

VOTE WITH PRIDE



VOTING IN UK ELECTIONS
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GLOSSARY

Additional Member System: The voting system used to elect MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament) and MSs (Members of the Senydd Cymru). Electors are given two votes; one for their preferred candidate and one for their preferred political party.

Authorised Person: Someone who has permission to carry out certain duties due to their profession.

Ballot Box: The secure box that holds marked ballot papers until they can be counted.

Ballot Paper: The paper that a voter marks to indicate their preferred candidate.

British Citizen (for the purposes of voting): A person who can live and work in the UK without immigration controls. You can check your citizen status [here](#).

By-Election: An election that occurs outside of the normal timetable of elections. By-elections are usually a result of a councillor's or MPs sudden departure from office.

Commonwealth Citizen (for the purposes of voting): Citizens of Commonwealth countries can register to vote in UK parliamentary and local elections, provided you live in the UK and are not subject to immigration controls. You must also fulfill age and residency requirements for the election you wish to vote in. More information is available [here](#).

Councillor: An elected official who represents their constituents in a local council.

Deed Poll: A document that can be used to legally change your name.

Electoral Register: A list of everyone who has registered to vote, detailing a registered voter's name, address, nationality, national insurance number and age. There are two versions of the electoral register:

Full Register: The full register contains all details of those registered to vote and is published once a year.

Open Register: The open register contains the same information as the full register; however, this is sold to any organisation or person who pays for a copy, and can be used for advertising and marketing, amongst other purposes.

You can choose to opt out of the open register when you register to vote.

EU Citizen (for the purposes of voting): A person who is a citizen of a country within the European Union and living in the UK. To be eligible to vote in local elections as of May 7th, 2024, you must have moved to the UK before January 1st, 2021. EU citizens living in the UK who moved after this date may only vote in local elections if there is an agreement between the UK government and their EU country of origin. At the time of writing, agreements are in place for Spain, Portugal, Luxemburg and Poland.

'First Past the Post': The voting system used in UK parliamentary and local elections. This system works by giving all registered voters a single vote which can be cast in favour of their preferred candidate.

Government: A group of elected officials responsible for running a country.

Local Council: The body responsible for making decisions and spending public money in a localised area.

Mayor: The elected (or unelected) head of a local area.

Member of Parliament (MP): An elected official who represents their constituents in the English Parliament.

Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA): An elected official who represents their constituents in the Northern Irish Assembly.

Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP): An elected official who represents their constituents in the Scottish Parliament.

Member of the Senedd Cymru (MS): An elected official who represents their constituents in the Welsh Parliament.

Polling Staff: Staff who work at the polling station on election day.

Political Party: An organisation that funds and coordinates candidates who compete in elections.

Presiding Officer: The lead member of staff working in a polling station on election day.

Prime Minister: The leader of an elected government.

Referendum: A vote on a single political issue. Recent referendums include the 2016 Brexit vote and the 2014 Scottish Independence referendum.

Single Transferable Vote: The voting system used to elect MLAs in Northern Ireland. Voters can rank candidates in their preferred order, and multiple candidates are elected based on the number of votes they receive.

Voter Authority Certificate (VAC): Photo ID that can be applied for if you do not have valid photo ID of another kind.

HOW TO CHECK IF YOU'RE REGISTERED TO VOTE

To find out if you're registered to vote, you need to contact your local electoral registration office.

You can find your local office using your postcode [here](#).



HOW TO REGISTER TO VOTE

To register to vote in the UK, you must:

- Be 16 or over (14 or over in Scotland and Wales).
- A British citizen, an Irish or EU citizen living in the UK or a commonwealth citizen living in the UK with permission.
- A citizen of another country living in Scotland or Wales with permission.

You only need to register to vote once, unless you've changed your name, address or nationality.

The rules for voting in elections may be different to the rules for registering, depending on the election you wish to vote in. See ['Ways to Vote' on page 15](#) for more information.

You can register to vote online or by post. You may need your national insurance number and passport details to hand.

Who can NOT register to vote

You cannot register to vote if you are a foreign resident (without British citizenship) who is not from a commonwealth or EU country.

You also cannot register to vote if you are a currently detained prisoner serving time for an offense you were convicted for, or if you have been found guilty of an election-related crime within the last 5 years.

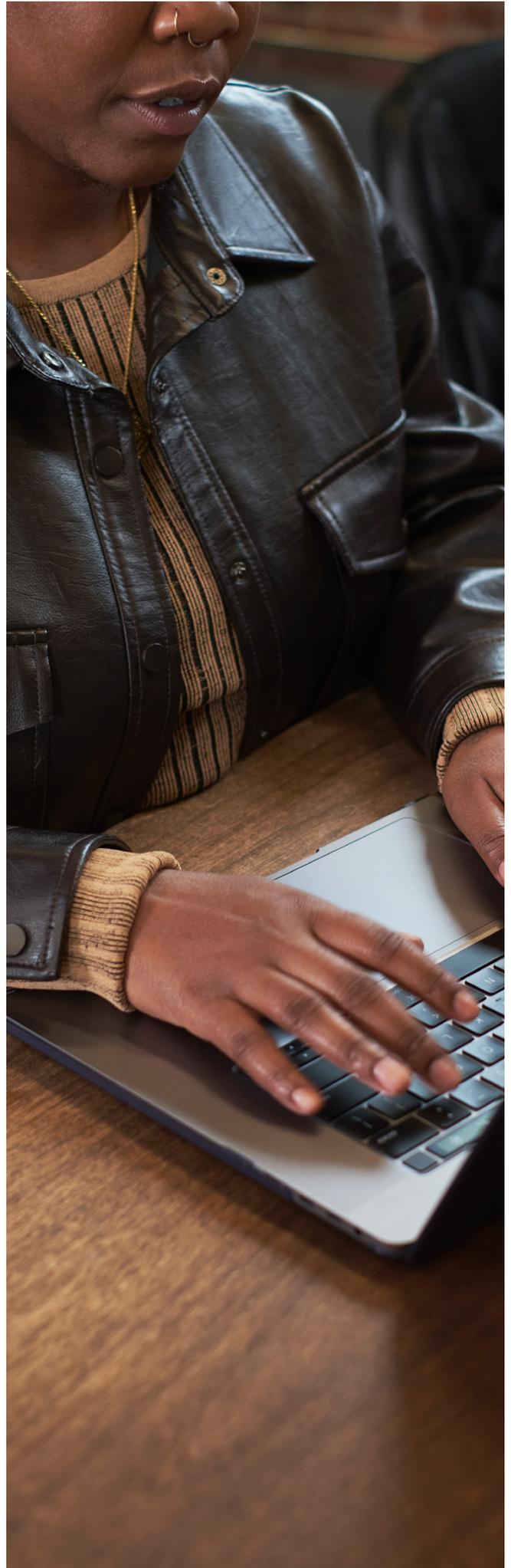
Electoral Register (Open Vs. Full Register)

Registering to vote will put your name on the electoral register. There are two versions of the electoral register:

1. The open register is available to anyone who wants to buy a copy, and will include your name, address, nationality and age.
2. The full register is not available publicly and may include more detail than the open register. This is only accessible by electoral administrators, political parties, the police, credit and loan checking businesses and UK courts.

You can opt out of the open register when you register to vote, but you cannot opt out of the full register.

The only exception to this is if you have registered to vote anonymously. For more information on voting anonymously, see [‘How to Register Anonymously’ on page 9.](#)



HOW TO REGISTER ANONYMOUSLY

If you are worried about your name and address being on the electoral register due to safety concerns, you can opt out of the open register. This means that your details will not be accessible to the public. However, your details will remain on the full register.

If you are concerned about your details being available on the full register, you may be able to register anonymously. To do this, you need to:

1. Explain why your safety or the safety of someone in your household may be affected by your details on the full register.
2. Provide either 1) a court document or 2) a statement from an authorised person who can support your application.

Court documents can include

forced marriage protection orders, non-molestation orders or restraining orders, amongst others. The full list of accepted documents can be found [here](#).

Authorised persons can include medical practitioners, nurses, refuge managers and police officers. A full list of authorised persons can be found [here](#).

Anonymous Registration Time Limit - Anonymous registrations last one year, and you will need to reapply when you are contacted by your electoral registration office.

You will still be required to show voter ID in some elections to vote in-person, and possibly to vote by post and/or proxy in the future. More information about voter ID and voting anonymously can be found in [‘Anonymous voting’](#).

TYPES OF ELECTIONS

There are lots of types of election you can participate in.

General elections and local elections are the most common.

General Elections - These decide which political party will form a government that will run the country for the next 5 years or so. We vote for MPs (Members of Parliament), who then represent their political party in parliament. Generally, the party with the most MPs gets to form a government, and the leader of the party is Prime Minister. For a short video explaining how general elections work click [here](#).

Local Elections - These determine who will run your local council. You vote for councillors who will represent their party in the city council, however they may focus more closely on local issues

than MPs do. Your council will hold elections every 2-4 years depending on how your council operates.

General and local elections follow the 'First Past the Post' system. This means that everyone votes once for their preferred candidate.

Mayoral Elections - Some areas of England also have mayoral elections. Elected mayors are responsible for setting priorities for public services, determining budgets and representing their city nationally (and internationally). Unelected mayors are ceremonial, and act solely as civic and regional ambassadors.

Some areas in England and Wales also have Police and Crime Commissioners, who are

responsible for the operations of the police in your local area.

Mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections will use 'First Past the Post' beginning in 2024.

If you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, you can participate in Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish parliamentary elections. These elections decide who will run the Scottish Parliament the Senedd Cymru, and the Northern Ireland Assembly respectively.

Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and Members of the Senedd Cymru (MSs) are elected using the Additional Member system. This means that you vote for your preferred candidate and your preferred political party separately.

Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Northern Ireland are elected using the Single Transferable Vote system. This means that you rank candidates in your preferred order, and multiple candidates are elected based on the number of votes they receive.

Welsh Elections - For a short video explaining elections in Wales click [here](#).

Scottish Elections - For a short video explaining elections in Scotland click [here](#).

Northern Ireland Elections - For a short video explaining elections in Northern Ireland click [here](#).

Occasionally, there may be referendums on important political issues. The most recent example of a this was the 2016 'Brexit' referendum.

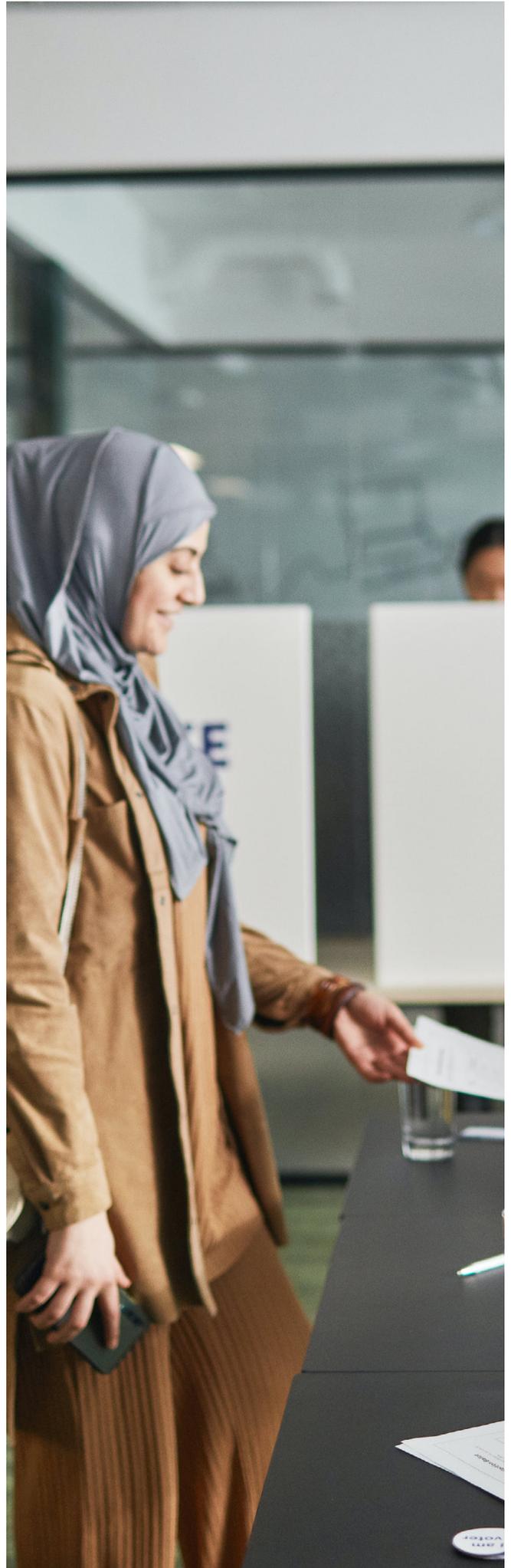
You may occasionally have a by-election in your area. These are elections held outside of the regular local or general elections, and usually occur when a Councillor or MP has died or left office suddenly.

VOTER ID

Voter ID is a new regulation that was introduced in 2023. It means that, to vote in certain elections, you must show photo ID to polling staff before you can receive your ballot paper.

Voter ID is required in all UK parliamentary (to elect MPs), local (to elect councillors) and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections. It may also be extended to mayoral elections and referendums in the future.

Voter ID is not required in Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish elections, and it is not required to vote by post or by proxy, however this may change in the future.



Accepted forms of ID

There are many accepted forms of photo ID, including:

- Passports
- Driving Licenses
- Blue Badges
- Older / Disabled Person's Bus Pass
- PASS Cards

For the full list of accepted photo ID, see [here](#).

You only need to show one form of ID, however this must be an original version, not a photocopy.

Expired ID - If your ID is expired but still resembles you, this will be accepted by polling staff.

Different Name on ID - If your name is different on your ID than the one you used to register to vote, your ID will be accepted if you can provide proof of a name change such as a deed poll.

You Don't Have the Photo ID Listed Above - Getting a Voter Authority Certificate

If you do not have a valid form of photo ID, or the details on your ID are incorrect, and you intend

to vote in person, you can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC).

How to Apply - You can apply for a VAC online or by post. You will be asked to provide your name (as it appears on the electoral register), your date of birth, your current address and your national insurance number.

You can find your national insurance number on tax documents or payslips; however you can still apply for a VAC if you do not have, or cannot find, your national insurance number.

Provide a Photo - You will also be asked to provide a passport style photograph. The guidance on taking a photograph can be found [here](#).

If you need help taking a photograph, your local council or library can help you. If you live in Manchester, you can also contact LGBT Foundation for help at helpline@lgbt.foundation.

Is Gender Displayed on a VAC?

- Your VAC will not show your gender and will not display a gender marker. Polling staff cannot ask for proof of your gender identity or sex assigned

at birth and cannot prevent you from voting due to any variation between the two or unexpected gender presentation.

A VAC has no expiration date, and you do not need to renew it before each election. You should only apply for a new VAC if your name or appearance has changed.

What happens if I'm discriminated against at the polling station?

If it is safe to do so, calmly but firmly assert your right to participate as a registered voter with valid ID. You could also ask to speak to the Presiding Officer.

If it is unsafe to do so or you feel uncomfortable, leave the polling station and apply for an emergency proxy vote. See '[Voting by Proxy](#)' for more information.

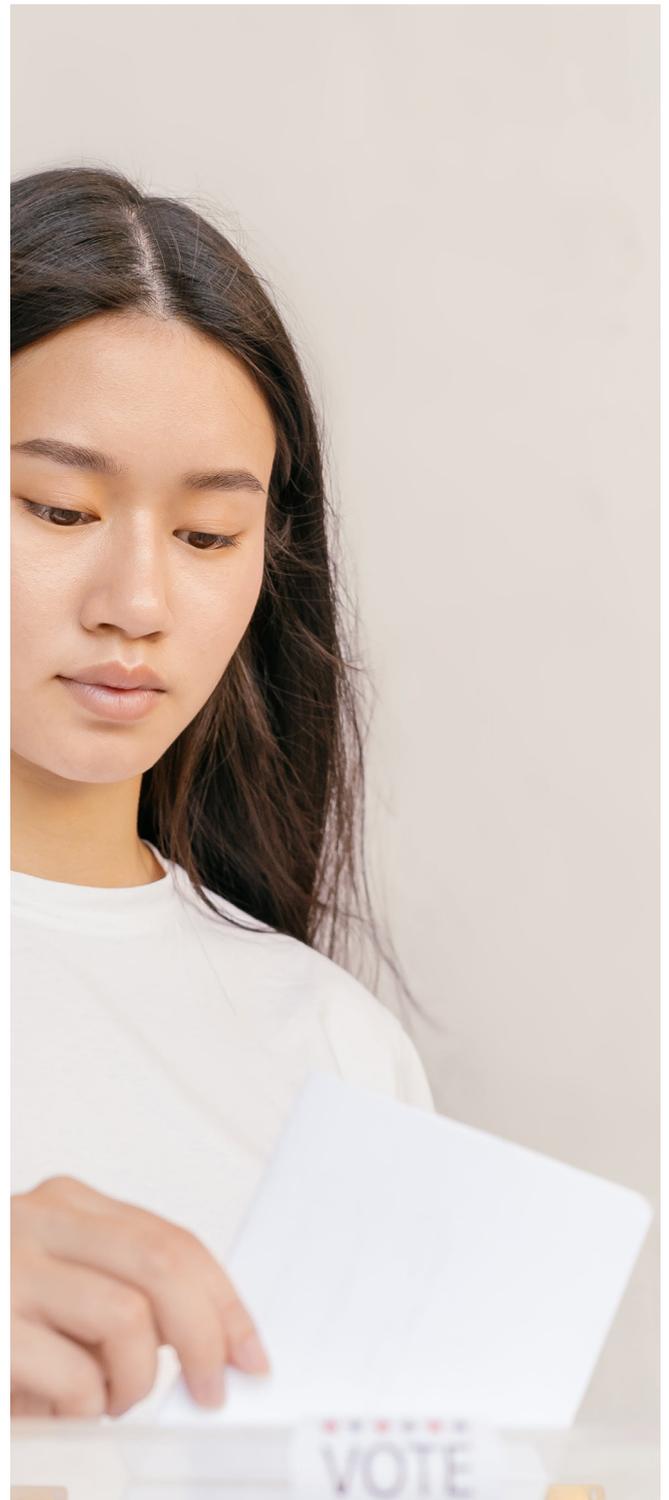
If you need to report a hate crime or discrimination incident, give us a call on 0345 3 30 30 30.

Anonymous Voting

If you have registered to vote anonymously due to safety concerns, and you want to vote in person, you can apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document

(AED).

This is like a VAC, however it will include your electoral number instead of your name, and a 20-digit ID number. More information on applying for an AED can be found [here](#).



WAYS TO VOTE

To vote in an election, you must meet the criteria for the type of election you wish to participate in. See the table below for more information. For all types of election, you can vote in person, by post or by proxy.

	Be registered to vote	Be 16 or over on polling day	Be 18 or over on polling day	Be a British Citizen*	Living in England OR	Living in Wales OR	Living in Scotland OR	Living in Northern Ireland OR	Living abroad but registered to vote in UK	Not be legally excluded from voting
General elections	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Local Government Elections	X	X (In Scotland & Wales)	X (In England & Northern Ireland)	X	X	X	X	X		X
Mayoral Elections	X		X	X	X					X
Police and Crime Commissioner Elections	X		X	X	X	X				X
Scottish Parliament Elections	X	X		X			X (Your registered address must be in Scotland)			X
Welsh Parliament Elections	X	X				X				X
Northern Ireland Assembly Elections	X		X	X			X (Your registered address must be in Northern Ireland)			X
Referendums	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
By-Elections	X	X (In Scotland & Wales)	X (In England & Northern Ireland)	X	X	X	X	X		X

* British citizen here means a British citizen, an Irish or EU citizen living in the UK, a commonwealth citizen living in the UK with permission.

Voting in person

Voting in person at the polling station is the default method of voting. You do not need to specify that you want to vote in person; your local election registration office will send you a poll card automatically, if you are registered to vote at your current address.

Your poll card will tell you when to vote and where your local polling station is. **You can only vote at the polling station listed on your poll card.** You do not need to take your poll card with you to the polling station.

When can I vote in person? -

Polling stations are open 7am to 10pm on the day of the election.

What happens when I arrive?

- When you get to the polling station, you may have to queue depending on how busy it is. When you enter, you will be greeted by polling staff, who will ask for your name, address and photo ID (see 'Voter ID' for more information). If you are registered to vote anonymously, you do not need to provide your name and address if you have an Anonymous Elector Document.

You will then be given a ballot paper listing the candidates or options you can vote for and be directed to a booth.

Your ballot paper will have instructions on how you should complete it, and your booth will have stationary for you to use.

Once you have marked your ballot paper, you can place it in the ballot box and leave the polling station.

Accessibility at the polling station

- Your local election registration office can provide information about the physical access of your assigned polling station, low level polling booth access, and specific equipment that will be available. Your polling station will also provide a large print display version of your ballot paper on request.

Voting by post

You need to apply if you want to vote by post. You can apply to vote by post for any reason, unless you're living in Northern Ireland.

You can apply to vote by post in Northern Ireland due to disability, or if you are living away from your registered address due to work or education.

To apply for a postal vote, you need to complete the online form [here](#). You can also apply by post [here](#).

You will also need to reapply if your address changes.

If you are applying in Northern Ireland, you will need to complete the Northern Irish form [here](#).

To complete your postal vote, you should mark your ballot for your chosen candidate and sign the postal voting statement, then mail it using the envelope provided. You do not need to use a stamp or pay for postage.

Make sure you post your ballot as soon as possible to guarantee that it will be counted. If you miss the postage deadline, you can take your completed postal

ballot to your local polling station before 10pm on election day.

If your postal ballot has been damaged, or if your details have been obscured, you should ask your Electoral Registration office to post a replacement. You can also collect this in person up to 5pm on election day.

You cannot vote at a polling station if you are registered to vote by post.



Voting by proxy

If you're not able to vote in person, you can nominate someone else to vote for you. This is a proxy vote.

Your proxy vote can be for a single election, a specific time period (except in Northern Ireland) or permanently.

You can only apply for a proxy vote if you will be away on polling day, you are unable to vote due to a disability or medical issue, or you are unable to vote due to work or military service.

Your proxy can be anyone who is registered and allowed to vote in the election you wish to vote in and should vote for the candidate you request. If the election requires photo ID to be shown, your proxy will need to provide their own valid ID to cast a vote on your behalf.

You can change your proxy by contacting the local electoral registration office.

To apply for a proxy vote, you can complete the online form [here](#), or apply by post [here](#). You should apply 6 working days (14 days in Northern Ireland) before the

election you want to vote in.

If you have missed the proxy vote deadline, and you cannot vote in person due to:

- Disability
- Medical emergency
- Work
- Your photo ID being missing, damaged, or not eligible

You may be eligible for an emergency proxy vote. You can apply until 5pm on election day (in England, Wales and Scotland only), and there are different forms to complete depending on the reason you need an emergency proxy vote (<https://www.gov.uk/how-to-vote/voting-by-proxy>).

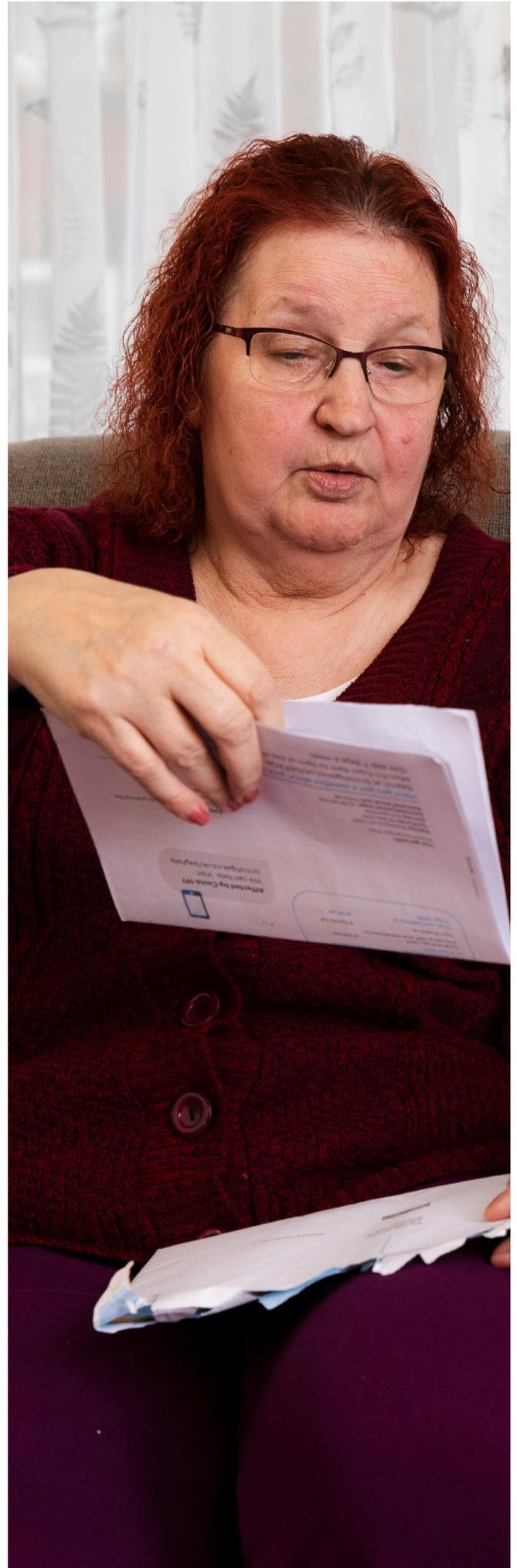
For emergency proxy votes due to disability, medical emergency or work, an 'appropriate person' must sign your application form. This may be a medical professional or your employer.

Abroad/overseas voting

If you need to vote in a UK election while you're abroad, the process depends on whether you're abroad temporarily or living abroad, and where you want to vote.

If you are abroad temporarily, you can vote by post or proxy if you have made arrangements in advance.

If you are living abroad permanently, you can still vote in UK Parliament elections, and you may be eligible to vote in referendums. To vote while living abroad, you need to register as an overseas voter. You can register [here](#).



WE EMPOWER LGBTQ+ PEOPLE TO REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL, EVERY DAY.

Published in Jan 2024
by **LGBT Foundation**

**Fairbairn House (2nd Floor),
72 Sackville Street,
Manchester, M1 3NJ**

Tel: 0345 3 30 30 30
Email: info@lgbt.foundation
Web: lgbt.foundation

Reg. Company No. 3476576
Reg. Charity No.1070904



Find out how we are here for you.
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