**Postal Vote Opening**

**Job Description**

**Points to note:**

1. The opening of postal votes usually takes place during the working day in the two weeks prior to polling day and can last anywhere between a few hours to an all day session. There is also an opening session on the evening of polling day.
2. You need to be available for as many sessions as possible.
3. Postal vote openers will be paid £65 for a daytime opening session.
4. Candidates and Agents may be present at the opening sessions to observe the process.
5. All staff must abide by the requirements of secrecy (as listed overleaf).

**Duties of a Postal Vote Opener:**

1. Postal votes are distributed in bundles of 50.  The bundle needs to be checked to ensure that there are 50 envelopes in the bundle.

1. Open the Envelope Bs, one at a time, and sort the contents:
* Envelope B
* Envelope A (ballot paper envelope) and the attached Postal Voting Statement (PVS). If the PVS isn’t visible, open Envelope A and see if it is inside.
* Any Envelopes Bs which don’t contain a PVS should be placed in the doubtful tray, along with their original contents, and the removal recorded on the batch header.
* If the Envelope A is missing, but the PVS and Ballot Paper are present, ask a team leader to create a replacement Envelope A (i.e. a new blank envelope upon which the ballot paper number from the PVS will be written).
* If an Envelope B contains two (or more) Envelope As you need to alert the team leader.

1. Each batch of 50 envelopes has a ‘batch control sheet’ that must be completed once all the envelopes have been opened. This shows how many postal voting statements are being sent for scanning (to check the date of birth and signature provided) minus any packs removed by the supervisor as they were missing something or contained additional items.

1. Once the statements have been scanned and checked by the central team the valid ‘envelope As’ (containing the ballot paper(s)) the batch sheet will be completed and all ‘good’ envelope A’s will move to ‘ready to open’ area.

1. Count the envelopes in the batch
2. Tear off all the PVS from their envelope, bundle them with a paperclip, write the batch number on the back and place it in the box for verified PVS in batch number order.

*NOTE: To avoid compromising the anonymity of the vote, all PVS must be removed from the opening desk* ***BEFORE*** *any envelope is opened.*

1. Open envelope A, check the numbers on the ballot papers match the number on the envelope.
* If the ballot papers and envelope numbers match, place the ballot papers **FACE DOWN** in the ballot paper tray and stack empty A envelopes in another tray. Keep the ballot papers separated by type / colour.
* If the ballot paper number **doesn't match, return** the ballot paper back into Envelope A, mark the envelope with the number of the ballot paper which has been returned and the batch number and place it into the doubtful tray ready for later adjudication.

1. Initial and complete the batch sheet with the number of good ballots and the number of missing and mismatches.

1. Give the batch sheet and ‘good’ ballot papers to the supervisor at the top table. Place the missing and mismatched envelopes in the tray next to the DROs.

Notification of secrecy requirements – postal voting

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

(4) Every person attending the proceedings in connection with the issue or the receipt of ballot papers for persons voting by post shall maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of the voting and shall not –

(a) except for some purpose authorised by law, communicate, before the poll is closed, to any person any information obtained at those proceedings as to the official mark; or

(b) except for some purpose authorised by law, communicate to any person at any time any information obtained at those proceedings as to the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper sent to any person; or

(c) except for some purpose authorised by law, attempt to ascertain at the proceedings in connection with the receipt of ballot papers the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of any ballot paper; or

(d) attempt to ascertain at the proceedings in connection with the receipt of the ballot papers the candidate for whom any vote is given in any particular ballot paper or communicate any information with respect thereto obtain at those proceedings.

[ ... ]

(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.