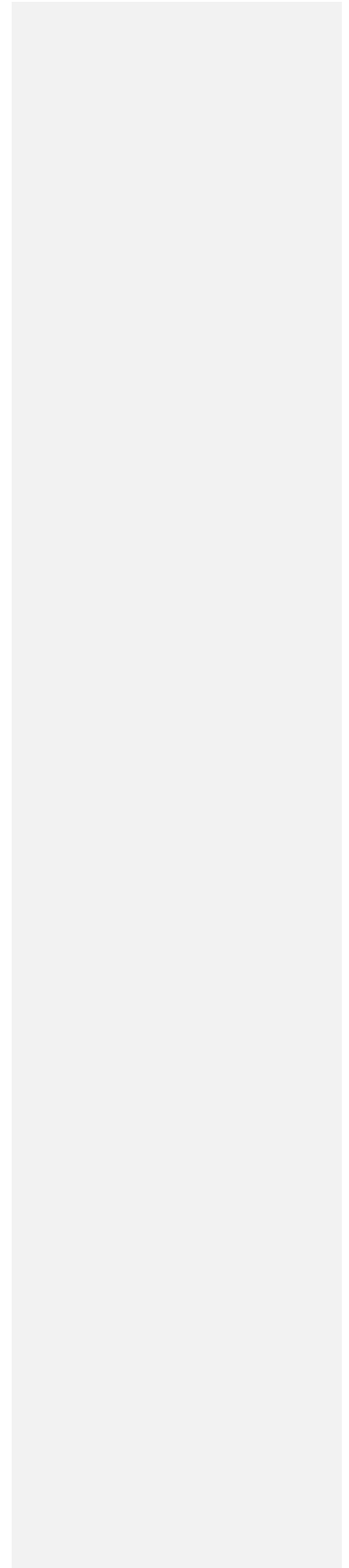


Part B – Planning and Organisation

**Scottish Independence Referendum
Guidance for Counting Officers**



Translations and other formats

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please [contact](#)

Comment [A1]: Arrangements for producing other formats need to be made.

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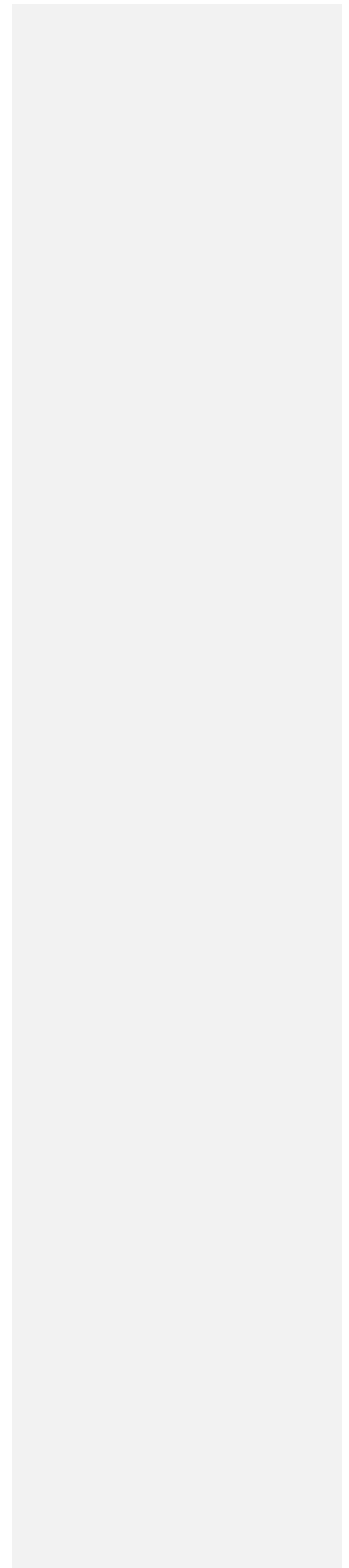
8 Accredited observers and Electoral Commission representatives

Appendices

Appendix A (1) Project Plan (Word)
Appendix A (2). Project Plan (Excel)

Comment [A2]: Are these appendices practical – especially the Excel ones?

Appendix B (1)	Risk Register (Word)
Appendix B (2)	Risk Register (Excel)
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1 Planning for the Referendum

Project Plan

- 1.1 At an early stage, it is essential to prepare a project plan then to treat it as a “living document” and keep it under regular review, using it to monitor progress and to inform the development of your lessons learned report.

To demonstrate that you have met the performance standard, you must provide the Chief Counting Officer with confirmation that your project plan includes all of the criteria as outlined in the performance standard. Further guidance on each of the criteria is provided throughout this part of the guidance.

Comment [A3]: Insert name and number of performance standard. This section will need to be fully revised when the new PSs come out.

- 1.2 The Chief Counting Officer has produced a template project plan that you may wish to use and adapt to fit your local circumstances. This template follows the previous style used by the Commission and forms Appendix A (1) to this part of the Guidance. We have also produced an Excel version of the project plan (Appendix A (2)). The template includes a number of deliverables and tasks which are key to the successful administration of the referendum. In addition to the deliverables and tasks identified in the template, you should include any other deliverables and tasks you identify as necessary, including ones specific to your local circumstances. It is not a requirement for you to use this particular template to meet the standard as long as your own plan contains all of the requirements outlined in the standard.

Comment [A4]: Insert hyperlink

Comment [A5]: Insert hyperlink

- 1.3 Before starting your detailed planning, you should set out what you want to achieve and what success would look like. Your project plan must include clearly defined objectives and success measures. As part of the project plan, the Chief Counting Officer has provided some sample aims and suggested tools that will allow you to measure the extent to which the conduct of the referendum has been successful.

- 1.4 If you have not already done so, you should conduct a review of previous electoral events to identify what worked well and what did not, which should assist with informing your planning. Further guidance on reviewing procedures can be found in Part F – After the declaration of results.

Comment [A6]: Insert hyperlink

- 1.5 Your project plan for the referendum must include a plan to evaluate procedures post-referendum and to identify lessons learned. In addition, you must, at the next

electoral event, produce a lessons learned document. This document should also inform the planning of any future election or referendum.

- 1.6 Your project plan must cover contingency planning and business continuity arrangements. The continuity arrangements should include provisions to cover loss of staff and loss of venues during the referendum period. Advice on developing continuity arrangements for these specific processes is provided in the relevant sections throughout this part of the guidance.
- 1.7 Your project plan must also identify the resources required. You should take all necessary steps to ensure that your local authority makes the necessary resources available to you to enable you to carry out your functions.
- 1.8 The Chief Counting Officer has published a **timetable** containing the statutory deadlines as set out in the **referendum rules** which can be used to inform your planning.

Comment [A7]: Insert hyperlink

Comment [A8]: Check reference – insert hyperlink if possible

Risk Register

- 1.9 You must prepare a risk register, treat it as a “living document” and keep it under regular review, using it to identify and monitor risks and to document any changes in risk, as well as ensuring that mitigating actions are identified and are being taken forward as appropriate.

To demonstrate that you have met the performance **standard**, you must provide the Chief Counting Officer with a comprehensive risk register taking into account the requirements of paras 1.10 and 1.11 below.

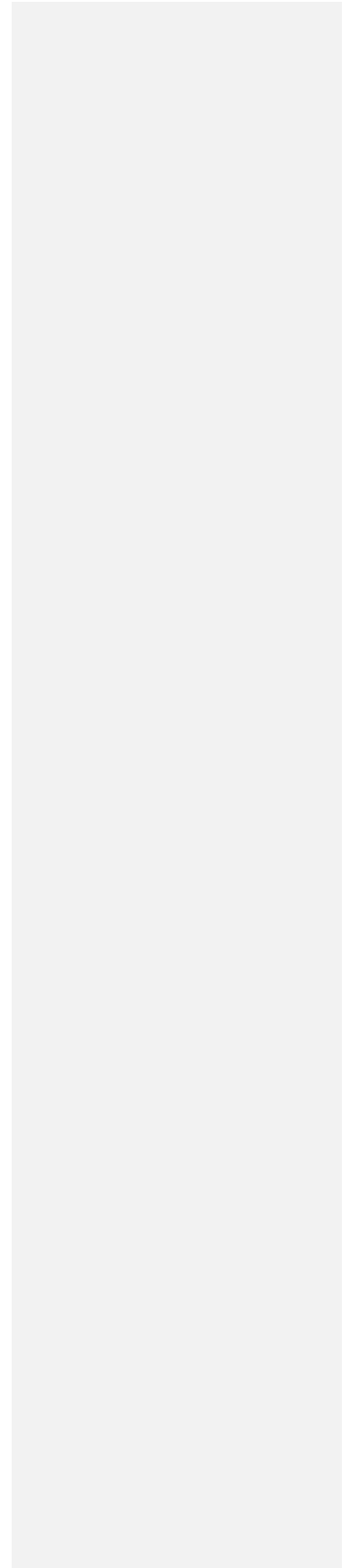
Comment [A9]: Insert number of standard if appropriate

- 1.10 Your risk register should identify the following:-
 - Any difficulties and problems that may occur and the actions taken to mitigate them
 - The seriousness of any risk by indicating both the likelihood of the risk occurring and the impact of the risk if it did occur
- 1.11 The Chief Counting Officer has developed a **template risk register** that you may wish to use. The template follows the previous style used by the Commission and forms Appendix B (1) to this Part of the Guidance. We have also produced an **Excel version of the template risk register** -(Appendix B (2)). The template provides some example

Comment [A10]: Insert hyperlink

Comment [A11]: Insert hyperlink

risks and suggestions for mitigating those risks. In addition to the risks identified in the template, you should also identify any other risks, including ones specific to your local circumstances and how you would mitigate those. It is not a requirement to use this particular template as long as your own risk register identifies the requirements as outlined in the standard.



2 Staffing

- 2.1 Your plan must include identification of staffing requirements, including any necessary recruitment arrangements. It is essential that you identify the staff you will need and make the necessary appointments at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.2 You should seek advice from your council's human resources department as necessary to ensure that the methods used to identify, recruit and employ staff are robust and comply with all legal requirements.
- 2.3 Following an assessment of the performance of staff used at previous electoral events, you may wish to write to staff used previously at an early stage in the planning process to check their availability. You can use your experience of staffing at the European Parliamentary Elections to inform your recruitment process for the referendum, while taking into account that the turnout at the referendum will almost certainly be much higher and that additional staff will be needed.

Project team

- 2.4 You should establish a project team to support you in carrying out your functions and in delivering a well-run referendum. In addition to yourself, your project team should include:
 - any appointed deputies
 - other referendum office team members
 - the Electoral Registration Officer or a senior representative from his/her office
- 2.5 Your project team should also include any other key personnel as appropriate.
- 2.6 The project team should have a clear remit and understanding of the tasks to be carried out. At the planning stage, a schedule of meetings should be prepared and a record of each meeting should be kept as an audit trail of what was discussed and of any decisions made

Deputes

- 2.7 You should make early arrangements to appoint deputes in case you are unable to act personally as Counting Officer. You will need to ensure that any deputes appointed have the skills and knowledge required to carry out the functions that they have been assigned. You are required by law to make any such appointment in writing and to include details of the functions that the depute is authorised to exercise on your behalf. The acceptance should also be made in writing. The Forms Working Group has developed styles for these letters and they can be accessed on the EMB website.

Comment [A12]: Insert hyperlink

Referendum Team

- 2.8 The referendum team, with their experience of running electoral events, should be part of the project team. Based on experience of previous electoral events and taking account of the likely workload at the referendum, you should assess whether the team is adequately staffed and whether you will need to recruit any additional members to support the effective delivery of the referendum.

The Electoral Registration Officer

- 2.9 If you are not also the Electoral Registration Officer, you will need to liaise closely with that officer to obtain the relevant registration and absent voting data. If there is a need for exchanging data electronically, you should agree the timings for the exchange of data and ensure that a test of the process is carried out ahead of the first scheduled transfer.
- 2.10 The Electoral Registration Officer should consider whether any additional support staff will be needed to assist with the processing of registration and absent vote applications in the lead-up to the referendum.

Support staff

- 2.11 You should identify staff and ensure they are available and adequately informed to assist with any public enquiries you may receive in the run-up to the referendum. You should set up a dedicated team (and/or train front reception or call centre staff) to deal with a range of basic enquiries, such as questions about whether a person is registered to vote, postal and proxy voting and the location of polling places.

2.12 Any staff dealing with public enquiries should receive training to equip them to handle the enquiries effectively and should be provided with responses to frequently asked questions, as well as a list of the locations of polling places and key dates in the referendum timetable. The Chief Counting Officer has developed a template of FAQs for front line staff which you can adapt to fit your local circumstances. This template forms Appendix C to this Part of the Guidance. A process should be in place for the escalation of more complex enquiries to the referendum team.

Comment [A13]: Insert hyperlink

Staff for specific referendum processes

2.13 As well as establishing your project team and support staff, you will need to appoint staff to help you undertake the various referendum processes. You should identify staffing requirements and put processes in place for recruiting the necessary staff. You should have access to a database of staff used at previous electoral events. Staff can be recruited from among council employees. Local authorities can permit their staff to undertake this kind of role at the referendum, but they are not required to do so.

Comment [A14]: Check how this conflicts with the duty to provide support to the CO?

Polling station staff

2.14 You have a legal duty to appoint and pay a Presiding Officer and such Poll Clerks as may be necessary to staff each polling station. This cannot, by law, be any person who has been employed as part of a campaign at the referendum.

2.15 You must ensure that, when allocating electors and staff to polling stations, you implement any directions made by the Chief Counting Officer or guidance issued by her.

2.16 The Chief Counting Officer has decided that it should be left to the discretion of local Counting Officers to decide on the number of voters to assign to any polling station and on the number of staff for each station.

Comment [A15]: What will the CCO decide? This whole para may need alteration

2.17 In making these decisions, it is important that Counting Officers give careful consideration to the likely footfall in the polling station at peak hours and the ability of the staff to cope with the volume of electors at these times. It is essential to build in sufficient flexibility to ensure that electors have a positive experience of polling and that there are no avoidable delays.

Comment [A16]: May require complete rewrite depending on CCO decision

2.18 It is important that, when allocating electors and staff to polling stations, the reasoning behind the decisions on allocation can be explained. You must be able to

Comment [A17]: May also require amendment depending on whether CCO directs or issues guidance.

provide details of your approach to allocating electors and staff to polling stations. Each decision should be taken on a case by case basis and not for the local authority area as a whole.

2.19 In deciding on the allocation of electors and staff to polling stations, you should consider:-

- expected turnout levels – high turnout levels have been predicted for the referendum and the levels appropriate for the most recent electoral event – the European Parliamentary Elections – are very unlikely to be adequate for a high level of turnout.
- any particular local circumstances
- any local or national issues which may affect turnout

To demonstrate that you have met performance **standard** you must provide the Chief Counting Officer with details of the reasoning behind your staffing levels at polling stations. You should also analyse the effectiveness of your strategy for the lessons learned document.

Comment [A18]: Insert number if this is applicable

2.20 There are different options available to you for deploying staff within polling stations. Your plans should be sufficiently flexible to allow you to deploy staff to respond to specific issues that may arise throughout polling day.

Example

Comment [A19]: construct this example on the basis of the CCOs decision.

2.21 If practical and feasible within your budget, you could consider appointing a small number of “stand-by” staff to respond to staffing emergencies. Where your local authority covers a large geographical area, you will have to consider the best location for these staff to ensure that they can be flexibly deployed.

2.22 You may also consider appointing part-time Poll Clerks to provide assistance at peak polling hours or in the run up to the close of poll. In addition, you could appoint a team of back-up polling staff to be deployed at peak times to specific polling stations or to respond to specific issues that may arise throughout polling day. If parts of the local authority area are not easily accessible, it may be helpful to have teams positioned in different parts of the area.

- 2.23 To be able to deploy staff flexibly on polling day, staff will need to receive appropriate training. Further guidance on training can be found **below**.

Comment [A20]: Make reference more specific and hyperlink

Polling station inspectors

- 2.24 Polling station inspectors play an important role in the effective management of polls, including dealing with queries and problems arising at polling stations. You should make arrangements to appoint polling station inspectors to visit and inspect polling stations on your behalf on polling day. You should have at least one polling station inspector for every **15 polling places**. Polling station inspectors should ensure that all their assigned polling stations are properly set up in such a way as to take account of voter needs and to contribute to the smooth running of the polling place and are equipped and accessible to all voters.

Comment [A21]: Based on what? Consult with COs? Should this number be reduced because of the referendum?

- 2.25 Polling station inspectors provide an essential communication link between polling staff and the Counting Officer. The polling station inspector should work with the Presiding Officers and other polling station staff to identify and deal with any problems arising and should escalate any issues to the Counting Officer or nominated deputy as appropriate.
- 2.26 The polling station inspector may be involved in liaising with the Electoral Registration Office about polling day amendments to the polling list and emergency proxy applications. In these instances, you should have a process in place for communicating any changes and should advise polling station inspectors of their role in it, if any.
- 2.27 Polling station inspectors should aim to visit all their allocated polling stations as early as possible after the poll opens so that they can reassure you that all the stations are operating effectively. You should plan the routes for polling station inspectors to enable them to visit particularly large or problematic polling places at an early stage.
- 2.28 Subsequent visits throughout the day can be used for a variety of purposes including collecting postal votes, answering any questions that polling staff may have, checking that all notices remain properly displayed and delivering any missing or additional equipment required. Polling station inspectors should therefore carry with them spare equipment and stationery in case of any shortages or missing items. This should include polling station handbooks and quick guides, **ballot papers**, equipment, stationery and other items such as forms, envelopes and copies of the polling lists. In some cases, the polling station inspector may be asked to deliver cheques and collect receipts for the payment of polling staff.

Comment [A22]: Is it secure for inspectors to carry spare ballot papers and CNLs?

2.29 You should provide polling station inspectors with instructions as to their role and a checklist of tasks that they should carry out. A template checklist has been produced by the Forms Group for the Chief Counting Officer. This document also contains a list of items that the polling station inspector should receive prior to polling day.

Comment [A23]: Hyperlink Add an appendix?

2.30 Beyond highlighting any issues, the completed checklists can also be used to inform an evaluation of the suitability of polling places as part of the post-referendum review process.

Postal vote issue and opening staff

2.31 You should identify staffing requirements for your postal vote issue and opening sessions. The following staff may be required:

- specially trained supervisory staff
- clerical staff
- IT staff

2.32 You should take into account the total number of current postal voters and projected turnout of postal voters when deciding on your staffing arrangements. You should use your lessons learned document to assess how robust your staffing assumptions were at previous electoral events. For planning purposes at the referendum, turnout is likely to be higher than the most recent electoral event, so staffing levels, or the number of sessions will almost certainly require to be increased.


2.33 This assessment may need to be revised after you have received the final postal voters' lists from the Electoral Registration Officer. In any event, you should build sufficient flexibility and contingency into your staffing arrangements to deal with a last-minute increase in numbers of postal voters, an unexpected increase in turnout or varying volumes of postal votes being returned on different days.

2.34 Where you outsource all or part of the postal vote issuing process, you must designate a member of the project team to monitor outsourced work and specifically to attend those parts of the issuing process that have been contracted out. This person should monitor the work of the contractor, carrying out tasks such as spot checks to ensure that the postal ballot packs are being correctly collated and that overseas postal votes are being prioritised. Further guidance on managing contractors and suppliers can be found in Section 5 below.

Comment [A24]: hyperlink

2.35 How the verification of personal identifiers is to be carried out, including how much of this process is automated and how much of it needs to be done manually, will impact on the number of staff you will require for opening returned postal votes. You must have arrangements in place to enable the checking of 100% of all postal vote identifiers.

Comment [A25]: not statutory requirement. Will this be a direction, or by agreement? Modify accordingly.

 Further guidance on postal vote issue and opening processes are provided in [Part D – Absent Voting](#).

Comment [A26]: Hyperlink

Count staff

2.36 You should identify the number and type of staff you will require to run your verification and count and make the necessary appointments as soon as possible. You must put appropriate resources in place to ensure the verification and count are efficient and timely.


To demonstrate that you have met the [performance standard](#), you must provide the Chief Counting Officer with the total number of verification and count staff.

Comment [A27]: Check whether this is still appropriate when PStandards come out

2.37 [The Chief Counting Officer, after consultation with Counting Officers, has decided that the count will be held ??????.](#) [For an overnight count, you should, wherever possible, not use staff at the count who have already been on polling station duty.](#) [day.](#)

Comment [A28]: To be agreed – consultation to take place. Amend after consultation

Comment [A29]: If not overnight count, delete

 Guidance on the management of the verification and count processes is contained in [Part E – Verifying and counting the votes](#).

Comment [A30]: hyperlink

3 Training

- 3.1 Effective training is an essential component of a well-run electoral event. Your project plan must contain a plan for training which identifies the training needs of both permanent and temporary staff.
- 3.2 While training activities for temporary staff may not take place until shortly before the referendum, planning for those activities should start at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.3 It is vital that each member of the team, whether permanent or temporary, understands their particular role and any statutory obligations associated with the work they are undertaking. All staff should receive training on the legislative requirements and responsibilities relevant to their respective roles, as well as training on ensuring equal access and good customer care.
- 3.4 You should also develop methods of evaluating the training sessions and materials in order to inform future planning. If you have training personnel within your local authority they may be able to assist you with this process.

Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and polling station inspectors

- 3.5 Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and other front line staff are frequently the only members of your staff that voters will meet in person. It is therefore essential that such staff are trained to understand their role, to perform their duties professionally and effectively and to be able to provide a high standard of customer care. It is important for such staff to be able to communicate well with all voters and so accessibility issues should be covered in training sessions for all external facing staff.
- 3.6 All polling station staff should be required to attend a face-to-face training session. The training session should address:
 - the tasks to be carried out ahead of polling day
 - the setting up and management of the polling station
 - the persons who can attend a polling station and the procedures to be followed on polling day itself
 - the need for polling station staff to be customer-focused and to offer assistance to all voters, including voters with disabilities

- the security of referendum stationery, including returned postal votes
- the procedures to be followed at close of poll
- health and safety issues: and
- dealing with emergencies

3.7 The Chief Counting Officer has produced a [template PowerPoint briefing for polling station staff](#) which can be used for your polling station staff training sessions, updated with any additional local information you consider necessary. The Chief Counting Officer has also produced a [quiz for polling station staff](#) and [role play exercises and scenarios](#) that you can use as a mechanism for testing and embedding learning.

Comment [A31]: [hyperlink](#)

Comment [A32]: [hyperlink](#)

Comment [A33]: [hyperlink](#)

3.8 Additionally, given the importance of ensuring that the ballot paper accounts are completed correctly in order to provide an audit trail of the number of ballot papers issued and to provide the foundation for an accurate verification process, the Chief Counting Officer has developed an [exercise for completing the ballot paper accounts](#) which you can use at your training sessions.

Comment [A34]: [hyperlink](#)

3.9 The Chief Counting Officer has also developed a [template graphical guide to packaging materials at close of poll](#) which you could adapt and provide to polling station staff.

Comment [A35]: [hyperlink](#)

3.10 For flexible resourcing to be able to work effectively, you should train Poll Clerks and Presiding Officers in such a way as to ensure that each has the technical knowledge to carry out the other's role if required and as far as the law permits.

3.11 Polling station inspectors should receive the same training as polling station staff in order for them to be able to be deployed flexibly and to carry out polling station duties if required. You should also provide an additional briefing for polling station inspectors, covering items that are specific to their role. [The Forms Working Group has provided a style for this kind of briefing which can be adapted to suit local circumstances.](#)

Comment [A36]: [hyperlink](#)

3.12 Both polling station staff and polling station inspectors should be given a copy of the Chief Counting Officer's [handbook for polling station staff](#) and the [polling station quick guide](#) and be instructed to read these ahead of polling day and to bring their copies with them on polling day itself. Polling station inspectors should be given spare copies of the handbook and quick guide that they can provide to polling stations in the event of polling staff forgetting to take their copies on polling day.

Comment [A37]: [Hyperlink](#). Also – check printing arrangements for this and for quick guide.

Comment [A38]: [hyperlink](#)

- 3.13 In addition, you should provide polling station staff and inspectors with contact numbers for use in the event of any problems arising. As well as the numbers for the referendum office and for the technical service who will respond to any physical problems in the polling places, this should include a contact number for the police.

Postal vote issue and opening staff

- 3.14 You should make arrangements for the briefing of all postal vote issue and opening staff. Briefings on the particular procedures to be followed may be provided to postal vote issue and opening staff immediately before the start of the issuing or opening processes. All staff should, however, be provided with guidance notes in advance.
- 3.15 Also, you should consider training supervisory staff a day or two in advance of the issuing or opening session so that they are fully aware of their duties and what will be expected of them.
- 3.16 Whether you are issuing in-house or have contracted out of the issuing of postal votes, you should ensure that supervisory staff are appropriately trained to carry out the required quality assurance checks.
- 3.17 Supervisory staff at postal vote openings should be trained to ensure that the opening procedures and verification process are correctly followed and an audit trail is maintained.
- 3.18 Any person who will be undertaking the verification of postal vote identifiers and has been delegated the authority by you to make decisions on postal voting statements should be provided with a copy of the [Electoral Commission and Forensic Science Service guidance on signature checking](#) and be instructed to follow it. The guidance has been endorsed by the Scottish Police Services Authority Forensic Services. Additionally, the Forensic Science Service offer training on signature checking which anyone undertaking this role may wish to attend.

Comment [A39]: hyperlink. Presumably we don't need to produce a CCO version? Should this be mentioned?

Verification and count staff

- 3.19 You should make arrangements for the briefing of all verification and count staff. In general, you should consider training, or providing refresher training, for supervisory staff a day or two in advance of the verification and count to ensure that they are fully aware of their duties and what will be expected of them

- 3.20 Briefings for counting staff, porters, security staff and door attendants may be held just before the start of the relevant proceedings. They should, however, be issued with guidance notes in advance. All such briefings should, as a minimum, cover the procedures relevant to the respective roles. They should also cover any policy on eating, drinking and the use of mobile phones, as well as health and safety. In particular, staff should be briefed on the correct procedures for moving ballot boxes and carrying heavy sacks in order to reduce the risk of any injuries.
- 3.21 Before the start of the verification and count, you should undertake a walk-through of the procedures you are expecting everyone to follow – from the receipt of ballot boxes up to the declaration of the result, so that everyone is aware of what is expected of them at each stage and of how the different roles relate to each other.

4 Venues

- 4.1 Your project plan must cover the identification of suitable venues for all processes.
- 4.2 Identifying appropriate venues for all of the various referendum activities should be done as early as possible. The managers of these premises should be contacted at an early stage and informed of the relevant dates and the necessary booking arrangements made. These activities, carried out at an early stage in the planning process, will highlight where venues are not available and should allow sufficient time to act on the information and identify alternative premises.
- 4.3 As part of your review of previous electoral events, you should have undertaken an evaluation of the suitability of venues used. The results of this should be used to inform your planning and to ensure that any identified barriers to access can be overcome.
- 4.4 Under the Equality Act 2010, service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid putting people with disabilities at a substantial disadvantage compared to people who are not disabled. In order to comply with this duty, you should work closely with people who have a particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people. The equalities officer at your local authority should be able to provide you with advice and assistance.
- 4.5 Contingency arrangements should be put in place for all venues to address the risk of the loss of a venue. You should prepare a list of alternative venues, including making arrangements, if necessary, for the use of stand-by portable polling places/mobile vehicles and alternative venues for the issue and opening of postal votes and the verification and count. Staff should be briefed on contingency arrangements, for example, in the case of a loss of a polling place on polling day, they could be advised to set up a temporary polling place in their car until alternative arrangements can be made. You should ensure that any changes made to venue location are communicated to candidates, agents, electors and any others as appropriate.

Comment [A40]: I changed from polling station as in EC version

Comment [A41]: note – changed from polling station

Comment [A42]: Insert note about who approves polling places?

Comment [A43]: Insert definition to make clear which is which and who sets which

Polling places and stations

- 4.6 It is important to know the difference between a polling place and a polling station. A polling place is the location (such as a school or church hall) in which polling is carried out. A polling station is the particular location within a polling place where

voters cast their votes. This being the case, a polling place can contain one or more polling stations.

4.7 It is the local authority which designates polling places. The Counting Officer, however, decides on the number and location of polling stations within each polling place.

4.8 At an early stage, you should prepare a timeline for the preparation of a list of proposed polling places and the procedures necessary to obtain approval from your council, including time for any local consultations. You should also plan to obtain approval, such as delegated authority, for last-minute changes to polling places in emergencies. It is very important not to underestimate the time that this exercise will take.

Comment [A44]: Check competence of delegation

4.9 You should undertake an evaluation of the suitability of the polling places you are intending to use.

4.10 Ideally, you will have a choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for electors in the area, with owners willing to hire them out for polling station use at low cost. Unfortunately, in practice, this is often not the case and in some areas there may be little choice available.

4.11 When making arrangements for polling places and the stations within them you must consider access needs.

4.12 You should work closely with people who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises. You should be able to demonstrate that an assessment has been conducted of the polling places and stations to be used at the referendum. Where access problems exist, you should document the problems, identify potential improvements and record any action taken to try to remedy these problems.

To demonstrate that you have met performance standard, you must provide the Chief Counting Officer with confirmation that you have considered access needs when making arrangements for polling places and stations and that you have identified and taken actions to remedy any problems.

Comment [A45]: Amend to correspond with new perf standards

4.13 Schools that are publicly-funded may be used as polling places free of charge and the legislation allows you to require rooms in such schools for use as polling stations. You are also entitled to use, free of charge, any publicly-funded room as a polling station. You will, however, need to pay for any lighting, heating etc. costs incurred when using such rooms for this purpose. You must also meet the cost of rectifying

any damage to the polling place or its facilities caused by taking the poll there. You should liaise with your council's Education Service and other managers of publicly-funded rooms at the earliest opportunity to confirm that you want to use the facilities as polling places.

- 4.14 It is essential that polling stations provide sufficient space for voting to take place.



Further information on polling station voting, including polling station set-up, can be found in [Part C – Administering the poll](#).

Comment [A46]: hyperlink

Last-minute changes to polling places and stations

- 4.15 There may be circumstances (e.g. flooding, fire, vandalism) when a change of polling place or station may be required at short notice. As part of your planning, you should compile a list of stand-by or portable polling places that could be used in such circumstances. As local authorities are responsible for designating polling places and polling districts, you should designate a new polling station within the same polling place as far as is possible and practical. As the location of a polling station within a polling place is your responsibility, there is no need to seek council approval for such a change.
- 4.16 If, however, there is a need to change the polling place, council agreement will be required. If delegation procedures are in place, you should follow these and contact the person or persons who are entitled to make changes to the scheme of polling places.
- 4.17 You should amend the notice of referendum relative to the situation of polling stations to reflect any changes.
- 4.18 There are a number of mitigating measures you can take to ensure that electors who are affected by a late change to a [polling place](#) are able to vote with minimum disruption. You should have a protocol to follow in case of a last-minute change. As a minimum, you should:

- if time allows, send out a letter to all affected electors informing them of the change to their polling place
- if time allows, use the local media to disseminate information to the affected electors – for example, through issuing press releases
- put up signs at the old polling place informing electors about the change and including directions to the new one

Comment [A47]: think about adding a paragraph if you make last minute changes to a polling station

- display clear and visible signage at the new polling place; and
- ensure that all polling staff appointed to that polling place are aware of the change of location, including the polling place inspector.

4.19 Where the change is to a polling station within a pre-existing polling place rather than the polling place itself, the procedure is simpler. You should check that the new location offers adequate accommodation for the polling station and that its location is clearly signed (this is particularly important for voters who are used to voting in the same room at every electoral event). You should brief the Presiding Officer No 1 and ensure that all the staff appointed to the polling place are aware of the change of location, including the polling place inspector.

Postal vote issue and opening venues

4.20 You should take into account the following key factors when selecting venues for postal vote issuing and opening sessions:-

- lessons learned from previous electoral events
- intended workflows
- IT requirements
- security and storage requirements
- disabled access, both to and within the venues
- accommodation for observers and for agents where permitted



Guidance on the layout of postal vote issue and opening venues can be found in [Part D – Absent voting](#).

Comment [A48]: [hyperlink](#)

Verification and count venue

4.21 You should consider the following points when selecting the venue for your verification and count:-

- lessons learned from previous electoral events
- size of the venue taking into account the space required to conduct the verification and count processes, sufficient storage space for parcels, ballot boxes and other equipment and adequate space for those entitled to attend and observe proceedings at the event
- access arrangements for vehicles and parking

- entrances for those entitled to attend and for staff
- secure entrance and delivery route for ballot boxes
- disabled access, both to and within the venue
- lighting within the venue
- platform or stage for announcing the results and for making regular announcements throughout the proceedings
- acoustics within the venue
- internal and external IT and communication systems
- facilities for those attending the count
- media requirements
- furniture requirements (if there are insufficient tables and chairs in the venue, for example, these will need to be acquired from another location or hired for the event)
- security and storage requirements
- contingency arrangements to address the risk of a loss of venue



Guidance on key factors to be considered when laying out the verification and count venues can be found in [Part E – Verifying and counting the votes.](#)

Comment [A49]: [hyperlink](#)

5 Managing contractors and suppliers

- 5.1 You can outsource particular work required to deliver the referendum, but not the responsibility for ensuring compliance with the rules and regulations.
- 5.2 Do not automatically assume that outsourcing is your only and best option. Your project plan must include an assessment of the need to outsource. Your decision should be taken as part of an assessment of the costs, risks and benefits of outsourcing work, as compared to in-house delivery by your staff. Your review of previous electoral events and consideration of the specific requirements for the referendum will help to inform your decision as to whether you outsource a particular function or task.
- 5.3 If outsourcing is considered appropriate, your project plan must cover the management of contractors and suppliers and the development and management of contracts.

Procurement

- 5.4 Where a decision has been made to outsource, you should start the procurement process as early as possible. Your local authority will have adopted standing orders or regulations relating to procurement and contracts. You should take advice from relevant staff at your authority on the procedures to be followed and the legal requirements for procuring supplies and services. All stages of the procurement process should be documented and the risks of outsourcing should be clearly acknowledged, with contingency arrangements identified and built into the process.
- 5.5 Good public procurement practice recommends obtaining at least three written quotations from prospective suppliers. Some local authorities may, however, have a standing list of approved contractors who have already been through a tendering process and in some instances it may be more effective and economical to use such existing contractors and systems.
- 5.6 The Chief Counting Officer has produced **contract management advice** designed to highlight key considerations relevant to outsourcing work and managing contracts.

Comment [A50]:

Comment [A51]: in the EC guidance, this is not a checklist but an advice document. Would a checklist be preferable?

- 5.7 A detailed specification of requirements is essential for effective procurement and should be developed for all outsourced work. Suppliers should be able to provide robust information on how they are going to deliver the work as required by the specification.
- 5.8 When evaluating the bids received, the final price in the suppliers' proposals should not be the only consideration in choosing a contractor. The focus should be on "value for money", with the final decision being a judgment based on the best combination of the cost of the goods or service and the ability to meet your requirements as set out in the specification. Work needs to be completed on time and to a high standard and therefore each bid should be carefully considered to assess exactly what it offers.
- 5.9 You should take steps to ensure that the selected contractor understands the requirements and has the experience and suitability to undertake the work being outsourced. The Chief Counting Officer's advice on [contract management](#) sets out the minimum steps you should take to be satisfied that the company will have the capacity to complete any contracted work on time and to the standard required.
- 5.10 Contractors may sub-contract work and you should give prior written consent before sub-contractors are used. You should ensure that any sub-contractors are aware of the specific requirements as detailed in the specification.
- 5.11 Once you have made your final decision, you should notify unsuccessful applicants and be prepared to debrief them should they request it.
- 5.12 You should have a formal, written contract in place with every contractor to whom you have outsourced a function or task. It is essential that statutory requirements and their implications are fully explained wherever contractors are used and that these requirements are explicitly stated in the contract for any work. Contracts should be developed with advice from other departments of the local authority, such as legal services and procurement. Experienced managers in these fields can be used to ensure that appropriate and rigorous procurement and contract management procedures are followed, thereby minimising risk.
- 5.13 [Scotland Excel](#) provides guidance and good practice advice on all aspects of procurement.

Comment [A52]: [hyperlink](#)

Comment [A53]: [hyperlink](#)

Contract management

- 5.14 The key to effective contract management is having continuous and open lines of communication with the contractor, underpinned by clear and robust provisions in the contract as to the quality and timescales expected and required.
- 5.15 In order to assist contractors and suppliers in delivering the work on time, it is essential to keep to agreed timescales for providing the information or data they need to do the job. If there is slippage, for example because of the time required to process bulk last minute postal vote applications, you should advise the contractors as soon as possible.
- 5.16 You should document all stages of the process. In particular, you should keep a formal record in order to be able to demonstrate that the processes are undertaken in accordance with the law.
- 5.17 Any variations from the agreed specification could result in a breach of legislation and any such breach is the responsibility of the Counting Officer, so any variations should be formally documented and signed off by you or by someone authorised to act on your behalf.



Further guidance on what to consider if you have outsourced the postal vote issue can be found in [Part D – Absent voting](#).

Comment [A54]: hyperlink

Royal Mail

- 5.18 You should already be in contact with your Royal Mail account manager and you should continue to liaise with them on a regular basis.



More information on working with Royal Mail in respect of postal voting can be found in [Part D – Absent voting](#).

Comment [A55]: hyperlink

Finding printers

- 5.19 If you decide that you need to outsource production and are having difficulty finding a suitable printer, Graphic Enterprise Scotland or the British Printing Industries Federation may be [contacted for assistance](#):

Comment [A56]: check this still applies

Graphic Enterprise Scotland
112 George Street
Edinburgh EH2 4LH
Tel: 0131 220 4353

www.graphicenterprisescotland.org

Comment [A57]: insert hyperlink

British Printing Industries Federation
Farringdon Point
29-35 Farringdon Road
London EC1M 3JF

www.britishprint.com

Comment [A58]: hyperlink

6 Maintaining the integrity of the referendum

- 6.1 As a requirement to meet performance standard 1 – Planning for the referendum, your project plan must include processes to identify any patterns of activity that might indicate potential integrity issues and what steps are to be taken to address those issues.
- 6.2 You should establish and maintain contact with your local police Single Point of Contact (SPOC) and your project plan should schedule regular contact with that officer.

Offences

- 6.3 There are a number of offences in relation to the referendum. Information on these offences is contained in [the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013, Schedule 7](#).

Comment [A59]: best reference? Hyperlink?

Dealing with allegations of malpractice

- 6.4 Although you and your staff are uniquely placed to identify malpractice, you have no power to investigate allegations of fraud or malpractice. Any allegations or suspicions should be referred promptly to your SPOC.
- 6.5 If you need additional information on the handling and referral of allegations of electoral malpractice or are having difficulties in making contact with your SPOC, you can contact:

(Insert contact name and details – in previous guidance this was D Freeland)

Comment [A60]: Find out who this should be.

Dealing with allegations of financial offences

- 6.6 Permitted participants are subject to a financial regime under the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013. Any queries on referendum spending should be referred to the [Electoral Commission's office in Scotland](#).

Comment [A61]: Insert hyperlink

Security

- 6.7 Your project plan should include a thorough review of security arrangements with the local police. You should also consider any security risks as part of your contingency planning exercise and include these in your risk register.
- 6.8 Your security arrangements should prevent unauthorised access to or use of the ballot papers during all stages of the production process and storage between printing and the poll.
- 6.9 You should also take all necessary steps to ensure the security of ballot boxes and relevant stationery from the close of poll through to the declaration of the result, particularly if there is any break in proceedings. You should liaise with your SPOC on this.
- 6.10 Whichever method of storage you choose, it should be such that you can be satisfied that you have taken all necessary steps to ensure that ballot boxes and other items are kept securely at all times and cannot be interfered with.
- 6.11 In addition, you should liaise with your SPOC to ensure that there is an appropriate police presence at polling places on polling day according to your assessment of the level of risk. You should obtain emergency numbers from your SPOC which can be notified to your presiding officers.

7 Raising awareness

- 7.1 The Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013 provides that the Electoral Commission must take such steps as they consider appropriate to promote public awareness and understanding in Scotland about the referendum, the referendum question and voting in the referendum. To this end, the Commission will work with the Chief Counting Officer's Communications Network and will provide details of its public awareness campaign and materials to the Chief Counting Officer, Counting Officers and Electoral Registration Officers to support them in their respective public awareness activities.
- 7.2 The Chief Counting Officer, Counting Officers and Electoral Registration Officers themselves also have a legal duty to take such steps as they think appropriate to encourage the participation of electors in the referendum.
- 7.3 Details of the respective responsibilities in relation to public awareness are covered in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Commission and the Chief Counting Officer.
- 7.4 The Electoral Commission has agreed to make publicity materials available for the use of the Chief Counting Officer and Counting Officers at the referendum.
- 7.5 The Chief Counting Officer has set up a Communications Working Group to support Counting Officers with their public awareness activities. The person to contact is
- 7.6 Your project plan must include details of your local public awareness activity.
- 7.7 When planning your public awareness activity you should consider and document:
- the identification of your target audience
 - the objectives and success measures of the activity
 - risks – identification and mitigation
 - resources – financial and staffing

Comment [A62]: Where is this duty contained in law?

Comment [A63]: ,more details of this group required.

7.8 With the franchise at the referendum being extended to sixteen year olds, Counting Officers and Electoral Registration Officers will have to develop particular local materials to target this new group of electors.

Information to electors


Comment [A64]: Insert information about EC coms support and CCO responsibilities when this becomes clear. What will COs' role be. Coms group.

7.9 In order to communicate information effectively to electors, you should consider who you want to reach through your awareness activity and the method of communication to be used. You should take advice and seek input from relevant staff at your local authority such as those in the communications department.

7.10 The information you make available should assist the voter to participate fully in the referendum. This may include details of:-

- the referendum itself
- the date and hours of poll
- the location of polling stations
- any key deadlines (e.g. deadlines for applying for postal or proxy votes)
- how to mark the ballot paper
- what assistance is available to electors (e.g. information for disabled voters)
- how votes are counted
- how the result will be made known

7.11 You should also ensure that all outgoing communications provide appropriate contact details to allow anyone to respond and obtain further information.

 The Electoral Commission will provide templates and tools for you to adapt to fit your local circumstances on [?????]. There is also a frequently asked questions page on About My Vote which will have FAQs relating to the referendum and to which people should be directed, for example by providing a link from your own web pages to the About My Vote website. The web address for the FAQs page is [?????????????????]

Comment [A65]: This was dopolitics.org.uk. What now?

Comment [A66]: Will this still apply. Info on EMB/CCO's website?

8 Accredited observers and Electoral Commission representatives

- 8.1 Observers accredited by the Electoral Commission are entitled by law to observe
- the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers
 - the poll
 - the verification and the counting of the votes
- 8.2 You must include in your project plan processes to manage potential enquiries from observers and to support their attendance at the electoral processes they are entitled to attend.
- 8.3 This should include providing observers with information on the location and timing of the above processes.
- 8.4 Electoral Commission representatives are also entitled to observe these processes and, in addition, are entitled to observe your working practices.
- 8.5 Accredited observers and Electoral Commission representatives do not need to give advance notification of where they intend to observe, but will carry with them a photographic identification card issued by the Commission.

Quick guide to the observer badge types

Observer badge type	Who are they?	Access
	Electoral Commission representatives	Same as referendum agents, plus access to the issue of postal votes, and working practices of the Counting Officer and Electoral Registration Officer
	Observers accredited by the Electoral Commission	Same as referendum agents, plus access to the

- 8.6 If you are in doubt about the status of a particular individual seeking to gain access to referendum processes, you can check the registers of observers on the [Electoral Commission's website](#).
- 8.7 You have a legal duty to have regard to the Electoral [Commission's Code of practice for observers](#) when managing the attendance of observers. Observers are required to comply with the standards of behaviour set out in the [Commission's Code of practice](#). If you think there has been a breach of the Code of practice, please inform the [Electoral Commission's office in Scotland](#).