

Disabled people's voting rights

Local authorities now have to take proactive steps to ensure that polling stations don't disadvantage disabled people¹.

All voters have a right to vote independently and in secret. A person who is registered to vote or who has been officially appointed as a proxy voter cannot be refused a ballot paper or the opportunity to vote on the grounds of mental or physical incapacity.

Polling station staff must ensure that disabled voters are not offered a lower standard of service than other voters and should be able to explain what assistance is available to disabled voters wishing to vote in person at a polling station.

Disabled voters are also entitled to:

The right to request assistance to mark the ballot paper

Disabled voters may request the assistance of the Presiding Officer to mark the ballot paper for them. Alternatively, they can bring someone with them to help them vote (this person must be an immediate family member over 18 years old or a qualified elector).

Tactile voting device

This is a plastic device that is fixed onto the ballot paper so visually impaired people or those with limited dexterity can mark their ballot paper in secret.

Large-print version of the ballot paper

A large-print version of the ballot paper should be clearly displayed inside the polling station and a copy can be given to voters to take with them into the polling booth. A voter can't vote on the large-print version, but it can be used for reference.

Assistance to electors unable to gain access to the polling station

It is the responsibility of the relevant council to designate polling places within their area and to keep these under review. In designating polling places, the council must have regard to accessibility for disabled voters. If an elector is unable to enter the polling station because of physical disability, the Presiding Officer may take the ballot paper to the elector.

If you have any problems on election day, you should call your local authority to try to resolve this.

You can also call the Electoral Commission on 0333 103 1928 or the Welsh language line on 0333 103 1929 for further guidance.

¹ Similar arrangements apply in Northern Ireland, but they are the responsibility of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland.