

Local Government, Local Authority Mayoral and Combined Authority Mayoral elections

Thursday 5 May 2022

Your pocket guide

This handy pocket guide provides you with information to help you to vote with confidence at this year's elections in England. It covers what elections are taking place, the different voting options available and what support and adjustments you are entitled to.

This pocket guide covers what you can expect at the polling station to help you make an informed decision on the best way to vote for you.

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.

What elections are taking place?

On Thursday 5 May 2022, there will be Local Government, Local Authority Mayoral and Combined Authority Mayoral elections in England.

In local government elections, voters elect councillors, who make decisions on services in the local area.

Local Authority Mayors are elected in some areas, and are responsible for running the council.

Combined Authority Mayors are elected to represent several neighbouring councils. They are responsible for services such as transport, planning and skills provision.

Where you live will determine which of these elections you have. You can use the Electoral Commission's [postcode look-up tool](#) to check what elections are taking place in your area. From mid-April, you will also be able to find information on where your polling station is and who is standing in the election.

Voting in Local Government Elections

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

In some areas there may be two or more seats to fill on the council, in this instance the candidate with the most votes is elected first, then if required the candidate with the second highest number of votes is elected, then the third placed candidate.

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.

Voting in Combined Authority and Local Mayoral Elections

The Supplementary Vote system is used in Mayoral Elections.

You can vote for a first and second choice candidate. Vote for your first choice candidate by marking a cross in the first choice column and for your second choice candidate by marking a cross in the second choice column.

As long as you mark one cross in the first choice column, your vote will be counted. You can choose whether or not to mark a second 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.

Polling station staff are made aware of the option to use a phone or other assistive device in Appendix One of the Electoral Commission's polling station handbook.

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 18, 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, large print or audio from your local electoral registration office. You can use the Electoral Commission's [postcode look-up tool](#) to find their contact details.

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 elections team 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, large print or audio from your local electoral registration office. You can use the Electoral Commission's [postcode look-up tool](#) to find their contact details.

In an emergency where you cannot go to the polling station in person, including self-isolating due to Covid-19, you can apply to your local elections team for an emergency proxy up to **5pm on Thursday 5 May 2021**.

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/>