## Elections and Referendums

### Guidance on the conduct of tellers

This document:

- Has been prepared having regard to the Electoral Commission’s Guidance for tellers in and around polling places
- Is intended for polling staff, agents, candidates and tellers
- Provides advice about what is and is not accepted when campaigning in and around polling places
- Recognises the important role that tellers can play in elections and referendums
- Should not be interpreted as seeking to prevent the activities of Tellers

### Definitions

In this guidance:

- ‘Polling Place’ means the building in which the polling station is located
- ‘Polling Station’ means the room or area in within a polling place where electors cast their votes, which contains the polling booths, ballot box and Presiding Officer’s table. The polling station is a self-contained area only those allowed by law may enter. More than one polling station may be located within a polling place.

### Tellers - General Information

Tellers:

- are usually volunteers for candidates
- stand outside polling places and record the electoral number of electors who have voted
- can help to increase voter turnout
- have no official legal status
- must not impeded or interfere with the efficient and secure administration of the election
- are only allowed in a polling station to cast their own vote, vote as a proxy or assisting a voter with disabilities
- must comply with any instructions given by the Returning Officer or Presiding Officer

### Teller’s location

Tellers have no legal right to enter the polling station. The only time they may enter the is if they are:

- casting their own vote
- voting as a proxy
- assisting a voter with disabilities.
Tellers must therefore:
- position themselves outside the polling station
- if permitted by the Presiding Officer may enter the polling place (e.g. stand under shelter) provided that they are outside the polling station and do not impeded the access of voters.
- not position themselves where they can see or hear what is going on inside the polling station
- where the polling place is only one room tellers are not allowed to enter that room
- comply with any direction given by the Presiding Officer or Returning Officer as to their positioning

Numbers of Tellers

No more than one teller per candidate is permitted at each polling station at any time. This because their behaviour and numbers should never be capable of being seen as intimidating in any way.

Where a polling place contains more than one polling station with separate entrances one teller per candidate may be situated at each entrance.

Teller’s activities

1. A teller’s main activity is to check who is about to vote or who has voted.

   This activity should involve tellers politely asking voters for their poll card, elector number or name and address as they enter or leave a polling station.

   A voter:
   - is not obliged to give this information
   - must not be pressed for this information if they decline to supply it

Tellers must not:
- ask a voter to re-enter the polling station to ascertain their elector number or retrieve a poll card
- request the voter information or voter poll card from Polling Staff. Staff would be breaching the secrecy requirement if this information was handed over

Tellers must:
- return any poll cards handed to them by voters either to the voter or to the Presiding Officer so that it can be disposed of securely
2. Tellers should not conduct themselves in a way that gives the impression they are election staff or employed by the Returning Officer.

With this in mind tellers:
- should not mark a document which gives the impression is the official polling station register
- should not position themselves so as impede voter’s access to the polling station
- should not position themselves in a way that causes a queue to form to enter the polling station
- if asked, explain that they are party activists seeking to determine who has actually voted

3. Tellers must not attempt to induce, influence or persuade an elector how or whether to vote.

Therefore tellers:
- Cannot promote particular candidates or political parties
- Should not display or distribute election material around the polling place
- Should not park cars emblazoned with party favours immediately outside the polling place. (Cars being used to transport voters to and from polling station are not subject to this restriction unless they unduly prolong their wait outside the polling station.)
- Should avoid conduct that may give rise to allegations of undue influence e.g. discussing voting intentions, party affiliations, a candidate’s history, election campaigns or activity associated with one particular part or candidate
- May wear conventionally sized rosettes in party colours bearing the name or emblem of the party or candidate as this assist electors by making it clear that they are activists and not electoral officials.
- Must not wear, carry or display headwear, footwear or other clothing that carries any writing, picture or sign relating to any candidate, party or campaigner.
- Should direct any queries about the electoral process to the Presiding Officer

Final points
- Presiding Officers are responsible for their polling station. Their decision in all matters relating to teller is final subject to the instructions of the Returning Officer.
- Candidates and agents are asked to bear in mind the accommodation restrictions that apply when selecting tellers.
- Should further assistance or guidance be required on this subject this should be sought from the Returning Officer in the first instance.

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