

THE ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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ELECTORAL REGISTRATION WEEK ENCOURAGES YOUNG PEOPLE TO – GET ON THE LIST

The Electoral Office aims to help around 15,000 young people to get on the Electoral Register by the end of March 2009. That was just one of the targets highlighted by Douglas Bain, the Chief Electoral Officer at the beginning of the 2008 Electoral Registration Week. The awareness week runs from 10-16 September and is focused on encouraging registration amongst young people, particularly those at school.

Caitríona Ruane MLA, Minister of Education, helped launch the annual awareness week at Priory Integrated College in Holywood. The event was attended by young people of registration age from the college and by pupils from neighbouring Sullivan Upper School in Holywood and St Columbanus' College in Bangor.

Speaking at the launch Douglas Bain said: **“Electoral registering is one of the most important things that a young person can do.**

“As well as securing a voice on how we are governed and how we decide such issues as education, employment and healthcare, being on the register helps with other things such as opening a bank account and credit rating.

“I am very pleased that the Education Minister, Caitríona Ruane was able to join us today and give us her support to help encourage all young people to – Get on the List.”

Until March 2009 the Electoral Office is visiting around 95% of secondary schools in Northern Ireland to encourage electoral registration.

Anyone over the age of 17 can register and can vote once they become 18 years of age.

Anyone who wants an application form or advice about registering should phone the Electoral Office Helpline on 0800 4320 712, or Textphone 0800 3284 502 or visit www.eoni.org.uk

Notes to Editors

The aim of Electoral Registration Week 2008 is to encouraging registration amongst young people particularly those at school.

Young people can register at 17 years of age, although can't vote until they become 18.

In 2006 10,787 seventeen year olds were on the register following the last annual canvass.

In 2007, the first year without a canvass, the number had fallen to 244.

Electoral Registration Week and the Schools Initiative are designed to restore the number of 17 year olds on the register to at least the former level.

The Electoral Office is currently operating a Prize Draw with a top prize of £500, full details can be found on www.eoni.org.uk

Everyone on the Register can apply for a free Electoral Identity Card which can be used to prove identity at Polling Stations and is accepted as proof of identity for travel on all UK operated domestic flights. It is also widely accepted as proof of age. (Other types of acceptable ID cards may cost money to get for the first time or to replace)