Thursday 5 May 2022
Local Elections Wales
Your pocket guide
This pocket guide covers what you can expect at the polling station to help you make an informed decision on the best way for you to vote.

RNIB also worked with the Electoral Commission to give guidance to polling station staff to improve their understanding of sight loss, to help them make voting as safe and accessible for blind and partially sighted voters as possible. This guide outlines that guidance and support.

Please feel free to take this guide with you on polling day.

This pocket guide is available in a range of alternative formats, including large print, digital, audio and braille. Please call our Helpline on 0303 123 9999 for a copy in your preferred format.
Which elections are taking place?

On Thursday 5 May 2022, there will be local council elections in Wales.

This is the first time that 16 and 17 year olds and qualifying foreign citizens in Wales can vote in a local council election.

You will be voting for local councillors to represent you on your local council. Your local council makes decisions on issues that directly impact your local area and is responsible for local services such as social care, education, housing, local transport and parks and outdoor spaces.

Voting in Local Government elections

The voting system used for local elections is first-past-the-post, so the candidate with the most votes is elected.

In some areas there may be up to four seats to fill on the council, in this instance the candidate with the most votes is elected first, then the candidate with the second highest number of votes is elected, then the third placed candidate, then the fourth.

You can vote for as many candidates as there are seats available. The instructions on the ballot paper will tell you how many candidates you can vote for, or you can ask polling station staff.

To vote, mark a cross in the box opposite the name of the candidate(s) of your choice.
Making sure everyone can vote

You can use your phone or other assistive technologies
Under the Equality Act, you are entitled to reasonable adjustments to help you to cast your vote independently.

This means you are allowed to take a phone or other form of assistive technology into the polling booth to help you to vote. For instance, to use magnifier or text-to-speech apps, or the phone torch to improve lighting.

You can use the tactile voting device
Your polling station will have a device that can be attached to the ballot paper. It has a window that can be lifted for each party or independent candidate. To use the device you should:

• lift the window for the party or independent candidate you want to vote for
• mark an X
• close the window
• separate the template from the ballot paper
• fold and place the ballot paper in the ballot box

The polling station staff can explain how to use the device and read out the party and candidate names in the order that they appear on the ballot paper.
**You can use the large print resources**

Your polling station will have a large-print version of the ballot paper on display. A handheld copy of the ballot paper will also be available in large print for you to take into the polling booth to help you to mark your ballot paper independently.

**You can ask the Presiding Officer for help**

The Presiding Officer is an independent person who is in charge of the polling station. You can ask them for help.

You can ask the Presiding Officer to read out the instructions on the ballot paper and the names of the parties and candidates in the order that they appear on the ballot paper.

In the polling booth you can tell the Presiding Officer how to mark the ballot paper on your behalf.
You can ask someone to come to the polling station with you

You can also bring someone with you who is over 16, and eligible to vote in that election, to help you cast your vote. You should notify the Presiding Officer that you will be assisted by your companion.

Your companion is required by law to complete a simple declaration. The Presiding Officer must record your name and elector number, as well as your companion's name and address. This is just a security measure and will not mean your vote can be identified in any way.

You can vote by post

If you are unable to visit your polling station on the day of the election, or would prefer not to, you can apply to vote by post. Download an application form via the Electoral Commission’s website or contact your local electoral registrations office. You can request your postal vote application in an accessible format such as braille or large print from your local electoral registration office.

Postal vote applications must usually include the elector’s signature. If you are unable to provide a signature, or a consistent signature, you can make a request to your local electoral registration office that the requirement for a signature is waived. Your application must include the reason for the waiver request and the name and address of any person who has assisted you with completing the application.

The deadline to apply to vote by post is 5pm on Tuesday 19 April 2022.
You will receive your ballot papers by post. Complete and return your ballot papers, ensuring you leave enough time for them to arrive by 10pm on Thursday 5 May 2022. Or if you need to, you can hand in your completed postal ballot pack to your local polling station on polling day.

**You can vote by proxy**

A proxy vote is where you appoint someone you trust to vote on your behalf.

To apply to vote by proxy, complete an application form and send it to your local electoral registration office to arrive by 5pm on Tuesday 26 April 2022. Download an application form via the Electoral Commission’s website or contact your local electoral registrations office. You can request your proxy vote application form in an accessible format such as braille or large print from your local electoral registration office.

In an emergency where you cannot go to the polling station in person, including self-isolating due to Covid-19, you can apply for an emergency proxy up to 5pm on Thursday 5 May 2022.
What can I expect at the polling station?

Local authorities will be following the latest public health guidance to make sure polling stations are safe places to vote. You might see some public health measures in place at the polling station, similar to those in place in other indoor venues.

RNIB has worked with the Electoral Commission to provide guidance to polling station staff to improve their understanding of sight loss and to help them make voting as safe and accessible for blind and partially sighted voters as possible. This includes:

- tips on how to provide sighted and verbal guiding,
- information on assistive technologies, apps, magnifiers, personal lighting and other reasonable adjustments people are entitled to use to help them vote independently,
- how to set up the polling station to make it easier to navigate,
- clear print and signage guidelines,
- awareness of face covering exemptions and social distancing wearables.

There are a number of wearable products available that you may wish to use to indicate to others that you want to maintain your distance but may find it difficult. These include lanyards, badges, masks and other resources.

Please Give Me Space: https://pleasegivemespace.uk/
Distance Aware:
https://www.bevancommission.org/distance-aware

Hidden disabilities sunflower:
https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/

Lighting, magnifiers, and other support
You are entitled to use assistive devices to help you to cast your vote. If you wish to make use of any of the tactile voting device, large print ballot paper or a magnifying glass, please ask a member of staff. They are there to help you.

If you have your own assistive device, like a phone, video magnifier or pocket light then please feel free to use this.

Alternatively, you can also have the support of a friend, family member or a member of staff.

Tell us about your experience
RNIB Cymru and Electoral Commission Wales are keen to improve blind and partially sighted people’s experiences at the polling booth. Tell us about your voting experience so that we can make sure blind and partially sighted people are able to vote independently and in secret in the future. You can give us feedback by contacting RNIB Cymru’s external affairs team by emailing cymru@rnib.org.uk or calling 0303 123 9999.

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