

Voter ID: Guide for Staff and Volunteers

Supporting people with the voter ID requirement

In the UK, you are legally required to show photo identification (ID) when voting at a polling station at some elections.

The name on a voter's ID must be the same they used to register to vote.

Anyone who does not have an accepted form of photo ID can apply for a free voter ID document, which is known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

This guide is for staff and volunteers working at local authorities and charities who want to support the people they work with to understand and meet this requirement. It includes information on:

- [Registering to vote](#), including how to register to vote without a fixed address
- [Which forms of photo ID are accepted when voting in person](#)
- [How to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate](#)
- [What voters can expect at the polling station](#)
- [Other ways to vote](#)

The information in this guide relates to the requirement to show photo ID when voting in person at a polling station (the ‘voter ID requirement’) in some elections in England, Scotland and Wales. Providing photo ID is a long-standing requirement to vote in Northern Ireland. More information on which elections require photo ID when voting in person can be found in the [‘Which elections require photo ID’](#) section of this guide.

You can also download resources to support people who are registered to vote anonymously, or who are eligible to do so.

Registering to vote

The deadline to register to vote in a particular election is **12 working days** before the date of that election.

Anyone who wants to vote in the UK must first be registered to vote. If they have registered before, they only need to register again if they have moved house or changed their name. The need to register to vote, and how you register, has not been changed by the introduction of the voter ID requirement.

This table shows who can register in England, Scotland and Wales:

I am a...	I live in England	I live in Scotland	I live in Wales
British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in UK	Yes (from 16 years old)	Yes (from 14 years old)	Yes (from 14 years old)
EU citizen living in UK	Yes (from 16 years old)	Yes (from 14 years old)	Yes (from 14 years old)
Qualifying foreign citizen (someone living in Scotland or Wales with permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission)	No	Yes (from 14 years old)	Yes (from 14 years old)

Even though you can register to vote from the age of 14 in Scotland and Wales, you can't vote in UK Parliament general elections, by-elections or recall petitions or Police and Crime Commissioner elections (which take place in England and Wales only), until you are 18 years old.

More information on who is eligible to register to vote in each UK nation is included at [Appendix 1](#). You can also check if the person you are supporting is eligible to vote in elections in their area by entering their postcode at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter or by calling our helpline on 0800 328 0280.

If the person you are supporting has a permanent address, they can register online now at gov.uk/register-to-vote, or download a paper application form at gov.uk/government/collections/register-to-vote-paper-forms.

Supporting members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

If the person you are supporting has been staying at a site for a substantive length of time they can register to vote at this address. Otherwise, they should register without a fixed address.

Registering without a fixed or permanent address

To do this they will need to fill in a form titled 'Electoral registration form for someone with no fixed or permanent address' and give details of where they spend most of their time. This could be anywhere in the local authority area.

You can download this form at

[gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions) or request a copy from their Electoral Registration Officer.

To find their contact details:

- Visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voter, or
- Call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**

Supporting people experiencing homelessness

Registering in temporary accommodation

People living in temporary accommodation may be able to register at that address, provided they don't have a permanent address elsewhere. If they are unsure if this is the case, they should contact their Electoral Registration Officer.

Registering with no fixed address

People who don't have a fixed address or are experiencing homelessness can still register to vote. To register, they need to fill in a form titled 'Electoral registration form for someone with no fixed or

permanent address', which is available to download at [gov.uk/ government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions](http://gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions)

A paper copy can also be requested from their Electoral Registration Officer. The form asks for the address where the person would like to be registered. This can be anywhere in the local authority area where they spend a substantial part of their time, for example a drop in shelter, shop or a park bench. The form also asks for an address where correspondence, including the poll card, can be sent. Alternatively, the person can choose to pick this up from their local council, although they do not need their poll card to vote.

You can support people you work with to register online now at gov.uk/register-to-vote. If you need any help when supporting someone to register to vote, you can contact their local council. You can find local council contact details by entering the postcode of the person you're supporting at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

Which elections require photo ID?

Voters in England, Scotland and Wales now need to show photo ID when voting in person at some elections. This requirement was proposed by the UK Government, who stated it was intended to “ensure that elections are better protected from the potential for voter fraud”, and became law when UK Parliament passed the Elections Act 2022.

The following table explains which elections require photo ID:

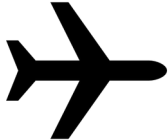




	Photo ID required
England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Parliament general elections (from October 2023) • UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions • Local council elections and by-elections • Police and Crime Commissioner elections
Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Parliament general elections (from October 2023) • UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions
Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Parliament general elections (from October 2023) • UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions • Police and Crime Commissioner elections

Photo ID is not required in Scottish Parliament and Senedd elections, or council elections and by-elections in Scotland and Wales.

Accepted forms of photo ID

Voters can use any of the following forms of photo ID to be able to vote at a polling station.

Voters only need to show one form of photo ID to vote, but it must be the original version and not a photocopy.

				
International travel	Driving	Local travel	Proof of age	Other government-issued documents
Passport	Driving license (including provisional license) Blue badge	Some concessionary travel cards*	Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)	Biometric immigration document Defence identity card National identity card

Only specific forms of the above photo ID will be accepted. For more information on which forms will be accepted, including a full list of accepted concessionary travel cards*, see [Appendix 2](#).

Name on a voter's photo ID

The name on the voter's photo ID should be the same name they used to register to vote.

Gender

Voters do not need to show photo ID that includes a gender marker.

Expired photo ID

Expired photo ID will be accepted if the photo remains a good enough likeness for the polling station/polling place staff to be able to identify the voter.

What to do if someone doesn't have an accepted form of photo ID

If someone wants to vote in person at a polling station but doesn't have one of these accepted forms of photo ID, they should apply for a Voter Authority Certificate.

If someone is not sure whether they have an accepted form of photo ID or not, they can visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

Applying for a Voter Authority Certificate

The deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate for use at a particular election is 5pm, **6 working days** before the date of that election.

If someone wishes to vote in person at a polling station, they should apply for a Voter Authority Certificate if they:

- Do not have an accepted form of photo ID,

- Feel worried about using an existing form of photo ID which has a gender marker, or
- Are not sure whether they still look like the photo on their ID

If someone does not wish to vote in person at a polling station, there are other ways they can vote. More information can be found in the 'Other ways to vote' section of this guide.

There are three ways to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate – online, by post or in person.

Voters need to be registered to vote before they apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. When someone registers to vote, they will be asked whether they have photo ID or if they want to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. They will also be asked if they want to receive instructions on how to use their Voter Authority Certificate in braille, large print, or easy read.

Apply online

Applications can be completed online at voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk

Apply by post

Voters can also apply for a Voter Authority Certificate by completing a paper form and sending it to their local Electoral Registration Officer. The form is available in English and a range of accessible formats.

The form can be downloaded at gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-voter-authority-certificate-by-post-if-youre-living-in-the-uk.

Apply in person

Voters may also be able to apply in person at their local Electoral Services Officer.

In some areas, where a voter has a specific need because they are disabled, Electoral Officers may be able to accept applications over the phone.

The application process

When applying for a Voter Authority Certificate, the voter will need to provide their:

- Name
- Address
- Date of birth
- National Insurance number

If the voter doesn't know their National Insurance number, they can look for it on their payslips or on official letters about tax, pensions or benefits.

If they are unable to find it, they can still complete their application, but they will need to provide alternative forms of proof of identity, which could include a birth

certificate, bank statement or utility bill. The Electoral Registration Officer will contact them to arrange this.

Voters do not need to provide their gender when applying for a Voter Authority Certificate, but they do need to apply using the same name they used to register to vote.

They can also ask someone who knows them to provide an attestation to the Electoral Registration Officer to verify their identity if they don't have any other accepted proof of identity. The Electoral Registration Officer can provide more information about the requirements of an attestation.

Providing a photo

Applicants will also need to provide a photo.

Requirements for the photo are similar to those for passport photos and must show the person's head and shoulders with nothing covering the head – unless a head covering is worn for religious or medical reasons. The face must not be covered for any reason.

If someone needs help taking their photo, their local Electoral Registration Office may be able to do this for them. They may provide an area at their office to take photos of applicants. Additional support may be available, however this will vary between areas so you or the voter should contact their Electoral Registration Officer to find out what support they can provide.

For more information on the requirements for the photograph, see [Appendix 3](#) or visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

Supporting people to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate

You can help people you work with to complete their application if they need support, and you can contact their local Electoral Registration Officer if you have any questions about the application process.

You can find contact details for the local Electoral Registration Officer by entering the postcode of the

person you are supporting at
[electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter)

What happens next

The Electoral Registration Officer will process the application and send the Voter Authority Certificate to the voter by post, along with instructions explaining how to use it. The Voter Authority Certificate includes a raised tactile marking in the top left-hand corner, to help the voter identify it. This marking consists of four small dots repeated three times.

Voter Authority Certificates do not have an expiration date, but voters should renew their Voter Authority Certificate after 10 years.

All data voters provide when applying for a Voter Authority Certificate will be stored securely by Electoral Registration Officers in line with data protection regulations.

What to expect at a polling station

When someone arrives at the polling station, a member of staff will:

1. Ask them for their name and address so they can find them on the electoral register
2. Ask for their photo ID, and check if it is acceptable
3. Give them their ballot paper and direct them to complete it at a polling booth as usual

Staff at the polling station are there to help, and all staff receive training on how to check photo ID sensitively.

Staff will not check the gender marker, address or nationality on a voter's photo ID.

Councils are responsible for ensuring that elections are well run and that voters feel comfortable casting their vote. As part of their planning, they will have thought about what arrangements are necessary to help make polling stations safe places.

If someone you are supporting has questions about how their photo ID will be checked, please contact their local

council to understand what local arrangements will be in place to support the person to vote. You can find their contact details by entering the postcode of the person you're supporting at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

Privacy

A private area will be available so voters can choose to have their photo ID viewed in private if they like. This might be a separate room, or an area separated by a privacy screen.

Voters can also request that a female member of staff checks their photo ID. This request will be granted if possible.

If someone wears a face covering such as a veil, there should be a mirror available to allow them to replace it immediately once their photo ID has been checked.

If someone wears a face covering for medical reasons and would prefer not to remove it indoors, polling station staff may be able to check their photo ID outside. If the

person you are supporting has any concerns, you can contact their local Electoral Services team.

Find out more about what to expect

If someone you are supporting would like further information about what to expect at the polling station, they should contact their local council. You can find their contact details by entering the person's postcode at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**

Support at the polling station

Assistive equipment

All voters have the right to vote independently and in secret. Some assistive equipment will be available at the polling station to help people to do so.

If someone has particular access needs, they can contact the local council to find out what assistive

equipment will be available and request any additional equipment they feel they need.

The council will decide whether or not the requested equipment can be provided.

You can find contact details for your local council by calling our helpline on **0800 328 0280** or by entering your postcode at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

Other forms of support

The Presiding Officer can help the voter cast their vote if they would find this helpful. Polling staff are there to help, and voters should be encouraged to ask a member of staff if they have any questions or need assistance.

People who feel they cannot vote at a polling station without assistance, including disabled people, can bring someone with them to help them. Anyone over the age of 18 can accompany a person voting in:

- a UK Parliament general election, by-election or recall petition,

- Council elections in England, and
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales.

Anyone over the age of 16, who is eligible to vote in the election, can accompany a person voting in:

- Scottish Parliament elections
- Senedd elections, and
- Council elections in Scotland and Wales.

The companion will not need to show photo ID.

If a companion will be supporting you in the polling booth, you should inform the polling staff when you arrive. Your companion will be allowed to enter the polling booth to help you vote.

What should someone do if they experience issues at the polling station?

If someone you are supporting experiences any issues at the polling station and wants to provide feedback

about their experience, they should contact their local council.

To find their contact details visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voter or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

Other ways to vote

Voting by post

Photo ID is not required to vote by post.

If a person would prefer to vote by post or won't be able to make it to the polling station on polling day, they can apply to vote by post.

The deadline to apply to vote by post at a particular election is **5pm, 11 working days before the date of that election.**

When a person applies for a postal vote, they need to provide their date of birth and signature. They will need to provide their date of birth and signature again when they complete the postal ballot pack, so their identity can be verified.

The voter will receive their ballot paper by post. They will need to complete and return their ballot paper, ensuring they leave enough time for it to arrive at their local council. If they can't post their postal vote pack in time, they can take it to their polling station (or polling place in Scotland). or to their local council office on polling day.

Voting by proxy (allowing someone you trust to vote on your behalf)

If a person won't be able to make it to the polling station (or polling place in Scotland). on polling day, they may

be able to apply to vote by proxy, where they choose someone they trust to go to their polling station or polling place on their behalf.

The deadline to apply to vote by proxy in a particular election is **5pm, 6 working days before the date of that election.**

The person they choose to vote on their behalf will need to go to the polling station (or polling place in Scotland). They will need to show their own photo ID, not the photo ID of the person they are voting on behalf of.

If an emergency occurs after the deadline to apply for a proxy vote, meaning you cannot go to the polling station/ place in person, you can apply for an emergency proxy up to 5pm on the day of the election.

More information on voting by post and by proxy is available at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter

or by calling our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

Receiving a temporary Voter Authority Certificate

If a person has applied for a Voter Authority Certificate before the application deadline (5pm, 6 working days before the election date), but their council doesn't think it will arrive in time for use at the election, they will produce a temporary Voter Authority Certificate.

The temporary Voter Authority Certificate will only be valid for the relevant polling day and the voter will need to collect it in person.

It may be possible to make alternative arrangements for collection of the certificate from a location which would need to be agreed with the Electoral Registration Officer. You can find contact for the relevant Electoral Registration Officer by entering the postcode of the person you're supporting at

electoralcommission.org.uk/voter

If a person loses their permanent Voter Authority Certificate after the application deadline, they can apply for an emergency proxy vote.

For more information on how to apply for an emergency proxy vote, visit **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter** or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

Appendix 1: Who is eligible to vote in England, Scotland and Wales?

Registering to vote in England

To be eligible to register to vote in England, a person must be one of the following:

- a UK or Irish citizen
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in the UK
- an EU citizen living in the UK

To register to vote in England, a person must also be aged 16 or over.

Once registered, they can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (but not EU citizens)
- Local council elections and by-elections, from the age of 18

- Police and Crime Commissioner elections, from the age of 18

Registering to vote in Scotland

To register to vote in Scotland, a person must be aged 14 or over. They must also be one of the following:

- a UK or Irish citizen
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in the UK
- a ‘qualifying foreign national’ – a citizen of another country who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission, including EU citizens

Once registered, they can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (but not ‘qualifying foreign nationals’)
- Scottish Parliament elections and by-elections, from the age of 16

- Local council elections, from the age of 16

Registering to vote in Wales

To register to vote in Wales, a person must be aged 14 or over. They must also be one of the following:

- a UK or Irish citizen
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in the UK
- a 'qualifying foreign citizen' – a citizen of another country who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission

Once registered, they can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (but not 'qualifying foreign citizens')
- Senedd elections and by-elections, from the age of 16
- Local council elections, from the age of 16

- Police and Crime Commissioner elections, from the age of 18 (but not 'qualifying foreign citizens')

Appendix 2: Accepted forms of ID

International travel

- Passport issued in the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state or a Commonwealth country (including an Irish passport card)

Driving

- Driving license issued in the UK, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state
- A blue badge

Local travel

- Older Person's Bus Pass funded by the Government of the United Kingdom
- Disabled Person's Bus Pass funded by the Government of the United Kingdom
- Oyster 60+ Card funded by the Government of the United Kingdom Freedom Pass

- Scottish National Entitlement Card (an ‘older person’s buss pass’)
- 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Disabled Person’s Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Senior SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person’s SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- War Disablement SmartPass or War Disabled SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- 60+ SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- Half Fare SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland

Proof of age

- Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card), including the ‘Young Scot’ card

Other government issued document

- Biometric immigration document
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- National identity card issued by an EEA state

Electoral Identity Document

- Voter Authority Certificate
- Temporary Voter Authority Certificate
- Anonymous Elector's Document
- Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland

Appendix 3: Photograph requirements for the Voter Authority Certificate application

Photo style

The photo must be of the applicant:

- Facing forward and looking straight at the camera
- A close up of their head and shoulders, without any head covering, unless they wear one for religious beliefs or medical reasons. The face must not be covered for any reason.
- Without any other person visible
- With a plain facial expression and with their eyes open and clearly visible (e.g. without sunglasses and not obscured with hair for example). Please note this does not apply where the applicant is unable to provide a photograph which complies with either or both of those requirements due to any disability.

Photo quality

The photo of the applicant must:

- Be a true likeness, with no photoshop or filters applied
- Be in colour
- Be taken against a plain, light background
- Be in sharp focus and clear
- Be free from 'redeye', shadows which obscure the face, or reflection
- Not be damaged

Photo size

Where the applicant applies online, the photograph they provide must be:

- At least 750 pixels in height and 600 pixels in width
- Contained in an electronic file which is no more than 20MB in size

Where the applicant applies using a paper form the photograph must be:

- At least 45 millimetres in height and 35 millimetres in width
- No larger than 297 millimetres in height or 210 millimetres in width

Appendix 4: Frequency Asked Questions (FAQs)

General

Question: Are there elections taking place in my area?

Answer: You can visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voter or call our helpline on 0800 328 0280 to find out if elections are taking place in your area.

Question: How do I contact my local council or Electoral Registration Officer?

Answer: You can find their contact details, including phone numbers and email addresses, by calling the Electoral Commission helpline on 0800 328 0280 or by visiting electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

Registering to vote

Question: I have voted in elections in my area in the past. Do I need to register again?

Answer: If you've registered before, you only need to register again if you have moved house, or changed your name.

Question: Can I apply for free voter ID at the same time as registering to vote?

Answer: Yes. When you register to vote online, you'll be asked whether you have photo ID or if you want to apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

Question: Do I need to show more than one form of photo ID?

Answer: No, so long as your ID is one of the forms listed included in the list provided in this document.

Question: Can I use photo ID that's out of date?

Answer: Yes, as long as you still look as you appear in the photo.

Question: I have photo ID in an app on my phone. Can I use this to vote?

Answer: No – only hard copy versions of your ID will be accepted.

Question: I don't have any photo ID. Can I still vote in person at a polling station?

Answer: Yes. If you don't have one of the accepted forms of photo ID, you can apply for a free voter ID document known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

Question: There aren't any elections taking place in my area in the near future. Can I still apply for a Voter Authority Certificate for use at future elections?

Answer: Yes. Voter Authority Certificates do not have an expiration date, but voters are encouraged to renew their Voter Authority Certificate after 10 years.

Other ways of voting

Question: Are there other ways to vote that don't require photo ID?

Answer: Yes. You can vote by post, or by proxy which is when you ask someone you trust to vote on your behalf. You'll have to apply for a postal or a proxy vote before you can do so.

Question: What are the accessibility options for postal voting?

Answer: Your local Electoral Registration Officer is legally required to include instructions with your postal vote pack on how to obtain a translation of directions or guidance on how to complete your postal vote application. Contact your local Electoral Services Office

for more information. You can get their contact details by entering your post code at electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information.

Question: I'd like someone to vote on my behalf at a polling station. Will they need to show my photo ID?

Answer: No. However, they will have to show their own ID. As long as you have registered for a proxy vote, polling station staff will know that this person is voting on your behalf.

Applying for a Voter Authority Certificate (free voter ID)

Question: Can I get the application form for a Voter Authority Certificate in an accessible format?

Answer: Yes. You can request the application form in large print or Easy Read from your Electoral Registration Officer. You can get their contact details by entering your post code at

electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information.

Question: I can't find my National Insurance number.
Can I still apply for free voter ID?

Answer: Yes. Your local Electoral Registration Officer will contact you to ask for a different proof of identity. This could be a birth certificate, utility bill or bank statement.

Question: I'm not sure how to take a photograph that will meet the requirements. How can I get help to do this?

Answer: You can contact your local Electoral Registration Officer for help with this. They can take the photograph for you. You can find contact details for your local Electoral Registration Officer by calling 0800 328 0280 or by entering your post code at electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information.

Question: I can't get to my local Electoral Registration Office, can I get support at home, or somewhere else?

Answer: It is up to individual Electoral Registration teams to determine what, if any, support they can offer away from their office. Such requests from voters would be considered on a case-by-case basis and would depend, among other factors, on what facilities were available and where.

Question: I'm blind/partially sighted, how will I be able to identify my Voter Authority Certificate when it is sent to me?

Answer: The Voter Authority Certificate includes a raised tactile marking in the top left-hand corner, to help you identify it. This marking consists of four small dots repeated three times.

Question: Can I get instructions on how to use my Voter Authority Certificate in an accessible format?

Answer: Yes. When you complete the application form, you'll be asked whether you would like to receive the instructions in large print, braille or easy read. Your local Electoral Registration Officer will send these instructions to you.

At the polling station

Question: What are the accessibility options at the polling station?

Answer: The equipment and accessibility provisions will be unique to each location, so visit your local council's website for more information. You can find their website by entering your post code at electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information.

Question: I don't want other people watching while I have my photo ID checked. Will it be possible to have it checked in private?

Answer: Yes. When you get to the polling station, you can ask to have your ID checked in private. This might be done in a separate room, or an area separated by a privacy screen.

Visit **electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID** or call **0800 328 0280** for more information on:

- Registering to vote
- Which elections require photo ID
- What photo ID will be accepted when voting
- How to apply for free voter ID