

The
Electoral
Commission

Voter ID - Guide for staff and volunteers

Supporting people
to vote in the 2023
English local elections

The UK Government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station at some elections. This new requirement will apply for the first time in England at the local elections on Thursday 4 May 2023.

We know that some groups are more likely to experience barriers in preparing for this change and may need support to access photo ID.

Anyone who does not have an existing form of accepted photo ID will be able to apply for a free voter ID document, which is known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

This guide is for staff and volunteers working at local authorities and charities in England who want to support those they work with to understand the change. It includes information on:

- **Registering to vote**
- **Which forms of photo ID will be accepted**
- **Applying for a Voter Authority Certificate**
- **What voters can expect at the polling station**
- **Other ways to vote**

You can also download bespoke resources to help groups who are likely to need support to prepare for the new voter ID requirement, including:

- **Older people**
- **Trans and non-binary people**
- **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities**
- **Disabled people**
- **People experiencing homelessness**
- **People who are registered to vote anonymously**

The May 2023 local elections

Local elections are taking place across 230 areas in England on **Thursday 4 May 2023**, including local council, mayoral and parish elections.

Find out where elections are taking place at electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

Registering to vote



The deadline to register to vote in the local elections on 4 May 2023 is **11:59pm on Monday 17 April 2023**.

Anyone who wants to vote in the elections on **4 May 2023** must be registered to vote. If they have registered before, they only need to register again if they have moved house or changed their name.

To be eligible to register to vote in England, a person must be aged 16 or over (but they can't vote until they're 18). They must also be one of the following:

- **A UK or Irish citizen**
- **A qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in the UK**
- **An EU citizen living in the UK**

If you need any help when supporting someone to register to vote, you can contact their local council. You can find contact details by entering the postcode of the person you're supporting at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter








You can support people you work with to register online now at gov.uk/register-to-vote.



Or download a paper application form at gov.uk/government/collections/register-to-vote-paper-forms.

Accepted forms of photo ID

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>International travel Passport</p> |  <p>Local travel Certain concessionary travel cards*</p> |
|  <p>Driving and parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving licence (including provisional licence) • Blue badge |  <p>Other government-issued documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biometric immigration document • Defence Identity Card • National identity card |
|  <p>Proof of age Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)</p> | |

Voters can use any of these accepted forms of photo ID to be able to vote at a polling station.

Voters only need to show one form of photo ID to vote, but it must be the original version and not a photocopy.

Only specific forms of the photo ID listed will be accepted. For more information on which forms will be accepted, including a full list of accepted concessionary travel cards*, see **Annex 1**.

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

Anyone who doesn't currently have an accepted form of photo ID, or isn't sure whether they still look like the photo on their ID, can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate.



If someone is not sure whether they have accepted ID or not, they can visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID



Or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.

Applying for a Voter Authority Certificate

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

Voters need to be registered to vote before they apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. When someone registers to vote, they will be asked whether they have photo ID or if they want to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate.

Apply online



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

Apply by post



Voters can also apply for a Voter Authority Certificate by completing a paper form and sending it to their local council.

You can request a form from the local council. You can find contact details by entering the postcode of the person you're supporting at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter

Apply in person



Voters may also be able to apply in person at their local council office.

In some areas, where a voter has a specific need, councils may be able to accept applications over the phone.

Supporting people to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate

You can help people you work with to complete their application if they need support, and you can contact their local council if you have any questions about the application process.

You can find contact details for the local council by entering the postcode for the person you are supporting at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter



The deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate for the elections on 4 May 2023 is **5pm on Tuesday 25 April 2023**.

The application process

When applying for a Voter Authority Certificate, 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 birth certificate, bank statement and utility bill. Their council will contact them to arrange this.

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

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

Providing a photograph

Applicants will also need to provide a photograph. Requirements for the photograph are similar to those for passport photos and must show the person's head and shoulders without any covering of the head – unless a head covering is worn for religious or medical reasons. The face must not be covered for any reason.

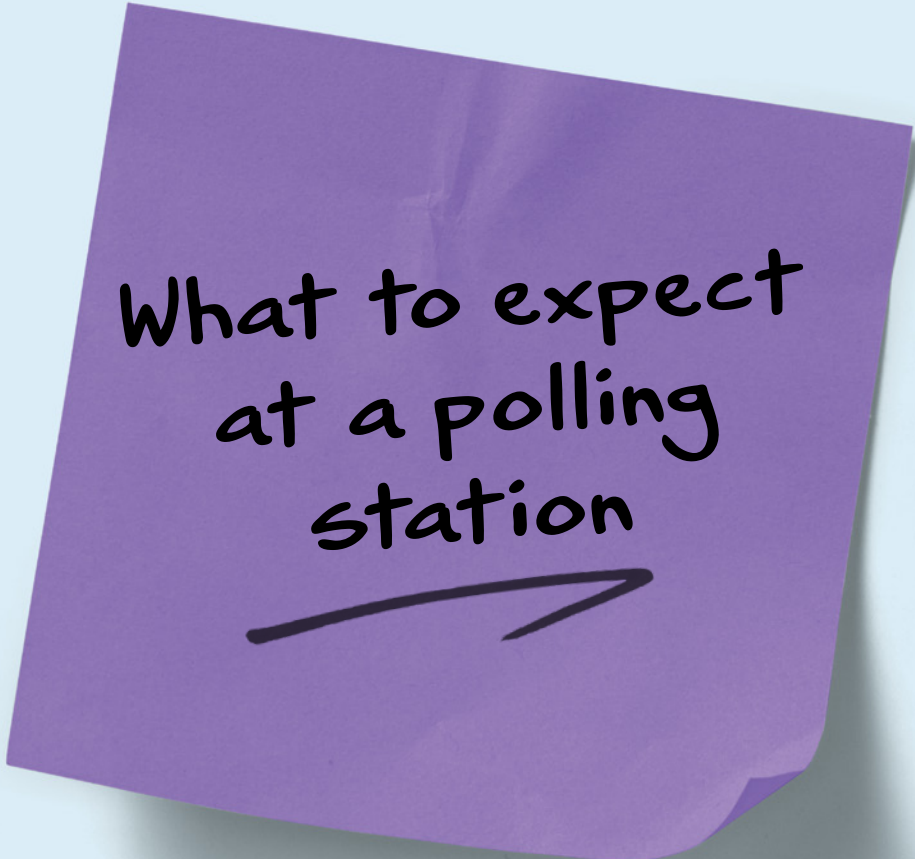
If someone needs help taking their photo, their local council will be able to do this for them.



For more information on the requirements for the photograph, see **Annex 2** or visit **[electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID)**.

The local council will process the application and send the Voter Authority Certificate to the voter by post. Voter Authority Certificates do not have an expiration date, but voters are encouraged to renew their Voter Authority Certificate after 10 years.

What to expect at a polling station



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
3. If your ID is acceptable, they will give you your ballot paper and direct you to complete it at a polling booth as usual

A private area will be available at the polling station, 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, depending on the polling station.

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


Other ways to vote



Voting by post

Photo ID is not required to vote by post.

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.

 The deadline to apply to vote by post at the elections is **5pm on Tuesday 18 April 2023.**


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 Thursday 4 May**. If they can't post their postal vote pack in time, they can take it to their polling station or to their local council office on polling day.

Voting by proxy

(allowing someone you trust to vote on your behalf)

If a person won't be able to make it to the polling station 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 on their behalf.

 The deadline to apply to vote by proxy at the elections is **5pm on Tuesday 25 April 2023.**

The person they choose to vote on their behalf will need to go to the polling station of the person who chose them to be their proxy. They will need to show their own photo ID, not the photo ID of the person they are voting on behalf of.

In an emergency where a voter cannot go to the polling station in person, they can apply for an emergency proxy up to **5pm on polling day**.



More information on voting by post and by proxy is available at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**



Or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**.



Receiving a
temporary
Voter Authority
Certificate

→

If someone applies for a Voter Authority Certificate before the deadline, but their local council doesn't feel it will arrive in time, they will produce a temporary Voter Authority Certificate.

If a person who plans to vote in an election in their area on **Thursday 4 May 2023** applied for a Voter Authority Certificate before the application deadline (5pm on Tuesday 25 April), but their 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 the voter 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 council. You can find contact for the relevant council by entering the postcode of the person you're supporting at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**

If a person loses their permanent Voter Authority Certificate after the application deadline, they 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**.

Annex 1: Accepted Forms of ID

International travel

- Passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state, or a Commonwealth country

Driving and parking

- Driving licence issued by the UK, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state
- A blue badge (prescribed under section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 or section 14 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978)

Local travel

- Older Person's Bus Pass
- Disabled Person's Bus Pass
- Oyster 60+ Card
- Freedom Pass
- National Entitlement Card
- 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Senior SmartPass
- Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass
- War Disablement SmartPass or War Disabled SmartPass
- 60+ SmartPass
- Half Fare SmartPass

Proof of age

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

Other government issued document

- Biometric immigration document (issued in accordance with regulations under section 5 of the UK Borders Act 2007)
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- National identity card issued by an EEA state

Electoral Identity Document

- Voter Authority Certificate
- Temporary Voter Authority Certificate
- Anonymous Elector's Document
- Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland

Annex Z:

Photograph requirements for the Voter Authority Certificate 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 for example). 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
- 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

The deadline to register to vote in the 2023 local elections is **11:59pm on Monday 17 April.**

The deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate for the 2023 local elections is **5pm on Tuesday 25 April.**

Visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID
or call **0800 328 0280** for more information on:

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