ProtectUK

Election security for polling stations and counting venues

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The advice contained in this section is intended to assist Returning Officers to develop a security plan to avoid major disruption to the election process.

Safety of election staff and venues

The recommendations will not be applicable in all cases and should be regarded as a menu of options that could be implemented, taking into account the nature of the threat together with the type and location of building being used. It is essential, in order to adapt to local needs, that Returning Officers discuss security arrangements with police at the earliest opportunity.

Returning Officers are responsible for the safety of election staff, the voting process and the verification and the count. This guide has been formulated to assist them with the security of buildings used in the electoral process.

The section contains generic advice intended to encompass the security provisions for all elections. As such it will need to be tailored to suit the type of venue being used.



Introduction

The following guidelines are intended to reduce the opportunity for disruption of the Election process through the use or threat of terrorism.

This document contains guidance outlining a series of factors for consideration by Returning Officers to enable their staff to conduct their roles and responsibilities, providing safe and secure counting venues and polling stations as far as reasonably practicable.

The guidelines are not intended to be exhaustive as the premises used will vary greatly and recommendations therefore must be adapted to meet local needs. Further supporting guidance publications including **'Recognising the Terrorist Threat'** are available on ProtectUK and the National Protective Security Agency (NPSA) website.

The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) have produced guidance on maintaining order and preventing undue influence outside polling stations: Maintaining order outside polling stations.

The APP outlines the necessity for Returning Officers and their respective Police Force to initiate

early contact in planning for the Election. The Electoral Commission provide a variety of guidance products, including a handbook for Polling Station staff at www.electoralcommission.org.uk.

Whilst the safety of staff must be part of security planning considerations, there is a high level of individual responsibility. Staff should be made aware of personal safety and security when working at and travelling to and from sites. In addition to NaCTSO (The Blue Book: A Guide to Personal Security), a good source of personal security advice is available at www.suzylamplugh.org.

The Threat

An attack in the UK could occur anywhere and potentially with little or no warning. Terrorists are likely to favour ‘soft’ targets or venues and public spaces with little or no protective security measures. Understanding the threat facing us all is essential in order that proportionate, effective and responsive activity can take place. It is important staff understand what normal looks like, around their venue, so that they are better able to identify suspicious activity. The message is clear ‘don’t worry, don’t delay, just act.’

In the event of an emergency or other incident requiring urgent police attention all staff should be reminded to dial '999' immediately. They should also notify the Returning Officer as soon as possible.

Managing security

To assist in deciding what security arrangements are necessary and commensurate, consideration may be given to the following factors:

- The current threat assessment
- The venue
- Profile of candidates
- Any other local issues that could influence security

The majority of venues used for local elections are unlikely to require any greater security arrangements than those afforded by good housekeeping such as a physical check of buildings and unobtrusive access control.

In a minority of cases, locations such as counting venues or high profile polling stations may require additional security provisions. Returning Officers are encouraged to liaise with their Police Single Point Of Contact (SPOC) at the earliest opportunity to discuss policing arrangements.

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