



BRIEFING PAPER

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Electoral fraud since 2010

By Isobel White and Neil
Johnston

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Contributing Authors:

Alex Bellis

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Summary

On 12 August 2016 Sir Eric Pickles published [Securing the ballot](#), his review into electoral fraud. The Government's Anti-Corruption Champion's year-long review has resulted in fifty recommendations on various aspects of the polling and voter registration process. The Government [published its response](#) on 27 December 2016, which included plans for pilot schemes in some areas in England for voters to be required to show identification in order to vote at local elections due in May 2018.

There has been increasing concern about electoral offences in recent years and in 2012 the Electoral Commission began a review to determine whether there were opportunities to improve confidence in the security of the electoral process. On 8 January 2014 the Commission published its [final report and recommendations](#) on electoral fraud in the UK. The Commission called for sustained action to address the risk of electoral fraud, especially in higher risk areas, and has called for the introduction of a system under which voters should be required to show proof of identity at the polling station before they can be issued with a ballot paper.

The Labour Government had made provision for the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER) in the *Political Parties and Elections Act 2009* to help combat fraud. Following a commitment in the Coalition's *Programme for government* to speed up its implementation, the *Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013* made provision for the introduction of IER by 2015. IER was introduced from 10 June 2014 in England and Wales and from 19 September 2014 in Scotland. For further information see Library Briefing Paper 6764, [Individual Electoral Registration](#).

This Briefing Paper gives details of the reports published by the Electoral Commission and the Associations of Chief Police Officers on cases of alleged electoral malpractice.

The Paper also provides information about the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into electoral conduct which published its [report](#) in October 2013. The cross-party group of MPs and Peers was commissioned by John Mann MP to examine discriminatory behaviour during election campaigns.

A chronology of allegations of electoral fraud from 2010 to date is given and the different election offences are described; for information about electoral fraud before 2010 see Briefing Paper 3667, [Postal voting and electoral fraud 2001-09](#).

1. Election offences

Details of the main electoral offences as set out in the *Representation of the People Act 1983* are given below. The Act largely consolidated the offences from nineteenth century legislation and defined them as corrupt practices. A [Schedule of election and referendum-related crimes and penalties](#) is available on the College of Policing's website page about policing elections. This guidance is supported by the Electoral Commission and replaces the *Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral fraud in England and Wales* previously published jointly by the Electoral Commission and the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Undue influence

Section 115 of the *Representation of the People Act 1983* states that an individual is guilty of undue influence if he directly, or indirectly, makes use of, or threatens to make use of, force, violence or restraint, or inflicts or threatens to inflict, injury, damage or harm in order to induce or compel any voter to vote or refrain from voting. A person may also be guilty of undue influence if they impede or prevent the free exercise of the franchise of an elector.

Personation

Section 60 of the *Representation of the People Act 1983* states that a person is guilty of personation if he votes as someone else (whether that person is living, dead or is a fictitious person), either by post or in person at a polling station as an elector or as a proxy. Vote-rigging is personation on a larger scale.

Bribery

Under Section 113 of the *Representation of the People Act 1983* a person is guilty of bribery if he directly or indirectly, by himself or by any other person on his behalf, gives any money or procures any office to or for any voter, in order to induce any voter to vote or refrain from voting.

Treating

Section 114 of the *Representation of the People Act 1983* states that a person is guilty of treating if either before, during or after an election, they, directly or indirectly, give or provide or pay, wholly or in part, the expense of giving or providing any food, drink, entertainment or provision in order to influence corruptly any voter to vote or refrain from voting. Any elector or their proxy who accept such food, drink, entertainment or provision is also guilty of treating.

Other offences

The *Electoral Administration Act 2006* made provision for new offences of supplying false information to an Electoral Registration Officer and of applying for a postal or proxy vote with the intention of stealing another person's vote by either personating another elector or by wrongfully redirecting another voter's postal vote.

2. Sir Eric Pickles' Review of electoral fraud

On 14 August the Cabinet Office announced that Sir Eric Pickles, the Government's Anti-Corruption Champion, was to review electoral fraud and make recommendations on what could be done to tackle it.¹ In an article in the *Daily Telegraph* on 12 August 2015, Sir Eric said:

The new Conservative Government is no longer prepared to turn a blind eye to Britain's modern-day rotten boroughs. I welcome the recent action of the new Cabinet Office Minister, John Penrose, to accelerate the introduction of individual registration and remove phantom voters. Over the next few months, I will be gathering evidence before reporting to the Prime Minister on what further steps are necessary to stamp out voter registration fraud and error; postal voting fraud; impersonation; bribery; and undue influence and intimidation.

Our nation has a proud heritage as the mother of Parliaments, yet the worrying and covert spread of electoral fraud threatens that reputation. While all politicians want high turnouts, we cannot sacrifice integrity and confidence in our democracy through misplaced political correctness or woolly concerns over "political engagement". It is time to awake from our state of denial and take action against the electoral crooks who threaten our elections. British democracy should not be reduced to the level of a phone vote in an X Factor contest: "vote early, vote often" is the problem, not the solution.²

The terms of reference for the inquiry are as follows:

- to examine what steps are necessary to stop voter registration fraud and error, postal voting fraud, impersonation, intimidation, bribery, treating and undue influence;
- to review the role of councils, the police and the Electoral Commission in deterring, identifying and prosecuting fraud;
- to consider the recommendations of Richard Mawrey QC in his recent Election Court judgment on fraud in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets;
- to recommend to government what practical changes are needed to legislation, guidance and practice.³

The consultation period for the inquiry ended on 8 October 2015.

The final report was published by the Cabinet Office on 12 August 2016.⁴ The report makes fifty recommendations for the Government to consider. In his conclusions, Sir Eric states:

¹ [Sir Eric Pickles to examine electoral fraud](#), Cabinet Office press release, 14 August 2015

² [We are ignoring electoral abuse just as we ignored child sex abuse in Rotherham](#), *Daily Telegraph*, 12 August 2015

³ [Sir Eric Pickles to examine electoral fraud](#), Cabinet Office press release, 14 August 2015

⁴ Cabinet Office, [Securing the ballot: review into electoral fraud](#), 12 August 2016

Having undertaken this review, I have conflicting responses – I am both dismayed and heartened. The former because of the evidence that has been adduced that shows the kind of tricks unscrupulous people will play to get candidates elected; and the latter because, despite that evidence, we still have a democracy and an electoral system that, in other than cases like that of Tower Hamlets, generally provides free and fair elections based on a system of trust and openness and inclusion.

He goes on to say:

My fear now is that such a trust-based system is becoming no longer tenable. To retain the integrity of our democracy, we need to introduce more rigour into the processes we use, to see more clarity and proactivity from institutions such as the police in upholding the system. We need to act now to avoid further major instances of fraud taking place.⁵

His recommendations cover a number of areas, including polling stations, postal and proxy voting, voter registration, election petitions, nominations and electoral offences.

One of the main recommendations is for voters to be required to produce personal identification at a polling station before getting a ballot paper. This has been a key recommendation of the Electoral Commission (see section 6 below) since 2014 and it would bring Great Britain into line with requirements in Northern Ireland. Another key recommendation that mirrors that of the Electoral Commission is to restrict the involvement of campaigners in the absent voter administration process.

The recommendations include:

- Returning Officers and the police should have greater powers to deal with unwanted behaviour and intimidation in and around polling stations and a lower test of intimidation should be introduced
- The taking of photographs in polling stations should be made illegal
- There should be restrictions on the number of postal votes handed in at polling stations and there should be statutory restrictions on campaigners handling completed postal votes and their envelopes. Sir Eric also recommended that the option to permanently request postal votes should be removed.
- On proxy voting, the same ID requirements for voting in person should be introduced and Electoral Registration Officers should be given a power of enquiry to check emergency proxy applications
- The Government should consider how residence could be defined in law to provide greater clarity about being able to register at a second residence
- There should be stronger checks on nationality when people apply to be placed on the electoral register and the Government should consider automating the process
- Eight recommendations relate to the election petition process
- Maximum sentences should be increased for electoral fraud relating to postal voting, personation and registration

⁵ Ibid, p55

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The remaining recommendations relate to the roles and responsibilities of the Electoral Commission, Electoral Registration and Returning Officers and the police.

Chris Skidmore MP, Minister for the Constitution, welcomed the report and said:

In order to ensure we have a democracy that works for everyone, the government is determined to ensure that the electoral register is as complete and accurate as possible. The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration has already begun to transform our registration system, increasing its accuracy and performance at the same time as seeing record levels of registration. We intend to continue to build on this success.

This report will be an important contribution to our fight against all types of fraud in the UK. We will look closely at the recommendations.⁶

In a press release the Electoral Commission stated that:

We welcome the fact that Sir Eric Pickles has repeated so many of the Commission's longstanding recommendations in his report, including our call for voter ID from 2014, which the UK Government must now finally respond to.⁷

The Government published its response to Sir Eric's recommendations on 27 December 2016.⁸ The document gives the Government's responses to each of the 50 recommendations made by Sir Eric. The Government supports many of the recommendations but notes:

This response creates a challenging programme of work that will take place over a number of years and requires partnership with other governments and a range of organisations at both national and local level.

It is essential that some of this work is put in place in the short term to prevent further attempts to undermine the electoral process, and to ensure public confidence and support participation. It needs to be implemented carefully and effectively but also in good time.⁹

Implementation of the recommendations would take a mixture of primary and secondary legislation and guidance. The Government also acknowledges that some areas require more consideration before action can be taken. For example, Sir Eric recommends strengthening the electoral registration process to prevent ineligible nationalities from registering.

The Government has committed to exploring whether data could be collected to assess the scale of the problem of ineligible foreign

⁶ Sir Eric Pickles publishes report into tackling electoral fraud, [Cabinet Office press release, 12 August 2016](#)

⁷ Electoral Commission press release, [Electoral Commission statement on Sir Eric Pickles' review of electoral fraud](#), 12 August 2016

⁸ Cabinet Office, [A democracy that works for everyone: a clear and secure democracy - government response to Sir Eric Pickles' review of electoral fraud](#), 27 December 2016.

⁹ Ibid, p27. See also [Written statement HCWS396](#), 9 January 2017

nationals registering to vote and whether a more systematic system of nationality checking would be a proportionate response.¹⁰

At the same time as responding to Sir Eric's review, the Government announced it was going to trial one of the key recommendations, that ID should be required in order to vote.¹¹

The Government announced:

The aim is that pilots for ID in polling stations will be conducted at the local government elections in May 2018. Electors will be required to bring ID to prove who they are before they can vote, preventing anyone fraudulently taking another person's ballot paper. Local authorities will be invited to apply to trial different types of identification, including forms of photo ID such as driving licenses and passports, or formal correspondence such as a utilities bill to prove their address backed by a signature check. Voters will be asked to produce ID before they can be given their ballot paper. If successful, the measure could be introduced for general elections and other polls. The independent Electoral Commission has long called for the use of ID in polling stations.¹²

The Government said it would invite applications from the 18 local authorities that have been identified by the Electoral Commission as at most risk of allegations of electoral fraud. The Government will also seek applications from other authorities where voter fraud has not been identified as a risk so that the impact of the pilots give an accurate picture across the country.

The 18 authorities identified by the Electoral Commission are:

- Birmingham
- Blackburn with Darwen
- Bradford
- Bristol
- Burnley
- Calderdale
- Coventry
- Derby
- Hyndburn
- Kirklees
- Luton
- Oldham
- Pendle
- Peterborough
- Slough
- Tower Hamlets
- Walsall
- Woking

¹⁰ Ibid, p11

¹¹ Cabinet Office press release, [Eliminating electoral fraud in polling stations](#), 27 December 2017

¹² Ibid

The Electoral Commission welcomed the Government's response:

We welcome today's full and considered response from the Government and the announcement of its intention to pilot measures to increase security at polling stations. Having undertaken detailed work, the Commission's view is that the use of photographic ID is the most effective proof against personation; however, we look forward to working with the Government and other partners to further explore the options, in order to ensure voter confidence in the system.¹³

The Labour Party broadly welcomed many of the proposals but highlighted concern that a requirement to produce ID at a polling station risked disenfranchising those without the required ID.

The Electoral Commission conducted research into potential proof of identity schemes for voting in December 2015 (see section 6.2) and estimated that 7.5% of the Great Britain electorate would be without suitable photo ID.¹⁴

Cat Smith, Labour's shadow minister for voter engagement said:

The government should be doing all it can to encourage lawful voting and ensure a high turnout, not putting extra hurdles in the way. The plans for photo ID are like taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut, potentially denying a vote to millions.¹⁵

The Electoral Reform Society has also been critical saying that the requirement to show ID in order to vote was a "sledgehammer to crack a nut" and that is risked reducing turnout as people could be turned away from the polling station if they did not have the required ID.¹⁶

There is more detail about the number of electoral fraud cases in Section 4.

¹³ Electoral Commission press release, [*Electoral Commission statement on Government response to Sir Eric Pickles' review of electoral fraud*](#), 27 December 2016

¹⁴ Electoral Commission, [*Delivering and costing a proof of identity scheme for polling station voters in Great Britain*](#), p19

¹⁵ Labour Party press release, [*Requiring voters to produce specific forms of photo ID risks denying millions of electors a vote*](#), 27 December 2016

¹⁶ Electoral Reform Society, [*Compulsory voter ID would only add to Britain's democratic deficit*](#), 4 January 2017

3. Policing elections

The police are responsible for investigating allegations of electoral fraud and every police force in the UK has an identified Single Point of Contact Officer (SPOC) for electoral fraud. The SPOC liaises with Returning Officers to ensure that they have police advice and support when this is needed.

Until 2014 the Electoral Commission and the Association of Chief Police Officers published *Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral malpractice*. Guidance is now published by the College of Policing as the Authorised Policing Practice on policing elections and is available on the College's [website](#) along with associated sources on electoral offences. The Electoral Commission gives further information:

This new guidance published by the College of Policing and supported by the Electoral Commission will replace the *Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral fraud in England and Wales* previously published jointly by the Electoral Commission and ACPO. It extends the advice given to police by also providing tactical options, expectations, minimum investigative standards and evidence-based good practice for each key role.

The APP has been produced by a team of police officers, electoral administrators and prosecutors with years of experience in electoral integrity matters. The work has been hosted by the Electoral Commission and ACPO with contributions from police officers at all levels, the Crown Prosecution Service and senior electoral administrators.¹⁷

The prosecuting authorities (the Crown Prosecution Service in England and Wales, the Crown Office in Scotland, and the Public Prosecution Service in Northern Ireland) are responsible for taking cases of alleged electoral fraud to court.

¹⁷ [Electoral fraud responsibilities](#), Electoral Commission

4. Analysis of cases of alleged electoral malpractice by the Electoral Commission and ACPO 2008 - 2014

From 2008 to 2014 the Electoral Commission and the Association of Chief Police Officers published reports into allegations of electoral malpractice during the elections held in these years.

The key findings for **2010** were that 232 cases of alleged electoral malpractice were reported by the police during the election period in Great Britain; 216 in England, 9 in Scotland and 7 in Wales. There were 25 cases reported in Northern Ireland. At the time of the publication of the report 68 cases remained under investigation or were awaiting advice from the Crown Prosecution Service. One case had resulted in a prosecution and conviction but over half of the cases reported, 137 in total, required no further police action.¹⁸

38% of the cases reported related to voting offences including personation at a polling station and tampering with ballot papers. This was a similar figure to 2009.

34% of the cases were campaign offences including false statements made about a candidate; this was an increase from 2009 when the proportion was 27%.

The analysis of cases of alleged electoral malpractice in **2011** was published on 20 March 2012.¹⁹ The report noted that the allegations of fraud in the majority of cases reported had not been substantiated, but that there had been an increase in the number of cases involving offences during campaigning. The foreword to the report summarised the findings:

In 2011, the police across the UK reported 270 cases of alleged electoral malpractice.

[...]

Compared with previous years, in 2011 there has been an increase in the proportion of cases of alleged electoral malpractice relating to campaigning offences, including false statements of fact made about candidates and required information missing from the election materials.

[...]

At the same time there has been a reduction in the proportion of cases relating to voting offences, including personation or postal voting offences. Outside our election reporting period we have seen an increase in registration offences being committed for the purpose of financial, benefit and/or ID fraud.

¹⁸ [Analysis of cases of alleged electoral malpractice in 2010](#), Electoral Commission & the Association of Chief Police Officers, February 2011

¹⁹ [Analysis of cases of alleged electoral malpractice in 2011](#), ACPO and the Electoral Commission, 2012

The key findings of the report were as follows:

- A total of 224 cases of alleged electoral malpractice were reported by the police during the election reporting period. 192 of these were reported in England, six in Scotland, six in Wales and 20 in Northern Ireland.
- The most frequently reported category of cases of alleged malpractice were those relating to campaigning offences, such as failure to provide a printer's name and address on election publications and false statements made about a candidate (56% or 125 out of 224). This was a higher proportion of the overall total than reported in 2010 or 2009.
- There has been a notable decrease in the proportion of alleged voting offences to 16% (35 cases) from 38% in 2010 and 40% in 2009.
- No case reported to the police during 2011 has affected the outcome of the election to which it related, and no election has had to be re-run as a result of electoral malpractice.
- As at 31 December 2011, court proceedings have been initiated in one case of personation at a polling station, and one case relating to an imprint offence has been resolved with a caution.
- A further 61 cases (27% of the total) resulted in informal advice being given by the police following investigation.
- Sixty one cases (accounting for 27% of the total) cases remain under investigation or are awaiting advice from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) or the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) in Scotland.
- A total of 99 cases (44% of the total) required no further police action following investigation, because no offence was committed, there was insufficient or no evidence to bring a prosecution, the offence was not found to be an offence under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA), or no offender could be detected

The geographical distribution of cases

- Cases were concentrated largely within five police forces, who reported 10 or more cases of alleged electoral malpractice: West Midlands; Nottinghamshire; Staffordshire; Northumbria and Northern Ireland.
- Thirteen UK police forces reported no cases of alleged electoral malpractice relating to the May 2011 polls...In 2010, eleven forces reported no cases.²⁰

In May 2013 the Electoral Commission published an analysis of cases of alleged electoral fraud in **2012**.²¹ A total of 406 allegations were reported to the police, this was higher than in 2010 and 2011. The Commission reported that despite the higher number of allegations only a small number had been substantiated and that it was not aware of

²⁰ [Analysis of cases of alleged electoral malpractice in 2011](#), ACPO and the Electoral Commission, 2012, p4

²¹ [Analysis of alleged cases of electoral fraud in 2012](#), Electoral Commission, May 2013

any which had been resolved with a conviction, nor any which affected the outcome of any election in either May or November 2012. Over half the cases reported were resolved with no further action.

The most commonly reported cases of electoral fraud related to campaigning offences (41%); 26% were alleged voting offences; 23% were registration offences and 6% were nomination related.

A detailed breakdown by police force of the number of cases and allegations in 2012 was published on the Commission's website.²²

In March 2014 the Electoral Commission published its analysis of cases of electoral fraud in **2013**.²³ The report covers all allegations reported to the police during the elections in May 2013 and throughout the rest of the year, including three Parliamentary by-elections.

A total of 179 cases of alleged electoral fraud were recorded by police forces in 2013. 73 cases were found either to involve no offence or to have insufficient evidence that a crime had taken place. Three cases (fewer than 2% of the total number of cases reported during the year) resulted in prosecutions:

- A candidate in Loughborough Leicestershire received a four month suspended sentence for failing to reveal a prior criminal conviction.
- A candidate in the Isle of Wight received 150 hours community service for use of false signatures on a nomination form.
- A candidate in Cambridgeshire was ordered to pay £110 costs plus being disqualified from the election process for five years for use of false signatures on a nomination form.²⁴

At the time of the publication of the report, 31 cases remained under investigation and in two of these cases court proceedings had been initiated.

The analysis of cases of electoral fraud in **2014** was published by the Electoral Commission in March 2014.²⁵ A total of 272 cases of alleged electoral fraud were recorded by police during 2014. At the time of publication of the report 139 cases (51% of the total number of cases reported during 2014) were found either to involve no offence, or to have insufficient evidence that a crime had actually taken place:

In summary; in 22% of cases (61 cases) some potential offence was identified; the majority of these were dealt with through police or returning officer advice or a caution. Of the remainder, two have been prosecuted and three are progressing through the courts at time of publication. Of those that were locally resolved 35 were Campaign cases, seven were voting cases, five were registration cases, four were nomination cases and one was

²² [Analysis of alleged cases of electoral fraud in 2012: summary of data recorded by police forces](#), Electoral Commission, May 2013

²³ [Analysis of alleged cases of electoral fraud in 2013: summary of data recorded by police forces](#), Electoral Commission, March 2014

²⁴ *ibid*, p3

²⁵ [Analysis of cases of alleged electoral fraud in the UK in 2014: summary of data recorded by police forces](#), Electoral Commission, March 2015

classified as an administration case. Three of the cautions were the result of voting cases and one each resulted from registration and nomination cases. Court proceedings have been initiated in one registration and two nomination cases.²⁶

The analysis of cases of electoral fraud in **2015** was published by the Electoral Commission in March 2016.²⁷ A total of 481 cases of alleged electoral fraud were recorded by police forces across the UK in 2015. The police also recorded 184 other complaints about elections which did not relate to allegations of electoral fraud. The Commission noted that “the number of cases of alleged electoral fraud and complaints about elections recorded by police forces in 2015 was significantly higher than in previous years” but added “at the time of publishing this analysis, however, the proportion of cases which have resulted in prosecution or a police caution remains small (less than 3% of the total number of cases)”.

The Commission gave further details of the alleged cases in 2015:

1.12 At the time of publishing this analysis, court proceedings had been initiated in relation to four cases of alleged electoral fraud, including three separate cases in which candidates (or in one case the husband of a candidate) have been convicted of submitting fraudulently completed nomination forms.

1.13 A quarter of all reported cases of alleged electoral fraud were locally resolved by police forces, with advice given either by the police or the Returning Officer. In nine cases suspects accepted police cautions in relation to allegations of electoral fraud. These included alleged personation offences where an individual cast a vote as someone else, either by post or by proxy; an alleged registration offence where someone registered in someone else’s name; and emails sent which made a false statement of fact about the personal character of a candidate.

1.14 A further 34 cases are either still under investigation by police forces or awaiting prosecution advice.

1.15 In nearly two thirds of cases of alleged electoral fraud (a total of 312 cases) police forces took no further action following the conclusion of their investigations. This includes cases where the activity involved was not in fact an offence, where there was no evidence that an offence had been committed, or where there was insufficient evidence to identify a perpetrator. It also includes cases which, following investigation, were found not to have involved electoral fraud offences.

1.16 More than half of all reported cases of alleged electoral fraud (269 cases, representing 56% of the total) related to campaigning offences, which could include failure to include details about the printer, promoter and/or publisher on election material, making false statements of fact about the personal character or conduct of a candidate, or failure to submit a return of elections expenses.

1.17 Just under a quarter of all reported cases (123 cases, representing 26% of the total) related to voting offences, which could include personation (voting as someone else), breaches of the secrecy requirements, tampering with ballot

²⁶ Ibid, p5

²⁷ [Analysis of cases of alleged electoral fraud in the UK in 2015: summary of data recorded by police forces](#), Electoral Commission, March 2016

papers, bribery or treating (providing food or drink to influence a voter) or undue influence.

1.18 Cases relating to nomination offences (which could include false statements made on nomination forms, including where candidates are ineligible or disqualified from standing for election, or where the signature of a candidate's supporter on the nomination paper has not been made by that person) accounted for 10% of the total (47 cases).

1.19 Registration offences (which could include providing false information in a registration or absent vote application form) accounted for 8% of the total (38 cases). Four cases related to administration offences (breach of official duty by a Returning Officer).²⁸

5. Electoral Commission's evidence and issues paper 2013

In response to concerns about electoral fraud amongst the public and those running for election as well as electoral administrators, the Electoral Commission commenced a review in 2012 to determine whether there were opportunities to improve the confidence in the security of the electoral process. In May 2013 the Commission published an evidence and issues paper, [Electoral fraud in the UK](#), and asked for responses by 9 August 2013 to inform the next stage of the review.

The Commission stated that the evidence then available did not support the conclusion that electoral fraud was widespread in the UK but that there was evidence to suggest that:

...electoral fraud is more likely to be reported as having taken place on a significant scale in certain specific places in England. Those places are currently concentrated in a small number of local authority areas – although we should be very clear that we do not believe fraud is likely to have been attempted in more than a handful of wards in any particular local authority area. It is also clear that the majority of cases of alleged electoral fraud relate to local government elections, rather than elections to the UK Parliament or other legislative bodies.²⁹

The Commission sought views on the following changes to the electoral process:

Postal voting

- **Restricting the availability of postal voting in Great Britain**, so that it is only available to people who can demonstrate that they are physically unable to vote in person at a polling station (as is already the case in Northern Ireland), or introducing these restrictions in specific areas where there has been a recent history of cases of electoral fraud.
- **Providing alternatives to postal voting**, including advance voting, mobile voting facilities for people who are physically unable to vote in person at a polling station, or giving electors the option of 'cancelling' their postal vote.
- **Restricting the handling of postal vote applications and postal ballot packs by campaigners and prohibiting the availability of absent voters' lists before elections**, so that there is a much clearer safeguard against suggestions of improper activity by campaigners, backed by the sanction of offences.³⁰

Proxy voting

- **Requiring all proxy vote applications to be attested**, so that Electoral Registration Officers can have greater

²⁹ [Electoral fraud in the UK](#), Electoral Commission evidence and issues paper, May 2013, p1

³⁰ *Ibid*, p3

reassurance that the application is based on the elector's need rather than the result of pressure from someone else.

- **Restricting the number of electors for whom a proxy can be appointed**, so that it is harder to influence the result of an election by organised proxy voting fraud.
- **Restricting the availability of proxy voting**, to specific categories of elector such as service voters or overseas voters.³¹

Polling station voting

- Requiring all voters at polling stations in Great Britain to provide proof of their identity (this is already a requirement in Northern Ireland), so that the risk of personation is minimised.
- Introducing statutory restrictions on the activities of campaigners outside polling stations, so that electors can be confident that their access to the polling station will not be obstructed.³²

³¹ Ibid, p4

³² Ibid, p5

6. Electoral Commission's final report and recommendations 2014

The Electoral Commission published its final report and recommendations on 8 January 2014.³³ The Commission made three main recommendations to tighten the security of the electoral system:

- Action should be taken now to protect the integrity of elections in all areas but particularly in higher risk areas. The Commission identified these areas as being: Birmingham, Bradford, Calderdale, Derby, Kirklees, Pendle, Slough, Walsall, Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Coventry, Hyndburn, Oldham, Peterborough, Tower Hamlets and Woking. The Commission expects all EROs, ROs and police forces to have comprehensive plans in place to address the risk of fraud and will continue to provide electoral integrity guidance and support across the UK, but will specifically target its monitoring activities in those areas where there is a higher risk of allegations of electoral fraud in 2014 and beyond.
- A revised Code of Conduct for Campaigners will restrict the involvement of campaigners in absent vote administration processes. The Commission recommends that campaigners at elections and referendums should not take, complete or help to complete postal or proxy vote application forms, nor should they take completed postal ballot papers from voters to post them or deliver them to the Electoral Registration Officer. The Commission plans to discuss these changes with the political parties and will introduce a revised Code of Conduct for Campaigners for elections after May 2014. Details of which parties and campaigners have agreed to follow the code will be made public.
- A requirement for voters to produce ID at polling stations should be implemented after the 2015 elections. The Electoral Commission will publish detailed proposals for a proof of identity scheme by the end of 2014 and wants to see this change in place by 2019.

6.1 Code of Conduct for Campaigners

In December 2014 the Electoral Commission published a revised [Code of Conduct for campaigners](#) before the 2015 general election. The Code was sent to all registered political parties in Great Britain and Returning Officers were asked to draw it to the attention of all candidates and parties contesting elections.

The Commission gives further details of the Code on its website:

³³ [Electoral fraud in the UK: final report and recommendations](#), Electoral Commission, January 2014

The Code of Conduct is a non-statutory agreement. It was developed following open consultation and the following political parties have signed up to the Code:

- The Labour Party
- The Scottish National Party (SNP)
- The Conservative Party
- The Liberal Democrats
- The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)
- Plaid Cymru

We have asked all candidates for the May 2016 Mayor of London elections to follow the Code. You will be able to see which candidates for the Mayor of London elections have made a public commitment to follow the Code on this page.³⁴

6.2 ID at polling stations

In its submission to Sir Eric Pickles' review of electoral fraud the Electoral Commission stated that it hoped to publish a scheme for the verification of the identity of electors at polling stations by the end of 2015:

We hope that, in considering any recommendations from this review, the Government will respond to the main recommendation from our 2014 review that voters at polling stations in Great Britain should provide photographic proof of their identity before being issued with a ballot paper, as they have been required to do in Northern Ireland since 2003. We have conducted further work to identify and develop a proportionate and accessible scheme for verifying electors' identity at polling stations, including costing implementation options and will publish details by the end of this year.³⁵

The research was published in December 2015.³⁶ The document included modelling for the cost of implementation of a voter ID scheme. The Commission estimated that this would be between £1.8 million and £10.8 million per year, depending on the method of implementation used.

³⁴ [Code of Conduct for Campaigners](#), Electoral Commission

³⁵ [Written evidence submitted by the Electoral Commission to Sir Eric Pickles' review of electoral fraud](#), Electoral Commission, 1 October 2015

³⁶ Electoral Commission, [Delivering and costing a proof of identity scheme for polling station voters in Great Britain](#)

7. Recent research into electoral fraud

In January 2015 a report, [*Understanding electoral fraud vulnerability in Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin communities in England. A view of local political activists*](#), was published by academics at the Universities of Manchester and Liverpool who had carried out research on behalf of the Electoral Commission. The authors found that:

...Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-origin communities in England share a wide range of vulnerabilities, which may make them susceptible to becoming victims of electoral fraud.

This report identifies seven main sources of vulnerability to fraud: language and knowledge barriers, community loyalties and pressures; kinship networks; lack of mainstream political party engagement; discrimination in candidate selection; insufficiency of safeguards for voting procedures and finally local economic deprivation.³⁷

NatCen Social Research also carried out research on behalf of the Electoral Commission and published [*Elections, voting and electoral fraud: an exploratory study focusing on British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis*](#) in January 2015:

The study findings suggest a complex intertwining of contextual, cultural, and practical electoral process factors that can create vulnerabilities to electoral fraud. Perceived pressure and feelings of obligation to vote a particular way, due to the influence of community networks or prominent individuals within a community; combined with individual factors, such as age, gender, an illness or disability, literacy levels or a lack of knowledge of the electoral process could exacerbate vulnerabilities. It was the interaction of these factors, alongside perceived weaknesses in the election and voting process, with particular reference to some aspects of the postal voting process, which appeared to generate the greatest risk of electoral fraud.

The findings suggest that the greater the number of factors present in an area, the greater the potential risk of electoral fraud. Higher risk areas had some or all of the main factors present, while Comparator areas had fewer or none of these factors. The relative influence of these factors, in combination with local conditions and characteristics increased the risk of unacceptable or fraudulent activity.³⁸

³⁷ [*Understanding electoral fraud vulnerability in Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin communities in England. A view of local political activists*](#) by Maria Sobolewska et al, Universities of Manchester and Liverpool, January 2015

³⁸ [*Elections, voting and electoral fraud: an exploratory study focusing on British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis*](#) by Valdeep Gill, Natalie Jago and Fatima Husain, NatCen Social Research, January 2015

8. All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct (discriminatory behaviour) 2013

The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into electoral conduct published its [report](#) in October 2013. The cross-party group of MPs and Peers had been established to examine the handling of incidents of discrimination at election time.

The terms of reference of the Inquiry were:

1. To inquire into the culture, practices and malpractices exhibited during election campaigns by electoral candidates and others with a particular focus on discriminatory behaviour.
2. To review whether the current law, regulations, political party and agency measures relating to electoral conduct are appropriate, well-co-ordinated or require amendment and to make recommendations accordingly.
3. To uncover what models of good practice exist for assessing and addressing accusations of discriminatory behaviour during elections.
4. To make recommendations, rooted in best practice where possible, for cross-party frameworks to prevent and address accusations of discriminatory conduct.

The Inquiry noted that formerly the Commission for Racial Equality and its regional offices had been key in drawing together evidence of malpractice and misconduct involving discrimination, but little had been done to bridge the gap since the dissolution of these bodies. The Inquiry took oral evidence from the Electoral Commission and the Association of Chief Police Officers and written evidence was submitted by the political parties, academics, individual MPs and others (see the appendix to the report).

The Association of Chief Police Officers told the Inquiry that discriminatory behaviour at elections was likely to be classed as a false statement in contravention of Section 106 of the *Representation of the People Act 1983*. In 2012 some 60 allegations were made under the Act of which 40 were deemed not to be offences; in 8 cases there was insufficient evidence to proceed and in the remaining 12 only 3 had been finalised.³⁹ ACPO suggested that there was an increasing trend in allegations and that the impact of perceived electoral misconduct can be disproportionate to the reality.⁴⁰

The Inquiry also examined evidence of discrimination in the media, including social media, and concluded that this demonstrated that there was more that should be done to prevent discrimination in the media and particularly in the press during elections.⁴¹

³⁹ [All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct report](#), 29 October 2013, para 75

⁴⁰ *ibid*, para 65

⁴¹ *ibid*, para 91

A [press notice](#) published with the report noted that it made 30 recommendations, including the following:

- the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) should produce a plan for engaging in work on electoral conduct, including publishing annual guidance on good practice;
- the Electoral Commission should include the EHRC as part of the stakeholder group of experts in tackling race discrimination;
- the Electoral Commission should set out expectations in line with its duties under the public sector equality duty under the *Equality Act 2010*.⁴²

Section 7 of the [report](#) provides a summary of the conclusions and recommendations.

⁴² [Report of the All-Party Parliamentary inquiry into electoral conduct](#), October 2013

9. Chronology of allegations of electoral offences 2010 - 2016

(See Standard Note 3667, *Postal voting and electoral fraud 2001-09*, for a chronology from June 2002 to December 2009.)

13 January 2010 The Electoral Commission and the Association of Chief Police Officers published an [Analysis of electoral malpractice at the June 2009 elections](#). The key findings of the analysis were summarised as follows:

Our analysis shows that there is no evidence of widespread, systematic attempts to undermine or interfere with the June 2009 elections through electoral fraud. No case reported in this analysis has been shown to have affected the outcome of the election to which it related, and no election that took place in June 2009 has had to be re-run as a result of electoral malpractice.

The number of cases and allegations of electoral malpractice recorded by police forces in Great Britain was very low, particularly compared with the scale of participation at the June 2009 elections, although the nature of the elections which took place in June 2009 were such that attempts to commit large-scale electoral fraud were not expected.

The size of the cases recorded by police forces relating to the June 2009 elections, in terms of the number of allegations involved in each case, also indicates that there were no apparent attempts to commit large scale electoral fraud. There is some similarity in the nature of cases recorded by police forces relating to the June 2009 elections with those relating to the May 2008 elections.

The geographical distribution of cases involving allegations of electoral malpractice recorded by police forces suggests that allegations are not confined to any particular area.

Analysis of the outcomes from the police investigations of cases of electoral malpractice suggests that many recorded allegations have little or no substance.⁴³

13 January 2010 The *Times* reported that the Conservative Party was challenging the attempt to make the party liable for the costs in the Slough vote-rigging case in 2007. A Conservative candidate at the elections, Esheq Khan, and five other men were all jailed in 2009 by Reading Crown Court (see above). The defeated Labour candidate, Lydia Simmons, who exposed the fraud, pursued Khan for the costs of the case but as he was bankrupt she asked the Conservative Party to pay the £215,000 legal bill. When the party refused Ms Simmons went to the election commissioner, Richard Mawrey QC, for an order that either the national or local Conservative Party should be deemed liable for the costs of the case. The Conservatives challenged Mr Mawrey's power to make such an order, arguing that the election court had ceased to exist once he had delivered his verdict. David Holgate QC, for the Conservatives, said 'my client was not funding the litigation and wasn't running it, wasn't conducting it. This is a sensitive case because

⁴³ [Analysis of electoral malpractice at the June 2009 elections](#), Electoral Commission / ACPO, 13 January 2010

there has been no decision whereby a political party is held to account for the costs of an election petition. That has constitutional implications, possibly even ultimately a matter for Parliament.⁴⁴ (See **29 November 2010** for outcome)

1 April 2010 Mohammed Munir, a councillor from Walsall, faced criminal charges for allegedly falsely registering electors and applying for proxy votes.⁴⁵ (see **4 September 2010** for outcome)

22 April 2010 Two candidates standing for election to Calderdale Council were arrested on suspicion of electoral fraud relating to proxy vote forms. They were released on bail whilst police inquiries continued.⁴⁶

26 April 2010 Police in Yorkshire urged electors not to be distracted by the general election when it came to potential fraud in the local elections. The *Yorkshire Post* quoted Detective Chief Inspector Steve Taylor of West Yorkshire Police as saying

Ninety-nine per cent of the complaints we receive are related to local government...

... While everyone's heads are turned to look at the General Election, the local election process leaves itself open.

The newspaper also reported that, at the time of writing, the police in West Yorkshire had already received more complaints about the 2010 local elections than for the two previous years combined. The police had made two arrests after investigating 15 cases.⁴⁷

27 April 2010 The *Star* (Sheffield) reported that 86 polling cards were left on letterboxes, next to a laundry room, at a student hall of residence in Sheffield, sparking concerns about potential electoral fraud.⁴⁸

30 April 2010 The *Belfast Telegraph* reported that the number of allowed postal and proxy votes in Northern Ireland has dropped by 47% compared to the 2005 general election. The newspaper quoted the Chief Electoral Officer, Douglas Bain, as saying:

The figures reflect the determined efforts of the office in increasing the numbers legitimately on the register while our warnings about the consequences of fraudulent postal and proxy vote applications and our robust counter- fraud measures are working.⁴⁹

1 May 2010 The *Times* reported on its own investigation into allegations that parties had been encouraging postal vote applicants to send their forms to local party offices instead of directly to the Electoral Registration Officer. This practice is counter to the Electoral Commission's code of conduct. The *Times* argued that this increases the

⁴⁴ Tories challenge £215,000 bill over rigged election, *The Times*, 13 January 2010

⁴⁵ Councillor facing ballot fraud claim, *Birmingham Mail*, 1 April 2010

⁴⁶ Two Tory candidates arrested, *Yorkshire Post*, 22 April 2010

⁴⁷ Exclusive: Yorkshire voters warned of local poll fraudsters, *Yorkshire Post*, 26 April 2010

⁴⁸ Fraud fears after students' polling cards left lying around, *The Star (Sheffield)*, 27 April 2010

⁴⁹ Postal and proxy votes have decreased by 47%, *Belfast Telegraph*, 30 April 2010

risk of electoral fraud because the applications include both the signature and date of birth of the applicant. These could be used to falsify a postal vote ballot paper.⁵⁰

3 May 2010 The *Guardian* reported that police across the country had received over 50 complaints relating to serious voter fraud and irregularities; it also reported that the rise in people registering for postal votes was causing some areas administrative problems.⁵¹

4 May 2010 The *Yorkshire Post* reported that the increasing number of postal votes was putting pressure on local councils to get them counted and checked in time. The newspaper quoted Peter Stanyon, chairman of the Association of Electoral Administrators, as saying:

Running from now until the general election, most councils will have large teams of people working until polling day.

We work with software companies to read signatures that do most of the checking for us – but this will be the first General Election since the new regulations requiring signatures and dates of birth, and it has made it an election in itself running alongside the main operation.

Councils will have put the systems in place to cope with the work, but it is still a massive task⁵²

4 May 2010 The *Independent* reported that one of its reporters was assaulted by a number of youths shortly after investigating allegations of electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets.⁵³ The reporter was investigating allegations that a number of electors had been falsely registered at the address of a Labour local election candidate.⁵⁴ The *Guardian* also reported on the assault.⁵⁵

The report in the *Independent* gave details of postal vote fraud investigations; in London the police had received 28 separate allegations of fraud of which 5 were under investigation. 4 of the cases were in Tower Hamlets where 3,123 late postal vote registrations had been received. There had also been 3 allegations in Bradford which were being investigated.⁵⁶

5 May 2010 The *Times* reported on police investigations of allegations of electoral malpractice at the home of a candidate standing at the local

⁵⁰ Election law loophole exposes postal votes to danger of fraud; Voters are being asked to send forms to party offices in breach of official guidelines, *Times*, 1 May 2010

⁵¹ Surge in postal voting brings warnings of electoral fraud: Complaints to police relate mainly to council elections Risk of abuse because no ID is required, say critics, *Guardian*, 3 May 2010

⁵² Postal Vote Counting Getting Underway, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 May 2010

⁵³ 'The first punch came, landing on my nose, sending blood down my face', *Independent*, 4 May 2010

⁵⁴ Police investigate electoral fraud claims after journalist is beaten up, *Independent*, 5 May 2010

⁵⁵ Bloody nose for Independent reporter investigating postal vote fraud, *Guardian*, 4 May 2010

⁵⁶ Police investigate electoral fraud claims after journalist is beaten up, *Independent*, 5 May 2010

elections in Tower Hamlets. 12 voters had been registered at the address.⁵⁷

5 May 2010 The Press Association National Newswire reported that the Metropolitan Police had started four criminal investigations into possible election irregularities in Tower Hamlets and one in Ealing; 23 other allegations from 12 boroughs were still being assessed.⁵⁸

5 May 2010 The *Evening Standard* reported on several cases of minors in London receiving polling cards prior to the 6 May general election.⁵⁹

5 May 2010 Cleveland police began an investigation into an alleged breach of electoral law on Teeside; poster theft and aggressive behaviour by doorstep activists had been reported by candidates. Dozens of posters advertising the Conservative candidate for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland had been vandalised.⁶⁰

9 May 2010 The *Sunday Times* reported that 27 people had been registered to a single property in Southall.⁶¹

11 May 2010 An investigation was launched after the Returning Officer for the local elections in Burnley had referred the count in the Daneshouse with Stoneyholme ward to the police after what he described as 'voting irregularities'.⁶²

23 May 2010 A member of Walsall Council pleaded not guilty in court to 11 charges of electoral fraud (see **4 September 2010** for outcome)

25 May 2010 Commonwealth Election Observers released their report on the 2010 UK general election. They found that "while the system is not corrupted it is certainly corruptible".⁶³

26 May 2010 Police began investigations into alleged fraud in Halifax after 4,000 postal vote ballots were delivered by hand to polling stations on 6 May.⁶⁴

4 September 2010 A member of Walsall Council, Mohammed Munir, was cleared of allegations of electoral fraud. It was alleged that he filled in and signed applications for 11 fictitious men to be added to the electoral register. The *Birmingham Mail* reported that:

...During the trial the court heard that Coun Munir had filled in the forms, but not signed them, for the men living above the Palfry Supermarket, Milton Street. The allegations were made after a rival councillor, and distant cousin to Coun Munir, Allah Ditta, was told by the owner of the flats the buildings were

⁵⁷ Police launch inquiry as more voters register at homes of candidates, *Times*, 5 May 2010

⁵⁸ Police prove allegations of electoral fraud, *Press Association National Newswire*, 5 May 2010

⁵⁹ Fears of voting fraud grow as children receive polling cards, *Evening Standard*, 5 May 2010

⁶⁰ Police probe into dirty tricks, *Evening Gazette*, 5 May 2010

⁶¹ 27 registered to London flat, *Sunday Times*, 9 May 2010

⁶² Police probe Burnley Council elections over 'voting irregularities', *Burnley Express*, 11 May 2010

⁶³ *The Royal Commonwealth Society & the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch Commonwealth Observer Team to the UK General Election 2010*, final Report, 25 May 2010

⁶⁴ Major electoral fraud alleged in marginal seat, *Independent*, 26 May 2010

empty. However during questioning Gulfraz Iqbar, who also owned the supermarket below the flats, told the court he had allowed tenants to live in the flats but not told the local authority.⁶⁵

7 September 2010 Four men from Bradford were imprisoned for 21 months, and one for 11 months, for attempting to rig the general election for the Bradford West seat in 2005 by fraudulently registering postal votes. The *Times* reported that they made more than 900 fraudulent applications for postal votes.⁶⁶

30 September 2010 In an interview with the *New Statesman* Baroness Warsi claimed that electoral fraud in the general election 2010 had cost the Conservative party three seats.⁶⁷

21 October 2010 In response to a Parliamentary Question in the Lords, the Minister of State, Lord McNally, said that 476 out of the 632 constituencies in Great Britain conducted verification of the personal identifiers for 100% of postal votes returned at the general election. Although the legislation only requires electoral administrators to undertake verification of a minimum of 20%, the funding was made available for 100% verification.⁶⁸

5 November 2010 The election court which heard the petition concerning the election in Oldham East and Saddleworth found Phil Woolas guilty of the illegal practice of making a false statement about a candidate and declared the election void. Mr Woolas ceased to be a Member of Parliament from the date of the court's report, 5 November 2010. Further details can be found in Library Standard Note [SN/PC/5751](#): *Election petition: Oldham East and Saddleworth*.

6 November 2010 Police investigated claims of fraud in Labour's candidate selection process for the local elections in Middlesbrough on 5 May 2011. The *Evening Gazette* reported that accusations focused on whether applications being made for registrations on the electoral roll were genuine. The newspaper quoted a Labour North spokesperson as saying:

The Labour Party has received a complaint regarding alleged party membership irregularities in the run-up to the local government selections in University Branch...

...The Labour Party has suspended the selection process and the University Branch whilst an internal investigation is carried out⁶⁹

29 November 2010 The *Times* reported that Lydia Simmons had been unsuccessful in her attempt to find the Conservative Party liable for her court costs in lieu of Esheq Khan's bankruptcy (see **13 January 2010**). Lord Justice Leveson ruled that as the election court and the election commissioner had concluded the business for which the court was set

⁶⁵ Councillor cleared of election fraud charge, *Birmingham Mail*, 4 September 2010

⁶⁶ Five jailed for plot to rig postal votes in favour of Conservative candidate, *Times*, 7 September 2010

⁶⁷ [Exclusive: Baroness Warsi says electoral fraud cost Tories the election. New Statesman, 30 September 2010](#)

⁶⁸ HL Deb 21 October 2010 cWA 188

⁶⁹ Party Fraud Probe Begins. *Evening Gazette*, 6 November 2010

up he did not have the authority to re-open his decision as to costs and consider making an order against a third party. Lady Justice Smith and Lord Justice Maurice Kay agreed.^{70 71 72}

3 December 2010 The *Walsall Express and Star* reported that Ali Hayder Munir, a Conservative Party member, was jailed for three months after admitting two charges of making false applications for proxy votes at the Walsall Council elections in 2008.⁷³ Munir, the son of Mohammed Munir (who was charged but later cleared of election fraud, see **4 September 2010**) was expelled from the Conservative Party.

9 February 2011 The *Burnley Express* reported that Asif Manzur was due to appear before Burnley Magistrate's Court on 3 March 2011 to face allegations that he conspired to defraud the Return Officer of Burnley Council in connection with the May 2010 local elections in the Daneshouse and Stoneyholme Ward of Burnley.⁷⁴

15 February 2011 The Electoral Commission and the Association of Chief Police Officers published a report into allegations of electoral malpractice during the 2010 elections.⁷⁵

24 February 2011 Sussex Police received two reports of 'double voting' in the May 2010 general election. One has been dropped due to a lack of evidence but the second is under investigation (as of 24 February 2011)⁷⁶

1 March 2011 John Spellar MP said that in light of the Electoral Commission's recent report on fraud in the May 2010 general election, Baroness Warsi should apologise for her comments in September 2010 that electoral fraud had cost the Conservative Party seats.⁷⁷

7 March 2011 The Electoral Commission released new guidance on preventing and detecting electoral malpractice.⁷⁸

19 April 2011 Warren Bradley, a Liberal Democrat councillor in Liverpool, was suspended by the party after he resigned as leader over allegations of fraud. It is alleged that Bradley nominated his son, Daniel Bradley, for election without seeking his consent. The *Daily Post*

⁷⁰ No third-party costs; Law Report. *Times*, 29 November 2010

⁷¹ The Conservative and Unionist Party v The Election Commissioner & Ors [2010] EWHC 285 (Admin) (19 February 2010)
<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2010/285.html>

⁷² Conservative and Unionist Party v Election Commissioner & Ors [2010] EWCA Civ 1332 (23 November 2010)
<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2010/1332.html>

⁷³ Calls for inquiry on vote rigging at council, *Walsall Express and Star*, 3 December 2010

⁷⁴ Man accused of election fraud bid in Burnley Council elections, *Burnley Express*, 09 February 2011

⁷⁵ [Analysis of cases of alleged electoral malpractice in 2010](#), Electoral Commission & the Association of Chief Police Officers, February 2011

⁷⁶ Police investigate Worthing and Shoreham election fraud claims, *Argus Lite*, 24 February 2011

⁷⁷ MP Demands Warsi Poll Claim Apology, *Press Association*, 01 March 2010

⁷⁸ [Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral malpractice and other 2011 electoral integrity products](#), Electoral Commission, 7 March 2011

reported that the son did not want to stand and that the signature on the nomination papers was forged.⁷⁹

26 April 2011 The BBC reported that Rochdale Council had received a number of allegations of pressure being exerted on people into handing over uncompleted postal votes. The leader of the Council, Colin Lambert, said that the allegations covered six wards and all three of the main parties were involved.⁸⁰

1 May 2011 *Bedfordshire on Sunday* reported allegations by a local council election candidate that over 100 postal votes had gone missing. He had also raised concerns over the number of people registering for postal votes; 1,900 out of 6,000 eligible voters.⁸¹

4 May 2011 Three of the former councillors convicted of electoral fraud during the 2004 local elections in Birmingham were declared bankrupt due to overwhelming legal costs.⁸²

11 May 2011 The *Derby Evening Telegraph* reported that police were called to a polling station in Normanton after reports that voters felt intimidated by political activists outside. Police confirmed that they were investigating the incident.⁸³

17 May 2011 Conservatives were considering a challenge to a local election result in the Birmingham ward of Harborne after allegations that an election official went missing with two ballot boxes which were subsequently tampered with. Police arrested and bailed an 82 year old woman and a 52 year old man in connection with the allegations.⁸⁴

20 May 2011 Police investigated a number of allegations about the conduct of Poole's local elections. The *Bournemouth Echo* reported that Conservative, Liberal Democrat and the Poole People Party members were involved. Most of the allegations reportedly stemmed from statements made in campaign literature. The police also investigated a complaint made in relation to a by-election in the Newtown ward last September.⁸⁵

22 May 2011 A candidate who stood in the May 2011 local elections in the Queens Park ward of Bedford Borough Council contacted police alleging that some voters were impersonating former residents of the ward at polling stations.⁸⁶

28 May 2011 Birmingham City Council Leader, Mike Whitby, is reported to have said that he would outsource the collection and counting of votes in the city to a security firm if he was not convinced that the council's elections office was competent to carry out the job

⁷⁹ Bradley is suspended by Lib-Dems after quitting as leader, *Daily Post (Liverpool)*, 19 April 2011

⁸⁰ [Postal vote fraud complaints made to Rochdale Council](#), *BBC News*, 26 April 2011

⁸¹ Concern as postal vote ballot papers go missing, *Bedfordshire on Sunday*, 1 May 2011

⁸² Vote fraud trio made bankrupt, *Birmingham Mail*, 4 May 2011

⁸³ Calls for security staff at polling stations as cops probe complaints, *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 11 May 2011

⁸⁴ Tories in poll challenge bid, *Birmingham Mail*, 17 May 2011

⁸⁵ Poole electoral conduct probe is launched, *Bournemouth Echo*, 20 May 2011

⁸⁶ Police to study claims over Queens Park poll, *Bedfordshire on Sunday*, 22 May 2011

itself. The *Birmingham Mail* reported this in the wake of allegations that two ballot boxes went missing on 5 May in Harborne ward (see **17 May 2011**). Mr. Whitby was said to be demanding a root and branch review of the elections office.⁸⁷

2 June 2011 The *Western Mail* reported that it expected the police to hand over files to the Crown Prosecution Service in relation to allegations that two Members of the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) were elected whilst being members of disqualifying institutions. Police are investigating whether the two may have committed an electoral offence by not resigning these positions prior to election to the NAW. The two Assembly Members say they did so unknowingly.⁸⁸

15 July 2011 Asif Manzur, a Liberal Democrat polling agent in Burnley, was jailed for eighteen months after he admitted stealing a book of unused ballot papers at a polling station and marking a number of them in favour of the Liberal Democrat candidate and putting them in the ballot box. Manzur admitted conspiring to defraud the Returning Officer.⁸⁹

12 January 2012 A Conservative candidate at a by-election for Ashford Council was arrested on suspicion of electoral fraud. Cengizhan Cerit was arrested after an investigation by the Returning Officer into alleged similarities in handwriting on postal votes was handed over to the police for further scrutiny.⁹⁰

13 January 2012 The Conservative candidate at a by-election for Ashford council was arrested on suspicion of voting fraud; suspicions were raised about alleged similarities in the handwriting on postal votes.⁹¹

February 2012 The Electoral Commission and the Association of Chief Police Officers published a revised version of their [Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral malpractice](#). This was later updated in October 2012.

3 February 2012 Warren Bradley, the former Liberal Democrat leader of Liverpool city council, has been charged with perjury following a police investigation into allegations that he nominated his son as a candidate without his son's consent (see **19 April 2011**).⁹² Bradley was subsequently fined £1,000.⁹³

21 February 2012 The *Evening Standard* reported that 'dozens of flats' in Tower Hamlets were occupied by up to eight people per bedroom according to the electoral register. Allegations of electoral fraud have been made before in the borough and a spokesman for Tower Hamlets said that the local authority would look into the matter. The *Standard*

⁸⁷ Chief: we may go private on Brum voting, *Birmingham Mail*, 28 May 2011

⁸⁸ Police to hand over electoral fraud files, *Western Mail*, 2 June 2011

⁸⁹ Burnley polling agent jailed over election fraud, *Lancashire Telegraph*, 15 July 2011

⁹⁰ Suspicious postal votes lead to landlord's arrest, *Kentish Express*, 12 January 2012

⁹¹ Suspicious votes lead to arrest, *Kent Messenger*, 13 January 2012

⁹² Ex-council chief to be charged with perjury, *Liverpool Daily Post and Echo*, 3 February 2012

⁹³ Ex-council leader Warren Bradley fined for perjury, *Independent*, 16 March 2012

reported concern about the possibility of electoral fraud with the London Mayoral elections due to take place in May.⁹⁴

23 March 2012 The *Evening Standard* reported that the Electoral Commission had reviewed the electoral registration procedures in Tower Hamlets where officials had had to remove 127 names from the electoral register. The *Standard* had obtained a dossier showing a total of 550 people were registered to vote in 64 properties in the borough.⁹⁵

16 April 2012 an article in the *Independent* by Mary Ann Sieghart called for a tightening of the rules on postal voting. Sieghart highlighted the practice of “Biraderi” amongst British Asian communities and said that postal voting did not guarantee a secret ballot, particularly for women.⁹⁶

20 April 2012 A police investigation was launched after a tailor’s mannequin was nominated as an independent candidate called Helena Torry for election in Aberdeen. Election agent Renee Slater was charged in connection with an alleged offence under the *Representation of the People Act 1983*.⁹⁷

26 April 2012 The *Independent* and the *Evening Standard* reported that Labour and Conservative councillors in Tower Hamlets had written to the Electoral Commission giving details of instances where they alleged electoral fraud had occurred. The councillors said they were concerned about the unprecedented number of households which had recently signed up for postal votes in the borough and also about reports that postal votes were being collected from voters.⁹⁸ The Commission issued a statement and said that it had passed on the allegations to the Metropolitan police.⁹⁹

Judge Richard Mawrey said almost nothing had been done to tackle electoral fraud since he disqualified six Birmingham councillors in 2005. Interviewed on BBC Radio 4, he said that local elections were still vulnerable to vote rigging and that “where a small number of votes will make a considerable difference, then the opportunities for fraud are enormous, the chances of detection very small, and a relatively modest amount of fraud will guarantee you win the election.”¹⁰⁰

27 April 2012 The *Peterborough Evening Telegraph* reported that the police had received five allegations of postal voting fraud, one of which

⁹⁴ Mayor voter fraud fears, *Evening Standard*, 21 February 2012

⁹⁵ Tower Hamlets ordered to tighten up its electoral register amid voting fraud fear, *Evening Standard*, 23 March 2012

⁹⁶ [How dodgy postal votes may decide our next government, by Mary Ann Sieghart](#), *Independent*, 16 April 2012

⁹⁷ You have the right to remain silent..., *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 20 April 2012

⁹⁸ Widespread allegations of electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets, *Independent*, 26 April 2012

Police probe London voting fraud, *Evening Standard*, 26 April 2012

⁹⁹ [Electoral Commission statement on allegations of electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets](#), 26 April 2012

¹⁰⁰ Widespread allegations of electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets, *Independent*, 26 April 2012 and Local polls open to fraud, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 April 2012

was that a person claiming to be a council worker was knocking on doors asking for completed postal ballot forms.¹⁰¹

28 April 2012 The *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* reported that the police were investigating allegations of electoral fraud in the Dewsbury South ward ahead of the local elections for Kirklees council.¹⁰²

30 April 2012 The local government minister, Grant Shapps, has written to the Electoral Commission about the allegations of electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets and called on the Commission to be more proactive in investigating the situation.¹⁰³ The chair of the Electoral Commission, Jenny Watson, responded to Mr Shapps to reiterate that allegations of electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets were being taken seriously and dealt with appropriately by the Commission. Ms Watson said that all specific allegations had been referred to the police for investigation and that the Commission was taking steps to ensure that any risks to the integrity of the elections were being addressed.¹⁰⁴

1 May 2012 The British National Party's candidate for mayor of Liverpool, Mike Whitby, has been arrested on suspicion of faking signatures on his nomination papers.¹⁰⁵ This followed a complaint made to Merseyside Police after an investigation by the *Liverpool Echo*.¹⁰⁶

Police officers are to be stationed at every polling station in Tower Hamlets on 3 May as the Metropolitan police began an investigation into electoral fraud in the borough. The police said they would also investigate claims that a recent by-election in the Banglatown and Spitalfields ward had been rigged.¹⁰⁷

3 May 2012 The *Independent* reported that a Conservative councillor in Tower Hamlets had sent a dossier of evidence to the Electoral Commission which gave details of flats where it was suspected that a large number of 'ghost voters' had been registered for postal voting.¹⁰⁸

The *Express* reported that Nick de Bois MP had cross-checked the names of constituents who were seeking his help with immigration problems and had found that 21 out of a sample of 100 had been wrongly registered to vote. Mr de Bois urged a strengthening of the rules on electoral registration.

10 May 2012 The *Electoral Registration and Administration Bill 2012-13* was introduced. The Bill provided a legislative framework for the introduction of individual electoral registration.

¹⁰¹ Five reports of voting fraud made, *Peterborough Evening Telegraph*, 27 April 2012

¹⁰² Poll fraud probe, *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 28 April 2012

¹⁰³ Watchdog attacked over electoral fraud, *Evening Standard*, 30 April 2012

¹⁰⁴ [Letter from Jenny Watson, chair of the Electoral Commission, to Grant Shapps, Minister for Housing and Local Government](#), 30 April 2012

¹⁰⁵ BNP man arrested over 'fake signatures', *Western Mail*, 1 May 2012

¹⁰⁶ BNP man arrested in election fraud inquiry: Echo probe uncovers alleged fake signatures, *Liverpool Echo*, 1 May 2012

¹⁰⁷ Police to guard voting booths at Tower Hamlets, *Evening Standard*, 1 May 2012

¹⁰⁸ Local elections: 'They knock on the door and ask us to give them our ballot papers', *Independent*, 3 May 2012

23 May 2012 Second reading of the *Electoral Registration and Administration Bill 2012-13*.

25 May 2012 The *Evening Standard* reported that a formal request had been made by Stephen Hammond MP to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) asking for a team to examine voting in Tower Hamlets for evidence of systematic electoral abuse.¹⁰⁹

31 May 2012 The *Lancashire Telegraph* reported that Andrew Stephenson, MP for Pendle, was meeting the Electoral Commission to discuss allegations of postal voting fraud in his constituency. The article also reported that the police were stepping up an investigation into electoral fraud in Hyndburn and Blackburn at the local elections.¹¹⁰

23 August 2012 The *Docklands and East London Advertiser* reported that the *Evening Standard* has apologised to a senior figure in Tower Hamlets council's legal department for accusing her of concealing electoral fraud in the borough.¹¹¹

15 September 2012 The *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* reported that three cases of alleged electoral fraud in this year's Kirklees council election had been referred to the Crown Prosecution Service.¹¹²

21 September 2012 The *Liverpool Echo* reported that the BNP candidate for Liverpool mayor who was arrested on suspicion of election fraud would not face charges.¹¹³

8 December 2012 The *Mail Online* reported that a pensioner accused of registering a mannequin as a candidate in a city council election was to face trial.¹¹⁴

12 December 2012 The *Lancashire Telegraph* reported that East Lancashire MPs backed an inquiry into possible election fraud.¹¹⁵

11 January 2013 The *Scotsman* reported that a pensioner had been cleared of registering a dummy to stand in a local government election in Aberdeen after the case was thrown out.¹¹⁶

26 January 2013 The *Manchester Evening News* reported that around 450 postal votes were rejected for not being completed correctly at last year's local elections.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁹ MPs ask international observers to probe mayor election 'fraud', *Evening Standard*, 25 May 2012

¹¹⁰ Watchdog takes up MP's electoral fraud fight, *Lancashire Telegraph*, 31 May 2012

¹¹¹ Evening Standard apologises to senior figure in tower hamlets council, *Docklands and East London Advertiser*, 23 August 2012

¹¹² Poll fraud cases for scrutiny, *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 15 September 2012

¹¹³ No charges for BNP city mayor hopeful; Court case 'not strong enough', *The Liverpool Echo*, 21 September 2012

¹¹⁴ [Pensioner accused of registering a mannequin as a candidate in a city council election is to face trial](#), *Mail Online*, 8 December 2012

¹¹⁵ East Lancashire MPs back probe over possible election fraud, *Lancashire Telegraph*, 12 December 2012

¹¹⁶ [Dummies can stand for election, court signals, after case thrown out](#), *news.scotsman.com*, 11 January 2013

¹¹⁷ Report shows 450 postal votes were rejected, *Manchester Evening News*, 26 January 2013

5 February 2013 The *Daily Mail* reported that Cengizhan Cerit (Conservative) tried to rig the Ashford local council by-election by forging signatures on his nomination form. He was caught out by a spelling mistake. He also tried to apply for hundreds of postal votes to rig the election result. Cerit was sentenced on **8 February 2013**. The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* reported that Cerit had been jailed for 12 months.^{118 119} Judge Adele Williams told him: "This was a fraud which struck at the heart of democracy. You tried to corrupt the legitimate electoral process. You sought to interfere with legitimate electoral process of our democracy. This is a very serious matter indeed."¹²⁰

6 February 2013 *BBC News* reported that Councillor Allan Pennington (Conservative) was challenging a High Court ruling requiring him to give up his seat after a number of votes cast at the local election at Prestatyn in May 2012 were wrongly allocated to him instead of his opponent Paul Pennington.¹²¹

19 March 2013 Four women appeared in court as part of an investigation into allegations of fraud at the local elections in Derby in 2012. Tameena Ali and Samra Ali were charged with personation offences; Nasreen Akhtar was charged with misconduct in public office and Noshiela Maqsood was charged with perverting the course of justice.¹²² (See entry for **27 July 2013** for details of their convictions and prison sentences.)

March 2013 The Electoral Commission published its report on the outcome of investigations into allegations of electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets in 2012.¹²³ The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) recorded and investigated a total of 64 cases involving 154 separate allegations of electoral fraud in relation to elections in Tower Hamlets in April and May 2012:

- The MPS identified three cases involving five allegations where there was evidence to suggest that an offence may have been committed, but where there was insufficient evidence to prove an offence or identify a suspect. No further action could be taken in these cases.
- The MPS identified 13 cases involving 44 allegations of false registrations where the information held by the ERO was found to be accurate, and there was no evidence of any offences having been committed.

¹¹⁸ Tory councillor tried to rig election, *Daily Telegraph*, 9 February 2013

¹¹⁹ Tory candidate who was caught out by a spelling mistake as he tried to forge election results is jailed for 12 months, *The Daily Mail*, 8 February 2013

¹²⁰ *ibid*

¹²¹ [Prestatyn vote mix-up: Allan Pennington challenges court](#), *BBC News*, 6 February 2013

¹²² Four women charged with election fraud following city vote last year, *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 19 March 2013

¹²³ [Allegations of electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets in 2012: report on the outcome of investigations](#), Electoral Commission, March 2013

- The MPS identified 48 cases involving 105 allegations where there was no evidence that an offence appeared to have been committed.¹²⁴

The Electoral Commission made a number of recommendations aiming to rebuild the confidence and trust between the key participants in the election process in Tower Hamlets: the ERO and Returning Officer for Tower Hamlets should commence a review of all current electoral registration and election integrity processes; the Metropolitan Police should review its plans for policing elections in 2014 and elected representatives, political parties, candidates and campaigners should make a clear public commitment to following the Electoral Commission's Code of Conduct for campaigners. The Commission itself would monitor the plans of the ERO, the RO and the police in the twelve months before the next elections in 2014.

May 2013 The Electoral Commission published an analysis of cases of alleged electoral fraud in 2012.¹²⁵

May 2013 The Electoral Commission published an evidence and issues paper, [Electoral fraud in the UK](#).

27 July 2013 Nasreen Akhtar, a polling clerk, was jailed for 14 months for her part in personation offences at the local elections in Derby in May 2012. Nasreen Akhtar helped her nieces, Tameena Ali and Samra Ali, to cast fraudulent votes by pretending to be someone else. Tameena Ali and Samra Ali were given eight month prison sentences, suspended for 18 months.¹²⁶ Judge John Wait said it was "fundamental for a working democracy" that elections were done fairly and that "if corrupted, those elections have no democratic mandate."

13 August 2013 A UKIP candidate, Hugh Mennie, who stood at the Cambridgeshire county council elections in May was charged over allegations that he forged signatures to stand as a candidate.¹²⁷

25 August 2013 The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) said it was looking into referrals made to it about the election of the PCCs for North Wales and Hampshire. The allegations referred to the use of false addresses on their nomination forms.¹²⁸

3 September 2013 The press reported that Nigel Kennedy, the violinist, had revealed in an interview that he had taken a friend to the polling station at the 2010 general election to vote using his wife's polling card as she was away.¹²⁹ The allegation of personation was raised as a point

¹²⁴ ibid

¹²⁵ [Analysis of alleged cases of electoral fraud in 2012](#), Electoral Commission, May 2013

¹²⁶ Jail for polling station clerk who played part in election day fraud, *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 27 July 2013

¹²⁷ UKIP candidate charged over election fraud claims, *Daily Telegraph*, 13 August 2013

¹²⁸ Police and Crime Commissioners accused of electoral fraud, *Daily Telegraph*, 25 August 2013

¹²⁹ [Violinist Nigel Kennedy could face vote fraud probe](#), BBC News online, 3 September 2013

of order in the House of Commons; the Speaker, John Bercow, said it was a matter for the police.¹³⁰

25 September 2013 Alex MacLeod, a Highland councillor, resigned over alleged misconduct involving election expenses.¹³¹

11 October 2013 Alex MacLeod was charged of forming a fraudulent scheme to be elected as a councillor for Landward Caithness in the Highland Council election in 2012 and of knowingly declaring a false home residence in his nomination paper.¹³²

18 October 2013 The Crown Prosecution Service decided not to prosecute Michael Mates for making a false declaration of his address when he stood for election as a Police and Crime Commissioner. In a statement, the CPS said: "Having considered the reasons why Michael Mates was at the address provided, we have determined that there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction in this case. However, in view of the likely penalty that would be imposed, Michael Mates' age, the fact that the election did not have to be re-run and that his culpability was relatively low, we do not consider that a prosecution would be in the public interest."

29 October 2013 The [report](#) of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct was published. The Inquiry had been established to investigate a reported 'void' across all political parties in the handling of incidents of discrimination at election time.¹³³ (See Section 5 above)

1 November 2013 A UKIP candidate at the 2013 Isle of Wight council elections, Richard Wilkins, was banned from standing for election for 5 years after admitting that he forged signatures on his nomination form. Wilkins was also ordered to complete 150 hours of community service.¹³⁴

8 November 2013 Labour councillor, Susan Shinnick, was under investigation by Essex police for 'treating' after claims were made that she had bribed elderly voters with cakes to win a local by-election in Stifford Clays ward in Thurrock, Essex.¹³⁵

23 November 2013 In an interview with the *Daily Telegraph*, the Attorney General, Dominic Grieve, referred to the problem of electoral fraud in comments he made about corruption in public life.¹³⁶

8 January 2014 The Electoral Commission published its final report and recommendations on electoral fraud in the UK and called for sustained action to address the risk of fraud, especially in higher risk areas. The Commission also called for the introduction of a system under which

¹³⁰ [HC Deb 3 September 2013 c165](#)

¹³¹ Highland councillor resigns over misconduct claims, *Scotsman*, 25 September 2013

¹³² Former SNP councillor accused of electoral fraud, *Scotsman*, 11 October 2013

¹³³ [All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct report](#), 29 October 2013

¹³⁴ [UKIP candidate admits election fraud](#), *Isle of Wight County Press online*, 1 November 2013

¹³⁵ [Councillor accused of bribing elderly with cakes](#), *Daily Telegraph*, 8 November 2013

¹³⁶ [Minister: Corruption is rife in the Pakistani community](#), *Daily Telegraph*, 23 November 2013 and [Attorney General forced to apologise after saying corruption is 'endemic' in Britain's Pakistani community](#), *Daily Mail online*, 24 November 2013

voters should be required to show proof of identity at the polling station before they can be issued with a ballot paper and recommended that campaigners should not be involved in the process of assisting people to complete postal vote application forms or take completed postal ballot papers from voters to post them or deliver them to the Electoral Registration Officer.¹³⁷

14 February 2014 Police in Luton announced an investigation into historical allegations of postal fraud.¹³⁸

21 February 2014 Allegations of electoral fraud at the Northumberland County Council elections are being investigated by the police following a complaint by a UKIP candidate.¹³⁹

10 March 2014 A number of PQs asked by Chris Ruane MP about electoral fraud and postal voting were answered by Gary Streeter MP representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission.¹⁴⁰ Details were given of the amount spent by the Commission on research into voter registration and postal ballot fraud. The Commission intends to conduct an additional research project related to fraud in 2014; this will focus on 'identifying whether certain demographic or cultural factors mean that specific communities are more vulnerable to electoral fraud.'¹⁴¹

11 March 2014 Richard Mawrey QC, who has tried a number of electoral fraud cases, said in an interview with the BBC that postal voting was open to fraud 'on an industrial scale' and called for an end to postal voting on demand.¹⁴² Cabinet Office Minister Greg Clark responded that postal voting had been 'very important in making sure that people can access the franchise' and added that he thought it was important that 'a relatively small number of cases of abuse, which need to be addressed and clamped down very firmly, don't prevent other people - the vast majority of people - using it in a law-abiding way.'¹⁴³

25 March 2014 The *Evening Standard* reported that police had launched an investigation into allegations of electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets. There had been claims that 'bogus workers', believed to be supporters of Independent mayor, Lutfur Rahman, posed as housing staff whilst canvassing residents.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ [Electoral fraud in the UK: final report and recommendations](#), Electoral Commission, January 2014

¹³⁸ Police in Luton investigate postal fraud allegations after meeting with Labour party representatives, *Luton on Sunday*, 14 February 2014

¹³⁹ Police called in following vote fraud allegations, *Newcastle Journal*, 21 February 2014

¹⁴⁰ [HC Deb 10 March 2014 c78W – 88W](#)

¹⁴¹ [HC Deb 10 March 2014 c80W](#)

¹⁴² [Scrap 'on demand' postal voting to curb fraud says judge](#), BBC Online 11 March 2014

¹⁴³ *ibid*

¹⁴⁴ 'Bogus officials canvassed for mayor' before East End ballot, *Evening Standard*, 25 March 2014

17 April 2014 Norfolk County councillor, Matthew Smith, was charged with seven counts of supplying a nomination paper to a Returning Officer knowing it to contain a forged signature.¹⁴⁵

4 May 2014 The *Sunday Times* reported that police would patrol polling stations in towns and cities identified by the Electoral Commission as being vulnerable to electoral abuse in the forthcoming elections. In Tower Hamlets polling stations will be surrounded by a 'sterile area' in which voters cannot be canvassed.¹⁴⁶

21 May 2014 Clare Pritchard, Deputy Leader of Hyndburn Council, was suspended by the Labour Party after her father accused her of electoral fraud. The police are investigating allegations that four voters from other wards had been registered to vote at Pritchard's home address in Milnshaw ward.¹⁴⁷

23 May 2014 Following the elections on 22 May, police in Manchester, Bradford, London and Birmingham have received complaints about "'ghost" voters, false statements by candidates and multiple attempts to vote by a single person' and have launched inquiries. There are 14 investigations in Greater London relating to false declarations on election papers, intimidation and tampering with postal votes. The West Midlands police received 11 allegations of electoral fraud. In Manchester the police have launched five inquiries; three into the eligibility of candidates to stand, one into a claim that someone had voted twice and one into false statements on election leaflets.¹⁴⁸

28 May 2014 The Electoral Commission said that an investigation would take place into events at the count in Tower Hamlets after recounts and suspension of the count at 3am on Saturday night after the election.¹⁴⁹

The *Daily Telegraph* reported Labour Mile End councillor Rachel Sanders' comments on the *Today* programme that there had been intimidation at polling stations in Tower Hamlets with "huge crowds at some, shouting at people or encouraging them to vote in a particular way."¹⁵⁰

1 June 2014 In Birmingham a Liberal Democrat candidate, Waheed Rafiq, reported that he had witnessed election workers telling people how to vote at polling stations in Washwood Heath and Hodge Hill in May 2014. Mr Rafiq said "most of the local population...vote according to caste, or as we call it Biradaree, and tradition. I saw for myself that

¹⁴⁵ UKIP councillor in court accused of electoral malpractice, *Future News- Media Planner*, 17 April 2014

¹⁴⁶ Police patrols to combat voter fraud in Asian areas, *Sunday Times*, 4 May 2014

¹⁴⁷ Senior East Lancs politician suspended after election fraud accusation, *Lancashire Telegraph*, 21 May 2014

¹⁴⁸ Police asked to investigate more than 50 allegations of electoral fraud, *Guardian*, 23 May 2014

¹⁴⁹ Election watchdog to probe Tower Hamlets count delays, as last results finally announced, *Independent*, 28 May 2014

¹⁵⁰ Voter intimidation in Tower Hamlets, *Daily Telegraph*, 28 May 2014

some voters were asking the polling clerk which way they should vote and were being instructed accordingly.”¹⁵¹

4 June 2014 Police arrested a man on suspicion of conspiracy to defraud as they investigated eight allegations of electoral malpractice in Tower Hamlets. The *Evening Standard* reported that a total of 84 complaints have been received about the May elections in the borough.¹⁵²

15 June 2014 *The Sunday Telegraph* reported that police were investigating allegations that candidates at the elections in Tower Hamlets in May made false statements on their nomination papers. On 22 May Aktaruz Zaman did not win a seat, but he stood again on 3 July under the name “Mohammed Aktaruzzaman” and gave a new address in Bromley-by-Bow. The handwriting on the nomination papers and pictures on election leaflets showed them to be the same man. It was reported that multiple postal votes came from houses that were not lived in and many genuine voters had their uncompleted ballot papers removed from them against their will by Lutfur Rahman.¹⁵³

17 June 2014 A local election petition was brought following the elections on 22 May 2014 in Tower Hamlets seeking to have the election of the mayor, Lutfur Rahman, declared void. Library Standard Note 6937, [Local election petitions](#), gives further details.

25 June 2014 A Labour councillor for Barking and Dagenham was put under investigation for making a false statement on his nomination papers.¹⁵⁴

1 July 2014 The Electoral Commission published its review of the count in Tower Hamlets at the May 2014 elections.¹⁵⁵ A [press notice](#) issued by the Commission summarised its findings and identified two main factors that led to the count being delayed. The first related to access to the count and the second to inadequate resource management during the verification and the count. The Commission called for immediate and sustained action “to provide reassurance to voters, candidates and campaigners that future election counts will be well-managed and efficiently delivered” and recommended that the Returning Officer should publish his overall plans for the management of the count at the 2015 General Election by the beginning of December 2014. The Commission also recommended that communication at the count between counting staff and others present should take place in English

¹⁵¹ Probe after poll workers ‘told people how to vote’; Complaint from losing Lib Dem election candidate, *Sunday Mercury*, 1 June 2013

¹⁵² Tower Hamlets vote fraud allegations: man arrested and eight investigations ongoing, *Evening Standard*, 4 June 2014

¹⁵³ First fake votes, now police look into ‘bogus’ council Hamlets, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 15 June 2014

¹⁵⁴ East London Labour councillor Sam Tarry under investigation over claims of electoral fraud, *Evening Standard*, 25 June 2014

¹⁵⁵ [Delays at the verification and count for the May 2014 elections in Tower Hamlets, report of the Electoral Commission’s review](#), Electoral Commission, July 2014

only and that all those attending the count should commit to behaving according to the rules set out in advance by the Returning Officer.¹⁵⁶

29 July 2014 The High Court rejected a request by Lutfur Rahman, Mayor of Tower Hamlets, to dismiss an election petition against his election in May. An Election Commissioner will now be appointed by the High Court to hear the petition later in the year. The High Court ordered the petitioners to provide more information about their allegations so that the Mayor and the returning officer, John Williams, can respond to the claims.¹⁵⁷

11 December 2014 The response to a PQ on electoral fraud stated that the Electoral Commission had targeted 17 areas where there was a high risk of allegations of electoral fraud to ensure that Returning Officers and police forces had developed appropriate responses to address specific local risks for the May 2015 elections.¹⁵⁸

15 December 2014 Judgement of the Election Court convened to try an election petition to challenge the validity of the local government election for the King's Park Ward of the London Borough of Hackney held on 22 May 2014. The petitioner made allegations of acts or omissions on the part of the Returning Officer which constituted breaches of election law. The Election Commissioner found that the Returning Officer was not guilty of any act, omission or breach of duty in relation to the election and the petition was dismissed.

January 2015 A report, [*Understanding electoral fraud vulnerability in Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin communities in England. A view of local political activists*](#), was published by academics at the Universities of Manchester and Liverpool who had carried out research on behalf of the Electoral Commission. The authors found that:

...Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-origin communities in England share a wide range of vulnerabilities, which may make them susceptible to becoming victims of electoral fraud.¹⁵⁹

NatCen Social Research also carried out research on behalf of the Electoral Commission and published [*Elections, voting and electoral fraud: an exploratory study focusing on British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis*](#) in January 2015.¹⁶⁰ (See Section 7 above for further details.)

¹⁵⁶ [Action needed to restore confidence in Tower Hamlets election counts](#), Electoral Commission news release, 1 July 2014

¹⁵⁷ *Muslim mayor's vote-rigging trial goes ahead, High Court rules*, Times Online, 29 July 2014

¹⁵⁸ [HC Deb 11 December 2014 c983](#)

¹⁵⁹ [*Understanding electoral fraud vulnerability in Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin communities in England. A view of local political activists*](#) by Maria Sobolewska et al, Universities of Manchester and Liverpool, January 2015

¹⁶⁰ [*Elections, voting and electoral fraud: an exploratory study focusing on British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis*](#) by Valdeep Gill, Natalie Jago and Fatima Husain, NatCen Social Research, January 2015

March 2015 An analysis of cases of electoral fraud in 2014 was published by the Electoral Commission.¹⁶¹ A total of 272 cases of alleged electoral fraud were recorded by police during 2014.

23 April 2015 The election petition against Mayor Lutfur Rahman, Mayor of Tower Hamlets, was upheld. The Election Commissioner, Richard Mawrey, ruled that Rahman had breached election rules and must vacate his office immediately. Rahman was banned from standing again and was ordered to pay £250,000 in costs. One of Mr Rahman's aides, Alibor Choudhury, was also found guilty of corrupt and illegal practices.¹⁶² The BBC reported that the Election Commissioner upheld the following allegations against Mayor Rahman:

- Voting fraud: ballots were double-cast or cast from false addresses;
- False statements made against Mr Rahman's rival Mr Biggs;
- Bribery: large amounts of money were given to organisations who were "totally ineligible or who failed to meet the threshold for eligibility";
- Treating: providing free food and drink to encourage people to vote for Mr Rahman;
- Spiritual influence: voters were told that it was their duty as Muslims to vote for Mr Rahman. Mr Mawrey cited a letter signed by 101 Imams in Bengali stating it was people's "religious duty" to vote.¹⁶³

8 June 2015 A Lords PQ gave details of the additional £500,000 which had been made available to 17 local authorities identified as being at greater risk of electoral fraud at the general election.¹⁶⁴

9 June 2015 The BBC reported that four people had been jailed and a fifth person was given a suspended prison sentence for electoral fraud after a local by-election in Maybury and Sheerwater in Surrey in 2012:

Shaukat Ali, Parveen Akhtar, Shamraiz Ali, Sobia Ali-Akhtar and Abid Hussain, from New Haw, were charged over claims that postal votes were being fraudulently submitted. They were all convicted of conspiracy to defraud at Reading Crown Court.

Shaukat Ali was jailed for 15 months, Parveen Akhtar and Sobia Ali-Akhtar were both jailed for nine months, and Shamraiz Ali was jailed for six months. Abid Hussain was given a six-month prison term suspended for 18 months.¹⁶⁵

6 July 2015 In Scotland Brian McLaughlin was convicted of voting twice at the Scottish referendum.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ [Analysis of cases of alleged electoral fraud in the UK in 2014: summary of data recorded by police forces](#), Electoral Commission, March 2015

¹⁶² [Tower Hamlets election fraud Mayor removed from office](#), BBC News, 23 April 2015

¹⁶³ *ibid*

¹⁶⁴ [HL 297 8 June 2015](#)

¹⁶⁵ [Five sentenced for Maybury and Sheerwater ballot fraud](#), BBC Online, 9 June 2015

¹⁶⁶ [Ex-fire chief convicted after caught voting twice in Independence Referendum](#), *Daily Record*, 6 July 2015

14 August 2015 The Cabinet Office announced that Sir Eric Pickles, the Government's Anti-Corruption Champion, was to review electoral fraud and make recommendations on what could be done to tackle it.¹⁶⁷

1 October 2015 The Electoral Commission published its [submission](#) to Sir Eric Pickles' review of electoral fraud.

6 October 2015 Dominic Grieve, the former Attorney General, was reported as saying at a fringe meeting at the Conservative Party's annual conference that fraud was a growing phenomenon in Great Britain.¹⁶⁸

9 November 2015 An election court hearing began in Birmingham. A Labour councillor, Ansar Ali Khan, faced allegations that he won his election for Washwood Heath illegally, using Mosque leaders to sway voters.¹⁶⁹

12 November 2015 The election court in Birmingham dismissed the case against Khan, ruling that there was no evidence that any corruption took place. Shamsur Rehman had claimed that Ansar Ali Khan, his opponent in the Washwood Heath ward, had won the Birmingham City Council seat after posting a threat on Facebook that if Muslims did not vote for him, they would "go to hell". The *Birmingham Mail* reported that Rehman has now been left with a legal bill that could run close to £100,000.¹⁷⁰

4 December 2015 After the Oldham West and Royton by-election UKIP claimed that "people with "bundles of postal votes" had turned up at polling stations and some wards had voted exclusively for Labour".¹⁷¹ UKIP leader Nigel Farage claimed that he had evidence of fraud from an 'impeccable source'. The party later clarified that they would pursue their claims only if the evidence proved strong enough.¹⁷² In a statement, Carolyn Wilkins, the Acting Returning Officer, said: "Oldham Council has not received any formal complaints about allegations of postal voting irregularities in the Oldham West and Royton by election... We take our duties in administering the voting and count process very seriously and if we received any allegations of postal voting irregularities then we would immediately report these to the police so they can be fully investigated."

2 January 2016 The *Sunday Telegraph* reported that Cabinet Office minister, John Penrose, and Sir Eric Pickles were looking at introducing a requirement for voters to sign for their ballot papers in the polling station as a means of combating electoral fraud. The measure would mean polling station staff comparing signatures with those given by voters when they registered. Sir Eric Pickles, currently heading a review

¹⁶⁷ [Sir Eric Pickles to examine electoral fraud](#), Cabinet Office press release, 14 August 2015

¹⁶⁸ Dominic Grieve claims electoral fraud growing in immigrant areas, *Guardian*, 6 October 2015

¹⁶⁹ Labour and Lib Dem politicians in court battle over Washwood Heath election, *Birmingham Mail*, 7 November 2015

¹⁷⁰ [Politician left with £98,000 bill after losing 'Islamification' case](#), *Birmingham Mail*, 12 November 2015

¹⁷¹ [UKIP to review by-election 'evidence' amid fraud claims](#), BBC News, 23 April 2015

¹⁷² [UKIP retreats from claim that Oldham poll was 'bent'](#), *The Times*, 5 December 2015

of measures to combat electoral fraud, indicated his support for the reform, arguing that there is a “strong case” given examples of similar processes in other elections worldwide.¹⁷³

5 January 2016 Cuts to the Electoral Office budget in Northern Ireland were criticised by Lord Empey who claimed that the potential loss of branches and staff could, amongst other effects, increase the likelihood of electoral fraud.¹⁷⁴

18 February 2016 Following an investigation by Channel 4 News, the Electoral Commission announced that it was launching an inquiry into the Conservative Party over its expenses during the 2015 general election. It has been alleged that £14,000 worth of hotel bills for activists in South Thanet were attributed to national election expenditure and not local expenditure.

The Electoral Commission commenced its inquiry following the announcement by Kent police that they were no longer investigating the claims.¹⁷⁵ The Commission gave further details in a press release:

The investigation opened by the Commission today focuses on whether the Conservative Party met their reporting obligations under the Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA) 2000, specifically:

- whether the spending reported by the party in its 2015 UKPGE campaign spending return, in relation to the Royal Harbour Hotel Ramsgate, was not national campaign spending and therefore should not have been included in the party's return;
- whether spending on the Premier Inn Margate was national campaign spending and therefore should have been included in the party's 2015 UKPGE campaign spending return.¹⁷⁶

March 2016 The Electoral Commission published its [Analysis of cases of alleged electoral fraud in the UK in 2015: summary of data recorded by police forces](#).

10 March 2016 The *Times* reported on the number of fraud allegations filed in the previous year:

Electoral Commission figures show that cases of alleged electoral fraud quadrupled from 129 in 2014 to 481 last year. The Commission said that part of the increase was down to the scale of last year's elections and increased public awareness of fraud.¹⁷⁷

16 April 2016 *The Herald* reported on accusations of overspending by the Constituency Labour Party (CLP) in Motherwell and Wishaw. The allegations arose from a letter, written in March by Councillor Frank

¹⁷³ [Voters may have to sign to get ballot papers; Official review set to recommend check to cut down on electoral fraud](#), *The Sunday Telegraph*, 3 January 2016

¹⁷⁴ [Electoral Office 'facing major cuts and closures'](#), *Irish News*, 5 January 2016

¹⁷⁵ [Tories under investigation by Electoral Commission over 'breaking election spending rules'; Strict rules are in place to stop money influencing elections](#), *The Independent*, 18 February 2016

¹⁷⁶ [Electoral Commission statement on allegations regarding the Conservative Party spending return at the 2015 general election](#), Electoral Commission, 18 February 2016

¹⁷⁷ [Voting fraud cases soar but few are proved](#), *The Times*, 10 March 2016

McKay, that nearly £4,500 of donations to the CLP for the General Election were unaccounted for. Labour's Scottish general secretary ordered an investigation which concluded that no fraud had been committed.¹⁷⁸

18 April 2016 Steven Gillingwater, a UKIP politician, pleaded guilty to falsifying electoral nomination papers for two candidates in the local elections in May 2015.¹⁷⁹ His sentence was 16 weeks imprisonment, suspended for 12 months, as well as a fine of £75 for costs and £80 for victim surcharge. He was also banned from holding an elected office for 5 years.¹⁸⁰

27 April 2016 The *Echo* reported that despite a police investigation into her list of nominations, Lucy Parkin would be able to stand for councillor in Castle Point Council elections on 5 May 2016. The investigation was sparked by a constituent who was wrongly named on Ms Parkin's list of nominators. An agent from her party, UKIP, called the inaccuracy an "administrative error."¹⁸¹

27 April 2016 Labour councillor, Robert Sharp, called upon his Conservative counterpart, Harley Hachem, to resign following revelations that the Conservative party agent had been cautioned for an electoral offence. The agent had falsified a name on the list of nominations for Councillor Hachem, who subsequently went on to successfully contest the election to Charnwood Borough Council in 2015.¹⁸²

4 May 2016 Darlington village residents complained that a promotional leaflet for 10 out of the 18 candidates at the Parish council elections was deliberately formatted to look like an official parish council newsletter. The publication was labelled as 'underhand' and as a potentially deceitful way of side-lining the other 8 candidates. The Council rejected the criticisms and suggested that any of the other candidates would have been free to do the same.¹⁸³

5 May 2016 Birmingham took the unprecedented step of ordering snap investigations of polling stations and election counts. Six independent investigators, including police officers and lawyers, targeted areas where there were accusations of intimidation and intrusive campaigning.¹⁸⁴

5 May 2016 A police investigation into electoral fraud has been launched in Kirklees. Although not confirmed, it is believed that the

¹⁷⁸ [Labour kingpin fears scandal over accounts](#), *The Herald*, 16 April 2016

¹⁷⁹ [Former Slough UKIP chairman guilty of election fraud](#), *BBC News Online*, 20 April 2016

¹⁸⁰ [Politician handed suspended sentence for electoral fraud](#), *Slough Observer*, 19 April 2016

¹⁸¹ [Police called in to investigate allegations of "fraud" in registering Ukip council candidate](#), *Echo*, 27 April 2016

¹⁸² [Police caution man over election offence](#), *Loughborough Echo*, 27 April 2016 (original report)

¹⁸³ [Controversy over parish council electioneering in Darlington village](#), *The Northern Echo*, 4 May 2016

¹⁸⁴ [Birmingham election polling stations to be watched by former police officers and lawyers in anti-fraud initiative](#), *Birmingham Mail*, 5 May 2016

cause was a Facebook post that allegedly revealed the number of postal votes for a Conservative candidate, Martyn Bolt.¹⁸⁵

5 May 2016 Gloucestershire police have launched an investigation into the Conservative Party over its 'battle bus' expenditure in the 2015 General Election. It is alleged that the bus, used to take activists around the country to campaign for candidates, was designated as national election spending, rather than local.¹⁸⁶

Pete Wishart (SNP) asked for further information about the issue during questions to the Leader of the House of Commons:

We need an urgent statement on what is going on with the investigation of the Conservative party for breaking campaign spending rules in last year's general election. The claims are absolutely extraordinary, and they centre around 28 Conservative candidates failing to register the use of a battle bus for local campaigning and some £38,000 of accommodation for local campaigns. If anybody is found guilty of such a charge, they could face one year's imprisonment and an unlimited fine. Surely, we must hear the Government's view on that. There must be no whiff of a suggestion that this Government cheated their way to power. [Commons Hansard, 5 May, c.313]

Several papers also reported that further queries over the attribution of battle bus spending were being reported in other constituencies and that over 20 MPs were implicated.¹⁸⁷

6 May 2016 It was reported that the General Election 'battle bus' spending investigation had widened to include around eight other areas. Police forces in Devon and Cornwall, Cheshire, West Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Greater Manchester Northamptonshire and Staffordshire were all said to be conducting inquiries.¹⁸⁸

Press reports noted that normally there is a year-long deadline for the completion of such inquiries after an election but report that several police forces had been negotiating with the Electoral Commission and the Crown Prosecution Service for more time.¹⁸⁹ Greater Manchester Police are the first to be granted an extension by the courts for their investigation.¹⁹⁰

6 May 2016 It was reported that the BNP is under investigation for their conduct during the Pendle Borough Council elections. It was alleged that BNP members had been offering to fill in postal votes while

¹⁸⁵ [Kirklees polling day controversy as police called to investigate election irregularities](#), *The Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 5 May 2016

¹⁸⁶ [Police launch general election fraud probe amid claims the Conservative Party failed to properly declare its battle bus spending](#), *Mail Online*, 5 May 2016.

¹⁸⁷ [Two Tories probed by police over claims they broke election spending laws](#), *Mirror*, 5 May 2016

¹⁸⁸ [Tories 'facing police probes into election spending breaches'](#), *The Belfast Telegraph*, 6 May 2016

¹⁸⁹ [Eight police forces launch investigations into Tory general election 2015 fraud accusations](#), *The Independent*, 6 May 2016

¹⁹⁰ [Police force given more time to pursue Tory MP over alleged battle bus election fraud](#), *Mirror*, 6 May 2016

canvassing houses. It was also claimed that BNP members had been harassing voters at a polling station.¹⁹¹

7 May 2016 Surrey Police announced they are investigating a possible case of electoral fraud in Woking.¹⁹²

8 May 2016 The *Mirror* reported that Alison Hernandez, the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner, is under investigation for not declaring election expenditure during the 2015 elections. Ms Hernandez was working as an election agent for Kevin Foster, who is currently under investigation over 'battle bus' overspending.¹⁹³ Devon and Cornwall Police have subsequently announced the transfer of their investigations to another force, a move welcomed by Ms Hernandez, who said it "removes any suggestion that I could ever influence police action".¹⁹⁴

22 June 2016 Plans to hand out croissants by pro-Remain campaigners at King's Cross had to be abandoned after the organisers were contacted by the Metropolitan Police and told that this would be "treating", an electoral offence under the *Representation of the People Act 1983*.¹⁹⁵

26 July 2016 A man was given a police caution for committing the offence of personation (pretending to be someone else to cast their vote) at the EU referendum at a polling station in Powys.¹⁹⁶

12 August 2016 Publication of Sir Eric Pickles' review into electoral fraud, the Cabinet Office published, [Securing the ballot](#). In an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, Sir Eric said that his report made 50 recommendations "to strengthen British democracy and stop election fraud":

We should ban the handing of postal ballot papers by political activists to stop "vote harvesting". We should require some form of ID to vote at polling stations – it is ridiculous that it is harder to take out a council library book than to pick up a council ballot paper. There should be stronger police powers to tackle intimidation outside polling stations and to set up 'cordons sanitaires' around them to prevent bullying of voters. We should consider a new role for the National Crime Agency to tackle complex election fraud cases, especially those linked to other forms of crime and corruption.¹⁹⁷

22 August 2016 The BBC reported that three Labour MPs in South Yorkshire are being investigated by police over alleged electoral

¹⁹¹ [Voter complaints against BNP referred to police](#), *Lancaster Evening Post*, 6 May 2016

¹⁹² [Local elections 2016: Woking electoral fraud allegation made to Surrey Police](#), *Get Surrey*, 7 May 2016

¹⁹³ [Tory crime chief is investigated by her own police force for 'election fraud'](#), *Mirror*, 8 May 2016. Cops probe their Tory boss; Crime chief is urged to stand aside as force holds battlebus cash quiz, *Daily Mirror*, 9 May 2016

¹⁹⁴ [Alleged Tory election fraud investigation launched, to include new police commissioner](#), *Falmouth Packet*, 9 May 2016

¹⁹⁵ [EU Referendum: the obscure law that stopped French Remainers handing out croissants to UK voters](#), *Independent*, 22 June 2016

¹⁹⁶ [EU Referendum: man cautioned for voting illegally in Powys](#), BBC News, 26 July 2016

¹⁹⁷ [Electoral fraud is a blight across the political spectrum and my review can help stamp it out](#), *Daily Telegraph*, 12 August 2016

expenses fraud at the 2015 general election. Sir Kevin Barron (Rother Valley), Sarah Champion (Rotherham) and John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) have all denied the allegations.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ [Rotherham MPs face electoral expenses fraud probe](#), BBC News, 22 August 2016

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