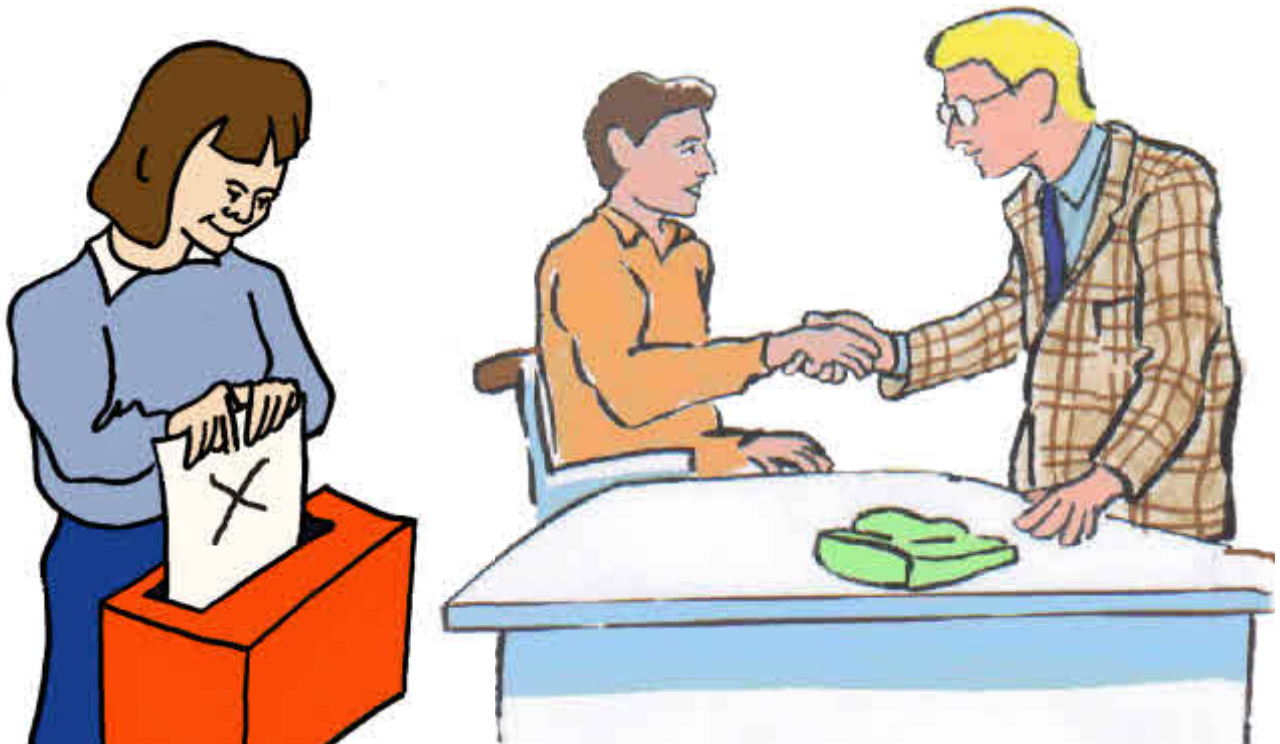




Information about voting for people with a disability



EasyRead version

What is in the booklet

Page



Some words by ; fU Ua 'G\ JY'Xg,
Chief Electoral Officer for
Northern Ireland

1



About this booklet

2



Who does what?

3



The voting list

5



Getting a poll card

7



If you can't get to a polling
station

7



-An absent vote

8



-A proxy vote

11



Voting at a different polling station

12



Other help with voting

14



Showing who you are

16



More help you can get

17



Using a polling booth

18



Other changes

19



Laws about voting and elections

20



How to get in touch

21

Some words by ; fU Ua 'G\ JY'Xg, Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

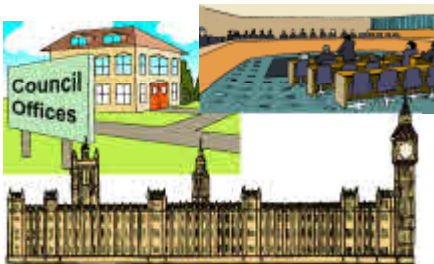


It is important that disabled people have their say by voting in elections, so we have made it easier.

The law has changed as well to make it easier for disabled people to vote.



About $\frac{1}{4}$ of the people in Northern Ireland are disabled.



When you vote in an election you are choosing the person you want to be your MP or local Councillor. This can be on a District Council, the Assembly, the European Parliament or at Westminster.



This booklet is about how elections are run and how you can vote.

I hope that this information is useful to disabled people, their carers and their families.



A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads 'Graham Shields'.

Graham Shields
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland



About this booklet

People with a disability have just as much right to vote as anyone else.



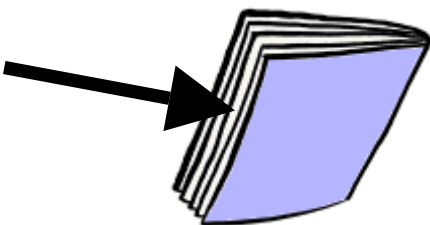
This is an EasyRead booklet about the changes made to elections and how they are run so that people with disabilities can be fully involved.



There is also some information about the people and organisations that run elections.



If you would like a copy of this booklet in another format or language then please get in touch with the Electoral Office.



Our details are at the back of this booklet.

Who does what?



Political Parties

A Political Party is a group of people who share the same ideas about how the country should be run.



Political Parties often help people to vote.

They usually have a person in an election who they want you to vote for. They are called a **candidate**.



Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission makes sure elections are fair and the political parties follow the rules.



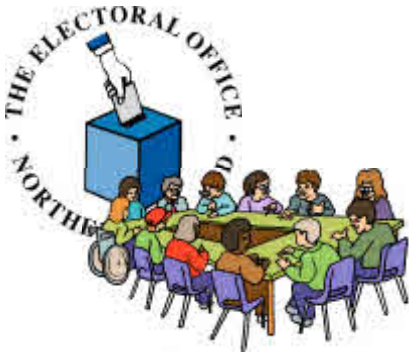
They help people to understand elections and write reports about the way that elections are run.



The Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

The Chief Electoral Officer is in charge of running the elections in Northern Ireland.

He makes sure that every election is fair.



He is helped by the workers in the **Electoral Office for Northern Ireland**.



Their main office is in Belfast with 6 other offices across Northern Ireland.



Each area office has to find workers for the polling stations where you go to vote and the count centres where all of the votes are counted.



The Voting List

To vote you need to be on a list.



The list is called **electoral register**.

To get on the list you have to fill out a form.



Your name will be put on the list if:

- your main home is in Northern Ireland,



- you are aged 17 or over,



- you are a British/Irish/European or Commonwealth citizen.



The form is easy to fill in.



You can get copies in other languages, in large print or in accessible formats.



If you cannot sign the form you can ask someone else to sign for you.



When this is done you will be registered.

Getting a Poll Card



Just before an election a **poll card** will be sent to you.



The card tells you when and where to vote.



If you can't get to a polling station

If you can't get to a polling station to vote there are 2 choices. You can vote by post or send somebody else to vote for you.



You must decide which way of voting is best for you.



An absent vote

If you don't visit the polling station this is called an **absent vote**.



You will need to fill in a form which must be signed by another person to say that the information is true, unless:



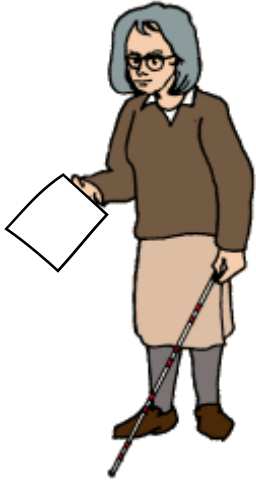
- you are registered as a blind person, or



- you get the higher rate of disability living allowance



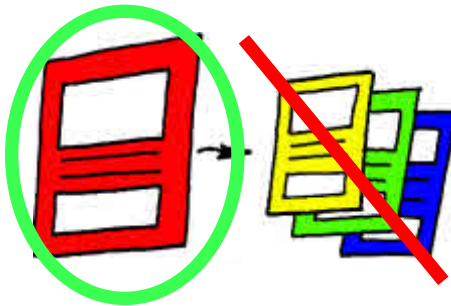
The person who signs the form must be a doctor, nurse or another person who is listed on the form.



If you tell us that you are a blind person or get the higher rate of disability living allowance you must send a document with the form that shows that this is true.



This can be a letter or another document. The type of information you can send us is listed on the form.



You must send the document itself, not a photocopy.

14 Days

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

You can ask to vote this way at any time up to 14 days before an election.

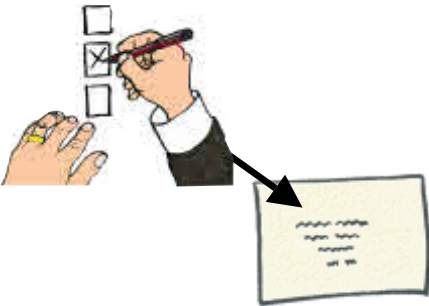
It is better to get it sorted out as early as possible.



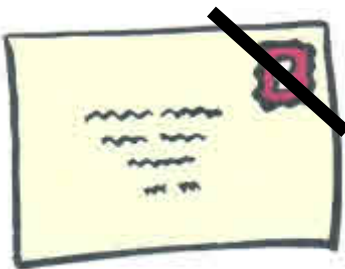
If you ask for a postal vote, the papers will be posted to you before the election.



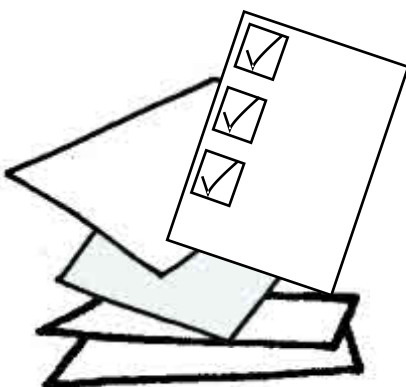
The paper that you vote on is called the **ballot paper**.



You mark the ballot paper and send it back to the Electoral Office in the envelope.



You do not need to buy a stamp.



Your ballot paper will be mixed in with all the others before counting begins.



A proxy vote

If you send somebody else to vote for you it is called a **proxy vote**.



Your ballot paper is sent to the person voting for you and you don't have to do anything.



You can get the forms for postal and proxy votes by getting in touch with the **Electoral Office Helpline**.



You can also print the forms from our internet site:

www.eoni.org.uk

Voting at a different polling station



We try to find accessible polling stations.

But there are some parts of Northern Ireland where there are no accessible buildings.



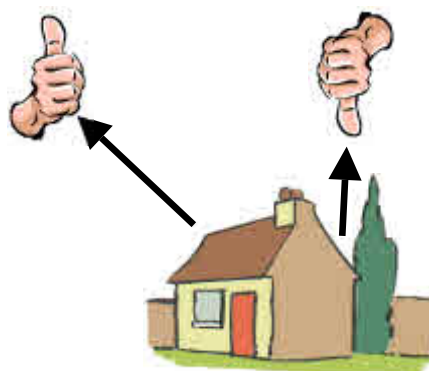
If you are due to vote at a polling station where there is no access for disabled people...



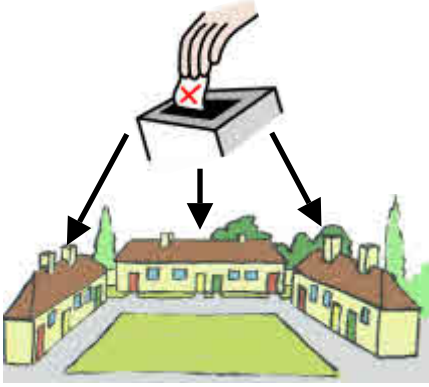
... you can ask for an absent vote or ask to vote at a different polling station.



You will have to say which polling station you would like to use.



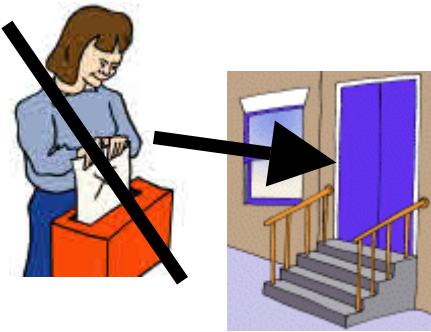
Only you will know the one that would be best for you – it may not be the one nearest to your home.



You can ask to vote at any polling station if it is in the same area as your normal polling station.



You will be sent a poll card for the other polling station and you can vote there in the normal way.



You cannot vote at the first polling station if you change your mind.

14 Days						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

You can ask to vote at a different polling station up to 14 days before an election.



You can get the forms to vote at a different polling station by getting in touch with the **Electoral Office Helpline.**

Our details are at the back of this booklet.



Other help with voting

If you have problems marking the ballot paper yourself, you can ask to have it marked for you by someone else.



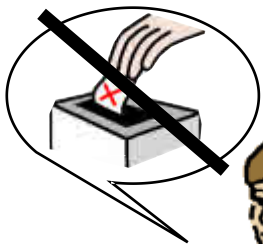
You can ask the person in charge of the polling station or a friend.



If you ask the person in charge to mark the ballot paper for you, you must tell him that you need his help and say why.



When you tell him how you want to vote he will mark the ballot paper for you and put it in the ballot box with all the other papers.



The person in charge must keep your vote secret.

A friend can be your:



- father or mother

- brother or sister

- son or daughter



- husband or wife

- civil partner



- or a person allowed to vote at the election.



Your friend will have to fill in a form for the person in charge that says who they are.



Once that is done they will mark your ballot paper in the way you tell them and put it in the box with all the other votes.



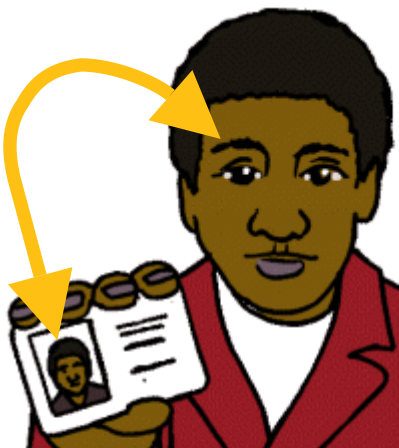
Showing who you are

You have to show something that says you are the person on the poll card before you can have your ballot paper.

You can use:



- Passport
- Driving Licence
- Senior Citizens SmartPass or 60+ SmartPass
- Electoral Identity Card
- War Disabled SmartPass
- Blind Person's SmartPass.

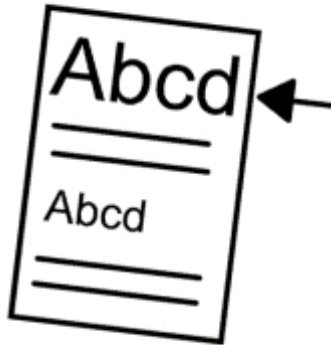


It doesn't matter if it is out of date so long as you still look like your photograph.



More help you can get

There are some other things that might help you to vote



Large Print Ballot Paper

A large print version of the ballot paper will be on display at the polling station.



Voting Device

There is a piece of equipment called a **voting device** to help you mark your ballot paper if you can't see well.



If you want to use it, please tell the workers at the polling station.

When you have to vote for more than 1 person you need to have a good memory to use it.



You might find it easier to ask the person in charge or a friend to mark the ballot paper for you.

Using a Polling booth



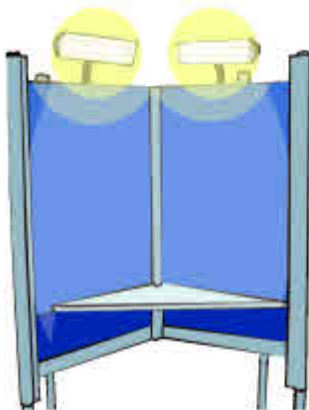
Polling booths are the places you go to mark your ballot paper. They are made so that nobody can see how you vote.



There is a shelf to put your ballot paper on and a pencil so you can make a cross for who you want to vote for. You do this standing up.



There should also be a booth with a shelf that can be used by wheelchair users or people who have trouble reaching.



There will usually be a booth with extra lighting to help you if your eyesight is poor.



If you need any help please ask one of the workers at the polling station.

Other changes



There may be more changes to help you vote in the future, things like:



- colour printing of the party symbols



- colour photographs of the people who want you to vote for them



If you have ideas for other changes that would help please do let us know.



Laws about voting and elections

This booklet does not give all the information on the laws about voting and elections.

These laws are:

- the Representation of the People Act 1983
- the Representation of the People Act 1985
- the Electoral Administration Act 2006
- the Representation of the People Act (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2008
- the Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 2001
- the European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2004.



You can read these laws on the internet:

www.legislation.gov.uk



How to get in touch

The workers at the Electoral Office will help you to vote and answer any questions.



There is a Helpline where our workers can answer all your questions. Calls are free.

Or you can call in at any of the 7 Electoral Offices in Northern Ireland.



You can ask for the address and opening hours from our Helpline or you can look at our internet site:

www.eoni.org.uk

We also have a textphone.



Our website has been set up so that it is easy to use by people with disabilities.

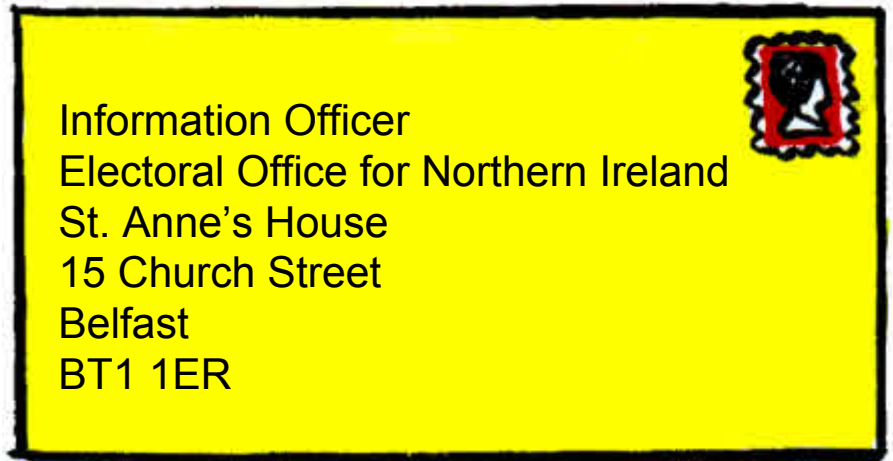
You can use **Browsealoud** to read it out loud.



You can ask for this booklet and all of our information in large print and other formats.

To get in touch:

By post:



By phone:

0800 4320 712



By text phone:

0800 3284 502



By fax:

028 9033 0661



By email:

info@eoni.org.uk



You can get more information about how elections are run on the internet:

www.eoni.org.uk



Credits

This report has been designed and produced for the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland by the 'EasyRead' service at Inspired Services Publishing Ltd. Ref ISL107/08. July 2008.



Artwork is from the Valuing People Clipart collection and cannot be used anywhere else without written permission from Inspired Services.

To contact Inspired Services:



www.inspiredservices.org.uk