

Guidelines on the Appointment of Temporary Election Staff (including Selection Criteria and Processes)

1. Introduction

Background:

To deliver a well run election, the Returning Officer is required to appoint and train approximately 500 temporary staff to help her run the polling stations, postal vote opening and the count.

The day to day work, including appointing and training these temporary staff, is carried out by Electoral Services on behalf of the Returning Officer.

The Council's terms of recruitment, selection and employment do not apply to any of these appointments because staff are employed by the Returning Officer in her personal capacity. However, the Returning Officer should ensure that the methods used to identify, recruit and appoint staff are transparent and comply with legal requirements. This document aims to provide anyone applying for a role at Elections an understanding of the selection criteria and processes that are followed.

Application method:

1. For certain positions priority will be given to applications from candidates who are current London Borough of Hounslow council employees and/or those who have recent experience of working in support of local and/or national elections or referendums.
2. Where appropriate, the Returning Officer will appoint new staff in order to maintain/increase the number of staff with experience for future elections.

Information about the roles is available on the London Borough of Hounslow website (www.hounslow.gov.uk/workforelections) with a link to the application form for new applicants.

The election management system (EROS) has a database of people who have worked for the Returning Officer at previous elections or for the Electoral Registration Officer as a registration canvasser.

Contact is made (by letter with an application form) with staff on the database, early on in the election process, to ascertain who is available and interested in working on the election. A closing date for receipt of applications is given. This deadline is usually about 3 months prior to polling day.

Dismissal:

Whilst election work is a temporary appointment and the Returning Officer is able to terminate employment without providing any notice, she recognises the importance of providing feedback to staff. If the Returning Officer does not intend to re-appoint someone in the future following inadequate or unacceptable performance, Electoral Services will normally write to them within 2 months of the election to inform them of this and outline the reason for the decision.

2. Appointment of Presiding Officers

Return of Applications

The Returning Officer will:

- Identify experienced and new staff (who have performed the role for other local authorities)
- Identify suitable locations for new Presiding Officers to be placed.

Placing Staff

The Returning Officer will:

- Allocate experienced Presiding Officers who have expressed a willingness to be a Reserve Presiding Officer at any polling station in the Borough
- Then place new Presiding Officers at:
 - a double polling station with an experienced Presiding Officer or
 - at a polling station they are familiar with or
 - with Poll Clerks they are familiar with or
 - with experienced Poll Clerks or
- From the remaining experienced staff fill the places still left. This means that some experienced Presiding Officers will be offered a position that is not at their preferred polling station.

The Returning Officer will take into account individual preferences for placing poll clerks and presiding officers but cannot guarantee that these can be accommodated.

Selection criteria for new Presiding Officers

- Feedback from previous elections when working as a Poll Clerk.
- A person will normally have been a Poll Clerk on two occasions before they can be a Presiding Officer, although the Returning Officer will waive this for London Borough of Hounslow council employees who have attended a recent Presiding Officer recruitment session, submitted an expression of interest and demonstrated the requisite skills and experience to recommend them for the role of Presiding Officer without prior experience.
- They must have access to a car as Presiding Officers must have the means to transport the ballot box to the count venue after close of poll.

Selection criteria for Presiding Officers

- Ability to perform the role as laid out in the job description
- Experience of performing the role or other appropriate roles
- Past performance/Feedback

3. Appointment of Poll Clerks

Return of Applications

The Returning Officer will:

- Identify experienced and new staff (including those who have performed the role for other local authorities).
- Establish the polling stations where experienced Poll Clerks are needed. There should, ideally, be two experienced Poll Clerks with a new Presiding Officer and there should be an experienced Poll Clerk with a new Poll Clerk.
- In some cases a new Presiding Officer may have requested a specific experienced Poll Clerk to work with them. If this is the case this request should be fulfilled where possible.
- Find suitable spaces for new Poll Clerks, i.e. with an experienced Presiding Officer.

Placing Staff

The Returning Officer will:

- Take into account the need for experienced and new/inexperienced staff
- Fill experienced Poll Clerk position
- Fill new Poll Clerk positions (prioritising appointments for those London Borough of Hounslow council staff referred to below)
- Finally fill any remaining positions

The Returning Officer will take into account individual preferences for placing poll clerks and presiding officers but cannot guarantee that these can be accommodated.

Selection criteria for new Poll Clerks

- The Returning Officer invites applications from London Borough of Hounslow council employees who have never worked at a polling station before but are interested in becoming a Presiding Officer in the future. Some of those who submit an expression of interest will be prioritised for appointment as a new Poll Clerk at the next election so that if they acquire the requisite skills and knowledge they can be fast-tracked for appointment as a Presiding Officer at future elections.

Selection criteria for Poll Clerks

- Ability to perform the role as laid out in the job description
- Experience of performing the role or other appropriate roles
- Past performance/Feedback
- Future Progression – there is always need to develop staff to become Presiding Officers. If a person has potential/interest in becoming a Presiding Officer placement needs to enable them to gain the experience required to qualify to serve as a Presiding Officer.

4. Appointment of Polling Station Inspectors

Return of Applications

The Returning Officer will:

- Look through the Presiding Officer applications and pull out any who indicate interest in this role, and could be potential Polling Station Inspectors.
- Consider feedback (written and verbal) from previous elections.

Placing

The Returning Officer will:

- Identify the number of Polling Station Inspectors to be appointed.
- Contact those Polling Station Inspectors who were used at the last election, giving them brief information about the election and a detailed timetable showing their duties, and ask if they want to and are able to undertake the duties again.
- Identify people that could be new Polling Station Inspectors

Selection criteria

- Only internal London Borough of Hounslow council staff will be considered for this role
- Ability to perform the role as laid out in the job description
- Experience of performing the role or other appropriate roles
- Past performance/Feedback

Selection criteria for new Polling Station Inspectors

- The general rule is that a person must have experience of working at a polling station and an understanding of the electoral processes, before they can be a Polling Station Inspector, although we may waive this in exceptional circumstances.
- Ideally, they must have access to a car as Polling Stations Inspectors must have the means to tour a number of assigned polling stations across the Borough.
- We are keen to encourage new Polling Station Inspectors to come forward having gained suitable experience, in the interests of increasing our pool of suitable Polling Station Inspectors candidates and longer term staffing planning (business continuity planning).
- They must have good people skills and be able to maintain a good working relationship with the Returning Officer and the core Electoral Services Team, as well as representing the Returning Officer to a variety of stakeholders, including candidates, agents and electors.

5. Appointment of staff to work at Postal Vote Opening

Return of Applications

The Returning Officer will:

- Identify experienced staff
- Identify any potential new staff who can work the majority of the days required

Placing Staff

- Only London Borough of Hounslow council employees will be considered for this work
- Apprentices working at the London Borough of Hounslow will be appointed as postal vote assistants, alongside a minimum of three permanent staff to work with them at each opening session
- Contact those supervisors who were used at the last election, giving them brief information about the election and a detailed timetable showing their duties, and ask if they want to and are able to undertake the duties again.
- Allocate remaining positions to staff who apply via the application form taking into account any prior or relevant experience and how many and which sessions they can attend.

Selection criteria to work at postal vote opening

- Ability to perform the role as laid out in the job description
- Experience of performing the role or other appropriate roles
- Past performance/Feedback
- Availability of staff for all the opening sessions taking place. It is preferable to have consistency in staff throughout the sessions as it allows for the sessions to progress quicker and with less errors due to inexperience of the process.

6. Appointment of Count Staff

The appointment of Count Assistants is very different for each election depending on the count model to be used, impact of any combined polls and agreed timings.

Any verifications or full counts that are taking place over night following close of poll should not include any staff who have worked at a polling station during the day. Different staff should be used as count assistants for the following reasons:

- They have not just finished a 15 hour day on a polling station so should be fresh and more efficient
- They can arrive at the Count Venue in good time to be seated and briefed prior to close of poll
- They can start the process at exactly 10.00pm (the postal voters ballot boxes) instead of having to travel from the polling station at 10.00pm

If the stages of the count are separate (i.e. overnight verification and counting the following day) then count assistants should not (if possible) be appointed to both parts of the process. Again this is important in order to have fresh and more efficient staff.

Return of Applications

The Returning Officer will:

- Identify experienced staff
- Identify any applications from canvassers who have not applied for other positions
- Identify any potential new staff

Placing Staff

- Only London Borough of Hounslow Council staff will be employed as Count Supervisors.
- For certain election counts internal London Borough of Hounslow Council staff will be prioritised for appointment, such as if it is taking place during a normal working day.
- Allocate experienced staff, depending on the numbers required prioritising those who achieved the highest performance scores at previous election counts.
- Allocate a number of positions to new staff for longer term staff planning.

Selection criteria for count assistants

- Ability to perform the role as laid out in the job description
- Experience of performing the role or other appropriate roles
- Past performance/Feedback
- Future Progression – there is always need to develop staff to become Count Supervisors. If a person has potential/interest in becoming a Count Supervisor placement needs to enable them to gain the experience required to qualify to serve as a Count Supervisor.