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Sheffield City Council Using intuitive technology from Idox to capture the student voice

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Challenge:

[Achieving register accuracy](#)

Maintaining accurate and comprehensive electoral registers is essential for supporting fair, representative voting across the UK. This activity is the responsibility of a local authority's Electoral Registration Officers (ERO), who are charged with overseeing the process and collating the data.

For local authorities with universities in their vicinity, maintaining register completeness becomes more complex given the swell of eligible voters and the transient nature of students.

Sheffield City Council has two universities in its locality – the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam – equating to a vast number of potential electors given the 60,000 students across both institutions. The administrative burden of achieving an accurate electoral register was becoming a challenge for the Council, and was subject to regular change as students moved in and out of the area. The process became even more complicated following the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER), where the onus to register fell on students themselves – a costly and time-consuming activity for the ERO who typically had to chase students to do so.

As a result, the Council was keen to streamline the process and implement a more effective and efficient approach to facilitating student registration and achieving ongoing register maintenance and accuracy.

Solution:

[An automated, complete solution from Idox](#)

As all students are required to enrol online for their course each year, the two universities in Sheffield adapted their student enrolment form to include an invitation to apply for electoral registration. As a result, students were also asked for their National Insurance number, date of birth, opt out preference, voting method and declaration.



To help the Council utilise this information, the team turned to Idox to provide a robust system that would facilitate the retrieval and storage of data into a secure electoral management system (EMS). Thanks to Idox's data mining module – specially designed to assist EROs in identifying new potential electors from a variety of data sources – the Council was able to automate the import of relevant student data directly into the EMS to create applications. This saved considerable amounts of time and money by negating the need to send out ITRS, alongside boosting end-to-end efficiency.

For the ERO, this approach minimises the need to pursue thousands of students to secure registration, and affords them more time to focus on strategic electoral planning instead. As the EMS is flexible, the Council is able to manage its register in a way that suits its needs, while always aligning with legislation and Electoral Commission guidance.

Outcome:

Increased uptake, reduced costs

By working closely with Idox and collaborating with both universities, Sheffield City Council achieved a significant response rate of around 66% of eligible students. This equated to a considerable saving in terms of reduced printing, postage, canvassing and processing costs, and contributed to a national drive to get more students to participate in the electoral process.

Aiding the management and increase of student registrations has also enabled the electoral team to meet statutory obligations, without having to implement expensive and time-intensive processes. As a result, the Council has been able to reduce the burden placed on its EROs and transform a previously complex, often challenging activity into an automated flow that delivers results and ensures register completeness.

Call us now on 0333 011 1200 or email marketing@idoxgroup.com to find out more about our electoral management software and solutions.

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