

Election Act

The Elections Act 2022 was granted Royal Assent and passed into law on 28 April 2022, and this will bring significant changes to the way elections are run. One of the most significant changes is that you will need to show photographic identification (ID) when you attend a polling station to cast your vote.

Not all of the changes have been announced, so this page is a summary of what we know so far, and it will be updated once we know more.

Requirement to show Photo ID at Polling Stations

Changes you will see:

You will have to show an official form of photographic ID when you attend a polling station to vote, such as a passport or driving license.

If you do not have an official form of photographic ID, you will be able to apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate from January 2023. Applications are not yet open, but once they are, you will be able to find a link on the website.

These changes are expected to come into force from May 2023.

EU Citizens' Voting and Candidacy Rights

Changes you will see:

EU citizens will no longer automatically be entitled to register, vote or stand for election.

Two groups of EU citizens will retain their rights:

Qualifying EU Citizens

- These are citizens from countries with reciprocal agreements who have 'leave to remain' in the UK or who do not need 'leave to remain' in the UK. These are currently Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Spain.

EU Citizens with Retained Rights

- These are EU citizens who were living in the UK before 1 January 2021 (the date when the UK left the EU).

These changes will apply to:

- All local elections and referendums in England.
- Mayor of London and London Assembly elections.

These changes are expected to come into force by Spring 2024.

Changes to Postal and Proxy Voting

Absent voting allows you to vote in an election if you are unable to vote in person at the polling station on the day. For example you might be on holiday or at work, or you might have a medical condition or disability which makes it difficult to attend the polling station.

There are two types of absent voting:

Postal Voting – once a completed application has been submitted, a postal pack, which will include your ballot paper will be sent to you by post. You will be asked to complete your postal pack and return it in time to be included in the counting of votes.

Proxy Voting – you can appoint someone you to trust to vote on your behalf. Once appointed they will vote at the polling station at which you would normally vote at.

Changes you will see:

You will have the option to apply for a postal vote via a new central government online system.

You will need to provide photographic ID when applying for an absent vote, whether this is an online application or paper application.

Postal Voting

Postal voters must reapply to vote by post every 3 years.

Political parties and campaigners will be banned from handling postal vote packs.

There will be a limit on the number of postal vote packs that a person can hand in at a polling station.

Proxy Votes

You will only be able to act as a proxy for up to 2 people living in the UK (or a maximum of 4 people, with 2 people living in the UK and 2 people registered as living overseas).

When do the changes come into force?

- Online absent voting applications is expected from July 2023.
- The rules of secrecy and who can handle postal votes is expected in Autumn 2023, however this is not yet confirmed.
- The process for a three yearly application process for postal voters will begin in June 2023.

Accessibility at Polling Stations

Changes you will see:

Extra support will be provided to voters with disabilities when voting in person at a polling station.

A disabled voter can be accompanied by anyone over the age of 18 at a polling station.

These changes are expected to come into force from May 2023.

Extended Voting Rights for British Citizens Living Overseas

Changes you will see:

The 15-year limit on voting for British citizens living abroad will be removed. Any British citizens who were previously registered to vote in the UK or who previously lived in the UK will be able to register as an overseas elector.

British citizens living abroad will be required to re-register every 3 years.

These changes are expected to come into force by May 2024