

Voter ID: Your guide

Information for blind and partially sighted people on photo ID for the May 2023 English local elections

On Thursday 4 May 2023, local elections are taking place across England.

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 these local elections.

This booklet will explain which forms of photo ID you can use to vote. It will also explain how to apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate, if you don't have any form of accepted ID.

You can also call the Electoral Commission helpline on **0800 328 0280** for more information on:

- Accessible ways to register to vote and apply for a Voter Authority Certificate
- How to contact your local council, who can help you register to vote and apply for a Voter Authority Certificate, should you need one
- What support is available face-to-face, or by phone, from your local council to help you:
 - Complete the forms required to register to vote, and apply for a Voter Authority Certificate
 - Take a photograph of yourself that meets the requirements for applying for a Voter Authority Certificate

A list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQ) can be found at the end of this booklet.

How do I register to vote?

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

In order to vote in any election you must first be registered to vote. If you've never registered, have recently moved to a different address, or changed your name, you can register to vote online at gov.uk/register-to-vote.

Alternatively, you can register by completing a paper application form. To request a paper application form, or if you need help registering to vote, contact your local council.

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

Which elections am I voting in?

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

To find out if there are elections happening in your area call our helpline on **0800 328 0280** or go to electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID.

Which forms of photo ID can I use to vote?

There are several accepted forms of photo ID you can use to vote at a polling station, including:

- **Passport**
- **Blue badge** parking permit

- **Certain concessionary travel cards**
 - an Older Person's Bus Pass
 - a Disabled Person's Bus Pass
 - an Oyster 60+ card
 - a Freedom Pass
 - the National Entitlement Card
 - a 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
 - a Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
 - a Senior SmartPass
 - a Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass
 - a War Disablement SmartPass
 - a 60+ SmartPass
 - a Half Fare SmartPass
- **Driving license** (including provisional license)

A complete list of the forms of photo ID that will be accepted when voting at a polling station can be found in the [Accepted forms of ID](#) section of this booklet.

If you have a form of accepted photo ID which is out of date, you can still use it to vote at a polling station if it still looks like you.

If you don't already have an accepted form of photo ID, or you're not sure whether your photo ID still looks like you, you can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

You need to be registered to vote before you apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. When you register to vote, you'll be asked whether you have photo ID or if you want to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate.

If you're not sure whether your photo ID will be accepted, call our helpline on **0800 328 0280** or visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID.

Applying for a Voter Authority Certificate

The deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate for use at these elections is **5pm on Tuesday 25 April**, but you should apply as soon as possible in case your local council need to check any details with you.

Apply online

You can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate online at gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate.

Apply by post

You can also apply by completing a paper application form and sending this to your local council. You can contact your local council and ask them to send you the form, or you can download it at gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-voter-authority-certificate-by-post-if-youre-living-in-the-uk.

Apply in person or by phone

You may be able to apply in person at your local council office.

Alternatively, if you have a specific need because of a disability, you can ask your local council if they could accept your application over the phone.

The decision on whether or not applications can be accepted in person or by phone is the responsibility of the council.

Call our helpline on **0800 328 0280** to get contact details for your local council, who can:

- Help you complete your online application for a Voter Authority Certificate
- Send you a paper application form, and help you complete it, if you prefer to apply that way
- Tell you whether they can take your application in person or over the phone, and support you to apply in this way if so
- Tell you what face-to-face support is available, should you need it

You can also find out more about applying for a Voter Authority Certificate at electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID.

What information do I need to give when I apply for a Voter Authority Certificate?

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

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

If you don't know your National Insurance number, or don't have one, you can still apply. Your council will contact you to request alternative proof of your identity, which could include a birth certificate, bank statement or utility bill.

You will also need to submit a photograph with your application. The requirements for the photograph are similar to the requirements for a passport photo.

Your local council should be able to take your photo for you, if you are unable to take one yourself. If you need assistance with providing a photo with your application, you should contact them. The council may provide an area at their office to take photos of applicants. Additional support may be available, however this will vary between councils so you should contact your council to find out what support they can provide.

Your local council will process your application and send your Voter Authority Certificate to you in the post, along with instructions explaining how to use it.

When you complete the application form, you'll be asked whether you would like to receive the instructions in large print, braille or easy read.

Find out more about the requirements, or get contact details for your local council, by calling our helpline on 0800 328 0280 or visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID.

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.

What will happen at the 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 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.

Assistive equipment

The UK Government recently introduced changes which mean that different assistive equipment may be available at the polling station.

Voters can contact their local council to find out what assistive equipment will be available at their polling station, and request the equipment they feel they need.

The council will decide whether or not the requested equipment can be provided.

Are there other ways to vote?

Voting by post

You don't need to provide photo ID to vote by post.

To apply to vote by post, you'll need to complete a postal vote application form and make sure it arrives with your local council by **5pm on Tuesday 18 April 2023.**

You will receive your ballot paper in the post. Your postal ballot pack will include instructions on how to obtain information in a variety of formats explaining how to complete your postal vote application. You can request

these instructions in braille, graphical format (for example, using photos or illustrations), or another form (including audio).

Complete and return your ballot paper, ensuring you leave enough time for it to arrive at your local council by **10pm on Thursday 4 May**. If you can't post your postal vote pack in time, you can take it your polling station or to your local council office on polling day.

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

To apply to vote by proxy, complete an application form and send it to your local council to arrive **by 5pm on Tuesday 25 April 2023**.

The person you choose to vote on your behalf will need to go to your polling station to vote and will need to show their own photo ID to be able to cast your vote. They will not need to show your ID when voting on your behalf.

In an emergency where you cannot go to the polling station in person, you can apply for an emergency proxy up to **5pm on Thursday 4 May**.

For more information or to get a postal or proxy application form, call our helpline on **0800 328 0280** or visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

Accepted forms of ID

The following forms of photo ID will be accepted:

- Passport issued by the UK, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or a European Economic Area (EEA) state
- Blue badge

- Driving license (including provisional license) issued by the UK, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state
- Identity card with PASS mark
- Biometric immigration document
- Defence Identity Card
- Certain national identity cards
- The following concessionary travel cards:

Passes funded by the UK Government

- An Older Person's Bus Pass
- A Disabled Person's Bus Pass
- An Oyster 60+ card
- A Freedom Pass

Passes funded by the Scottish Government

- The National Entitlement Card

Passes funded by the Welsh Government

- A 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- A Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card

Passes issued under the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme

- A Senior SmartPass
- A Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass
- A War Disablement SmartPass
- A 60+ SmartPass
- A Half Fare SmartPass

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General

Question: Are there elections taking place in my area in May 2023?

Answer: You can call our helpline on **0800 328 0280** to find out if elections are taking place in your area. A full list of areas holding elections in May 2023 can also be found at electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/local-elections-england-may-2023.

Question: How do I contact my local council?

Answer: You can find contact details for your local council, including phone numbers and email addresses, by calling the Electoral Commission helpline on **0800 328 0280** or by visiting electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

Registering to vote

Question: I have voted in elections in my area in the past. Do I need to register again?

Answer: If you've registered before, you only need to register again if you have moved house, or changed your name.

Question: Can I apply for free voter ID at the same time as registering to vote?

Answer: Yes. When you register to vote, you'll be asked whether you have photo ID or if you want to apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

Question: Do I need to show more than one form of photo ID?

Answer: No, so long as your ID is one of the forms listed included in the list provided in this document.

Question: Can I use photo ID that's out of date?

Answer: Yes, as long as you still look as you appear in the photo.

Question: I have photo ID in an app on my phone. Can I use this to vote?

Answer: No – only hard copy versions of your ID will be accepted.

Question: I don't have any photo ID. Can I still vote in person at a polling station?

Answer: Yes. If you don't have one of the accepted forms of photo ID, you can apply for a free voter ID document known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

Question: There aren't any elections taking place in my area in May. Can I still apply for a Voter Authority Certificate for use at future elections?

Answer: Yes. Voter Authority Certificates do not have an expiration date, but voters are encouraged to renew their Voter Authority Certificate after 10 years.

Other ways of voting

Question: Are there other ways to vote that don't require photo ID?

Answer: Yes. You can vote by post, or by proxy which is when you ask someone you trust to vote on your behalf. You'll have to apply for a postal or a proxy vote before you can do so.

Question: What are the accessibility options for postal voting?

Answer: Your local council is legally required to include instructions with your postal vote pack on how to obtain a translation of directions or guidance on how to complete your postal vote application. Contact your local council for more information. You can get their contact details by entering your post code at electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information.

Question: I'd like someone to vote on my behalf at a polling station. Will they need to show my photo ID?

Answer: No. However, they will have to show their own ID. As long as you have registered for a proxy vote, polling station staff will know that this person is voting on your behalf.

Applying for a Voter Authority Certificate (free voter ID)

Question: Can I get the application form for a Voter Authority Certificate in an accessible format?

Answer: Yes. You can request the application form in large print or Easy Read from your local council. You can get their contact details by entering

your post code at electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information.

Question: I can't find my National Insurance number. Can I still apply for free voter ID?

Answer: Yes. Your local council will contact you to ask for a different proof of identity. This could be a birth certificate, utility bill or bank statement.

Question: I'm not sure how to take a photograph that will meet the requirements. How can I get help to do this?

Answer: You can contact your local council for help you with this. They can take the photograph for you. You can find contact details for your council by calling **0800 328 0280** or by entering your post code at electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information.

Question: I can't get to my local council office, can I get support at home, or somewhere else?

Answer: It is up to individual councils to determine what, if any, support they can offer away from their office. Such requests from voters would be considered on a case-by-case basis and would depend, among other factors, on what facilities were available and where.

Question: How will I be able to identify my Voter Authority Certificate when it is sent to me?

Answer: 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.

Question: Can I get instructions on how to use my Voter Authority Certificate in an accessible format?

Answer: Yes. When you complete the application form, you'll be asked whether you would like to receive the instructions in large print, braille or easy read. Your local council will send these instructions to you.

At the polling station

Question: What are the accessibility options at the polling station?

Answer: The equipment and accessibility provisions at a polling station will be unique to each location, so visit your local council's website for more information. You can find their website by entering your post code at electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information.

Question: I don't want other people watching while I have my photo ID checked. Will it be possible to have it checked in private?

Answer: Yes. When you get to the polling station, you can ask to have your ID checked in private. This might be done in a separate room, or an area separated by a privacy screen, depending on the polling station.

Key dates

- The deadline to register to vote in the 2023 local elections is **11:59pm on Monday 17 April**.
- To apply to vote by post, your application form must arrive at your local council by **5pm on Tuesday 18 April 2023**.
- To apply to vote by proxy, your application form must arrive at your local council by **5pm on Tuesday 25 April 2023**.
- The deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate for the 2023 local elections is **5pm on Tuesday 25 April**.

Your voting with photo ID checklist

1. Have I registered to vote?
2. Do I have photo ID?
3. If not, have I applied for a free voter ID?
4. Have I got my photo ID ready to take with me to the polling station on election day?
5. Have I voted?

How can I find out more?

If you have any questions or would like to obtain this information in an accessible format, call our helpline on 0800 328 0280, go to electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID, or scan the QR code on this page.

This booklet has been produced by the Electoral Commission.

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulated political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity.

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