

Ensuring those working to support the poll are aware of accessibility needs | Electoral Commission      Guidance for Returning Officers - Assistance with voting for disabled voters    You are in the Ensuring that voting is accessible section Home Guidance for Returning Officers - Assistance with voting for disabled voters Ensuring that voting is accessible View the navigation tree Go to main guidance section: Guidance for Returning Officers - Assistance with voting for disabled voters Ensuring that voting is accessible Understanding the barriers to voting for disabled people Providing equipment at the polling station that enables or makes voting easier for disabled voters Ensuring those working to support the poll are aware of accessibility needs Raising awareness about the voting process and support available Reviewing the election Ensuring those working to support the poll are aware of accessibility needs To help ensure that all voters are provided with equal access to voting and receive appropriate support, it is important that all of those who work to deliver the election or provide information to voters are aware of the needs of disabled people. You should provide accessibility awareness training for all staff who interact with voters, including staff who support electoral services, to help improve their understanding of the needs of disabled voters and the importance of clear communication. Working with external partners, we have developed resources that could help your staff to understand barriers to voting and experiences of disabled voters at the polling station including: RNIB video which shares the experiences of voting in the polling station for those with sight loss Mencap videos which share the experiences of Charlotte and Harry of voting in a polling station with a learning disability You can take advice from your Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) officer or HR department on other accessibility awareness training that you could access. Staff should also be made aware of the resources we have available on our website and YouTube channel to assist disabled people with particular impairments to help with understanding about voting and what to expect at the polling station. For more information and updates about our resources we create you can subscribe to Roll Call our voter registration newsletter and your guide to supporting voter registration and participation. In addition you could think about sourcing or developing evergreen resources that are not election specific and so can be used year round over multiple years in partnership with civil society organisations that advocate for and support their stakeholders on issues surrounding the accessibility of voting. Training for polling station staff to support accessibility It is also vital that your training for polling station staff addresses the importance of being aware of the accessibility needs of voters at the polling station and what steps they should take to support them. The actions and behaviours of polling station staff are key to making voters' experience in the polling station a positive one. Simple things like offering assistance and listening to voters' questions can make a real difference. In addition to general awareness raising of accessibility needs, it is important that your training for polling station staff covers: the barriers faced by disabled voters at the polling station and how polling station staff can help reduce them awareness that there are no legal barriers to prevent disabled people from voting, including voters with any learning disability or cognitive impairment awareness that not all disabilities are visible or obvious, and that polling station staff should not make assumptions about what equipment voters might need the importance of considering the needs of the person, not a specific disability awareness that some voters may have more than one impairment – for example, a visual impairment and dementia the importance of clear communication about the voting process the importance of clearly communicating that assistance is

available if required awareness of the equipment provided at the polling station to enable or make easier voting in the polling station for disabled voters, and how to use it including in particular equipment that polling station staff may be less familiar with, such as hearing loops awareness that a companion assisting a voter can be anyone over the age of 18 and if they have completed the declaration, can accompany a voter into the booth to assist them awareness that disabled voters may have an assistance animal with them and that assistance animals should not be prevented from entering the polling station awareness that voters with sight loss may use apps on their mobile phones or carry pocket-sized assistive equipment, such as video magnifiers, to help them read documents in the polling booth or in conjunction with a tactile voting device awareness that the use of text to speech apps are acceptable for use in polling stations awareness of alternative methods of communication that voters may use such as Makaton and British Sign Language (BSL) In our core guidance for Returning Officers for each type of election , we link to resources for training polling station staff which contain information about the role polling station staff have in ensuring that voting is accessible and the equipment that is available to support disabled voters on accessibility which you should highlight when briefing polling station staff. Last updated: 29 March 2023 Book traversal links for Ensuring those working to support the poll are aware of accessibility needs Making decisions about providing additional support and equipment for voters Raising awareness about the voting process and support available