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Changes to postal voting You are in the Elections Act section Home Elections Act On this page Changes for voters Our role in the change for voters Postal vote handling and secrecy Changes to postal vote handling and secrecy Our role in the changes to postal vote handling and secrecy First published: 5 July 2021 Last updated: 7 July 2023 Summary From October 2023, there will be a number of changes to postal voting for both voters and parties and campaigners. It will also be possible to apply for a postal vote online. This will apply to: local elections in England, Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales, and UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions. Changes for voters The changes to postal voting include: A maximum period of three years on voters' application to hold a postal vote. Voters would need to re-apply at the end of that time. Allowing voters to apply online for a postal vote and requiring a voter's identity to be checked as part of the process. Both online and paper applications will require ID verification. Our role in the changes for voters We will provide updated guidance and support to electoral administrators to help them understand and deliver the changes. We will support local authorities to communicate these changes to voters who want to apply for a postal vote, including highlighting to them the option to apply online. We will also update the postal vote application forms. We will tell political parties and campaigners about the postal vote changes. Postal vote handling and secrecy From 1 December 2023, restrictions on the handling of postal votes by campaigners will apply. Changes to postal vote handling and secrecy A ban and new criminal offence will be in place to stop parties and campaigners handling completed postal votes and postal vote envelopes. Only voters, a family member or a designated carer will be able to hand in a postal vote. Voters will not be allowed to hand in more than five postal ballot packs (in addition to their own). Ministers will get new powers to make regulations to limit the number of postal ballot packs that someone can hand in on behalf of other voters, and would also require postal votes to be rejected if they are not handed in in accordance with the requirements. Our role in the changes to postal vote handling and secrecy We will update our guidance for electoral administrators and polling station staff to help them understand the changes. We will also provide updated guidance for political parties and campaigners to help them comply with the changes on handling postal votes, which formalise a key part of our existing code of conduct for parties and campaigners. Related content Elections Act about the UK Government's Elections Act and what it means for voting and campaigning About the Elections Act about the Elections Bill, including the measures it contains and which elections it applies to. Requirement to show ID at polling stations about the UK Government's voter ID proposal. Changes to proxy voting about the proposed changes to voting by proxy, where someone you trust votes on your behalf.