Further advice

If you need more advice about registering requirements or voting, it is best to contact your local electoral registration officer.

Voting in the General Election

A guide for service users

April 2015
The General Election is on May 7th 2015.

For many reasons, people with mental health problems are often under-represented in voting. This is often because they are not registered to vote or are not aware of the different ways to vote.

All service users are entitled to vote:

- whether or not they are detained under the Mental Health Act;
- whether they are community or inpatients.

This information will tell you about voting and the support available from your mental health team.

**Who can vote in a UK general election?**

To vote, you must be:

- registered to vote;
- aged 18 or over on polling day;
- a British citizen, Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Irish Republic;
- not legally excluded from voting (for example because you’re in prison).

You cannot vote if you are:

- not registered to vote;
- under 18;
- a member of the House of Lords;
- a European Union citizen (and not also a British, Irish or Commonwealth citizen);
- in prison (apart from remand prisoners).

**Ways AWP staff can support you**

1. If needed, staff can give you copies of the relevant [electoral registration form](#).
2. Staff or volunteers can help you complete your registration forms.
3. We can help you post sealed postal ballot papers.
4. We can help you make your arrangements to vote on General Election Day.

**Things we cannot do**

1. We must not directly or indirectly seek to influence how you vote.
2. Staff or volunteers must not help you complete your ballot form. Whether attending a polling station or voting by post, you should complete your ballot papers in secret and seal the envelope yourself.
3. Staff or volunteers must not act as a proxy for a service user in any circumstances and should not advise you on who might act as a proxy on your behalf.
3) Voting by proxy

Voting by proxy means getting someone to vote on your behalf at a polling station.

You can only apply for a proxy vote under certain circumstances (which are likely to require confirmation from another person), including:

- being abroad on Election Day;
- having a medical issue or disability;
- not being able to vote in person because of work or military service.

If you wish to vote by proxy, you need to contact your local Electoral Registration Office to:

- find out if you are eligible for a vote by proxy;
- ask for a relevant proxy vote application form. There are different forms depending on the reason for the proxy application.

Deadline to apply for proxy vote

For proxy voting, you need to make sure your local Electoral Registration Office gets the application by 5pm Tuesday 28th April 2015.

When to register

Address for registering

Normally, you should register (and vote) in the area where your home address is. This applies whether you are a community or inpatient.

However, in some cases the use of a hospital address is allowed for registration purposes. This is normally where the person:

- has been in hospital for a year or over and so is regarded as a resident; or
- has no other resident address before coming into hospital.

In these situations, it is a good idea to check with your relevant local electoral registration office (see page 3).

Deadline to register

The last date you can register to vote in the 2015 General Election is 20th April 2015.

However, to make sure your name is on the register in time, it is best to do this by the first week in April.
How and where to register to vote

Service users in any area can register to vote on-line
https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Or you can complete and return an electoral registration form and return it to your local registration office.

Bath and North East Somerset Council
Electoral Registration Officer
Guildhall
High Street
Bath
BA1 5AW
01225 477333
elections@bathnes.gov.uk

Bristol City Council
Electoral Services (B Bond)
c/o Willway Street
Bedminster
Bristol
BS3 4SP
0117 9223400
electoral.services@bristol.gov.uk

North Somerset Council
Electoral Registration Officer
Town Hall
Walliscote Grove Road
Weston-super-Mare
Somerset
BS23 1UJ
01934 634 909
electoral.services@n-somerset.gov.uk

South Gloucestershire Council
Electoral Registration Officer
Freepost (BS760)
Council Offices
Castle Street
Thornbury
Bristol
BS35 1ZZ
01454 863030
electoral.services@southglos.gov.uk

Swindon Borough Council
Electoral Registration Officer
Civic Offices
Euclid Street
Swindon
SN1 2JH
01793 463543
elecreg@swindon.gov.uk

Wiltshire Council
Electoral Services
Wiltshire Council
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN
0300 456 0112
elections@wiltshire.gov.uk

Ways to vote

1) Voting in person

The most common method of voting is to go to a designated polling station in the area where you live.

Normally, several weeks before the election, people are sent a polling card with the date of the election and details of their polling station.

You don’t have to take the card to the polling station to vote, but if you don’t receive polling card, the electoral registration office can be contacted for advice and information.

If going to a polling station is going to be difficult due to health related, legal restrictions or other reasons, there are two other ways to vote.

2) Postal voting

Anyone can now apply for a postal vote – you don’t need to give a reason for wishing to vote by post.

To apply to vote by post, you need to apply in advance using a postal vote application form.

If you will be away from home in the run up to Election Day (for example, on holiday or in hospital), you can make a new postal application and ask for the postal voting documents to be sent to the address where you are staying.

Deadline to apply for postal voting
You need to make sure your local Electoral Registration Office gets the application for postal voting by 5pm on Tuesday 21st April 2015.