

# Individual Electoral Registration

**Form design research:  
Phase two report**

December 2013

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# Introduction and Methodology

# Introduction and Methodology

The Electoral Commission contracted Ipsos MORI to conduct research into the design and content of the registration forms for Individual Electoral Registration (IER), the new method of electoral registration, which requires every individual to register themselves using a new form. Individual Electoral Registration will be implemented across Great Britain prior to the 2015 General Election.

This phase of the research focussed mainly on the design and format of the new Household Enquiry Forms (HEF) and Individual Electoral Registration (IER) forms, and what impact, if any, it has on the successful completion of the form. This phase of the research follows two previous phases (in autumn 2012 and summer 2013) testing content and design. The forms tested in this phase have been created taking into account findings from this previous research.

The specific aims of this research phase were:

- ◆ To examine how the layout of the new design helps (or hinders) people to fill out electoral registration forms
- ◆ To measure how these forms are interpreted in their blank and “pre-populated” formats
- ◆ To determine which form works “best”. In this context this means ensuring comprehension and accurate completion from all who are required to fill them out

Three formats of the registration forms were tested at this phase:

- A4 one-sided: where all questions are on one A4-size sheet of paper and the introductory text and guidance notes were on the opposite side
- A4 two-sided: where questions are spread over two sides of A4 paper with guidance notes in “bubbles” on the right hand side next to the relevant question
- A3 booklet: similar layout to the A4 two-sided but spread out across A3-size paper folded into a booklet. The A3 booklet incorporated the Invitation To Register (ITR) letter onto its front page, whilst this was provided as a separate letter with the two A4 formats<sup>1</sup>.

The three formats were tested for both IER and HEF forms in two different versions – one where details had already been filled out (“pre-populated”), and another where the form was entirely blank. In total, twelve different types of form were tested:

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the ITR was not explicitly tested in this phase of the research, and is the subject of a different research exercise.

**Table 1 - Form versions tested**

	<b>A4 one side</b>	<b>A4 two side</b>	<b>A3 booklet</b>	<b>No. forms</b>
<b>HEF</b>	<i>Blank and pre-populated versions</i>	<i>Blank and pre-populated versions</i>	<i>Blank and pre-populated versions</i>	6
<b>IER</b>	<i>Blank and pre-populated versions</i>	<i>Blank and pre-populated versions</i>	<i>Blank and pre-populated versions</i>	6
<b>Total:</b>				<b>12</b>

Sample images of the forms are overleaf.

## HEF forms

HEF-P4-MONO-281013

**Household Enquiry Form**  
**Who is eligible to vote?**

MRI A N OTHER  
10 EXAMPLE STREET  
ANYTOWN  
COUNTYSHIRE  
AB12 3CD

**Don't lose your right to vote**  
To make sure you can vote in elections in your area, we need to know who lives at this address. The form on the other side of this page shows who is currently registered to vote at this address, according to our records. If you need to do this, check the information shown on the form.

**If nothing has changed, tell us by:**  
• going online at [www.manton.gov.uk/electoraladmin](http://www.manton.gov.uk/electoraladmin)  
• or sending your security code to 01234 567 890  
• or calling us on 01234 567 890  
• or signing the declaration and returning the form in the reply-paid envelope.

**Your security code is 2001064 7178**

**If anything has changed, tell us by:**  
• going online at [www.manton.gov.uk/electoraladmin](http://www.manton.gov.uk/electoraladmin)  
• or carrying any details on the form and send it back to us  
• or call us on 01234 567 890

**When we receive this form**  
• If there are no changes, the people listed on this form will stay on the register.  
• We will send an Individual Registration Form to anyone you have listed for the first time. Or they can fill in the Individual Registration Form online at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote).  
• Once we have processed the Individual Registration Forms, we will send each eligible person confirmation that we have added their name and address to the electoral register and for 16 or 17 year olds, their date of birth.

**Problems with this form?**  
Contact us if you need any help understanding or completing this form.  
Call 01234 567 890  
Email [info@manton.gov.uk](mailto:info@manton.gov.uk)  
Telephone 18001 01234 567 890  
Reference 1234567890  
123 Example Street, Suburbname, Anytown, Countyshire AB12 3CD.

**Use black ink, write in CAPITALS and only write in the white spaces.**

**Please list everyone who is eligible to register to vote**

**Person 1**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**Person 2**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**Person 3**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**Person 4**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**There is space for more people on the next page**

**Notes**  
**Want to change your choice?**  
If anyone wishes to vote by post or proxy, you will need to tell us for an application form. If anyone wishes to change their choice about the open register, they will need to contact us. There is more information about the open register on page 3.

**Notes**  
**Who is eligible to register to vote?**  
You can register to vote in the UK if you are:  
• resident (usually live) in the UK, and  
• aged 16 or over (but you will not be able to vote until you are 18).  
You must also be either:  
• a British, Irish or European Union citizen, or  
• a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK.

**Notes**  
**There are two registers. Why?**  
Using information received from the public, registration officers keep two registers – the electoral register and the open register (also known as the added register).  
The electoral register lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in public elections. The register is used for electoral purposes, such as making sure only eligible people can vote. It is also used for other limited purposes specified in law, such as:  
• identifying crimes (e.g. fraud)  
• calling people for jury service  
• checking credit applications.  
Your personal information:  
We will only use the information you give us for other registration. We will not use personal information to send you any other information. We will not give personal information about you to other people in your household to ensure one or another registration officer we have to use. If you would like to know more about data protection and how we will use your personal information, please contact us.

**The open register is an extract of the electoral register, but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm names and address details.**  
Your name and address will be included in the open register unless you ask for them to be removed. To do this please contact us. Removing your details from the open register does not affect your right to vote.  
You can find more information about both registers and how they may be used at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote).

**Who should I include on this form?**  
Please give details of everyone aged 16 or over who is resident at this address and is eligible to register to vote.  
Include anyone who normally lives at your address but is away, for example, on holiday, in student accommodation or in hospital. Do not include visitors staying temporarily at your address.  
If you are unsure whether someone should be included on the form, please contact us.  
**Contact details**  
You don't have to give us their telephone number and email address. But if you do, it will help if we need to contact them about their registration.  
**Nobody eligible to register to vote?**  
Go to page 2.

**Barcode**  
2001064

**A4, one sided form**  
*Blank version showing*

HEF-B3-045713

**Household Enquiry Form**  
**Who is eligible to vote?**

123 Example Street  
Anytown  
Sampleshire  
AB12 3CD

**Use black ink, write in CAPITALS and only write in the white spaces.**

**Please list everyone who is eligible to register to vote**

**Person 1**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**Person 2**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**Person 3**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**There is space for more people on the next page**

**Notes**  
**Want to change your choice?**  
If anyone wishes to vote by post or proxy, you will need to tell us for an application form. If anyone wishes to change their choice about the open register, they will need to contact us. There is more information about the open register on page 3.

**Notes**  
**Who is eligible to register to vote?**  
You can register to vote in the UK if you are:  
• resident (usually live) in the UK, and  
• aged 16 or over (but you will not be able to vote until you are 18).  
You must also be either:  
• a British, Irish or European Union citizen, or  
• a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK.

**Notes**  
**There are two registers. Why?**  
Using information received from the public, registration officers keep two registers – the electoral register and the open register (also known as the added register).  
The electoral register lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in public elections. The register is used for electoral purposes, such as making sure only eligible people can vote. It is also used for other limited purposes specified in law, such as:  
• identifying crimes (e.g. fraud)  
• calling people for jury service  
• checking credit applications.  
Your personal information:  
We will only use the information you give us for other registration. We will not use personal information to send you any other information. We will not give personal information about you to other people in your household to ensure one or another registration officer we have to use. If you would like to know more about data protection and how we will use your personal information, please contact us.

**The open register is an extract of the electoral register, but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm names and address details.**  
Your name and address will be included in the open register unless you ask for them to be removed. To do this please contact us. Removing your details from the open register does not affect your right to vote.  
You can find more information about both registers and how they may be used at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote).

**Who should I include on this form?**  
Please give details of everyone aged 16 or over who is resident at this address and is eligible to register to vote.  
Include anyone who normally lives at your address but is away, for example, on holiday, in student accommodation or in hospital. Do not include visitors staying temporarily at your address.  
If you are unsure whether someone should be included on the form, please contact us.  
**Contact details**  
You don't have to give us their telephone number and email address. But if you do, it will help if we need to contact them about their registration.  
**Nobody eligible to register to vote?**  
Go to page 2.

**Barcode**  
2001064

**A4, two sided form**  
*Blank version showing*

HEF-B3-MONO-281013

**Household Enquiry Form**  
**Who is eligible to vote?**

MR A N OTHER  
10 EXAMPLE STREET  
ANYTOWN  
COUNTYSHIRE  
AB12 3CD

**Use black ink, write in CAPITALS and only write in the white spaces.**

**Please list everyone who is eligible to register to vote**

**Person 1**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**Person 2**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**Person 3**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**Person 4**  
First name Middle name(s) Surname  
Nationality Telephone number  
Email address (if they have one)

**There is space for more people on the next page**

**Notes**  
**Want to change your choice?**  
If anyone wishes to vote by post or proxy, you will need to tell us for an application form. If anyone wishes to change their choice about the open register, they will need to contact us. There is more information about the open register on page 3.

**Notes**  
**Who is eligible to register to vote?**  
You can register to vote in the UK if you are:  
• resident (usually live) in the UK, and  
• aged 16 or over (but you will not be able to vote until you are 18).  
You must also be either:  
• a British, Irish or European Union citizen, or  
• a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK.

**Notes**  
**There are two registers. Why?**  
Using information received from the public, registration officers keep two registers – the electoral register and the open register (also known as the added register).  
The electoral register lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in public elections. The register is used for electoral purposes, such as making sure only eligible people can vote. It is also used for other limited purposes specified in law, such as:  
• identifying crimes (e.g. fraud)  
• calling people for jury service  
• checking credit applications.  
Your personal information:  
We will only use the information you give us for other registration. We will not use personal information to send you any other information. We will not give personal information about you to other people in your household to ensure one or another registration officer we have to use. If you would like to know more about data protection and how we will use your personal information, please contact us.

**The open register is an extract of the electoral register, but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm names and address details.**  
Your name and address will be included in the open register unless you ask for them to be removed. To do this please contact us. Removing your details from the open register does not affect your right to vote.  
You can find more information about both registers and how they may be used at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote).

**Who should I include on this form?**  
Please give details of everyone aged 16 or over who is resident at this address and is eligible to register to vote.  
Include anyone who normally lives at your address but is away, for example, on holiday, in student accommodation or in hospital. Do not include visitors staying temporarily at your address.  
If you are unsure whether someone should be included on the form, please contact us.  
**Contact details**  
You don't have to give us their telephone number and email address. But if you do, it will help if we need to contact them about their registration.  
**Nobody eligible to register to vote?**  
Go to page 2.

**Barcode**  
2001064

**A3, booklet format**  
*Blank version showing*

## IER forms

Individual Registration Form  
**Register to vote**

IER-B4-MONO-281013

**1 Fill in this form**

**Online**  
Fill in this form at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote)

**Or use the form on the back of the page**  
Use black ink, write in CAPITALS and only write in the white spaces.

**2 Return the form**  
If you have filled in the form on the back of this page, send the agreed form in the reply-paid envelope – or to the address in the right-hand column of this page.

**3 When we receive your form**  
If we need more information – for example, about another address or, if you are a Commonwealth citizen, about your immigration status – we will contact you.  
If you have asked for an application form to vote by post or by proxy, we will send you one.  
We will send each eligible person confirmation that they are on the electoral register. If you are aged 16 or 17, we will let you know when you are on the register.

**Problems with this form?**  
Contact us if you need any help understanding or completing this form.  
Call 01234 567 890  
Email [info@manton.gov.uk](mailto:info@manton.gov.uk)  
Telephone 18001 01234 567 890  
Reference 1234567890  
123 Example Street, Suburbname, Anytown, Countyshire AB12 3CD.

**Don't know your exact date of birth?**  
Please give the date of birth you put on other official documents. For example, your passport or driver's licence.

**If you have more than one nationality, please include them all.**  
You can only register to vote in the UK if you have leave to remain. We may check your immigration status with the Home Office before we include you on the electoral register.

**If you cannot tell us your National Insurance number, we will need to ask you for proof of your identity. We will contact you about this.**

**If you have two addresses (for example, you're a student or you own a second home), don't give us the address now – but we may ask you for more information later.**  
Please contact us if you have had more than one previous address in the last 12 months, or fill in this form at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote).

**If you can't vote in person, you can choose to vote by post. Or you can vote by proxy (ask someone to vote for you).**  
To vote by post or proxy, you will need to fill in an application form. We will send you an application form, or you can download a form from [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk). You can change your choice before an election.

**There are two registers. Why?**  
Using information received from the public, registration officers keep two registers – the electoral register and the open register (also known as the edited register).  
The electoral register lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in public elections. The register is used for electoral purposes, such as making sure only eligible people can vote. It is also used for other limited purposes specified in law, such as:  
- detecting crime (e.g. fraud)  
- calling people for jury service  
- checking credit applications.  
The open register is an extract of the electoral register, but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm names and address details. Your name and address will be included in the open register unless you ask for them to be removed. Removing your details from the open register does not affect your right to vote. You can find more information about both registers and how they may be used at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote).

**Your personal information**  
We will only use the information you give us for voter registration. We will not give your personal information to any other organisation unless we have to to law. If you would like to know more about data protection and how we will use your personal information, please contact us.

**123 Example Street, Suburbname, Anytown, Countyshire AB12 3CD**  
Call 01234 567 890  
Email [info@manton.gov.uk](mailto:info@manton.gov.uk)  
Telephone 18001 01234 567 890  
Reference 1234567890  
You can also fill in this form at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote)

**Page 1**

**A4, one sided form**  
*Blank version showing*

Individual Registration Form  
**Register to vote**

IER-B4-MONO-281013

**To vote you need to be on the electoral register. If you do not fill in this form, you may not be able to vote. Only your name and address will appear on the register.**  
Only one person can register to vote using this form. If you want to you can fill this form in online at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote).

**Filling in this form**  
Use black ink, write in CAPITALS and only write in the white spaces.

**Your full name**  
Surname(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Any other name you have had in the last 12 months \_\_\_\_\_  
For example, you may have got married.

**Your date of birth**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
If you don't know your exact date of birth, please tick if you are:  
☐ Under 18 ☐ 18 – 70 ☐ Over 70

**Don't know your exact date of birth?**  
Please give the date of birth you put on other official documents. For example, your passport or driver's licence.

**If you have more than one nationality, please include them all.**  
You can only register to vote in the UK if you have leave to remain. We may check your immigration status with the Home Office before we include you on the electoral register.

**If you cannot tell us your National Insurance number, we will need to ask you for proof of your identity. We will contact you about this.**

**Your National Insurance number**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
If you don't know your NI number, nationality or date of birth, please tell us why: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your address**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Do you have another address?  
☐ No ☐ Yes  
If you have moved in the last 12 months?  
☐ No ☐ Yes  
If yes, please give your previous address if you no longer live there.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
If this address was overseas, were you registered in the UK as an overseas voter?  
☐ No ☐ Yes

**If you have two addresses (for example, you're a student or you own a second home), don't give us the address now – but we may ask you for more information later.**  
Please contact us if you have had more than one previous address in the last 12 months, or fill in this form at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote).

**123 Example Street, Suburbname, Anytown, Countyshire AB12 3CD**  
Call 01234 567 890  
Email [info@manton.gov.uk](mailto:info@manton.gov.uk)  
Telephone 18001 01234 567 890  
Reference 1234567890  
You can also fill in this form at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote)

**Page 1**

**A4, two sided form**  
*Blank version showing*

Individual Registration Form  
**Register to vote**

IER-P3-MONO-281013

**Filling in this form**  
Use black ink, write in CAPITALS and only write in the white spaces.

**Your name and address**  
Karen Elizabeth Mitchell  
23 Chestnut Avenue, Peterborough PE12 3LM

**If your name and address are wrong, put the correct details here.**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Your date of birth**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
If you don't know your exact date of birth, please tick if you are:  
☐ Under 18 ☐ 18 – 70 ☐ Over 70

**Don't know your exact date of birth?**  
Please give the date of birth you put on other official documents. For example, your passport or driver's licence.

**If you have more than one nationality, please include them all.**  
You can only register to vote in the UK if you have leave to remain. We may check your immigration status with the Home Office before we include you on the electoral register.

**If you cannot tell us your National Insurance number, we will need to ask you for proof of your identity. We will contact you about this.**

**Your National Insurance number**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
If you don't know your National Insurance number, your nationality or your date of birth, please tell us why: \_\_\_\_\_

**Register to vote**  
Dear xxxxx

**About the electoral register**  
To vote in elections and referendums, you need to register to vote (on the electoral register).  
Only your name and address will appear on the register. If you do not fill in this form, you may not be able to vote. And you could face a fine of up to £50.  
You can register to vote in the UK if you are:  
- resident (usually live in the UK), and  
- aged 16 or over (although you won't be able to vote until you are 18).  
You must also be either:  
- a British, Irish or European Union citizen, or  
- a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK.

**Problems with the form?**  
Contact us if you need any help understanding or completing this form – or if you need this form in large print or in another format.

**How to register**  
It is easy to register to vote and only takes a few minutes. You can either:  
- go to [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote) to complete a form online  
- call us on xxxxxxxx  
- complete and return the form included with this letter in the reply-paid envelope provided.

**Yours sincerely**  
xxxxxxx  
Mrs ER Officer

**123 Example Street, Suburbname, Anytown, Countyshire AB12 3CD**  
Call 01234 567 890  
Email [info@manton.gov.uk](mailto:info@manton.gov.uk)  
Telephone 18001 01234 567 890  
Reference 1234567890  
You can also fill in this form at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote)

**Page 1**

**A3, booklet format**  
*Pre-populated version showing*



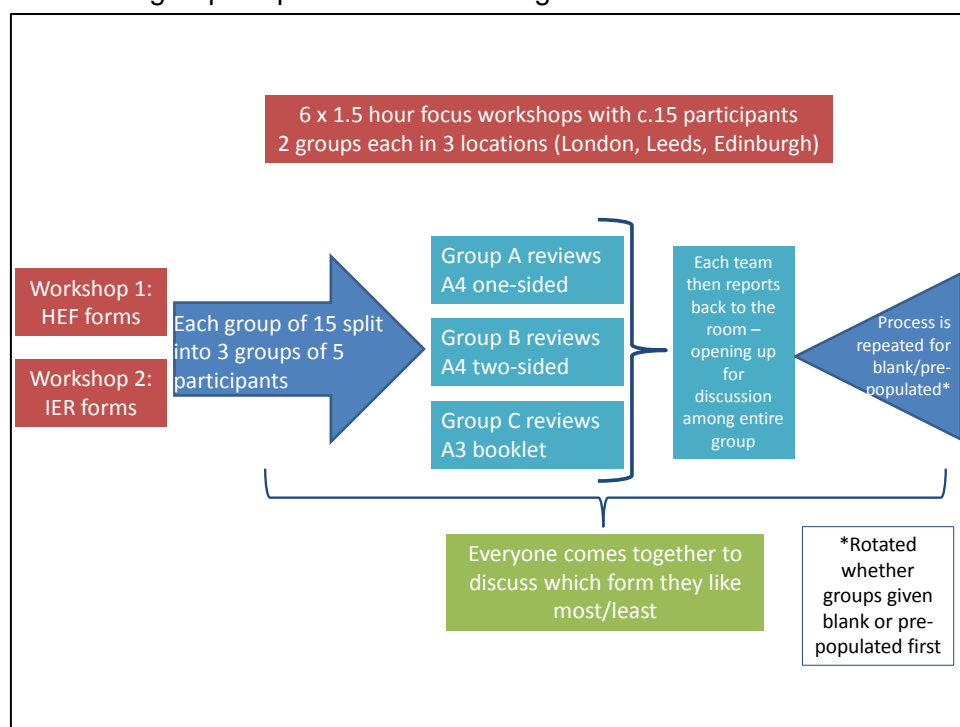
## Methodology

In this phase of the research six “mini-workshop” events were conducted across England (London, Leeds) and Scotland (Edinburgh), alongside five Welsh-language depth interviews in Llanelli to test the Welsh and English versions of the form. Fieldwork took place between 30<sup>th</sup> October and 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

### Mini-workshop structure

- ◆ Two mini-workshops were held in each of the three locations, one workshop tested the IER forms and the other tested the HEF forms;
- ◆ In each mini-workshop the c.15 participants were divided into three groups, and each group would receive a different form format to fill out i.e. A4 one-sided, A4 two-sided or A3 (all groups were given either the blank or pre-populated version of their form). After a short group discussion the workshop returned to a plenary format and the three groups were able to discuss the merits and shortfalls of the form they had been given while comparing and contrasting with the other versions of the same form;
- ◆ This process was then repeated in each group with the other (pre-populated or blank) version;
- ◆ At the end of the workshop, a wrap-up plenary discussion helped identify the elements from all the forms tested that had been particularly useful or ineffective.

The structure of the groups is presented in the diagram below:



This summary report contains the findings from the mini-workshops and depth interviews, identifying the elements that participants found the most and least useful, with recommendations for creating the most user-friendly and comprehensible form.

### ***Interpreting qualitative data***

Unlike quantitative surveys, qualitative research is designed to be illustrative, detailed and exploratory, providing insight into the perceptions, feelings and intended behaviours of people rather than conclusions from a quantifiable valid sample. Therefore, these interviews do not allow statistical conclusions to be drawn about the extent to which views are held across the wider public. It should especially be borne in mind that only five interviews were conducted with Welsh speakers.

The perceptions of participants make up a considerable proportion of the evidence in this report, and it is important to remember that although such perceptions may not always be factually accurate, they represent the truth to those who relate them.

# Summary of findings

# Summary of findings

## **Context**

Participants were coming to the discussions about these forms from a base of very low awareness about the changes to electoral registration. However, many believed they were currently registered and because of the timing of this research (around the time of the annual canvas), the registration forms were fairly fresh in the mind of many. However, there were a number – often younger participants – who said they had never seen a registration form and some who did not think they were registered.

It is important to note that the workshops and interviews were simulated situations. While we worked to ensure that participants were completing the forms “as they would at home”, that situation cannot be completely replicated. The very nature of the discussion also asked participants to look more closely at, and think more about the forms than they perhaps would if they received it at home, therefore identifying potential issues that would not necessarily be a major problem if they actually received the form “for real”. We therefore probed on what are priorities for change, and our analysis has focussed on highlighting those issues that may impede the correct completion of the form.

The research found participants’ comments to generally be more negative about the pre-populated forms than the blank versions. However, this is in part due to the false situation participants were in where they were presented with the pre-populated information of fictional people and were asked to imagine they were that person. Furthermore, expectations from the Electoral Commission’s analysis would be that in reality most people would not need to change or correct their details. Different approaches were tried to get beyond this issue<sup>2</sup>, and participants were also probed on how they felt about the principle of pre-populated forms. Generally, participants were positive about the principle of pre-populated forms because they were felt to be easy to complete. Indeed, some participants recalled positively how easy they found the current forms because all they had to do was send a text to confirm their details were correct.

While there was some discussion among participants about the A3 booklets taking up more paper, it was also noted that the A4 forms came with a separate letter and therefore took up as much paper as the A3 forms.

## **Summary**

Opinions on each of the three formats differed between individuals and groups and frequently people talked about favourite form elements, rather than favourite forms overall, so designating one format the most popular is not simple. However, there are some general findings for each version. Please note that this summary combines findings on the HEF and IER forms; the “detailed findings” section provides greater detail for individual formats and versions.

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<sup>2</sup> Participants were either asked to pretend that they were the person on the form and that their surname had a minor misspelling, or were told to correct the form so that their name was on it.

Generally, participants found the forms easy, simple and straightforward to complete. Participants also tended to think the form looked simple which meant they often completed it quickly and without the need to read or turn to the guidance notes.

**The A4 one-sided forms tended to be least popular**, in particular the pre-populated format. Factors which contributed to this opinion included the small font size and a lot of information “cramped” on the front of the form. Participants also said they did not like “flipping and turning” to find the relevant guidance notes there were on the form on the opposite page to the questions.

However, participants thought that the structure and layout of the blank version was clear and useful, and in one group this emerged as the favourite for this reason. In addition to the structure (in the blank version), the separate box for name corrections in the pre-populated IER form and the “1,2,3” steps on the front page were highlighted as useful and informative elements.

**A4 two-sided forms were well-liked**, although a few issues with the design – particularly with the pre-populated version – meant that they weren’t always selected as the top format.

Participants noted the larger font size and use of space as positives that set the form apart from the one-sided version. The use of guidance bubbles, although not universally liked, was generally seen as a positive and useful addition.

The lack of separate boxes for name and address corrections on the pre-populated versions caused difficulty for some, and the layout of personal information was considered by some to be poor more generally. Signposting to online completion alternatives – a popular option for many in the groups – was also less obvious than in other formats.

**The A3 booklet-style forms were often the most favoured**, although not in every case.

The larger font size and use of space in these forms was frequently seen as the clearest and best. For some participants, the booklet format was also a positive as it made it look official, and helped it stand out as something important to complete. As with the A4 two-side form, guidance bubbles were generally seen as a positive addition.

A number of the positives about the A3 form were also negatives for others – some saw the use of space as excessive, and others were put off by the booklet format because it made the form look longer and daunting to complete. A number of elements, particularly around making name and address corrections on the pre-populated version, were the same as the A4 two-side format, and therefore came with the same drawbacks.

# Detailed findings

# Detailed findings

This section covers the particular positives and negatives of each format. Whilst all forms were comprehensible and could be completed by group participants, the different layouts and designs were not all equally clear, and some elements caused confusion or made the completion of the form more difficult than it could be.

## HEF forms

### ***A4 one-sided, blank and pre-populated***

This format showed the greatest difference in participant opinion between the blank and pre-populated form versions.

The **blank** version of the form was considered by some to be the best of the three formats, owing to its strong structure (clearly defined answer boxes and enough space for answers), the clear and informative text on the front of the form (including the “1,2,3” steps – see example below), and the clear signposting of the online form alternative.

Providing a grid of boxes helped participants identify precisely where they needed to write and what information was required, meaning that they were able to complete this form quickly and easily.

The form is titled "Please list everyone who is eligible to register to vote" with a link "See other side" and a sub-header "Who is eligible to register to vote?". It contains a grid for the following fields: First name, Middle name(s), Surname, Nationality, Telephone, and Email. Each field has a corresponding empty box for the user to fill in.

#### ***Household member information grid***

The text on the front of the form, clearly signposting in three steps how to complete the form was liked by participants because it was clear and succinct, outlining the options of what to do before you began filling it in. Some also felt that the three steps showed how simple the form was and that it would not take a long time.

The form front page contains three numbered steps:   
1 Fill in this form: Includes an "Online" section with a URL and security code, and an "Or use the form on the back of the page" section with instructions on ink and spacing.   
2 Return the form: Includes instructions on where to send the signed form.   
3 When we receive your form: Includes a statement about sending an Individual Registration Form to eligible persons.

#### ***Form front page – “1,2,3” instructions***

The perceived negative aspects of this form include the small font size – which participants often cited as a problem for other people or groups (e.g. those with visual impairments), rather than themselves – for the text on the front page and the fact that notes and instructions are not visible whilst completing the form. Participants disliked having to “flip and turn” the form to read the notes on the opposite page because it was seen as a great deal of hassle, especially if you had to do it a number of times. Combined with the perception that

this form is “simple” to complete many may ignore the notes on the front reverse side which could lead to a higher error rate in form completion.

The **pre-populated** version was much less popular, and was frequently identified as the worst form of all. The notes on the front page were thought to be too small, too much, and too cramped, setting a bad impression for the form and often meaning that participants did not feel inclined to read them.

Crossing out to correct pre-populated information such as people’s names on this form was also generally seen as a negative, as it was for all the forms where participants were asked to cross out incorrect details. Participants felt that crossing something out on a form was not natural and many felt uncomfortable with doing so. There were also concerns that it looked messy and unprofessional.

The lack of a clearly defined space (or box) to write in the correct details meant that participants were not always sure about how or where to write their details if they needed to make a correction. Spontaneously many participants suggested having a separate box to

**Please check the information below**

If anything is wrong please cross it out and put the correct information under it. Remember to write in capitals.

*JAN BROWN*  
JAN BROWN

Want to change your choices? See **Note A**

Has anyone moved out? Cross out their name. If nothing has changed Tell us using any of the ways on this form.

Your details		Your choices		Contact details
Full name	Nationality	Over 70?	Postal or proxy vote?	Included on open register?
Sarah Stephenson	British	No	No	No
				Email
				Telephone

#### **Individual information and corrections pane**

write in any details that needed correcting. Some also thought a “tick box” would add clarity, by allowing them to tick whether the details were correct or not.

The “your choices” section, which covers preferences over postal/proxy voting and the open register (see picture above) was also confusing for some participants. Many felt that because it was in the same space as the name which can be crossed out and amended meant that they could cross out their options for postal or proxy voting and being included on the open register and make the amendments on the form. However, very few spotted in the notes section (and only after completing the form) that they would actually have to request an additional form to make these changes. This was a broader issue with all the pre-populated forms.

Some positives were also identified with this form – some considered the “don’t lose your right to vote” tagline on the front of the form to be a strong call to action which would make them fill out the form if they received it, and the fact that all questions were on one side of paper made the form appear short and easy to complete at first glance.



## A4 two-sided, blank and pre-populated

The difference in opinion between the blank and pre-populated versions of this form was much smaller than the one-sided A4, although there were still noticeable differences.

The **blank** form was generally popular and sometimes chosen as the “best” format. It was felt to have a straightforward, clear and “clean” appearance.

The guidance notes or “bubbles” were considered to be more useful than having them front-loaded, with some suggesting that it made the form look modern, like an internet form. Those who liked the bubbles felt it was helpful to have them alongside the relevant question so that they could instantly look across to see the necessary help.

Participants also liked having the questions start on the first page as it meant that they could get on with filling it in straight away, and that they were more likely to read most of the notes and information (compared to the one-sided version where participants generally ignored the first side).

**Please list everyone who is eligible to register to vote**

**Person 1**

First name  Middle name(s)  Surname

Nationality  Telephone number

Email address (if they have one)

**Person 2**

First name  Middle name(s)  Surname

Nationality  Telephone number

Email address (if they have one)

**Person 3**

First name  Middle name(s)  Surname

Nationality  Telephone number

Email address (if they have one)

**Blank household member entry pane**

One perceived down-side to the form was that the online completion option was not well signposted. In this form the main prompt is directly below the local authority contact details on the top right of the first page. For some participants this is a “blind spot” – the assumption is that the information here relates to the council’s address, and is therefore not relevant unless you want to contact the council. Participants across all the workshops were keen to be pointed towards the online option as many felt this was an easy way to be able to complete the form.

Another point that participants raised was that the boxes for names were possibly too small for some people, particularly if they had long middle names.

The **pre-populated** form shared many of the positives identified with the blank format, such as the guidance bubbles. However, there were a number of issues specific to the pre-populated form. The main issue was with the presentation of pre-populated information. Participants generally expect a separate box for corrections, so the requirement to cross out and re-write details in the same box caused confusion and many felt uncomfortable crossing

 **BOROUGH OF MANTON**

123 Example Street, Suburbname,  
Anytown, Countyshire AB12 3CD

Call 01234 567 890

Email [info@manton.gov.uk](mailto:info@manton.gov.uk)

Textphone 18001 01234 567 890

Reference 1234567890

Online

Fill in this form at  
[www.manton.gov.uk/electoraladmin](http://www.manton.gov.uk/electoraladmin)  
using this security code

**2001064 7178**

**Address and online information boxes**

out details on a form – as with the other versions of the forms where they were asked to do so.

As with the one sided form, the name details (which can be changed on the form) were presented next to the information on choices around the open register and postal/proxy voting (which must be changed on a different form) without obvious guidance, which led to errors in completion of the forms. Again, participants believed they could make changes to the “your choices” section by simply crossing out and writing an answer in.

Please check the information below				
Your details			Your choices	
Name	Nationality	Over 70?	Postal or proxy vote?	Included on open register?
Sarah Stephenson	British	No	No	No
Email				
Telephone				
John McLean	Canadian	No	No	No
Email				
Telephone				
Karen McLean	British	No	Postal	No
Email				

**If nothing has changed**

Tell us by either:

- Going online at [www.manton.gov.uk/electoratadmin](http://www.manton.gov.uk/electoratadmin)
- or texting your security code to 57575
- or calling us on 01234 567 890
- or signing the declaration on page 2 and returning the form in the reply-paid envelope.

Your security code is **2001064 7178**

**If anything is wrong**

If anything is wrong, please cross it out and put the correct information under it. Remember to write in CAPITALS.

*Iain Brown*  
**IAN BROWN**

Has anyone moved out?  
Cross out their name.

### **Pre-populated household member information**

The option to complete the form online if nothing has changed is presented in the guidance bubble on the right-hand side. However, because of its position on the form many people missed it, or only saw it after they had begun completing it. Therefore, participants suggested having this centrally and “up front”, before they begin completing the form.

The guidance and information around the open register is placed after the declaration and after people have already signed the form, and away from their listed open register status. This led to suspicion for some, as if it was being purposely hidden.

**Declaration**

To the best of my knowledge, the information in this form is true. I have checked with everybody on the form that the information about them is correct.

I understand that if I do not give the information asked for in this form, I could face a fine of up to £1,000 – and if I knowingly give false information, I could face a fine of up to £5,000 or up to six months in prison.

Signature Date

Full name (please use CAPITALS)

If nobody lives at this address, this form should be completed by the person who is in charge of the property. Please tell us who you are, for example landlord.

---

**The open register**

**There are two registers. Why?**

Using information received from the public, registration officers keep two registers – the electoral register and the open register (also known as the edited register).

### **Open register information – after declaration**

### A3 booklet, blank and pre-populated

The A3 forms were generally the most popular HEF format, but with some important caveats.

The **blank** form was generally the most popular HEF form. The size of the form meant that the font size was larger and more accessible, and the use of white space made the form easier to look at and fill out. Participants liked the flow of questions, and felt that the guidance bubbles were useful. This version of the form also had a separate bubble telling participants that their email and telephone information were not mandatory, which some participants appreciated.

The image shows a sample of the A3 booklet form. It is titled 'Please list everyone who is eligible to register to vote'. It contains two sections for 'Person 1' and 'Person 2'. Each section has fields for 'First name', 'Middle name(s)', 'Surname', 'Nationality', 'Telephone number', and 'Email address (if they have one)'. To the right of the form, there are two guidance bubbles. The first bubble lists eligibility criteria: 'resident (usually live) in the UK, and', 'aged 16 or over (but you will not be able to vote until you are 18)', and 'You must also be either: a British, Irish or European Union citizen, or a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK'. It also states 'Nobody eligible to register to vote? Go to page 3.' The second bubble says 'You don't have to give us their telephone number and email address. But if you do, it will help if we need to contact them about their registration.'

**Blank household information pane**

The booklet format was more divisive, whilst some participants felt that it made the form appear more official and important to complete, others said that it made the form look long and more intimidating.

The form had two main drawbacks identified by participants. The “other information” section on the fourth page was frequently missed as it was on the back of the booklet after the signed declaration, and was not signposted at all earlier in the form. This meant that some only discovered it accidentally and made some think it was purposely being hidden away.

Information on the online completion option was not felt to be obvious meaning that some people who would prefer to go

online missed the prompt and would complete the form by hand before noticing the prompt (if they noticed it at all).

The image shows a graphic for online completion signposting. It is titled 'Household Enquiry Form' and 'Who is eligible to vote?'. It contains the text 'Filling in this form Use black ink, write in CAPITALS and only write in the white spaces.' and 'Online Fill in this form at www.manton.gov.uk/electoraladmin using this security code 2001064 7178'.

**Online completion signposting**

The **pre-populated** form shared the positives of the blank version about size and clarity, but tended to be less liked. The household information section was similar to that of the pre-populated two-sided A4 form, and so shared many of its flaws around the lack of a clear structure and confusion over what could be edited as well as the online option not being clearly signposted. The single long guidance bubble (see below) may also have led people to not read the information it provided, leading to errors in form completion.

Some noted that whilst the left hand page of the booklet was very busy there was too much space on the right hand side, leaving the form unbalanced and leading some to suggest that the form was wasting paper.

As with the blank version, the information on the open register was on the back of the booklet, where most participants missed it.

Please check the information below				
Your details			Your choices	
Name	Nationality	Over 70?	Postal or proxy vote?	Included on open register?
Sarah Stephenson	British	No	No	No
.....				
Email				
Telephone				
John McLean	Canadian	No	No	No
.....				
Email				
Telephone				
Karen McLean	British	No	Postal	No
.....				
Email				
Telephone				
Christian Stephenson	British	No	No	No
.....				
Email				
Telephone				

**If nothing has changed**

Tell us by either:

- **Going online** at [www.manton.gov.uk/electoraladmin](http://www.manton.gov.uk/electoraladmin)
- **Texting** your security code to 57575
- **Calling us** on 01234 567 890
- **Signing the declaration** on page 3 and returning the form in the reply-paid envelope.

**Your security code is**  
**2001064 7178**

**If anything is wrong**

If anything is wrong, please cross it out and put the correct information under it. Remember to write in CAPITALS.

~~Iain Brown~~  
IAN BROWN

**Has anyone moved out?**  
Cross out their name.

**Want to change your choices?**

**Pre-populated household member information and part of the long guidance bubble**

## IER forms

### A4 one-sided, blank and pre-populated

Both blank and pre-populated A4 one-sided IER forms were generally liked the least, and feedback on the IER form was often similar to that given for the HEF version. However, the difference in popularity between the three forms was smaller for IER than the HEF versions. Although they were viewed as the least effective, participants again identified some strong elements in these forms.

The **blank** form was generally considered to be too cramped, particularly the front page with the introductory text and the guidance notes. Participants felt it had a small font size that might be difficult to read for older people and those with poor eyesight. They felt that it looked off-putting and many did not read it. Participants felt that there was too much information on the front page. Placing the guidance notes on the other side of the form to the questions was again considered an impediment, and the tabs used to refer people to the relevant note ("see Note A") were frequently missed.

Individual Registration Form  
**Register to vote**

IER-B4-MONO-281013  
BOROUGH OF MANTON

**1 Fill in this form**

**Online**  
Fill in this form at [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote)

**Or use the form on the back of the page**  
Use black ink, write in CAPITALS and only write in the white spaces.

**2 Return the form**  
If you have filled in the form on the back of this page, send the signed form in the reply-paid envelope – or to the address in the right-hand column of this page.

**3 When we receive your form**  
If we need more information – for example, about another address or, if you are a Commonwealth citizen, about your immigration status – we will contact you.  
If you have asked for an application form to vote by post or by proxy, we will send you one.  
We will send each eligible person confirmation that they are on the electoral register. If you are aged 16 or 17, we will let you know when you are on the register.

**Problems with this form?**  
Contact us if you need any help understanding or completing this form  
Call 01234 567 890  
Email [info@manton.gov.uk](mailto:info@manton.gov.uk)  
Telephone 18001 01234 567 890  
Reference 1234567890  
123 Example Street, Suburbname, Anytown, Countyshire AB12 3CD.  
Call 01234 567 890 if you need this form in large print or in another format.

**Note A**  
Don't know your exact date of birth?  
Please give the date of birth you put on other official documents.  
For example, your passport or driver's licence.

**Note B**  
If you have more than one nationality, please include them all. You can only register to vote in the UK if you have leave to remain. We may check your immigration status with the Home Office before we include you on the electoral register.

**Note C**  
If you cannot tell us your National Insurance number, we will need to ask you for proof of your identity. We will contact you about this.

**Note E**  
There are two registers. Why?  
Using information received from the public, registration officers keep two registers – the electoral register and the open register (also known as the edited register).  
The electoral register lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in public elections. The register is used for electoral purposes, such as making sure only eligible people can vote. It is also used for other limited purposes specified in law, such as:  
- detecting crime (e.g. fraud)  
- calling people for jury service  
- checking credit applications.

Positive elements included those **One sided IER – front page** seen for the HEF version of this form around the appearance of simplicity. Specifically in this form, the positives were seen as clearer signposting that email and telephone details are not mandatory fields, and the “1,2,3” steps outlined on the front of the form which strongly highlighted the online alternative. However, some felt that this information might be lost on the cramped front page.

The **pre-populated** version shared the drawbacks of the blank version around the cramped appearance of the first page and the small font size.

One positive which was identified by almost all participants was a separate box for corrections if a name or address were incorrect. Although the box was

Your name and address	Karen Elizabeth Mitchell 23 Chestnut Avenue, Peterborough PB12 3LM
	If your name and address are wrong, put the correct details here. <hr/>

**Separate name correction box**

considered too small if you had a long name or long address, the inclusion of a separate box clarified for many how they were meant to make changes to their details – for some this was the most important requirement of any. When participants who were not originally given this version of the form saw that it had a separate box they felt that all pre-populated forms should have that format for making corrections.

## A4 two-sided, blank and pre-populated

The A4 two-sided IER form shared many of the same positives and negatives as the HEF, although some differences were noted. This form was sometimes the most popular, and the difference in popularity between A3 and A4 2-sided IER forms was smaller than for HEF forms.

The **blank** form was seen by many to be easy, simple and clear. The numerous guidance bubbles were seen as useful additions and helped maintain a less cluttered and confusing appearance. The information on the open register was also clearly signposted, which prevented suspicions arising that it was purposely placed after the declaration and signature section.

The form is divided into sections with guidance bubbles. The 'Your full name' section has fields for 'Forename(s)' and 'Surname', and a bubble for 'Any other name you have had in the last 12 months' with the example 'For example, you may have got married.' The 'Your date of birth' section has a date picker and a bubble for 'Don't know your exact date of birth?' with instructions to use other documents. The 'Your nationality' section has a bubble for 'If you have more than one nationality, please include them all.'

### Multiple guidance bubbles on two sided IER

Some were confused by the position of the telephone and email details section in this form – it was placed on the second page, away from other “personal” information such as National Insurance Number and date of birth, and with a selection of mandatory fields.

The signposting for the online option was also criticised on this form as it was not seen by many (in a paragraph of text at the very start of the form, and in the letter “blind-spot”). Participants wanted to be encouraged to complete it online and so were disappointed that this option was not made clearer.

**BOROUGH OF MANTON**  
123 Example Street, Suburbname,  
Anytown, Countyshire AB12 3CD  
Call 01234 567 890  
Email info@manton.gov.uk  
Textphone 18001 01234 567 890  
Reference 1234567890  
You can also fill in this form at  
[www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote)

### Online completion “blind spot”

The **pre-populated** version, whilst well-spaced and with a good font size, was seen as more confusing. Very little space is provided for participants to correct their details, so they were unsure where they should write new contact details or how to alter their name if it was required. There was also no bubble instruction on how to amend name details and there was a general lack of clear instruction about how to make a change.

**Your name and address**  
If your name and address are wrong, please change them.  
Karen Elizabeth Mitchell  
23 Chestnut Avenue, Peterborough PB12 3LM

### Pre-populated details and correction space



The online alternative was felt to be poorly signposted, and was only mentioned once under the council address.

Additionally, the “changed your name?” section on the second page caused confusion as participants who had recently changed their name corrected their name at the start of the form, and were then unsure whether they again needed to write in their changed name on the second page or not. It was suggested that this section appears with the “name and address” section or that clearer instructions at the beginning of the form were needed about where to make changes to a name that has been changed.

**Changed your name in the last 12 months?**

☐ No ☐ Yes

Please give us your new name.

### Name change section

On this version of the form there is also some information (eg. about the open register) placed at the end of the form, after people have signed it. Participants often missed this information and many said that once they sign a form they rarely look to see what else is written afterwards.

More positive feedback on this form specifically was that the “contact details” section was on the first page with other personal details in this version, meaning that the order of questions flowed better.

## Register to vote

To vote you need to be on the electoral register. If you do not fill in this form, you may not be able to vote.

Only your name and address will appear on the register.

**Filling in this form**

Use black ink, write in CAPITALS and only write in the white spaces.

**Your name and address**

If your name and address are wrong, please change them.

Karen Elizabeth Mitchell  
 23 Chestnut Avenue, Peterborough PB12 3LM

**Your date of birth**

If you don't know your exact date of birth, please tick if you are:

☐ Under 18 ☐ 18 – 70 ☐ Over 70

**Your nationality**

**Your National Insurance number**

You can find this on your payslip, or on official letters about tax, pensions or benefits.

If you don't know your National Insurance number, nationality or date of birth, please tell us why.

**Contact details**

Telephone number(s)

Email address (if you have one)

**Moved in the last 12 months?**

**MANTON**

123 Example Street, Suburbname,  
 Anytown, Countyshire AB12 3CD  
**Call** 01234 567 890  
**Email** info@manton.gov.uk  
**Textphone** 18001 01234 567 890  
**Reference** 1234567890

You can also fill in this form at  
[www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote)

**Don't know your exact date of birth?**  
Please give the date of birth you put on other official documents. For example, your passport or driver's licence.

**If you have more than one nationality,**  
please include them all. You can only register to vote in the UK if you have leave to remain. We may check your immigration status with the Home Office before we include you on the electoral register.

**If you cannot tell us your National Insurance number,** we will need to ask you for proof of your identity. We will contact you about this.

**You don't have to give us your contact details,** but if you do it will help us if we need to contact you about your registration.

### Contact details on first page of pre-populated form



## A3 booklet, blank and pre-populated

The findings for the A3 booklet IER format were similar to those for the HEF format, with this form frequently being picked out as the best. However, unlike in the HEF groups, where the A3 booklet often had a clear lead, preferences for the two sided and booklet IER forms were much closer – particularly for the pre-populated formats.

Participants liked the **blank** version because they felt the use of the space makes the form appear clear and easy to follow and fill out, and it was more popular than its A4 two-sided alternative.

The screenshot shows the beginning of a registration form. It includes fields for 'Your full name' (Forename(s) and Surname), 'Any other name you have had in the last 12 months', 'Your date of birth' (with a date picker and checkboxes for age groups: Under 18, 18-70, Over 70), and 'Your nationality'. There are also guidance bubbles: one for names (e.g., 'For example, you may have got married.'), one for date of birth (e.g., 'Don't know your exact date of birth? Please give the date of birth you put on other official documents...'), and one for nationality (e.g., 'If you have more than one nationality, please include them all...').

### A3 booklet – start of form

Unlike the HEF A3 booklet, directions on how to fill out the form online were placed on the front page, which also helped people view it more positively.

This box titled 'How to register' explains that registration is easy and quick. It lists three options: going to [www.gov.uk/registermyvote](http://www.gov.uk/registermyvote), calling on xxxxxxx, or completing the form in the provided envelope.

### “How to register” guidance on front page

The **pre-populated** form had the same clear, easy to follow, and popular layout as the blank version, although a few issues meant that it was less often the most popular form. The provision of a separate box for changes in name and address was a key factor for many in their preference for this form. However, this additional box was provided without a guidance bubble. Participants were concerned that the most important correction box was without a guidance bubble, and felt that the instruction directly above the boxes might be missed.

This section shows pre-filled details for 'Karen Elizabeth Mitchell' at '23 Chestnut Avenue, Peterborough PB12 3LM'. Below this is a box for corrections with the instruction: 'If your name and address are wrong, put the correct details here.'

### Separate corrections box

Another issue, shared with the A4 two-sided pre-populated form, was that the “changed your name?” section was on the second page, well after most participants had changed their name on the first page. This led to confusion as people wondered whether they should undo their correction on the first page and leave the second, or if they could correct their name in both places.

## Welsh language forms

Remarks on the Welsh language forms from depth interviews were generally in line with remarks from the English language groups. However, participants were impressed with the quality of the Welsh language translation, and also with the simplicity of the forms.

Specific language issues were around the word for nationality, *cededligrwydd*. Some participants were unsure what this meant, although the context and use of the English language version helped clear up any confusion.

<b>Eich cenedligrwydd</b>	<input type="text"/>	<b>Mwy nag un cenedligrwydd?</b>
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### ***Eich cenedligrwydd/Your nationality box***

In all five interviews conducted, the preference was for separate Welsh and English forms, rather than a combined/integrated (Welsh and English on the same page) or back-to-back (twist and turn<sup>3</sup>) format. It was felt that integrated forms can look confusing and appear very long, which would put people off filling them out. Participants highlighted some other official Welsh forms that are integrated (for example, DVLA forms) as examples of forms that appear too long and complicated. Twist and turn was also seen as confusing because of the requirement to flip the paper over if they wanted to check something on the English form.

By comparison, participants said that having separate forms was simpler as they could have them side by side when filling out the forms, ready for if they needed to check a specific word or phrase.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Twist and turn' is where a bilingual form is double sided, so one language appears on one side of the sheet and the other on the reverse throughout. This format means that each language version resembles a single-sided one language form.

# Recommendations

# Recommendations

No single form was sufficiently preferred across the groups to be considered unequivocally the best. In most groups one form came out as being worse than the others (usually the one-sided A4 pre-populated form – see the summary below), but overall there were positive and negative elements in each. These positives and negatives can be adapted and combined to create a form that combines the best of the three formats, whilst avoiding the pitfalls present in each - while also being aware of the final overall length of the form, and the implications this might have on the design.

## Positive form attributes

- ◆ **Clear signposting for online electoral registration at the start of the form** will help channel people to the online registration portal. A number of participants expressed frustration that they had part completed their paper form before realising that they could do it online instead.
- ◆ **On pre-populated forms, a separate box for name and address corrections** was seen as a must by participants as they felt uncomfortable crossing out incorrect details and were not clear where to write new, correct information. The use of tick boxes to note whether information is correct or not was also suggested as an alternative.
  - A clearer structure for this element of the form, with clear grid lines or boxes, would also help people to understand what they need to write where and explains the popularity of the otherwise cramped one-sided blank HEF form.
- ◆ **Providing clear steps on how to complete and return the form** was also popular. One of the most liked aspects of the otherwise unpopular one-sided A4 forms was the “1,2,3” steps on the front page.
- ◆ **The use of in-line guidance bubbles works better than front-loading notes.** Although some people thought the bubbles looked unprofessional, front-loading notes and flipping back to read them was almost universally unpopular.
  - Some suggested that putting the guidance bubbles to the left of the fields would make them more noticeable as people read from left to right and may stop before the bubble on the right hand side and miss the information.
- ◆ **A strong phrase like “Don’t lose your right to vote”** opened two of the HEF forms powerfully and was more successful at getting people’s attention than the other opening line (“about this form”).
- ◆ **Instructions on the use of block capitals and black ink** should be placed directly above the form or at the start, rather than to the side if it is to be noticed. Another prompt for capitals may be required for email address as it is a common habit to write this in lower case.
- ◆ The **“I don’t want to be included on the open register”** answer option was clear.

- ◆ **The envelope for these forms should draw attention to their importance** to ensure people open them, as should the accompanying letter.

#### Aspects of form design to avoid

- ◆ Although this is how electoral registration forms are currently filled out, **crossing out names and addresses on the pre-populated forms was found to be unpopular across the research**. Participants were unsure when they should cross out a name and manually amend the details to correct it, and when they should cross out the name and write the details in as a new person. It is important to note that this finding may have been affected by the artificial environment in which the research took place (asking people to pretend that they are the person named on the form); however, the same reaction was observed despite changes in strategy to counteract this.
- ◆ **Notes and information on a separate side of a form are less likely to be read than notes next to their relevant question**. If participants don't read notes they are more likely to make errors.
- ◆ **Information placed after the declaration and signature is unlikely to be read**. Participants consider a form "done" once it is signed, so important information should ideally be placed in-line with questions.
- ◆ **Small font size, and too much text on one page, can lead participants to ignore information**.
- ◆ **Changing the "choices" on postal/proxy voting and the open register should be made easier**. It is not particularly clear in any form that these cannot be amended on the registration form, and placing them next to information which can be amended, such as name and address, suggests that no further action is necessary.
- ◆ On IER forms **the point at which a change in name (eg. due to marriage) should be made needs to be clarified** – on the pre-populated section up front, in the name change section, or in both?

Based on people's preferences for the form attributes highlighted above, their reactions to the three formats can be summarised below:

**A4 one-sided, pre-populated** forms tended to be least popular. This was due to a variety of factors:

- ◆ The high level of information on the front page and the small font contributed to the form looking "cramped". This was particularly the case for the notes, which were also placed on the opposite side of the page to the form itself.
- ◆ However, it had some positive features such as the "1,2,3" steps, and the separate box for corrections

**A4 two-sided forms** were largely well-liked, although a number of “deal breakers” often prevented them from coming out as the most well liked. These included:

- ◆ The lack of a separate box for corrections to name on the pre-populated forms
- ◆ The need for clarification on how to make changes to “your choices” about postal/proxy voting and the open register
- ◆ Poor signposting for the online alternative to filling the form

**A3 forms** were often favoured, though not exclusively, with the blank version more clearly popular than the pre-populated

- ◆ Participants tended to like the white space and larger font size
- ◆ However, there was also a feeling that there was often “unnecessary space”
- ◆ The A4 versions were not seen as saving paper because they would come with a separate covering letter
- ◆ While some liked the “booklet” because it looked official and important, others did not like it because it made the form appear long, which some said would cause them to put it to one side rather than fill it out
- ◆ The “deal breakers” noted on the A4 two sided forms were also often present in the A3 booklet.