

# Bromley May 2018 voter identification pilot evaluation

## Summary of key findings

In the Bromley voter identification pilot voters were required to show one form of photographic identification or two forms of non-photographic identification (one of which needed to include the full registered address of the elector) in order to be given a ballot paper. We found that:

- **The majority of voters were able to meet the identification requirements upon arriving at the polling station.** However, some electors did not have the required ID available when they came to vote on 3 May. The majority later returned and were able to cast a vote.
- **There is no evidence that the ID requirement significantly deterred electors from voting.** In our public opinion survey only one respondent told us that they had not voted as a result of the ID requirement. Also, turnout at the 2018 polls was similar to the comparable elections in 2014.
- **We cannot draw firm conclusions about whether the ID requirement had a disproportionate impact on particular groups of people, for example those with a learning or physical disability.** While we have seen no evidence that specific groups struggled with the ID requirement it is challenging to gather evidence in this area as relatively small groups of people could have been affected in different ways.
- **The delivery of this pilot was manageable for the Returning Officer and their staff and there is nothing in their experience of the pilot to suggest that Bromley would face significant issues with the administration of a similar ID requirement in the future.** Additional staffing and training were in place for the pilot. However the Returning Officer has indicated that the extra staff would not necessarily be required to deliver this type of ID requirement at future local elections.
- **Public attitudes to electoral fraud improved from before to after the pilot.** More people said they electoral fraud is not a problem in Bromley in May 2018 than did so in January 2018. However, we cannot definitively link this change to the pilot.

Our findings suggest that the 2018 local elections in Bromley were not significantly affected by the voter ID pilot in either its impact on voters or on the administration of the poll. However, it is important to be cautious when drawing conclusions from this pilot about the impact of any wider application of voter ID.

# Background

1.1 At the May 2018 elections Bromley was one of five local authorities that tested the impact of requiring voters at polling stations to show a form of identification before being issued with a ballot paper. Each area defined their own list of acceptable ID for the pilot, in consultation with the Cabinet Office. The full list of ID accepted in Bromley is set out in Appendix A. Each pilot required a Pilot Order which legally allowed the changes to be tested at the May 2018 local elections. These orders also include details of amendments to standard electoral processes. All the orders can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

## Evaluation criteria

1.2 The Electoral Commission is required to evaluate any pilots carried out under Section 10 of the Representation of the People Act 2000. The Commission's evaluation must consider several criteria set out in the legislation. They are whether:

- the turnout of voters was higher than it would have been if the scheme had not applied
- voters found the procedures provided for their assistance by the scheme easy to use
- 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
- those procedures led to any increase in expenditure, or to any savings, by the authority

1.3 In addition, the UK Government set two objectives for these pilots:

- That proposed 'ID at polling stations' policy measures are proportional to the policy objective of reducing the opportunity for electoral fraud.
- That the proposed 'ID at polling stations' policy measures enhance public confidence in the security of the electoral system.

1.4 Our assessment below is structured in order to consider all the aspects of both the statutory criteria and the Government's objectives.

## Our research

1.5 We have collected information from different places to help us answer these questions:

- Public opinion surveys asking people about the elections and what they thought of the pilot.

- A survey of people who worked in the polling station.<sup>1</sup>
- Data about what identification people showed when they voted, and the number of people who were turned away because they didn't have the right identification.
- Feedback from Returning Officers and their staff
- Feedback from organisations that represent different groups of voters.
- Feedback from observers on polling day.

1.6 [View the full datasets from our research.](#)

## Evaluation findings

1.7 This report sets out our detailed findings for Bromley. We have produced a similar report for each of the other individual pilot areas. We have also published [an overarching report](#) setting out our assessment of the pilots as a whole.

1.8 The voter identification pilot scheme in Bromley required voters to produce one form of photographic identification or two forms of non-photographic identification (one of which must have shown the full registered address of the elector) in order to meet the requirements to vote.

## Impact on voters

### Headline findings

1.9 Data provided by Bromley, and set out in table below, from all polling stations shows that the majority of voters were able to meet the identification requirements upon arriving at the polling station. However, some electors did not have the required ID available when they came to vote on 3 May. The majority of these electors later returned and were able to cast a vote.

**Table 1.1**

<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Electors initially unable to vote (no ID)</b>	<b>Electors initially unable to vote (wrong ID)</b>	<b>Electors not returning with correct ID</b>	<b>No. not returning as % of polling station votes cast</b>
240,000	450	119	154	0.2%

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<sup>1</sup> The survey used in this study was developed from the 2015 Poll Worker study conducted by Alistair Clark and Toby James. Their input in adjusting it for the 2018 local elections was gratefully received. Clark A. & James T. (2017) Poll Workers in Pippa Norris et al (eds) Election Watchdogs, Oxford University Press.

1.10 The types of ID used also suggests that voters were able to meet the requirement with little difficulty. The most common ID used by voters was photographic with around 90% of polling station voters using one of three photographic IDs:

- Photo driving licence (used by 54% of polling station voters)
- Passport (24%)
- Freedom pass (15%)

1.11 Some voters did use the combination of two pieces of non-photographic identification. The most commonly used non-photo ID was the poll card which was shown by 3% of polling station voters. [View the full dataset showing which ID types were used by electoral ward.](#)

1.12 This data can only tell us about the impact on some of those electors attempting to vote at a polling station. It does not include electors who may have gone to the polling station and decided not to attempt to vote when they became aware of the ID requirement (from posters, etc. at the polling station). It also does not include any electors who did not go to a polling station at all on 3 May because they felt (correctly or incorrectly) that they would not be able to provide the required ID. However, there is other available evidence which suggests that electors were not significantly affected in this way.

1.13 In our public opinion research conducted immediately following 3 May we asked respondents if they voted on 3 May or not.<sup>2</sup> Those respondents that said they were non-voters were asked why they did not vote. This question was asked unprompted, i.e. respondents did not pick a reason from an existing list.

1.14 The reasons given by non-voters were largely in line with those we usually see in response to this question. For example, 25% of non-voters in Bromley said they did not have time, were too busy or had work commitments and 16% said they were away or on holiday. These were also the most common reasons across the other (non-pilot) local authorities holding elections in May 2018. One respondent in our survey in Bromley said that the ID requirement was the reason they had not voted.

1.15 Evidence from our public opinion research suggests that the public awareness activities run by Bromley in the months before 3 May did effectively contribute to the relatively low numbers of electors initially failing to present any or the correct ID. For example, in Bromley the proportion of the public who said they had heard something about the ID requirement rose from 43% in our research conducted in January 2018 to 60% in the surveying carried out from 4 May. In our post-election survey, we also asked polling

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<sup>2</sup> In our survey in Bromley, 67% of respondents said they voted on 3 May, with 33% saying they did not. This is similar to the figure for all areas piloting ID requirements, of 67% voters to 32% non-voters. Claimed turnout in surveys is usually higher than official turnout due to over-claim and because surveys may be more likely to pick up responses from voters. Note that findings relating to non-voters are on a small base size.

station voters in particular if they were aware they had to take ID to vote – 93% of polling station voters in Bromley said they were aware.

1.16 Respondents in Bromley were most likely to have heard about the ID requirement via various council communication, eg inserts with council tax bill etc. with nearly half (48%) citing that as a source of information. The next most commonly cited source of information (46%) was some form of local press (TV, radio, newspaper).

## Turnout

1.17 If the requirement to show ID had deterred many electors from attempting to vote on 3 May we would also expect to see a drop in overall voter turnout at the 2018 elections. The turnout in 2018 was similar, at 40%, to the 41% recorded at the last comparable elections (Bromley’s local government elections in 2014).

**Table 1.2 Turnout by electoral ward**

Ward	2014 turnout	2018 turnout	Change
Bickley	42%	43%	1%
Biggin Hill	41%	40%	-1%
Bromley Common & Keston	40%	36%	-4%
Bromley Town	37%	40%	3%
Chelsfield and Pratts Bottom	47%	42%	-5%
Chislehurst	39%	39%	0%
Clock House	42%	46%	4%
Copers Cope	39%	45%	6%
Cray Valley East	36%	32%	-4%
Cray Valley West	35%	29%	-6%
Crystal Palace	37%	35%	-2%
Darwin	48%	40%	-8%
Farnborough and Crofton	45%	44%	-1%
Hayes and Coney Hall	42%	41%	-1%
Kelsey and Eden Park	42%	42%	0%
Mottingham and Chislehurst North	36%	33%	-3%
Orpington	43%	38%	-5%
Penge and Cator	40%	40%	0%
Petts Wood and Knoll	46%	47%	1%
Plaistow and Sundridge	37%	40%	3%
Shortlands	44%	43%	-1%
West Wickham	44%	42%	-2%

1.18 We cannot be certain that the ID requirement did not affect overall turnout – beyond those electors who were refused a ballot paper. For example, Bromley’s public awareness campaign, put in place to support the pilot, meant that electors saw substantially more advertising about the election than they usually would for a local government poll. In one scenario this activity could have encouraged some electors who do not normally vote while deterring others who usually do (because they felt they did not have sufficient ID). However this is unlikely and the results from our public opinion research suggest that this is not what happened.

1.19 We have also considered whether variation in turnout at ward level suggests any disproportionate impact on certain electors, for example by age or other demographic factors. As the table above shows there was variation across different wards in both 2014 and 2018. However, it is common to see notable differences between wards in different years even at comparable polls.

1.20 Our analysis did not find any clear evidence linking changes in turnout to demographic differences across electoral wards. Darwin saw the biggest fall in turnout and was also the ward with the highest proportion of people aged 65 and over but there is no consistent pattern suggesting a relationship between the population aged 65 and over and declining turnout between 2014 and 2018.<sup>3</sup> We also found no pattern in relation to economic activity, ethnicity or tenure.

## Accessibility and ease of use

1.21 The evidence above suggests that the majority of voters found the ID requirement easy to comply with. We asked people in Bromley if they needed to provide identification at future elections, how easy they would find it to access it. The vast majority (95%) said it would be easy.

1.22 We have seen no evidence that specific groups, for example those with a learning disability or visual impairment, struggled with the ID requirement in Bromley. However, it is challenging to gather evidence in this area as relatively small groups of people could have been affected in different ways. We also know that some organisations representing those with learning disabilities and/or visual impairments were concerned about the ID requirement being a further barrier to those who already vote infrequently if at all.

1.23 We cannot therefore draw any firm conclusions about whether the ID requirement had a disproportionate impact on these particular groups.

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/wardlevelmidyearpopulationestimatesexperimental>

## Postal voting

1.24 We looked at levels of postal voting in Bromley to assess whether the ID requirement had pushed voters towards postal voting. In 2018 15.5% of the electorate were issued with a postal vote for the May elections. This is down from the recent peak at the EU referendum where 17.4% had a postal vote and is relatively small increase on the last Bromley local elections in 2014 when 14.2% were postal voters. This data does not suggest any notable move towards postal voting instead of polling station voting.

## Impact on administration

### Staffing and training

1.25 The Returning Officer decided to deploy additional staff at all polling stations on 3 May to support the delivery of the pilot. This meant that each of the 185 polling stations had three poll clerks and one presiding officer. In addition, a team of polling station inspectors were visiting polling stations throughout the day. This meant that over 750 staff were deployed on 3 May – around 200 more than usual.

1.26 In their feedback after polling day the Returning Officer and the electoral services team at Bromley have indicated that the additional staff were largely needed to support the pilot-specific evaluation requirements (for example, the detailed recording of which ID types were used by each elector). In the absence of this data collection the RO and staff felt that it would be possible to administer the ID requirement at a local government election with fewer staff, closer to their standard level. However, they did feel that the additional staff would be required at an election where turnout was likely to be higher.

1.27 More and longer training sessions were also required to support the pilot and to ensure that polling station staff were able to implement the ID requirement. However, the RO and their staff felt that the additional training was manageable for them to deliver.

1.28 The results from our survey of polling station staff suggest that the training was effective with 46% of polling station staff in Bromley rating the quality of their training experience as excellent and a further 48% as good. In terms of the instructions they received the vast majority agreed that the instructions received on the what types of identification were acceptable were clear (96%) and instructions received on requesting and verifying voter identification were clear (96%).

1.29 We also asked staff if they agreed or disagreed that the training had prepared them well for polling day and 95% agreed that it had.

1.30 Our survey asked staff to tell us what they thought would improve their training experience. The improvement that was most often mentioned was further practical training such as a roleplay exercise replicating the interaction



between staff and a voter asked to provide identification. Some polling station staff also expressed a desire for greater clarity on the full list of acceptable identification.

1.31 Overall the additional staff and extra training meant that this element of the election cost approximately 30% more than at a standard local election.

## Local certificate of identity

1.32 Bromley had a system in place to provide locally issued ID for electors unable to provide any of the listed document or combination of documents. A certificate could be issued up to 5pm on 2 May.

1.33 No certificates were issued in Bromley as part of this pilot. The elections team indicated that they received a small number of enquiries about applying but in discussions with the elector it always became apparent that they already possessed one of the accepted ID types.

1.34 The fact that no certificates were issued is very likely to be the result of Bromley's relatively long list of acceptable ID types. However, it does mean that the pilot did not test the resources required to process applications and issue certificates.

## Polling day

1.35 Overall, feedback from polling station staff indicates that delivering the ID requirement at this pilot did not present significant challenges. This is consistent with our own staff's observations in Bromley on polling day.

1.36 The majority of those who had worked at a previous election in Bromley said that they felt this election was about the same in terms of difficulty as previous years (53%); however, three in ten (31%) felt that it was more difficult.

1.37 Around three-quarters (77%) of polling station staff said that they had no problems at all in checking voters' identity. When asked whether they agreed that asking voters to prove their identity had little or no impact on their work at polling day about two-thirds agreed (67%) and 21% disagreed with this statement.

1.38 Polling station staff were also asked how confident they were that the requirement to ask voters to verify their identity could easily be replicated at another election. Seven in ten (70%) of the staff surveyed in Bromley were very confident that this requirement could easily be replicated, 27% were somewhat confident and 3% were not very confident.

## Impact on security

1.39 We cannot judge the impact of the pilot on the security of the May 2018 elections in Bromley. This is one of the key limitations of any evaluation of



these pilots – we cannot say if the requirement to present ID at polling stations prevented any fraud that would have occurred if the pilot had not taken place. We do know that no cases of electoral fraud in Bromley have been reported to the police following the May 2018 polls.

## Impact on public confidence

1.40 We have used our public opinion survey results to explore whether the pilot in Bromley had an impact on public confidence in the security of the election. It is important to remember that even where we see changes in the survey results before and after the pilot we cannot be certain those changes were the result of the pilot.

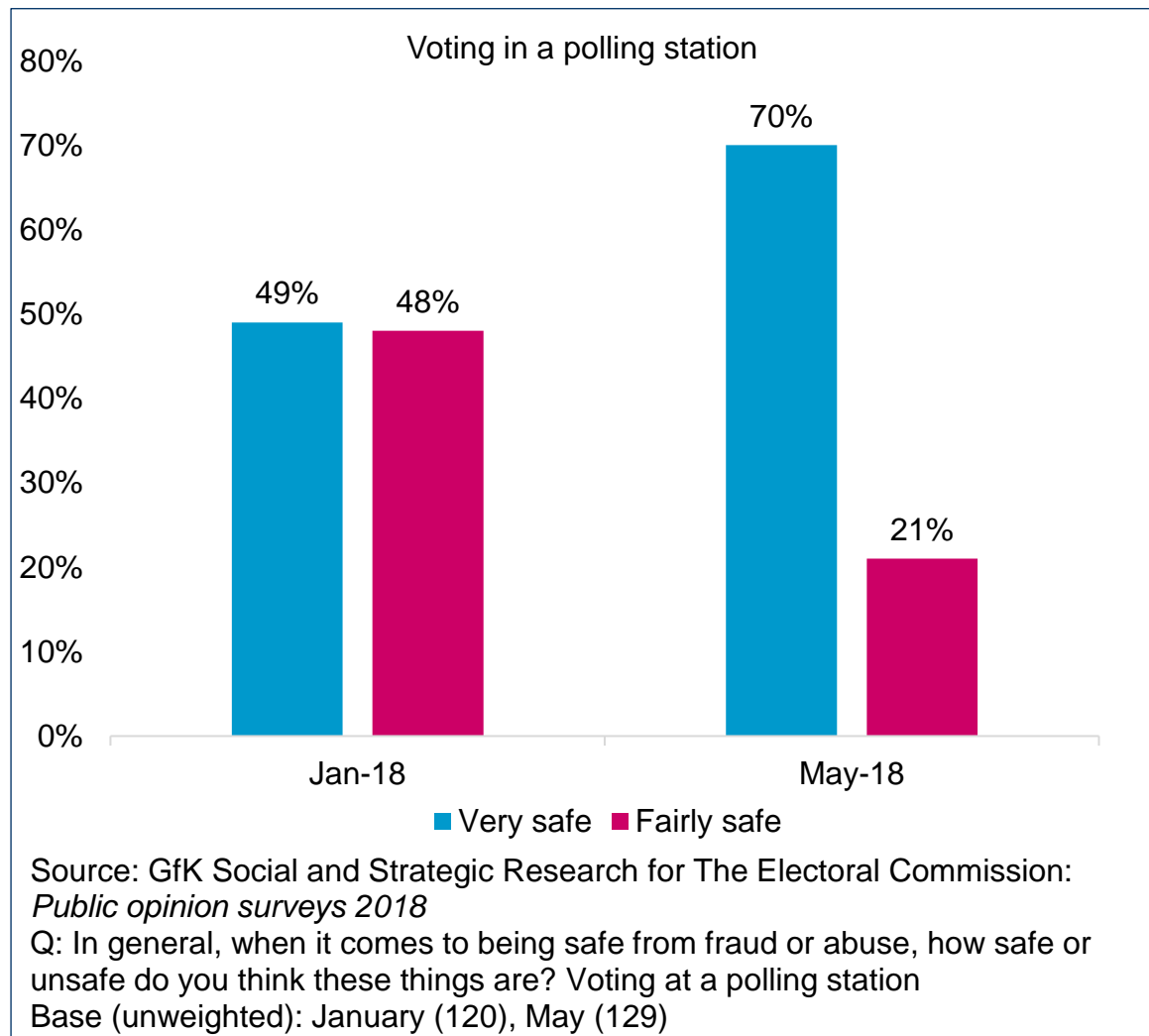
1.41 We asked respondents to our survey whether a requirement for voters to show identification at the polling station would make them more or less confident in the security of the voting system, or if it would make no difference. In Bromley 63% said they would be more confident (of which 48% said they would be a lot more confident). Those who said it would make them less confident made up 2%. This positive effect was more noticeable in Bromley than most other pilot areas (except for Gosport), and other areas which had elections in May (but no pilots).

1.42 We also asked how safe or unsafe respondents considered voting in a polling station. The proportion saying they think it is safe does not change across the two survey waves (in January and May 2018) although levels are high (96% and 91%).<sup>4</sup> However, there is a significant increase, between January and May, in the proportion saying they think it is very safe.

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<sup>4</sup> The difference here is not statistically significant.

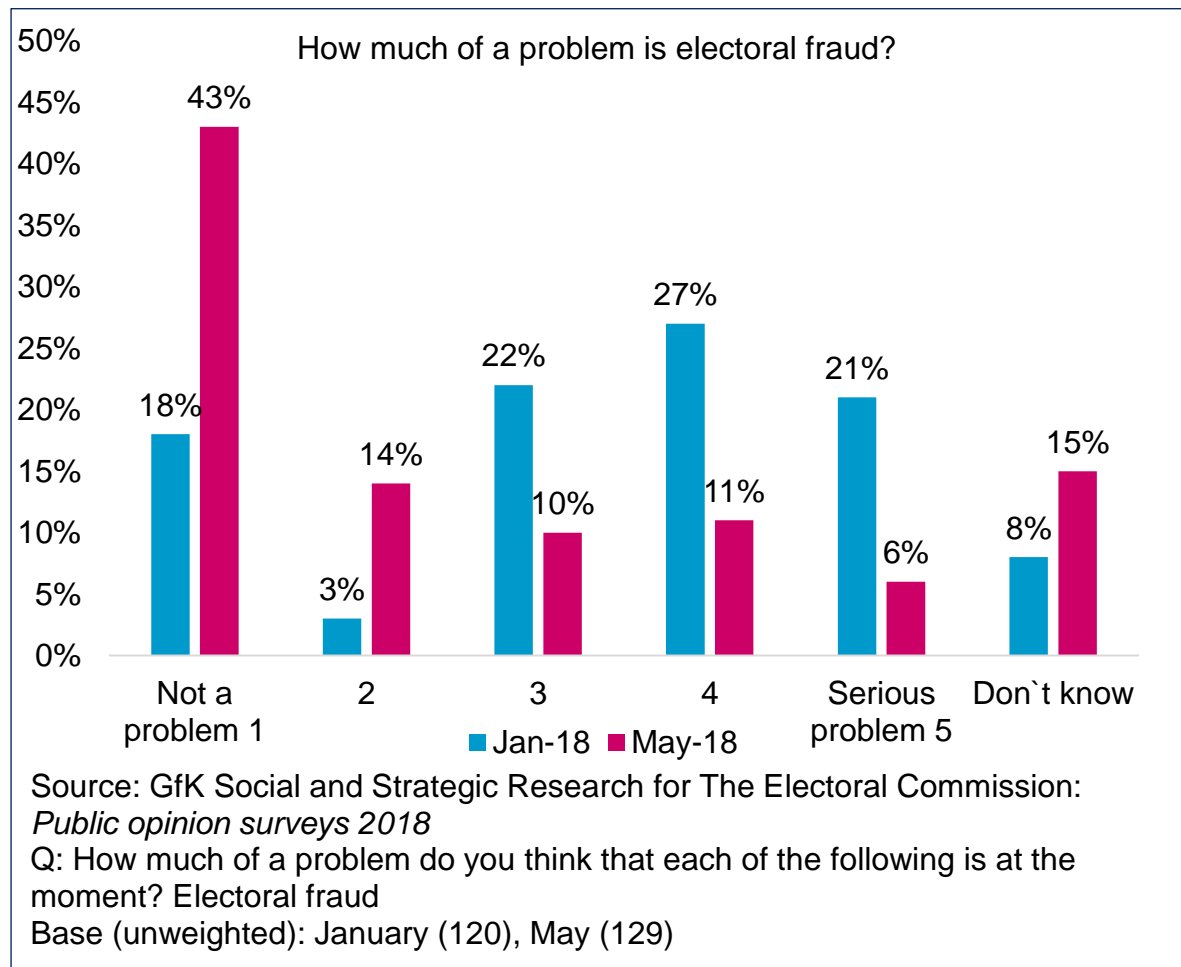
**Figure 1.1 In general, when it comes to being safe from fraud or abuse, how safe or unsafe do you think these things are?<sup>5</sup>**



1.43 Respondents in both January and May were also asked how much of a problem they thought electoral fraud is at the moment on a five-point scale. As the chart below shows, the results show a notable change in attitudes with the proportion of respondents saying they believe electoral fraud to be a problem (those rating it 4 or 5) dropping from 49% in January to 18% in May.

<sup>5</sup> Due to rounding of data, there may be small variations (c.1% point) between reported aggregated totals and the sum of disaggregated figures.

**Figure 1.2 How much of a problem do you think that electoral fraud is at the moment?**



1.44 It is possible that concerns about electoral fraud could decrease as the public engage more with the reality of an election as polling day approaches. However, the shift seen in Bromley does not appear to reflect a general shift in attitudes in this period. We asked the same question of people in areas holding elections in May without pilots. There is little difference in these areas between January and May in those saying they think electoral fraud is a problem.

1.45 The survey results show a change in attitudes between early 2018 and the immediate post-election period. Respondents were less likely to see fraud as a problem in May 2018 than they were in January and they were more likely to believe voting in a polling station is very safe from fraud.

1.46 However, we cannot definitively link this change in attitude to the pilot although some connection is likely. However, we should be cautious about drawing any wider conclusions about the impact of voter ID requirements on public confidence as these findings relate to a single local authority area.

# Appendix A

People in Bromley had to take either one type of photographic ID or two types of non-photographic so they could vote in person at the polling station.

Photographic:

- a passport issued by the United Kingdom, a Commonwealth country or a member state of the European Union
- a photocard driving licence (including a provisional licence) issued in the United Kingdom or by a Crown Dependency, or by a member State of the European Union
- an electoral identity card issued under section 13C (electoral identity card: Northern Ireland) of the Representation of the People Act 1983
- a biometric immigration document issued in the United Kingdom in accordance with regulations made under section 5 of the UK Borders Act 2007
- an identity card issued in the European Economic Area
- an Oyster 60+ London Pass
- a Freedom Pass (London)
- a PASS scheme card (national proof of age standards scheme)

Non-photographic:

- a valid bank or building society debit card or credit card
- a poll card for the poll
- a driving licence (including a provisional licence) which is not in the form of a photocard.
- a birth certificate
- a marriage or civil partnership certificate
- an adoption certificate
- a firearms certificate granted under the Firearms Act 1968
- the record of a decision on bail made in respect of the voter in accordance with section 5(1) of the Bail Act 1976
- a bank or building society cheque book
- a mortgage statement dated within 3 months of the date of the poll
- a bank or building society statement dated within 3 months of the date of the poll
- a credit card statement dated within 3 months of the date of the poll
- a utility bill dated within 3 months of the date of the poll
- a council tax demand letter or statement dated within 12 months of the date of the poll
- a Form P45 or Form P60 dated within 12 months of the date of the poll

Or (if you do not have any of the above ID):

- Certificate of identity