

and equality: feedback from local and national organisations | Electoral Commission Search and equality: feedback from local and national organisations

You are in the May 2019 voter identification pilot schemes section Home Our research Voter identification pilots May 2019 voter identification pilot schemes First published: 12 July 2019 Last updated: 15 October 2019 Intro Our evaluation considered whether the identification requirements might have disproportionately affected particular groups of people with protected characteristics. We asked 165 national and local organisations to provide us with evidence of how the pilots affected the specific groups they represent. A total of 29 organisations responded, with 16 providing the more detailed feedback available below.

Organisations

Age UK North Craven "The majority of the geographical area that we cover did not have elections. Where there were elections we have had no negative feedback at all about the process. We always advise getting a postal vote."

Age UK Nottingham & Nottinghamshire "We became involved with the Broxtowe pilot when we were asked to support publicity around the project. We were happy to help, and took the following actions: We identified those clients in the relevant post code areas (for whom we had GDPR permission to contact) and sent them a letter outlining the pilot and how they should comply with it We created entries in our internal and external e-newsletters and shared that in each of the editions in the 2 months prior to the vote on 2 nd May (combined circulation of around 700) We put information about the pilot on our website and out via our social media platforms. Broxtowe Borough Council covered the postage costs and a couple of hours of time to prepare the mail out. Our social media presence has followers across the age range which we hope will have encouraged all residents to comply. We have not been made aware of any issues at the polling booth, although there may have been some. If we do get any feedback to suggest that voters couldn't cast their vote, we will let you know. "Age UKs are always concerned when activities like this take place because it can have the effect of disenfranchising voters because they don't have, or can't get the relevant ID. The pilot was asking people who may have voted for many years to do something very different. Whilst many older people now use the internet safely and with enjoyment, many others don't, so the range of information would have been harder for them to find out and compliance with the new requirements may have involved multiple trips to obtain the necessary ID. Decisions about the merits of the pilot should be weighed against the risk of voter fraud which, by all accounts, appears to be very small. Factors such as transport issues should also be taken into account. Nottinghamshire has numerous good bus services but there have been cuts. Pensioners may well have access to free transport because of their bus passes but, if there is no bus, then they have gained nothing. When work cannot be done online, or there is no access to online, then these types of considerations should be factored into further roll-outs. "Whilst we did what we could to support the pilot in this area, there wasn't a lot of time for prospective voters to engage with the concept and ensure they had the necessary documentation if it wasn't already in their possession. We could, perhaps, have done more if we had had more time. I hope this minimal feedback is of some use and I will let you know of any other anecdotal evidence if we receive any."

Broxtowe Youth Homeless "I have been promoting the pilot ID voting scheme here at our drop-in using your leaflets and through general chats. The feedback I have received is that not many young people are wanting to vote, but do feel the ID approach is a good idea for those that have ID. Although, there are many young people that access our service that don't have any form of ID for many different reasons. These young people struggle to even have a bank account that

allows for benefits to be paid. "There was also a general consensus from our young people that feel a bit confused about voting full stop and not knowing which party to vote for. Myself and colleagues have tried our best to explain as much as can without being too 'pushy'. However, I do feel if a young people makes the effort to vote and they are turned away for forgetting this, would deter them from going back to vote or discourage others from doing so." Consultant Psychiatrists at Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (members of the UK Government's Access to Elections working group) "As far as we know no surveys were carried out, of those living with mental illness, to specifically gauge their views regarding voter ID and/or the impact of the voter ID requirement on intention to vote/impact on casting their vote on voting day. Around the time of the pilots we suggested that local Rethink Mental Illness & MIND groups might wish to undertake surveys in the ID pilot areas but we don't think this was progressed. We aren't able to offer any specific evidence for the voter ID pilots however we have previously explained: People living with mental illness are much less likely to register, and once registered to cast their vote, than the general population. Barriers to voting may be usefully divided into informational, attitudinal, psychological and physical. "A requirement for ID will be an additional barrier to voting (see below in which will act as a barrier) and will detrimentally impact on both our patient/service user groups intention to vote and on whether they successfully cast their vote in person or not. Potential negative impact on voting of ID requirement maybe related to: Informational barrier: Unaware need ID to vote. Attitudinal barriers: Resentment that require ID to vote/think too onerous a task etc Psychological barriers: overwhelmed/disorganized/unmotivated/anxious/paranoid etc Physical barrier: - no actual ID/obstacles to access ID If the government intend to roll out a voter ID requirement nationally then it is important to consider how best to minimise the negative impact on voting for those living with mental illness by considering how to overcome the barriers listed. "We also acknowledge that it is useful to hold ID and that some of our patients/service users find it difficult to get ID therefore if the initiative were coupled with easier access to ID for patients/service users then that might prove attractive for some." East Grinstead Macular Support Group "I did mention it at our meeting after I received your initial email. The response at that time was that they all had voting cards and understood. They were going to wait until voting day to see if there were any issues." Friends, Families, Travellers "We are a national charity working with Gypsies and Travellers. Gypsies and Travellers are already very disenfranchised, with low levels of voter participation. We know this as we have run targeted campaigns to increase voter registration amongst Gypsies and Travellers, including those of No Fixed Abode. It would be more useful to look at measures which would increase their, and other socially excluded groups', participation in voting. Voter fraud is actually extremely rare, there was only one conviction in the 2017 General Election. "We have not had contact with any Gypsies or Travellers in the ten voter I.D areas on this issue so cannot comment on whether or not the requirement to produce I.D influenced their ability to vote. However we do know that the requirement to produce I.D stops Gypsies and Travellers from accessing other services. For example, we run a national casework helpline and we get lots of calls from Travellers who are unable to open a bank account because they cannot comply with the I.D requirements for this (even though the government have recently lowered the I.D requirements banks can ask for). And in a mystery shopping exercise we carried out this year of 50 GP's surgeries, we found our mystery Gypsy/Traveller shopper was unable to register at 24 of the surgeries because of a lack of

identification or an address, despite this being illegal . "We consider that requirements to produce I.D when voting will adversely impact two protected ethnic minorities, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers who are already probably the most socially excluded ethnic minorities in the UK today. There is also a cost implication to having photographic I.D such as a passport or driving licence, which many of our clients don't have. Many of our clients are also of No Fixed Abode, i.e. statutorily homeless, as local authorities do not provide enough Gypsy/Traveller sites for Travellers to live on. Being homeless and not having an address provides another barrier to people obtaining the requisite I.D such as utility bills etc, for voting. "We are concerned that the voter I.D trials could have been undermined Travellers' and others' right to vote and would prefer to see this money spent on increasing their participation in the democratic process." Gendered Intelligence Purpose "The Government is trialling new checks on voter identification across several test constituencies in an attempt to curb what is claimed to be widespread electoral fraud. Most recently, at least 800 people were turned away from the ballot box during the May 2019 local elections. Gendered Intelligence has grave concerns about the implications of such restrictions on voters, of the potential long-term unfurling of even tighter restrictions in general and of disenfranchisement of certain trans and gender diverse people in particular. Who we are "Gendered Intelligence is a trans-led charity, the mission of which is to increase understandings of gender diversity across all sectors. Our vision is of a world where people are no longer constrained by narrow perceptions and expectations of gender, and where diverse gender expressions are visible and valued. We work closely with the trans community and those who impact on trans lives. We particularly specialise in supporting young trans people aged 8-25. Background "In an attempt to address voter impersonation, the Government announced plans to introduce the mandatory use of voter ID at several test sites. Several organisations have expressed concerns at the far-reaching implications for such trials, especially were they to be rolled out more widely. Issues "With just 8 cases of voter impersonation in 2018, the background to these trials seems like a solution looking for a problem. This disproportionate response to a relative non-issue will undermine efforts to reduce the democratic deficit and ultimately push tens of thousands away from the ballot box if rolled out nationwide. The recent trials (at the 2019 local elections) allowed for different rules at different sites: two pieces of non-photo ID, polling card or photo ID only were asked for at different polling places. As part of the trial, people with no access otherwise to ID should be able to apply to their local authority for a 'certificate of identity', but with lack of time and resource, several councils had to cancel their participation altogether. This does not bode well when for the realistic ability of local authorities up and down the country to enact these changes wholesale and without issue. Discrete and changing bureaucratic demands and whims alone should be a reason to look at these trials with a critical eye, let alone the very real issues of voter disengagement these trials are already causing. Whilst the current trials have allowed for non-photo ID at several sites, it is worth considering the very real possibility that these policies could eventually dictate for the sole allowance of photo ID if rolled out nationwide. As a trans-led organisation, Gendered Intelligence recognises the unique issues facing trans and gender diverse people when it comes to obtaining and presenting photo ID. Trans and gender diverse people showing up to vote, even with photographic ID, are liable to be turned away by officials if it is deemed their presentation and pieces of identity are incongruent. As way of example: A trans person whose physicality has changed may

be unable to update their photo ID, to make it more congruent with their current appearance, through lack of money to do so. Trans people are less likely than their non-trans peers to be in employment (with workplace harassment and anti-trans recruitment widespread) and thus less likely to be able to afford photo ID where it is not provided free of charge by the local authority. A trans person may have to police their appearance in their local area, including the polling station, for their own safety (to avoid transphobic attacks). This may see a (trans) woman having to frame her gender expression in a 'male-coded' way to avoid public scrutiny or attack on the day of voting. However, the photo ID may feature this person with a different gender expression incongruent with how the official sees them, and they may be turned away.

Remedies "Understanding that people's gender expressions and presentations may change underlies Gendered Intelligence's approach on this specific proposed aspect of voting. Widescale education and knowledge around trans identities would help reduce confusion or refusal of participation at the polling station. However, with wider society very much in flux with regards its understanding and appreciation of varied gender expressions, mandating the entire electorate to use photo ID at this juncture would prejudice many trans and gender non-conforming people, inevitably leading to discrimination and a closing-off of the democratic process. It is unrealistic at this point for every staff member or volunteer at polling stations nationwide to be sufficiently clued-in to the specific issues affecting trans people and their occasional yet ongoing need for incongruent photo ID. We must then reject any push for photo ID to be mandatory for voting for all people."

LGBT Foundation General Concerns "Introducing voter ID risks disenfranchising a large number of people, furthermore voter fraud is not a significant problem in the UK. 7.5% of people in the UK do not have a photo ID, therefore introducing voter ID risks disenfranchising 3.5 million people. In the 2017 election just 28 allegations of in-person voter fraud were made, out of 44.6 million votes cast (0.000063%). Concerns for LGBT Communities "Decades of international studies show that restrictive identification requirements are particularly disadvantageous to certain voter groups who are less likely to possess approved ID for a variety of socio-economic and accessibility reasons. " reforms could therefore disproportionately affect young people, older people, disabled people, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people, BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) communities and the homeless. This is partly due to the financial costs of obtaining an ID: A new driving licence costs £34 if the application is submitted online and £43 if the application is submitted by post. A new passport costs £75.50 if the application is made online and £85 if the application is submitted by post. "Groups within LGBT communities may be more likely to earn less. One study based on data from the 2012-2014 Integrated Household Survey found that gay and bisexual men are less likely to be working full time compared to heterosexual men and that gay men in relationships earn less than heterosexual men in relationships. "LGBT people also face discrimination in employment, 18% of LGBT people who were looking for work said they were discriminated against because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity while trying to get a job in the last year. This discrimination may be having an impact on employment and earnings although evidence is limited (trans communities also face a range of barriers to employment, these are outlined in section 4). "Not having a fixed address is an additional barrier to obtaining an ID. This will disproportionately affect LGBT people as 24% of homeless young people aged (16 to 25) are LGBT. This is hugely disproportionate as 4.2% of people aged 16-24 identify as LGBT and an estimated 0.3% to 0.8% of people in the UK identify as trans (although there is overlap between the

two groups, with some trans people also identifying as LGB). Specific Concerns for Trans and Non-binary Communities "A trans or non-binary person's photo or gender marker on their ID may not reflect their gender expression or identity. This could lead to challenges from polling staff, which would likely be distressing and uncomfortable and may force someone to out themselves as trans against their will. "An additional unintended consequence may be that some trans or non-binary people are turned away from voting stations. Trans and non-binary people may be discouraged from going to vote for fear of such a reaction. "Trans people already face barriers to registering to vote, a trans person's National Insurance number may be protected and classified by HMRC as 'sensitive information'. This prevents the voter from registering online, instead they have to present themselves with a number of identification documents to their local council in order to register, a time burden that the vast majority of people don't have to deal with. Barriers to Obtaining a New ID for Trans Communities "In order to be able to vote without fear of being turned away, or in order to feel comfortable showing their ID, trans people may need to obtain new ID documents that are in line with their gender identity. This can be time consuming and costly: It costs £17 to change the photo on a driving licence. A new passport with a change of gender costs £75 and requires a letter from a GP or medical professional, which costs £25. Obtaining a GRC is the only way a trans person can change their gender linked to their National Insurance number. The total cost of obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) is £752, this includes a £140 application fee. Furthermore obtaining a GRC is a time consuming and invasive process. "These costs are a particular barrier for many trans people given that they face significant employment discrimination and are less likely to be employed: Just 63% of trans people had a paid job at any point last year, this falls to 56.2% of ethnic minority trans people. The 2017 Labour Force Survey indicated an employment rate of 75% for the general UK population aged 16-64 years old. 60% of trans people earned less than £20,000 last year. 1 in 3 UK employers say they would be 'less likely' to employ a trans person. 1 in 3 trans people have been the target of negative comments or conduct from work colleagues in the last year due to the fact they are LGBT. LGBT Foundation's Evidence "LGBT Foundation does not have any evidence on service user's experiences of voter ID. Most of our service users are based in the North West and all the boroughs in the May 2018 trial were in the South of England and just two boroughs trialled in the 2019 election were in the North West which has limited our ability to collect experiences. Recommendations "Ideally we would recommend that voter ID does not come into force as it risks disenfranchising people and will discourage some people from voting, including a likely disproportionate number of people in minority groups. Voter fraud is not a significant problem in the UK so introducing voter ID is unnecessary. "However in order to address challenges faced by bringing in voter ID for LGBT communities a number of steps should be taken: Training must be carried out to ensure staff understand that someone's gender marker on their ID may be different gender to how they are presenting and to not challenge this. Specific outreach to trans and non-binary individuals must be carried out, reassuring them that having an ID that does not match up to their gender identity will not mean that they are turned away or challenged. If the government chooses to introduce voter IDs they have a duty to support people to obtain IDs. This may include financial support or support with the bureaucratic process. One potential way of overcoming some of these barriers is by issuing free and easy to obtain voter ID cards. When Northern Ireland introduced voter ID they also introduced a free Electoral Voter Card. Critically, these cards should be free to access and contain a

minimal administrative burden to obtain, as a difficult process to obtain them could lead to further barriers to voting. Furthermore these cards must allow people to register their gender identity they choose as well as give the option to register a non-binary gender identity." Mencap Mencap shared a copy of 12 responses they had received from service users at Braintree Mencap. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 Q1. Have you voted in an election before? Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Q2. What type of ID did you show when voting? Bus Pass Passport Passport/Bus Pass Passport Bus Pass Bus Pass Bus Pass Driving Licence Photocard Blue Badge Parking Permit Bus Pass Passport Bus Pass Q3. How did you find out that you needed to show ID when voting? Other (Told by friend) Social Media Other (Post) Family or Friend/ Book on voting Supporter/ Carer Supporter/ Carer Supporter/ Carer Supporter/ Carer Supporter/ Carer Supporter/ Carer Supporter/ Carer Supporter/ Carer Q4. Did you need to get a new form of ID in order to vote? No No No No No No No No No Yes No No Q5. Did you have a good experience when voting? Good Bad (Not very helpful and willing to help me) Good Bad (Didn't like going into booth, felt crowded) Good Good Good Good Good Good Good Good Q6. What can be done to make voting more accessible? Ok Electronically/ Online Advertise more N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A Q7. Is there anything else you want to tell us? N/A Polling stations can't help as not allowed but how can I vote if on my own? We need more people to vote in the whole town of Braintree N/A A man from the Council came to tell us about it. It was very helpful. The Democracy Manager from Braintree District Council came to our self-advocacy group and told us all about it. The Council sent someone to talk to us about this and he listened to what we said and then the Council produced an easy-read booklet to explain it. Someone from the Council asked us how to make it easy for people with a learning disability to understand this new way of voting. Then the Council gave us copies of a lovely booklet about it to share with our friends. The Council made an easy read leaflet to explain what we had to do. It had some good pictures to help us. We liked the little booklet the Council gave us to help us to understand. All the people at the places where we went to vote were very helpful. I liked the booklet they gave us which told us what we had to take. We had a very good meeting before the election. A man from the Council came to ask us how the Council could make it easy for us to understand. Mid Sussex Older People's Council "I actually have a postal vote so for me nothing really changed. But having spoken to friends and others no-one from what I can actually gather had any negative thoughts about having to provide identity, in fact they thought it a good thing to have, and if it helps to make the voting system much fairer. And also helps reduce coercion of voters by some less ethical parties that is a good thing. "These days people are used to being asked provide their identity and from what I can gather from friends was not an issue for them. So very positive and a good thing to have to do." Royal Naval Association Sleaford "I was contacted by the Electoral Commission concerning their survey into the effects of the voter ID trial taking place in North Kesteven. I am the Hon Secretary of the Sleaford Branch of the Royal Naval Association, RNA, a small group of people who have served in various branches of our naval forces such as Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Women's Royal Naval Service, WRENS. "The RNA, by its nature consists of older individuals, the youngest in our branch would be in their late forties and the oldest a 94 year old WW2 veteran, with the majority being in the late sixties to mid-eighties age range. I scanned the literature produced by the local authority and posted it on our closed Facebook group, there are however some members that still do not have access to computers or the Internet. "Before the local elections I mentioned your survey at our March 29 meeting and again at our meeting on

April 26th. At the March meeting one member in particular, an 85 year old, was not aware of the ID requirements and was, until persuaded otherwise, adamant that the polling card sent to each voter would be sufficient. Once the process was explained most members said that the ID requirement would not cause them any problems. One member, a 78 year old who, because of illness and infirmity, does not have a driving licence and also does not have a passport expressed concern and, I suspect was not going to bother to vote. "You ask about ways to make the voter ID process easier, in the discussions after my explanations I would say that the general consensus was that an ID card would solve everyone's concerns, bearing in mind that this group of people are quite used to carrying ID cards having carried one during their military service. "In closing the group of people I represent do not have any problems with producing ID however in my opinion, and this is probably outside your remit, the big problem is voter apathy brought about by Brexit. I go to various ex-service groups in Sleaford, the local camaraderie club, a veteran's breakfast club and the RNA. I cannot think of anyone I meet who voted remain, Brexit is discussed endlessly at meetings and on various Facebook groups where more and more people are saying things like nobody listens, nobody cares, I am not going to vote any more. I think that voter apathy will be a bigger problem than the odd, miniscule amount of voter fraud." Sleaford Parkinson's Support Group "As far as I can tell, the voter ID local elections went as any other. There were plenty of reminders about taking ID so no-one was unaware of the need. As with myself, people simply presented their ID, answered the usual questions and voted. No hassle. No complaints." St Mungo's "Thank you for your email and the opportunity to submit evidence on the voter ID pilots. We do not actually run any services in this year's pilot areas and so will not be able to gather evidence from our service users. " We have shared our general views previously, including in this joint letter. " Stonewall "Stonewall is a national charity that campaigns for lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) equality, Britain and abroad. We warmly welcome this opportunity to respond to the Electoral Commission's call for evidence to support their evaluation of the Pilot Schemes. "Along with many others, Stonewall raised cases when the Government announced their plans to pilot a new vote ID scheme for the local government elections on the 3 May 2018. Not only are cases of electoral fraud very rare, we were concerned that a requirement to provide a form of approved ID would create a further barrier to minority groups who may want to vote. "For many minority groups, including LGBT, black, Asian and minority ethnic, disabled and homeless people, the complicated and costly process to obtain ID, such as a passport or driving licence, means many simply do not have these. "Furthermore, trans and non-binary people may have been particularly vulnerable to these ID requirements as the photo on their ID may not reflect their gender expression or identity. Stonewall was deeply concerned that this may lead to confusion or challenges from staff at the pilot polling stations. "Stonewall now urges the Government to reconsider rolling these pilots out as standard and instead, work closely with minority communities to understand what can be done to reduce the barriers they face when voting." United Response "Anecdotal feedback from people we support, families and carers suggests that compulsory use of ID for voting would create a further barrier for people with learning disabilities. "The attached response to the Government's call for evidence, demonstrates the level of difficulty already experienced by people we support to exercise their democratic rights; the necessity of producing photo ID to vote makes this even harder. "Feedback we had last year on a similar voter ID scheme in the London local elections, was that leaflets in the post to tell people about ID requirements, were inaccessible (not written in Easy read format) and easily missed

for people with learning disabilities. Posters advertising voter ID from the local authority were few and far between and were difficult to read. And as you know, people we support can sometimes be less likely to have access to or own a passport or driving license or other photo ID. "As an organisation, we worked extremely hard on successive election campaigns with our Every Vote Counts campaign, to make elections more accessible for people we support. We managed to improve numbers of people with learning disabilities voting, and raised greater public awareness – with messages of support from then PM David Cameron as well as leaders of the other major political parties. "Every Vote Counts and our outline of how to make elections more accessible for people with learning disabilities, has been copied by others globally (see attached report which United Response collaborated on with Victorian Electoral Commission, Australia). "We genuinely feel that progress made in the past few years to improve accessibility would be seriously undermined by introduction of voter ID. It does seem unfair that instances of some people breaking the law and committing electoral fraud should impact on the ability of another group of people to vote. We'd be keen to hear about the result of the recent pilots and any substantive impact on voting in the UK." Voice4Change "Voice4Change England have been aware of the intention for quite a while to run new pilots to trial additional voter ID checks and the government desire that the pilots aim to provide it with further insights into how best to ensure the security of the voting process and reduce the risk of voter fraud. Hence, in May 2019 ten local authority areas: Braintree, Broxtowe, Craven, Derby, Mid Sussex, North Kesteven, North West Leicester, Pendle, Watford and Woking were scrutinised. "We understand once again, none of the areas looked at in these local elections has any great history of fraudulent activity – and again noted the absence of any major incidence of voting fraud taking place generally across the UK in elections in recent years. "Having spoken with some of our members in Derby and West Leicester, two of the areas where the current pilot takes place and where we have a significant reach, we would like to make the following observations: Difficult to assess any negative impact on voter's turnout, or whether it had been effective in rooting out fraud due to the relatively small size of the voter's sample. Making any analysis inconclusive. Asking for voter's IDs could be seen as a policy certainly has echoes of the strategy aimed at making society an uncomfortable place for illegal migrants. We maintain through very limited feedback from the two areas mentioned, that the introduction of the pilots was viewed generally as unnecessary. Our members expressed strong concerns that this type of policy will not only have minimal impact on the miniscule level of voting fraud but, will create potentially new and unnecessary barriers to participation in the electoral process if people become uncertain of requirements when they turn up at polling stations, further impacting negatively on registrations. "The Commission "evaluation method identified several areas where further work is required, where evidence was found to disprove concerns or where evidence was inconclusive. This relates particularly to the potential impact on some BME groups of people who may find it harder than others to show certain types of identification. E.g. Windrush scandal. "So, to sum up. Although we have not seen all the relevant information - from the May pilots. We believe the conclusions will again prove to be inconclusive in detecting voter fraud as a significant problem. It remains to be seen if it has been of significance in any of the pilot areas under scrutiny in May 2019. "Voice4Change England maintains its commitment to working with the government and the EC to improve the participation of BME communities in elections and voter registration drives." Related content Register to vote All you need to register to vote is 5 minutes and your National Insurance number. Donations



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