
Director General for Regulation

(By email)

4th May 2018

Thank you for your email correspondence regarding the presentation of electoral fraud statistics both in a letter from Swindon Borough Council and by the Cabinet Office¹.

Your complaint was about the onward reporting of statistics initially published by the Electoral Commission. These statistics report on allegations of personation fraud at polling stations. The Cabinet Office stated that "allegations of people pretending to be other people to steal their votes doubled nationally between 2014 and 2016"². This statement is correct based on the published statistics² however, you felt that a better comparison may have been between 2015 and 2017 when numbers of people voting and personation fraud were relatively stable between years.

These figures are not official statistics, and therefore are outside our remit. However, we have reviewed the case drawing on the principles of the Code of Practice and we consider there are two areas where the Cabinet Office could have been clearer in the presentation of this information.

1. The figures have not been put in context. Although it is true that the incidence doubled between 2014 and 2016 there is no indication of the prevalence of the issue and therefore the scale of the problem.
2. The years that have been included in the quote are not typical of the fuller time series. Ideally, the figures for all years from 2014 to 2017 would be included. This would show that while there is a doubling from 2014 to 2016 from 21 to 44, in 2017 the figure for personation at a polling station is 28.

We will highlight the importance of these issues with the Cabinet Office.

Your sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dont-forget-to-take-id-to-vote-in-five-pilot-areas-on-3-may>

² <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/electoral-fraud/data-and-analysis>