

ITEM 13



SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION 6 MARCH 2007

Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Management Commission

Review of Electoral Registration – Approval of Final Report and Recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Commission approve the final report and recommendations arising from the Commission's review of Electoral Registration.
- 1.2 That the outcomes and recommendations arising from the review are reported to full Council.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Commission's review of Electoral Registration was completed in December 2006 and the draft report and recommendations were considered by Commission members on 5 February 2007.
- 2.2 The amendments suggested by Commission members at the meeting on 5 February have been incorporated into the final version of the report which is included as Appendix 2 of this report.
- 2.3 Electoral Registration falls within the area of responsibility of full Council rather than Council Cabinet so it will be necessary to report the outcomes of the review and the Commission's recommendations to a future Council meeting. The first full Council meeting to which the report could be made will be the Annual Meeting on 23 May 2007.

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Background papers: Appendix 1 – Implications
List of appendices: Appendix 2 – A review of Electoral Registration in Derby

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None arising directly from this report although there will be financial implications if the recommendations contained within the report are implemented. These implications have not been quantified.

Legal

2. None arising directly from this report. However the Council must comply with the requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

Personnel

3. None arising directly from this report. However, one of the recommendations of the report is that the Electoral Services team is increased to enable it to better cope with the increased demands imposed by the recent legislation.

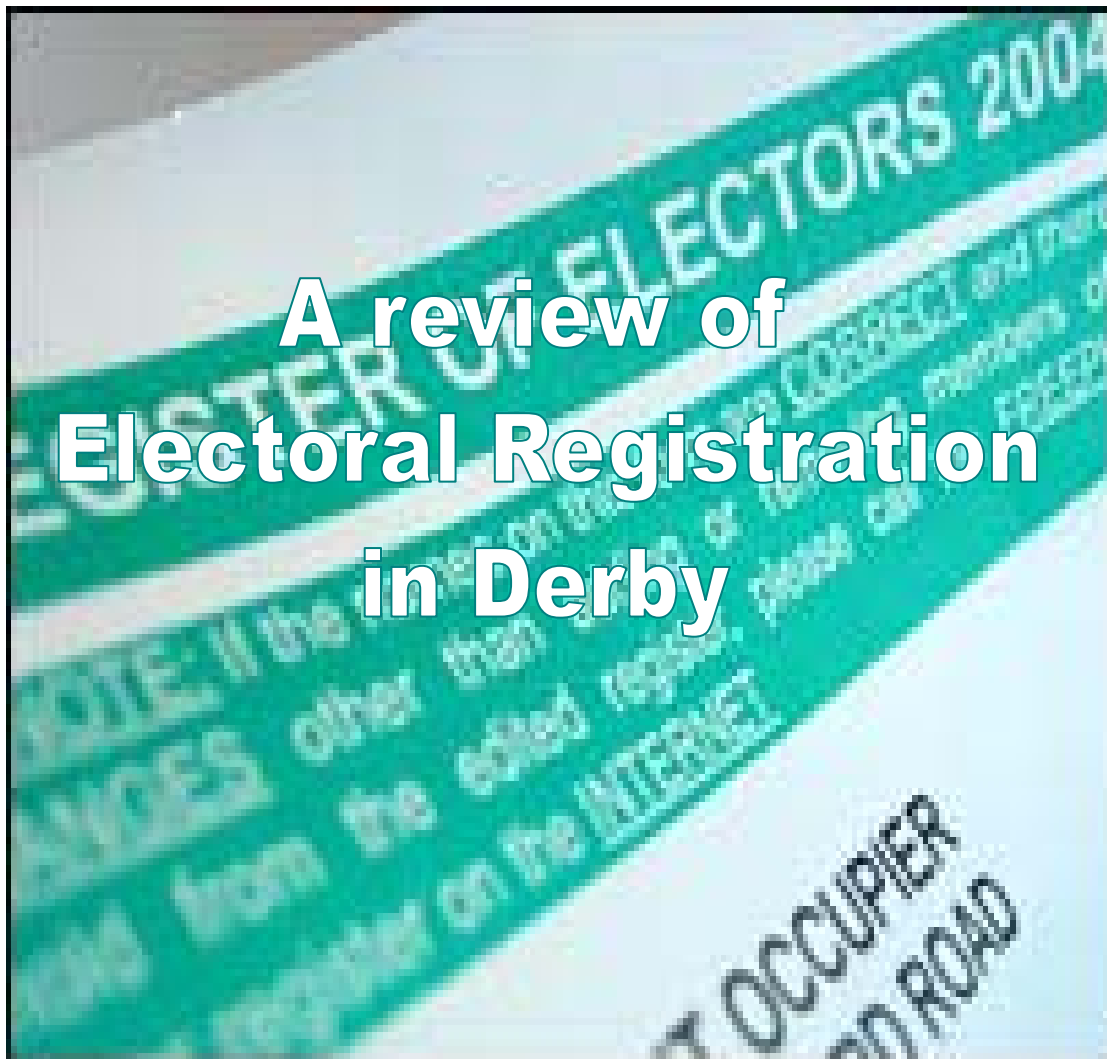
Equalities impact

4. Increased electoral registration will potentially be of benefit to all Derby people.

Corporate Objectives, Values and Priorities

5. This report has the potential to link with all the Council's Corporate Objectives,

Scrutiny Management Commission



January 2007

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Scrutiny Management Commission

A review of Electoral Registration in Derby

1. Executive Summary

1. The objectives of the Scrutiny Management Commission's review of Electoral Registration in Derby were set out in the scoping report for the review and were:

1. To achieve an understanding of the electoral registration process and of the barriers to registration
2. To examine any examples of electoral registration best practice by UK local authorities and assess the outcomes of that best practice
3. To consider the actions taken by the Council to encourage electoral registration in Derby.
4. Through discussion with selected stakeholder groups, to assess the outcomes of the Council's initiatives to encourage electoral registration and see whether there is the potential to achieve further significant increases in the level of electoral registration in Derby
5. If it is considered that there is the potential to significantly increase the level of electoral registration in Derby, to formulate recommendations, supported by reasons, for achieving the increases, and to give an indication of the level of financial and personnel resources that would be required to achieve the potential increases that have been identified.

2. In the course of its review the Commission considered information contained in reports of the Electoral Commission and took evidence from a range of witnesses who included a representative of the Electoral Commission, local authority officers and members of the public.

3. The evidence presented to the Commission showed that the officers of the Council's Electoral Services team were already aware of the majority of the initiatives that are known to increase electoral registration and had implemented most that were practicable in terms of finances and resources.

4. The Commission has therefore proposed a structured series of recommendations that are intended to take forward and build upon the initiatives already considered and in some cases commenced by the Electoral Services team. The Commission recognises that implementation of the recommendations will be conditional upon the necessary finance being available but members hope that this can be found from the funds that central government are providing to enable local authorities to undertake the duties set out in the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

5. From analysis of the evidence gathered during the review the Commission considers that there is the potential to significantly increase the level of electoral registration in Derby and has developed the recommendations set out in Section 2 of this report.

2. Recommendations

Recommendation		Reasons
General Recommendations		
G1	<p>That the Council web pages relating to registration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Are always interesting, attractive and informative b) Include an on-line form that can be downloaded and used for registration c) Incorporate a more obvious link from the Home page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The current web pages, although factual, do not appear particularly attractive. The information that they contain, although factually correct could be presented in a way that makes it more understandable b) At the time of writing this report the web pages do not include a registration form c) It is considered that registration will be encouraged if potential registrants do not have to search for information on registration
G2	<p>The Electoral Services team should investigate all the opportunities that exist for using other front line Council services and advertising media to provide information on electoral registration and should work with the relevant departments to promote those opportunities that appear to have potential. These could include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council Tax section ▪ Houses in Multiple Occupation ▪ Benefits section on home visits ▪ Housing Options ▪ Derby Homes 	<p>Leeds City Council has successfully used other Council departments to provide information on electoral registration to the public. The Commission considers that this approach should be thoroughly explored for Derby.</p>

G3	A generic 'Registration poster' should be prepared. The poster should be available in English and the major minority ethnic languages. The poster should be useable for all applications and should include details of how to obtain more information on electoral registration	<p>The Commission considers that the fundamental need is for clear easily accessible information on electoral registration.</p> <p>It is thought that a poster and an information pack that explains the need to register and the benefits of doing so and includes the relevant forms would help promote understanding of the process and so encourage registration and voting.</p> <p>It is intended that the poster and the pack would be usable for all applications</p> <p>To ensure that effort is directed towards those areas where there is the highest potential to improve electoral registration</p> <p>It is considered that professional advice may enable a more productive and cost effective campaign.</p> <p>Derby has a very small Electoral Services team compared to other similar sized local authorities and it will be difficult to deliver the proposed recommendations unless more staff are available</p>
G4	A generic 'Registration Information pack' should be compiled. The information pack should be usable for all applications where information on registration is required. The pack should be available in English and the major minority ethnic languages.	
G5	The Electoral Services team should identify specific areas and communities where there is a lower than average level of electoral registration and efforts to encourage registration should be targeted at those areas	
G6	Consideration should be given to engaging a publicity company to advise on the promotion of electoral registration	
G7	Consideration should be given to increasing the size of the Electoral Services team	
To encourage the registration of Attainers (16/17 year olds)		
A1	Young people at schools and colleges offering 16 to 18 provision should be provided with information on electoral registration when they reach their 16 th birthday.	<p>The Commission was told that young people are currently given very little information about electoral registration and do not know how registration and voting might affect them.</p> <p>The Commission considers that it is important to redress this deficiency and has suggested some specific actions with this</p>
A2	Head teachers should be asked to prominently display the generic registration poster (G3) in all Derby secondary schools	

A3	The Citizenship Co-ordinators news letter should be used to publicise the fact that 16-18 year olds are eligible to register even though they cannot vote until they are 18.	<p>aim.</p> <p>The Proof of Age card scheme that Trading Standards have put in place at Derby secondary schools will show when pupils attain their 16th birthday. They could then be sent information such as a personalised birthday card and the generic information pack (G4).</p> <p>The Commission considers that as well as young people being given information about electoral registration it is important that they are actively encouraged to register.</p>
A4	The Council should lobby the DfES to include electoral registration as part of the National Curriculum	
A5	The Electoral Services team should offer electoral registration advice to Derby sixth form pupils	
A6	As an incentive to register the Council could enter all young people between 16 and 18 who are registered in a prize draw.	
To encourage the registration of Students		
S1	The Electoral Services team should establish contacts and work with the Students' Unions of Derby University and Derby College to provide information and promote electoral registration.	<p>The Commission was told that little information on registration and voting was currently provided to students.</p> <p>The Commission considers that it is important to redress this deficiency and has suggested some specific actions with this aim.</p> <p>The Commission considers that the approach should be to provide some general information on electoral registration and to explain where more detailed information can be obtained.</p>
S2	The Students' Unions and the University/College authorities should be asked to prominently display the generic registration poster (G3) in all University and College buildings.	
S3	The Electoral Services team should encourage the display of the generic registration poster (G3) in places such as shops, hot food shops, bars and clubs, and on transport, that is used by students.	
S4	The Electoral Services team should ensure that sufficient copies of the generic information pack (G4) are provided to the Students' Unions and the University/College authorities.	

S5	The Electoral Services team should make information on registration available at appropriate 'freshers' week' functions at both Derby University and Derby College.	
S6	The University accommodation officer should be contacted to find out if there is a database of students in private rented accommodation and if so whether this can be used to send information on registration to those students.	
To encourage registration by members of Derby's ethnic minority communities		
E1	The Electoral Services team should seek to establish contacts in community and religious centres and work with them to make information on electoral registration available to the communities that they represent. The generic information pack G4 will provide a starting point for this.	<p>The Commission was told that some women were isolated from the electoral process and did not get the information or understand that they needed to register in order to be able to vote. Members were also told that to overcome barriers it was necessary to communicate with key people in the new communities and religious communities.</p> <p>The Commission considers that the approach should be to provide some general information on electoral registration and to explain where more detailed information can be obtained.</p>
E2	Information and advice provided to the ethnic minority communities on registration should where necessary be offered in the appropriate language.	
E3	The Electoral Services team should encourage the display of the generic registration poster (G3) in places such as shops, community and religious centres and on transport, that are used by members of Derby's ethnic minority communities.	

To encourage registration by people who are moving house		
M1	The Electoral Services team should work with Estate Agents, Building Societies, Housing Associations, the Housing Options Centre and Derby Homes to ensure that people who move house are reminded of the need to register and are provided with the information and the forms that they need to do this. The poster G3 and information pack G4 can be used for this purpose.	<p>The Commission was told that people who had moved in the past six months and those who were in private rented accommodation were among the groups with the highest levels of non-registration.</p> <p>The Commission considers it important that these groups are reminded of the need to register and are provided with information on how to do this.</p>
M2	The Electoral Services Team should seek to establish contacts with letting agencies representing private landlords and should attempt to work with them to make information on electoral registration available to their clients	
To encourage the registration of people in the 18-30 age range		
Y1	The Electoral Services team should encourage the display of the generic registration poster (G3) in places such as shops, bars, clubs and sports centres, that are used by this sector of Derby's population	<p>Information from the Electoral Commission's report suggest there is a significant likelihood that single people under the age of 30 will not be registered.</p> <p>The Commission considers that the provision of publicity and information in places likely to be frequented by people in this age group may help to redress this imbalance.</p>

Part1

3. Introduction and Background to the Review

6. At its meeting on 11 July 2006 the Scrutiny Management Commission (SMC) agreed to conduct a review of Electoral Registration in Derby with the specific aim of seeing how more Derby people could be encouraged to register.

7. The review was in part prompted by some work that had been done for the Commission in preparation for a review of Council Tax income/expenditure. This had shown that there were very significant differences in the levels of registration in different wards in the City. The Commission was also aware that forthcoming legislation would impose a duty on local authorities to increase the level of registration within their areas, and members had been informed that Councils had received central government funding that was to be used to enhance their electoral registration activities.

8. This report is intended to summarise the findings of the Commission's review and to indicate some viable recommendations for increasing the level of electoral registration in Derby.

4. Objectives of the Review

The objectives of the review were as follows:

1. To achieve an understanding of the electoral registration process and of the barriers to registration
2. To examine any examples of electoral registration best practice by UK local authorities and assess the outcomes of that best practice
3. To consider the actions taken by the Council to encourage electoral registration in Derby.
4. Through discussion with selected stakeholder groups, to assess the outcomes of the Council's initiatives to encourage electoral registration and see whether there is the potential to achieve further significant increases in the level of electoral registration in Derby
5. If it is considered that there is the potential to significantly increase the level of electoral registration in Derby, to formulate recommendations, supported by reasons, for achieving the increases, and to give an indication of the level of financial and personnel resources that would be required to achieve the potential increases that have been identified.

5. Methodology of the review

9. A comprehensive scoping report, which drew heavily on research carried out by and for the Electoral Commission was prepared for the Scrutiny Management Commission. The first part of the scoping report was based on the research carried out by the Electoral Commission and provided a factual

summary of the reasons for and level of non-registration in the UK. The second part of the scoping report outlined the objectives and format of the SMC's review. Because of its factual content, Part 1 of the scoping report has been included as Appendix 1 to this report.

10. At the scoping stage of the review it was recognised that the Commission would first need to gain a reasonable working knowledge of the electoral registration process and the way in which electoral registration was managed in Derby. Having achieved this it was thought that the next step should be to examine examples of good practice, and once this had been done, to ask representatives of the major stakeholder groups for their views on the service delivered by the Council and on electoral registration in general.

11. It was considered that this information base would give the Commission the knowledge it required to make viable recommendations aimed at increasing the level of electoral registration in Derby.

12. The structure of the evidence gathering phase of the review is shown in the following table:

Table 1

Activity		Date
1	Consideration of the factual information contained in Part 1 of the scoping report	September 2006
2	Meeting with the Council Officers responsible for managing and implementing electoral registration in Derby	September 2006
3	Identification of best practice through meetings with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex Markham of the Electoral Commission • Alex Meek of Leeds City Council 	October 2006
4.	Meetings with representatives of some of the stakeholder groups that were recognised as being 'hard-to-reach' (HtR), namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Minority Ethnic groups • Young People 	November/December 2006

13. The key points extracted from the meetings with the witnesses who gave evidence to the review are set out in Part 2 of this report. A detailed account of the meetings is available from the Co-ordination Team.

6. Outcomes of the Review

6.1 Derby's Approach to Electoral Registration

14. From the key points of the interview with Council officers on 26 September 2006 it can be seen that the Electoral Services team are aware of the issues that have an adverse impact on electoral registration and are taking a number of initiatives to address those issues.

15. Currently the Electoral Services Team:

- Sends reminders and makes multiple canvass visits to households that do not return the Form A
- Works with residential assistants in student accommodation blocks, and with residential care homes to promote registration
- Works with the Council Tax section to identify empty properties
- Offers the facility to confirm by telephone or the internet that there has been no change in the electors registered at a property.
- Includes a leaflet explaining why it is important to register to vote with each canvass form. The leaflet is in English and the major minority languages
- Offers a rolling registration form on the Council's website

16. The officers recognised that there were opportunities to introduce better systems. These included:

- Targeting inner city wards where the level of registration was lowest
- More contact with attainers – possibly through schools or the B-Line card
- A reminder system for people who were moving house
- Using Derby Direct to remind callers of the need to register if they wished to vote
- Increasing the size of the Electoral Services Team by a further full time post to help meet the requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006

6.2 Issues identified from the Electoral Commission report

17. The Electoral Commission's research shows that the level of non-registration in the UK is significant and work carried out for it by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) suggested that in some parliamentary constituencies registration fell between 10% and 19% during the period 2001-2003. The Electoral Commission's research has found that:

- Reasons for non-registration may be situational or attitudinal. Situational reasons are those that relate to a person's individual and household situation and circumstances. Attitudinal reasons include the person's perception of the principles and practices of electoral registration and ultimately their attitudes towards voting and politics.
- Recent surveys have shown strong consensus that registration is considered a low priority and somewhat problematic
- Few non-registrants saw any particular advantage in becoming registered.
- Non-registration is highest in areas where there are large numbers of young people, large ethnic minority communities and high levels of population mobility.
- People from minority ethnic groups were about three times as likely to be non-registered as white people. The levels of non-registration varied

considerably among the different sub groups that made up the ethnic minority population but those of the ethnic minority population with UK, EU or Commonwealth nationalities were much less likely to be unregistered than those with other nationalities (17% compared with 71%).

- Tenure and length of residence have a marked effect on the level of non-registration.
- Over half of all non-registrants come from just three groups:
 - Those living with their parents (particularly attainees)
 - Those having moved within the six months prior to the qualifying date
 - Those renting from private landlords
- The knowledge of the registration system varies with age with younger people generally having a much lower level of knowledge than older people.

18. Many of these views were supported by comments made by the 'best practice' witnesses to the SMC's review.

6.3 Evidence provided to the Commission by witnesses

(a) Alex Markham (AM) – Electoral Commission

19. AM told members that there were high levels of non-registration among people who had moved in the past six months and said that there was potentially a lot that could be done by working with Estate Agents and Housing Associations to target home movers. She told members that the Electoral Commission worked with the Housing Associations and suggested that local authorities needed to replicate this.

20. AM thought it was the wrong approach to tell young people that registration was a legal duty. She said they needed to be encouraged and given choices when it came to registration and voting. She said that DfES thought that Citizenship was not being taught too well, although some schools did better than others, and she said that the government was pressing for more training for Citizenship teachers. AM told members it was important that any information provided to young people was totally unbiased and merely provided the means for them to find out for themselves about the democratic process. She said that the 'Democracy Cookbook' that was produced by the Electoral Commission was intended to engage young people in the democratic process.

21. AM told the Commission that it was important to establish links with the Community Associations and agreed that contacting mosques and churches might be one way of improving registration levels.

22. AM told members that age, sex, ethnicity and mobility all affected electoral registration. She said that the Electoral Commission had issued some guidance for improving electoral registration the main points of which were to:

- Get support from members

- Target the voluntary sector and groups that have access to the hard to reach
- Work with other Council departments to ensure that as many residents as possible know about the registration process and have easy access to the necessary registration forms
- Target Housing Associations and estate agents – these give access to home movers who are one of the target non-registrant groups

(b) Alex Meek (AMe)– Leeds City Council

23. AMe told the Commission that Leeds had a student population of around 47,000 who were mainly resident in Headingley, Hyde Park and Chapel Allerton. He said that in these areas non-registration runs at around 9.7 to 9.8% whereas in other parts of the City it was around 4.7%. He confirmed that there was a big problem with privately rented student accommodation and said that as landlords did not help all that much, the Electoral Services team put posters in the student areas and operated a plasma screen in the main library. This was used for rolling messages during the registration and election periods.

24. AMe told members that there were clear links between the main non-registrant groups and factors such as age, ethnicity, income and home ownership. He said that hard evidence for this was shown by the different patterns throughout Leeds; for example there was a fairly large West Indian population in Chapel Allerton and this contributed to the lower than average levels of registration. However, AMe said that the Electoral Services team had done a lot of work with minority groups and as a consequence non-registration among the City's Asian population had been reduced to around 5.7%. He also confirmed that the response rate was much higher – up to 97/98% in the city's more affluent areas and said that in the more deprived areas in the city centre the response rates were much lower.

25. AMe said that the Leeds Electoral Services team had tried to address non-registration with awareness campaigns, education programmes and leaflet drops. He told members that the team worked with sixth form colleges to encourage registration by attainners and confirmed that so far Leeds had just concentrated on the sixth form colleges. AMe told members that pupils and teachers supported the initiatives and were keen to engage.

26. The Commission was told that to improve the level of registration, the Leeds Electoral Services team worked closely with the Equal Opportunities and Council Tax teams, and with the Central Interpretation Unit. He said that the team used Council Tax information during the annual canvass to check on void properties and properties that were empty for prolonged periods. They also worked with the Council Tax visitors, who take Registration Forms with them on Council Tax visits.

27. AMe also said that the Electoral Services team worked with the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and that they provided a Housing Welcome pack that contained all the necessary information on

registration and a Rolling Registration form. The pack is given to tenants when they move. AMe said that they did not at present work with the Housing Associations but agreed that this was something that might prove productive. He also agreed that it might be possible to work with Estate Agents.

28. AMe said that the approach taken by the Electoral Services team was to work closely with other Council departments and to use their resources rather than spending lots of additional money. AMe told members that the information provided to the Electoral Services team included details of demolished properties, new residents, voids, and the status of empty properties. They also received information on deaths from the Registrar's Office. He said that the information was very helpful in updating the register and in understanding the non return of 'A' forms.

29. AMe told the Commission that Leeds was hoping to work with other West Yorkshire local authorities on a joint advertisement. The cost of this would be around £55k with each authority contributing about £6k.

(c) Comments from representatives of the 'hard-to-reach' groups

30. Nasreen Iqbal (NI), who represented Asian women, asked whether people in Derby were asked to register at the beginning of the house moving process, through estate agents or other organisations. She also said that women in minority groups were often isolated from the electoral process and did not get all the information. This meant that they did not understand they had the right to vote or that they needed to register in order to be able to vote. She suggested that one way of resolving this would be to involve advice development workers at the Community Centres. She also suggested that to overcome barriers it was necessary to communicate with the key people in new communities and religious communities and said that contacts needed to be developed in these groups.

31. Ross Copley (RC), representing the University of Derby Students Union, told the Commission that when he was at school he had only received one hour of citizenship training every two weeks and said it was just set work that only required the class to read and answer questions. He did not think that young people were taught early enough about voting. He thought that it was too late to do this at eighteen as by then they had little interest in the process, and he suggested that the best time was when young people were in the sixth form as then they had the right level of maturity.

32. RC also said that he did not think enough information on registration and voting was provided to students. He thought that more emphasis needed to be given to the process.

33. There was general agreement that it would be helpful to make registration forms easily available by putting them in doctors' surgeries, supermarkets, etc.

34. Richard Irvine (RI) representing Derby young people, told the Commission that some young people do not have any real knowledge of the electoral registration process, particularly if their parents don't vote. He also said that they were subject to peer pressure when it came to registration and that many 16/17 year olds did not think that registration and voting affected them.

35. RI said that not many young people knew that they could register before their 18th birthday and he thought that because not much was done at school young people did not realise how registration and voting might affect them. RI thought that information needed to be provided at the right level and he suggested that this might be done through advertisements and by posters in schools aimed at Year 11 students.

36. RI said that the attitude of parents was important. He also suggested that there was a need to focus on schools and youth groups, especially in poorer areas and said that nothing had been done at his school. He thought it was important to focus on schools and 6th forms where there were a lot of young people who were approaching their 16th birthday and he suggested it would be important not to ignore the minority groups. He felt that if no information was provided in the gap between 16 and 18, young people might subsequently be discouraged from voting.

37. RI said that advertisements needed to be where young people would see them and he suggested schools and colleges. He agreed that the Proof of Age card lists might be a useful starting point and he also wondered whether Connexions advisers might be trained to provide the necessary information.

(d) Supplementary information

38. The Co-ordination Officer was advised by Graham Falgate (GF), Education Officer with the Children and Young People's Directorate that Citizenship lessons would be the place to bring up attainer registration.

39. GF said that most schools were not likely to cover it as it was not included in the National Curriculum. He said there was discussion of the voting process but a lot of teachers might be unaware that young people could register at 16/17.

40. GF suggested that this matter could be raised either through the twice yearly Co-ordinators network meeting or through the newsletter which goes out twice yearly in October and March.

7. The barriers to registration

41. The Electoral Commission's report categorises barriers to registration as either:

- Situational barriers – which are due to a person's individual and household situation and circumstances, or

- Attitudinal barriers – which stem from a person's perception of the principles and practices of electoral registration and ultimately define their attitude towards voting and politics.

42. From the evidence considered in the course of the review it appears that the main situational barrier to registration arises when a person is in a situation where information on registration is not easily accessible to them.

43. This situation seems most often to apply to:

- Some young people living with their parents
- People who have moved house recently
- People who are renting from private landlords
- People who were members of certain minority ethnic communities
- Single people under the age of 30
- Students

44. The main attitudinal barriers, which are to some extent linked with the situation of the non-registrant, appear to be:

- Limited understanding of registration and the electoral process as a whole
- The view that registration is not important and hence has a low priority
- A failure to recognise the advantages of registration
- Political disengagement and/or political hostility

8. Conclusions

45. The evidence considered by the Commission suggests that the way of overcoming all but one of the situational and attitudinal barriers to electoral registration would be to make clear information on the registration and voting process available to everyone in Derby who is eligible to register or to vote.

46. This approach is unlikely to resolve issues of political disengagement or political hostility, but it may help by indicating an alternative to political abstention.

47. The Commission's recommendations are therefore intended to pursue the aim of ensuring that everyone in Derby who is eligible to vote knows how to register.

48. Many of the recommendations relate to the provision of publicity about electoral registration and to the use of a generic leaflet and information pack for this purpose. No attempt has been made at this stage to define the form or content of the leaflet and poster.

Part 2

Key Points

Key Points from the Scoping Report

SR1	The level of registration is falling. ONS concluded that in October 2000, non-registration among the eligible household population in England and Wales was between 8% and 9%. This meant that in October 2000 there were about 3.5 million people in England and Wales who were eligible to be on the register and were not registered. Further work by ONS has suggested that there were falls of between 9.7% and 18.6% in registration in some parliamentary constituencies between February 2001 and December 2003.
SR2	In 2000 the highest rate of non-registration was among the youngest age groups.
SR3	People from minority ethnic groups were about three times as likely to be non-registered as white people. However, the levels of non-registration varied considerably among the different sub groups that made up the ethnic minority population.
SR4	Those of the ethnic minority population with UK, EU or Commonwealth nationalities were much less likely to be unregistered than those with other nationalities (17% compared with 71%).
SR5	There were important relationships between non-registration, and country of birth and nationality.
SR6	Tenure and length of residence were also found to have a marked effect on the level of non-registration.
SR7	The level of non-registration varied with the level of educational achievement and ranged from 4% for people with a higher educational qualification below degree level to 8% among those with no qualifications.
SR8	People who were divorced, single or separated were more likely to be unregistered than those who were widowed or married (8-14% compared to 2-3%). Men in each category were more likely to be unregistered than women.
SR9	In households containing two or more unrelated adults, the head of the household was much more likely to be registered than other eligible household members.
SR10	Non-registration was highest in areas where there were large numbers of young people and large ethnic minority communities and where there were high levels of population mobility.
SR11	<p>Over half of all non-registrants came from just three groups. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those living with their parents (particularly attainers)• Those having moved within the six months prior to the qualifying date• Those renting from private landlords <p>These three groups accounted for 52% of non-registration in 2000.</p>

SR12	People's reasons for non-registration may be either situational or attitudinal. Situational reasons are those that relate to a person's individual and household situation and circumstances. Attitudinal reasons include the person's perception of the principles and practices of electoral registration and ultimately their attitudes towards voting and politics.
SR13	MORI focus groups January and February 2005 found a strong consensus that registration was a low priority and something of a hassle, and few non-registrants saw any particular advantage in becoming registered.
SR14	The knowledge of the registration system varies with age with younger people having a much lower level of knowledge than older people.
SR15	Most case study councils reported problems registering one, other or several of the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Residents of inner city areas • People living in areas with a high percentage of private rented accommodation

Key Points from the interview with Officers on 26 September 2006

O1	The canvass form, Form A, is sent to each household in Derby and there is a requirement for the occupier to provide details of all those in the household who were eligible to vote and those aged 16-17 who would be eligible on their 18 th birthday.
O2	Electoral Registration Officers have the power to require the information and to enforce the Regulations through the Courts, although this was never done in Derby as any case would be difficult to prove.
O3	Annual Form A canvass forms are sent out in July each year. Reminders are sent to those households that do not return the forms, and if these are not returned, up to two personal visits are made to the properties in question. The process of registering the electors in a household may involve up to two Form A canvass forms that are sent by post, two personal visits, and a third Form A that is left at the property by the canvasser if they are unable to speak to anyone when they visit for the second time.
O4	For student accommodation the Electoral Services team work with the residential assistants in the accommodation blocks who were responsible for getting all the registration forms back from the students. A similar system is used for residential care homes.
O5	The Electoral Services team works with Council Tax to identify empty properties and that empty properties are counted as a response.
O6	For the past three to four years the public had been able to telephone or use the internet to confirm that there has been no change in the electors registered at a property.
O7	A leaflet explaining why it was important to register to vote is included with every canvass form. The leaflet is in English and the three major minority languages.

O8	This year the Electoral Services team has targeted 16-17 year old attainers through an advertisement campaign in cinemas.
O9	A Rolling Registration form is available from the Council's website. When a form is received the elector's details appear in the following month's Register. The Council Tax service also uses a change of address form.
O10	The Electoral Commission has identified a number of initiatives to encourage registration and improve voter turnout. These include providing a form to Estate Agents that they could give to people who were moving house.
O11	In addition to those groups identified by the Electoral Commission a significant percentage of people who were under 30 and single were also unregistered.
O12	There is no information on non-registrants that is specific to Derby, but it was felt that the situation in Derby was unlikely to be different from the rest of the country.
O13	It was suggested that it could be helpful to look at ward profiles and in particular at inner city wards where there is the lowest level of registration. It was pointed out that these areas contained a high level of private rented accommodation.
O14	It was thought that possible barriers to registration might be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax benefit fraud • Language barriers • Access to property/security – access to certain buildings, such as blocks of flats is difficult because of security systems such as door entry controls, and people were in any case increasingly reluctant to open the door to strangers • Ignorance of the registration process – the Electoral Commission had found that although many people claimed to have knowledge of the registration process their actual knowledge was deficient.
O15	More publicity with more and better leaflets seemed one way forward. However the Electoral Services team had advertised in the past and had found it difficult to measure the impact of the advertising.
O16	It was thought that more work could be done on the attainers. This could involve visits to schools and it might be possible to work through the 'B' Line card scheme
O17	It was recognised that there were opportunities to introduce better systems. It was thought that that there was an opportunity to introduce a reminder system for people who were moving house. It was suggested that a good way forward would be to target the worst responding wards as this would raise overall response rates. There was concern about the possibility that significant numbers of people in some wards might be disenfranchised.
O18	It was suggested that one method of improving registration might be to emphasis the fact that companies would not offer credit to people who were not registered. Members were told that some local authorities had done this through a big sticker on the reminder and this seemed

	to work. The prize draw approach that had been tried by some local authorities did not seem to make an appreciable difference to registration.
O19	Members were told that one very effective way of increasing registration was by carrying out a personal canvass of all properties.
O20	It was suggested that it might be possible to use Derby Direct to remind callers of the need to register if they had not already done so.
O21	Members were told that there was evidence that people now don't bother to register because they don't want to vote. This seemed to be an increasing problem.
O22	Derby has an elections team of two FTE that was among the smallest in the country for a city the size of Derby. Extra funding of £85k has been received from government and this would provide for a third team member to take forward the initiatives that had been identified, however, despite the 50% increase in staff, the team will still be a very small unit. The funding increase for Electoral Services was built into the base budget and would be permanent for the foreseeable future.
O23	<p>Members were provided with the following comparison of electorate/electoral team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derby - 77,500 electors/ member of staff • Nottingham – 48,500 electors/member of staff • Portsmouth – 23,000 electors/member of staff <p>Members were told that Portsmouth's staffing levels were enough for them to operate Elections and Registrations teams. However despite having more staff, Nottingham's registration levels were lower than Derby's.</p>
O24	In response to a question about the problems of delivering registration forms to houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) that only had one letter box it was agreed that this did present problems and that the difficulties were compounded by the fact that the address of the units within houses often changed. However the Electoral Services team regularly compared their data base with that of Council Tax and there was generally good agreement between the two. The team's approach was constantly being refined and they did send the right number of canvass forms to each property. The problem was getting into the properties and speaking to the tenants when it came to doing the personal canvass.
O25	Members asked whether it would be possible to use the HMO licensing procedures to resolve some of the problems relating to the registration of HMO tenants and were told that this was something that could be looked into.
O26	The small Electoral Services team made the service vulnerable to staff sickness or absence and it could be very stressful at busy times. The opportunity to take on additional staff had only just arisen.
O27	Members were told that the new Electoral Administration Act 2006 places a duty on Electoral Registration Officers to maximise registration. This would involve targeting specific groups and would be a year round activity. The new Act allowed registration until 11 days before polling day. The Electoral Commission was now setting performance standards for the conduct of elections and this included

	registration.
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Key Points from the Interview with Alex Markham (AM) of the Electoral Commission on 5 October 2006.

AM1	AM said that the Electoral Commission welcomed the SMC's decision to conduct a review of Electoral Registration. She said that the new Electoral Administration Act required electoral administrators to take action to encourage electoral administration. Some of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 was now in force but some was not.
AM2	AM said that the Electoral Commission was looking at the level of spend by local authorities, particularly in view of the requirements of S69 of the new Act. The Electoral Commission needed to look at the registration rates and resource levels of different Councils otherwise a comparison of their performance would not be relevant. The S69 funds were ring-fenced but when the funding was divided between all the local authorities there was not actually that much for each Council.
AM3	AM said that the Electoral Commission had an application process whereby Councils could bid for funding to support or develop new initiatives.
AM4	Members were told that there was currently no prescribed way of compiling a register but once performance standards were introduced this might change.
AM5	AM said that the Electoral Commission had issued some guidance for improving electoral registration. The main points of this were to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get support from members • Target the voluntary sector and groups that have access to the hard to reach – the so called 'gatekeeper' organisations • Promote collaboration between Council departments – Communications/Youth Service/Social Services/Education - could use the latter to contact attainers through schools • Target Housing Associations and estate agents – these give access to home movers who are one of the target non-registrant groups
AM6	AM told members that the Electoral Commission worked with the Housing Associations and suggested that local authorities needed to replicate this. Local authorities also needed 'champions' to support their electoral services as well as resources that should be provided by the local authorities.
AM7	AM said it was important that any information was totally unbiased and merely provided the means for young people to find out for themselves about the democratic process.
AM8	With regard to Citizenship training AM said that the issue was one of political literacy. DfES thought it was not being taught too well but some schools did better than others. The government was pressing for more training for Citizenship teachers.
AM9	With regard to what electors felt about filling in the canvass forms

	AM suggested that the relationship of potential electors to the head of the household was important. She also said that some young people did not realise that they needed to register to vote when they left home.
AM10	AM said that the performance standards the Electoral Commission was planning to introduce would help identify the reasons for non-registration. She said that the level of registration depended on a number of different factors. The level of registration for Unitary authorities was around 87%. AM said that in the East Midland the level of non-registration was around 5% of the total. AM confirmed that there were marked differences in the level of registration by members of different social and demographic groups. She told members that the age, sex, ethnicity and mobility all affected the level of registration and gave the following examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age – worst level of non-registration among young people • Ethnicity – non-registration among electors classed as Black African 37% and Chinese 37%
AM11	AM told members that there were high levels of non-registration among people who had moved in the past six months and said that there was potentially a lot that could be done by working with Estate Agents and Housing Associations to target home movers.
AM12	AM confirmed that the main reasons for non-registration were knowledge and awareness and said that there was a need to raise the level of these for all the non-registrant groups. She said this was particularly important for young people.
AM13	The Commission was told that it was important to establish links with the Community Associations.
AM14	Hammersmith and Fulham Council had achieved 97% registration through a process of intensive canvassing and several groups of authorities were working together to promote registration.
AM15	It was suggested that one way of improving registration levels would be to involve the faith groups in the City. AM agreed and suggested contacting mosques and churches.
AM16	AM said that the Democracy Cookbook was intended to engage young people in the democratic process.
AM17	AM said that for young people it was the wrong approach to say that registration was a duty, they needed to be encouraged and given choices when it came to registration and voting.

Key Points from the interview with Alex Meek (AMe) of Leeds City Council on 23 October 2006.

AMe1	AMe told members that the findings of Leeds did not differ greatly from those of the Electoral Commission and he said that they had found similar problems with engaging the hard-to-reach groups.
AMe2	AMe said that Leeds had a student population of around 47,000 who were mainly resident in Headingley, Hyde Park and Chapel Allerton. He said that in these areas non-registration runs at around 9.7 to 9.8% whereas in other parts of the City it was around 4.7%.
AMe3	AMe said that there was also a fairly large West Indian population in

	Chapel Allerton and this contributed to the lower than average levels of registration.
AMe4	AMe said that the Electoral Services team had done a lot of work with minority groups and non-registration among the City's Asian population had been reduced to around 5.7%. However he agreed that there were still groups that were difficult to reach.
AMe5	AMe said that there was about 93% overall response to the 'A' form sent to all households during the annual canvass and that this equated to around 96-97% registration of the adult population of the city.
AMe6	So far as the student population was concerned AMe said that the Electoral Services team worked with Students Union Accommodation Officers who provided information on students who were in University accommodation.
AMe7	AMe agreed that there was a big problem with privately rented student accommodation. He said that in Headingley over 50% of the population were students and as these were not first year students they were difficult to capture. He said that they were important as they might well stay in Leeds after they graduated. Non-registration by students could distort the registration data for a district.
AMe8	AMe said that landlords did not help all that much so the Electoral Services team put posters in the student areas and operated a plasma screen in the main library. He said that the team worked with the Council's Corporate Media Unit and used rolling messages during the registration and election periods. A Commission member asked whether Leeds were aware of the impact of the adverts and AMe said that they were now starting to look at this and were considering a survey to get the views of the students.
AMe9	AMe told the Commission that there was no requirement on students to register twice so some might not be registering in Leeds because they were already registered at home.
AMe10	AMe said that there were clear links between the main non-registrant groups and factors such as age, ethnicity, income and home ownership. He said that there was hard evidence shown by the different patterns throughout the City.
AMe11	The Leeds Electoral Services team had tried to address non-registration with awareness campaigns, education programmes and leaflet drops. AMe said that the team worked with sixth form colleges to encourage registration by attainments. They ran mock elections and managed the Youth Parliament elections.
AMe12	AMe said that so far Leeds had concentrated on the sixth form colleges. AMe said that pupils and teachers supported the initiatives and were keen to engage.
AMe13	AMe said that the response rate was much higher – up to 97/98% in the city's more affluent areas. He said that in the more deprived areas in the city centre the response rates were much lower.
AMe14	AMe told the Commission that to improve the level of registration the Electoral Services team worked closely with Equal Opportunities and the Central Interpretation Unit. He said that also worked closely Council Tax and used their information during the annual canvass to

	check on void properties and properties that were empty for prolonged periods. He also said that they worked with the Council Tax visitors who take Registrations Forms with them on Council Tax visits.
AMe15	AMe also said that the Electoral Services team works with the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMOs) and provided a Housing Welcome pack that contained all the necessary information and a Rolling Registration form that is given to tenants when they move.
AMe16	Information from Council Tax on void properties was very helpful in updating the register and in understanding the non return of 'A' forms.
AMe17	AMe said that they used to give Housing Welcome packs to the Council Tax visitors but now provide them to new tenants. They did not at present work with the Housing Associations but agreed that this is something that might prove productive. He also agreed that it might be possible to work with Estate Agents.
AMe18	Asked about the cost of the initiatives that Leeds had put in place to increase registration, AMe said that they had four temporary staff that they brought in about 12 weeks before the elections. He said that this was less than previously and the reduction in numbers had been made possible by IT benefits. AMe said that they now scanned in all the registration documents and were getting lower levels of changes, which made the process easier to manage. He confirmed that the Electoral Services team was well supported financially; they had a total budget of about £1.1million about £680k of which was allocated to registration. AMe said that one of the biggest costs was due to the increase and servicing of postal votes.
AMe19	AMe told members that the Electoral Services team worked closely with other Council departments and the approach was to use their resources rather than spending lots of money.
AMe20	AMe told members that the information provided to the Electoral Services team included details of demolished properties, new residents, voids and the status of empty properties. They also received information on deaths from the Registrar's Office.
AMe21	Information leaflets were available in a range of languages and in Braille and said that they also liaised with RNIB and RNID.
AMe22	Leeds was hoping to work with other West Yorkshire local authorities on a joint advertisement. The cost of this would be around £55k with each authority contributing about £6k.
AMe23	Asked whether Leeds has taken any action to enforce the requirement to register, AMe said that they did not do this and said he knew of nowhere where fines for non-registration had been achieved. Anecdotal evidence suggested that in cases where action was taken by a local authority the defendant either registered or showed that they were ineligible to register. In either case the case was dropped. In other cases where Council's had brought about successful prosecutions of non respondents, the Councils concerned were usually awarded minimum costs, something in the order of £70.
AMe24	In Leeds the registration rate had been increased from 83% to 93%

	without the need for door step canvassing.
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Key points from the Commission's meeting on 22 November with representatives of 'hard to reach' groups

HTR1	NI asked whether the Citizens' Advice Bureau could help and advise.
HTR2	NI asked whether people were asked to register at the beginning of the house moving process, through estate agents or other organisations.
HTR3	SHJ asked whether it would be possible to work through the HADARI and other day care centres such as those provided by the Pakistani and Indian Community Associations.
HTR4	RC told the Commission that when he was at school he had only received one hour of citizenship training every two weeks and said it was just set work that only required the class to read and answer questions.
HTR5	RC said that he did not think that young people were taught early enough about voting. He thought that it was too late to do this at eighteen as by then they had little interest in the process and he suggested that the best time was when young people were in the sixth form as then they had the right level of maturity.
HTR6	RC also said that he did not think enough information on registration and voting was provided to students. He said that more emphasis needed to be given to the process and he suggested that the TV licence campaign was a good example of how this might be done.
HTR7	NI said that often women were isolated from the process and did not get all the information. This meant that they did not understand they had the right to vote or that they needed to register in order to be able to vote. She suggested that one way of resolving this would be to involve advice development workers at the Community Centres.
HTR8	NI told the meeting that Islam as a religion was against democracy and this meant that Muslim people had to decide whether or not to vote.
HTR9	SHJ suggested that mock elections to give young people the experience of voting and NI wondered whether it might be possible to work with School Councils. RC suggested surveying the Youth Council to identify the level of electoral registration among young people.
HTR10	There was general agreement that it would be helpful to make registration forms easily available by putting them in doctors' surgeries, supermarkets, etc.
HTR11	MD suggested that faith groups might be able to help.
HTR12	NI suggested that to overcome barriers it was necessary to communicate with the key people in new communities and religious communities and she said that contacts needed to be developed in these groups.

Key Points from the Commission's meeting with young people's representative Richard Irvine on 5 December 2006.

RI1	RI told the Commission that some young people do not have any
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	real knowledge of the electoral registration process, particularly if their parents don't vote. He also said that they were subject to peer pressure when it came to registration and that many 16/17 year olds did not think that registration and voting affected them.
RI2	RI said that not many young people knew that they could register before their 18 th birthday and he confirmed that not much was done at school so young people did not realise how registration and voting might affect them.
RI3	Asked how it might be possible to change the views and attitudes of young people when it came to electoral registration, RT said that information needed to be provided at the right level and he suggested that this might be done through advertisements and by posters in schools aimed at Year 11 students.
RI4	RI said that the attitude of parents was important and he suggested that there was a need to focus on schools and youth groups, especially in poorer areas. He thought that young people's parents and the media put them off the voting process.
RI5	Asked if young people were aware that they would have difficulty getting credit when they were 18 if they were not on the electoral register, RI said that he did not think they considered that this was important.
RI6	Asked what schools did to promote electoral registration, RI said that nothing had been done at his school and he said he did not think that many young people would be interested in attending a talk at school on electoral registration.
RI7	RI told members that he thought it was important to focus on schools and 6 th forms where there were a lot of young people who were approaching their 16 th birthday. He felt that if no information was provided in the gap between 16 and 18, young people might be discouraged from subsequently voting.
RI8	Asked whether mock elections at schools might help to encourage young people to register and vote, RI thought that they might have mixed outcomes. He said that some people were more likely to vote than others and he said that some young people had conflicting interests.
RI9	Asked about incentives and RI said that birthday cards might work.
RI10	Asked where the best place would be to locate advertisements, RI said that they needed to be where young people would see them. He suggested that they needed to be where young people went, such as schools and colleges.
RI11	In response to a question RI agreed that the Proof of Age card lists might be a useful starting point. He also wondered whether Connexions advisers might be trained to provide the necessary information and he suggested it would be important not to ignore the minority groups.

Supplementary Key Points

SI	DR told the Commission that he had spoken with Graham Falgate, Education Officer Children and Young People's Directorate who had confirmed that registration was not included as part of the curriculum for Citizenship. He has however said it would be possible to include something on registration in the twice yearly Citizenship magazine and that there was also the possibility of including an item on the agenda for the Citizenship Co-ordinators meeting. The Commission agreed that this could form one of its recommendations. It also agreed to recommend that the Electoral Commission put pressure on the government to include registration as part of the Citizenship curriculum.
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Appendix 1

Extract from the Scoping Report prepared for the Scrutiny Management Commission

Part 1

4. In preparing this scoping report considerable reliance has been placed on the information contained in the following report by the Electoral Commission (EC):

Understanding electoral registration. The extent and nature of non-registration in Britain - September 2005.

5. This report compares and combines information from the Electoral Commission's own research based on the 2001 Electoral Register with that from the 2001 Census. This data is also compared with a statistical register check conducted on the Commission's behalf by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), with public opinion research by MORI, and with evidence from eight local authorities.
6. The full report can be accessed via the following link or by entering the Electoral Commission's website and using their search facility:

http://www.electoralcommission.gov.uk/files/dms/Undreg-FINAL_18366-13545_E_N_S_W_.pdf

Electoral Registration in the UK

7. To vote in an election in the UK it is necessary to be included on an electoral register and to be registered an individual must satisfy criteria relating to age, nationality and residence.
8. The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to prepare and publish a register of electors for their area each year. The register is published on 1 December each year.
9. Registration in the UK is conducted on a household basis. The Electoral Registration Form, the 'Form A', is sent to each household in the autumn for completion by the 'occupier'. The form asks the occupier to provide details of all those in the household who are eligible to vote, and those aged 16 or 17 who will be eligible to vote on their 18th birthday (the attainers), and who are resident at that address on 15 October that year.
10. Although registration is not in itself compulsory, the ERO has the power to require information for the purpose of maintaining the register of electors, and it is an offence to fail to return the Form A or to give false information.

11. In addition to the autumn canvass, the Representation of the People Act 2000 introduced rolling registration. This enables people to be added to and deleted from the register at any time throughout the year, for example when they move house.
12. The February 2001 electoral register was used by the Electoral Commission in its research because it just pre-dates the introduction of rolling registration and because of its proximity to the 2001 Census.

The extent of Non-Registration in the UK

13. According to the Electoral Commission report, on 1 December 2004 the number of people registered to vote following the annual canvass was 43,602,190. This figure compares with a 2001 Census estimate of 45,434,897 for the number of people aged 18+ in the UK – a difference of around 4%.
14. This figure does not however take account of the non-eligibility to vote of certain sectors of the population. To do this it is necessary to determine the eligibility of a sample of people before comparing this figure with the number actually registered. The register check exercise conducted by the ONS for the EC looked at a specially constructed sample of 23,963 adults and this information was cross checked against electoral registers. According to ONS, this sample represented 95% of the household population of England and Wales. The 5% of the population not represented by the study sample is said to comprise people who were found by the census enumerator but who did not return their census form. Analysis of the 2001 Census data suggests that up to 55% of those not responding to the Census are unregistered.
15. Based on their register check exercise the ONS concluded that in October 2000, non-registration among the eligible household population in England and Wales was between 8% and 9%. This meant that in October 2000 there were about 3.5 million people in England and Wales who were eligible to be on the register and were not registered.
16. The figures developed by ONS for the EC are a snapshot as they only estimate the extent of non-registration in October 2000. Further work by ONS has suggested that there were falls of between 9.7% and 18.6% in registration in some parliamentary constituencies between February 2001 and December 2003. More recent work by the University of Plymouth Local Elections Centre looked at data from 213 local authorities and found an average percentage registration of 87% in 2004 for the 31 unitary authorities they sampled.
17. The non-registration among key groups was investigated by the ONS and they found that in 2000 the highest rate of non-registration was among the youngest age groups. The distribution of non-registration among all age groups is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Non-registration by age					
Analysis 1		Analysis 2		Analysis 3	
Age Group	% not registered	Age Group	% not registered	Age Group	% not registered
16-17	28	16	34	18-34	13
18-24	16	17	25	35-54	5
25-35	11	18-19	15	55-99	2
35-44	6	20	17		
45-54	4	21-24	17		
55-64	3	25-29	14		
65-99	2				

18. The ONS also considered the effect of gender on registration and their findings are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 Non-registration by sex and age		
Age group	% not registered	
	Male	Female
All Ages	8	6
16-17	29	25
18-24	18	15
25-34	13	10
35-44	7	5
45-54	4	3
55-64	3	2
65+	2	2

19. The consistent difference in the percentage of registration between men and women across all the age groups led ONS to speculate that this may 'imply a genuine gender variation in propensity to register'.

20. As part of their study ONS looked at the level of non-registration among ethnic groups and different religions and found that people from minority ethnic groups were about three times as likely to be non-registered as white people. However, as is shown in Table 3, the levels of non-registration varied considerably among the different sub groups that made up the ethnic minority population.

Table 3 Non-registration by ethnic group	
Group	% not registered
Black Caribbean	9
Black African	37
Black other	24
Indian	6
Pakistani	8
Bangladeshi	6

Chinese	30
Other/mixed	33
Ethnic minority (all)	17
White	6

21. It is of note that among Asian people (Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani) the percentage not registered to vote was 7% which is the same as the overall percentage for England and Wales. Also, the level of non-registration among Black Caribbean people was, at 9%, only slightly greater than the overall percentage for England and Wales. However, as will be seen from the Table, the level of non-registration among other ethnic groups was very high.
22. ONS also found that those of the ethnic minority population with UK, EU or Commonwealth nationalities were much less likely to be unregistered than those with other nationalities (17% compared with 71%).
23. ONS investigated non-registration among different religious groups and found that in 2000, Muslims were more likely to be unregistered than other religious groups. Table 4 shows the level of non-registration among different religious groups.

Table 4 Non-registration by Religion	
Religion	% not registered
Muslims	14
Sikhs	3
Hindus	5
Jews	7
Christians	4
'No religion'	8

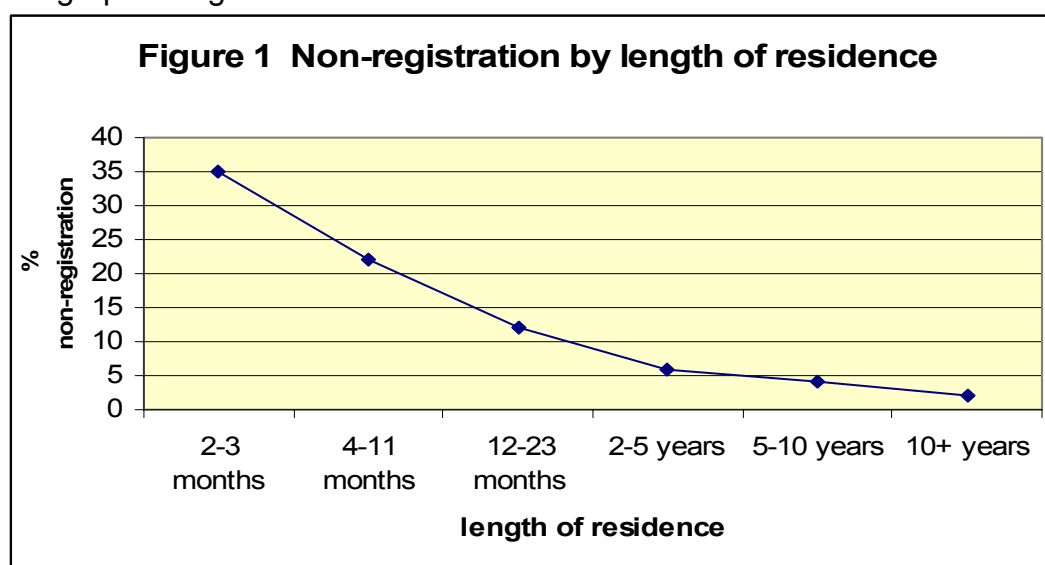
24. However ONS also found that non-registration among Muslims who had lived in the UK for 10 or more years was only 6% and concluded that the variations they had identified probably reflected other factors such as nationality and residency.
25. ONS found that there were important relationships between non-registration, and country of birth and nationality and this is illustrated by Table 5.

Table 5 Non-registration by nationality	
Nationality	% not registered
UK	5
Republic of Ireland	6
Commonwealth	17
Other European Union	19
Other	60

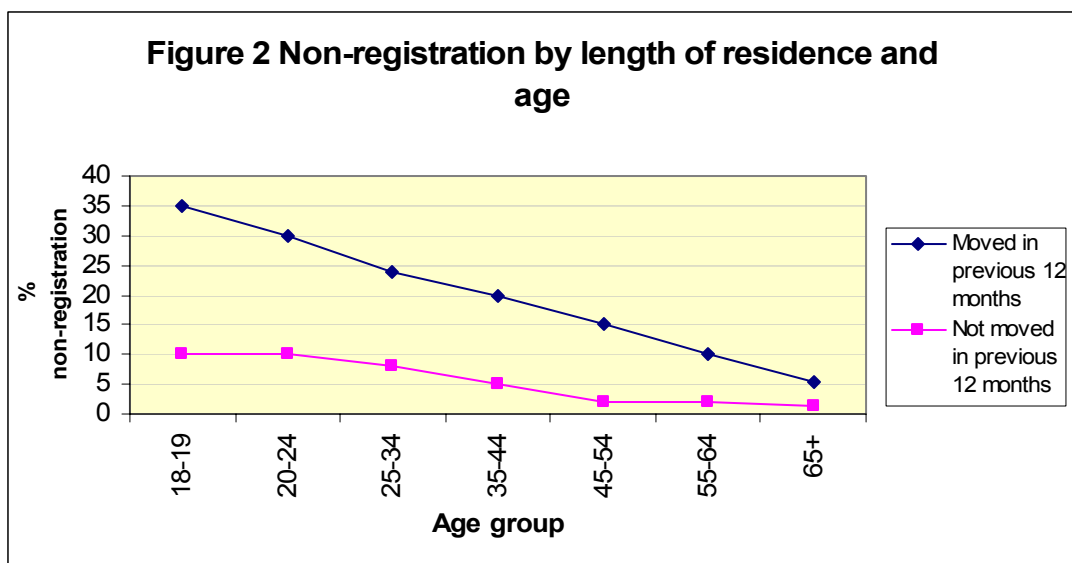
26. Tenure and length of residence were also found to have a marked effect on the level of non-registration. The effect of tenure is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Effect of tenure on registration	
Type of tenure	% not registered
Owner occupier	3-4
Rented or rent free accommodation	15
Rented from private landlord or letting agency	27
Rented from employer	19
Rented from local authority	10
Rented from Housing association	11
Rented from relative or friend	9

27. The effect of length of residence on non-registration is illustrated by the graph in Figure 1.



28. Further analysis by ONS showed that moving home increased the likelihood of non-registration among all age groups. This effect is illustrated by Figure 2.



29. ONS found that the level of non-registration varied with the level of educational achievement and ranged from 4% for people with a higher educational qualification below degree level to 8% among those with no qualifications.
30. ONS also found that people who were divorced, single or separated were more likely to be unregistered than those who were widowed or married (8-14% compared to 2-3%). Men in each category were more likely to be unregistered than women.
31. The composition of the household was also found likely to have an effect on registration and ONS found that in households containing two or more unrelated adults, the head of the household was much more likely to be registered than other eligible household members. Table 7 illustrates the level of registration that ONS found for household members.

Table 7 Non-registration by relationship to 'head of household'	
	% not registered
Single person households	
Head of household (sole member)	5
All other households	
Head of household	6
Spouse	3
Partner	13
Parent	6
Child	12
Other relative	18
Sharer	46
Lodger	42
Friend	39
Other non-relative	44

32. ONS looked at the level of non-registration by region and local authority type and found that as might be expected non-registration was highest in areas where there were large numbers of young people and large ethnic minority communities and where there were high levels of population mobility. ONS also compared registration rates with the indices for deprivation and again as might be expected found that areas with high levels of unemployment and income deprivation had high levels of non-registration.

The profile of non-registrants

33. Analysis carried out by ONS found that over half of all non-registrants came from just three groups. These were:

- Those living with their parents (particularly attainers)
- Those having moved within the six months prior to the qualifying date
- Those renting from private landlords

34. These three groups represented 19% of the ONS sample but accounted for 52% of non-registration in 2000. Adding people who were unrelated to their head of household, the unemployed, those receiving certain benefits, full time students, single people under the age of 30 and those who were divorced or separated increased the percentage of the sample to just over one third and the proportion of non-registration to just over 75%. Thus approximately one third of the sample accounted for over three quarters of the non-registrants.

35. Table 8 shows the contribution of each of the key groups to the level of non-registration. These figures are based on the ONS sample.

Table 8 Profile of non-registration	
Category	Estimated % of all non-registration
Being an attainer	8
Living with parents	19
Moved in 6 months prior to qualifying date	23
Renting from private landlord	21
Unrelated to head of household	10
Receiving certain benefits*	8
Being unemployed	7
Being single and under 30	38
Being a full time student	8
Being divorced or separated	14

- * includes people receiving unemployment/council tax/income support/housing benefit

Reasons for non-registration

36. The Electoral Commission's report suggests that people's reasons for non-registration may be either situational or attitudinal.
37. Situational reasons are those that relate to a person's individual and household situation and circumstances. Attitudinal reasons include the person's perception of the principles and practices of electoral registration and ultimately their attitudes towards voting and politics.
38. In 2004/5 MORI, working on behalf of the Electoral Commission asked a 'rolled' sample of 274 non-registrants why they were not registered. Table 9 shows the top five responses to the MORI question.

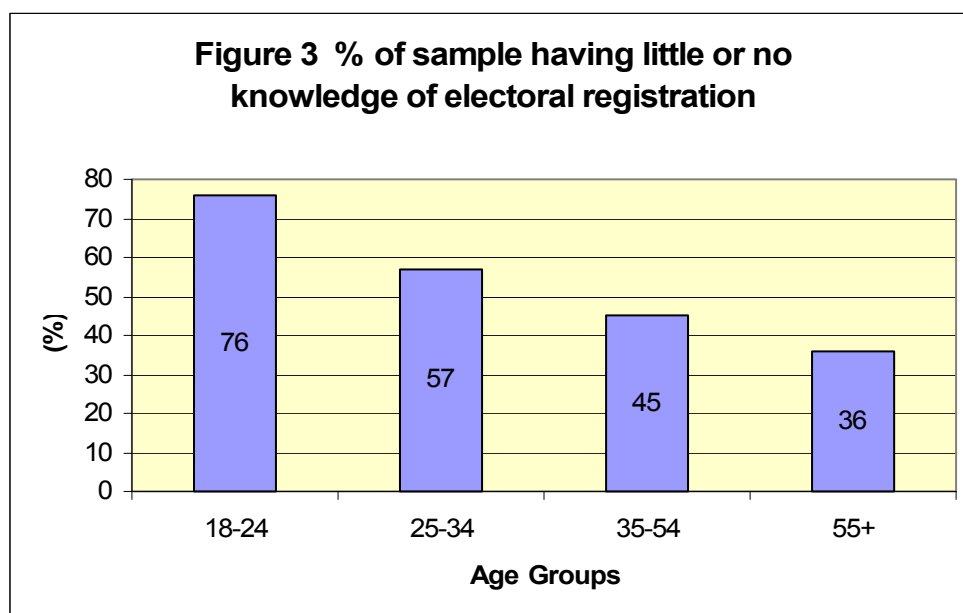
Table 9 Top five unprompted responses for non-registration MORI 2004/5	
I'm not eligible to vote	29%
I'm not interested in voting so there is no point in registering	14%
Have just moved house	10%
Haven't got round to it/will do it sometime	8%
Don't know how to do it/who to contact	6%

39. People's motivation to register was further explored by MORI in eight focus groups that they conducted for the EC in January and February 2005. These focus groups found a strong consensus that registration was a low priority and something of a hassle, and few non-registrants saw any particular advantage in becoming registered.
40. MORI used their research to develop seven different 'typologies' of non-registrants. These are listed in Table 10.

Table 10 'Typologies' of non-registrants – MORI research	
False Positives	Those who mistakenly believe that they are registered when, in all likelihood, they are not.
'Big Brother' phobics	Those who have a general suspicion of 'bureaucracy' or 'government' and are unwilling to provide their details.
Nervous of bureaucracy	Those who find the actual process of completing the forms daunting or off-putting.
Politically disengaged	Those who have a general lack of interest in politics and, as a result, see no point in registering or voting.
Politically hostile	Those who actively dislike politicians and politics and consequently wish to take no part in voting or registering to vote.
Recent movers	Those who have recently moved house but have not yet got around to completing a form.

Not got around to it	Those who say they simply have not got around to filling in a registration form.
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41. There also appears to be a lack of knowledge of the registration system with knowledge varying very much with age. This is illustrated in Figure 3 below.



42. MORI also found some misconceptions about registration which impacted in the following ways:

- ‘False positives’ think it necessary to register only when moving house or think registration is automatic or related to other processes such as payment of council tax.
- Some “‘Big Brother’ phobics’ are concerned about ‘junk mail’, but are unaware of the optout provision now available when registering to vote (see 3.24 below).
- Among ‘recent movers’, there is a low level of knowledge of rolling registration.
- Claimed non-registration is relatively high among 16–17-year-olds who might not be aware of their eligibility to register (as attainers).
- There is low awareness of the legal requirement to return registration forms.

Local Authorities’ experiences of non-registration

43. As part of the Electoral Commission’s investigation, evidence on the extent and nature of non-registration and the impact of administrative practice was collected from eight local authorities during December 2004 and January 2005. The eight local authorities were:

Cardiff County Council
Ceredigion County Council
Copeland Borough Council
Dundee City Council
Fife Council
Leeds City Council
The London Borough of Newham
Stevenage Borough Council.

44. These local authorities reported percentage rates of return of 'Form A' ranging from 75% to 99% and almost all said that there were significant variations in rates of return within their areas. Most of the eight authorities said that whilst it was relatively easy to identify which population groups were least likely to return their Form As, it was more difficult to see how best to tackle the non-registrants.
45. Most of the eight case study councils reported problems registering one or other (or several) of the following groups: students, people in inner city areas and people living in areas with a high percentage of rented accommodation. Leeds, in particular, were concerned about non-registration among students resulting from either low engagement or their being absent from term-time addresses during much of the annual canvass period.
46. Newham and Cardiff – two of the eight authorities with relatively high ethnic minority populations – did not think ethnicity was itself a cause of non-registration, but did recognise the increasing challenge of explaining the why and how of registration to those without English as a first language.
47. The eight authorities were however confident that they had in place adequate procedures to ensure that individuals could register if they wanted to.
48. Some of the initiatives taken by the eight authorities to encourage electoral registration among more hard-to-reach groups are listed in the following table.

Table 11 Local authority initiatives to encourage electoral registration

<p>Cardiff reported a Form A response rate of 93% following the 2004 annual canvass. The authority uses several methods in response to the challenges it faces in registering particular groups of people, including those who live in the inner city, mobile residents, students and those from minority ethnic communities. For example, registration is promoted through the universities at the beginning of term and information leaflets are distributed together with registration forms to travellers via site managers. In addition, the ERO works in partnership with the housing department who send out registration forms with council tax forms to new home movers.</p>	<p>Newham is an urban, diverse, multi-ethnic area of inner London and has a large electorate in the region of 172,000. The council reports higher non-registration in specific areas of the borough, especially where there is a high concentration of student accommodation, and particular challenges involved in raising public awareness and comprehension in an area where there are so many non-native English speakers. In response, the registration officer and her team use publicity, outreach and partnerships with community groups to raise public awareness of the registration process. Personal door-to-door canvassers are employed during the canvass period and the team work closely with council departments</p>
<p>Ceredigion, a rural authority in Wales, had a 93% response rate during the last canvass. While registration rates are fairly consistent across the authority area, they are thought to be lower in areas with a mobile population (people living in flats and bedsits) and among students living in halls of residence (the University of Aberystwyth is situated in Ceredigion). According to the authority, notices in newspapers and advertisements on the radio have proved to be successful tools for maximising registration rates.</p>	<p>Dundee reported an 85% response rate, but aimed to increase this in future through the use of personal canvassers. The authority reports particular difficulties in registering the sizeable number of students in the area – especially as they are a mobile population and tend to live in multiple occupation dwellings – and uses a number of different methods to tackle non-registration. These have included obtaining a list of 16–17-year-old attainers from the council's education department, and information from housing associations, local solicitors, private landlords and the council tax department to target new home movers.</p>

<p>Stevenage in the south of England has an electorate of about 57,000 people and secured a 92% response rate following the last canvass. The council report that an original 75% response rate was boosted to 92% following a systematic cross-check of the register against council tax records, including housing lists. Additional initiatives designed to boost registration rates have included promotional events, working closely with local community groups and issuing schools with registration forms for attainees.</p>	<p>Fife in the east of Scotland had an initial 82% response rate, which was boosted to 92% through the use of council records. The council's ERO identified two important obstacles to registration: people not wanting others to know their personal details, or simply assuming that they were automatically registered. In an attempt to boost registration rates, the council has held publicity drives, including the use of specifically designed posters and leaflets, registration forms on the council website, media releases, bookmarks and adverts in cinema magazines. In addition, they receive information from the council's education service in relation to 16- and 17-year-olds, and student information from the local universities. The council's housing service also issues registration forms to new tenants on the ERO's behalf.</p>
<p>Leeds had a response rate of 93% in 2004. The authority has found that inner city areas tend to have lower registration rates, in part, related to a concentration of minority ethnic and student populations. The latter are particularly difficult to register given the difficulties created by not knowing if they are registered at home, rather than term-time, addresses. The electoral registration team use a variety of methods to promote registration, including advertising, events and partnership working with local community groups, and also work closely with other council departments and local authorities.</p>	<p>Copeland is an authority in rural Cumbria and had a 99% response rate to the 2004 canvass – 85% of Form As were returned initially, but reminders from door-to-door canvassers boosted this figure. It is thought that younger people are less inclined to register – especially if they live in multiple occupancy younger households – but the authority's ERO thought that the desire to obtain credit often prompted registration. In addition to using personal canvassers, Copeland have found that working with other council departments and sharing best practice with other local authorities helps to maximise registration rates.</p>

DRR 13 February 2007.