



the3million
9 Bath Buildings
Bristol BS6 5PT

To: Electoral Commission: press@electoralcommission.org.uk
info@electoralcommission.org.uk

And

Local Government Association

info@local.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

Postal Vote Applications

We are writing on behalf of the3million, the largest organisation representing EU citizens in the UK, and its youth wing, the Young Europeans Network.

We would like to raise a concern that we have in relation to this year's UK local elections, and more specifically, about the provisions made around postal voting. We believe that postal voting, as it is currently organised, is inaccessible to many young residents and particularly to migrant communities who lack access to printer facilities at home and/or are not reached by traditional channels of communication.

Postal voting, as you are aware, requires that people print their postal voting registration form, sign it and then send it back through post. While it is true that voters can contact their local authorities' democratic services for a form to be sent by post in case they are unable to print it themselves, not every local authority makes that known as clearly as they could. Given the current situation, we believe it is important that local authorities take proactive measures to inform their residents about a) the possibility of voting by post and b) their ability to access a registration form by post if unable to print at home.

As a group representing young migrants, we take it upon ourselves to raise this. Many young people who live in the UK lack access to printers at home. The Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions in place make it particularly difficult as they are also unable to access printers elsewhere (such as libraries, post offices, bookstores etc.). This creates an unnecessary barrier for those who are shielding or particularly vulnerable and makes it much more difficult for them to exercise their democratic right.

Secondly, we would also like to bring your attention to the fact that migrant communities are affected by this issue most severely. Voter participation of EU nationals in UK local elections has historically been very low. A clear example can be seen in Corby where it is

estimated that 29% of residents are EU nationals, yet EU nationals represent only 14% of its electoral register. Moreover, in the aftermath of the European Parliament elections where many EU citizens were unable to cast their vote, partly due to the fact they needed to fill in an additional form many were not aware about, we have learnt that many have grown more sceptical about voting in the UK and are even less likely to vote in this election. We believe that this election cycle is an opportune time for the Electoral Commission and local authorities to make it as clear as possible to EU citizens that they are eligible to vote and that they can do so safely.

Therefore, we ask that the Local Government Association and the Electoral Commission encourage local authorities to proactively inform their residents, especially through their websites, that registration forms can be posted to those who do not have access to a printer. We suggest that local authorities everywhere consider which additional steps they can take to promote safe access to postal voting to their residents, including social media posts, direct letters, radio interviews, and more.

We also take this opportunity to propose that a more sustainable solution to the problem is considered; one which does not require the use of printed forms. We believe this will be a more accessible option for migrants and young residents more generally, and one which will be more environmentally friendly.

Below we include some examples of best practice amongst councils:

- London Borough of Hounslow:

“If you do not have access to a printer, please email elections@hounslow.gov.uk and we will post the application form to you”

 hounslow.gov.uk/info/20043/elections_and_voting/1189/voting_by_post

the pre-paid envelope provided.

How to apply

[Click here](#) to download a postal vote application form. Return your completed form to us either:

- As a scanned attachment to an email to elections@hounslow.gov.uk. Please ensure that the image is of good quality and your signature is clear. Photographs of applications will **not** be accepted.
- or post it to us at Electoral Services, London Borough of Hounslow, Hounslow House, 7 Bath Road, Hounslow TW3 3EB

Please note that you must print the form and provide your physical ("wet") signature using **black ink** within the grey box in part 4 of the application before you scan and return your form. **If you do not have access to a printer, please email elections@hounslow.gov.uk and we will post the application form to you.**

The deadline for making an application for a postal vote for an election is 5pm, 11 working days before polling day.

If you have any questions regarding completing the postal vote application form or voting by post, please email elections@hounslow.gov.uk.

- **Mid Devon District Council:**

“Please contact us and we will send you a personalised application form by email or in the post”

middevon.gov.uk/your-council/voting-elections/postal-and-proxy-voting/

Accept all cookies

Set cookie preferences

Postal and proxy voting

Postal votes

If you would like to vote by post because you don't want to go to the polling station, or are unable to get there for any reason, you may apply for a postal vote. If you apply for and are granted a postal vote, a ballot paper will be sent to you approximately two weeks before an election. You must be registered under the new (IER) system to qualify.

Please **contact us** and we will send you a personalised application form by email or in the post.

We will accept scanned forms by email to elections@middevon.gov.uk, fax to 01884 234318 or delivery by hand or post.

If you are applying prior to a published election the form MUST be in our possession by 11 working days before that election.

- **London Borough of Camden:**

In Camden, postal vote application forms were sent to every registered voter who is not already registered for a postal vote. 130,000 voters were thus encouraged to apply for postal voting.

In comparison, the examples below show councils that have decided not to make explicit the fact that residents can ask for a paper form to be sent by post.

- **Nottingham City Council:**

nottinghamcity.gov.uk/your-council/voting-elections/how-to-vote/

let anyone see your vote. If you are not clear on what to do, ask the staff at the polling station to help you

Postal Vote

Anyone can apply to vote by post but you must complete an application form. Once you have completed an application form your details will be entered onto a list of postal voters and an acknowledgement letter will be sent to you. Postal Vote Application forms can be returned to us in the post or by email as a scanned attachment. If sending by email as a scanned attachment, the image must show a signed form and not a typed signature.

 [Postal Vote Application Form](#)

Return the signed and scanned form via email us at elections@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Or return the form to the following address:

Electoral Services, Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG

You can choose to vote by post for an individual election, for a specified timescale, or indefinitely for all future elections. If you apply to vote by post indefinitely you will only need to apply again if you change your address.

Prior to the election, you will be sent a polling card advising you of your postal voting arrangements.

You will then be sent your postal vote through the post approximately 10 days before the election. It will include your ballot paper, a ballot paper envelope, a postal voting statement and a return envelope.

- **South Cambridgeshire District Council:**

scams.gov.uk/elections/voting-by-post-or-proxy/

Elections

- Elections
- Register to vote
- Voting by post or proxy**
- Electoral registration FAQs
- Historic election results [↗](#)
- Elections 2020
- Elections 2021

If you are going to be away at the time of an election or referendum (including neighbourhood planning referendums), you can choose to vote by post or proxy.

How to apply

You must already be registered to vote to apply for a postal or proxy vote.

If you want to have your ballot paper sent to you in the post, you will need to apply to vote by post.

By post

Please complete an [application form \[PDF, 0.1MB\]](#) and send it to the Electoral Registration Office. See below for information about how to return your application form.

The deadline to apply to vote by post or amend an existing postal vote is 5pm 11 working days before polling day.

Anyone can apply for a postal vote, and you can choose to have it on a permanent basis or for a specific election/referendum.

We believe that the practices used to inform voters about their options, such as postal voting, should be consistent across the UK, in order to ensure equal access to democratic rights.

We look forward to hearing about the plans to make postal voting more accessible.

Sincerely,

Lara Parizotto, Alexandra Bulat, Maria Milova, Sofia Miccolis
 Young Europeans Network
 the3million