

Guide to Elections

Includes information on the voter ID requirement

This Guide to Elections includes information on:

- Registering to vote, including how to register without a fixed address
- The voter ID requirement
 - Which elections require photo ID?
 - Accepted forms of photo ID
 - Applying for a Voter Authority Certificate
 - Receiving a temporary Voter Authority Certificate
- What to expect at a polling station
 - Support available at the polling station
- Other ways to vote: voting by post or proxy

The information in this guide relates to the requirement to show photo ID when voting in person at a polling station (the 'voter ID requirement') in some elections in England, Scotland and Wales.

Providing photo ID is a long-standing requirement to vote in Northern Ireland.

We also have resources available for people who are registered to vote anonymously, or who are eligible to do so at electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

Registering to vote

The deadline to register to vote in a particular election is **12 working days** before the date of that election.

If you want to vote in the UK you must first be registered to vote. If you have registered before, you only need to register again if you have moved house or changed your name. The need to register to vote, and how you register, has not been changed by the introduction of the voter ID requirement.

Even though you can register to vote from the age of 14 in Scotland and Wales, you can't vote in UK Parliament elections until you are 18 years old. You can register to vote from the age of 16 in England.

More information on who is eligible to register to vote is included at [Appendix 1](#). You can also check if you are eligible to vote in elections in your area by entering your postcode at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter or by calling our helpline on 0800 328 0280.

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

I am a...	I live in England	I live in Scotland	I live in Wales
British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in the UK	Yes (From 16 years old)	Yes (from 14 years old)	Yes (from 14 years old)
EU Citizen living in the UK	Yes (From 16 years old)	Yes (from 14 years old)	Yes (from 14 years old)
Qualifying foreign citizen (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)

Registering to vote if you are part of a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community

If you have been staying at a site for a substantive length of time or live in permanent accommodation, you can register to vote at this address. Otherwise, you should register without a fixed address.

Registering without a fixed or permanent address

To do this you will need to fill in a form titled 'Electoral registration form for someone with no fixed or permanent address' and give details of where you spend most of your time. This could be anywhere in the local authority area.

You can download this form at

[gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions) or request a copy from your local council.

To find their contact details:

- Visit [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voter), or

- Call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**

Registering to vote if you are experiencing homelessness

Registering in temporary accommodation

If you are living in temporary accommodation, such as a hostel, you may be able to register at that address, provided you don't have a permanent address elsewhere. If you are unsure if this is the case, you should contact your local council.

Registering with no fixed address

If you don't have a fixed address or are experiencing homelessness you can still register to vote. To register, you need to fill in a form titled 'Electoral registration form for someone with no fixed or permanent address', which is available to download at [gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions)

A paper copy can also be requested from your local council. The form asks for the address where you would like to be registered. This can be anywhere in the local authority area where you spend a substantial part of your time, for example a drop in shelter, shop or a park bench. The form also asks for an address where correspondence, including the poll card, can be sent. Alternatively, you can choose to pick this up from your local council, however you do not need your poll card to vote.

You can register online at [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote). If you need any help when registering to vote, you can contact your local council, you can find their contact details by entering your postcode at [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voter).

Which elections require photo ID?

Voters in England, Scotland and Wales now need to show photo ID when voting in person at UK Parliament general elections. Providing photo ID is a long-standing requirement in Northern Ireland and therefore isn't covered in this guide.

The name on your photo ID must be the same as the name you used to register to vote.

The following table explains which elections require photo ID:

	Photo ID required
England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Parliament general elections • UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions • Local council elections and by-elections • Police and Crime Commissioner elections
Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Parliament general elections • UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions
Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Parliament general elections • UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions • Police and Crime Commissioner elections

Photo ID is not required in Scottish Parliament and Senedd elections, or council elections and by-elections in Scotland and Wales.

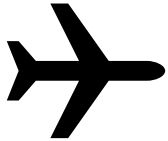



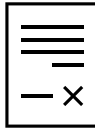
Accepted forms of photo ID

You can use any of the following forms of photo ID to be able to vote at a polling station.

You only need to show one form of photo ID to vote, but it must be the original version and not a photocopy. It must be a hard copy, not a digital version like you might find in an app.

If you are not sure whether you have an accepted form of photo ID, you can visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID or call our helpline on 0800 328 0280.

Only specific forms of the above photo ID will be accepted. For more information on which forms will be accepted, including a full list of accepted concessionary travel cards*, see [Appendix 2](#).

				
International travel	Driving	Local travel	Proof of age	Other government-issued documents
Passport	Driving license (including provisional license) Blue badge	Certain concessionary travel cards*	Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)	HM Armed Forces Veteran Card (from 1 May 2025) Scottish National Entitlement Card (from 1 May 2025) Biometric immigration document Defence identity card National identity card

Name on a voter's photo ID

The name on your photo ID should be the same name you used to register to vote.

Gender

You do not need to show photo ID that includes a gender marker.

Expired photo ID

Expired photo ID will be accepted if the photo remains a good enough likeness for the polling station staff to be able to identify you.

What to do if you don't have an accepted form of photo ID

If you want to vote in person at a polling station but don't have one of these accepted forms of photo ID, you should apply for a Voter Authority Certificate.

If you are not sure whether you have an accepted form of photo ID or not, you can visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

Applying for a Voter Authority Certificate

The deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate for use at a particular election is **5pm, 6 working days** before the date of that election.

If you wish to vote in person at a polling station, you should apply for a Voter Authority Certificate if you:

- Do not have an accepted form of photo ID,
- Feel worried about using an existing form of photo ID which has a gender marker, or
- Are not sure whether you still look like the photo on your ID
- The name on your photo ID does not match the name you registered with

If you do not wish to vote in person at a polling station, there are other ways you can vote. More information can be found in the 'Other ways to vote' section of this guide.

There are three ways to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate – online, by post or in person.

You need to be registered to vote before you apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. When you register to vote, you will be asked whether you have photo ID or if you want to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. You will also be asked if you want to receive instructions on how to use your Voter Authority Certificate in braille, large print, or easy read.

Apply online

Applications can be completed online at voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk

Apply by post

You can also apply for a Voter Authority Certificate by completing a paper form and sending it to your Electoral Registration Officer. The form is available in English and a range of accessible formats.

The form can be downloaded at gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-voter-authority-certificate-by-post-if-youre-living-in-the-uk

Apply in person

You may also be able to apply in person at your Electoral Services Office.

In some areas, your local council may be able to accept your application over the phone, particularly if you have specific needs because you are disabled.

The application process

When applying for a Voter Authority Certificate, you will need to provide your:

- Name
- Address
- Date of birth
- National Insurance number

If you do not know your National Insurance number, you can look for it on your payslips or on official letters about tax, pensions or benefits.

If you are unable to find it, you can still complete your application, but you will need to provide alternative forms of proof of identity, which could include a birth certificate, bank statement or utility bill. The Electoral Registration Office will contact you to arrange this.

You do not need to provide your gender when applying for a Voter Authority Certificate, but you do need to apply using the same name you used to register to vote.

You can also ask someone who knows you to provide an attestation to the Electoral Registration Office to verify your identity if you don't have any other accepted proof of identity. The Electoral Registration Officer can provide more information about the requirements of an attestation.

Providing a photo

You will also need to provide a photo. Requirements for the photo are similar to those for passport photos and must show your 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 you need help taking your photo, your Electoral Registration Officer may be able to do this for you. They may provide an area at their office to take photos of applicants. Additional support may be available, however this will vary between areas so you should contact your local council to find out what support they can provide.

For more information on the requirements for the photograph, see [Appendix 3](#) or visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

Applying for a Voter Authority Certificate

If you need help completing your application, you can contact your Electoral Registration Office who may be able to answer any questions you have about the application process. You can find contact details for your Electoral Registration Office by entering your postcode at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

What happens next

The local council will process the application and send the Voter Authority Certificate to you by post, along with instructions explaining how to use it. The Voter Authority Certificate includes a raised tactile marking in the top left-hand corner, to help you identify it. This marking consists of four small dots repeated three times.

Voter Authority Certificates do not have an expiration date, but you should renew your Voter Authority Certificate after 10 years.

All data voters provide when applying for a Voter Authority Certificate will be stored securely by Electoral Registration Officers in line with data protection regulations.

Receiving a temporary Voter Authority Certificate

If you have applied for a Voter Authority Certificate before the application deadline (5pm, 6 working days before the election), but your local council doesn't think it will arrive in time for use at the election, they will produce a temporary Voter Authority Certificate.

The temporary Voter Authority Certificate will only be valid for the relevant polling day and you will need to collect it in person.

It may be possible to make alternative arrangements for collection of the certificate from a location which would need to be agreed with the Electoral Registration Officer.

You can find contact details for the relevant Electoral Registration Officer by entering your postcode at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**

If you lose your permanent Voter Authority Certificate after the application deadline, you can apply for an emergency proxy vote.

For more information on how to apply for an emergency proxy vote, visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voter or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

What to expect at a polling station

Polling stations will be open from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM on election day.

Around two weeks before election day, the location of polling stations will be published on the Electoral Commission website. The address of your polling station will also be on your poll card, which you will receive in the post.

There will be signs outside and inside the polling station to show you where to go.

When you arrive at the polling station, a member of staff will:

1. Ask you for your name and address so they can find you on the electoral register;
 2. Ask for your photo ID, and check if it is acceptable;
- and

3. Give you your ballot paper and direct you to complete it at a polling booth as usual

Staff at the polling station are there to help, and all staff receive training on how to check photo ID sensitively.

Staff will not check the gender marker, address or nationality on your photo ID.

Councils are responsible for ensuring that elections are well run and that voters feel comfortable casting their vote. As part of their planning, they will have thought about what arrangements are necessary to help make polling stations safe places.

If you have questions about how your photo ID will be checked, please contact your local council to understand what local arrangements will be in place to support you to vote. You can find their contact details by entering your postcode at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter

Privacy

A private area will be available so you can choose to have your photo ID viewed in private if you like. This might be a separate room, or an area separated by a privacy screen.

You can also request that a female member of staff checks your photo ID. This request will be granted if possible.

If you wear a face covering such as a veil, there should be a mirror available to allow you to replace it immediately once your photo ID has been checked.

If you wear a face covering for medical reasons and would prefer not to remove it indoors, polling station staff may be able to check your photo ID outside. If you have any concerns, you can contact your local Electoral Services team.

Find out more about what to expect

If you would like further information about what to expect at the polling station, you should contact your local

council. You can find their contact details by entering your postcode at 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 you to do so.

If you have particular access needs, you can contact the council responsible for your polling station to find out what assistive equipment will be available and request any additional equipment you feel you need.

The council will decide whether the requested equipment can be provided.

You can find contact details for your local council by calling our helpline on **0800 328 0280** or by entering your postcode at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter

Other forms of support

The Presiding Officer can help you cast your vote if you would find this helpful. Polling staff are there to help, and you are encouraged to ask a member of staff if you have any questions or need assistance.

If you feel you cannot vote at a polling station without assistance, including if you are disabled, you can bring someone with you to help you. Anyone over the age of 18 can accompany you to vote at:

- UK Parliament general election, by-election or recall petition,
- Local council elections in England, and
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales.

Anyone over the age of 16 can accompany a person voting in:

- Scottish Parliament elections
- Senedd elections, and

- Council elections in Scotland and Wales.

Your companion will not need to show photo ID.

If a companion will be supporting you in the polling booth, you should inform the polling staff when you arrive. Your companion will be allowed to enter the polling booth to help you vote.

What should you do if you experience issues at the polling station?

If you experience any issues at the polling station and want to provide feedback about your experience, you should contact your local council.

To find their contact details visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voter or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

Other ways to vote

If you won't be able to make it to the polling station on polling day, or you do not want to vote in person, there are other ways to vote.

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.**

When you apply for a postal vote, you need to provide your date of birth, National Insurance number and signature. If you are unable to provide your National Insurance number, you will need to explain why in your application. Your local council will contact you to discuss which other forms of identification you will need to provide. You will need to provide your date of birth and signature again when you complete the postal ballot pack, so your identity can be verified.

You will receive your ballot paper by post. You will need to follow the instructions to complete and return your ballot paper, ensuring you leave enough time for it to arrive at your local council. If you can't post your postal vote pack in time, you can take it to your polling station or local council office on polling day. Anyone handing in

a postal vote will be given a form to complete. Your postal vote pack will contain information on who to contact to find out which council office you can hand in your postal vote to.

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

You can apply to vote by proxy, where you choose someone you trust to go to your polling station on your behalf.

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

The person you choose to vote on your behalf will need to go to the polling station. They will need to show their own photo ID, not your photo ID.

If an emergency occurs after the deadline to apply for a proxy vote, meaning you cannot go to the polling station in person, you 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 or by calling our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

Appendix 1: Who is eligible to vote in England, Scotland and Wales?

Registering to vote in England

To be eligible to register to vote in England, you must be one of the following:

- a UK or Irish citizen
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in England
- a qualifying EU citizen, or an EU citizen with retained rights living in England

To register to vote in England, you must also be aged 16 or over.

Once registered, you can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (unless you are an EU citizen)
- Local council elections and by-elections, from the age of 18

- Police and Crime Commissioner elections, from the age of 18

If the person you are supporting is unsure if they are eligible to vote, visit

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/which-elections-can-i-vote>

Registering to vote in Scotland

To register to vote in Scotland, you must be aged 14 or over. You must also be one of the following:

- a UK or Irish citizen
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in Scotland
- a 'qualifying foreign national' – a citizen of another country who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission, including EU citizens

Once registered, you can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (unless you are a 'qualifying foreign national')
- Scottish Parliament elections and by-elections, from the age of 16
- Local council elections, from the age of 16

Registering to vote in Wales

To register to vote in Wales, you must be aged 14 or over. You must also be one of the following:

- a UK or Irish citizen
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in Wales
- a 'qualifying foreign citizen' – a citizen of another country who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission

Once registered, you can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (unless you are a 'qualifying foreign citizens')
- Senedd elections and by-elections, from the age of 16
- Local council elections, from the age of 16
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections, from the age of 18 (unless you are a 'qualifying foreign citizen')

Appendix 2: Accepted forms of ID

The accepted forms of photo ID issued in England, Scotland and Wales are:

International travel

- Passport issued in the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state or a country listed in Schedule 3 to the British Nationality Act 1981 (a Commonwealth country). This includes an Irish passport card.

Driving

- Driving license issued in the UK, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state
- A blue badge

Local travel

- Older Person's Bus Pass funded by the UK Government (Issued in England)

- Disabled Person's Bus Pass funded by the UK Government (Issues in England)
- 60+ London Oyster Photocard funded by Transport for London
- Scottish National Entitlement Card including the 'Young Scot card', 'older person's bus pass' and 'disabled person's bus pass'
- 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card

Proof of age

- Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)-

Other government issued document

- Biometric immigration document
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- National identity card issued by an EEA state

- Voter Authority Certificate
- Temporary Voter Authority Certificate
- Anonymous Elector's Document

The following forms of ID will be accepted at elections from 1 May 2025:

- - HM Armed Forces Veteran Card
- - All Scottish National Entitlement Cards

For a full list of the accepted forms of photo ID, visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

Appendix 3: Photograph requirements for the Voter Authority Certificate application

Photo style

The photo must be of you:

- Facing forward and looking straight at the camera
- A close up of your head and shoulders, without any head covering, unless you wear one for religious beliefs or medical reasons. Your face must not be covered for any reason.
- Without any other person visible
- With a plain facial expression and with your eyes open and clearly visible (e.g. without sunglasses and not obscured with hair for example). Please note this does not apply where you are unable to provide a photograph which complies with either or both of those requirements due to any disability.

Photo quality

The photo of you must:

- Be a true likeness, with no photoshop or filters applied
- 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

When you apply online, the photograph you 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

When you apply using a paper form, the photograph you provide 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

For more information on:

- Registering to vote
- Which elections require photo ID
- What photo ID will be accepted when voting
- How to apply for free voter ID

Visit [**electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID**](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID) or call **0800 328 0280**

BSL users can contact us using SignLive or Contact Scotland BSL if they live in Scotland