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What is voting?

This guide explains what voting is and how it works

This guide will explain what **voting** is and why it is **important**.



It's important to remember that you must register to vote in order to vote!

The people who run the country are called politicians.

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

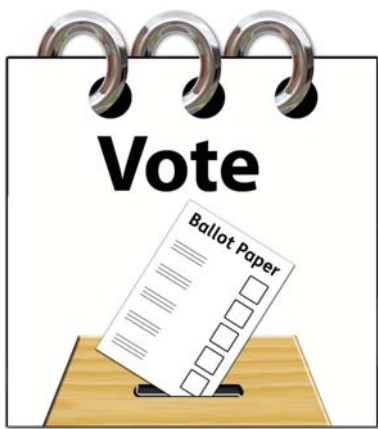


For example, the Government makes important decisions that can change:

- Hate crime laws
- How people with a learning disability get support
- How people with a learning disability get healthcare.



Different politicians have different ideas about the best way to run the country.



Most politicians are elected. This means people get to decide which politicians they would like to run the country.

People call this an election.

You can decide which politicians run the country by voting.

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

Politicians are usually part of a political party. There are lots of political parties. Each party is made up of politicians who agree on how the country should be run. You can also vote for candidates who are not part of a political party. They stand as independent candidates.

In England, some political parties are:

- The Conservative Party
- The Green Party
- The Labour Party
- The Liberal Democrats
- The UK Independence Party.

In Northern Ireland, some political parties are:

- Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
- Democratic Unionist Party
- Green Party in Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Conservatives
- Progressive Unionist Party
- Sinn Féin
- Ulster Unionist Party
- UK Independence Party.

In Wales, some political parties are:

- Welsh Conservative Party
- Welsh Green Party
- Welsh Labour
- Welsh Liberal Democrats
- Plaid Cymru
- UK Independence Party.

In Scotland, some political parties:

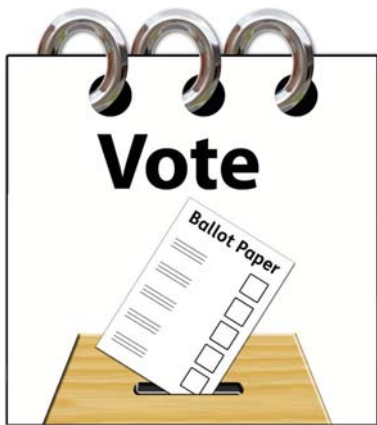
- Conservative and Unionist Party
- Labour Party
- Scottish Green Party
- Scottish Liberal Democrats
- Scottish National Party
- UK Independence Party.



People with a learning disability have the same rights to vote as everybody else. If you are over 18 years old you may be able to vote.



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



The next elections will be on the 5 May 2016.

These elections will be the Local Council elections in some parts of England, elections for the National Assembly for Wales, Scottish Parliament and elections for the Greater London Assembly, London Mayor and the Police and Crime Commissioners.

In these elections people can vote for who they would like to make some of the most important decisions in their local area.

People will vote to choose who they would like to represent their local area on the local council, in the Scottish Parliament, on the Welsh Assembly or who will be their Police and Crime Commissioner.

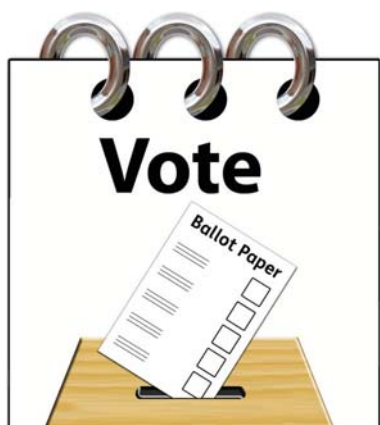
The people elected make important decisions that affect your local area. Most councillors, Members of Parliament and the Assembly belong to a political party.

General Elections happen every five years. The next General Election will be on 7 May 2020.

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Guide to registering to vote

This guide explains how someone can register to vote



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

It is important that you register to vote. You cannot vote unless you register.

You can find out more about voting on the Mencap and Electoral Commission websites:

**www.mencap.org.uk/allaboutvoting
www.aboutmyvote.co.uk**

Elections allow you to choose who you want to run the country and to run your local area.

Online registration

To register to vote, you can go online to **www.gov.uk/register-to-vote** or fill in a form. A copy of this form is at the end of this guide. Please register to vote!





Completing an electoral registration paper form

The form has four sections:

- Your name
- Your address
- Other information
- Declaration.



Your name

You will need to write your first names, your last name and your nationality.

You may have changed your name in the last 12 months. For example, you may have become married.

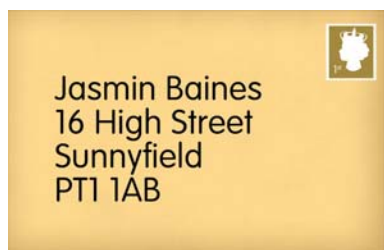
If you have changed your name, you should write your old name and when you changed your name.

You will need to write your date of birth.



Your address

Next, fill in your address and post code in the Address section.



You may have changed address in the last 12 months. You should write your previous address if you have moved house in the last 12 months.

Other information

Please write your nationality. You may have more than one nationality. For example, you may be English and Bangladeshi. You should write all your nationalities.

Please fill in your National Insurance number. You should be able to find this on your payslip or any letters about your tax or your benefits.

Declaration

Next, fill in the Declaration section.

You will need to sign your name or make your mark and write the date.





Now you need to post the form to your local electoral services team. They will make sure you hear about future elections before they happen.



Here is how you find out where to post the form:

- You can call **Mencap Direct** on **0808 808 1111**.
 - Tell the operator you would like to find out the address for your local electoral services team.
 - The operator will ask for your postcode. They will then search online for the address of your local electoral services team.
- Or you can search for your local electoral services team on **www.aboutmyvote.co.uk**
- Once you have registered you will be sent a poll card when there is an election.





What happens next?

Once you have registered to vote, you can vote in the local and General Elections.

Local elections let people choose which politicians will run your local area.

General Elections happen every five years. These elections let people choose their MP.

Need help?

You can find out more about voting on the Mencap and Electoral Commission websites:

www.mencap.org.uk/allaboutvoting

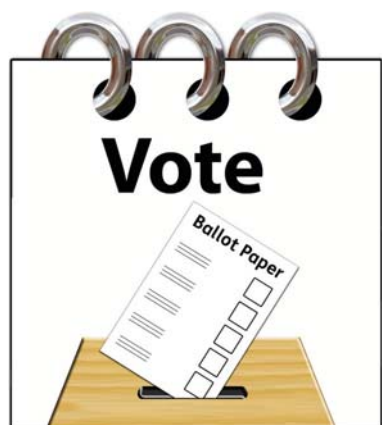
www.aboutmyvote.co.uk



If you get stuck or have any questions, you can call the Mencap team on **020 7696 5583**.



Contact information
email: **help@mencap.org.uk**
telephone: **020 7696 5583**
Mencap Direct: **0808 808 1111**



There are three ways to vote:

- **At a polling station** - Before an election you will be posted a poll card. Your poll card will tell you where your 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** - You will be sent a form similar to the registration form. You should fill out the postal vote application and send it to your local electoral services team. Before elections, you will receive a ballot paper in the post. It will tell you when to post it.
- **By proxy** - Voting by proxy means choosing someone else to vote for you. You need to fill in a new 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.





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 or go online at
www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

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's 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.