

Electoral Services

# Registering to vote

Care home handbook



Working with  
you to make  
sure your  
residents have  
their say.



Brighton & Hove  
City Council

# Registering to vote

## Care home handbook

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## **Introduction**

The right to vote is central to involvement in our community and our sense of personal dignity. It is highly valued by citizens of the United Kingdom. Without a vote, residents don't have a voice in society and lose their say in how it is run.

Residents of care homes are eligible to register to vote, and can all request access to postal votes should mobility be an issue. However, citizens in care homes are much less likely to be registered than the wider community. Some of this will be due to capability issues, but can also be a result of voter registration being overlooked in the complex process of moving from independent living to residential care, or moving between care homes.

This handbook sets out to help care home managers to understand the requirements of the electoral canvass, how they can use their expertise to improve the experience for their residents, and make them aware of the support available from the Electoral Services team.

Electoral registration is a legal requirement, and we want to work with care homes to ensure that the right outcome is reached for each resident. Support is available to assist residents, and this can help to ensure that the administrative burden is reduced to a minimum.

We look forward to establishing a partnership which ensures that your residents can have the right to vote in any election, should they wish to use it.

**Electoral Services Team**

**Brighton & Hove City Council**

January 2017

## The Electoral Canvass

For most care homes, the electoral canvass consists of the production and return of two sets of forms:

- **The Household Enquiry Form (HEF)**  
Normally hand delivered, with follow-up visits by council canvassers, this form asks the householder (or manager of residential homes) to list residents at an address. Information from this canvass is used to check the existing electoral roll. Any changes suggested by this exercise will result in the production of a letter to new elector called an 'Invitation to Register'.
- **Invitation to Register letter (ITR)**  
Usually sent in the post, these letters include a registration form to allow the recipient to apply for registration. To complete successfully, the elector needs to have their National Insurance Number to hand, otherwise there will be future correspondence seeking copies of documents to confirm identity.

For most care homes, the HEF information simply requires copying from an existing document. You can avoid this task by submitting a copy of the home's register, redacted as appropriate, as we only require the residents' names and dates of birth to begin the registration process. This can be supplied by email.

Consultation with care home managers has suggested that it would be best to do this quarterly to ensure that changes are easily managed in small batches. Some have also asked if it would be possible to set up an email reminder from the Electoral Services team – we will be pleased to do this if asked.

Care home managers can support the ITR process by helping residents to complete paper forms, or to register online. It is common for care home residents not to have access to their National Insurance Number, not to have a valid passport and, obviously, they have few regular bills to prove their ID. In such cases a responsible person from the care home can sign an attestation which will serve as confirmation of identity. A copy of a form is included in this handbook.

## Outreach support

Brighton & Hove City Council provides support for care homes through its outreach canvassers. They can help residents complete forms, register online using their iPads, organise postal votes and confirm their identity. They are also responsible for maintaining relationships with care home management, making direct contact to discuss issues at least once a year.

Outreach canvassers are also the first point of contact for care homes in case of any problems or queries. Residents can make contact directly if they require assistance, but in most cases contact will be requested by care home staff. In addition to personal assistance with form filling, registration, etc, they are also happy to attend resident meetings to talk about voting and registration.

An advantage of using outreach canvassers is that all of the factors affecting a resident can be assessed at the same time, avoiding further correspondence and additional effort from the care team.

## Welcome Pack

In the busy period leading up to and during the move into residential care, registering to vote can sometimes be overlooked. Including voter registration in the settling in process does help signal that moving into care does not mean a new resident's citizenship is diminished.

Brighton & Hove City Council has produced a welcome pack which can be given to new residents and discussed with their families before the move takes place.

The pack includes a welcome letter, information about how to register and how to access support should this be required. The pack also includes paper registration forms and a postal vote application form.

Packs are available from the Electoral Services team and are free of charge.

## Confirmation of identity

For some residents of care homes, it can be difficult to confirm their identity with supporting documents such as passport, driving licence, utility bills, etc. In many cases they will rely upon a statement from their care home, attesting that they are who they say they are. This handbook includes a form to easily do this for residents. This can be downloaded and personalised from our outreach webpage.

## Capability

This is a difficult area. There is no legal definition of capability to vote, the assumption being that everyone can vote if they are eligible, irrespective of any physical or mental capacity issues. This suggests that everyone must register to vote even if they would not be able to vote in practice. However, there will be individuals for whom the process of registering is beyond their mental capacity and who would be distressed by doing it.

In effect this is the key measure for people who are exempted from registration – capacity **and** distress. In such cases, the care home should inform the Electoral Services team using the form in this pack which can be downloaded and personalised from the outreach webpage.

Where a resident has a physical impediment which could interfere with their ability to vote, this can be addressed in a number of ways:

- If a resident has difficulty completing a form they can be helped by an outreach canvasser. It is easy to make an appointment to do this by calling the electoral office number.
- A postal vote can be issued to any resident who might have difficulty attending at a polling station in person.
- If a resident cannot produce a consistent signature for their postal vote, a waiver can be granted to allow them to vote without a signature. This is only allowed in a small number of cases. A form to record people requiring this assistance can be downloaded and personalised from the outreach webpage.
- A resident can appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf. This can be a friend or member of their family.

Please contact the Electoral Services team if you have a resident who requires assistance in such a case.

## Assistance and contact

Brighton & Hove City Council's Electoral Services team is based at Brighton Town Hall in Bartholomew Square, Brighton. The table below shows the simplest ways to contact the right team member as well as websites where you can find out essential information and download forms directly.

I want to.....	Website / email	Telephone	Comments
..talk to someone about electoral canvass information	<a href="mailto:electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk">electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk</a>	01273 291999	Or contact your nominated canvasser if known.
..make an appointment for an outreach canvasser to visit	<a href="mailto:electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk">electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk</a>	01273 291999	Or contact your nominated canvasser if known.
..help a resident to register online	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote">www.gov.uk/register-to-vote</a>	01273 291999	Call to clarify any identification or eligibility issues.
..download application forms for postal votes or voting by proxy	<a href="http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk">www.aboutmyvote.co.uk</a>	01273 291999	PDF versions of forms can be emailed from the council if required.
..discuss what can be done to help physically handicapped residents to vote	<a href="mailto:electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk">electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk</a>	01273 291999	Or contact your nominated canvasser if known.
..get fresh supplies of welcome packs	<a href="mailto:electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk">electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk</a>	01273 291999	Or contact your nominated canvasser if known.
..email resident information to the electoral services team	<a href="mailto:electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk">electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk</a>		HEF information can be emailed, as can proofs of ID. If submitting documents please include postcode in the address line.
...inform electoral services about someone leaving or new residents	<a href="mailto:electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk">electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk</a>	01273 291999	There is no need to inform Electoral Services each time the register changes. The three monthly register update will usually be enough notice.

Electoral Services  
Brighton & Hove City Council  
Town Hall  
Bartholomew Square  
Brighton  
BN1 1JA

Tel: 01273 291999  
Email: [electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk)  
Fax: 01273 291222  
Web: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach)

## Frequently asked questions

### Registering to be a voter

**Q Are my residents entitled to be registered?**

A Yes, as long as they are permanently resident at your home, are 16 or 17 or over, and are British, Irish, Commonwealth or European Union citizens.

**Q When and how should they apply to be registered?**

A The registration system changed in June 2014, making each resident responsible for their registration. Although there is still an annual canvass, the process is now continuous across the year. Residents can apply using paper form, online, or with the assistance of an outreach canvasser. Care Homes remain responsible for completing the Household Information Form (HEF), detailing every resident at the address.

**Q What else has changed about the new registration system?**

A To make the registration system more secure, applicants must now provide identifying information (date of birth and national insurance number) as part of their application. These details will be checked against government records to verify the identity of the person making the application.

**Q Does each applicant have to sign their own application?**

A On the paper form, the applicant must make the declaration by signing or making their usual mark. On the online application, the applicant must confirm that the information is correct. Alternatively, a person who has an appropriate power of attorney may make the declaration on behalf of the applicant.

**Q Can someone else, such as the Care Home Manager, sign the individual registration application form for them as a 'pp' or 'power of attorney' signatory?**

A Only a person with an appropriate power of attorney may complete a registration application and make the declaration of truth on behalf of an incapacitated person.

### Applying to vote by post or by proxy

**Q Our residents are unable to go to a polling station. Can they apply to vote by post?**

A Yes, any person who is individually registered to vote (and identity checked) can apply for a postal vote.

**Q Does each applicant have to sign their own application?**

A Yes, each applicant must sign their own application form and they must also provide their date of birth on the form. These are then held by Electoral Services, and are checked when a postal vote is received at an election.

If the applicant is unable to sign, due to illness or disability for example, he or she may ask for a signature waiver, but they must give the reasons for asking for this waiver.

**Q Can they appoint someone else – a proxy – to vote for them?**

A Yes, but acceptable reasons must be given for applying for a proxy vote. These will include visual impairment or registered disability, or a supporting statement from a doctor or Care Home Manager.

**Q Can we act as a proxy for a voter with severe learning disabilities who would not otherwise be able to exercise their own choice?**

A We would not advise Care Home Managers to act as a proxy for any of their residents. Apart from the fact that a non-family member can only act as proxy for a maximum of two other voters, it is far better that a resident's family member or other contact should act as their proxy. Otherwise, this question still comes down to whether the person would be able to exercise, on their own, an individual choice.

**Q Our residents have severe learning disabilities / dementia. Can we vote for them?**

A No, this is not possible in election law **unless** you are the appointed proxy for a resident. It will also be important to ask, could the resident have exercised an individual choice on their own?

**Q One of our residents has dementia, but they always voted for such and such a party, and we feel they would still want to vote that way. Can we vote for them?**

A As above, no, **unless** you are the appointed proxy. But, the same question of individual choice arises.

**Q We have heard some of the media reports about postal voting misuse and fraud. What advice do you give us on this one?**

A Postal voting fraud has been very topical and the law concerning postal voting fraud was recently tightened up. Unless they have a signature waiver, the voter must sign the Postal Voting Statement themselves using their usual signature, and they must enter their date of birth on the statement. The statement is checked against the specimen signature and date of birth that we hold; we have a policy of referring what may be fraudulent statements to the police.

We advise you to take a cautious role. You would be quite right in guiding the resident with the fairly complex forms and envelopes, but the resident must sign and date the statement themselves and they must exercise their own, individual choice in how they vote.

## Examples of forms

The following pages are examples of forms which can be used by care home management to record residents who are incapable of registering to vote and to attest the identity of residents.

There are also examples of the forms used to register to vote, to apply for a postal vote and for a proxy vote.

A sample welcome pack letter is also included.

## Website

All of these forms can be downloaded and personalised as required. Our website is also the place to find the most up to date versions of forms and guidance associated with registering to vote and the options available to your residents. You will also find links to other useful sites. Go to [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach) to find out more.

## Declaration of incapacity to vote

**Declaration of incapacity to vote**

To be used by residential care homes only where residents clearly do not have mental capacity to vote and where the process of registration might cause distress



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Name and address of Care Home

Download and personalise this form at:  
[www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach)

To: The Electoral Registration Officer  
Brighton & Hove City Council

I am writing to inform you that the following persons resident at the residential care home (address above) do not have mental capacity to vote and should not be written to further in relation to voter registration:

First name	Surname	Date of birth

I understand that Brighton & Hove City Council will only use the information provided for electoral purposes and they will look after personal information securely according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

I understand it is an offence to provide false information. The maximum penalty is six months in prison and/or a £5,000 fine.

Signed:

Position:

Please print name:

## Form of Attestation

**Form of Attestation**

To be used by residential care homes only where National Insurance Number is not available to corroborate a resident's identity for the purpose of registering to vote



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Name and address of Care Home

Download and personalise this form at:  
[www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach)

To: The Electoral Registration Officer  
Brighton & Hove City Council

I am writing to confirm the identity of the following people resident at the residential care home (address above):

First name	Surname	Date of birth

I understand that Brighton & Hove City Council will only use the information provided for electoral purposes and they will look after personal information securely according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

I understand it is an offence to provide false information. The maximum penalty is six months in prison and/or a £5,000 fine.

Signed:

Position:

Please print name:

# Inability to provide a consistent signature

**Inability to provide a consistent signature**

To be used by council outreach workers in association with residential care home staff where residents cannot provide a signature, or a consistent signature



Brighton & Hove  
City Council

Name and address of Care Home

Download and personalise this form at:  
[www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/voting-outreach)

To: The Electoral Registration Officer  
Brighton & Hove City Council

The following person/people resident at the residential care home (address above) cannot provide a signature, or a consistent signature for the purpose of completing absent votes:

First Name	Surname	Unable to provide a consistent signature because of:	
		Disability	Inability to read or write

I understand that Brighton & Hove City Council will only use the information provided for electoral purposes and they will look after personal information securely according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

I understand it is an offence to provide false information. The maximum penalty is six months in prison and/or a £5,000 fine.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Postal Vote Application

Application to vote by post



**Only one person can apply to vote by post using this form.** Please write in black ink and use **BLOCK LETTERS**. When you have completed every section and signed the form yourself, send it to your electoral registration office. You can get the address at [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)

**1 About you**

Surname \_\_\_\_\_

First names (in full) \_\_\_\_\_

Your full UK address (where you are registered to vote) \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime telephone or mobile number (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**3 Address for ballot paper**

Please send my ballot paper to:

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

The reason I would like my ballot paper sent to this address, rather than my registered address is: \_\_\_\_\_

**2 How long do you want a postal vote for?**

I want to vote by post at all elections or referendums (tick one box only):

until further notice (permanent postal vote)

for the elections or referendums to be held on \_\_\_\_\_

for the period

from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

**4 Your date of birth and declaration**

**Declaration:** As far as I know, the details on this form are true and accurate. I understand that to provide false information on this form is an offence, punishable on conviction by imprisonment of up to 2 years and/or a fine.

**Date of birth:** Please write your date of birth 'DD MM YYYY' in the black boxes below, **using black ink.**

Signature: Sign below, keeping within the grey border.

If you are unable to sign this form, please contact your Electoral Registration Officer

**5 Date of application**

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

### **Brighton & Hove City Council Care Home Welcome Pack**

**YOUR VOTE MATTERS**

**DON'T LOSE IT**



Brighton & Hove City Council  
Town Hall  
Brighton  
BN1 1JA

Call 01273 291999

Email [electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Web [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/vote](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/vote)

Dear resident,

Now that you have moved into residential care it is important that you register to vote at your new address. It is the duty of every adult in the UK to register, although it is not compulsory to vote in elections or referendums. You can register in one of three ways:-

- Complete and sign the attached form and return it to us using the pre-paid envelope supplied.
- Go online to register at **[www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)**. This is the quickest way to register on computer, tablet or smartphone.
- Call the Electoral Services team at Brighton & Hove City Council on 01273 291999. It may be possible for one of their canvassers to visit and assist with your registration.

#### **Proof of identity**

If you don't know your National Insurance Number you can ask the manager for **a form of attestation** to accompany your application. This simply confirms your identity in a different way, ensuring that your application is not delayed and will avoid you having to supply copies of other documents at a later date.

#### **Postal vote**

If you feel that you would not be able to vote in person this pack also includes a postal vote form which you can use for one election, or until further notice. It can be returned in the pre paid envelope with or without the paper form. If you would like a postal vote but are concerned that you might not be able to provide a consistent signature, please get in touch with us to see if we can arrange a waiver for this requirement.

#### **Open register**

Most care home residents elect to opt-out from the open register. This simply means that their details cannot be used by companies seeking to contact prospective customers about their goods and services. It does not interfere with your right to vote.

#### **Capability**

Some residents may have difficulty understanding the registration process or be distressed by the prospect of filling out forms. If this is true in your case, please talk to your care home staff – it may be possible to arrange for a personal visit or to be excused from the registration process entirely.

If you would like to find out more about registering to vote, or anything else in this pack, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the team here on 01273 291999.

Yours sincerely,

Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis  
Electoral Registration Officer

**Electoral Services**

Brighton Town Hall  
Bartholomew Square  
Brighton BN1 1JA

**Telephone** 01273 291999

**Email** [electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

**Fax** 01273 291222