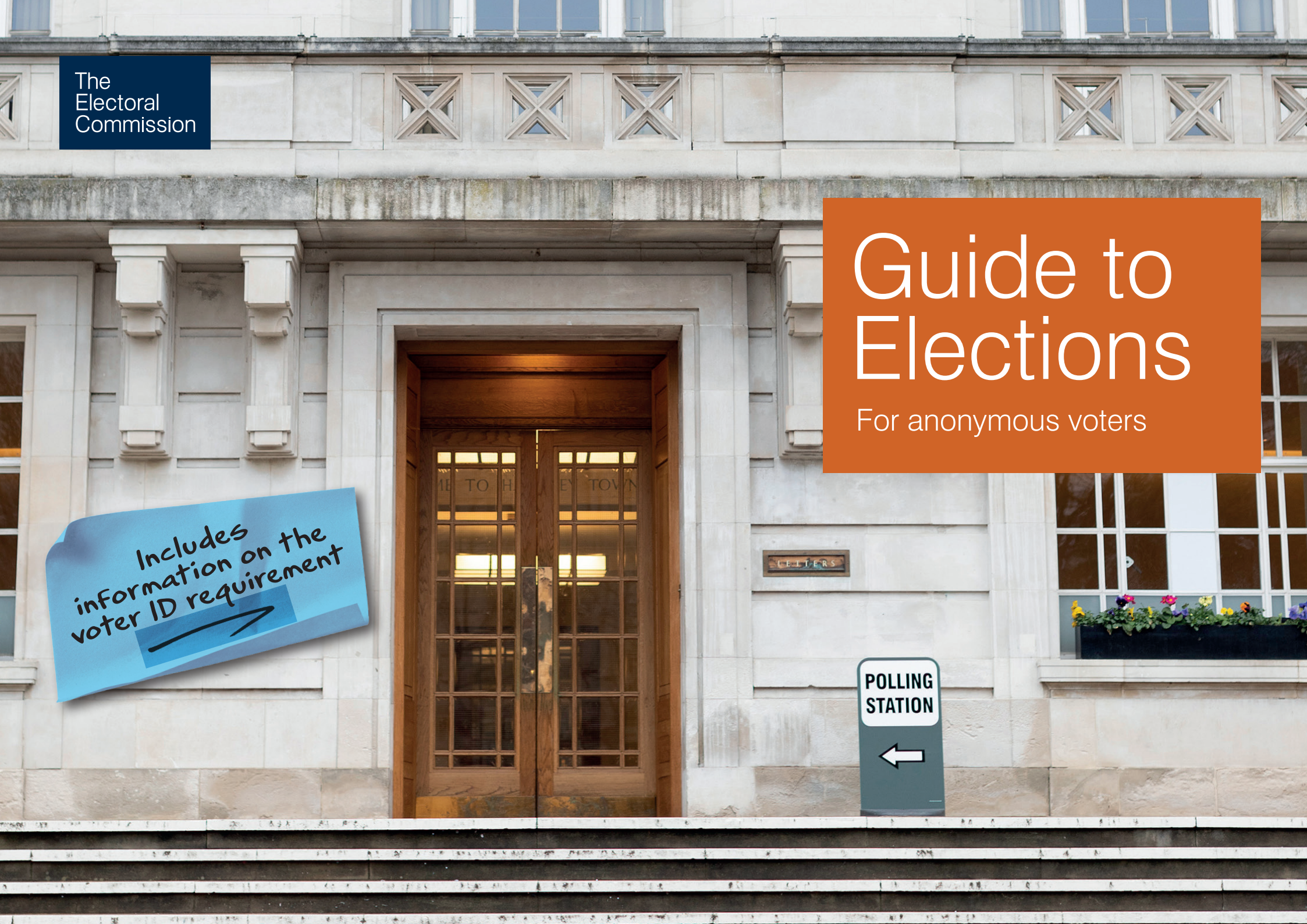
The Electoral Commission

Guide to Elections

For anonymous voters



The Electoral Commission

When you register to vote, your name and address will appear on the electoral register. If you feel that your name and address being on the electoral register could affect your safety, or the safety of someone in your household, you may be able to register to vote anonymously.

This will mean that you can still vote, but your name and address will not be on the electoral register. Only your elector number will appear.



Unlike other voters who can use a range of different forms of photo ID to vote in person at a polling station, voters who are registered to vote anonymously are required to apply for a free Anonymous Elector's Document instead.

This Guide to Elections includes information on:

- What is anonymous registration?
- How to register to vote anonymously
  - Applying for an Anonymous Elector's Document
  - Which elections require an Anonymous Elector's Document
  - Requesting a replacement Anonymous Elector's Document
- What to expect at a polling station
  - Support available at the polling station
- Other ways to vote: voting by post or proxy.



We also have resources available for people who don't need to register to vote anonymously. These resources explain registering to vote, the voter ID requirement, how to apply for free voter ID, what to expect at the polling station and other ways to vote. Find out more at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID**



If you want to vote, you must first be registered to vote. When you register to vote, your name and address will appear on the electoral register.

If you are worried that your name and address being on the electoral register could put your safety, or the safety of someone in your household, at risk, you may be able to apply to register as an anonymous voter.

This is how entries usually appear on the electoral register:

BC412	**Vella, John**	**59 Green Lane**
BC413	**Vella, Veronica**	**59 Green Lane**

This is how anonymous entries appear on the electoral register:

BC602	**N**

The '**N**' signifies that this entry relates to an anonymously registered voter.

This means if you are registered to vote anonymously, you will still be able to vote, but your name and address will not be on the electoral register.

The application process

If you want to register to vote anonymously you will need to:

- Complete an application form
- Explain why your safety, or the safety of someone in your household, would be at risk if your details were on the electoral register
- Submit evidence or an attestation to support your registration
- Return the application form, explanation and evidence or attestation to your local Electoral Registration Officer.

Find further information on the application process, as well as the application form, at **electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/register-vote/register-vote-anonymously**

If you need any help to vote anonymously, you can contact your local council. You can find their contact details at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**

How long does an anonymous registration remain valid?

Registration lasts for 12 months from the day the anonymous entry is first made on the electoral register. After the 12 month period is up, you will need to re-apply to register anonymously.

Your Electoral Registration Officer will contact you in good time to tell you what information you need to provide to enable the registration to continue for a further 12 months. Provided it remains valid, the same evidence or attestation can be used to renew your anonymous registration.



The deadline to register to vote anonymously in a particular election is **6 working days** before the date of that election.

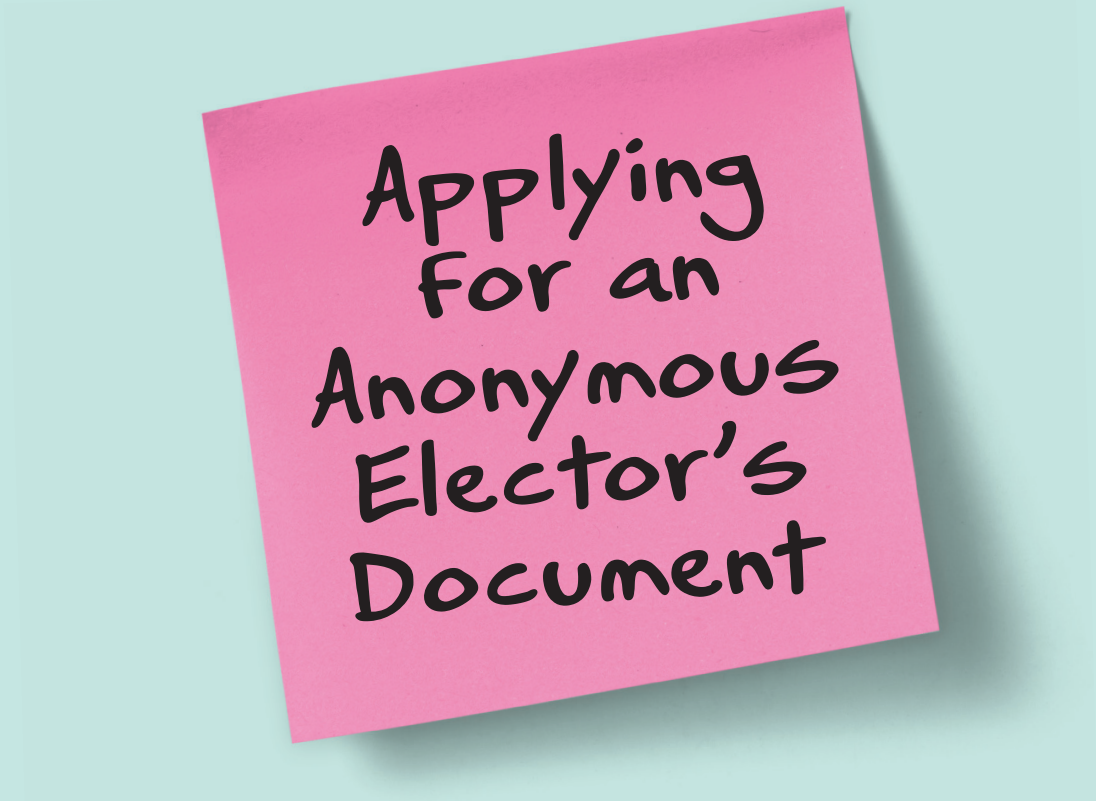
Once you have registered to vote anonymously and your application has been approved, you will be registered as an anonymous voter for 12 months. You will need to reapply each year.

This table shows who can register in England, Scotland and Wales:

I am a...	I live in England	I live in Scotland	I live in Wales
British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in the UK	**Yes** (from 16 years old)	**Yes** (from 14 years old)	**Yes** (from 14 years old)
EU citizen living in the UK	**Yes** (from 16 years old)	**Yes** (from 14 years old)	**Yes** (from 14 years old)
Qualifying foreign citizen (someone living in Scotland or Wales with permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission)	**No**	**Yes** (from 14 years old)	**Yes** (from 14 years old)

Even though you can register to vote from the age of 14 in Scotland and Wales, you can't vote in the following elections until you are 18 years old: UK Parliament general elections, UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions, and Police and Crime Commissioner elections (which only take place in England and Wales). You can register to vote from the age of 16 in England.

To find out more about registering to vote anonymously, or which elections you can vote in, contact your local council. To find their contact details, or get more information, visit **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**, or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**



If you are registered to vote anonymously and want to vote at a polling station in a particular election, you will need to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document by **5pm, 6 working days** before the date of that election. You cannot use any other types of voter ID to vote.

People who are registered to vote but not registered as anonymous voters can use a range of forms of photo ID to vote, in elections that require it. You can find a full list of accepted forms of ID at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID**, or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280** for more information.

If you are already registered to vote anonymously, or if you register to vote anonymously ahead of an election, you will be invited to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document by your local Electoral Registration Officer. You can also contact your Electoral Registration Officer to request one.

Getting help to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document

If you need support, or have questions about the application process, you can contact your local Electoral Registration Officer.

You can find contact details for your local Electoral Registration Officer by entering your postcode at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**

The application process

When applying for an Anonymous Elector's Document, you will need to provide your:

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

If you do not know your National Insurance number, you can look for it on your payslips or on official letters about tax, pensions or benefits.

If you are unable to find it, you can still complete your application, but you will need to provide alternative forms of proof of identity, which could include a passport, driving licence, birth certificate, bank statement or utility bill. Your local council will contact you to arrange this.

You can also ask someone who knows you to provide an attestation to your local Electoral Services team to verify your identity if you don't have any other accepted proof of identity.



Your local Electoral Registration Officer can provide more information on who can provide an attestation. You can find their contact details by entering your postcode at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**

Providing a photo

You will also need to submit a photo. Requirements for the photo are similar to those for passport photos and must show your head and shoulders with nothing covering your head – unless a head covering is worn for religious or medical reasons. Your face must not be covered for any reason.

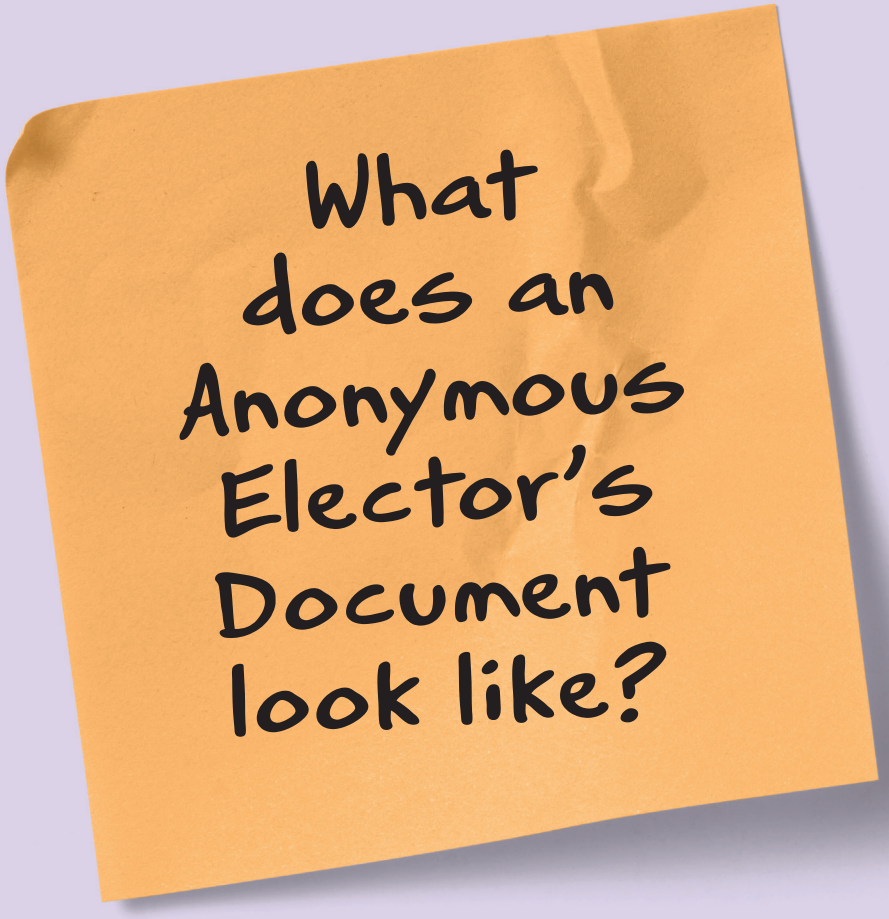
If you need help taking your photo, your local Electoral Registration Officer may be able to help.



For more information on the requirements for the photograph, see Appendix 1 or visit **electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID**

Your local council will process the application and send the Anonymous Elector's Document to you by post.

All data you provide when applying for an Anonymous Elector's Document will be stored securely by local councils in line with data protection regulations.



An Anonymous Elector's Document has the words 'Elector's Document' written on the top and does not refer to your status as being registered to vote anonymously.

An Anonymous Elector's Document includes:

- The date of issue
- Your photo
- Your electoral number (which is the number which will appear on the electoral register instead of your name and address)
- An appropriate identifier (which is a combination of 20 letters and numbers generated by the software used by Electoral Registration Officers).

If you are voting anonymously, you will need to bring your Anonymous Elector's Document and your poll card with you when you go to the polling station. You will not need to bring an additional form of photo ID.

Which elections require an Anonymous Elector's Document?

Voters in England, Scotland and Wales who are registered to vote anonymously now need to show an Anonymous Elector's Document when voting at a polling station at some elections.

An Anonymous Elector's Document is required for…



England

- UK Parliament general elections
- UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions
- Local council elections and by-elections
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections.



Scotland

- UK Parliament general elections
- UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions.



Wales

- UK Parliament general elections
- UK Parliament by-elections and recall petitions
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

An Anonymous Elector's Document is not required for...

Scottish Parliament and Senedd elections, or council elections and by-elections in Scotland and Wales.



Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on election day.

Around two weeks before polling day, information on the location of your polling station will be published on the Electoral Commission website. The address of your polling station will also be on your poll card, which you will receive in the post.

There will be signs outside and inside the polling station to show you where to go.

If you are voting anonymously you will need to bring both your poll card and your Anonymous Elector's Document when you go to vote.

When you arrive, you will be greeted by a member of staff, who will:

1. Ask to see your poll card. You will not need to provide your name and address
2. Find your elector number on the register
3. Check your Anonymous Elector's Document
4. Cross you off the list, and give you your ballot paper

Privacy

A private area will be available so that you can choose to have your Anonymous Elector's Document viewed in private. This may be a separate room, or an area separated by a privacy screen.

Requests can be made for a female member of staff to check your Anonymous Elector's document. This request will be granted if possible.

If you wear a face covering such as a veil, there should be a mirror available to allow it to be replaced immediately once the Anonymous Elector's Document has been checked.

If your face covering is worn for medical reasons and you would prefer it not to be removed indoors, polling station staff may be able to check your Anonymous Elector's Document outside. If you have any concerns, you can contact your local Electoral Services team.

Find out more about what to expect

If you would like further information about what to expect at the polling station, you should contact your local council.

You can find their contact details by entering your postcode at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**



Assistive equipment

All voters have the right to vote independently and in secret. Some assistive equipment will be available at the polling station to help you to do so.

Contact the local council responsible for your polling station to find out what assistive equipment will be available and request any additional equipment that may be needed. The council will decide whether the requested equipment can be provided.

Find the contact details for your local council by calling our helpline on **0800 328 0280** or by entering your postcode at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**

Other forms of support

The Presiding Officer can help you to cast your vote if you would find this helpful. Polling staff are there to help, and you should ask a member of staff if you have any questions or need assistance. If you are disabled or feel you cannot vote at a polling station without assistance, you can bring someone with you to help.

Anyone over the age of 18 can accompany a person voting in:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections or recall petitions
- Council elections in England
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales.

Anyone over the age of 16 can accompany a disabled person voting in:

- Scottish Parliament elections
- Senedd elections
- Council elections in Scotland and Wales.

Your companion will not need to show photo ID.

If a companion will be supporting you in the polling booth, you should inform the polling staff when you arrive. The companion will need to sign a declaration to be allowed to enter the polling booth to help you vote.

What should you do if you experience issues at the polling station?

If you experience any issues when you go to vote or want to give feedback about your experience, you should contact your local council.



If you have registered to vote but would prefer not to vote in person there are other options.

Voting by post

You do not need photo ID or an Anonymous Electors Document to vote by post

The deadline to apply to vote by post at a particular election is **5pm, 11 working days** before the date of that election.

If you would prefer to vote by post, or won't be able to make it to the polling station on polling day, you can apply to vote by post.

When you apply for a postal vote, you need to provide your date of birth, National Insurance number and signature. You will need to provide your date of birth, and signature again when you complete the postal ballot pack, so your identity can be verified.

You will receive your ballot paper by post. You will need to follow the instructions to complete and return your ballot paper, ensuring you leave enough time for it to arrive at your local council by 10pm on the day of the election. If you can't post your postal vote pack in time, you can take it to your polling station or your local council office on polling day. Anyone handing in a postal vote will be given a form to complete. If you are concerned about handing in your postal vote as an anonymous voter, please contact the Electoral Services team at your local council.

The voter's postal vote pack will contain information on who to contact to find out which council office they can hand in their postal vote to.

Voting by proxy

(allowing someone you trust to vote on your behalf)

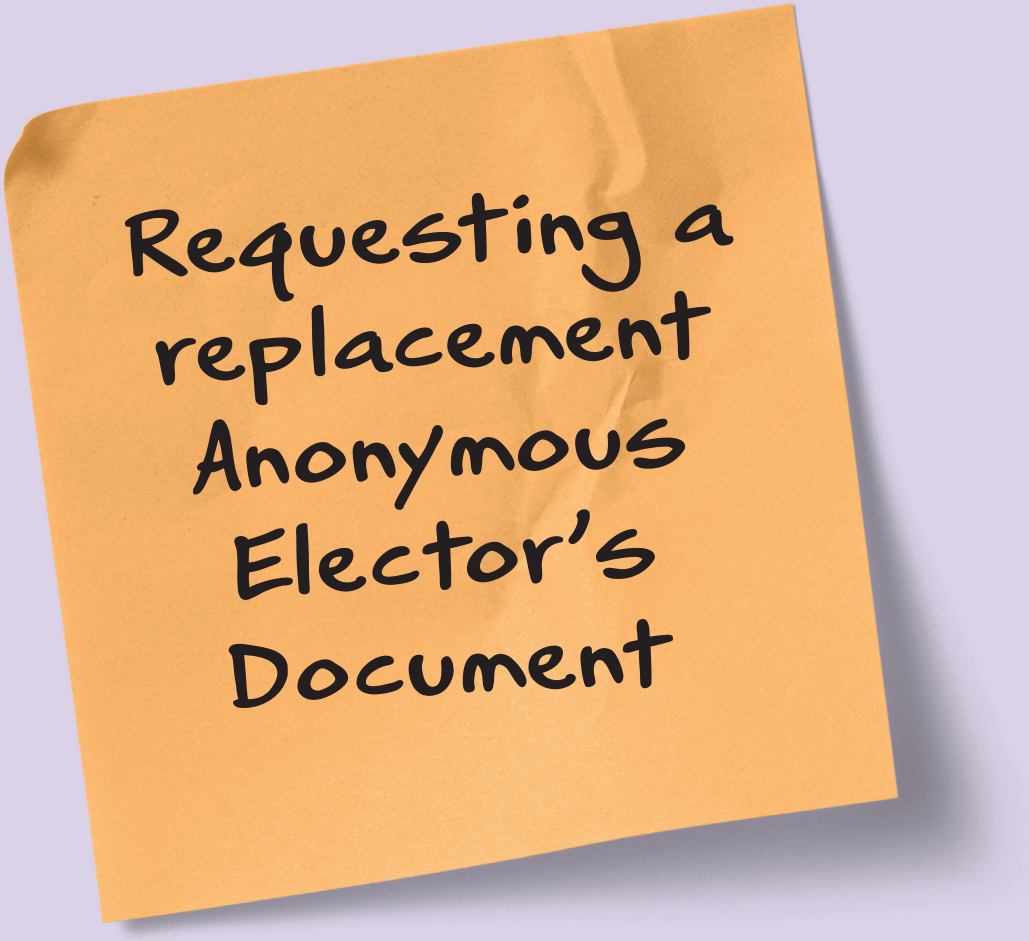
You can apply to vote by proxy, where you choose someone you trust to go to your polling station on your behalf.

The deadline to apply to vote by proxy at a particular election is **5pm, 6 working days** before the date of that election.

The person you choose to vote on your behalf will need to go to your polling station. They will need to show their own photo ID, not your photo ID.

If an emergency occurs after the deadline to apply for a proxy vote, meaning you cannot go to your polling station in person, you can apply for an emergency proxy up to 5pm on the day of the election.

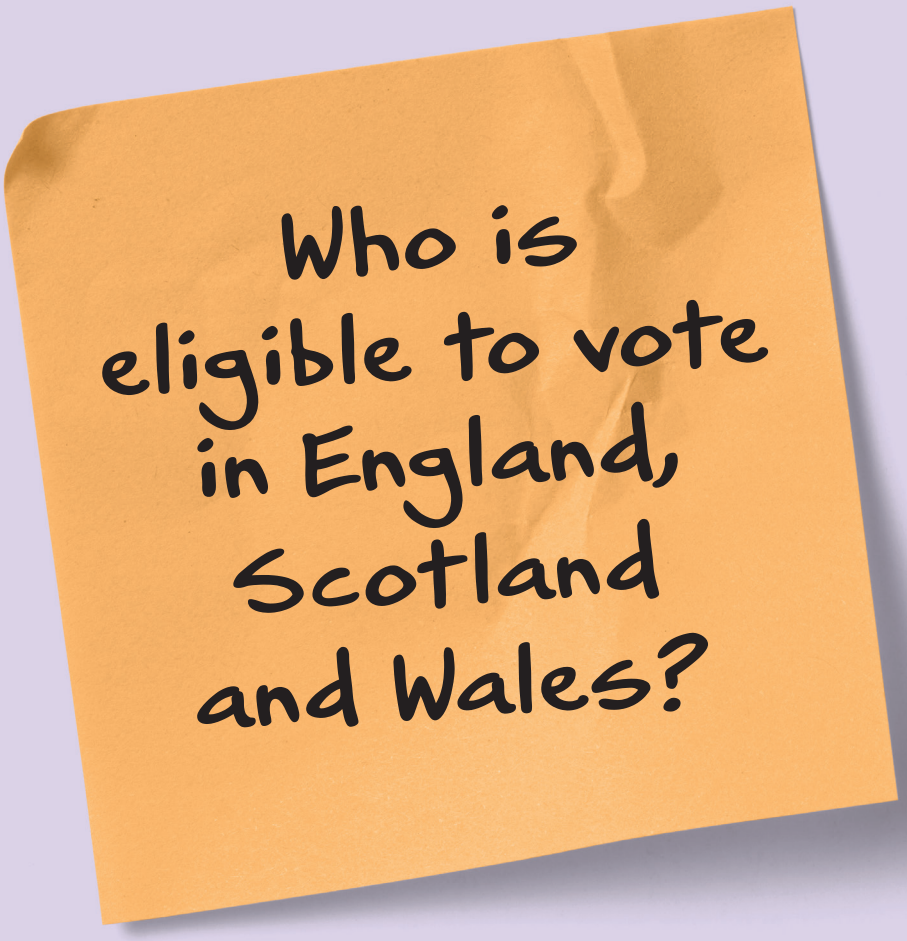
More information on voting by post and by proxy is available at **electoralcommission.org.uk/voter**, or call our helpline on **0800 328 0280**



If your Anonymous Elector's Document is lost, stolen, destroyed or damaged after **5pm, 6 working days** before the election but before **5pm on polling day,** you can request a replacement Anonymous Elector's Document.

You will need to request a replacement Anonymous Elector's Document by 5pm on polling day. You will need to collect it in person from the place specified by the local Electoral Registration Officer.

Appendix 1



Registering to vote in England

To be eligible to register to vote in England, you must be one of the following:

- A UK or Irish citizen
- A qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in England
- A qualifying EU citizen, or an EU citizen with retained rights, living in England.

To register to vote in England, you must also be aged 16 or over.

Once registered, you can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (unless you are an EU citizen)
- Local council elections and by-elections, from the age of 18
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections, from the age of 18.

If you are unsure if you are eligible to vote, visit: **electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/which-elections-can-i-vote**

Registering to vote in Scotland

To register to vote in Scotland, you must be aged 14 or over. You must also be one of the following:

- A UK or Irish citizen
- A qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in Scotland
- A 'qualifying foreign national' – a citizen of another country who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission, including EU citizens.

Once registered, you can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (unless you are a 'qualifying foreign national')
- Scottish Parliament elections and by-elections, from the age of 16
- Local council elections, from the age of 16.

Registering to vote in Wales

To register to vote in Wales, you must be aged 14 or over. You must also be one of the following:

- A UK or Irish citizen
- A qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in Wales
- A 'qualifying foreign citizen' – a citizen of another country who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission.

Once registered, you can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (unless you are a 'qualifying foreign citizen')
- Senedd elections and by-elections, from the age of 16
- Local council elections, from the age of 16
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections, from the age of 18 (unless you are a 'qualifying foreign citizen').

Appendix 2

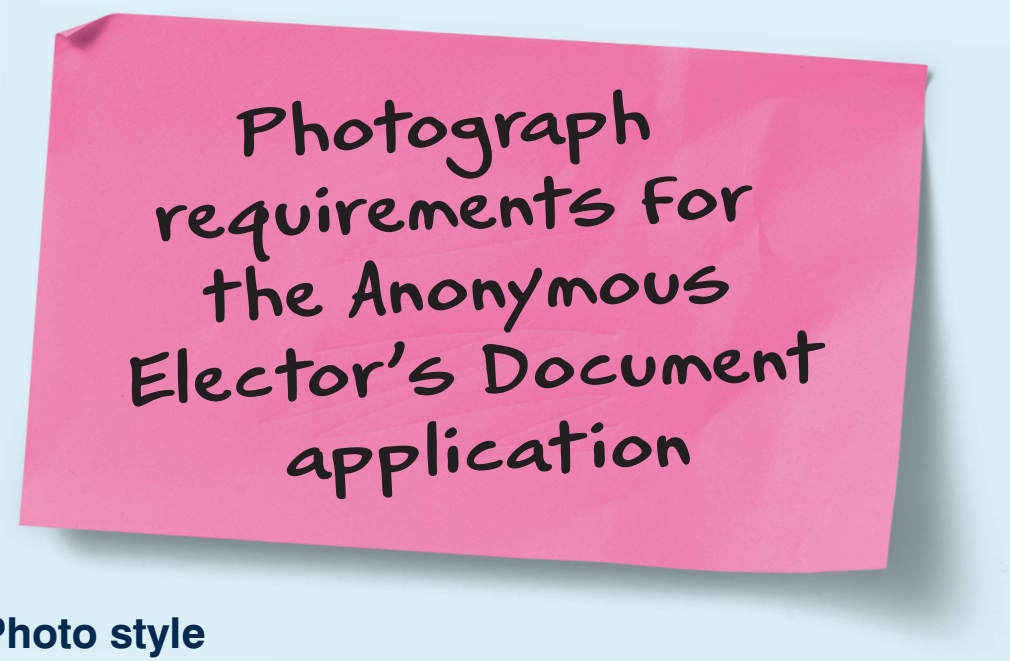


Photo style

The photo must be of you:

- Facing forward and looking straight at the camera
- A close up of your head and shoulders, without any head covering, unless you wear one for religious beliefs or medical reasons. Your face must not be covered for any reason
- Without any other person visible
- With a plain facial expression and with your eyes open and clearly visible (for example without sunglasses and not obscured with hair). Please note this does not apply if you are unable to provide a photograph which complies with either or both of those requirements due to any disability.

Photo quality

Your photo must:

- Be a true likeness, with no photoshop or filters applied
- Be in colour
- Be taken against a plain, light background
- Be in sharp focus and clear
- Be free from 'redeye', shadows which obscure the face, or reflection
- Not be damaged.

Photo size

When you apply online, the photograph you provide must be:

- At least 750 pixels in height and 600 pixels in width
- Contained in an electronic file which is no more than 20MB in size.

When you apply using a paper form the photograph must be:

- At least 45 millimetres in height and 35 millimetres in width
- No larger than 297 millimetres in height or 210 millimetres in width.

The Electoral Commission

For more information on:

- Registering to vote
- Which elections require photo ID
- What photo ID will be accepted when voting
- How to apply for free voter ID.

electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

0800 328 0280

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