

Homelessness Sector

Registering to Vote

Local Elections Briefing 2026

Local elections will take place in many parts of the country on Thursday 7 May 2026. In areas where elections are happening, this is a key opportunity to shape local leadership and support action on homelessness.

To take part in the election people must be registered to vote. Registration closes on Monday 20th April.

Can someone register to vote if they don't have a fixed or permanent address?

Yes. Anyone eligible can register to vote even if they don't have a fixed or permanent address. This guidance explains how. (Please note, this guidance applies in England only. There are different processes elsewhere in the UK.)

Someone might not have a fixed or permanent address because they are:

- homeless or don't have a fixed address
- a patient in a mental health hospital
- a person who has been remanded in custody, but not yet been convicted of an offence.

Who is allowed to register to vote?

Someone can register to vote in the local elections if they are resident (usually live) in England and are aged 16 or over (but they will not be able to vote until they are 18).

They must also be one of the following:

- British citizen
- Irish citizen
- Commonwealth citizen (including Maltese and Cypriot) who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man, or who does not need permission. It is worth noting that citizens of Fiji and Zimbabwe can still register to vote in local elections in England despite having been suspended from the Commonwealth.
- European Union (EU) citizen of Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, or Spain who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man, or who does not need permission (*they can vote in local council and Police and Crime Commissioner elections, and Mayor of London and London Assembly elections only*)
- European Union (EU) citizen of any other EU country who on or before 31 December 2020 had permission to enter or stay in the UK, Channel Islands or

Isle of Man, or who did not need permission, and this has continued without a break (*they can vote in local council and Police and Crime Commissioner elections, and Mayor of London and London Assembly elections only*).

How does someone without a fixed or permanent address register to vote?

To register, they need to give an address where they would be living if it were not for their current situation, or an address where they have lived in the past. If someone is homeless, they can give details of where they spend a substantial part of their time. This could be a shelter, or any place where they sleep or spend a large part of their day.

They need to fill in [this form](#) on the Government website.

They will need to give their full name, and ideally their date of birth, nationality and national insurance number – but this isn't essential. If they don't have a national insurance number, or can't find it, their council will tell them what alternative information to provide so they can confirm their identity.

What happens after someone has filled in the form?

They will need to print it off and sign it and deliver or post it to their local electoral registration officer at the council. All the relevant addresses can be found here: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voter

Why should someone register to vote?

Traditionally people who don't have a permanent place to live are less likely to vote so their views may be less likely to be prioritised by the government.

What can homelessness services do to help with voter registration?

Homeless Link encourages all services to ensure that their clients and residents are registered to vote. Every vote counts, but someone cannot vote if they are not registered. The form has to be accessed through a computer and then printed off. It will need to be sent to the local Registration Office, and services may need to help those they support to do with this. Monday 20th April is the deadline for submission of registration forms in order to vote in the May 7th Local Elections.

What happens next?

Once someone has registered to vote they should be able to vote in the local elections. Before an election, the local election office will send a poll card to their nominated address telling them where their designated polling station is.

Anyone registered to vote can vote in person on the day (Thursday 7th May) at their designated polling station, between 7am and 10pm. [An accepted form of photo ID](#) is required to vote in person. Anyone who doesn't have valid photo ID will need to apply for a free "Voter Authority Certificate". The deadline for applying for this in time for the upcoming local Elections is Tuesday 28th April at 5pm.

Alternatively, during the voter registration process the person registering to vote can stipulate that they would like to vote by post or proxy, instead of "in person". Anyone opting to vote by post will be sent a form to complete – or they can complete this online at www.gov.uk/vote-uk-election. The deadline for postal vote applications is April 21st at 5pm. A postal vote pack will be sent to the elector that includes the ballot paper(s), envelopes and a declaration form, which can either be returned by post in time to be counted on election day or handed in to the council office or the designated polling station on polling day. There is no need to show ID to vote by post. Postal votes are usually despatched about two weeks before polling day, but can be later if the postal vote application is received close to the deadline.

Anyone unable to vote in person, due to illness or disability for example, and would like to nominate someone to vote on their behalf, can apply for a proxy vote when registering to vote. A proxy vote can also be applied for a one off election. Proxy voting can be applied for [here](#) and the deadline for applications is 28th April at 5pm. In limited circumstances the elector can apply for an emergency proxy, the deadline is 7th May at 5pm. Contact the local elections office for an application form.

References

- <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voting-and-elections/who-can-vote/other-registration-options/people-experiencing-homelessness>
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/663e1c47b7249a4c6e9d3273/PF_ITR-N-E-C_acc.pdf
- <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/resources/resources-young-people/your-vote/ways-vote/voting-post>
- <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate>
- <https://www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote>
- <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voting-and-elections/voter-id/accepted-forms-photo-id>