

Vote with Pride

Polling station accessibility guidance

Plain Text Version

Key Terms:

Polling Station: The building where you will go to vote

Voting Booth: A private section of the building with a desk and privacy screens where you will complete your ballot paper

Ballot Box: The box where you will put your completed ballot paper

Ballot Paper / Ballot: The form you will use to vote, by writing an 'x' in the box next to your preferred candidate.

Polling Staff: People who have been employed to run the polling station

Presiding Officer: The main person responsible for running the polling station

Poll Card: A card you get in the post with information about your local polling station

If you're disabled, and want to **vote in person**, you might have questions about how accessible your **polling station** will be, particularly if you are **voting for the first time**.

There are a few things that **all polling stations must do** and some **equipment** they must provide to help you vote.

All polling stations must have:

Step free access, which will be signposted if not at the main entrance

Disabled parking, or information about where the nearest disabled parking spaces are available if not on site.

A low-level voting booth

A low-level ballot box, with a white strip outlining the slot that you should place your ballot paper into

Doorbells or alerters next to entrances or exits that need to be kept shut during the day. If you need help to open one of these doors, the doorbell or alerter will help polling staff know that you are waiting

Good lighting, so that you can see the faces of polling staff and read the ballot paper

Polling stations will also **provide instructions on the voting process** you need to follow and **how you should complete your ballot paper.**

There is some equipment that all polling stations must have:

Large poster sized, and handheld, **large-text, sample ballot papers.** You may also request a handheld sample ballot paper in **braille.**

A **tactile voting device.** This attaches to your ballot and helps you know where to write on the paper.

There are **different types** of tactile device. A **McGonagle Reader** is a device that attaches the ballot paper and allows you to lift a flap and press a button to hear information about a candidate.

This allows you to complete the ballot paper at your own pace.

You will need to request this device from your local council,

as they are not provided as standard.

A **standard tactile device**. These are **provided by all polling stations** and allow you to feel where on the ballot paper you should write. Your companion or presiding officer will need to **read the ballot to you while you use the tactile device**, unless you request an **audio player** from your local Elections Office. You can find more information about requesting an audio player [here](#).

A **magnifier**, which can be used to make text appear larger. Ideally there will be a range of magnifiers of different strengths.

Chairs with and without armrests

A **pencil grip** that can help you hold a pencil on your own

A **privacy screen** that can be used to show your voter ID to staff in private.

There is some equipment that polling stations are **not required to provide**, but that you might want to **request by writing to your local election office**. You can find your local election office [here](#).

A **hearing induction loop** (if the building does not already have an induction loop)

Audio devices, which can be used with a tactile voting device to help you complete your ballot independently. This will usually be a speaker with a USB slot, and a pre-recorded USB device which gives instructions for using the tactile device and lists the candidates' names in order. You will need to **bring headphones to use with the audio device**.

Easy read information, such as instructions for completing the ballot paper.

You might need information in a **different language or format**.

The ballot paper will be available in **braille or audio format** on request by asking polling staff.

You can also ask for **BSL assistance**. The BSL interpretation service will vary based on your location.

Instructions on how to vote, photo ID requirements and how to write on your ballot paper are available in **different languages**.

You can see these by asking polling staff. **Available languages usually include:**

Arabic

Bengali

Bulgarian

Cantonese

Czech

Farsi

French

Hebrew

Kurdish

Mandarin

Pashto

Polish

Portuguese

Punjabi

Romanian

Slovak

Somali

Spanish

Tigrinya

Urdu

Yiddish

If you have your **own equipment**, or use your **phone to assist you**, (such as with an app, translation software or video magnifier) **you can use these in the polling station**. You can also bring your **own pen or pencil**.

Service animals are allowed in the polling station.

You might need **help from others**, such as a friend or family member (also known as a **companion**) to complete your ballot. They will need to **sign a form** at the polling station before they are allowed to enter the voting booth with you.

Your companion must be **over 18**, but they **do not need to be registered to vote** themselves.

If you require a companion, tell the polling staff when you arrive, and they will support you both to sign the required forms.

If you don't have someone to help you, you can **ask the presiding officer for support**. You can identify the presiding officer and all polling staff by their **staff badge**.

You may need to **consider your own accessibility needs** before you attend the polling station. **You might need to think about:**

Whether you need to bring any **equipment from home**, such as mobility aids, assistive writing devices or headphones

Whether you need any more **information about the voting process**, how to find your polling station or what support is available for you, to help reduce anxiety

How you will ask polling staff for **support based on your needs**

How **busy** the polling station might be. Polling stations are open **7am-10pm on election day** and tend to be busiest just before the

start of the workday (8:30-9am), at lunchtime (12-1pm) and after the workday has finished (4:30-6pm). Consider whether you are able to **queue comfortably**, and if not, you might want to **visit the polling station at a quieter time**.

Whether you want to speak to **'tellers'**. 'Tellers' are volunteers for a particular party or candidate and may ask for the number on your **poll card**. They collect this information to guess how many people in a local area have voted. **You do not need to speak with them** if you do not wish.

More information

Vote with Pride: Voting in UK elections – LGBT Foundation:

<https://lgbt.foundation/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Vote-with-Pride-Voting-in-UK-Elections-December-2023.pdf>

Guidance on Assistance with voting for disabled voters –

Electoral Commission:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/full-guidance/guidance-returning-officers-assistance-voting-disabled-voters>

Four things you need to know for polling day – Electoral

Commission: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/blog/four-things-you-need-know-polling-day>

Find your local election office – Electoral Commission:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information>

Voting and Elections: What you need to know – RNIB:

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/get-involved/support-a-campaign/voting-and-elections-what-you-need-to-know/>