

News Release

The Press Office

London Borough of
Hammersmith & Fulham
Town Hall
King Street
W6 9JU

www.lbhf.gov.uk

Phil McCorkell
Press Officer

Tel 0208 753 2127
Fax 0208 741 2685

E-mail
philip.mccorkell@lbhf.gov.uk

H&F named beacon council for excellent electoral services

H&F Council has been named a beacon council for the excellence of electoral services – an honour shared with only two other councils in the country.

The national beacon scheme, sponsored by the government, recognises excellence and innovation in local authorities. Councils who are awarded beacon status are expected to share their good practice and knowledge with other councils and organisations.

H&F's electoral services were judged to be outstanding, with assessors commenting, "The quality and breadth of the services are highly impressive. Electoral services attempt to engage with all levels of the community."

The borough has the highest level of voter registration in inner London and the fourth highest in London as a whole. More than 96 per cent of all households in H&F were registered to vote last year

Extensive use of personal canvassers has played a significant role in this success. H&F was also one of the first councils to introduce phone and internet registration – a service which is now offered to nearly 70 per cent of UK households.

The high levels of voter registration contribute to high turnouts in elections. H&F consistently has among the highest turnout levels in inner London in all types of elections.

H&F has worked hard to improve registration and voting among young people, disabled people and black and ethnic minorities. All canvassers are required to ask about any 16 or 17 year-olds living at an address. Young people can join the electoral register at 16, although they can't vote until 18, and electoral services has organised visits from schoolchildren as well as helping to run the UK Youth Parliament elections to increase awareness among young people of their right to register at 16. Young people have also been employed to help with the count on election night.

Electoral services have worked closely with Hammersmith & Fulham Action on Disability to promote services available to disabled voters. Publicity materials are regularly sent to a more than 800 community groups and contacts. Staff in polling stations are given access to language line translation services and telephone registration is available in nine non-English languages.

The use of the council's new customer contact centre to deal with the majority of first-line inquiries has helped to make electoral services more efficient. Those

electors who choose to vote by post all receive a comprehensive postal voting guide.

Electoral services work closely with all political parties and seek their feedback through the regular Elections Forum.

H&F Council chief executive and returning officer, Geoff Alltimes, said, "This is a tremendous endorsement of the professionalism of our electoral services team and the hundreds of local people who help them, who pride themselves on high levels of accurate registration and voting. Polling day is the one occasion when the greatest number of residents come into personal contact with a council service so it is vital that we get this right. Our beacon status will enable us to share our successful practices with others."