

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

This Call for Evidence looks to support the Government's commitment to ensure the electoral system is accessible for all electors.

Thank you to RNIB for advice on producing this accessible document.

Responses to the Call for Evidence will:

enhance the Government's understanding of the experiences of disabled people in registering to vote and casting their vote.

help identify if current mechanisms to support disabled people to participate in the democratic process are sufficient; and

identify examples of good practice provided by Electoral Service Teams to disabled people at elections.

The Cabinet Office is seeking comments by 17:00 Tuesday 14 November 2017.

A report of key findings and recommendations will be produced in partnership with the Cabinet Office chaired Accessibility of Elections Group. This will be published in Spring 2018.

This Call for Evidence will be of particular interest to:

Disabled people;

Those who support disabled people to register to vote and/or vote;

Individuals, organisations and stakeholders who work with and also represent the interests of disabled people;

Healthcare and social care professionals and providers;

Electoral administrators and electoral stakeholders.

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The questions for this Call for Evidence are outlined below and respondents are invited to submit answers to the questions which are most relevant to them.

Please write your answers under the questions and return this document by email or post. You can also call us and tell us your answers. See 'How to respond to this Call for Evidence' at the end of this document.

Details of specific disabilities and the challenges they present in registering to vote and voting are welcome and will aid understating of how support can be best provided.

1. What capacity you are giving the information? For example as a disabled person, a support worker, or an organisation.

Answer:

SECTION ONE - EXPERIENCE OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN PARTICIPATING IN ELECTIONS

Please provide details of your experience in registering to vote and casting your vote at elections.

2. Experience of disabled people in registering to vote:

Do you know how to register to vote?

How do you find the process of registering to vote?

Do you need help to register to vote, and if so, who provides this?

What do you think can be done to make it easier for you to register to vote?

3. Voting experience of disabled people:

Do you know how to cast your vote?

How do you prefer to vote: is it by post, by proxy or at the polling station?

Do you need help to cast your vote and, if so, who provides this?

What do you think can be done to make the process of voting easier for you?

SECTION TWO - SUPPORT PROVIDED TO DISABLED PEOPLE AT ELECTIONS

Annex A of this document provides a summary of the support which must be provided to support disabled people to vote at elections.

What support is provided by your organisation?

What does your organisation do to promote the rights of disabled people to register and to cast their votes?

Do you think that the support provided to disabled people to vote at elections is sufficient?

What additional measures can be implemented to dismantle barriers to improve the voting experience of disabled people?

SECTION THREE - LEVELS OF SUPPORT PROVIDED BY ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATORS TO DISABLED PEOPLE AT ELECTIONS

To help develop good practice we would welcome details of the support provided to disabled people at elections by local authority Electoral Service Teams.

What support do you provide to disabled people at electoral events?

Would more guidance on supporting disabled people to vote be helpful?

Do you engage with disabled charities and stakeholders in your area to improve the voting experience of disabled people?

HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS CALL FOR EVIDENCE

We need to receive your response by 17:00 Tuesday 14 November 2017.

Contact information

In case we need to contact you for further information we would be grateful if you could provide contact information including the name of the respondent, name of organisation and contact details (email and telephone).

Contact details for response

Responses should be sent to elections@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

We will accept submissions in hard copy. If you need to submit a hard copy, please send to

Electoral Administration Team
Cabinet Office
4th floor, Orange Zone
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

Handling of information and publication of responses

We will not publish any responses to this Call for Evidence. The information you send may be passed to colleagues within Cabinet Office or other Government departments.

Support provided to disabled people to vote at elections

At elections and referendums, disabled voters may ask that the presiding officer in the polling station to help them to mark the ballot paper. They may also vote with the help of another person - or "companion" - who must be a close family member over 18 years old or a qualified elector.

All polling stations must be equipped with a special "tactile" voting device. The voting device is a reusable plastic template that can be attached to the ballot paper and is designed to allow blind and partially sighted voters to vote independently without revealing their voting intentions to a third party.

A large print version of the ballot paper must be displayed in the polling station and an enlarged hand-held sample copy provided on request to be taken into the polling booth for reference.

Local authorities have responsibility for designating polling places (that is, locations or buildings) within their area. and make sure, as far as is reasonable and practicable, that they are accessible to the local community, including those voters who are disabled.

Also, electoral officers are now required to make certain information and documents about the electoral process available to electors in other languages and formats upon request, including Braille and audio format.

Local authorities and Returning Officers are also required to have regard to the public sector equality duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 when carrying out their duties.

