



## Ways of voting

YOUR LONDON. YOUR VOTE

### Who can vote in the London elections?

People can vote in the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections on 3rd May 2012 if they are:

- resident in one of the 32 Greater London boroughs or the City of London
- a British, Republic of Ireland, qualifying Commonwealth or European Union citizen
- 18 years old or over on polling day
- registered to vote (please visit [www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/how-register-vote](http://www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/how-register-vote) to find out more about how to register)

To qualify, Commonwealth citizens must be resident in the UK and either have leave to remain in the UK or not require such leave.

### Ways of voting

#### At a polling station

On 3rd May voters can visit their local polling station between 7am and 10pm and cast their votes there. However, if they are registered as a postal voter, they **MUST** use the ballot papers sent by post. Postal voters will not be given ballot papers if they go to a polling station.

Voters should make sure that they arrive in plenty of time. By law, if voters have not been issued with their ballot papers by 10pm, they will not be able to vote. This is the case even if they have been waiting in a queue since before 10pm.

Poll cards will be delivered to all registered voters before the election telling voters where their polling station is. Voters do not need to take the poll card with them to be able to vote, but it will help staff. Voters can only vote at the polling station stated on this card.

When voters arrive at the polling station they will be asked by staff for their name and address to make sure that they are on the register. Staff will then provide the three ballot papers and can help voters understand how to fill out these papers if required. Voters should not fold their

ballot papers, but instead place them face down flat into the ballot box. This ensures the counting machines can scan them easily. Folded ballot papers will slow down the count. In the polling station, there will be a Presiding Officer and Poll Clerks. The Presiding Officer is responsible for running that particular polling station. The Poll Clerks are the people who hand out the ballot papers.

Supporters of the candidates (called 'tellers') may stand outside the polling station and ask voters for their name and address on the way into and out of the polling station. Tellers help their parties to identify supporters who have not yet voted, so that they can be contacted and encouraged to vote, and offered assistance – such as transport to the polling station – if necessary. Voters do not have to speak to tellers if they do not wish to do so.

Returning Officers must endeavour to ensure polling stations are accessible for voters with disabilities, both in entering the premises but also by providing accessible booths which are lower and wider to accommodate wheelchairs. 'Tactile voting devices' and large-print versions of ballot papers are also available at all polling stations to help people with visual impairments. Voters may also ask for help from polling station staff to complete their ballot papers. Voters can bring along a companion to help them, but they must seek the permission of the polling station staff to do so. London Elects provides guidance for disabled people and carers at [www.londonelects.org.uk/im-community-group](http://www.londonelects.org.uk/im-community-group)

All voting materials in polling stations are in English, however there will be guidance notes available on request in 16 languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (simple and traditional), French, Gujarati, Hindi, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu, and Yoruba. It is also available in Braille.

#### By postal vote

Anyone can register to vote by post. Voters can apply for a postal vote by contacting their local borough council or by downloading an application form from [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk). The last date

to apply for a postal vote, and for the council to receive the application by, is 5pm on Wednesday 18th April.

Ballot papers will be sent to postal voters about one week before polling day, and must be returned to the council by 10pm on 3rd May. Voters who do not post their ballot papers and postal voting statement in time can deliver it by hand on polling day to any polling station in their borough or to their borough's elections office.

By law, voters need to give their signature and date of birth when they apply for a postal vote, and again on the 'postal voting statement' which accompanies the ballot papers in the post. These are checked to help prevent any postal voting fraud. They will not be viewed alongside completed ballot papers, so the secrecy of the ballot is maintained. The law requires that at least 20% of the postal vote identifiers are checked. For the 2012 Mayor of London and London Assembly elections the Greater London Returning Officer has directed that Returning Officers should plan to check 100% of postal voter identifiers.

Voters should follow the instructions in the postal ballot pack carefully. Ballot papers and the postal voting statement should be folded and placed in the return envelopes as shown.

## **Voting by proxy**

If someone cannot vote at their polling station or by post, they can ask someone else to vote on their behalf. Voters can apply for a 'proxy vote' by contacting their local borough council's elections office or by downloading an application form from [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk).

Voters must give a specific reason to vote by proxy. For example if they have physical disability or condition, if they are away on holiday, have educational or employment commitments or are a member of the armed forces. The last date to apply for a proxy vote, and for the council to receive the application by, is 5pm on Wednesday 25th April.