

# Thurrock Council – Voter ID guidance

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# Voter Authority Certificates

## What is a Voter Authority Certificate?

A Voter Authority Certificate is a free document containing a photograph of an elector. It allows any elector who doesn't have another suitable form of photographic ID (photo ID) – or who doesn't wish to use it – to vote in-person at a polling station in an election at which photo ID is required.

## What elections do Voter Authority Certificates apply for?

The UK Government has passed a law that requires photo ID to apply to all relevant polls in Great Britain. This will include:

- UK Parliamentary general elections
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales
- recall petitions
- local government elections in England
- combined authority mayoral elections
- local authority mayoral elections
- Greater London Assembly elections

The requirement to provide photo ID in the polling station will take effect for local elections in England in May 2023. This requirement already exists for elections in Northern Ireland.

## Do all electors need a Voter Authority Certificate?

No. Electors who already hold a valid form of photo ID will not need to apply for or use a Voter Authority Certificate as they will be able to use their existing ID instead. If an elector owns one or more type of accepted photo ID, they may still apply for a Voter Authority Certificate – for example, it could be that their existing ID does not contain an accurate likeness of the elector.

Other accepted forms of photo ID in polling stations will include:

- A passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, a European Economic Area (EEA) state or a Commonwealth country
- a driving licence issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or an EEA state
- a biometric immigration document
- an identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- a Blue Badge that allows those with a disability or health condition to park closer to their destination
- a national identity card issued by an EEA state
- an Older Person's Bus Pass
- a Disabled Person's Bus Pass
- an Oyster 60+ Card
- a Freedom Pass
- a Scottish National Entitlement Card issued in Scotland
- a 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card issued in Wales
- a Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card issued in Wales
- a Senior SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- a Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland

- a War Disablement SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- a 60+ SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- a Half Fare SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- an Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland

## **I am a postal voter – do I need to provide photo ID?**

Electors voting by post are not affected by the requirement for photo ID. Electors who do not wish to show photo ID can apply for a postal vote in the normal way.

## **Will photocopies of ID documents or pictures on mobile phones of ID documents be accepted?**

No. All accepted documents must be originals. This is because photo-editing software could be used to edit copies, making them susceptible to fraudulent alteration.

## **My name on the electoral register is different from the name on my photo ID – what do I do?**

The decision on whether an ID document bearing a different name or an alternative spelling of a name from the one on the register can be accepted will be at the discretion of the polling station staff, who must be satisfied that the ID provided is acceptable.

If your name has changed, you may be required to provide further proof of identity as evidence of your name change. For example, if your name had changed through marriage, you may provide your marriage certificate. We encourage you to update your details on the electoral register.

## **Can I have my photo ID viewed in private?**

There will be a private area in each polling station for voters who wish to have their ID viewed in private. This may be provided in a variety of ways and will depend on the room or location being used as a polling station. For example, some stations may use privacy screens, whilst others may use an existing partition or a separate room.

If you refuse to comply with a voter ID check, you will not be given a ballot paper and will not be able to vote in the polling station.

## **Can I have my photo ID viewed by a specific gender poll clerk?**

It is not a requirement for the election's Returning Officer to provide a specific gender poll clerk in polling stations. However, you may wish to request a specific gender poll clerk to view your ID and this request will be met if that specific gender poll clerk is available.

## **What happens if I cannot provide acceptable photo ID at the polling station?**

If you turn up to a polling station without acceptable photo ID, you will be advised to leave and return with appropriate ID. The poll clerk will need to record this information.

You may return with acceptable ID and be issued a ballot paper later in the day. If you do, you should notify the poll clerk so they can record this properly.

If you do not provide an accepted form of ID, then there is no evidence that you are the person on the register. This means it will not be appropriate for you to be issued with a ballot paper or a tendered ballot paper.

The Presiding Officer will be responsible for making the decision to refuse to provide a ballot paper. There will be no ability for an elector to appeal the Presiding Officer's decision on polling day.

## **What information does a Voter Authority Certificate contain?**

The Voter Authority Certificate will contain:

- the elector's full name
- a photograph of the elector
- the date of issue of the certificate
- the 'appropriate identifier' – automatically generated, made up of 20 digits and letters
- the words "issued by the Electoral Registration Officer appointed by Thurrock Council"
- the recommended renewal date
- one or more security features, such as a watermark

## **Can I use my Voter Authority Certificate as ID elsewhere?**

No, it cannot be used as proof of identity for any other purpose than for voting.

It does not contain any other information – such as a date of birth or address – that would be found on many other forms of ID.

## **Do I need a Voter Authority Certificate if my existing photo ID is out of date?**

You can use expired photo ID from the approved list of identification, as long as the photograph is still a good likeness of you.

## **How long are Voter Authority Certificates valid for?**

The Voter Authority Certificate does not have a specified validity period, but they have a recommended renewal date of the tenth anniversary from the date of issue.

## **Can Voter Authority Certificates be used in any polling station?**

You can use a Voter Authority Certificate at any election or election petition that requires photo ID to be shown in the polling station, in any local authority. This includes elections that are not held within the local authority area where the Voter Authority Certificate is issued.

## **How can I apply for a Voter Authority Certificate?**

You can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate:

- online via the application portal hosted on GOV.UK
- by providing the necessary information in writing – for example, on a paper application form
- in person at our offices

If you need assistance applying for a Voter Authority Certificate, contact Electoral Services on 01375 652 816

If you contact us to request a paper form before you apply, we will check you are either already a registered elector – or have made a recent application to register – before we can provide a paper application form.

If you are not registered, or have not yet applied to register, we will provide you with the means or opportunity to register so that you can then submit an application for a Voter Authority Certificate.

You will need to provide a suitable photo as part of the application. If you're not able to do so by yourself and would like us to take a photo of you, or if you need any other help to complete your application, we can provide assistance at our Town Hall offices in High Street, Grays.

## **When can I apply for a Voter Authority Certificate?**

You can submit an application, or request an application form, from January 2023.

## **What do I need to provide to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate?**

Any application for a Voter Authority Certificate must contain:

- your full name
- the address at which you are registered to vote, or have applied to be registered at, or in the case of special category electors, your present address, correspondence address or British Forces Post Office (BFPO) number address
- your date of birth
- your National Insurance (NI) number
- a statement as to whether you consider it necessary to collect the Voter Authority Certificate in person instead of it being delivered to the relevant delivery address, and the reason for collection
- a declaration that the contents of the application are true, either by signature or some mark that shows you have made the declaration
- the date of the application

Any application must also contain a suitable photo of you, meeting the relevant size and resolution requirements.

## **When will I receive my Voter Authority Certificate?**

Once your application has been successfully processed, the data is sent to a supplier appointed by the UK Government who will produce the document and then deliver it to you directly, first class by Royal Mail.

Your Voter Authority Certificate should be printed within one to two working days after your application has been successfully processed.

You can request to collect your Voter Authority Certificate in person from the offices of your local authority's Electoral Registration Officer (ERO).

## **I have moved house – do I need to apply for a new Voter Authority Certificate?**

No, but you will need to register to vote at your new address. You will be able to use your Voter Authority Certificate in all polls across Great Britain – not just in the area of the local authority that issued the Voter Authority Certificate.

## **Do I need to be on the electoral register to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate?**

You will need to be registered to vote in order to be issued with a Voter Authority Certificate. However, you will be able to submit an application at the same time as you submit an application to register to vote.

## **What is the deadline for applying for a Voter Authority Certificate?**

Ahead of a specific election, referendum, or recall petition, the deadline for application will be 5pm, 6 working days before either the date of the poll or the last day for signing the petition.

For elections on 4 May 2023 this deadline is Tuesday 25 April 2023 at 5pm.

If you apply for a Voter Authority Certificate after this date, you will not be able to use your Voter Authority Certificate at that poll or recall petition.

## **If I've lost or damaged my Voter Authority Certificate, can I get a new one?**

If you have successfully applied for a Voter Authority Certificate but have not received it, you may request a reprint within a month of the application being made.

In certain circumstances, after the deadline for applications for a specific election or recall petition (5pm, 6 working days before polling day or the last day for signing the petition), but before 5pm on polling day or 5pm on the last day for signing a recall petition, you may apply for an emergency proxy on grounds relating to voter identification.

To apply for an emergency proxy on these grounds, the acceptable photo ID that you intended to use, including a Voter Authority Certificate, must have been lost, stolen, destroyed or damaged, and you must declare that you do not have access to another form of accepted photo ID.

You can also apply for an emergency proxy in this way if the photo ID of your existing appointed proxy has been lost, stolen, destroyed or damaged. You will not need to provide evidence or an attestation to support your request for an emergency proxy in these situations.

## **I have been appointed as a proxy / emergency proxy – what ID do I need to provide?**

If you intend to vote as the proxy at a polling station, you need to show your own photo ID. You do not need the ID of the elector. If you are a proxy voter and do not have accepted photo ID, you can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate but must do so before the deadline.

## **Will my poll card look different?**

Yes. For May 2023 there will be additional information on the Poll Card regarding the new requirements and details regarding voter identification. The postal poll card will remain unchanged.

## **What can I expect when I attend the polling station to vote in person?**

You will go to the desk and tell the staff your name and address. They will ask you to provide your photo ID. They will then give you your ballot paper.

Take your ballot paper to a voting booth. Read the instructions in the booth and mark your ballot paper, fold them once so that nobody can see how you have voted. Place your folded ballot paper in the ballot box.

## **I no longer want to vote in person at a polling station – what are my options?**

If you do not want to vote in person at a polling station, you can apply to vote by post. This means you will be sent a postal ballot pack before the election. For the local elections on 4 May 2023, the application to vote by post must be received by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) of your local authority no later than 5pm, Tuesday 18 April 2023.

If you prefer to appoint a proxy, you can nominate somebody (who is a registered elector) that you trust to attend your polling station in person and vote on your behalf. For the local elections on 4 May 2023, the application for a proxy vote must be received by the ERO no later than 5pm, Tuesday 25 April 2023. You should check that your intended proxy has acceptable photo ID.

# **Anonymous Elector's Document**

## **What is an Anonymous Elector's Document?**

Anonymous electors who want to vote in person at a polling station will need to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document. This document will be the only form of identification that an anonymous elector can use in the polling station.

This is because an anonymous elector's name does not appear on the register, and therefore no other types of identification would prove their identity.

## **What does an Anonymous Electors Document contain?**

The Anonymous Elector's Document will contain:

- the elector's elector number
- a photograph of the elector
- the date of issue of the certificate
- the 'appropriate identifier' – automatically generated, made up of 20 digits and letters
- the words "issued by the Electoral Registration Officer appointed by Thurrock Council"
- the recommended renewal date
- one or more security features, such as a watermark

## **Do all anonymous electors need an Anonymous Elector's Document?**

Any anonymous elector who wishes to vote in a polling station in relevant elections or referendums, or sign a signing sheet at a signing place for an election petition, will need to produce an Anonymous Elector's Document as their photo ID.

The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) must notify all existing qualifying anonymous electors on their register of the new requirements to apply for and hold an Anonymous Elector's Document if they want to vote in person.

Any anonymous elector who is registered to vote by post will not need to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document, unless they cancel their postal vote and wish to vote in person.

## **How can I apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document?**

You can only make an application for an Anonymous Elector's Document using a paper application form.

If you contact us to request a paper form before you apply, we will check you are either already a registered anonymous elector, or have made a recent application to register, before we can provide a paper application form.

## **What do I need to provide to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document?**

Any application for an Anonymous Elector's Document must contain:

- your full name

- the address at which you are registered to vote (or have applied to be registered at), or in the case of special category electors, your present address, correspondence address or British Forces Post Office (BFPO) number address
- your date of birth
- your National Insurance (NI) number
- a statement as to whether you consider it necessary to collect the Anonymous Elector's Document in person instead of it being delivered to the relevant delivery address, and the reason for collection
- a declaration that you have, or are applying to have, an anonymous entry on the register
- a declaration that the contents of the application are true, either by signature or some mark that shows that you have made the declaration
- the date of the application

Any application must also contain a suitable photo of you, meeting the relevant size and resolution requirements.

### **When will I receive my Anonymous Elector's Document?**

Once your application has been successfully processed, the Anonymous Elector's Document will be produced by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and posted to you, in a plain envelope.

If you consider it necessary to collect your Anonymous Elector's Document, you may indicate this on your application. If the ERO determines that collection is necessary based on the reason you provided, you will be contacted to arrange collection.

### **What is the deadline for applying for Anonymous Elector's Document?**

Ahead of a specific election, referendum, or recall petition, the deadline for applying will be 5pm, 6 working days before either the date of the poll or the last day for signing the petition.

If you apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document after this date, you will not be able to use your Anonymous Elector's Document at that poll or recall petition.

### **If I've lost or damaged my Anonymous Elector's Document, can I get a new one?**

If you lose or damage your Anonymous Elector's Document after 5pm, 6 working days before polling day or the last day for signing a recall petition, but before 5pm on polling day or 5pm on the last day for signing a recall petition, you may apply for a replacement.

In these circumstances, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) will make the replacement Anonymous Elector's Document available for election and you must collect it yourself.

### **How long is an Anonymous Elector's Document valid for?**

You will need to apply for a new Anonymous Elector's Document each year when your anonymous registration expires and you renew it.

If you have an Anonymous Elector Document and your elector number changes during the validity period – for example, when the electoral register is republished in December – the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) will issue your Anonymous Elector's Document bearing the correct elector number.

## **Do I also need to take my anonymous poll card to the polling station?**

Yes, as an anonymous elector you need to take your Anonymous Elector Document and your poll card to the polling station and show them to the poll clerk.

## **Security and privacy**

### **Is the data I enter online secure?**

The online voter registration website, the Voter Authority Certificate application website and the data you provide are all secure. The websites have been developed to meet best practice guidelines for data security, tested for security and independently accredited.

### **Why do you want my date of birth and National Insurance number?**

You must provide personal identifiers – your date of birth and National Insurance number – to register to vote, to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate or to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document.

These details are checked against government records to verify your identity. This is a way of making the process more secure.