

Media handbook

Mayor of London and London Assembly
elections

Thursday 6 May 2021

Produced by the Electoral Commission and London Elects

Media contacts and resources

Electoral Commission press office

Media contacts

Electoral Commission press office
Andreea Ghita and Billy Proudlock
Tel: 020 7271 0704
press@electoralcommission.org.uk
Out of office hours: 07789 920 414

Our channels

[Like us on Facebook](#)
[Read our blog](#)
Follow us on Twitter
[@ElectoralCommUK](#)
[Follow us on LinkedIn](#)

London Elects Media office

Media contacts

London Elects press office
Alison Bell
Tel: 020 7983 4228/07887 832 918
Media@londonelects.org.uk

Our channels

Follow us on Twitter:
[@londonelects](#)

Websites

www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

The public can visit this website in order to register to vote. It is quick and easy to use. Since its launch in June 2014, millions of applications to register to vote have been submitted. Wherever possible, please refer to this site in media coverage about the election to ensure members of the public know where to register.

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

The Electoral Commission website has a dedicated section for journalists featuring its press releases and statements. It has information on donations made to political parties and campaigners and has a guidance section with information for candidates and those administering the election.

The website also provides information for the public on how to register and vote, including forms they can print off to register and apply to vote by post or proxy. It has a postcode search facility allowing people to find contact details for their local electoral registration office as well as polling station and candidate details.

www.londonelects.org.uk

London Elects provides information on the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections for 2021. As well as information for voters, it has sections for candidates, electoral administrators and journalists.

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Introduction

What the elections are about

Who is being elected on Thursday 6 May 2021?

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is made up of one directly elected Mayor and 25 London Assembly Members, supported by staff at City Hall. Londoners voted for this unique form of government in a 1998 referendum and the GLA was established in 2000.

On Thursday 6 May 2021, Londoners will vote for the Mayor of London and the 25 Members that make up the London Assembly. These elections are held every four years. The elections were due to take place in May 2020, but were postponed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

There are also elections taking place across other areas of the UK on Thursday 6 May 2021. The Electoral Commission has produced [separate media handbooks for each set of elections, which are available on its website](#).

What does the Mayor do?

The Mayor of London has several functions, including:

- Making plans, strategies and policies for Londoners
- Acting as the executive of London's government and managing a £17bn budget to run transport, police, fire services and investing in London's housing. Part of the Council Tax levied by London's councils is set by the Mayor to help fund these services.
- Acting as a representative for the capital at home and abroad

While London Boroughs retain responsibility for delivering many services on the ground, the role of Mayor offers strategic and London-wide leadership for the capital. The Mayor of London is responsible for developing strategies for London covering:

- Transport
- Policing
- Housing
- Planning & development (the London Plan)

- Culture
- Economic development
- Health inequalities
- Environmental issues

The Mayor sets the budgets for and appoints board members to: Transport for London, the London Fire Brigade and the two Mayoral Development Corporations (London Legacy Development Corporation and Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation). The Mayor also directs the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime. These five organisations are the GLA's functional bodies and together form the GLA Group.

The Mayor has other responsibilities which include managing Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square Garden and deciding which major building projects can go ahead across London.

The Mayor works closely with partners to fund and commission a wide range of projects.

What does the London Assembly do?

The Mayor is the Greater London Authority's executive, and the Assembly's primary role is to hold the Mayor to account. Assembly Members scrutinise the work of the Mayor and carry out investigations into issues of importance for Londoners.

The Assembly is made up of 25 individuals. The 14 Constituency Assembly Members are elected by voters in each of London's 14 constituencies. The 11 London-wide Assembly Members are elected by voters across the whole of London.

The Assembly has the power to:

- put questions to the Mayor and his officials during Mayor's Question Time and full London Assembly meetings
- examine and scrutinise the Mayor's progress against his plans
- investigate issues that are important to Londoners, publish reports and make recommendations to the Mayor, London Boroughs and the Government
- amend the Mayor's budget with a two-thirds majority of Members
- reject statutory mayoral strategies, again with a two-thirds majority
- hold confirmation hearings for certain mayoral appointments

Roles and responsibilities

This Media Handbook for the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections has been jointly produced by the Electoral Commission and London Elects. It sets out the role of both organisations in the upcoming elections, the rules for candidates, parties and campaigners, and what happens before, during and after polling day.

The Greater London Returning Officer

Mary Harpley is the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO). The GLRO has overall responsibility for the election of the Mayor of London and the London Assembly.

The GLRO manages the nominations process for mayoral and London-wide assembly member candidates. She also announces the London-wide assembly member and Mayor of London results, after totals for the 14 local constituency counts are complete. She works closely with, and has the power to direct the actions of, the Constituency Returning Officers where this is desirable to achieve consistency across London and best practice in running the elections.

To arrange an interview with Mary Harpley, or for more information on the GLRO's role, please contact the London Elects Media office.

Constituency Returning Officers

The 14 London Assembly constituencies are each made up of two to four London Boroughs. The 14 Constituency Returning Officers (CROs) are responsible for conducting the poll and the count for their own constituency. They will announce the results for the Constituency Assembly Member election at the relevant count centre and the local totals of the votes cast in their area for the London-wide member and mayoral elections.

CROs are supported by Borough Returning Officers (BROs) who, though having no particular status in law, play an important role in organising arrangements at the borough level.

Details of the 14 CROs (at the time of writing)

Assembly constituency	CRO Name	Lead Borough (for which the CRO is the Returning Officer)
Barnet & Camden	John Hooton	Barnet
Bexley & Bromley	Mark Bowen	Bromley
Brent & Harrow	Carolyn Downs	Brent
City & East (City of London, Barking & Dagenham, Newham and Tower Hamlets)	Althea Loderick	Newham
Croydon & Sutton	Katherine Kerswell	Croydon
Ealing & Hillingdon	Paul Najsarek	Ealing
Enfield & Haringey	Ian Davis	Enfield
Greenwich & Lewisham	Kim Wright	Lewisham
Havering & Redbridge	Andrew Blake-Herbert	Havering
Lambeth & Southwark	Andrew Travers	Lambeth
Merton & Wandsworth	Ged Curran	Wandsworth
North East (Hackney, Islington and Waltham Forest)	Martin Esom	Waltham Forest
South West (Hounslow, Kingston upon Thames and Richmond upon Thames)	Niall Bolger	Hounslow
West Central (Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster)	Stuart Love	Westminster

To arrange an interview with one of the Constituency Returning Officers, please contact the relevant borough's press office directly.

Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)

Electoral Registration Officers are responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists for their local authority area. In London, the Electoral Registration Officer is normally a senior officer of the local authority and may also be the Borough Returning Officer. You can find the contact details for all Electoral Registration Officers at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information

London Elects

London Elects is the programme team that organises the Mayor of London and the London Assembly elections. This includes everything from designing and printing the ballot papers and managing the counting of votes, to delivering a public awareness campaign to tell Londoners about the election and how to vote.

The London Elects Programme Team is drawn from staff across the GLA, leading on finance, marketing and web, media, legislation and guidance, training, venue management of the count centres, and managing the e-counting contractor.

Although part of the Greater London Authority (GLA), London Elects is politically impartial and operationally independent. It works directly for the Greater London Returning Officer and has a separate budget and reporting lines from other GLA staff.

The Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity. Our role in these elections is to:

- produce guidance for ROs, set performance standards and report on how electoral administrators perform against these standards
- produce guidance for candidates standing for election and their agents
- produce guidance for parties that are campaigning at the election
- produce guidance for non-party campaigners that are campaigning at the election
- register political parties and non-party campaigners
- raise public awareness of the elections and how to take part in them
- report on the conduct of the elections
- publish details of where political parties get their money from and how they spend it

Election timetable

Timetable for the election to the Greater London Authority: Thursday 6 May 2021

Event	Date (deadline is midnight unless alternative stated)
Publication of notice of election	Monday 22 March 2021
Delivery of nomination papers	On any working day, by no later than 4pm on Tuesday 30 March 2021
Deadline for delivery of nomination papers	4pm, Tuesday 30 March 2021
Deadline to withdraw nominations	4pm, Tuesday 30 March 2021
Publication of statement of persons (and parties) nominated	Not later than 4pm on Thursday 1 April 2021
Deadline for applications to register to vote	Monday 19 April 2021
Deadline for new postal vote applications and for changes to existing postal or proxy votes.	5pm on Tuesday 20 April 2021
Deadline for receiving new applications to vote by proxy (not postal proxy or emergency proxies)	5pm on Tuesday 27 April 2021
Polling day	Polling stations open 7am to 10pm on Thursday 6 May 2021
Deadline to apply for a replacement postal ballot paper	5pm on Thursday 6 May 2021

Deadline to apply for an emergency proxy vote 5pm on Thursday 6 May 2021

Election count **Starts at 9am on Friday 7 May**
Starts at 8am on Saturday 8 May

Last day for submission of candidate spending returns to the Constituency Returning Officer – **constituency candidates** No later than 35 calendar days after the declaration of the result

Last day for submission of candidate spending returns to the Greater London Returning Officer – **London wide and London mayoral candidates** No later than 70 calendar days after the declaration of the result

Candidate rules

Becoming a candidate

Who can become a candidate?

Anyone who wants to become a mayoral or London Assembly member candidate must be:

- at least 18 years old; and
- a British or qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of a European Union country

They must also meet **at least one** of the following four qualifications:

- Be, and continue to be, registered as a local government elector in Greater London from the day of their nomination onwards
- Occupy as owner or tenant any land or other premises in Greater London during the whole of the 12 months before the day of their nomination and the day of election
- Have Greater London as a main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of their nomination and the day of election
- Have lived in Greater London during the whole of the 12 months before the day of their nomination and the day of election

Is anyone barred from becoming a candidate?

The following people cannot stand as a candidate:

- Anyone employed by the Greater London Authority, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, The London Fire Commissioner (including the London Fire Brigade) and every staff member in a politically restricted post at Transport for London and a Mayoral Development Corporation
- Local government staff who hold politically restricted posts
- Anyone in a public post that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has designated as a post disqualifying persons from standing

- A person currently subject to a bankruptcy order, though bankruptcy itself is not a disqualification
- A person who in the last five years has been convicted of an offence and sentenced to more than three months in prison without the option of a fine
- A paid officer of a London borough council, who is employed under the direction of council committees or joint committees of which the Mayor of London is a member
- Anyone disqualified from being a member of a local authority under the Audit Commission Act 1998
- Anyone guilty of certain offences relating to improper conduct at elections, as set out in the Representation of the People Act 1983

How does someone become a candidate?

The earliest that someone can officially become a candidate is on the day that nominations open.

Nominations will open on **22 March 2021**. Prospective candidates may announce that they intend to stand before this, but this is the first date that someone can submit a formal nomination.

Anyone who wants to stand as a constituency member candidate must submit nomination papers to the relevant Constituency Returning Officer by **4pm on Tuesday 30 March 2021**.

Anyone who wants to stand as a mayoral or London-wide member candidate must submit nomination papers to the Greater London Returning Officer **by 4pm on Tuesday 30 March 2021**.

There are different requirements for standing as a mayoral, constituency member or London-wide member candidate. See below for more information on each.

How does someone stand as a mayoral candidate?

Prospective mayoral candidates must submit the following to the Greater London Returning Officer by 4pm on Tuesday 30 March 2021.

- A completed nomination form.
- A home address form.
- Their consent to nomination.

- The signatures of 66 registered voters (at least two from each borough and at least two from the City of London) supporting the nomination.
- A deposit of £10,000, returnable if they receive more than 5% of the valid first preference votes.
- If they are standing for a registered political party, a certificate from that political party. They can also request to use one of the party's registered emblems on the ballot paper.

How does someone stand as a constituency candidate?

Prospective constituency member candidates must submit the following to the Constituency Returning Officer for the constituency in which they wish to stand by 4pm on Tuesday 30 March 2021.

- A completed nomination form.
- A home address form.
- Their consent to nomination.
- A deposit of £1,000, returnable if they receive more than 5% of the valid votes cast in their constituency.
- If they are standing for a registered political party, a certificate from that political party. They can also request to use one of the party's registered emblems on the ballot paper.

How does someone stand as a London-wide candidate?

London-wide candidates can stand either as independents, or as party candidates on a 'party list'.

Prospective independent candidates and political parties must submit the following to the Greater London Returning Officer by 4pm on Tuesday 30 March 2021.

- A completed nomination form. Political parties that want to put forward a list of up to 25 candidates must submit a party list nomination form. Independent candidates must submit an independent candidate nomination form.
- A consent to nomination for each candidate regardless of whether they are on a party list or an independent candidate.
- A home address form for each candidate.

- A deposit of £5,000 for an independent and a deposit of £5,000 from each party, regardless of how many names are on their list of candidates. This is returnable if the party or candidate receives more than 2.5% of the valid votes cast across London.
- Registered political parties must provide a certificate authorising use of the party name or a registered description. This must be signed by the party's Nominating Officer or by a person authorised to act on their behalf.

Who are the candidates?

The deadline for prospective candidates to submit nomination papers is 4pm on Tuesday 30 March. The relevant Returning Officer will publish a statement of persons (and parties) nominated no later than 4pm on Thursday 1 April.

London Elects will publish a list of all validly nominated candidates on its website www.londonelects.org.uk on or before April 1 2021.

Can someone stand as more than one type of candidate?

Yes. An individual can be nominated as a mayoral candidate, London-wide Assembly candidate and a constituency candidate. However, they cannot stand for election in more than one Assembly constituency after the deadline for withdrawals.

If a candidate stands for election as the London Mayor and as a candidate in a London Assembly constituency and is successful in both, they will be returned as the Mayor of London but not as a Constituency Assembly Member. If a candidate is returned either as the London Mayor or as a Constituency Assembly Member, they will not also be returned as a London-wide Assembly Member.

For more information on [the specific qualifications for standing as a candidate in the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections](#) see Electoral Commission & London Elects Guidance for candidates and agents.

Campaigning at the elections

What can candidates say about one another during the campaign?

As at all elections, it is illegal to make a false statement about the personal character of a candidate in order to influence the result of the election. Rules about defamation also apply to election materials.

The police may investigate allegations of the specific electoral offence of making a false statement. Defamation issues are a matter for the civil courts.

The Electoral Commission does not have any regulatory role in relation to the content of campaign material or what candidates say about each other, though we encourage all campaigners to undertake their vital role responsibly and to support campaigning transparency.

Are there any electoral rules regarding campaign materials?

By law, candidates, parties and non-party campaigners must use 'imprints' on all their printed campaign material. An imprint includes the name and address of the printer and promoter (the person who authorised the material to be printed). It must be included on all printed material such as posters, placards and leaflets. This is so that voters can be clear about the source of the campaign material. It is an offence not to include an imprint on printed election material.

Though it is not yet a legal requirement, the Electoral Commission recommends that candidates, parties and non-party campaigners wherever possible, place an imprint on their online materials too (e.g. websites, emails and social media platforms). Voters need to know who is targeting them with political messages online and we have called for the law to be changed to make this a requirement.

In October 2020, the Government launched a consultation on the introduction of digital imprints. This would deliver an important increase in transparency for voters.

Can candidates see the electoral register?

Candidates at these elections are entitled to receive a copy of the electoral register and lists of people voting by post or proxy once they officially become a candidate.

Constituency candidates for the London Assembly are entitled to copies covering the constituency they are standing in, while mayoral and individual candidates at the London-

wide Assembly elections are entitled to copies for the whole of the Greater London Authority area.

Access to the electoral register may be helpful before someone officially becomes a candidate and is eligible to receive it. For example, one of the requirements to become a validly nominated candidate at the election of the Mayor of London is to obtain subscribers in support of the nomination. Candidates at the election of the Mayor of London who wish to use the register to prepare for their nomination in advance of the time they officially become a candidate, may inspect the electoral register under supervision at the relevant local authority. Only handwritten notes may be taken.

The election agent of a registered political party that has submitted a list of candidates for the London-wide Assembly member election is entitled to a copy of the electoral register and lists of absent voters for the whole of Greater London. The register and party lists can only be supplied to the election agent after the party has submitted a list of candidates for the London-wide Assembly election.

Registered political parties are entitled to obtain and use the electoral register and absent voters lists at any time for electoral purposes and, in the case of the register, for the checking of donations.

Candidates, election agents and parties can use the information on the registers and lists to:

- help them campaign
- complete their nomination form (in the case of a candidate at the election of the Mayor of London)
- check that donations are permissible

Are candidates entitled to a free delivery of leaflets?

No, however the GLRO will produce a booklet containing the “election address” of candidates who wish to be included. The address is a campaign statement that a mayoral candidate makes to the electorate to persuade electors to vote for them. The booklet is delivered to all households in the Greater London area before polling day.

Candidates wishing to be included must pay a fee of £10,000, which goes towards meeting the printing and distribution costs.

Campaign spending limits and rules on accepting donations

Regulated Period

What is the regulated period for the May elections?

There are four types of candidate in the elections to the GLA. Each type of candidate has different spending limits and reporting deadlines, and may have different regulated periods.

The regulated period begins the day after the date they officially become a candidate and ends on polling day, 6 May 2021.

Candidates standing on a party list for London-wide seats become a candidate when the agent for the party submits the party list to the Great London Returning Officer. This occurs between Monday 22 March 2021 and Tuesday 30 March 2021. The regulated period in this case begins the day after the agent for the party delivers the list.

All other candidates including those for Mayor of London will become a candidate on Monday 22 March 2021 if they or others have already announced their intention to stand. The regulated period for them starts on Tuesday 23 March 2021.

If a candidate's intention to stand has not been announced by Monday 22 March 2021, they will officially become a candidate on the earlier of:

- the date their intention to stand is announced
- the date they are nominated

This must be prior to the close of nominations, which is 4pm on Tuesday 30 March 2021.

Spending

How much can candidates spend on their election campaigns?

The spending limits for the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections are below.

Election	Spending limit
Mayor of London	£420,000
Constituency Assembly Member	£35,000
London-wide Assembly Member (independent candidate)	£330,000
London-wide Assembly Member (party list candidates)	£330,000 (This is a single limit for the whole party list. It includes spending promoting any or all of the candidates on the list, or the party generally)

What activities count towards the spending limit?

Candidate spending includes the costs of:

- advertising of any kind, such as posters, newspaper adverts, websites, online display advertising, promoted social media posts or YouTube videos
- unsolicited material sent to voters, such as letters, leaflets or emails that are not sent in response to specific queries
- transport costs, such as hire cars or public transport for the candidate or candidate's campaigners
- public meetings
- staff costs (e.g. an agent's salary, or staff seconded to a candidate)
- accommodation (e.g. a campaign office)
- administrative costs (e.g. telephone bills, stationery, photocopying and the use of databases)

Payments made for digital campaigning must be reported.

Activities that do not count include:

- payment of a candidate's deposit
- anything (except adverts) appearing in a newspaper or on a licensed broadcast channel
- costs that are reasonably attributable to the candidate's disability

- facilities the candidate is entitled to use, such as a public room for a meeting
- volunteer time including time spent by the candidate's staff that they do not pay them for
- use of someone's main residence, provided free of charge
- use of someone's personal car or other means of transport acquired principally for that person's personal use and provided free of charge
- use of someone's computer or printer equipment acquired principally for that person's personal use and provided free of charge

What happens if money is spent promoting a political party candidate before the regulated period?

Spending before the regulated period will not count towards a candidate's spending limit, providing they do not make use of that spending during the regulated period. For example, if they purchase leaflets before the regulated period but use them during the regulated period this spending is reportable and will count towards their spending limit.

There are no separate limits in place for national party spending for elections in England in May 2021.

Donations

Who can make donations to candidates?

Anyone can make a donation worth less than £50 to candidates. Candidates are not required to declare donations with a value of £50 or less in their spending and donations return.

There are no limits on the number of donations a candidate can accept. Candidates must ensure that any donation worth more than £50 is only accepted if it is from a permissible source. This applies to cash donations and donations in kind. Donations that are not from a permissible source must be returned to the donor within 30 days. After that, the donation may be forfeited.

Permissible donors in the UK are defined as:

- an individual on a UK electoral register
- a GB registered political party

- a UK registered company which is incorporated in the UK and carries on business in the UK
- a UK registered trade union
- a UK registered building society
- a UK registered limited liability partnership
- a UK registered friendly society
- a UK based unincorporated association that carries on business or other activities wholly or mainly in the UK and has its main office in the UK

Candidates cannot accept donations over £50 unless they are permissible.

Reporting

Who do candidates or agents report their regulated spending to and when?

London Assembly constituency candidates, or their agents, must submit their returns of election expenses (meaning their spending) to the Constituency Returning Officer **within 35 calendar days of the declaration of the result.**

Mayor of London and London-wide Assembly member candidates, or their agents, must submit their campaign spending returns to the Greater London Returning Officer **within 70 calendar days of the declaration of the result.**

If no spending is incurred, a nil return must be submitted by the agent.

To find out when candidates in the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections campaign spending returns will be open to public inspection, contact London Elects.

What happens if a candidate exceeds their spending limit?

Exceeding the spending limit can be a criminal offence. Allegations relating to the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983, including candidate spending offences, are a matter for the relevant local police force to consider.

Whilst the Electoral Commission has a statutory duty to monitor compliance with parts of the RPA relating to candidate and agent expenses, it is not legally empowered to investigate and impose sanctions for offences under the RPA.

[Part 3 of the Commission's guidance for candidates and agents](#) contains further information on spending and donations for candidates.

Campaigning by political parties and others

Regulated period

When do the rules on campaign spending apply to political parties at these elections?

There is no separate regulated period for political parties campaigning in the Greater London Authority elections in 2021. Any campaigning that takes place on behalf of a candidate will be counted against the candidate spending limit.

Any spending which promotes the party in general in the GLA elections counts towards the spending total for the party list candidates.

Spending

To what extent can political parties fund their candidates?

Many political parties run a local 'fighting fund' for their candidate. If the fund is managed and controlled by the party and not the candidate, then donations to the fund are usually treated as having been made to the party, unless the donations are specially made towards the candidate's campaign.

However, during the regulated period, any donations above £50 made by the party to a candidate, including donations in kind, must be reported in the candidate's spending return.

To search donations made to political parties, visit [the Electoral Commission's online database](#).

What is the spending limit for parties?

Political parties will often spend money at elections, promoting the party in general as well as particular candidates. There is no party spending limit in England in 2021.

What are the rules on crowdfunding?

Candidates and parties may accept donations using crowdfunding websites, often managed by third party providers, which pass the donations to the candidate or party minus a fee.

Crowdfunding pages should make donors aware of the rules covering permissibility and declarations of donations and the possibility that donors names will appear publicly. It is also the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that they collect sufficient information to properly complete their reporting obligations including reporting how donations from impermissible donors have been dealt with.

For reporting purposes, the date of receipt of a donation is the date on which the funds are received from the third party crowdfunding site. If a donation received in this way is from an impermissible source it must be returned within 30 days.

[The Commission has published guidance on crowdfunding donations and the rules on permissibility.](#)

What are the rules for non-party campaigners?

Non-party campaigners are individuals or organisations that campaign in elections, but are not standing as political parties or candidates.

During the regulated period, they can spend up to £50 + 0.5p for each elector in the electoral area contested by the candidate they are campaigning for or against. They cannot spend more than these amounts without the candidate's authorisation in writing. Any authorised spending above their spending limit will count against the candidate's spending limit. Any spending must be reported by the local non-party campaigner to the RO within 21 days of the result being declared.

Campaigns for or against a candidate for

Spending limit

Mayor of London A London-wide Assembly seat, including candidates on a party list	£50 plus 0.5p for each elector in the Greater London Authority area
A constituency member of the London Assembly	£50 plus 0.5p for each elector in the relevant constituency

For information on non-party campaigning at these elections, see the [Commission's guidance](#).

Donations

What donations do political parties need to report?

Political parties must report donations and loans over £7,500 if accepted by their Central Office and over £1,500 if accepted by a local accounting unit.

Political parties have to submit their quarterly donation and borrowing returns to the Electoral Commission 30 days after the end of a quarter.

Voters and voting

Registering to vote

Who can vote in the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections?

A person can vote in the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections if they are registered to vote and are:

- resident in London,
- aged 18 or over on polling day
- a British citizen
- an Irish, EU or qualifying Commonwealth citizen

More information on eligibility can be found on our website at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter.

What is the deadline to register to vote?

The deadline to apply to register is midnight, Monday 19 April 2021

What is the deadline for applying to vote by post or by proxy?

The deadline to apply for a postal vote is 5pm, Tuesday 20 April 2021.

The deadline to apply for a proxy vote, except in an emergency, is 5pm, Tuesday 27 April 2021.

The deadline to apply for a proxy vote as a result of an emergency is 5pm, Thursday 6 May 2021.

How can someone register to vote?

The best way to register to vote is by going online to www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. Anyone who would prefer to apply by completing a paper registration form should contact their

local authority's electoral registration office for the necessary forms or download them from the UK Government's website.

Local authority electoral registration office contact details can be found using [the postcode look-up tool on the Electoral Commission's website](#).

How do members of the armed services register and vote?

Service personnel and their spouses or civil partners, serving in the UK or overseas, can register either at their home address or their barracks in the usual way, or as a 'service voter'. Service voters fill out an armed services declaration so they can be registered when away from their home address on duty.

Can prisoners vote?

Remand prisoners (those who have not been convicted and sentenced) can vote. Convicted prisoners detained because of their sentence cannot.

In some limited circumstances, prisoners released on temporary licence may meet the criteria to register to vote.

Can someone register at two different addresses?

You can be registered to vote at two different addresses, however you can only vote in one place. It is an offence to vote twice.

Voting

When are the elections?

The elections are held on **Thursday 6 May 2021**.

What different ways are there for Londoners to vote?

Londoners can choose to vote in one of three ways in the Mayoral and London Assembly elections on Thursday 6 May 2021: in person, by post or by proxy.

In person

- Registered voters can visit their local polling station between 7am and 10pm on 6 May to cast their votes. Before polling day, voters will be sent a poll card which includes details of where their polling station is
- Voters can only vote at their allocated polling station as stated on this card
- Polling station staff will be on hand to explain the ballot papers and how to vote
- Voters do not need to take their poll card with them to the polling station but doing so will speed up the process. If voters have lost their poll card, nearer to the election they can use the London Elects online polling station finder to check where to go

What happens if someone is still queuing to vote at a polling station at 10pm?

Any voter who arrives at the polling station before 10pm and is still waiting to vote at 10pm will be able to vote.

What provisions are made to make voting accessible to voters with disabilities?

It is a legal requirement to provide a tactile voting device at every polling station. This allows someone who is blind or partially sighted to mark the ballot paper themselves, once the details on the ballot paper have been read out either by their companion or the Presiding Officer. In addition, a large print version of the ballot paper must be displayed inside the polling station for the assistance of voters who are partially sighted. Enlarged hand-held copies, marked as 'sample', must also be available to anyone who requires them.

The Commission works closely with the Accessibility of Elections Group, run by the Cabinet Office, to consider how voting can be made more accessible. [The Commission has responded to a UK Government Call for Evidence with recommendations on how elections can be made more accessible.](#)

The Commission provides guidance to polling station staff, to help them make sure that polling stations are accessible to everyone. This information is available for staff who are running the [Mayor of London and London Assembly elections.](#)

By post

If voters do not wish to - or are unable to - go to a polling station, they may apply for a postal vote.

To vote by post, electors need to register as a postal voter by **5pm on Tuesday 20 April 2021**. Postal ballot papers will be sent directly to voters about a week before polling day

- Voters should complete their ballot papers and send them back straight away, so that they arrive before 10pm on Thursday 6 May 2021. Votes arriving after 10pm on Thursday 6 May 2021 will not be counted.
- If voters don't leave enough time to post their vote, they may take it by hand to a polling station in their constituency from 7am to 10pm on polling day.
- Voters must also remember to complete the security declaration – with their signature and date of birth.

By proxy

Voters can also register for a proxy vote. This means asking someone they trust to vote on their behalf. They need to complete and sign a form and return it to their local electoral registration office by 5pm, Tuesday 27 April 2021. Voters can also apply for a proxy vote as a result of an emergency up until 5pm on polling day.

How to complete the ballot papers

In the 2021 elections for the Mayor of London and the London Assembly, voters will have three votes. One is for the Mayor of London and two are for the London Assembly.

Voters will be given three ballot papers. Nearer the election London Elects will have example ballot papers on their website, so that voters know what they look like before they vote.

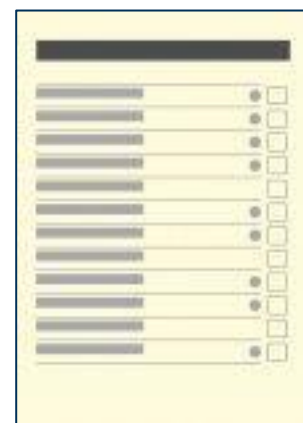
How do you vote for the Mayor of London?

- This is the **PINK** coloured ballot paper.
- This is for the candidate voters would like to be the Mayor of London.
- Voters can cast a first and second choice from the list of candidates who will either be part of a political party or standing as an independent candidate.
- Voters vote for their first choice candidate by marking a cross (X) in column A. Voters vote for their second choice candidate by marking a cross (X) in column B.
- If voters only mark the first choice column, their vote will still be counted – voters can choose not to mark the second choice column.
- If voters only mark a second choice and not a first choice, their vote will not be counted.
- If voters give the same candidate their first and second choice, only their first choice will be counted.



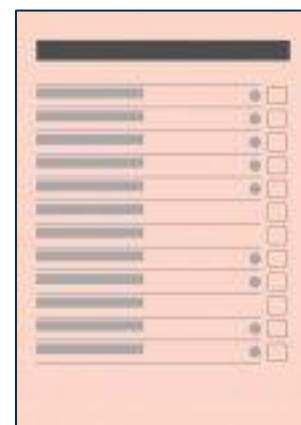
How do you vote for your London Assembly Constituency Member?

- This is the **YELLOW** coloured ballot paper.
- This is for the candidate voters would like to represent their local area on the London Assembly.
- Voters can cast one vote for a candidate.
- Voters should mark one cross (X) in the box next to the candidate they wish to vote for.



How do you vote for your London-wide Assembly Member?

- This is the **ORANGE** coloured ballot paper
- This is for the party or independent candidate that voters would like to become a London-wide Assembly Member
- Voters should mark one cross (X) in the box next to the party or candidate they wish to vote for



Which voting systems are used?

The Mayor of London is elected by supplementary vote.

If a candidate receives more than half of all the first choice votes they are elected.

If this does not happen, the two candidates with the most first choice votes go through to a second round. All other candidates are eliminated, but the second choice votes on the eliminated ballot papers are taken into account. Second choice votes for either of the top two candidates are added to the totals for those two candidates from the first round. The candidate with the highest combined total of first and second choice votes will be elected as Mayor of London.

The 14 Constituency Assembly Members are elected using the first-past-the-post system.

This means that the candidate in each constituency with the most votes is elected as a London Assembly Constituency Member.

The 11 London-wide Assembly Members are elected using a form of proportional representation.

Votes from across London for the London-wide Assembly Members are added together. The 11 seats are then allocated based upon a mathematical formula – the **Modified d'Hondt Formula**. This takes into account the total votes cast in the London-wide ballot together with the number of constituency Assembly member seats that each political party has already won.

Eleven rounds of calculations take place to fill the 11 vacant Assembly member seats, and the party or independent candidate with the highest result at each round is allocated the seat. Seats won by parties are allocated to party candidates in the order they appear on the relevant party's list of candidates.

For further information on the voting systems used in the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections, visit the London Elects website at www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/counting-votes.

Electoral Fraud

The Representation of the People Act 1983 specifies a number of criminal offences relating to electoral fraud. The relevant police force for the area in which the election is taking place would investigate any allegations that an offence may have taken place.

Every police force has a designated single point of contact (known as a SPOC) to lead on election-related crime, who will give advice to local police officers. People can also choose to contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Anyone, including candidates, politicians and members of the public, who has evidence of electoral fraud taking place should report it to the police immediately, using the 101 non-emergency number, unless there is a crime in progress.

What are the criminal offences that relate to electoral fraud?

- **Personation** – It is an offence to vote as someone else (whether that person is living, dead or fictitious), either by post or at a polling station, in person or as a proxy.
- **Undue influence / intimidation** – A person is guilty of undue influence if they attempt to influence someone's vote by:
 - using or threatening force, violence or restraint
 - inflicting or threatening injury, damage, loss or harm
 - impeding or preventing someone from freely exercising their right to vote – even where the attempt is unsuccessful
- **Bribery** – A person is guilty of bribery if they directly or indirectly offer any reward (financial or otherwise) in order to induce any voter to vote or refrain from voting.

- **Treating** – A person is guilty of treating if either before, during, or after an election they offer food, drink or entertainment to corruptly influence any voter. Treating requires a corrupt intent - it does not apply to ordinary hospitality.
- **False statements** – It is an offence to make or publish a false statement of fact about the personal character or conduct of a candidate in order to affect the return of a candidate at an election. False statements that are not about a candidate's personal character or conduct are not illegal under electoral law, but could be considered as libel or slander. It is an offence to knowingly provide a false statement on a nomination paper.
- **Multiple voting and proxy voting offences** – There are various offences regarding multiple voting and proxy voting, including voting (whether in person, by post or by proxy) when you are not allowed to and voting more than once in the same election.
- **False information in connection with registration and absent voting** – It is an offence to supply false registration information to an Electoral Registration Officer. It is also an offence to supply false information for a postal or proxy vote.

What safeguards are in place to ensure postal voting is secure?

Postal voters have to provide their signature and date of birth when applying for a postal vote and also when casting their postal vote. Both records are checked. If the Returning Officer is not satisfied that they match, the ballot paper is not counted.

The system has been further strengthened by the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in 2014. Anyone applying to register to vote first has to provide their national insurance number and date of birth, before going on to provide the additional information above if they want to cast their vote by post.

Responsibilities for combatting electoral fraud

How does the Commission work with political parties to prevent postal vote fraud?

The Electoral Commission has developed a [Code of Conduct for campaigners](#), which applies to all political parties, candidates and their supporters. It covers the handling of postal vote applications and postal ballot packs, behaviour outside polling stations and the reporting of allegations of electoral fraud. In particular, the Code includes the following guidance for parties, candidates and campaigners.

- Do not assist in completing a ballot paper - instead, campaigners should always refer the voter to the Returning Officer's staff who may be able to arrange a home visit or provide assistance at the polling station.
- Do not handle or take any completed ballot papers from voters. Instead, voters should be encouraged to post their postal ballot pack themselves - alternatively, the Returning Officer's staff may be able to arrange for it to be collected.

The law does not prohibit postal votes from being handled by candidates, parties and campaigners. We want the law changed so that candidates, parties and campaigners do not handle or take completed absent vote applications or postal ballot packs from voters.

What happens if a political party breaches the Code of Conduct?

The Code is voluntary. The Electoral Commission asks political parties to investigate any reported breaches and take action to ensure that problems are not repeated. This includes parties potentially taking disciplinary action against their members.

Who is responsible for putting in place plans to deal with electoral fraud?

The primary responsibility lies with the Returning Officer for each area. They work closely with their local police force.

[Guidance on policing elections](#) has been published to support police officers and SPOCs as they put in place plans to prevent and detect electoral fraud in England and Wales. This guidance, which builds on work previously carried out by the Electoral Commission and the National Police Chiefs Council, now forms part of the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice for police forces in England and Wales.

The Count

Counting the votes

When does the count start?

The count will start at 9am on Friday 7 May and 8am on Saturday 8 May.

After the polls have closed, elections staff will take ballot boxes from all the polling stations in London to the relevant count centre.

All ballot boxes have tamper proof security seals, and will be stored securely until the counting begins.

On Friday, 7 May, the count will take place for the following constituencies:

- Bexley & Bromley, at Excel count centre
- Brent & Harrow, at Alexandra Palace count centre
- Ealing & Hillingdon, at Olympia count centre
- Havering & Redbridge, at Excel count centre
- Lambeth & Southwark, at Excel count centre
- North East at Alexandra, Palace count centre
- West Central, at Olympia count centre

On Saturday, 8 May, the count will take place for the remaining constituencies:

- Barnet & Camden, at Alexandra Palace count centre
- City & East, at Excel count centre
- Croydon & Sutton, at Olympia count centre
- Enfield & Haringey, at Alexandra Palace count centre
- Greenwich & Lewisham, at Excel count centre
- Merton & Wandsworth, at Olympia count centre
- South West, at Olympia count centre

The count is overseen by the GLRO. For more information about the count, please contact London Elects.

Will there be delays to the count?

The counting of votes must begin as soon as practicable after the close of the poll.

A number of factors may affect how long it takes to complete the count, including the complexity of the polls, the number of different ballots to be counted, and the number of staff able to work in the count venue at the same time, particularly with social distancing measures in place. It is important that all votes are counted, and that the process is safe for those participating.

This year the count has been scheduled over two days, in order to enable social distancing and reduce the overall numbers of staff accessing the three count centres at one time.

Where does the count take place?

Constituency Returning Officers will count the votes from the 14 constituencies in three count centres across London.

The Greater London Returning Officer will be at City Hall. No physical counting of ballot papers will take place at City Hall, but this is where the GLRO will collate results coming in from around London to give a mayoral result, and to work out the allocation of London-wide Assembly member seats.

Votes from the 14 constituencies will be counted at the following venues:

Count centre	Constituency
Alexandra Palace	North East Enfield & Haringey Brent & Harrow Barnet & Camden
Excel	Greenwich & Lewisham Havering & Redbridge Lambeth & Southwark

	Bexley & Bromley
	City & East
Olympia	Croydon & Sutton
	South West
	Ealing & Hillingdon
	Merton & Wandsworth
	West Central

How are the votes counted?

As in the previous Mayor of London and London Assembly elections, count staff will use electronic counting (or 'e-counting') machines to count the votes. This process has a number of stages, analogous to those in a manual count, to ensure that all votes are counted and the result accurately reflects Londoners' intention.

The scale and complexity of the elections – with three ballot papers and using three voting systems – means that counting the votes by hand would take days. E-counting means that Londoners will know who their Mayor and Assembly Members are in good time.

The 14 Constituency Returning Officers (CROs) across London are responsible for counting all the votes cast in their constituency.

The Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) is responsible for collating the votes from across London for the Mayor of London and 11 London-wide Assembly Members.

For more information on e-counting visit the London Elects website and download the e-counting factsheet at www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/counting-votes

How are the results announced?

Once all the votes in a contest have been counted, the e-counting software will calculate the results. These calculations will be checked by the CRO and GLRO.

The relevant CRO will share the provisional results for the constituency Assembly member election with the candidates and their election agents. They will then announce the final result for the constituency Assembly member and the local totals of the Mayor of London and London-wide Assembly member elections at the count centre.

The CRO will then send the number of votes cast in their constituency for the Mayoral candidates and London-wide Assembly seats to City Hall. At City Hall, the Greater London Returning Officer will collate all these results to give the final totals for all of London.

The GLRO will share the provisional results with the candidates and their election agents. The GLRO will then declare the result for the Mayor of London in the Chamber at City Hall.

The distribution of London-wide Assembly seats is calculated using the 'D'Hondt formula'. The GLRO will use e-counting software to make this calculation, but will also check the calculations herself.

A live feed of vote progress will be available via the London Elects website.

All results will be published on the London Elects website as soon as possible after they are available, at www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/election-results

How does the opening of postal votes fit into the process?

Several postal vote opening sessions will take place before polling day as well as on polling day itself.

The CRO must give candidates at least 48 hours' notice of when and where the sessions will take place. At each opening session, the CRO will decide whether or not the date of birth and signature provided by electors on their postal voting statements match the signature and date of birth previously provided and held on record. If the CRO is not satisfied that they match, the vote is rejected.

Candidates can observe the process or appoint a postal voting agent to do so. Anyone attending an opening session must not attempt to look at any identifying marks or numbers on ballot papers, disclose how any particular ballot paper has been marked or pass on any such information gained from the session. The ballot papers are handled face down during the postal vote opening session.

All valid ballot papers are placed into ballot boxes and stored securely before being delivered to the count venue for counting after the close of poll.

What happens with spoilt ballot papers?

Once the verification phase of the count is complete, ballot papers will be sorted by candidate and any doubtful ballot papers will be identified. The Returning Officer will

adjudicate any doubtful ballot papers in the presence of candidates and agents and the Commission has provided guidance to help them do this.

The RO will announce how many ballot papers were rejected when they announce the results of the election.

Any ballot papers which are considered 'good' in this process are returned and allocated to the relevant candidate.

Can candidates request a recount?

Any candidate or election agent present when the counting of votes is completed will be given the opportunity to request a recount of the votes. However the CRO may refuse this request if they feel it is unreasonable.

One counting agent per mayoral candidate, constituency candidate and individual London-wide Assembly member candidate may also be authorised to request a recount. The election agent of a party list may also authorise one counting agent to request a recount. In each case, this must be specified when they are appointed as a counting agent.

For all three contests, recounts may only be requested at the constituency level. In respect of the constituency Assembly member contest, the request may only be made before the constituency result is announced. In respect of the Mayor of London and the London-wide Assembly member contests, the request may only be made before the local totals have been announced. A London-wide recount is not permissible.

Challenging the result

How does someone challenge the result following the election?

Someone can challenge the result of an election by issuing an election petition. This is a legal action and will be adjudicated by a judge in court.

A petition at the London Mayoral and London Assembly elections must normally be presented within 21 calendar days after the day on which the election was held. Further time may be allowed in certain circumstances.

In 2020, [the Law Commissions recommended that the process for challenging elections should be modernised](#), making it easier for parties to understand and use, and that judges

be given the power, in appropriate cases, to limit the potential costs for challengers. The Electoral Commission supports this recommendation.

For more information about challenging the result of an election, [see part 6 of the Electoral Commission's guidance for candidates and agents](#).

Media coverage of the election and count

How many election broadcasts are political parties entitled to?

Television broadcasters decide how many party election broadcasts (PEBs) are allocated to political parties.

Political parties pay for and produce the content of PEBs, which must observe the law on, for example, copyright, defamation, contempt, obscenity and incitement to racial hatred or violence.

They must comply with the [Ofcom Broadcasting Code](#) and the BBC Editorial Guidelines that relate to harm, offence, fairness and privacy.

Will there be media briefings for journalists?

London Elects will hold media briefings in March and April 2021. These will provide background information on all aspects of the elections, and information on the London Elects public awareness campaign.

Please contact the London Elects Media team if you wish to know more at Media@londonelects.org.uk.

Can the media attend the count centres and declaration of results at City Hall?

Yes. Members of the media can normally attend, provided they have applied for accreditation. However, numbers for 2021 will be severely limited due to COVID-19 restrictions.

No one will be able to enter any of these buildings on count day unless they are accredited.

Members of the media who attend will be provided with information about the process as well as a copy of the secrecy requirements and must respect the confidentiality of the ballot. At all times, all attendees must follow the directions of the CRO at the count centres and the directions of the GLRO at City Hall.

It is at the discretion of the CRO and GLRO to allow entry to any members of the press unless they are also a candidate, agent, counting agent or accredited observer.

Anyone wishing to attend the three count centres or City Hall must first apply for accreditation. Visit the London Elects website to apply for accreditation here: www.londonelects.org.uk/media-centre/media-pre-accreditation-application-form

How will journalists be told the results?

The CROs will announce constituency results and local totals for the mayoral and London-wide Assembly member elections in the relevant count centre. The GLRO will announce the final mayoral and London-wide results at City Hall. London Elects and CRO staff will give media advance warning when a result is due. Only candidates and their agents will be told the results shortly before they are announced publicly.

Can media film inside polling stations?

No. Filming and interviews are not allowed inside polling stations. If members of the media wish to film or conduct interviews outside the polling station, they must ensure that voters are not hindered or harassed on their way to vote and that the entrance to the polling station is not obstructed.

Media accreditation applications will be via the London Elects website. Applications must be received by Friday 23 April 2021.

All accreditations are subject to security checks and approval of the GLRO. Anyone wishing to film or record audio in the count venues should contact the London Elects Media team.

Public awareness

Raising awareness of voter registration

What are Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) doing to encourage people to register to vote?

EROs are legally responsible for maintaining the electoral register for their local authority area and are at the forefront of efforts to get as many people as possible onto the registers.

EROs will have plans in place to raise awareness of voter registration in their area, including how they will encourage groups who are less likely to be registered to vote to do so before the registration deadline.

What is the Electoral Commission doing to encourage people to register to vote?

The Commission's voter registration campaign launched on 9 March and runs until the registration deadline of 19 April. The 'Got 5?' voter registration campaign asks people to use five spare minutes they might have in their day to register.

Advertising will take place on TV, out-of-home billboards, video on demand (catch-up TV), digital audio, digital display and social media. This is supported by PR activity.

How can other organisations help encourage people to register to vote?

Any organisation that would like to promote these messages can make use of our [full suite of resources](#).

Raising awareness of the elections

The 2021 London Elects campaign seeks to engage London's over 6M registered voters and promote the Mayor of London and London Assembly Elections on Thursday 6 May 2021.

For 2021 separate campaigns are running, with the Electoral Commission focusing on registration and London Elects focusing on raising awareness of the elections and providing the necessary voter information.

The London Elects campaign will cover:

- When the elections are taking place
- How to fill in the three ballot papers
- How to find your polling station
- How to find out who the candidates are

London Elects has developed a wide-reaching advertising campaign which will launch in March 2021. The campaign will raise awareness of the elections and it will also focus on where to vote, when to vote and how to fill in the ballot papers. The campaign will be displayed across radio, video-on-demand, outdoor and online.

A key tool throughout the campaign will be the London Elects website, which contains content tailored for a range of individual audiences, such as voters, candidates, journalists and electoral administrators.

The campaign will also run on social media platforms and will be accompanied by a PR campaign targeting broadcast media across London. The team will provide journalists briefings, media interviews, press releases and other PR activity that will help raise awareness of the elections and give voters information on when and how to take part.

London Elects is responsible for the production of the statutory mayoral address booklet, which contains 'mini-manifestos' written by Mayoral candidates, the names of London Assembly candidates, and information on how to vote. This will, as required by law, be sent to every registered elector in London.

For many marginalised or hard to reach groups, the person delivering the message is often as important as the message itself. For that reason, London Elects is producing material in different languages as well as Braille and large print.

Appendix A

The results from the 2016 Mayor of London and London Assembly elections can be found [online here](#).

Mayor of London and London Assembly constituency map

