

The Presiding Officer

Presiding Officers are responsible for the conduct of the ballot in the polling stations, and they must have a good knowledge of the voting procedures.

The role:

- Comply with any instructions from the Returning Officer
- To take charge of a polling station
- To ensure that all electors are treated impartially and with respect
- To maintain the secrecy of the ballot
- To supervise the Poll Clerks and report on their performance
- To report on the suitability of the polling station for future elections

Duties

Before Polling Day:

- Read the polling station handbook
- Attend a briefing session as directed by the Returning Officer (via Electoral Services)
- Liaise with contact person for their polling station to confirm arrangements for key collection/opening and closing the building
- Visit the polling station to ensure polling equipment and other facilities are in place
- In multiple polling stations, make contact with the other Presiding Officer(s)
- Contact Poll Clerk(s) to check that they have appropriate travel arrangements in place to get to the Polling Station for 6.00am or time directed by you
- Collect the ballot box and check contents on the Tuesday prior to polling day

Polling Day:

- Transport ballot box and contents to the polling station
- Erect polling booths
- Organise the layout of the polling station taking the needs of voters into account
- Ensure the station is fully accessible to disabled voters
- Be responsible for health and safety at the polling station for all staff and visitors
- Ensure the polling station is opened on time (7.00am)
- Confirm with your Polling Station Inspector as soon as you have successfully set up your polling station.
- Ensure that all signs and instructions are clear, visible and remain in place

- Contact your Polling Station Inspector immediately if you experience any problem setting up the polling station
- Keep the polling station neat and tidy
- Instruct, supervise, and be responsible for the work of the Poll Clerk(s)
- Account for, and be responsible for, all ballot papers, issued and un-issued
- Ensure that voters' electoral numbers are checked, marked, and entered onto the corresponding numbers list
- Supervise the issue of ballot papers
- Ensure that voters cast their vote in secret and put them in the ballot box
- Provide assistance to voters where appropriate
- Receive postal votes delivered by hand (and ensure they are collected by Polling Station Inspectors throughout the day or are taken to the count venue after close of poll)
- Manage the attendance of those entitled to be present in the polling station, e.g. polling station inspectors, candidates, agents, Electoral Commission observers, and ensure that they do not interfere with the voting process.
- Be polite and professional when dealing with visitors to the polling station and remain impartial at all times
- Monitor the activities of tellers and party activists outside the polling station

Close of poll:

- Ensure that the polling station is closed on time or after the last person in the queue at 10pm has voted . Ensure that no ballot paper is issued after this time
- Supervise the dismantling of the polling station and ensure the building is returned in good order
- Complete the ballot paper account and associated paperwork; pack in accordance with instructions given by the Returning Officer
- Deliver the ballot box and associated paperwork to the Count location as designated by the Returning Officer

You will be working a sixteen-hour day, so you must provide your own refreshments and take appropriate breaks throughout the day to avoid tiredness. As Presiding Officer, you should schedule breaks to avoid peak times such as early morning, lunchtime, and early evening. Polling staff are not permitted to leave the premises during the hours of poll.

The Returning Officer is not permitted to employ anyone who is/or has carried out duties on behalf of any political party, group, or candidate at the election.

All staff will be required to sign their agreement to maintain the secrecy of the poll and to waive their rights under the European Working Time directive.