

Understanding the barriers to voting for disabled people | Electoral Commission  
Guidance for Returning Officers - Assistance with voting for disabled voters You are in the Ensuring that voting is accessible section Home Guidance for Returning Officers - Assistance with voting for disabled voters Ensuring that voting is accessible View the navigation tree Go to main guidance section: Guidance for Returning Officers - Assistance with voting for disabled voters Ensuring that voting is accessible Understanding the barriers to voting for disabled people Providing equipment at the polling station that enables or makes voting easier for disabled voters Ensuring those working to support the poll are aware of accessibility needs Raising awareness about the voting process and support available Reviewing the election Understanding the barriers to voting for disabled people By identifying and understanding the physical, psychological and information barriers disabled people may face when voting, you will be better able to make appropriate arrangements to help support them. Some of the barriers and challenges disabled voters face include: not having accessible information about the voting process written instructions not being available in plain or easy read format lack of information about a companions assisting with voting lack of information about the experience of voting at a polling station causing anxiety about things such as: travelling to the polling station, especially if it is for the first time being able to find and access the polling station knowing what will happen once there knowing what the process for voting is the possibility of lots of people being there at the same time the possibility that there will be lots of noise feeling rushed to make decisions quickly queueing the building/polling station not being accessible for example, if there are steps or the layout inside is unsuitable for wheelchairs to access instructions not being provided in a format that is accessible to assist people with: visual impairments or blindness hearing impairment or hearing loss dyslexia learning disabilities cognitive impairments polling station staff not having the skills, training or experience to communicate effectively support or auxiliary aids not being easily accessible or available to help voters to vote independently and secretly seating or other arrangements not being available to support those unable to stand in a queue polling station staff not having the skills, training or experience to support voters with neurodivergence and hidden disabilities to vote independently and secretly. Additional barriers for blind and partially sighted people The method of voting – by making a cross in a specific location on a piece of paper – is principally a visual exercise. For this reason, blind and partially sighted people face additional barriers that other people without sight loss do not face: absence of additional equipment or sufficient light can make it difficult or impossible for blind or partially sighted people to: read the names on the ballot paper make a mark in a specific location on the ballot paper verify their vote independently after making their mark on the ballot paper polling station staff being unaware that blind and partially sighted people may experience barriers when navigating the polling station environment polling station staff not having the skills, training or experience to support voters with sight loss to vote independently and secretly. For example, being unfamiliar with accessible voting equipment polling stations not having the equipment or polling station staff being unaware of the equipment that can support blind and partially sighted people – for example, the handheld copy of the large print sample version of the ballot paper and the correct tactile voting device polling station staff not having sufficient awareness about sight-loss and not knowing how to appropriately interact with someone with sight loss Last updated: 29 March 2023 Book traversal links for Understanding the barriers to voting for disabled people Ensuring

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