

# **Voter ID: Guide for staff and volunteers**

## **Supporting anonymous voters to meet the voter ID requirement**

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

When someone registers to vote, their name and address will appear on the electoral register. If someone feels that their name and address being on the electoral register could affect their safety, or the safety of someone in their household, they may be able to register to vote anonymously.

This means they can still vote, but their name and address will not be on the electoral register. Only their elector number will appear.

Unlike other voters who can use one of a range of different forms of photo ID to vote in person at a polling station, voters who are registered to vote anonymously will be required to apply for a free Anonymous Elector's Document instead.

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

- [Registering to vote anonymously](#)
- [Applying for an Anonymous Elector's Document](#)
- [Which elections require photo ID](#)
- [What anonymous electors can expect at the polling station](#)
- [Other ways to vote](#)

You can also download resources to support people who have no need to vote anonymously to understand which forms of photo ID they can use to vote, and how to apply for free voter ID if they need it.

## Anonymous voter registration

The deadline to register to vote anonymously in a particular election is **6 working days** before the date of that election.

Anyone who wants to vote must first be registered to vote. If someone feels that their name and address being on the electoral register could put their safety, or the safety of someone in their household, at risk, they may be able to apply to register to vote anonymously.

This means they will still be able to vote, but their name and address will not be on the electoral register.

Once their application has been approved, they will be registered as an anonymous voter for 12 months. They will need to reapply each year.

To find out more about registering to vote anonymously, contact their local Electoral Registration Officer. Find their contact details by visiting [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter) or by calling our helpline on 0800 328 0280.

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

<b>I am a...</b>	<b>I live in England</b>	<b>I live in Scotland</b>	<b>I live in Wales</b>
<b>British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in UK</b>	YES (from 16 years old)	YES (from 14 years old)	YES (from 14 years old)
<b>EU citizen living in UK</b>	YES (from 16 years old)	YES (from 14 years old)	YES (from 14 years old)
<b>Qualifying foreign citizen</b> (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.

For more information on eligibility to register to vote, or which elections you can vote in, contact the local Electoral Registration Officer. To find their contact details, or get more information:

- Visit [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter), or
- Call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**

## What is anonymous registration?

When someone registers to vote, their name and address will appear on the electoral register.

If someone is worried that their name and address being on the electoral register could put their safety at risk, or the safety of someone in their household at risk, they may be able to apply to register as an anonymous voter.

This is how entries usually appear on the electoral register:

BC412	Vella, John	59 Green Lane
BC413	Vella, Veronica	59 Green Lane

This is how anonymous entries appear on the electoral register:

BC602 N

The 'N' signifies that this entry relates to an anonymously registered voter.

This means people registered to vote anonymously will still be able to vote, but their name and address will not be on the electoral register.

## The application process

Anyone who wants to register to vote anonymously will need to:

- Complete an application form
- Explain why their safety, or the safety of someone in their household, would be at risk if their details were on the electoral register
- Submit evidence or an attestation to support their registration

- Return the application form, explanation and evidence or attestation to their local Electoral Registration Officer.
- Find further information on the application process as well as the application form, at [electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/register-vote/register-vote-anonymously](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/register-vote/register-vote-anonymously).

If you need any help when supporting someone to register to vote anonymously, you can contact their local Electoral Registration Officer. You can find contact details by entering the postcode of the person you're supporting at [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter).

## How long does an anonymous registration remain valid?

Registration lasts for 12 months from the day the anonymous entry is first made on the register. After the 12 month period is up, the person you are supporting will need to re-apply to register anonymously.

The Electoral Registration Officer will contact them in good time to tell them what information they need to provide to enable the registration to continue for a further 12 months. Provided it remains valid, the same evidence or attestation can be used to renew their anonymous registration.

## Applying for an Anonymous Elector's Document

If the person you are supporting is registered anonymously and wants to vote at a polling station in a particular election, they may need to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document by 5pm, 6 working days before the date of that election.

People who are registered to vote but not registered as anonymous voters can use a range of forms of photo ID to vote, in elections that require it. You can find a full list of accepted forms of ID at [electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID), or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280** for more information.



Anyone who is registered as an anonymous voter and wants to vote at a polling station needs to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document for elections that require photo ID. They cannot use any other types of photo ID to vote.

Everyone who is already registered to vote anonymously, or who registers to vote anonymously ahead of the elections, will be invited to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document by their local Electoral Registration Officer.

You can also contact their Electoral Registration Officer to request one. You can find their details by entering the postcode of the person you are supporting at [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter).

## Supporting your service users to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document

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 person's postcode at [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter).

## The application process

When applying for an Anonymous Elector's Document, 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

passport, driving licence, birth certificate, bank statement and utility bill. Their local Electoral Registration Officer will contact them to arrange this.

They can also ask someone who knows them to provide an attestation to the electoral services team to verify their identity if they don't have any other accepted proof of identity.

The person's local Electoral Registration Officer can provide more information on who can provide an attestation. You can find contact details for them by entering the person's postcode at [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter).

## Providing a photo

Applicants will also need to submit 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 Officer may be able to help.

For more information on the requirements for the photo, see [Appendix 1](#) or visit [electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID).

The local Electoral Registration Officer will process the application and send the Anonymous Elector's Document to the voter by post.

All data voters provide when applying for an Anonymous Elector's Document will be stored securely by local councils in line with data protection regulations.

## What does an Anonymous Elector's Document look like?

An Anonymous Elector's Document has the words 'Elector's Document' written on the top and does not refer to the voter's status as being registered to vote anonymously.

An Anonymous Elector's Document includes:

- the date of issue
- the voter's photo
- the voter's electoral number (which is the number which will appear on the electoral register instead of the voter's name and address)
- an appropriate identifier (which is a combination of 20 letters and numbers generated by the software used by Electoral Registration Officers)

Anonymous voters will need to bring their Anonymous Elector's Document and their poll card with them when they go to the polling station. They will not need to bring an additional form of photo ID.

## Which elections require anonymous voters to show an Anonymous Elector's Document?

Voters in England, Scotland and Wales who are registered to vote anonymously now need to show an Anonymous Elector's Document when voting at a polling station at some elections.

This applies to:

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

An Anonymous Elector's Document is not required in Scottish Parliament and Senedd elections, or council elections and by-elections in Scotland and Wales.

## What to expect at a polling station

Anonymous voters will need to bring both their poll card and their Anonymous Elector's Document when they go to vote.

When they arrive, they will be greeted by a member of staff, who will:

1. Ask to see their poll card. They will not need to provide their name and address.
2. Find their elector number on the register
3. Check their Anonymous Elector's Document
4. Cross them off the list, and give the voter their ballot paper.

## Privacy

A private area will be available so that voters can choose to have their Anonymous Elector's Document viewed in private. This may be a separate room, or an area separated by a privacy screen.

Requests can be made for a female member of staff to check the Anonymous Elector's document. This request will be granted if possible.

If a face covering is worn such as a veil, there should be a mirror available to allow it to be replaced immediately once the Anonymous Elector's Document has been checked.

If a face covering is worn for medical reasons and would prefer it not to be removed indoors, polling station staff may be able to check 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](https://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.

Contact the local council to find out what assistive equipment will be available and request any additional equipment that may be needed. The council will decide whether or not the requested equipment can be provided.

Find the contact details for the local council by calling the helpline on 0800 328 0280 or by entering their postcode at [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter).

## Other forms of support

The Presiding Officer can help a voter to cast their vote if they would find this helpful. Polling staff are there to

help, and you should ask a member of staff if you have any questions or need assistance.

If the voter is disabled or feels they cannot vote at a polling station without assistance, they can bring someone with them to help. Anyone over the age of 18 can accompany a disabled 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 can accompany a disabled 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 a voter in the polling booth, they should inform the polling staff when they

arrive. The companion will need to sign a declaration to be allowed to enter the polling booth to help them vote.

## What should I do if I experience issues at the polling station?

If voters experience any issues when they go to vote or want to give feedback about their experience, they should contact their local council.

To find their contact details visit [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter) or call our helpline on 0800 328 0280.

## Other ways to vote

If someone has registered to vote but would prefer not to vote in person there are other options.

### **Voting by post**

**Photo ID is not required 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.**

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.

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 by **10pm on the day of the election.** If they can't post their postal vote pack in time, they can take it to their polling station or polling place, or to their local council office on polling day.

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

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

If a person won't be able to make it to the polling station or polling place 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 person they choose to vote on their behalf will need to go to the polling station or polling place of the person who chose them to be their proxy. They will need to show their proxy poll card and 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 they cannot go to the polling station or polling place in person, they 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](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voter) or by calling our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

## Requesting a replacement Anonymous Elector's Document

If a voter's Anonymous Elector's Document is lost, stolen, destroyed or damaged after 5pm, 6 working days before the election but before 5pm on polling day they can request a replacement Anonymous Elector's Document.

The voter will need to request a replacement Anonymous Elector's Document by 5pm on polling day. The voter will need to collect it in person from the place specified by the Electoral Registration Officer.

# Appendix 1: Photograph requirements for the Anonymous Elector's Document 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 etc.). 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 applies
- 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