Elections Staff - Job description

Presiding Officer	
Responsible to (this will be confirmed in your appointment letter)	Returning Officer
Rate of pay (this will be confirmed in your appointment letter)	To be advised in appointment letter. Internal staff will not be required to take annualised hours or annual leave under the councils Leave Policy (v5 May 2015, reviewed 2022).
Duration of role (this will be confirmed in your appointment letter)	Temporary for one day plus training and ballot box collection (usually the Tuesday before the poll)
Hours (these will be confirmed in your appointment letter)	Collection of ballot box and equipment the Tuesday before the poll. 6:30am – 10.30pm on election day, plus delivering Ballot Box and equipment to count venue.
Location	Allocated polling station – to be advised in the appointment letter.
Employer	Either: Returning Officer (District and Parish Elections) Deputy Returning Officer (County Council Elections) Local Returning Officer (UK Parliamentary Elections) Counting Officer (Referendums)
DBS check required	No
Date job description updated	June 2026

Purpose of the post

- To be responsible for the set up of the polling station and the conduct of the ballot in the polling station
- To have a very good knowledge of the voting procedures.
- To comply with all instructions from the Returning Officer.
- To take charge of a polling station.
- To ensure that all electors are treated fairly, impartially and with respect.

- To maintain the secrecy of the ballot.
- To supervise the Poll Clerk(s) at the polling station.

Summary of responsibilities and personal duties

Duties Before Election Day:

- Attend compulsory training sessions and briefings provided by the Electoral Services team (online or in person).
- Liaise with the contact key holder for your designated polling station a week before polling day to confirm arrangements for key collection and/or the opening and closing the building.
- In a multiple polling station, make contact with other Presiding Officer(s) to discuss key collection etc.
- Make contact with all your appointed Poll Clerk(s) to check travel arrangements to and from polling station and ensure they are fully aware of their role and responsibilities and inform them about the facilities available at the venue.
- Collect the ballot box (usually on the Tuesday before the poll) and contents and keep secure.

Polling Day:

- Transport ballot box and contents to assigned polling station.
- Set up and organise the layout of the polling station taking all voter needs into account (this will include some lifting and assembly of polling booths and furniture).
- Assess accessibility for electors at the polling station and seek solutions where required.
- Be responsible for health and safety at the polling station for all staff and visitors.
- Ensure the polling station is opened at 7am precisely and seal the ballot box lid onto the ballot box.
- Ensure that all signs and instructions are clear, visible and remain in place throughout the hours of the poll.
- Keep the polling station neat and tidy.

- Instruct and supervise the work of the poll clerk(s).
- Account for, and be responsible for, all ballot papers : issued and un-issued.
- Check the photo ID of electors is valid and determine whether it is acceptable, and reject any ID that is not. Maintain appropriate records.
- Check and mark electors' electoral numbers in the register of electors and on the corresponding number lists.
- Issue ballot papers to voters.
- Ensure that voters cast their votes in secret and put them into the (correct) ballot box.
- Provide assistance to voters where appropriate.
- Receive postal votes delivered by hand and ensure paperwork is completed correctly
- 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.
- Be polite and professional when dealing with all visitors to the polling station and remain impartial at all times.
- Monitor the activities of tellers outside polling places.
- Maintain a safe system of work for yourself and others at all times.
- Comply with the instructions of the Returning Officer or his staff (including Polling Station Inspectors).

Close of Poll:

- Ensure the polling station is closed at 10pm precisely (unless there is a queue of voters who arrived before 10pm, in which case they must be issued with a queue card at 10pm and must be issued with a ballot paper as promptly as possible) and the ballot box sealed.
- Supervise the dismantling of the polling station and ensure the building is returned to good order.
- Complete the ballot paper account and associated paperwork; pack paperwork and equipment away in accordance with instructions given by Returning Officer.

- Close and lock the polling station as directed by the keyholder.

- Deliver the Ballot Box and associated paperwork to the Count location as soon as possible after close of poll as designated by the Returning Officer.

Special Conditions

You will be working a 16 hour day in excess of the hours set out in the EU Working Time Directive.

You must provide all your own refreshments.

Polling station staff are not permitted to leave the premises during the hours of poll.

You must read and adhere to the attached Requirement of Secrecy provisions.

Person specification

Experience

- To have worked as a Poll Clerk on at least two occasions.
- A good understanding of the election process.

Skills/personal attributes

- Numerate and literate.
- Keep calm under pressure and work on own initiative.
- Excellent communication and customer service skills.
- High level of personal presentation and professional manner.
- Ability to explain procedures.
- Accuracy and excellent attention to detail.
- Punctual and reliable.
- Confidentiality.
- Good team player and flexible attitude.
- Physically able enough to lift and carry ballot boxes and other equipment.

Essential requirements

- Attend compulsory training/briefing sessions as required.

- Understanding of the Working Time Directive and its impact on the post holder's average hours and rest breaks for the period of employment.

- The use of a mobile phone which should be switched on at all times throughout the day.

- Use of a vehicle to carry equipment which must be insured for business use.

- **Equal opportunities and diversity** - Demonstrate awareness and understanding of, and commitment to, equal opportunities and diversity, showing respect, consideration and sensitivity to people's needs and ensuring that both the councils' policies and Elections Act 2022 are adhered to and demonstrated in all contact with customers, colleagues, other agencies and stakeholders.

- **Public contact** - The post holder will have contact with members of the public throughout polling day, as well as contact with candidates, agents, polling station staff and elections staff.

The post holder must not have helped or been employed in any way, either for or against, any candidate, election agent or political party involved with any election.

The post holder must not have been convicted of an offence under electoral legislation.

In accordance with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, the post holder must demonstrate that they are permitted to work in the UK (evidence will be required such as a passport showing that the post holder is a British citizen or a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies having the right of abode in the United Kingdom).

The Electoral Commission

South Oxfordshire District Council
Listening Learning Leading

Vale of White Horse District Council

Notification of secrecy requirements – the poll

Section 66 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended)

(1) The following persons –

(a) every returning officer and every presiding officer or clerk attending at a polling station,
(b) every candidate or election agent or polling agent so attending
(c) every person so attending by virtue of any of sections 6A to 6D of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000

shall maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of voting and shall not, except for some purpose authorised by law, communicate to any person before the poll is closed any information as to –

(i) the name of any elector or proxy for an elector who has or has not applied for a ballot paper or voted at a polling station;
(ii) the number on the register of electors of any elector who, or whose proxy, has or has not applied for a ballot paper or voted at a polling station; or
(iii) the official mark.

[...]

(3) No person shall –

(a) interfere with or attempt to interfere with a voter when recording his vote;
(b) otherwise obtain or attempt to obtain in a polling station information as to the candidate for whom a voter in that station is about to vote or has voted;
(c) communicate at any time to any person any information obtained in a polling station as to the candidate for whom a voter in that station is about to vote or has voted, or as to the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper given to a voter at that station;
(d) directly or indirectly induce a voter to display his ballot paper after he has marked it so as to make known to any person the name of the candidate for whom he has or has not voted.

[...]

(3F) A person voting as proxy for an elector at a relevant election—

(a) must not communicate at any time to any person other than that elector any information as to the candidate for whom the person is about to vote, or has voted, as proxy for that elector;

(b) except for some purpose authorised by law, must not communicate at any time to any person other than that elector the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of a ballot paper sent or delivered to the person for voting as proxy for that elector.

[...]

(4A) No person having undertaken to assist a relevant voter to vote at a relevant election may communicate at any time to any person except that voter any information as to—

(a) the candidate for whom the voter intends to vote or has voted, or

(b) the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper given for the use of the voter.

(4B) In subsection (4A) “relevant voter” means a voter who is blind, has another disability, or is unable to read.

(5) No person having undertaken to assist a blind voter to vote [at an election in Scotland or Wales under the local government Act] shall communicate at any time to any person any information as to the candidate for whom that voter intends to vote or has voted, or as to the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper given for the use of that voter.

(6) If a person acts in contravention of this section he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months.

Manual handling policy

INTRODUCTION

1. Over one third of the accidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive each year result from manual handling activities. Some typical injuries associated with manual handling include internal injuries such as hernia, prolapsed disc, muscle and ligament strain and external injuries such as cuts, bruises, lacerations, crush injuries. Manual handling activities can also cause cumulative damage due to lifting or moving a load repetitively or in a fixed working posture.

AIM

2. The aim of this procedure is to minimise as far as reasonably practicable the risks to employees from the manual handling of loads and ensure compliance with legal requirements.

LEGAL REQUIREMENT

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992.

DEFINITIONS

3. Manual handling is defined as 'any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving thereof) by hand or by bodily force.'

PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

4. Managers must avoid the need for employees to undertake any manual handling activities which involve a risk of injury if possible.

5. Where this is not possible then the manager must assess the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling using the form available on the intranet - refer to appendix four for a copy of the manual handling assessment form. The following are taken into consideration:

    - the way the task is carried out (e.g. handler's posture)
    - load (weight, shape, size)
    - working environment (e.g. hot, cold, cramped)
    - individual capability.

6. Managers can use figure 1 in appendix one to make a quick and easy assessment. If the manual handling activity is within the guidelines described then a detailed assessment is not required. As a guide a packet of 500 sheets of A4 paper weighs 2.5 kg and a box of the same 12.5 kg. Lifting items weighing less than 3 kg (women) and 5 kg (men) would not require a manual handling assessment but one would be required for lifting the water bottle. Providing boxes of paper are not kept on the floor or above head height and can be lifted without extending the arms then a detailed risk assessment would not normally be required for this, unless the employee was pregnant or suffering from ill-health.

7. Where possible, managers must consider mechanisation and/or manual handling aids.

8. Managers must include the employees involved in the work activity in the risk assessment process to ensure that control measures introduced are effective and practicable.

9. Where an assessment identifies a significant risk, such a risk must be reduced as far as reasonably practicable. The manual handling risk assessment form identifies the problems to look for when making an assessment and ways to reduce the risk of injury.

10. Managers must review the manual handling assessment and the control measures at least every three years, or when there is a reason to suspect that it is no longer valid, or if there has been a significant change in the matter to which it relates, to check their effectiveness and to ensure that controls are being maintained.

11. Wherever reasonably practicable, loads needing manual handling must be marked with the weight of the load and an indication of their heaviest side.

12. Managers required to carry out manual handling assessments must be competent (familiar with the work being carried out), for difficult or unusual cases please contact the health and safety adviser.

13. A copy of each risk assessment must be sent to the health and safety adviser for review and retention and the original retained electronically. Any manual handling assessment relating to an individual must be sent to human resources so a copy can be retained on the employee's personnel files.

14. Employees must follow safe systems of work, use equipment provided for their safety, co-operate with their manager, inform their manager of any hazardous handling activities and ensure that their activities do not put others at risk.

TRAINING

15. Managers must make sure all employees required to manually handle loads are given appropriate training in manual handling risk factors and preventative measures. In particular, they should be trained in safe handling, including good handling techniques, which are outlined in appendix two.

16. Training and instruction complements measures to reduce the risk of injury, it does not replace them. Training can not overcome a lack of mechanical aids; unsuitable loads; bad working conditions.

MONITORING

17. The health and safety adviser is responsible for auditing and reviewing this procedure at least every three years, or when circumstances dictate.

Version 3 issued: September 2016
Review Due: September 2019

APPENDIX 1

General risk assessment guidelines

1. There is no such thing as a completely 'safe' manual handling operation. But working within the following guidelines will cut the risk and reduce the need for a more detailed assessment.
2. Use figure one to make a quick and easy assessment. Each box contains a guideline weight for lifting and lowering in that zone. (As you can see, the guideline weights are reduced if handling is done with arms extended, or at high or low levels, as that is where injuries are most likely to occur.)

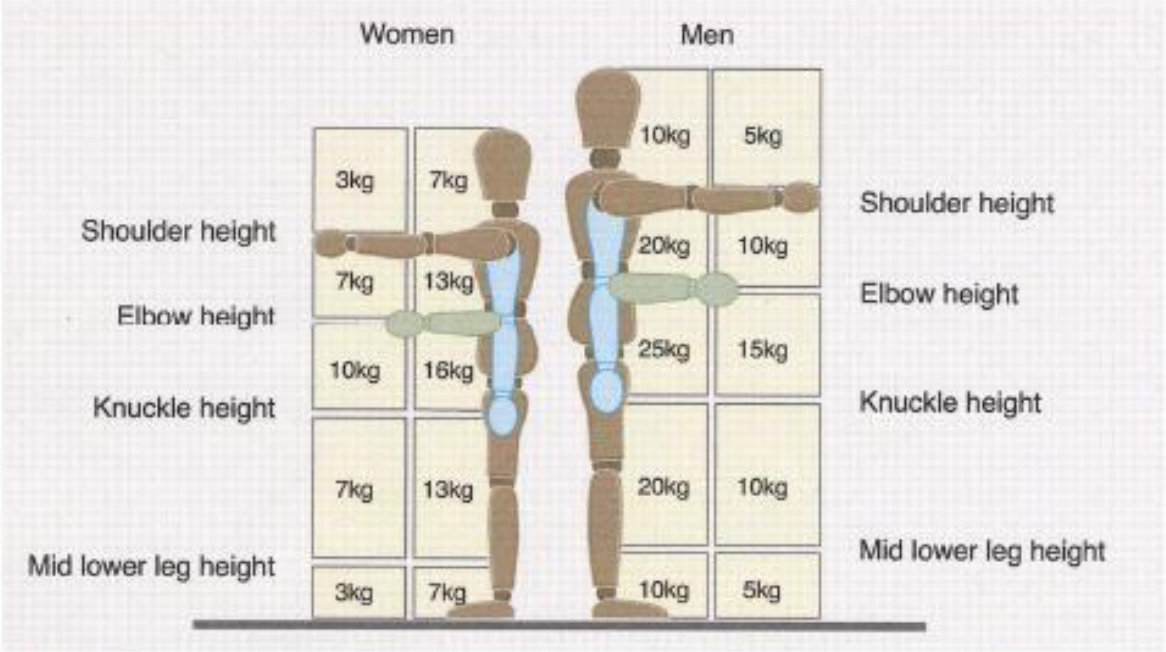


Figure 1

3. Observe the work activity you are assessing and compare it to the diagram. First, decide which box or boxes the lifter's hands pass through when moving the load. Then, assess the maximum weight being handled. If it is less than the figure given in the box, the operation is within the guidelines.
4. If the lifter's hands enter more than one box during the operation, use the smallest weight. Use an in-between weight if the hands are close to a boundary between boxes.
5. The guideline weights assume that the load is readily grasped with both hands and that the operation takes place in reasonable working conditions, with the lifter in a stable body position.

Twisting

6. Reduce the guideline weights if the handler twists to the side during the operation. As a rough guide, reduce them by 10 percent if the handler twists beyond 45° and by 20 percent if the handler twists beyond 90°.

Frequent lifting and lowering

7. The guideline weights are for infrequent operations - up to about 30 operations per hour, where the pace of work is not forced, adequate pauses to rest or use different muscles are possible, and the load is not supported by the handler for any length of time. Reduce the weights if the operation is repeated more often. As a rough guide, reduce the weights by 30 percent if the operation is repeated once or twice per minute, by 50 percent if the operation is repeated five to eight times a minute, and by 80 percent where the operation is repeated more than 12 times a minute.

Pushing and pulling

8. The task is within the guidelines if the following figures are not exceeded:

	Men	Women
force to stop or start the load	20 kg	15 kg
sustained force to keep the load in motion	10 kg	7 kg

9. Refer to appendix three 'Good handling technique for pushing and pulling' for some examples of forces required to push or pull loads.

Using the results: Do I need to make a more detailed assessment?

10. Using Figure 1 is a first step. If it shows the manual handling is within the guideline figures (bearing in mind the reduced limits for twisting and for frequent lifts) you need not do any more in most cases. But you will need to make a more detailed assessment if any of the following apply:

- the conditions given for using the guidelines (e.g. that the load can be readily grasped with both hands) are not met
- the person doing the lifting has reduced capacity, e.g. through ill health or pregnancy
- the handling operation must take place with the hands beyond the boxes in the diagram
- the guideline figures in the diagram are exceeded

11. For pushing and pulling, you should make a more detailed assessment if any of the following apply:

- there are extra risk factors like uneven floors or confined spaces;
- the worker can't push or pull the load with their hands between knuckle and shoulder height;
- the load has to be moved for more than about 20 m without a break; or
- the guideline figures in the table are likely to be exceeded.

12. Work outside the guidelines is likely to increase the risk of injury, so you should examine it closely to make sure it has been properly assessed and the risk of injury has been reduced.

APPENDIX 2

Good handling technique for lifting

Here are some practical tips to remember when loads are lifted or handled. In the following section a basic lifting operation is taken as an example.

1. **Think before lifting/handling**
   - Plan the lift.
   - Can handling aids be used?
   - Consider the route to take, are there any obstructions, doors to open, etc.
   - Where is the load going to be placed?
   - Will help be needed with the load?
   - Remove obstructions such as discarded wrapping materials.
   - For a long lift, consider resting the load midway on a table or bench to change grip.

2. **Keep the load close to the waist**
   - Keep the load close to the body for as long as possible while lifting.
   - Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body.
   - If a close approach to the load is not possible, try to slide it towards the body before attempting to lift it.

3. **Adopt a stable position**
   - The feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance (alongside the load, if it is on the ground).
   - The worker should be prepared to move their feet during the lift to maintain their stability.
   - Avoid tight clothing or unsuitable footwear, which may make this difficult.

4. **Get a good hold**
   - Where possible the load should be hugged as close as possible to the body. This may be better than gripping it tightly with hands only.

5. **Start in a good posture**
   - At the start of the lift, slight bending of the back, hips and knees is preferable to fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting).

6. **Don't flex the back any further while lifting**
   - This can happen if the legs begin to straighten before starting to raise the load.

7. **Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways,** especially while the back is bent.
   - Shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as the hips.
   - Turning by moving the feet is better than twisting and lifting at the same time.

8. **Move smoothly. Keep the head up when handling**
   - Look ahead, not down at the load, once it has been held securely.

- The load should not be jerked or snatched as this can make it harder to keep control and can increase the risk of injury.

9. **Don't lift or handle more than can be easily managed**
   - There is a difference between what people can lift and what they can safely lift. If in doubt, seek advice or get help.

10. **Put down, then adjust**
    - If precise positioning of the load is necessary, put it down first, then slide it into the desired position.

APPENDIX 3

Good handling technique for pushing and pulling

Here are some practical points to remember when loads are pushed or pulled.

1. **Handling devices**
   - Aids such as barrows and trolleys should have handle heights that are between the shoulder and waist.
   - Devices should be well-maintained with wheels that run smoothly (the law requires that equipment is maintained).
   - When purchasing new trolleys etc, ensure they are of good quality with large diameter wheels made of suitable material and with castors, bearings etc which will last with minimum maintenance.
   - Consultation with employees and safety representatives will help, as they know what works and what doesn't.
2. **Force**
   - As a rough guide the amount of force that needs to be applied to move a load over a flat, level surface using a well maintained handling aid is at least two percent of the load weight. For example, if the load weight is 400 kg, then the force needed to move the load is eight kg. The force needed will be larger, perhaps a lot larger, if conditions are not perfect (e.g. wheels not in the right position or a device that is poorly maintained). The operator should try to push rather than pull when moving a load, provided they can see over it and control steering and stopping.
3. **Slopes**
   - Employees should enlist help from another worker whenever necessary if they have to negotiate a slope or ramp, as pushing and pulling forces can be very high.
4. **Uneven surfaces**
   - Moving an object over soft or uneven surfaces require higher forces.
5. **Stance and pace**
   - To make it easier to push or pull, employees should keep their feet well away from the load and go no faster than walking speed.