

Job Description: Presiding Officer

Reports to: The Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer

Responsible for: Poll Clerk(s) and Polling Station Assistant (if any)

The role of polling station staff is to ensure that voters can cast their vote in secret, free from influence and in a calm atmosphere.

Both the Presiding Officer and Poll Clerks should be able to carry out each other's duties if required. However, Presiding Officers have an overall responsibility for the polling station and carry out an additional supervisory role.

Duties of the Presiding Officer

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

Polling stations are open from 07:00 to 22:00. On polling day, Presiding Officers are required to arrive at the polling station by 06.30 to set up the equipment. Polling station staff are not permitted to leave the premises during polling hours, this ensures that the secrecy of the vote is maintained.

You must provide your own refreshments and take appropriate breaks (onsite) throughout the day to avoid tiredness.

Some venues will have more than one polling station. They may be in the same room, or in another room within the building. Some of these multiple station venues will have a Polling Station Assistant allocated, to assist voters to attend the correct station. Any reference below to Poll Clerks, should also be taken as a reference to Polling Station Assistants.

Main Responsibilities

1. Comply with any instructions issued by the (Deputy) Returning Officer.
2. Maintain the secrecy and security of the ballot.
3. Act impartially always.
4. Supervise the Poll Clerk(s).
5. Be polite and professional when dealing with voters, candidates, agents, and others entitled to be present in the polling station.
6. Ensure voters can cast their vote safely, including by making sure that any public health advice from the Returning Officer is observed throughout the day.
7. Read and understand the [Polling Station Secrecy Requirements](#).

Before Polling Day

1. Undertake training and attend any briefings (this may be in-person and/or virtual).
2. Liaise with the venue key-holder for your designated polling station and confirm arrangements for key collection/opening and closing the building.
3. In venues with multiple stations, contact the other Presiding Officer(s).
4. Contact your Poll Clerk(s).
5. Collect the ballot box, with contents, and be responsible for its security while in your possession.

Polling Day

1. Arrive at your designated polling station by 6:30 am.
2. Assist with the erection of polling screens (this involves some lifting) and placement of signage and polling equipment.
3. Organise the layout of the polling station taking all voter needs into account, with special attention to any accessibility issues.
4. Be responsible for health and safety at the polling station for all staff and visitors.
5. Ensure the polling station is opened on time at 7 am.
6. Ensure that all signs and instructions are clear, visible and remain in place throughout the day.
7. Keep the polling station neat and tidy.
8. Instruct and supervise the work of the Poll Clerk(s).
9. Account and be responsible for all ballot papers, issued and un-issued.
10. Ensure all voters provide appropriate photographic identification, recording as appropriate those who do not provide ID.
11. Ensure that electors' electoral numbers in the register of electors are checked and appropriately marked and that the issue is correctly recorded on the corresponding numbers list.
12. Ensure that an elector's eligibility is properly determined, and their ballot paper(s) issued.
13. Ask the prescribed questions of voters when necessary, including when asked to do so by candidates or agents or before the issue of a tendered ballot paper.
14. Deal with any special voting procedures, as required.
15. Ensure that voters cast their votes in secret and put them into the ballot box.

16. Act as an authorised person to receive and record any postal votes delivered by hand.
17. Manage the attendance of those entitled to be present in the polling station, e.g., candidates, agents, representatives of the Electoral Commission and Observers, and ensure they do not interfere with the voting process.
18. Be polite and professional when dealing with all visitors to the polling station and always remain impartial.
19. Monitor the activities of any tellers outside polling station and ensure that they do not interfere with the voting process.

Close of Poll

1. Ensure the polling station is closed on time, at 10 pm.
2. If there is a queue at 10pm, ensure every elector in the queue can cast their vote.
3. Seal the ballot box, and permit any candidate, election agent or polling agent present to add their own seal.
4. Supervise the dismantling of the polling station and ensure the building is returned to good order.
5. Complete the ballot paper account and associated paperwork; pack in accordance with instructions given by (Deputy) Returning Officer.
6. Secure or arrange the securing of the polling station premises.
7. Deliver the ballot box and associated paperwork to the designated count location.

You may be required to perform additional duties, not listed above, which are appropriate to your role and experience to ensure the smooth running of the election process. Job descriptions can be amended at the Returning Officer's discretion to ensure service needs are met.

Useful web links:

- [Handbook for Polling Station Staff \(for polls before 1 May 2025\)](#)
- [Dealing with party tellers outside the station](#)

Last updated: 12/02/2025

Person Specification – Presiding Officer

Experience	
Essential - To have worked previously as a Presiding Officer within the last three years <u>OR</u> to have worked as a Poll Clerk on at least two occasions within the last three years - A basic understanding of the election process	Desirable n/a
Skills & Personal Attributes	
Essential - Excellent communication skills and the ability to explain procedures to a variety of people - High level of personal presentation and professional manner - A commitment to customer care - Good administration skills and attention to detail - A team player and flexible attitude - Calm under pressure - Punctual and reliable	Desirable Ability to lift/carry polling booths, ballot boxes etc.
Other Requirements	
Essential - Must not have worked in support of a political party/candidate at the election, whether paid or unpaid - Be willing to attend training/briefing sessions as required - Must not have been convicted of an offence under Electoral Legislation - Agreement to waive the Working Time Directive for period of employment	Desirable Use of a car, with appropriate insurance, to carry the ballot box(es) and any other required polling equipment

