

Supporting a Referendum on the voting system for UK Parliamentary elections and the Assembly and local government elections in Northern Ireland



A quick guide for polling station staff

This guide should be used alongside the Commission's *Handbook for polling station staff*. Page references given in this guide show where more detailed information can be found in the handbook.



Who can vote at the polling station?

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Letters next to an elector's entry on the register determine whether or not they are entitled to vote at a particular election or at the referendum. The table below lists which ballot papers, if any, are to be issued in each case:

Letters/prefix	Referendum ballot paper	Assembly and local government ballot papers
No letters	Yes	Yes
Date on or before polling day	Yes (unless any additional letters show they are not eligible)	Yes (unless any additional letters show they are not eligible)
Date after polling day	No	No
A	No	No
E	Yes	No
F	Yes	No
G	No	Yes
K	No	Yes
L	Yes	Yes



Stage 1 – checking the voter

Greet the elector and ask them to state their name and address.

Check that the elector has one of the acceptable forms of photographic identification.

Confirm that they are eligible to vote at the referendum and the elections by checking their register entry.

Draw a line between the elector number and the surname of the elector in the register.

Read out clearly the voter's name, elector number and polling district reference from the register of electors.

Stage 2 – issuing the ballot papers

Write the elector number on the corresponding number lists alongside the relevant ballot paper numbers.

Ensure that the ballot papers to be issued bear the official mark.

Fold the ballot papers once, then hand them to the voter **unfolded**. Ask them to re-fold them once they've marked their ballot papers in the polling booth.

Stage 3 – voting

The voter marks the ballot papers in the privacy of the polling booth and then folds the ballot papers.

Ask the voter to show you the ballot paper numbers and unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot papers before they place them in the ballot boxes.



What if...

It is 7am and the key-holder has not arrived?

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Try to make contact with the key-holder. If necessary, make alternative arrangements, e.g. set up a temporary polling station in the back of a car. Inform the Area Electoral Office.

An elector spoils a ballot paper?

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Cancel the spoiled ballot paper. Place it in the appropriate envelope, write 'cancelled' on the corresponding number list and issue the elector with another ballot paper.

An elector refuses a particular ballot paper?

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The appropriate response will depend on whether the ballot paper is refused before or after it has been handed over to the elector. See handbook for further details.

An elector is not entitled to receive all of the ballot papers?

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Only issue the ballot paper(s) the elector is entitled to. Indicate on the register which ballot paper(s) has/have been issued ('A' for Assembly, 'L' for local government, 'R' for referendum).

An elector cannot gain access to the polling station?

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Take the ballot paper(s) outside to the elector after informing any agents present. Ensure ballot secrecy at all times.

A disabled elector needs assistance?

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Offer assistance. Explain what support is available.

The person asking for ballot papers appears on the register as having already voted?

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Check whether they had appointed a proxy. If not, follow the tendered ballot process. Ask the prescribed questions before issuing tendered ballot papers. Do not issue tendered ballot papers if the questions are not answered satisfactorily.

An elector with an 'A' marker on the register says they did not apply to vote by post?

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Do not issue ordinary ballot papers. **If they have received their postal vote:** encourage them to return it to the Area Electoral Office by 10pm. **If they have not received their postal vote:** follow the tendered ballot procedure. Ask the prescribed questions before issuing tendered ballot papers. Do not issue tendered ballot papers if the questions are not answered satisfactorily.

A person is not on the register or any of the notices?

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Do not issue ballot papers. Ask them if there is another address they may be registered at. Direct them to the Area Electoral Office.

An elector wants to return their postal vote to the polling station?

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Do not accept the postal vote. Explain that they will have to return it to the Area Electoral Office before 10pm.

There is a serious disturbance (e.g. fire, flood, etc.)

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Do not put the safety of anyone at risk. If safe to do so, set up a new polling station nearby. Inform the Area Electoral Office.

You, or someone else, suspects that the person applying for a ballot paper is not who they say they are?

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Before – and only before – issuing a ballot paper, the Presiding Officer may ask the prescribed questions. Agents have a right to require Presiding Officers to ask these questions. If they are answered satisfactorily, an ordinary ballot paper must be issued. No further enquiries may be made as to someone's right to a ballot paper.



Contact details

If you are unsure about any of the procedures described in the handbook, or need to contact the Area Electoral Office for any other reason, please contact:
