

FAQs: postal vote identifier rejection notices

The following are designed to support you with responding to a range of potential questions you may receive from electors following the sending out of postal vote identifier rejection notices. It will be for you to decide which of these questions you would like elections staff to answer and which ones you are happy for others, such as call centre staff, to provide a response to.

1. I know I completed my postal vote as instructed – my postal vote has been wrongly rejected

By law, the Returning Officer has to check the signature and date of birth on every returned postal voting statement and determine whether they match those held on record. Where they do not, or where they are not provided, the Returning Officer must reject the postal vote. The Returning Officer's decision is final. To avoid losing out in future:

Where the rejection is a result of the signature not matching	Where the rejection is a result of the date of birth not matching	Where the rejection is a result of the date of birth and/or signature being absent
If you have received one, make sure that you complete the signature refresh form and provide a fresh copy of your signature by no later than [insert date] .	Make sure that next time you include your date of birth, in the correct format, on the postal voting statement. The date of birth must be the same as the one given on the application. <i>Go to number 8 if they suggest that they may have given the wrong date of birth on their application.</i>	Make sure that you provide your date of birth and signature next time. Make sure you follow the instructions and complete all of the required information.

2. It is an outrage that my vote was not counted.

By law, Returning Officers are required to check the signature and date of birth on every returned postal voting statement and determine whether they match those held on record. This is to preserve the integrity of the postal voting process and ensures that only those postal votes that have been completed by the elector go forward to the count. In cases where the Returning Officer is satisfied that the date of birth and signature match, the postal ballot paper will go forward to the count. In cases where the Returning Officer cannot be satisfied, they are required by law to reject the postal vote.

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3. But if I provide my signature and/or date of birth, does it not mean that my vote is no longer secret?

By law, Returning Officers must supply two separate envelopes for the return of a postal ballot pack:

- Envelope A: is for the return of the completed ballot paper(s)
- Envelope B: is for the return of envelope A and the postal voting statement (i.e. the form on which the voter is asked to provide their signature and date of birth)

These two separate envelopes help to preserve the secrecy of the ballot. They ensure that any details provided on the postal voting statement – which includes the voter's name, address, signature and date of birth – are kept separate from the marked ballot paper(s).

The process for opening postal ballot packs is also designed to preserve the secrecy of the ballot. Once a completed postal ballot pack is received by the Returning Officer, they must follow strict rules about the processing of the paperwork to maintain the secrecy of the ballot. It is only once the postal voting statements have been separately checked that the envelopes containing the ballot paper(s) are opened. Also, ballot papers must be kept face down throughout this process so nobody can see how they've been completed.

4. I may have provided a wrong date of birth when I first applied. Can you tell me what date of birth I provided on the application?

If you think the date of birth you provided on your original application may have been wrong, you should complete a new application to vote by post. You can download a postal vote from www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter or we can send you a form by post, if you prefer.

5. Why have I received this notice? I did not vote by post at the last elections or I have never applied to vote by post.

Our records show that you applied to vote by post and that a postal vote was issued to you and subsequently returned. We will look at the data again and if it is confirmed that an application was made and a postal vote was returned, we will raise this issue with the police. We or the police may ask you to confirm via a statement that you did not apply for a postal vote.

6. But my signature will always be different as I have a condition that means I can't sign the same way every time. Does this mean my postal vote will always be rejected?

If you have a disability or a condition that means your signature is not consistent, you can apply to have the requirement to provide your signature on the postal voting statement waived. You will, however, still be asked to provide your date of birth which will be checked against the date of birth you provided on your original application. You can obtain a form to request a signature waiver by [\[include details of how to obtain waiver application form\]](#). On the form you will be asked to include the reason for your request and, if you needed help to fill in the form, it will also ask for the name and address of the person who assisted you. The

Electoral Registration Officer will then decide whether to grant the waiver request.

7. I want to have a look at my postal voting statement to see what happened. Can I inspect it?

Yes you can, the rules allow for the postal voting statement to be inspected¹, but looking at the postal voting statement is not going to overturn the Returning Officer's decision. The Returning Officer's decision is final and cannot be challenged, except by an election petition. (An election petition is a separate legal process. Petitions can only be presented on limited grounds and within 21 calendar days of the result. You can read more about petitions by downloading Part 6 of the Commission's guidance for candidates and agents for the relevant election: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent).

What is important now is that you don't lose out at future elections or referendums. To avoid losing out in future:

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¹ A request to inspect election documentation must be made in writing and specify which document (the postal voting statement) to be inspected and who will be inspecting the document. The request must also specify the date on which they wish to inspect the document.

8. I think I may have made a mistake and provided the wrong date of birth on my application - I might have wrongly supplied the date of birth in a MM-DD-YY format.

If you think the date of birth you provided on your original application may have been wrong, you should complete a new application to vote by post. You can download a postal vote application form www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter or we can send you a form by post, if you prefer.

9. What will happen if I don't provide a fresh signature when requested to do so?

If you have been required to provide a fresh signature and fail to do so, you will be sent a reminder notice on [insert date]. If you have not provided a fresh signature by [insert date] you will no longer be able to vote by post. You will then need to vote in person at your polling station or make a fresh application to vote by post.

10. I no longer want to vote by post

You can cancel your postal vote at any time and up until 5pm, 11 working days before an election or referendum. The only exception to this is that, where you have already returned your postal vote for the election or referendum, you will not be allowed to cancel or make any changes to your absent voting arrangements for that election or referendum.