

Changes to postal and proxy voting

Identity checking requirements

- All absent vote applications (except for emergency proxy applications) made on or after 31 October 2023 must contain a **National Insurance Number** (NINo) or a reason why one cannot be provided.
- The personal identifiers contained on the application (name, address, date of birth and NINo) must initially be **verified against Department of Works and Pension (DWP) data**.
- Where an application fails to match with DWP data – electors will be required to provide **documentary evidence** to verify their identity. Where this is not possible, electors must submit an **attestation** to confirm their identity.

Online absent vote applications

- Since 31 October 2023 electors (except for anonymous electors) are able to apply for most types of **absent vote online** via <https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote>
 - Electors can apply for the following absent votes both online and through a paper application:
 - Postal vote
 - Proxy vote for a particular election or referendum
 - Proxy application for definite or indefinite period for overseas and service electors
 - Electors will not be able to apply for the following absent votes online but can continue to be applied for through a paper application:
 - Proxy application for definite or indefinite period due to disability
 - Proxy application for definite or indefinite period due to employment, service etc.
 - Emergency proxy application
- In these cases the Elector should contact Electoral Services directly.
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Maximum period for absent vote applications

- Since 31 October 2023, a **postal vote** can be in place for:
 - a particular poll (poll held on specific date)
 - a definite period of not more than 3 years
 - a maximum period of up to 3 years
- Electors applying for a postal vote will only be able to hold their postal vote until the third 31 January following the date on which their application was granted.
- For electors with a long-term postal vote (in place before 31 October 2023) there will be transitional arrangements. Existing domestic electors will be able to vote by post for relevant polls until 31 January 2026.
- **Proxy voters** can continue to put in place a proxy arrangement for an indefinite period (subject to a three yearly eligibility check and five yearly signature refresh). However, all existing proxy voters who have an arrangement in place before 31 October 2023 must reapply and make a fresh application by 31 January 2024. We will be writing to all of our current proxy voters shortly to inform them of this change.

Changes to proxy voting limits

- The number of people a person can act as proxy for has also been restricted.
 - From 31 October 2023, a **person is not entitled to vote as proxy in any electoral area on behalf of more than four electors. Within the four electors, no more than two electors can be domestic electors.** Domestic electors are those electors who are neither service voters nor overseas electors.
 - For any by-elections whose notice of election is published from 31 October 2023 to 30 January 2024 – transitional provisions will be in place. Further information will be provided to candidates should this scenario arise.
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What does this mean for you?

- For future election campaigns you may wish to direct electors to the online absent vote website to apply for a postal vote - <https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote> rather than providing them with a paper application. This web link could also be included in any campaign literature you may send out.
- As absent vote forms are not prescribed, political parties can continue to create their own forms for electors if they wish. However, you must ensure any forms provided from contain all the newly required information. For postal vote applications this includes:
 - Need for the NINo or reason it cannot be provided
 - Whether request is for a particular poll, a definite period that does not exceed 3 years or for the maximum period of up to 3 years.
- Paper absent vote applications designed by the Electoral Commission are also available should you wish to supply paper forms – <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/apply-vote-post>
- If you require any further information on the changes to postal and proxy voting, please contact Electoral Services on elections@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
- We will be issuing a further briefing note in January 2024 outlining the changes to postal vote handling that take effect for polls taking place on or after 2 May 2024.

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(From a template provided by the Association of Electoral Administrators)
