

2019

Easy Read Guide to voting in the
May local elections in Northern Ireland



The
Electoral
Commission

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1

What is voting?

This section explains what voting is and how it works

This section will explain what **voting** is and why it's **important**.



People with a learning disability have as much right to vote as anyone else. Don't let anyone else tell you different.

It's important to remember that you must register so that you can vote.



The people that run your council are called councillors.

They make important decisions that can affect people's lives.

For example, your local council makes important decisions that can change:

- How people with a learning disability use local services.
- How services like leisure centres, parks and rubbish collections are run.



Different councillors have different ideas about the best way to run local services.



Councillors are elected. This means people living in the area get to decide which councillors are elected to run the council.

People call this a local election.

Voting is one of the best ways for people to have their voice heard by people in power.

Councillors are usually part of a political party. There are lots of political parties.

You can also vote for candidates who are not part of a political party. They stand as independent candidates.



In elections people with a learning disability have the same rights to vote as everybody else.



People with a learning disability should vote so they have a say about things that affect their lives.



There will be local elections happening on **Thursday 2 May 2019** across **11** council areas in Northern Ireland.



People will vote to choose who they would like to be their local councillor.

Councillors make important decisions that affect the local community.



If you need more information please visit the following websites

www.yourvotematters.co.uk

www.eoni.org.uk

www.nidirect.gov.uk

Contact information
email: campaigns@mencap.org.uk
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

Who can vote in local elections?

To vote at local elections in Northern Ireland you must be:

- 18 years old or over
- registered to vote
- a UK or Irish citizen, a citizen of the European Union or a qualifying Commonwealth citizen.
- a resident in Northern Ireland.

More information on which countries are included within the Commonwealth can be found on the Electoral Commission's voter information website

– www.yourvotematters.co.uk/can-i-vote/who-can-register-to-vote

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Registering to vote

This section explains how you can register to vote



This section explains how to **register to vote**.

It is important that you register to vote. If you are not registered to vote you won't be able to vote in an election.

You can find out more about voting on the Mencap website:

www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/guides-voting

People living in Northern Ireland can register to vote online at **www.gov.uk/register-to-vote**



For the local elections, you need to register by **Friday 12 April 2019**.

You need to register to vote every time you move home.



There are three ways you can vote and you should pick the one that works best for you.

At a polling station - Before an election you will be posted a poll card. Your poll card will tell you where your nearest polling station is. Your local polling station is where you can vote in person. Polling stations are often at churches, community centres and schools. However they can be in all sorts of places.



By post - If you want to vote by post you will need to **fill in** a postal vote application form and send it back to **the Electoral Office Northern Ireland**. Before elections, you will receive a ballot paper in the post.



By proxy - Voting by proxy means choosing someone else to vote for you. You need to fill in a proxy vote application form and send it back to the Electoral Office Northern Ireland. This person can visit a polling station or apply for a postal vote in order to vote on your behalf.

Need help?

To access the form you need to visit.

www.eoni.org.uk/vot/voting-by-post-or-proxy

If you have any questions you can call the Mencap election hotline on **0207 696 6009**.

Contact information
email: **campaigns@mencap.org.uk**
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

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Voting by post

This section explains how you can apply for a postal vote.



Voting by post

This section explains **how to apply to vote by post.**

If you are unable to make it to the polling station in person on election day you can apply to vote by post.

You will need to get in touch with the Electoral Commission Northern Ireland.

To access the form you need to visit this website

www.eoni.org.uk/vote/voting-by-post-or-proxy

For more information or help you can contact the Electoral Office Northern Ireland

Tel 028 9044 6680

Email info@eoni.org.uk

Once you have completed the form please send it in the post to
Absent Voting Unit
Electoral Office Northern Ireland
15 Church Street
Belfast
BT1 1ER



The deadline for postal vote applications is Wednesday 10 April 2019 at 5pm.

Contact information
email: campaigns@mencap.org.uk
telephone: 0207 696 6009



What happens next

Before the election, you will receive a postal ballot pack and a ballot paper that shows you who you can vote for.



The postal ballot pack will tell you where you should post the paper.



Need help?

You can find out more about voting by post on the Mencap website:

www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/guides-voting

If you get stuck or have any questions, you can call the Mencap team on **0207 696 6009**.



Or

You can call the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland on 028 9044 6680

Contact information
email: **campaigns@mencap.org.uk**
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



Voting by proxy

This section explains how you can apply to vote by proxy (this means someone votes on behalf of someone else)



This guide explains **how to apply to vote by proxy.**

Voting by proxy means that you choose someone to vote for you.

If you are unable to make it to the polling station in person on election day you can apply to vote by proxy.



To access the form you need to vote by proxy visit this website

www.eoni.org.uk/vote/voting-by-post-or-proxy

For more information or help you can contact the Electoral Office Northern Ireland



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If you get stuck or have any questions, you can call the Mencap team on **0207 696 6009**.

Or

You can call the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland on 028 9044 6680



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Voting at a polling station

This section explains how you vote at a polling station



This section explains **how to vote at a polling station.**

You can find out more about voting on the Mencap website:

www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/guides-voting

When you have registered to vote, you can vote in person at a polling station.

Before an election, you will be sent a poll card.

This card will tell you where your nearest polling station is to where you live and where you need to go to vote.



Polling stations are often in churches, community centres and schools. However they can be in all sorts of places.



Polling stations are open from **7am to 10pm.**

It can be useful to take your poll card with you when you go to vote.



When you arrive at a polling station, you will be asked to give your name and address.

Contact information
email: campaigns@mencap.org.uk
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



When you vote at a polling station you will be required to produce one of the following documents to confirm your identity:

A UK, Irish or EEA driving licence (photographic part) (provisional accepted)

A UK, Irish or EU passport

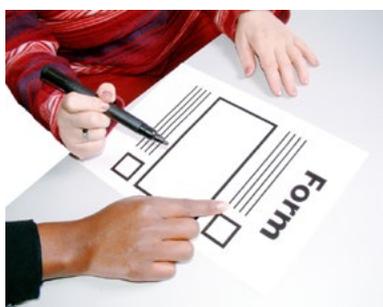
An Electoral Identity Card

A Translink Senior SmartPass

A Translink 60+ SmartPass

A Translink War Disabled SmartPass

A Translink Blind Person's SmartPass



Remember your passport and other forms of **identity** can be out of date. For more information contact the Electoral Office Northern Ireland.

Tel: 028 9044 6680

If you are unsure what to do when you get to the polling station, ask the staff at the polling station – they are there to help you.

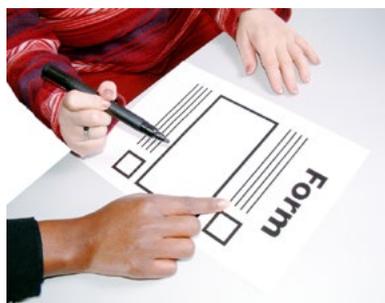


You can also ask someone to come along to the polling station with you to help you. For example, a family member who is over 18 or a support worker who can also vote in the same election as you are. **They can also help you fill in your ballot paper.**

If you don't have anyone with you and you need help filling in your ballot paper the Presiding Officer can help you. The Presiding Officer is the person in charge at the polling station.

Everyone who is registered to vote has the right to vote.

Contact information
email: campaigns@mencap.org.uk
telephone: 0207 696 6009



At the polling station you will be given one **ballot paper**. This is a piece of paper with all the names of the candidates on it.

On the ballot paper, mark a '1' against your first preferred candidate, a '2' against your second preferred candidate and so on, for as many candidates as you wish.



You can find out more about voting at the polling station on the Mencap website:

www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/guides-voting

If you get stuck registering to vote or need help understanding voting, you can call the Mencap team on **0207 696 6009**.

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Important dates

This section tells you the important dates you need to remember for the local elections in May 2019

Important dates for the local elections

You might want to put some of these important dates in your diary or your calendar.



Election Day

Election day for the local elections in Northern Ireland in 2019 is **Thursday 2 May**. You can vote in your polling station between 7am and 10pm.



Register to Vote Deadline

If you want to vote in the local election, the deadline for registering to vote is **midnight on Friday 12 April 2019**.



Postal Vote Application Deadline

If you would like to vote by post, you must send in your application by **5pm, 10 April 2019**

Proxy Vote Application Deadline

If you would like to vote by proxy, you must send in your application by **5pm, 10 April 2019**.

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Terms we use in this guide

This section explains specific useful words, like councillor, ballot box, polling station etc. which you will come across in this guide

Councillor

Councillors are **politicians** who are elected to represent your area on the local council. They help make decisions that affect services in your local area.



Political Parties

A **political party** is a group of people who think the country should be run in a certain way.

Politicians are usually in political parties. There are also candidates that are independent from political parties.



Electoral Register

The electoral register is the list of everyone that is allowed to **vote** in **elections**. You need to be on the electoral register to be able to vote.

Voting

Voting means that you and other people choose who represents you on a **council** or in **parliament or assembly**. In politics, voting happens during an **election**. Voting is very important. It is one of the best ways to get your voice heard by some of the most important people in the country.

Polling station

A **polling station** is a place where you go to **vote**. Polling stations are often at churches, community centres and schools however they can be in all sorts of places. You will be told where your polling station is on your poll card.



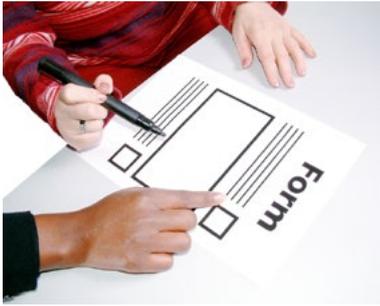
Presiding Officer

The Presiding Officer is the person in charge of a polling station on election day. They are there to make sure the election goes smoothly and they are also there to help if you have a question or would like someone to support you when you vote.



Ballot Box

The **ballot box** is where you put your ballot paper when you vote at a polling station. It is a big black box used to keep all the votes safe until they are ready to be counted.



Ballot Paper

Everyone who votes is given one **ballot paper**. This is a piece of paper with all the names of the candidates on it. If you are voting in a polling station, you then put your ballot paper into the ballot box.

After voting has closed all the ballot papers are counted and the winners are declared.



Postal Vote

A postal vote is when someone is sent their ballot paper in the post and they fill it in and post it back. This means they don't vote at the polling station on polling day.



Proxy Vote

Voting by proxy means choosing someone else to vote for you. You need to fill in a form to choose who will vote for you. This person can visit a polling station or apply for a postal vote in order to vote on your behalf.

Notes

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The Electoral Commission

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