Polls Apart
A Future for Accessible Democracy
An evaluation of the accessibility of the May 2002 electoral pilot voting schemes
Gwilym Morris, Ruth Scott & Anna Woodward

Funded by The Electoral Commission
I opened, I voted, I posted – what could be simpler.
Survey Respondent – Chorley

The voting system was easy to use because someone showed me how to use the machine. It was convenient and I had no complaints.
Survey Respondent – Newham

I didn’t have to worry whether I would be well enough to vote.
Survey Respondent – Gateshead

Due to becoming immobile I have not voted for the past seven or eight years. Now I can easily cast my vote from my armchair.
Survey Respondent – Chorley
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Contents

Polls Apart
A Future for Accessible Democracy
An evaluation of the accessibility of the May 2002 electoral pilot voting schemes
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4 Executive Summary
5 Introduction
7 E-voting pilot systems
8 Disabled people and technology
10 Barriers in technology that affect individual impairment groups
12 Evaluation of the e-voting systems
12 Kiosks
15 Internet voting
20 Telephone voting
21 SMS (Text messaging) voting
23 Local authority evaluation
24 Postal vote pilot schemes
24 Disabled people and postal voting
26 Evaluation of the postal voting pilots
27 The results of the postal vote survey
35 Analysis of voting information
39 Recommendations
42 Appendix 1 - Accessibility audits
Executive summary - Polls Apart: a future for accessible democracy

*Polls Apart: a future for accessible democracy* explores the accessibility of the May 2002 local election pilot voting schemes. It was commissioned as part of the overall evaluation of these schemes by the Electoral Commission* and focuses on how the systems and mechanisms used in the pilots impacted on disabled voters.

*The Electoral Commission’s report is published separately under the title ‘Modernising Elections’ and incorporates key findings and recommendations from this report. The report can be read at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

The Polls Apart 3 research into the accessibility of the 2001 General Election found that 69% of polling stations remained inaccessible to one or more groups of disabled people. New systems of voting offer many opportunities to improve the overall accessibility of elections and are generally welcomed.

Each pilot scheme was evaluated individually and where possible visited during the election. Disabled people within each pilot area were also asked to complete a detailed survey, the results of which aided our evaluation.

Suppliers of the e-voting systems and the local authorities that took part in the pilots had, in general, a good and clear understanding of the access needs of disabled people.

Some local authorities used kiosk voting mechanisms to increase the number of locations where voting can take place. One local authority even took the kiosks to residential and care homes. However, we found evidence that disabled people, especially those with visual or co-ordination impairments, could find kiosk voting mechanisms inaccessible. Making the overall voting process as simple as possible may increase accessibility of all the kiosk systems.

Internet voting gave disabled people the opportunity to vote from wherever there was a computer connected to the web. In general the websites were created to high accessibility standards but some barriers to access remained. Over time and with further testing these barriers should be removed, however national standards will need to be created to ensure that Internet voting is fully accessible.

Telephone and SMS (text messaging) voting will never be completely accessible to all disabled people. Eventually however they might provide valuable flexibility needed to ensure an overall accessible election if they were provided as an alternative to other voting methods.

Postal voting appealed to a majority of disabled people who completed our survey. There remains however serious concern about maintaining the secrecy of the electoral process for some disabled people in all-postal vote elections.

The pilots have allowed new voting methods to be tried out and although problems with access occurred they have provided a valuable opportunity to plan the accessibility of future voting systems.
Introduction

This report gives an overview on how access to democracy may have been enhanced or diminished by the pilot schemes used in the May 2002 elections.

Scope has been campaigning on this issue for over a decade and although there has been improvement and changes to voting legislation disabled people still find it more difficult to vote than non-disabled people.

According to a 1999 Department for Social Security report there are 8.6 million disabled people in the UK. However, at the 2001 General Election Polls Apart 3 research found that 69% of polling stations could be inaccessible to a disabled person.

Disabled people have much to gain from new forms of voting. The current main system – going to a polling station, marking a cross on a ballot paper and then placing it in a ballot box – is not very accessible. It automatically excludes people who can’t get to a polling station or can’t read the ballot paper.

Access to democracy is further eroded as many polling stations are situated in inaccessible buildings. These exclude anybody who can’t get in or around them.

Postal voting has made accessing the electoral process easier for some disabled people. But where there is a choice of voting methods this choice should be available to all voters including disabled people. While some disabled people are forced to use a postal vote because other voting systems are inaccessible they are being offered a second-class service.

The time is right to review the way we vote to see if there are ways to improve the accessibility of elections.

Changes to our voting system should be welcomed by those who wish to see a greater degree of involvement by disabled people in democracy. A key indicator of the success or failure of any new system should however be whether it includes everybody or continues to exclude a large, and often overlooked, minority.

New forms of voting may improve access to democracy but any new system must ensure that everyone gets the same opportunities to vote. It is important that access for disabled voters is included from the outset in any plans to alter our existing voting structures.

By looking at each system individually and through consultation with disabled people we have been able to map where access problems will occur. We have not dismissed anything. Rather we have attempted to provide advice to those planning future pilot schemes, the suppliers of the technology involved and the people on the ground who run our elections.
As the nature of the election pilots varied tremendously we have divided the evaluation into three sections:

1. An assessment of the accessibility of the e-voting pilots
2. An assessment of the accessibility of the postal vote pilots
3. Analysis of voting information sent to voters by Local Authorities

The purpose of each assessment is to:

- Identify if individual voting mechanisms and systems are broadly accessible to a wide range of disabled people
- Identify access barriers if they occur
- Provide recommendations on how to improve the accessibility of the voting mechanisms and systems used

This is designed to help the Electoral Commission meet the criteria set by the Representation of the People Act 2000 for the evaluation. These criteria were to evaluate:

- the scheme’s success or otherwise in facilitating voting or the counting of votes, or in encouraging voting or enabling voters to make informed choices at the elections
- whether the turnout of voters was higher than it would have been if the scheme had not applied
- whether voters found the procedures provided for their assistance by the scheme easy to use
- whether the procedures provided for by the scheme led to any increase in personation or other electoral offences, or in any other malpractice in connection with elections
- whether those procedures led to any increase in expenditure, or to any savings, by the authority

Naturally we have focused on the criteria as they relate to disabled people and their specific needs.
Assessment of the e-voting pilot schemes

Introduction

The technical assessment of the voting systems is divided into three sections:

1. An introduction to disabled people and technology

2. Evaluation of the individual systems used. As many of them are very similar it has been possible to group several systems together to provide contrast with each other. It has also enabled us to outline the broad principles that make each type of system accessible.

3. Evaluation of how Local Authorities used the e-voting systems. In doing this we hope to provide examples of best practice and identify where other access considerations may have been overlooked.

Methodology

To gather evidence for the evaluation we:

- Visited each e-voting mechanism in use during the election or a public demonstration. Where a mechanism was used in several Local Authorities we made sure we visited at least one of these

- Accessed remote e-voting systems via the web or using the telephone demonstrations

- Contacted the suppliers of each e-voting mechanism

- Contacted Local Authorities to identify how each e-voting system would fit into the wider elections environment

- Gathered information from disabled voters via Scope’s networks and the www.pollsapart.org.uk website

It was not possible to visit every Local Authority during the election. This was because of the geographical spread of the pilots and the time available. Where we were unable to visit a Local Authority we asked it to provide information that would help us make a reasonable assessment.

We have included in Appendix 1 the accessibility audits carried out on each individual e-voting mechanism and many of the Local Authorities.
Disabled people and technology

Models of disability

To understand how technology impacts on disabled people it is first important to recognise what exactly disables an individual. At the moment there are two ‘models’ of disability.

The first is called the medical model. This puts the focus on the disabled person. It is an individual’s impairment that disables them.

Using the medical model a person with a visual impairment is disabled because they can’t see. A wheelchair user is disabled because they can’t get up stairs. This is the way most of society views disability but it is a very one-sided approach.

The other explanation is called the social model of disability. This puts the focus on society rather than the individual. Society has created barriers that exclude disabled people, so it is the barriers that disable people, not the impairment.

If a building has level access then a wheelchair user can get into it. If a leaflet is created in large print or Braille then a person with a visual impairment can read it. Remove the access barrier and a person’s impairment becomes insignificant.

By using the social model when looking at how technology impacts on disabled people it is possible to identify possible barriers to access and how to reduce or remove them.

The importance of including disabled people’s needs when designing technology

The needs of disabled people are not often considered at the creation stage of any technological advancement. This means that a lot of new technology is inaccessible from the outset.

The traditional London bus is a good example. When this vehicle was designed its creator did not think about disabled people. So a form of transport was created with numerous barriers. High steps to get onto it and a narrow aisle prevented many disabled people travelling on it. This type of bus is still being used on many routes in London today. If the designer had thought about disabled people’s needs during the planning stage then the bus would have been designed differently.

Accessible buses are now very common. They have lower entrances, ramps, wider aisles, holding poles painted with high contrast yellow paint and adequate space so a wheelchair user can travel in comfort. This shows it can be done. The only question is why did it take so long?

The same thing has happened to a varying degree with most forms of information technology. The only difference is that today disabled people and the organisations that work on their behalf will object if something is inaccessible.
In doing this they are also backed up by the law. The Disability Discrimination Act places a responsibility for suppliers and manufacturers of technology to provide solutions that do not exclude disabled people or offer them an inferior service.

Technology is often already in use before anyone realises that it is inaccessible. This is true for many of the types of technology used in the e-voting pilots. Some solutions have been found to remove barriers but this takes time and effort and could have been avoided if the technology was accessible in the beginning.

**Technology designed for disabled people**

Over the years there have been many advances in technology that have been designed for disabled people. A good example of this is Braille. This has given visually impaired people the opportunity to read unaided. Another is electric wheelchairs that are used by people with mobility impairments to get around independently.

Computer technology has given disabled people still greater opportunities. Screen-readers allow visually impaired people to access the Internet. This is done by processing information contained within the design of a website and converting it into synthesised speech.

Disabled people have appropriated other types of technology and adapted them to their needs. Mobile phones with SMS text messaging are a good example. Hearing impaired people can communicate with each other using text messages.

When an organisation fails to take account of the fact that disabled people use technology in a specific way then they can also create new access barriers. An example of this is a website that is designed in such a way that people who use screen-readers can't access it.

A good example of how barriers have been removed by identifying and incorporating “access” technology is the Braille template which is now used in all elections.

**Access to technology**

Disabled people, like some other groups in society, are often socially excluded. This means they may not have had the opportunity to use the latest technology or the confidence to learn new technology-related skills. This needs to be recognised not only in the way that the technology is created but also in the way that, for example, e-voting systems are introduced.
Barriers in technology that affect individual impairment groups

Disabled people are not one single homogeneous group and different people encounter very different access barriers. To ensure that technology is accessible it is necessary to consider some of the issues separately.

Visual impairments

Most people who have a visual impairment have some degree of vision. Many will access technology through sight. That is to say they are able to view screens as a sighted person would if the image on the screen is designed appropriately. This usually means that the text on the screen is in a large font whose colour and design contrast with the background.

Other visually impaired people may need text to be magnified. Computer browsers have this capability built into them, although this option does depend on the way the code for the website is constructed. There are also specialised browsers which only read text, displaying this on a screen in a format the user defines. Again the usability of such browsers depends on how the code is constructed.

Finally some visually impaired people with little or no vision use ‘screen-reading’ technology. This converts the text on a page to Braille or synthesised speech.

Communication and learning impairments

Society is getting more aware of the needs of people with communication and learning impairments. Again, however, there is a wide spectrum of barriers that may prevent people with these impairments accessing technology.

Some people prefer to get information graphically. This does not necessarily mean they cannot read text but symbols can help to confirm what they think the text is saying. The inclusion of official party symbols next to the candidate’s name on the ballot paper is a positive development that could have been extended further.

The layout of the text is also important. Dyslexic people may be able to read text more easily if the type, colour and size of text are chosen with care. The language used in all the e-voting pilots was overly complex and could be improved.

It is important to realise that learning impairments do not mean that a person will not understand how to use technology or any information delivered by it. All that needs to be recognised is that some people may need appropriate support with some aspects of e-voting systems.

Learning and communication impairments can be acquired at any stage of a person’s life. For example one possible outcome of a stroke is that a person may find it difficult to process text. When this happens an individual may find it difficult to ask for assistance so support needs to be provided sensitively.
Finally, some people with communication impairments find it difficult to use speech. This may be an issue if the only support that is offered on how to use technology is through a telephone helpline. For example, touch-tone voting mechanisms may be inaccessible to some people if the only way they can get information on the system is by ringing a helpline. Further information should also be provided in a written format on the web, through a fax or by email.

**Co-ordination impairments**

People with co-ordination impairments may find it difficult to move something such as a pen, joystick or mouse. Pressing buttons or using a keyboard may also be problematic.

Wherever possible, alternatives should be provided. For example websites should be able to be navigated using both a mouse and a keyboard.

Where there is no obvious alternative, such as with a touch-screen, other methods of voting will have to be provided.

**Mobility impairments**

The environment in which the technology is placed can affect its accessibility to disabled people with mobility impairments. For example placing a voting kiosk in an inaccessible building makes the process and therefore the technology inaccessible to a wheelchair user.

**Hearing impairments**

Technology that uses an audio indication, such as a voting kiosk whose screen remains largely static but makes a noise when the screen changes, can cause problems. It is important that there is also clear visual recognition to indicate progression.

**Neurological impairments**

Flashing or flickering screens and some animations should be avoided because of their impact on people with epilepsy and other neurological conditions.

**Multiple impairments**

Many disabled people do not fit into one category and may have more than one impairment. Technology wherever possible should attempt to overcome the barriers affecting people with all types of impairment. The key to this is maximising flexibility.
**Older people**

Many people acquire impairments in old age. When this happens there is often a perception that they are not disabled. The barriers that older people with impairments encounter are exactly the same as for other disabled people.

Older people, however, may not be aware that the support that is provided for disabled people is also relevant to them.

**Evaluation of the e-voting systems**

**Kiosks**

This group of systems can be described as a simple interface between the voter and the ballot process. They usually replace the ballot paper with a screen on which is there is a graphical representation of the ballot paper. Every pilot system used touch-screens. One system (Powervote – Bolton & Stratford-upon-Avon) incorporated an actual ballot paper into the system by placing a printed copy of the ballot paper on a touch-screen.

**Touch-screens**

All but one of the kiosks used touch-screens. This creates specific issues for people with hand-eye co-ordination, visual and/or mobility impairments.

One key factor is the weight of touch needed to activate an on-screen button. Involuntary hand movement may switch the button on and off. Other people who are not able to remove their fingers from the screen quickly may also encounter the same problem. These people’s needs must be taken into account when considering the type of screen used and the touch / pressure / delay settings used.

Touch-screens also have the disadvantage of a person’s hand covering the button when they press it. This can cause difficulties for some visually impaired people who can only focus on a small area at a time. Making the buttons as large as possible may help alleviate this problem.

**Do kiosks make voting more straightforward for disabled people?**

Most of the kiosks required the user to complete a set of relatively complex actions such as moving through a sequence of several screens or inserting a card into a slot. For many people this is less straightforward than using a simple pencil to mark a cross on a piece of paper. The complexity of the set of actions may be a barrier to mobility, coordination or visually impaired people. Where there were relatively few steps to voting, such as the Powervote system, the potential barriers were minimised.
“The screen wasn’t easy to read. And it wasn’t user-friendly.”
Survey respondent, Newham

Sheffield City Council’s use of their information kiosks may have increased the accessibility of the election process for some disabled people. The kiosks are placed throughout the city in areas that are physically accessible. Disabled people who have to vote at inaccessible polling stations may have found them useful. The actual design of the information kiosks however would have prevented many visual or coordination impaired people from using them.

Do kiosks make elections more accessible, either by making it more convenient to vote or by making voting more attractive to people currently less likely to vote?

Where kiosks replace paper ballots and are situated in existing polling stations there is little evidence that they make voting more accessible for disabled voters.

“I use a wheelchair. If I had been alone I would not have been able to get into the building. I liked the novelty of electronic voting but I will use a postal vote in future because of the difficulty of accessing the building.”
Survey respondent, Stratford

“Information on the screen was not as clear as it could be (small and italics) and a magnifier did not make much difference. The logos to the right of the candidate’s details were too small and did not always indicate their party’s name in words.”
Survey respondent, Newham

Some disabled people did like the new system. Where the kiosk is used in other settings such as a mobile polling station it can dramatically increase the ease with which some disabled people can vote. A good example of this occurred in Newham where the kiosks were taken to people living in residential and care homes.

“The voting system was easy to use because someone showed me how to use the machine. It was convenient and I had no complaints.”
Survey respondent, Newham

“The system was very simple to understand and to use. They way it was set out made it very convenient.”
Survey respondent, Chester

Most kiosks could be dismounted which would allow people to bring the screens close to them. The Strand kiosk screen was on an angled hinge. This is important for people with some visual impairments who need to be close to the text they are reading.
Do kiosks make the administration of elections more efficient and cost effective?

None of the kiosks used were completely accessible so other methods would also need to be used to enable all disabled people to vote. This obviously has cost implications especially if the kiosks exclude a large proportion of disabled people.

Do kiosks maintain or increase the level of security at elections?

Some disabled people found it difficult to use the kiosks unaided. This was apparent on several occasions when we visited kiosks in use during the election. Voters got stuck on a specific screen and did not know how to progress. When this occurred the polling staff present showed a high degree of professionalism explaining to the voter how to continue. In a crowded or busy polling station this may be more difficult. In this situation it may also be possible for the secrecy of the ballot to be compromised.

“I couldn’t reach the buttons. A council rep. had to vote for me.”
Survey respondent, Stratford

Part of the problem was that the users of the system were unaware of the processes involved in casting a vote beforehand.

“After staff explained procedures they looked away from the screen so they didn’t see my vote. If I had a problem they would have had to view my vote to help me. This is not desirable”.
Survey respondent, Newham
Internet voting

Disability access to e-voting websites

Unlike kiosk voting, using the Internet can happen anywhere there is a computer with a connection to the web. This means that their wider environmental access considerations are somewhat more complicated.

A large group of disabled people can vote at home, in work, at an educational establishment or another place where they have personal access to the Internet. They however do not just receive information on the election via the web. Polling information will continue to be delivered in a paper format.

Ensuring the e-voting website is accessible is therefore only one of the overall access considerations that need to be examined.

People who have to vote using a third-party computer, for example in a library or a computer set up especially for the purpose of voting in a public place, need to have other access requirements met. This can be the physical access to any building where the public computer is situated as well as the way they use the system.

It is worth remembering that not everybody is computer literate or has the confidence to gain the relatively complex skills needed to vote. Disabled people encounter a high degree of social exclusion, they are less likely to be in employment and have on average a lower per-capita income. This means that special attention needs to be given to the support disabled people might need when planning overall Internet voting methods.

Disability access within the online e-voting environment

The web should be a very accessible environment. It is a very flexible medium where users can define the way they receive and process information. Disabled people are however needlessly excluded from much of the Internet.

The Internet is not constrained by national boundaries. It is a world wide web of models, procedures, languages and ideas. The basic building blocks of the web, HTML/HTM code, can be constructed in a multitude of different ways. The user rarely notices these differences unless of course it prevents them from visiting or using a specific site.

Disabled people are often excluded from websites simply because of the way the code is written.

Web Access Initiative (WAI) Standards

Attempts have been made to standardise the way the Internet develops. This is done at a global level though the World Wide Web Consortium W3C. (www.w3c.com)
W3C was created to:

“lead the World Wide Web to its full potential by developing common protocols that promote its evolution and ensure its interoperability.”

As part of this work W3C has developed the Web Access Initiative (www.w3.org/WAI/) which works with a wide range of organisations to ensure the web is accessible to disabled people. W3C provides support, checklists but most importantly a set of guidelines. These guidelines, known as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), indicate whether a website is accessible. They have been created in a way that indicates the level of access that has been achieved. This is done through analysing individual “checkpoints” which have three levels of priority.

**Priority 1**
A web content developer must satisfy this checkpoint. Otherwise, one or more groups will find it impossible to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint is a basic requirement for some groups to be able to use Web documents.

**Priority 2**
A web content developer should satisfy this checkpoint. Otherwise, one or more groups will find it difficult to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint will remove significant barriers to accessing Web documents.

**Priority 3**
A web content developer may address this checkpoint. Otherwise, one or more groups will find it somewhat difficult to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint will improve access to web documents.

Some checkpoints specify a priority level that may change under certain (indicated) conditions.

**WCAG Conformance**

The website can then be given a level of overall conformance

**Conformance Level “A”:** all Priority 1 checkpoints are satisfied;

**Conformance Level “Double-A”:** all Priority 1 and 2 checkpoints are satisfied;

**Conformance Level “Triple-A”:** all Priority 1, 2, and 3 checkpoints are satisfied

Further information on the details of the guidelines can be found at http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT

The guidelines, if met, are also beneficial to non-disabled people who use the web. This is because access is considered in the wider sense.
Conformance with the WCAG standards

The evaluation process was made somewhat easier as each of the e-voting suppliers were aware of the Web Access Initiative and were able to provide evidence on their level of compliance with the guidelines.

- The Electoral Reform Society e-voting portal had their e-voting portal evaluated by the RNIB who use the WCAG as a framework.

- The BT/Oracle e-voting portal defined WCAG standards within their project’s style guide. This enabled their developers and managers to structure disability access from the start.

- The BT/Elections.com e-voting site had areas which would have conformed to the WCAG level “A” but had other areas where there were significant access barriers.

Although none of the pilots completely met the higher level WCAG conformance standard “Triple A”, each had examined seriously how to include disabled people.

The most positive aspect of the overall evaluation of the e-voting systems was the awareness by the suppliers of the need to build accessible e-voting environments. A great deal of thought had gone into how to make the sites accessible.

There were no glaring access barriers, though each of the sites had barriers which further development could remove. Some of the problems were understandable given the short amount of time suppliers were given to set up the Internet voting mechanisms used in the pilots.

It is not the purpose of this evaluation to excuse or overlook the access barriers we encountered - though we recognise that getting things right first time within the timescale was difficult. Occasionally errors were a result of oversights which would have been picked up through further user-testing.

We believe that adequate time for preparation and development is key to ensuring that future e-voting Internet sites are accessible.

There was some disagreement on how the WAI guidelines could be met, with one supplier not altering a potential access barrier as defined by the WCAG level “A” guidelines as they felt that it would compromise access in other areas.

Although this issue was relatively minor it highlights the importance of having an agreed and possibly contractually binding national reference relating to the WAI guidelines. We would recommend that the pilot bids for the next set of pilots require that suppliers meet the WCAG level “A” as a minimum.
Look and feel of e-voting websites

The WCAG standards cannot adequately describe the usability of any website. The only way to do this is by a subjective analysis of how the sites were constructed, their content, how they looked and how the user moved about within them.

Usability is an important disability access consideration because a poorly designed website will be unwelcoming and difficult to use. Such sites may deter disabled people with communication impairments such as dyslexia. They may confuse visually impaired people who are not using screen-reading technology and could exclude people with co-ordination impairments who cannot manage a complex set of actions.

As the Internet voting sites will be accessed in the main by users without support it is very important that a high degree of usability is maintained.

Each of the sites that were developed for the e-voting pilots looked very different. The BT/Oracle developed sites were particularly welcoming environments. Each had a different method of navigation with the Electoral Reform Society’s being the simplest.

The BT/Elections.com site had two areas, one for voting, the other for information on the election, the suppliers and the council. Although it contained detailed and useful information its layout and use of graphics could have been improved. The voting area itself had a higher degree of usability.

Each site also used different methods of verification. All had a requirement to enter different PIN and password codes. These were not standardised.

One method that could be employed to regulate the usability would be to create a simple set of guidelines on the type of navigation and the expressions used to move people through the site. It would also be possible to specify the number of pages that a person has to go through in order to vote. This would need to be undertaken at a national level and would have the advantage of being able to be supported by a national publicity campaign.

Although this may seem prescriptive a similar process occurs for paper ballots, which are more or less uniform throughout the country for the same types of elections.

Interestingly one area that was defined was that the pilots had to have a replication of the ballot paper on the voting screen. This did not work as it was based on a paper design principle and it did not fit with the general design concepts used on the web.
Does Internet voting make voting more straightforward for disabled people?

Internet voting is, provided disability access is maintained, as straightforward for disabled people as paper voting providing they have had some exposure to the web.

“The process took five minutes, I could do it without help and without going anywhere.”
Survey respondent, Sheffield

For disabled people who are not familiar with the web or who have had little experience of using it, voting using the Internet could be quite difficult. Where pilot schemes use the Internet as the main voting method support needs to be available to help people use the e-voting website.

Does Internet voting make elections more accessible, either by making it more convenient to vote or by making voting more attractive to disabled people currently less likely to vote?

Internet voting is extremely convenient for many groups of disabled people if they have access to a computer linked to the web. Some disabled people are very comfortable using the Internet and for some people the Internet allows them to vote independently as long as the e-voting sites are designed appropriately.

“This is the first time I have been able to vote without personal assistance. Using voice recognition software I insert a pin and password, select my candidate on an on-screen ballot paper and submitted my vote.”
Survey respondent, Sheffield

“I voted at work. It was done quickly, and easily, without queues and when I wanted to.”
Survey respondent, Swindon

Disabled people with a low exposure to the web may have found Internet voting less accessible.

Does Internet voting make the administration of elections more efficient and cost-effective?

If websites are constructed appropriately it may reduce the amount of money needed to run alternative voting methods and produce information in alternative formats.
Does Internet voting maintain or increase the level of security at elections?

Provided appropriate support is given to disabled people to vote then the level of security will remain the same.

Problems with security may occur when a large number of disabled people live in one place such as a residential home or in a supervised independent living environment. In these situations there is greater potential for people to appropriate e-voting pin codes. However, security concerns are no different to those that currently exist in relation to the postal voting system.

Telephone voting

In all the pilot schemes telephone voting was undertaken through a touch-tone system. The voter dials a number and then uses the keypad to verify that they are a voter before making their voting selection.

As a concept telephone voting will be inaccessible to many people with hearing impairments and may prove difficult for people with co-ordination or communication impairments.

Minimising the number and length of the PIN and password access codes may increase accessibility for some people. However, the simplicity of telephone voting makes it particularly accessible to some disabled people.

The confidentiality of the ballot would prove difficult for some hearing impaired people who use type talk services. No “textphone” equivalent systems were created or therefore assessed.

Does telephone voting make voting more straightforward for disabled people?

Some disabled people may find telephone voting more straightforward than traditional methods of voting. However, other voting methods would need to be provided for people who cannot access the telephone.
Does telephone voting make elections more accessible, either by making it more convenient to vote or by making voting more attractive to people currently less likely to vote?

Telephone voting may make voting more accessible and convenient for some disabled people but is not suitable to be used on its own.

“If I could have my polling card in Braille I could vote (by telephone) independently. This would be great, I feel very strongly that at present many disabled people are literally disenfranchised.”
Survey respondent, Swindon

Does telephone voting make the administration of elections more efficient and cost-effective?

Telephone voting could provide a cost-effective alternative to other voting methods which may be inaccessible to certain groups of disabled people.

Does telephone voting maintain or increase the level of security at elections?

Provided appropriate support is given to disabled people to vote then the level of security will remain the same.

Problems with security may occur when a large number of disabled people live in one place such as a residential home or in a supervised independent living environment. In these situations there is greater potential for people to appropriate e-voting PIN codes. However, security concerns are no different to those that currently exist in relation to the postal voting system.

SMS voting (Text messaging)

SMS was in many ways the most simple of the e-voting pilots. All the user had to do was send a string of numbers to an election phone number using their mobile phone. They would then receive a reply if their vote had been verified.

Does SMS voting make voting more straightforward for disabled people?

Disabled people who already use SMS communication will find this method of voting very straightforward.

Naturally within this process extreme care has to be taken to ensure that the voter is aware of the way they are voting. This is especially true for people with communication or learning impairments.
Does SMS voting make elections more accessible, either by making it more convenient to vote or by making voting more attractive to people currently less likely to vote?

Some disabled people, especially those with hearing impairments, use text messaging to communicate and may have found this system especially useful.

Does SMS make the administration of elections more efficient and cost-effective?

SMS voting may provide a cost-effective method of building flexibility into the election process which is needed to ensure accessibility.

Does SMS maintain or increase the level of security at elections

Provided appropriate support is given to disabled people to vote then the level of security will remain the same.

Problems with security may occur when a large number of disabled people live in one place such as a residential home or in a supervised independent living environment. In these situations there is greater potential for people to appropriate e-voting pin codes. However, security concerns are no different to those that currently exist in relation to the postal voting system.
Local Authority evaluation

To assess the accessibility of any of the pilots it is also necessary to examine how Local Authorities planned and implemented systems to ensure the election process was accessible to disabled voters.

Awareness of disability issues

Overall there was a good knowledge about access issues amongst the Electoral Administrators.

We were aware of detailed access planning by many of the Local Authorities and this should be commended.

Several authorities had been very creative with the way they managed voting by disabled people.

Siting of e-voting kiosks or public Internet access

Although there were still some access problems, where pilots used e-voting kiosks considerable effort had been made to ensure that they were placed in accessible environments.

Chester City Council conducted an access audit on all the polling stations that would be used. The Borough of Crewe and Nantwich opened an accessible public Internet voting office in a main shopping area.

Newham Borough Council has bought mobile polling stations that are accessible. They also took the voting kiosks to residential homes where there was a concentration of people with mobility impairments.

Information

All the Local Authorities recognised that they had to provide material to disabled voters. This was done in various ways. All produced polling cards with relevant information on the mechanisms that would be used. Some held training days or had public road shows. Others had telephone helplines.
Assessment of postal voting
Disabled people and postal voting

Background

The long-term goal of Scope’s Polls Apart campaign is to make all polling stations accessible to disabled voters. When the campaign began in 1992 we knew that it would take time to achieve this goal. So, as an interim measure to ensure disabled people weren’t disenfranchised we recommended that disabled people should be able to use a postal vote at any election.

The Representation of the People Act 2000 now allows every voter the choice to vote by post or in person – the same choice should be open, both in theory and in practice, to disabled people too.

“I prefer to vote on the day rather than by post. It’s always possible that there will be some development after the date one has to submit a postal vote.”
Polls Apart 3 volunteer, Batsley and Spen

Polls Apart 3

Scope’s 2002 Polls Apart research looked at the way disabled people would like to vote given an option between postal and traditional polling station.

Polls Apart 3 found that 53% of the disabled campaign volunteers who completed the survey preferred to vote in person.

Polls Apart 3 noted that:

“Disabled people, like other voters, prefer to have a choice in the way they vote. Some wish to use a postal ballot: others want to vote on the day.”

It concluded that the poor access to polling stations may have been the reason why many disabled people preferred voting by post. Although this is still an issue, it is clear that all-postal pilot schemes in 2002 were popular with voters generally.

“I had the usual problems of getting into the building. I will vote by post in future because of the difficulty of accessing the building.”
Survey respondent, Stratford-upon-Avon

Barriers inherent in postal voting

Postal voting isn’t a completely accessible method of voting. It has several inherent barriers that could prevent a disabled person using a postal vote. Visually impaired people are one such obvious group but it also includes many people with communication, learning and co-ordination impairments who may need assistance to vote.
Ballot secrecy

In all-postal ballots the number of people who will be able to vote in secret or with the assistance of a polling clerk will decline. This is because postal voting does not take place within the privacy of a polling booth.

For disabled people who live alone or who don’t need assistance in voting then this won’t be an issue. Not all disabled people however live independently and care must be taken to ensure that the secrecy of their vote is maintained.

This is even more of an issue for disabled people who can’t vote independently either because they do not receive information in alternative formats or because of the nature of their impairment.

Although assistance by Local Authorities may be provided to enable disabled people to vote in secret the take-up of such a service may be initially low. Structures will need to be put in place to encourage disabled people to take up such services.

Coercion

One area of identifiable concern with postal voting is the possibility of disabled people being inappropriately influenced to vote in a specific way. One advantage of voting at a polling station is that it is very difficult to force a person to vote for a particular party or identify who a person has voted for. The risk of this type of coercion is much higher under an all-postal system where people may be put under pressure to vote in a certain way or have their vote completed by someone else.

Coercion or inappropriate influence may occur when the views of disabled people are not as valued within a group as those of non-disabled people. Assumptions may be made that the disabled person is unable to challenge. For example it may be difficult for a disabled person who lives within a family unit to vote for another political party than the rest of the household. This can also be an issue for other groups within society, such as women.

There is also the potential for political activists or those campaigning on a single issue to target disabled people voting by post. This may happen when disabled people live alone or within a residential setting or if they are members of a cultural, religious or social group with a particular political bias.

Although coercion may have been an issue where postal votes have been one option of voting, where there are all-postal ballots it may become a significantly larger problem. This is because disabled people are more likely to require assistance using this method of voting and for that assistance to be provided “unofficially”.

Polls Apart: a future for accessible democracy  25
Evaluation of the postal voting pilots

Thirteen Local Authorities ran 100% postal voting pilot schemes in the May 2002 local and mayoral elections. Most authorities ran the pilot scheme throughout the entire Local Authority area but one ran the pilot in only a few selected wards.

Although the Representation of the People Act 2000 gave everyone the right to choose to vote by post, this was the first time for the majority of voters that postal voting was the only available voting method.

The type of postal ballot used in each Local Authority was largely the same. In general each voter received:

- Voting instructions
- Ballot paper
- Declaration of identity (some local authorities didn’t have this)
- Envelope to send ballot paper back to the council
- Many Local Authorities also had collection points at the council’s offices or polling stations, where voters could hand-deliver their postal ballot.

Methodology

To assess evidence for evaluating the postal votes we identified disabled campaigners within each pilot area and asked them to fill in a detailed survey. By doing this we were able to identify any possible access barriers. We also asked the researchers what they thought of postal voting in general. The evidence we gathered was both quantitative and qualitative.

The questions in the survey were selected to gather information on:

- How easy and convenient postal voting was to disabled people
- How easy it was to vote in secret
- Whether postal voting appealed to disabled people and whether they would choose to vote in this way again

We also encouraged survey participants to give us additional information about their voting experience. This would give us more detailed information from which to draw our conclusions.

In order to get surveys from each of the pilot areas we used the media to attract people who would fill in the survey. We also distributed the survey widely within Scope’s networks and gave the survey to other interested organisations.
The results of the postal vote survey

The survey participants

87 people returned surveys.

All the participants who filled in the survey were disabled people.

Pilots covered

We received surveys from 8 out of the 13 pilot areas.

Chorley, Hackney, Havering, Gateshead, Middlesbrough, Preston, NorthTyneside, South Tyneside.

Survey question - How regularly do you vote in local elections?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>57%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nearly always</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of our respondents the overwhelming majority “always” or “nearly always” voted in local elections. Considering the average turnout in local elections is quite low our respondents were unusual. This is not a great surprise as our sample was largely self-selected.

“Feel it’s my democratic right, and obligation to vote”
Survey respondent, Havering

Some disabled people found that postal voting had enabled them to vote for the first time in many years.

“Due to becoming immobile I have not voted for the past seven or eight years. Now I can easily cast my vote from my armchair.”
Survey respondent, Chorley

Survey question - Were you were aware that there was a postal voting pilot scheme in your area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>66%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the majority of people did know an all-postal scheme was being used there was a sizable minority which was unaware. This may have been because they did not receive any information in the correct format or that information was not passed on to them.

Survey question - If you did know, how did you find out?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority information</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local newspaper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polling card</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV advert/programme</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party political leaflet</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit from a political party worker</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit from a Local Authority worker</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio advert/announcement</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants could select more than one option.

Survey respondents heard about the all-postal ballot from a range of sources. Most people got their information from the Local Authority, through council literature, visits from council workers and their polling card. Local newspaper stories and television features were also effective at raising awareness of the pilot schemes amongst disabled voters.

How easy and convenient postal voting was to disabled people

Survey question  How easy did you find voting by postal vote?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not easy</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of respondents found it “very easy” or “easy” to vote by postal vote. Few people indicated that they encountered any access problems. People particularly liked the fact that they could vote quickly.

**Why did you find the postal vote easy or difficult?**

“I opened, I voted, I posted – what could be simpler?”
Survey respondent, Chorley

Some respondents said that postal voting improved access. Some respondents cited their impairment as a reason why this form of voting was particularly easy. This supports previous Polls Apart research that found that some disabled people prefer to vote by post.

“I have good days and bad days so not being tied to a specific day not having to make a journey makes postal voting wonderful for me.”
Survey respondent, Chorley

Others liked voting by post because of the access problems at their usual polling station.

“No access issues involved – when I voted last time I had to sit in the rain and wait for my husband to find a member of staff to unlock the back entrance.”
Survey respondent, Havering

Not everyone thought the process was easy or accessible. The complexity of the system was a barrier. Traditional voting at a polling station enables people to seek advice or help if they have any problems. Filling in forms can be very daunting especially for people who find it difficult to write or read official documents. Support could be provided to solve this access barrier.

“Couldn’t understand...very complicated”
Survey respondent, Middlesborough

Where a voter needed an alternative format to vote problems also arose. It is important that the systems in place to deal with such requests are efficient.

“I had great difficulty in requesting voting information from the council in Braille - it took five phone calls.”
Survey respondent, Havering
The practical use of the tactile template in the voting process was a concern raised in Polls Apart 3. Our survey respondents also reported problems:

“The tactile template was useless. The most crucial information, i.e. a tactile template with candidates’ names on it, was not available. Full information in Braille should be possible for postal voting as it would make it a much more independent method of voting for someone who is a Braille user.”
Survey respondent, Havering

For disabled people who live alone, the need to get someone to sign the declaration of identity caused problems.

“It was a lot of messing about, too many pieces of paper and I had to wait for someone to come round and witness it.”
Survey respondent, Preston

“The voting procedure was very good…the difficulty I had was getting someone to verify who I am.”
Survey respondent, Havering

Many disabled people, especially older disabled people, encounter a high degree of social isolation which can also make this aspect of the voting process inconvenient.

Survey question - How convenient was it to vote in this way?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very convenient</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not convenient</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very inconvenient</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, the overwhelming majority of respondents found it “very convenient” or “convenient” to vote in an all-postal ballot. This reflects the general perception that postal voting was a good idea.

“Everything was catered for…with plenty of time to return it. In case it did slip my mind the Council sent me a reminder.”
Survey respondent, Chorley

The flexibility of having a longer time to vote and the time you saved not having to go to the polling station clearly appealed.

“I didn’t have to worry whether I would be well enough to go to vote.”
Survey respondent, Gateshead
“Didn’t have to find time to hike to the polling station.”
Survey respondent, Chorley

Not having to rely on external factors such as the availability of transport or the accessibility of the polling station clearly made postal voting a lot more convenient for some disabled people.

“Voting by post was easier than going round the corner and struggling to get in a portacabin to do it.”
Survey respondent, Gateshead

“I did not have to drive a car to the polling station or check for access which is usually more difficult.”
Survey respondent, Chorley

Secrecy of the ballot

Survey question - Was it easy to vote in secret?

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<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not easy</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general people found it “very easy” or “easy” to vote in secret.

A large number of participants welcomed the fact that they were able to vote privately in their own homes.

“I marked the ballot paper put it in envelope and posted it without anyone knowing I’d even done it.”
Survey respondent, Chorley

A few participants highlighted issues around privacy for people living in residential homes. These included personal space, staff resources or attitudes towards disabled residents.

“If you are a disabled person living with a lot of people you cannot vote in secret.”
Survey respondent, North Tyneside
Some people with visual impairments were not able to access the ballot paper at all. In these people’s cases their vote was not secret. Some people may be happy to allow another person to vote for them however this is not always the case. Voting should, as a matter of principle, be in secret and methods of allowing visually impaired people to complete postal ballots in secret should be explored.

“I’ve never had the opportunity to vote without someone else knowing who I have voted for.”
Survey respondent, Havering

Producing all voting information including the ballot paper, declaration and instructions in plain English, large print and using symbols for extra clarification would not only help people with learning or communication impairments to vote secretly without assistance but would be of benefit to all voters.

“I could do the voting away from the residents where I live but found the forms confusing to read so needed help to vote.”
Survey respondent, Middlesborough

“Difficult to vote in secret . . . need help to read.”
Survey respondent, Middlesborough

Did postal voting appeal to disabled people and would they choose to vote in this way again?

Survey question - Overall, would you say that voting by postal ballot made the experience of voting better or worse or did it make no difference?

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vast majority of our participants felt that an all-postal ballot made voting better. This is not surprising. The Polls Apart 3 report found that 69% of polling stations had one or more access barriers. Disabled people may simply be saying that voting by post is easier than trying to vote in an inaccessible polling station.

Given a choice, would you prefer to vote in this way?

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When this question was asked in the Polls Apart 3 research only 47% of the participants said they would prefer to vote by post. Although the number of people completing the survey for this research was considerably lower, this statistic may indicate a change in disabled people’s preferred method of voting. However, this may just be a reflection of the general population’s movement towards postal voting.

**How all-postal voting ballots met the evaluation criteria**

**Does postal voting make voting more straightforward for disabled people?**

Our survey found that the majority of disabled people thought that postal voting was an easy and convenient way to vote.

There remained however a core of people for whom postal voting presents a serious access barrier. This is especially significant for visually impaired people. Some disabled people who live alone may also have problems getting someone to sign the declaration of identity.

**Does postal voting make elections more accessible, either by making it more convenient to vote or by making voting more attractive to people currently less likely to vote?**

Postal voting is in general more accessible than traditional methods because it does not rely on the accessibility of polling stations, the majority of which were inaccessible at the last General Election. Poor access in some polling stations is a problem for disabled people but it is not a reason in itself to introduce all-postal ballots.

Although disabled people have had the option of voting by post for a number of years, all-postal ballots place them on the same democratic footing as everybody else. The general publicity accompanying postal voting may encourage disabled people, who may have previously felt disenfranchised, to vote.

The nature of postal voting however causes problems for people who are visually impaired. Currently there is no requirement to provide large-print ballot papers. In addition, Local Authorities need to ensure that they adequately publicise the existence of voting information in alternative formats, the tactile template, and the availability of assistance if people want it.

**Does postal voting make the administration of elections more efficient and cost effective?**

If there were universal postal voting for all elections then it could be argued that the cost of ensuring all polling stations were accessible would be removed. This however would not constitute a satisfactory reason for the introduction of postal voting as community buildings should be accessible to disabled people all year round and not just on polling day.
Does postal voting maintain or increase the level of security at elections?

Serious questions remain about maintaining the security of postal voting for disabled people. Where a large number of disabled people live together there is the potential for voter fraud and some groups of disabled people are more likely to be coerced. In addition, the right to a secret ballot may not always be respected or possible due to lack of space/ staff resources.

If security is to be maintained, structures will need to be put in place to ensure those disabled people who require assistance can vote secretly and without coercion.
Analysis of voting information

A key part of looking at the accessibility of any voting system is to examine the information sent to voters.

Most people are aware of the physical barriers that disabled people face when accessing their vote. Equally significant are the barriers disabled people face in not being able to access polling information. This is usually because the information is not provided in an appropriate format.

Many of the paper documents produced for voters are not accessible to some disabled people. This can mean that a disabled voter has to rely on other people or does not get to access the information at all. This can compromise both people’s opportunity to vote independently and their ability to vote in secret.

Providing information in alternative formats will dramatically improve the accessibility of the election process.

To gain a picture of the accessibility of voting information during the pilots we looked at the voting literature sent out by several Electoral Services Departments. This enabled us to research:

- the availability of voting information in alternative formats such as Braille, tape, large print
- the availability of the Braille tactile template
- assistance provided for disabled people when voting

We were especially interested in looking at the:

- Promotional literature
- Polling card
- Instructions on how to cast your vote

Disability Discrimination Act

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires service providers to make reasonable adjustments to the way they provide services to make them accessible to disabled people. Local Authorities provide services that enable people to vote, therefore promotional literature, polling cards and voting instructions should all come under the DDA.

Evaluated Local Authorities

We looked at selected material from a diverse group of Local Authorities.
South Tyneside

This Local Authority ran an all-postal voting pilot.

Voters received:

- a promotional leaflet
- a letter explaining the all-postal ballot
- a Frequently Asked Questions sheet on the voting process
- voting instructions with the declaration of identity

The promotional leaflet and the letter contained a phone number to contact a named person in the election office “if you have any questions”.

The instructions included a free telephone helpline number and the number for ‘type talk’ so people with a hearing impairment could access the helpline.

Sheffield City Council

Sheffield City Council ran a mixed mechanism e-voting pilot.

Voters received:

- leaflet outlining the different ways to vote
- polling card

Both contained a freephone “Vote Support Centre” number “for assistance”

London Borough of Newham

London Borough of Newham ran a kiosk e-voting pilot.

Voters received:

- several leaflets
- polling card

The leaflet included details of how the e-voting screen could be moved to accommodate wheelchair users and equipment available to assist visually impaired voters. There was a telephone hotline number to contact “for more information”.
London Borough of Havering

London Borough of Havering ran an all-postal pilot

Voters received a

- leaflet
- Frequently Asked Questions booklet.

The back of the booklet contained details of "a specialist helpline to provide advice and further information", and highlighted that you could get the information in Braille, on audio tape or in large print.

Good practice

We found many examples of good practice where Local Authorities addressed the needs of disabled people.

‘type-talk’

Type-talk is a service that enables hearing or speech impaired people to communicate using the phone. Where this was used it allowed disabled people who can’t usually access the phone to communicate with the Electoral Services Department. It means that more people can access the service independently, without having to rely on friends and family or carers.

Freephone helplines

Disabled people may require further information on how and where they can vote. Ensuring that disabled people are not put out of pocket for doing this may encourage disabled people to ask questions.

Information leaflets

Some of the pilots used relatively complicated voting systems that voters in general may have been unsure about. Information leaflets would help to reassure disabled people that they will be able to access the voting system.

Formats

Voting information was produced in different formats. Large Print (16 point or above), audiotape, and Braille are common formats. Others used include video with subtitles, disc, or email.
Access barriers

Assistance to vote and tactile templates

None of the polling information highlighted the availability of the tactile template or informed people that assistance was available to support disabled people to vote. These are both requirements under the Representation of the People Act.

Text size

The majority of text was in 12 point or less on all material. This would make it inaccessible to many people with visual impairments. Larger fonts may help with access.

Availability of different formats

The availability of different formats was not always publicised. Few disabled people are going to assume that this is the case so it is important to highlight the availability of different formats on all election material.

Providing material in alternative formats

Although Local Authorities can bulk-buy alternative formats and hope that disabled people request them it is not the most efficient way of distributing material.

One solution would be for Local Authorities to guarantee that all material they produce will be available in alternative formats so disabled people can be certain that they can order the information in the format they want.

In the short term however, it is important that all election material, especially the first leaflet to be delivered, has clear information on the availability of alternative formats.

Another solution that could be examined would be to ask all voters what format they prefer. This could happen during the voter registration process. Naturally this information would have to be kept confidential.
Recommendations

E-voting

Government

• Pilot bids to be approved as early as possible – ideally four to five months before Election Day. This is to allow Local Authorities to produce adequate publicity, provide voter training in the skills needed to use a new method of voting and to assess whether the voting systems are accessible. This length of time will give Local Authorities an opportunity to make any access modifications needed before Election Day.

• Realistic funding to be provided by central Government to ensure local authorities can buy the most accessible e-voting system.

• Prospective suppliers of e-voting technology should be asked to provide a disability access audit on any mechanism they propose to use.

• Include in pilot bid criteria that all websites, both information and e-voting portals, should be created to a minumum of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Conformance Level “A”. The most current WCAG should be used.

Electoral Commission

• Produce official guidance on the layout of all e-voting websites. Template style guides should be provided for the suppliers of e-voting mechanisms. These should be updated regularly to ensure best practice is maintained.

• Guidance to be created for how all e-voting websites should broadly function. The aim of which is to reduce complexity and increase uniformity.

• A set of agreed vocabulary to be created for use within e-voting mechanisms. This should also standardise expressions, graphics and images that are to be used.

• National guidelines on creating understandable candidate selection pages to be developed. This does not need to replicate the format of the existing paper ballot which can be confusing when on screen.

• Guidance to be distributed to local authorities on how to support disabled people’s access needs within e-voting environments.

• Production of e-voting information material to train people who may be unfamiliar with using IT. This should be relevant to disabled people.

Local Authorities

• Websites that relate to, or carry information on, e-voting systems to be accessible to a minumum of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Conformance Level “A”.

• Where telephone voting is used there should be a ‘help’ or ‘support’ as one of the options. This should connect to a person rather than a voice recording or further menu options.
Political parties

- Political party websites to conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Conformance Level “A”.
- Where political parties are “linking” to Internet voting websites they should ensure that they also provide links to the information or support areas of the website.

Suppliers of technology

General

- Access audits to be conducted on all aspects of the technology used.
- User interaction to be kept to a minimum to enable a secure and secret ballot.
- The number and length of PIN codes and passwords should be kept to a minimum and where possible replaced without jeopardising the secrecy and security of the ballot.

Internet voting

- Websites to conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Conformance Level “A”.
- A demonstration version of the ballot process to be included close to the e-voting environment.
- A constant and functional navigation system to be used throughout all the websites.
- A glossary of terms to be included explaining basic expressions such as “submit” or “proceed”.

Kiosks

- Where touch screen technology is being used within a kiosk voting environment, care should be taken in identifying the settings that are used to switch on/off any screen button.
- Where aids and adaptations are used to support voters these should be integrated with the page structure of the voting mechanism to ensure maximum independence. For example if a Braille template is being used the system should be able to be set up by a polling clerk so that a visually impaired person can vote without further assistance.
- Polling clerks to be able to confirm that a voter has completed their vote successfully. This will ensure disabled people who may encounter difficulties with the voting process can be confident that their vote has been recorded.

Postal Voting

Government

- Remove the requirement for Declaration of Identity for postal votes.

Electoral Commission

- Produce official guidance on the content of voting publicity. This should highlight
the need for all election material to include:

• information on alternative formats and how a voter can access them
• how a disabled person can request assistance with voting
• the availability of the Braille tactile template
• Support the creation of tactile templates with candidates’ names rather than the current A B C system.
• Draw up minimum standards for voting information provided in Braille, tape, plain English and large print formats by Local Authorities.

General recommendations to improve the participation of disabled people in elections

Government

Voter registration procedures to be altered to include a question on their preferred format e.g. Braille, tape, large print. This would have to be kept confidential but could be used to ensure information is supplied to voters in the format of their choice.

Local authorities

• All polling environments to be accessible. Access audits should be undertaken on all venues. In the short term, where access barriers continue to exist, voters should be informed of alternative places where they can vote.
• In consultation with local disability organisations run a voting registration awareness campaign aimed at disabled people.
• Send information out to voters living in residential centres about the voting process and their right to vote in secret.
• Produce a guide for staff in residential/day centres about the voting process that outlines good practice in supporting clients who wish to vote and organising secret ballots within these environments.
• Offer a ‘mobile polling booth’ service to encourage people who need support to vote.
• Introduce a separate, free phone number for access enquiries. This will mean that disabled people will not have to incur an extra cost for making access enquiries.
• All new voting mechanisms to be accompanied by a locally based information campaign, available on the internet and other formats. These should include:
  • an explanation of the systems that are being used and the accessibility of each
  • a guide to voting by each individual method

Political parties

• All election material to be made available in accessible formats. These should include Braille, large print and audio tape. Plain English summaries that are accessible to learning disabled people should also be provided.
## Appendix 1 - accessibility audits

### Kiosk E-voting Systems used in the pilots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Kiosk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Authority | Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Stratford-upon-Avon District Council |
| Supplier  | Powervote |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation method</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Mechanism viewed in use on 2 May 2002 at the Surestart Centre, Oxford Grove, Bolton  
• Feedback from Scope Campaigners |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluators</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Gwilym Morris  
The Pollen Shop | Giles Roddy  
Scope |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief description</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Touch screen is an angled panel with paper ballot on top. Voter receives ticket, and gives it to another member of staff who activates machine. The voter then votes by touching the screen next to the candidate of their choice. When the vote has been placed the system registers a &quot;real vote&quot;, this is confirmed to the staff member who activates the machine.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive access considerations</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Mechanism on stand that is at an appropriate height for manual wheelchair-users (approx 110cms).  
• Can be placed on other surface it there is a problem with somebody reaching the ballot area. However, this would be difficult as the kiosk is large and cumbersome  
• Panel and paper combination may be more suitable to some people with visual impairments than a simple paper and pen mechanism  
• Keeps recognisable paper format  
• Very simple "one-touch" user mechanism  
• System registered vote so poll clerks can be sure a person has voted  
• Tactile templates easily added to the system  
• Could integrate large print ballot |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible barriers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Initially looks intimidating  
• Angle of voting surface cannot be altered so there is no mechanism for the voter to bring the ballot paper closer  
• It may be impractical for some people to move their head towards the paper as the screen is rigid |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Touch screen kiosk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>St Albans City and District Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>BT/ Oracle /Touch screen provided by DVE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation method</td>
<td>Visit to BT, Bletchley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluators</td>
<td>Gwilym Morris The Pollen shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>The kiosk was a touch screen on an adjustable stand. The voter accessed their vote by placing a card with a barcode on a ledge. This was read by the system and then the voter was asked to enter a nine-digit pin number. They did this by typing on numbers displayed on the screen. Once they had been authenticated the voter moved through various pages until they had completed their ballot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positive access considerations | - A lipped ledge was provided for holding the card with the barcode  
- The screen was clear with large print text in an accessible font  
- The buttons were large and easily distinguishable  
- Moving through the screens was simple  
- Final confirmation page |
| Possible barriers | - The voter had to undertake a relatively complex set of actions to vote - these could be simplified  
- Didn’t have a unified static navigation system  
- Party images on ballot screen unfocused and slightly blurred – this was due to the quality of the images supplied by the Electoral Commission |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Kiosk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Chester City Council and London Borough of Newham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>Strand/Sequoia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Evaluation method | Visited Chester for Chester Council’s public demonstration at the Town Hall, 24 April  
- Visited Newham mobile voting station, Stratford station, 26 April  
- Visited Newham mobile voting station in BUPA nursing home Manor Park, 26 April |
| Evaluators     | Gwilym Morris The Pollen Shop | Andy Davies CF2 ltd |
| Brief description | The kiosk is a hinged touch-screen on a solid base. The voter receives a card which they place in a slot on the front of the base of the machine. This activates the kiosk enabling the voter to cast their vote. The text on the screen is variable in size. |
An A4 magnifying sheet is provided. The kiosk is dismountable and can be placed on any level surface.

| Positive access considerations | • Kiosk is dismountable  
• A4 magnifying sheet is provided  
• Braille template can be stuck on screen  
• Possible barriers Inserting the card in to the slot might be difficult for people with mobility impairments |

| Mechanism | Kiosk |
| Authority | Sheffield City Council |
| Supplier | Sheffield Public Data Web/BT/elections.com |
| Evaluation method | • Site visit to lobby Sheffield Town Hall, Pinstone Street  
• Site visit to Sainsbury’s Supermarket, Archer Road Sheffield |
| Evaluators | Gwilym Morris  
The Pollen shop  
Giles Roddy  
Scope |
| Brief description | Sheffield City Council has several information kiosks placed throughout the city. These provide local information and were linked up to the online voting system. The format of the voting system was similar to www.votesheffield.com, the Sheffield e-voting portal. The kiosks were at a height that wheelchair-users could access and were touch-screen navigated. |
| Positive access considerations | • The kiosks could be accessed by wheelchair-users  
• They were located in places that could be accessed by the general public.  
• A demonstration option was included on the navigation explaining how to cast a vote. This was detailed and informative. |
| Possible barriers | • The kiosks were not clearly identified as places people could vote. Staff in both the council building and Sainsbury’s were unaware that the information kiosk was a voting terminal.  
• The kiosk themselves were inaccessible to a range of disabled people. Visually impaired people may have found it difficult to read the site or move through the navigation. The kiosks could not be moved and the touch buttons may have caused problems to people with mobility or hand-eye co-ordination impairments.  
• Scrolling down through and across pages was very difficult. Scrolling occurred on the “ballot paper” screen.  
• A radio button was used to indicate that a vote had been cast and although there was a confirmation screen users may have found it difficult to recognise that they had voted. |
### E-voting websites used in the pilots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th><strong>BT / Oracle designed site</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authority</strong></td>
<td>Borough of Crewe and Nantwich and St Albans City and District Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplier</strong></td>
<td>Supplier BT oracle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation method</strong></td>
<td>Visit to BT, Bletchley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Evaluators** | Gwilym Morris  
The Pollen Shop  
Giles Roddy  
Scope |
| **Brief description** | Voters entered a PIN and password and then moved through static screens to vote |
| **Positive access considerations** | • Both websites designed to high level of accessibility as defined by W3C 1.0 / 2.0  
• Graphics used to accentuate accessibility for people with non-visual communication impairments  
• Text alternatives to graphics  
• Developers and managers have clear understanding of access issues and how they can be developed within the spirit as well as letter of guidelines.  
• Documentation provided showing how access was defined within planning stage  
• Simple Text and graphical composition to aid navigation through site  
• Possible to tab through site to vote, enabling people who don’t use a mouse |
| **Possible barriers** | • One occurrence of text within graphics that was not replicated in the alt text attribute on introductory page. This was not however in a crucial area.  
• Further information on accessible voting could have been provided.  
• Simplified and consistent navigation layout might have helped some people with communication impairments to vote. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>BT elections.com sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>City of Liverpool and Sheffield City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>BT elections.com</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Evaluation method | Appraisal of www.votesheffield.com  
                    Appraisal of www.voteliverpool.com |
| Evaluators      | Gwilym Morris  
                    The Pollen Shop |
| Brief description | Simple website. User navigates through website using simple navigation buttons. Access through PIN code and password. |
| Positive access considerations | • In part the site conformed to a high level of accessibility as defined by W3C 1.0 / 2.0 accessibility Techniques (see www.w3.org).  
                              • Demo and FAQs sections which explain how to vote.  
                              • Information on other voting mechanisms on offer  
                              • Simple step navigation |
| Possible barriers | • Gateway inaccessible and did not conform to W3C 1.0 / 2.0. For example, lack of alt text alternatives for graphics, no table/form labels etc. This would prevent a person with a visual impairment using a screen reader to vote.  
                              • Other pages within the site did not conform to W3C 1.0 / 2.0 though the e-voting area was fully accessible.  
                              • It was stated within the media room that site conforms to W3C guidelines which it only did in part.  
                              • Navigation simple though of a variable format throughout the site. On FAQ pages returning to index was only through scrolling.  
                              • Demo page used graphics without alt text descriptors to explain how to vote. This would have been inaccessible to people who use screen-readers or need text enlarging. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th><strong>Electoral Reform Society Website</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Swindon Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>Electoral Reform Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Evaluation method  | Documentation provided by Swindon Borough Council  
|                    | Documentation provided by the Electoral Reform Society |
| Evaluators         | Gwilym Morris  
|                    | The Pollen Shop                      |
| Brief description  | Simple website. User navigates through the website using simple navigation buttons. User asked to input two Ballot Codes and their date of birth |
| Positive access considerations | • Both websites designed to high level of accessibility as defined by W3C 1.0 / 2.0  
|                    | • Access of site assessed by the RNIB. Web Accessibility Summary Assessment Report produced.  
|                    | • Graphics used to accentuate accessibility for people with non-visual communication impairments  
|                    | • Textual alternatives to most graphics  
|                    | • Documentation provided showing how access was defined within planning stage  
|                    | • Simple Text and graphical composition to aid navigation through site  |
| Possible barriers  | • The site did not comply completely with W3C accessibility. This may have caused problems for some people with visual impairments. The use of JavaScript may have caused specific problems for people using screen readers.  
|                    | • Absolute text sizing may have caused problems for people who enlarge text on websites. |
| Further comments   | • Although the site was not completely compliant with the W3C guidelines it could be developed so it is completely accessible given more time. |
## Telephone voting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Evaluation method</th>
<th>Evaluators</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
<th>Possible barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| BT touch-tone voting  | Sheffield City Council        | BT/elections.com            | Material from the Vote Liverpool website  
Correspondence with BT | Gwilym Morris                  | The voter dials a number and navigates using a touch-tone phone through to the voting options. They have to input an 8-digit PIN code and a 10 digit Password. | Number of digits which need to be inputted for verification before voting can begin |
| BT / Oracle touch tone voting | St Albans City and District Council | BT/elections.com | Visit to Bletchley  
Correspondence with BT/oracle | Gwilym Morris                  | The voter dials a number and navigates using a touch-tone phone through to the voting options. | Number of digits which need to be inputted for verification before voting can begin |
| ERS touch-tone voting | Swindon Borough Council       | BT/elections.com            | Material from the Electoral Reform Society  
Trying system on a demo line | Gwilym Morris                  | The voter dials a number and navigates using a touch-tone phone through to the voting options. They have to input a string of 6 and 4 numbers to vote | Number of digits which need to be inputted for verification before voting can begin |
### SMS (Text messaging) voting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>SMS voting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Sheffield City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>BT/Elections.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation method</td>
<td>Material from the vote Liverpool website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence with BT/elections.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluators</td>
<td>Gwilym Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>The voter sends an exact string of numbers with correct spacing to a telephone number. This is then accepted and confirmation is returned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive access considerations</td>
<td>Very simple voting technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible barriers</td>
<td>Message gateways, websites that can send SMS messages, cannot be used. Some disabled people might have found it easier to use than texting on a phone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Local authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>Powervote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation method</td>
<td>Visit 2, Surestart Centre, Oxford Grove, Bolton May 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visit to Town Hall, Bolton May 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Material from Bolton Metropolitan Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone conversations with John Addison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluators</td>
<td>Gwilym Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Pollen Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giles Roddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>E-voting by kiosk touch screen in all 20 wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assisted voting available at the polling station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive access considerations</td>
<td>· Mechanism was situated in a very accessible building with parking close by.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Polling staff knew and understood basic disability awareness issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Single user-friendly system used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· 20 new polling stations opened to improve access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Each elector received an individual poll card with printed instructions on the voting process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Roadshows were held in major public buildings/thoroughfares where the public could get hands-on experience of the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Borough of Crewe and Nantwich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>BT/Oracle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation method</td>
<td>We received detailed information on the access procedures put in place by the Borough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluators</td>
<td>Gwilym Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Pollen Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>Phone and internet voting was provided in two wards as an alternative to voting at a polling station. Importantly polling station paper voting was also retained.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positive access considerations | • Council had taken physical access for disabled people seriously and planned how disabled people could get to e-voting facilities.  
                          • e-voting facilities were made available to people without access to the internet  
                          • Access audits were undertaken on e-voting sites  
                          • A ground floor converted shop next to the main Council Offices in Crewe was used as a town centre e-voting site. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Chester City Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>Strand/Sequouia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation method</td>
<td>Visited Chester City Council voter demonstration Wednesday 24 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluators</td>
<td>Gwilym Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Pollen shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>Touch screen kiosks used in 3 wards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positive access considerations | • Clear access plans had been put in place  
                          • Demonstration session open to disabled people. The press were also invited so they could explain the systems.  
                          • Material explaining how to vote provided in a paper format  
                          • Large A4 magnifying glass to enlarge text on screen  
                          • Tactile template available which can be attached to the screen  
                          • Local disability organisations consulted about the pilot  
                          • Polling stations assessed by council’s disability access officer |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>London Borough of Newham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>Strand/Sequouia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation method</td>
<td>• Visited Newham mobile voting station, Stratford 26 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Visited Newham mobile voting station in BUPA nursing home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manor Park 26 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluators</td>
<td>Gwilym Morris&lt;br&gt;The Pollen Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andy Davies&lt;br&gt;CF2 ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>Touch-screen voting across the borough. Early voting at specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>locations including railway stations and mobile polling stations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kiosks also taken to people in sheltered accommodation and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other residential accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive access</td>
<td>• Very detailed access planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considerations</td>
<td>• Kiosk with trained staff visited residential homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mobile polling stations accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Everyone in borough can vote at mobile polling stations rather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>than restricted to one ward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information available in large print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Polling staff have a good understanding of disability awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Sheffield City Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Contact <a href="mailto:e.eves@sheffield.gov.uk">e.eves@sheffield.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>BT/Elections.com /Sheffield Public Data Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation method</td>
<td>Visit to Sheffield 1 May 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Material gathered from town hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site visit to lobby Sheffield Town Hall, Pinstone Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site visit to Sainsbury’s Supermarket, Archer Road Sheffield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation by disabled voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluators</td>
<td>Gwilym Morris&lt;br&gt;The Pollen Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giles Roddy&lt;br&gt;Scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>E-voting in three wards using touch-screens in information kiosks, internet and SMS. Kiosks sited in supermarkets, churches, a corner shop, housing offices and on the street. Voters get password and PIN number with polling card. A limited number of smart cards were also used in kiosks. Traditional voting also available at all the usual polling stations. Electors can vote at any polling station in ward because of electronic register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive access</td>
<td>• Detailed consultation with disabled people in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considerations</td>
<td>• Worked with suppliers to provide accessible solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Placed kiosks in accessible buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Electronic register allowed voters to vote at any polling station which may have enabled disabled people to visit the most accessible polling station or the one that best met their needs i.e. close to work, bus route etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Swindon Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>Powervote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation method</td>
<td>Material provided by Swindon District Council Evaluation by Scope campaigners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluators</td>
<td>Gwilym Morris The Pollen Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>Early voting by Internet or phone Traditional voting also available on polling day (all polling stations open). Sent two postal ballots to every household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positive access considerations | • Supporting material about e-voting was provided to all electors. This literature was produced in large print for all electors to comply with RNIB guidelines.  
• A helpline was set up to assist voters and offered “home visits” if anyone needed assistance with voting.  
• Though the helpline was busy, no offers of ‘home visits’ were taken up. |
If you’re a disabled person living with a lot of people you cannot vote in secret.
Survey Respondent – North Tyneside

The voting procedure was very good . . . the difficulty was getting someone to verify who I am.
Survey Respondent – Havering

I voted at work. It was done quickly and easily, without queues and when I wanted to.
Survey Respondent – Swindon

I had great difficulty in requesting voting information from the council in Braille – it took five phonecalls.
Survey Respondent – Havering
Polls Apart - a future for accessible democracy, is an evaluation of the accessibility of the May 2002 electoral pilot voting schemes. Commissioned by the Electoral Commission, Scope’s report looks at the accessibility of a variety of forms of voting including postal, telephone, Internet, SMS and kiosk voting.

Each voting method piloted made voting easier for some disabled people but, as yet, no single system is fully accessible to all disabled voters. The results make it clear that access barriers still exist within all the systems used in the pilots, demonstrating that there is still significant room for improvement.

Through the Polls Apart campaign Scope aims to ensure that democracy is accessible to all disabled people whatever forms of voting are used.

Scope is a national disability organisation whose aim is that disabled people achieve equality.

Scope is a registered charity no. 208231.