

Your vote matters



Cabinet Office



homeless link



HANSARD
SOCIETY

An activity pack for people who work in social housing and homelessness services to provide tenants and clients with the knowledge and skills to influence local and national politics and put their interests centre stage.

Your Vote Matters

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Homeless

~~NOT~~

Voteless

You don't need a fixed address to **register to vote.**

Registering to vote gives you a voice to make a difference, but also brings a wide range of benefits, such as helping with your credit rating.

Where

When

What to bring



What is **Your Vote Matters?**

The **Your Vote Matters** pack has been developed by **Hansard Society** and **Homeless Link**, in partnership with the **Cabinet Office**, to promote voter registration amongst **social housing tenants** and **people in homelessness services**.

Why does voter registration matter?

Lower levels of registration amongst social housing tenants and people in homelessness services means that those who are not registered may not have their voices heard by those in power.

Being registered gives social housing tenants and people in homelessness services a say on the issues that affect their everyday lives, whether it's housing, local schools or bin collections. If an issue comes up that they care about and want to have a say on, if they're not registered they won't have a voice when it really matters.

Being on the electoral register is one of the key checks that is made in any application for personal credit – for example, for a credit card or a mobile phone contract.

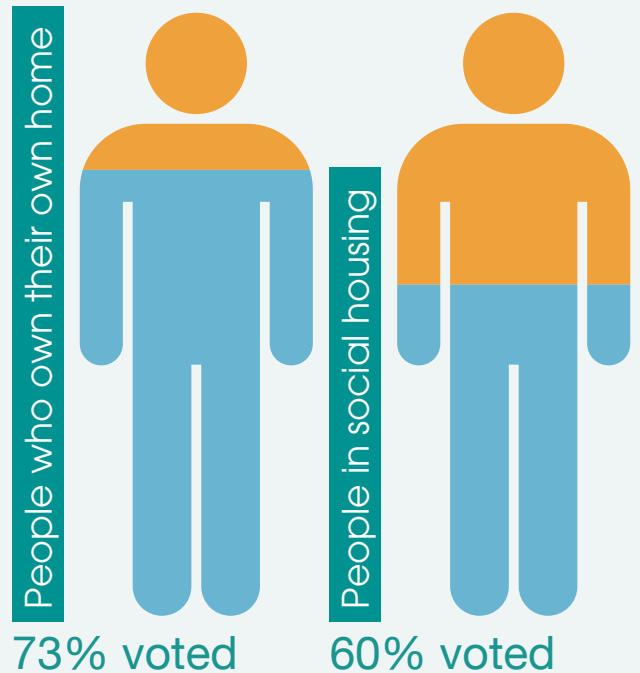
Online registration has made the process of registering to vote more convenient for electors, especially those who are frequent home-movers and social housing tenants. It is quick and easy and takes less than 5 minutes.

You can register online at:
www.gov.uk/register tovot e

How does this pack help?

Your Vote Matters provides social housing tenants and people in homelessness services with the knowledge and skills they need to realise the power they have to influence local and national politics and to put their interests centre stage.

Who voted in the 2017 General Election?



Source: **General Election 2017: Results and Analysis** - House of Commons Library

High levels of contact with local authority

Social tenants and politics

Lower levels of interest or knowledge of politics

What is Your Vote Matters?

Who is this pack for?

This pack is aimed at those working in social housing or homelessness services, their tenants or clients. It provides all you need to run a workshop as a 'champion', with fun and engaging activities to explain different aspects of democratic engagement.

How do I use it?

Your Vote Matters provides background information and activities, as well as factsheets that are designed to be copied and kept by participants. All the activities can stand alone or be run sequentially in the order you feel best fits with your group.

Each activity suggests a likely running time, has self-contained resources, aims and a step-by-step guide.

The pack is split into four parts:

1 Activity 1 – **Who gets to be a local councillor?**

Explains the connection between voter registration and those elected – Page 7

2 Activity 2 – **Creating community action**

Explores how people can influence the way services are run – Page 10

3 Activity 3 – **Make friends and influence politicians**

Explores how to take the first steps towards building a local campaign – Page 14

4 Next steps resources:

- **Voter registration factsheet**
- **Key contacts factsheet**
- **Access to the online registration page:**
www.gov.uk/register tovote or
- **Voter registration form (if you don't have internet access)**



What now?

- Get stuck into the activities over the page and share photos, videos and quotes on Twitter using the hashtag **#RegisterToVote**
- Make sure you post any registration forms to your local council's electoral services team in good time. For registration deadlines see the **Registration factsheet** (page 18).

Activity 1 Who gets to be a local councillor?



Who sets the agenda and who gets elected?

Aim: To demonstrate the importance of being registered and how this makes it possible to influence the political decisions that affect your everyday life.

Time: 15-20 minutes

What you need:

- Ensure that all participants bring along their National Insurance number
- Photocopies of **Pick your policies worksheet** – one per group
- Photocopy of **Pick your policies results sheet** – one for you
- Photocopies of the **Voter registration form** (at the back of the pack) – one each (if you don't have internet access)

• Pens

Optional:

- Photocopies of the **Voter registration factsheet** – one each
- Photocopies of the **Key contacts factsheet** – one each

Steps

- 1 Ask the group to put their hands up if they are registered to vote or if they have ever voted. Discuss with the group:
 - How they feel about voting and if they think it's important to vote.
 - What do they think might be the consequences of not voting to individuals and groups?
- 2 Split the group into small teams and distribute the **Pick your policies worksheet**. Explain that each group is going to put themselves in the shoes of a politician standing in a local election. Each group needs to select the four policies they think are most important for the local area by putting a cross in the box at the top of the cards (5 mins).
- 3 Using **Pick your policies results sheet** announce the “popularity points” (how popular the issue would be amongst all local people) for each policy. Each group should make a note of their popularity scores in the box on the left of each of the policy cards. Ask all those that got over 100 popularity points across their four policies to raise their hands.
- 4 Now announce the “voting points” for all the policies and ask participants to make a note of their score in the box on the right of each of the policy cards. Explain that the voting points represent the number of local people who support the policy AND are registered to vote so can influence which politician gets elected. Ask all those that got over 100 voting points to raise their hands.
- 5 Discuss with the groups their opinions about the result. **Some ideas:**
 - Who got more than 100 popularity points but fewer than 100 voting points?
 - What can people do to make sure that their favoured policies have a better chance of being heard by politicians?
- 6 Use the **Key Facts** from the **Pick your policies result worksheet** to explain that whilst the popularity points and voting points are fictitious, they broadly reflect the current situation in the UK. This activity illustrates how only registered voters can have their say and are able to vote in elections. Discuss what effect this may have on how policies are developed.
- 7 Ask participants to register to vote online at: www.gov.uk/registertovote. If you do not have internet access please ask them to fill out a Voter registration form.
- 8 Collect up voter registration forms and send them to the relevant local council offices for the attention of “Electoral Registration Officer”. Don't forget to tell the Democratic Engagement Team at the Cabinet Office how many people you register at the session by emailing: DemocraticEngagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. We welcome your feedback so please fill in the relevant evaluation forms on pages 22 and 23 and send it to: DemocraticEngagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk so that we can hear your views.

Optional:

- 9 Give each participant a copy of the **Key contacts** and **Voter registration factsheet** to take away (on page 18).

Pick your policies worksheet



Policy 1

Free travel for all over 65s in the area.

--	--

Policy 2

Planting a new community garden in the largest social housing estate in the area.

--	--

Policy 3

Open a new hostel for people sleeping rough in the local area.

--	--

Policy 4

A council tax freeze until the next election.

--	--

Policy 5

A new social housing development to relieve local overcrowding.

--	--

Policy 7

Removing all parking charges and permits in the area.

--	--

Policy 6

Free childcare for the poorest 10% in the area.

--	--

Policy 8

Free travel to college for all 16-17 year olds in the area.

--	--

Pick your policies results worksheet

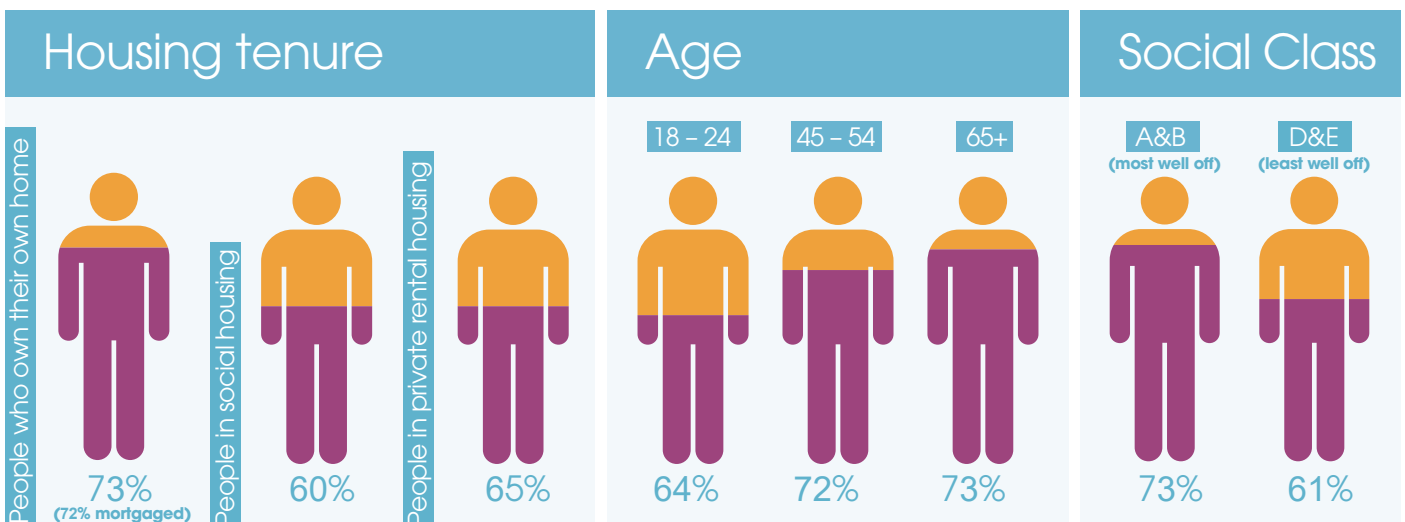
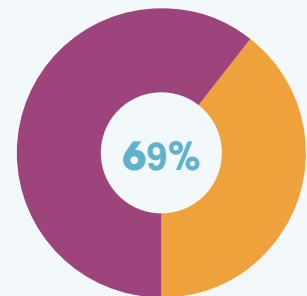


Policy 1 Free travel for all over 65s in the area. Popularity 40 Voting 38	Policy 2 Planting a new community garden in the largest social housing estate in the area. Popularity 15 Voting 4
Policy 3 Open a new hostel for people sleeping rough in the local area. Popularity 18 Voting 8	Policy 4 A council tax freeze until the next election. Popularity 65 Voting 50
Policy 5 A new social housing development to relieve local overcrowding. Popularity 30 Voting 8	Policy 6 Free childcare for the poorest 10% in the area. Popularity 20 Voting 5
Policy 7 Removing all parking charges and permits in the area. Popularity 50 Voting 30	Policy 8 Free travel to college for all 16-17 year olds in the area. Popularity 15 Voting 8

Popularity points represent the number of people that support the policy. (The aim is to get over 100 points).

Voting points illustrates the number of people that support the policy AND who are registered to vote.

The percentage of eligible voters that voted (overall)





Activity 2 Creating community action

How to make your voice heard

Aim: To explore the differing roles of councillors and MPs, how to contact them to try and resolve a problem, raise an issue of concern, propose some community initiative or initiate some positive social action.

Time: 15-20 minutes

What you need:

- Ensure that all participants bring along their National Insurance number
- Photocopies of the **Local vs National issues sheet**
 - one for each group
- Photocopy of the **Local vs National results sheet**
 - one for you
- Photocopies of the **Creating community action worksheet** – one each or one per group
- Photocopies of the **Voter registration form** (at the back of the pack)
 - one each (if you don't have access to the internet)
- Pens

Optional:

- Photocopies of the **Key contacts factsheet**
 - one each
- Photocopies of the **Voter registration factsheet**
 - one each

Steps

- 1 Explain that the purpose of this activity is to explore:
 - What MPs and councillors have responsibility for
 - How to contact them
 - What they can do for you
 - What to do if your problem doesn't get resolved.

Remember campaigning isn't just for huge organisations.

- 2 Divide the group into teams and ask them to circle Local or National on each of the issues on the **Local vs National issues sheet**. 'National' is the responsibility of Parliament and MPs and 'Local' is the responsibility of the local council and councillors.
- 3 Ask the group if they have experienced a problem with any of these issues on the sheet.

Did they complain about these things to a neighbour or friend? How many contacted their local MPs or councillors? Did they get the response they wanted? Explain that the next task will explore how to seek to influence both local MPs and local councillors.

- 4 Distribute the **Creating community action worksheet** and ask each group to fill out the sheet using an issue from the previous exercise, one they think of themselves or the scenario below. (10 mins)

SCENARIO: In the last six months there has been a sharp increase in the amount of anti-social behaviour in your local area. Loud motorbikes are being driven up and down streets and around housing estates at all hours of the night.

- 5 Ask each group to feed back about the issue they chose, what they want done and what they would ask of their local representatives. **Points to consider:**
 - How could people strengthen their campaign?
 - What would make the MP or councillor take notice?
 - How could you generate support for your campaign? For example:
 - Start a petition
 - Contact the local press
- 6 Conclude the session by reminding the group that MPs and councillors only hold their positions because people registered to vote and elected them. Campaigning is a great way to improve things between elections but registering to vote and voting come Election Day is the only way to ensure people who are more likely to care about your cause are in power.
- 7 Ask participants to register to vote online at: www.gov.uk/register tovote. If you do not have internet access please ask them to fill out a copy of the Voter registration form at the back of the pack.
- 8 Collect up Voter registration forms and send them to the relevant local council offices for the attention of "Electoral Registration Officer". Don't forget to tell the Democratic Engagement Team at the Cabinet Office how many forms you collected by emailing: DemocraticEngagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. We welcome your feedback so please fill in the relevant evaluation forms on pages 22 and 23 and send it to DemocraticEngagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk so that we can hear your views.

Optional:

- 9 Give each participant a copy of the **Key contacts** and **Voter registration factsheet** to take away (on page 18).

Local v National issues

worksheet

Welfare benefit levels

Local

National

Income tax

Local

National

Council tax

Local

National

Housing allocation

Local

National

Bin collection

Local

National

Local park maintenance

Local

National

Consumer rights

Local

National

Planning for new housing

Local

National

Car tax

Local

National

Sport/Leisure facilities

Local

National

Fixing potholes in roads

Local

National

Pensions

Local

National



Local v National issues

results worksheet

Welfare benefit levels

National

Income tax

National

Council tax

Local

Housing allocation

Local

Bin collection

Local

Local park maintenance

Local

Consumer rights

National

Planning for new housing

Local

Car tax

National

Sport/Leisure facilities

Local

Fixing potholes in roads

Local

Pensions

National



Creating community action **worksheet**



Start here

Who has responsibility?

Local Council

Local councillors represent different wards/areas on the council and have local decision-making responsibility.

Parliament

Your local MP represents your area (constituency) in Parliament. They can raise issues in the House of Commons and assist you locally with any problems and concerns.

How do I contact them?

Meet

Many local councillors hold “surgeries” in the local area where you can meet them in person to discuss any problems or ideas you have.

Contact

You can find contact details for your local councillor on the council website or www.theyworkforyou.com or you can write to them via www.writetothem.com

Meet

Most MPs also hold regular “surgeries” in their local area. To find out who your MP is and when their surgery is held use:

www.theyworkforyou.com

Contact

You can contact your MP by emailing or writing to them at the addresses provided by the website above.

What can they do?

- Put ideas forward to the rest of the council to improve things in your area
- Put you in contact with someone who can help
- Contact outside organisations to try and influence them e.g. police, NHS, media
- Contact the local MP.

- Ask a question of the Government
- Contact other relevant organisations to engage their help and support, for example police, NHS, media
- Contact the local council.

What do I write/talk to them about?

This section is to help you to consider how you would like to raise the issue you care about with the relevant people. Use the questions below to describe what the problem is and what you want done about it:

- What is your issue?
- Who else is affected and how?
- How would you like it solved?
- What do you want the MP/Councillor to do? (use the ideas from above)
- What are the consequences of not taking action?

Contact details for representatives can be found on page 17.

What happens next?

You should receive a direct response from the MP or Councillor but they receive lots of correspondence from local people every day. The best way to get your issue noticed and acted upon is to demonstrate how much support there is for your campaign from the local people they represent:

Remember

- **Be patient but persistent**
- **Be clear**
- **Generate support locally**
- **Be polite** – you may not get the answer you want immediately but if you can build a relationship with your local MP/councillor you’re one step closer to recruiting an ally!

Activity 3 Make friends and influence politicians



Become a local campaigner



Aim: To demonstrate how to build support for a campaign so it has the greatest chance of influencing politicians, the local council and the Government.

Time: 15 minutes

Facilitator notes:

- A **campaigning scenario** is provided below but you can ask participants to come up with their own campaign
- If you are short on time you may wish to skip Step 5
- If you have already run the **Creating community action activity** you can use the work started there for this activity

You will need:

- Ensure that all participants bring their National Insurance number with them
- Photocopies of **Influence builder worksheet** cut up into the different cards – one per group
- Photocopies of the **Key contacts factsheet** – one each
- Access to the internet using a tablet, computer or smartphone
- Photocopies of the **Voter registration factsheet** – one each
- Pens

Steps

- 1 Ask the group to name any campaigns they are aware of, either national or local. (For example, a campaign that recruited volunteers to keep their local shop open, helped to improve local bus facilities or improve recycling arrangements).
- 2 Ask the group what they think makes an effective campaign. Explain that the strength of a campaign comes from the clarity of its aim and the amount of support it can generate. **Just like in elections – the numbers matter!**
- 3 Split the group into small teams and distribute the Influence builder cards (one set per team). Ask each team to think of an issue they care about (or use the scenario below) and write down a campaign name and aim. Explain a catchy name will help with publicity and a short and sharp aim will give the campaign a clear focus.
SCENARIO: In the last six months there has been a sharp increase in the amount of anti-social behaviour in your local area. Loud motorbikes are being driven up and down streets and around housing estates at all hours of the night.
- 4 Ask each group to organise the Influence builder cards according to the order they think will build the most support i.e. should they contact a local councillor before or after they build support locally? They can disregard any cards they feel aren't relevant to their campaign.
- 5 Ask the groups to feedback encouraging input and observations from all. Some questions to consider:
 - When is the best time to build support?
 - What will get your campaign noticed by politicians?
- 6 Distribute the **Key contacts factsheet** and as an extension activity, you can ask the groups to attend a further session (or work on their own) and use the **Key contacts factsheet** to plan their campaign.
- 7 Ask participants to register to vote online at: www.gov.uk/registertovote. If you do not have internet access please ask them to fill out a Voter registration form at the back of the pack.
- 8 Collect up Voter registration forms and send them to the relevant local council offices for the attention of "Electoral Registration Officer". Don't forget to tell the Democratic Engagement Team at the Cabinet Office how many people you register at the session by emailing: DemocraticEngagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. We welcome your feedback so please fill in the relevant evaluation forms on pages 22 and 23 and send it to DemocraticEngagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk so that we can hear your views.

Optional:

- 9 Give each participant a copy of the **Voter registration factsheet** to take away (on page 18).

Influence builder worksheet 1



Contact people who
feel the same way

Send letter to
local press

Contact the
national media

Write to your
local councillor

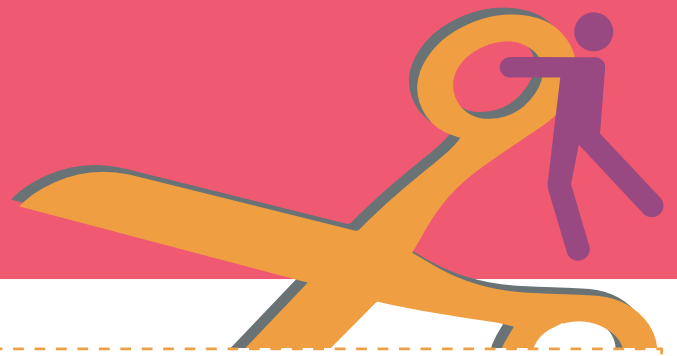
Attend your local
MP's surgery

Organise
a petition

Set up a
campaign blog

Use social media:
Twitter, Facebook etc.

Influence builder worksheet 2



Send local media
a press release

Attend public meeting
of the local council

Find like-minded
groups in the area

Ask local businesses
to display posters

Organise a meeting
with neighbours and
other affected people

Fundraise

Write to your
local MP

Organise a
demonstration

Key contacts factsheet

Find your MP: www.theyworkforyou.com

Set up your own e-petition: www.gov.uk/petition-government

Start a petition on change.org: www.change.org

Write to local and national politicians: www.writetothem.com

Homeless Link's guide to local influencing: www.homeless.org.uk



Contact details – MP

Name of MP	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
Phone number	<input type="text"/>
Local office address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
Surgery dates/times	<input type="text"/>

Contact details – councillor

Name of councillor	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
Phone number	<input type="text"/>
Local office address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
Surgery dates/times	<input type="text"/>

Voter registration

factsheet

The system for registering to vote in Great Britain has changed to make the process more secure and modern. In the past, the head of the household told the council the names of all the people living in the property who were eligible to vote. Now everyone who is eligible to register to vote needs to register themselves.

You can now register to vote online, at: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote Registering to vote is more convenient than ever. The process takes less than five minutes, online, using a computer tablet or smart-phone.

You are not automatically registered, even if you pay council tax.

Who can register to vote?

You can register to vote in the UK if you are:

- Resident (usually live in the UK), and
- Aged 16 or over (but you will not be able to vote until you are 18).

You must also be either:

- A British, Irish or European Union citizen, or
- A Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK.

How do you register to vote?

Register to vote online at: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote If you are unable to access the internet then you will need to call your local council and ask for a voter registration form. You will need to fill it in and post it to your local council who will add you to the register.

There are two versions of the electoral register: the electoral and the open version.

All registered voters appear on the electoral register which is used for election administration, credit applications and preventing crime. The open version of the electoral register is available for sale to anyone for any purpose.

You can opt out of the open version of the register.

Registering without a fixed address

You can still register to vote even if you do not have a fixed address. You need to fill in a form called a 'Register to vote' (no fixed or permanent address living in England or Wales).

You can get this form by contacting your local council.

On the form you need to give an address where you would be living if it were not for your current situation, or an address where you have lived in the past.

If you are homeless, you can give details of where you spend a substantial part of your time.

Moving house

If you have moved house, you will need to register to vote again, and it's important that you do, otherwise you may not be able to vote!

So while you're unpacking your fridge and updating your TV licence, take a few minutes to ensure you're registered to vote:

www.gov.uk/register-to-vote



Registration deadlines

You can register to vote at any time. There are deadlines for registering to vote if you want to vote in a particular election (usually 12 working days before the date of the election).

What happens next?

Your local council will add you to the register and send you a letter to confirm that you are registered. At the next election in which you are eligible to vote, your local council will send you details of when and where to vote.

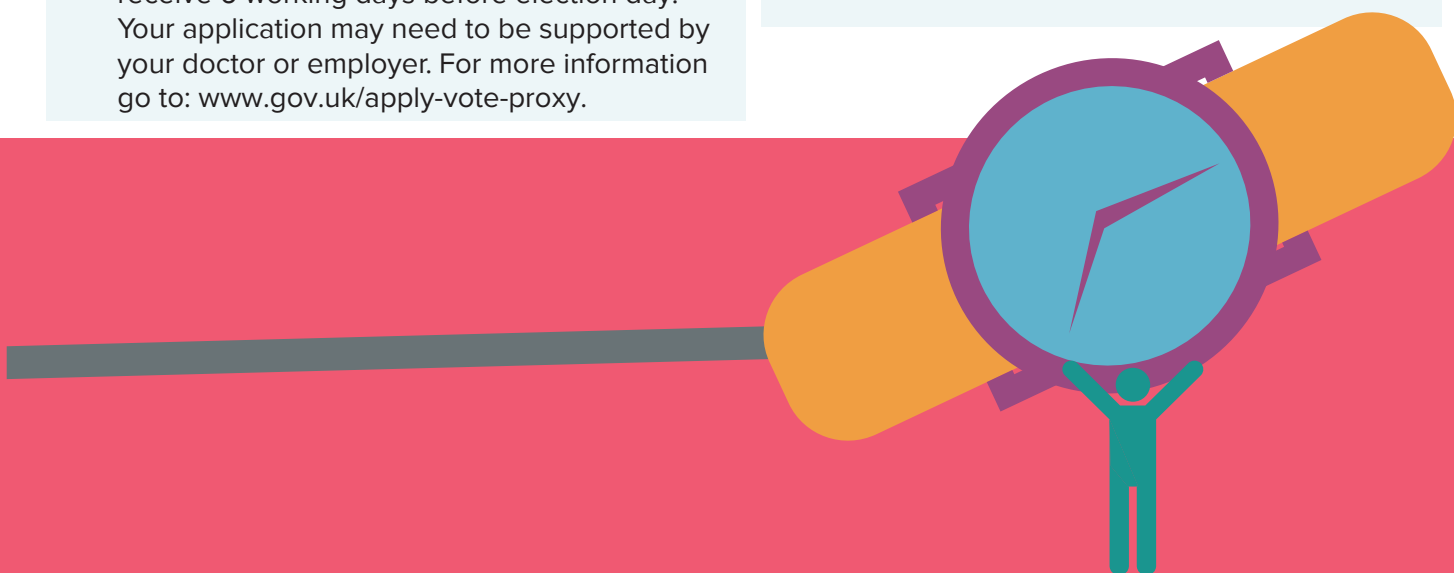
There are three ways that you can vote:

- 1 In person** – on election day, go to your allotted polling station, Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm. You do not need to take the poll card or any ID with you (unless you live in Northern Ireland) (See under What Happens on Election Day? for further details).
- 2 By post** – if you prefer, you can choose to vote by post by filling in an additional application form. Your council must receive the form 11 working days before election day.
- 3 By proxy** – You can appoint someone else to vote on your behalf. You will need to fill in an application form which your local council must receive 6 working days before election day. Your application may need to be supported by your doctor or employer. For more information go to: www.gov.uk/apply-vote-proxy.


What happens on Election Day?

Not relevant for postal votes You will have been sent the details of your local polling station through the post, on your poll card. All polling stations are open from 7am-10pm.

- 1** When you arrive at the polling station staff will cross your name off their list. You don't need a polling card or any other form of ID (unless you live in Northern Ireland).
- 2** You will be given a ballot paper, which will list all the candidates and their parties. If there is more than one election being held, you will be given a different ballot paper for each election.
- 3** Take the ballot paper(s) to one of the booths.
- 4** Make your mark next to the candidate(s) that you've chosen. The way you vote in each election is slightly different. Some elections require you to put a single cross next to your preferred candidate. In other elections you may be required to make more than one choice. Ask polling station staff if you are unsure. They are there to help.
- 5** Once you have made your mark fold your ballot paper(s) so no one can see your choice and put it in the box for the appropriate election.



You can now register to vote online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote
Alternatively you can complete this form.

 **Go online**

You can fill in this form at
www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Register to vote

Only one person can register to vote using this form.

Use **black ink** and write in CAPITALS

Your name and address

Forename(s)

Surname

Your address

 Postcode

Do you live at another address?

No Yes

If we have printed information which is incorrect, please cross it out and write the correct information.

If you also live at another address don't give us the address now, but we may ask you for more information later.

Changed your name in the last 12 months?

No Yes

If yes, please give us your previous name.

Please tell us the date you changed your name (DD MM YYYY).

For example, you may have got married.

Moved in the last 12 months?

No Yes

If yes, please give any previous address where you have lived during the last year.

 Postcode

If this address was overseas, were you registered in the UK as an overseas voter?

No Yes

Don't know your exact date of birth? Please give the date of birth you put on other official documents (for example, your passport or driving licence) or tick one of the boxes.

Your date of birth (DD MM YYYY)

If you don't know your date of birth, please tick if you are:

Under 18 18-70 Over 70

Your nationality

If you have more than one nationality, please include them all. You can only register to vote in the UK if you have leave to remain. We may check your immigration status with the Home Office before we include you on the electoral register.

Your National Insurance number

You may find this on your payslip, or on official letters about tax, pensions or benefits.

If you cannot tell us your National Insurance number, we may need to ask you for proof of your identity. We will contact you about this, and it may take longer to deal with your application.

Don't know your date of birth, nationality or National Insurance number?

Please tell us why.

Contact details

Telephone number(s)

Email address (if you have one) in CAPITALS

You don't have to give us your contact details, but if you do it will help us if we need to contact you about your registration.

The open register

I don't want my name and address to be included in the open register.

There is more information about the open register on page 4 of this form.

Can't vote in person?

If you are unable to go to the polling station in person on polling day, please choose how would you like to vote and we will send you a form.

- By post
- By proxy (someone voting on your behalf)

You can also download an application form at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

Declaration

To the best of my knowledge, the information in this form is true. I understand that the information I have given on this form will be used on the electoral register.

I understand that if I do not make an application for registration when required to do so I could face a fine of £80.

I understand that it is an offence to knowingly give false information in this form, and that I could face a fine of up to £5,000 and/or up to six months in prison.

Signature

Date (DD MM YYYY)

Now sign and return the form

Send the signed form in the pre-paid envelope or to the address on page 1 of this form.

Your vote matters

Champion's evaluation form

Date of workshop

Number of people

Number of voter registration applications completed

Number of people already registered to vote

Based on this workshop, how would you rate the activities?



unsatisfactory



satisfactory



excellent



don't know

Activity 1: Who gets to be a local councillor?

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Activity 2: Creating community action

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Activity 3: Make friends and influence politicians

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Comments on Activity 1:

Comments on Activity 2:

Comments on Activity 2:

Other feedback or ideas from the group:

Suggestions for changes or additions to the pack:

Please return this form to: DemocraticEngagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Thank you!

Your vote matters

Participant evaluation form

Date

Name (optional)

Based on this workshop, how would you rate the activities?



unsatisfactory



satisfactory



excellent



don't know

Activity 1: Who gets to be a local councillor?

Activity 2: Creating community action

Activity 3: Make friends and influence politicians

Comments on Activity 1:

Comments on Activity 2:

Comments on Activity 2:

Any other comments or suggestions:

e.g. how, if at all, has this session changed your thoughts on registration and voting?

Please return this form to: DemocraticEngagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Thank you!

Contact us at:

Democratic Engagement Team
Cabinet Office
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ
DemocraticEngagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

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