

Questionnaire

Accessibility Consultation

Status message

The consultation closes on 17 October 2022.

You need to complete this form in one go. You can't save your answers and return to it later.

Supporting Returning Officers to make voting accessible

Status message

Barriers to voting

The barriers to voting at the polling station are not limited to physical barriers, and can include psychological and informational barriers.

The draft guidance aims to support ROs to understand and identify the barriers that people with disabilities may encounter at the polling station and then to take steps to help overcome them through training and the provision of information, specific equipment and support.

Are there any other barriers that voters may experience when voting at the polling station that the draft guidance does not cover?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Not applicable

If so, what other barriers do people face at the polling station? How could these barriers be addressed?

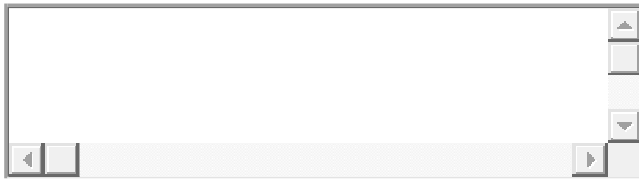
While this guidance already has some good accessibility measures in place, we would like to see some recommendations to remove barriers to people with a learning disability and/or neurodivergent people.

You already mention providing information in an easy read format and to putting up a large print version of the ballot papers. We would also urge you to include guidance on displaying easy read instructions prominently.

Many neurodivergent people and people with a learning disability might struggle to understand processes and instructions on the spot and might benefit from having clear instructions easily available on what is expected of them throughout the process. Having clear instructions available may

make it significantly easier for them to vote. We suggest that in addition to the non easy read instructions that are already part of this guidance, you put up guidance on how to vote in an easy read format.

Some people will also struggle with sensory barriers. They might find it difficult to concentrate and vote due to background noise or other distractions. In order to counteract this, it would be good, where feasible, to have extra voting booths for people who may need a quieter, low sensory environment to concentrate.



Status message

Provision of equipment

The Electoral Commission will have a duty to give guidance to Returning Officers on the equipment they should provide to enable or make it easier for voters to vote independently and in secret at the polling station.

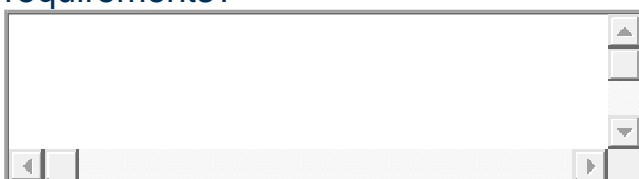
The draft guidance identifies the equipment that could have a significant impact in enabling and making voting easier for as many voters with disabilities as possible. It sets out that ROs should provide this equipment as a minimum.

It also highlights some additional equipment and support that ROs should consider making available, and provides some guidance to support ROs in making decisions about this.

Do you think the suggested minimum requirements for equipment to be provided at the polling station are sufficient and reasonable?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Not applicable

If not, are there any changes you would want made to the list of minimum requirements?



Status message

Ensuring those working to support the poll are aware of accessibility needs

To help ensure that all voters are provided with equal access to voting and receive a high quality of customer care, all of those who work to deliver the election should be aware of the needs of those with disabilities, and receive training to support them.

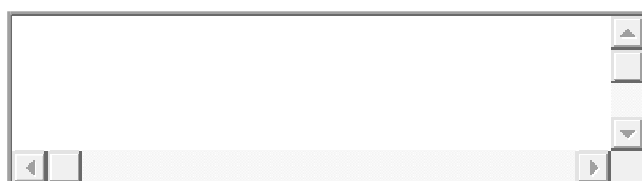
The draft guidance aims to highlight the importance of accessibility awareness training for all staff who interact with voters, and to support the delivery of specific training for polling station staff to ensure that voters' experience is a positive one.

Does the draft guidance give enough information to support Returning Officers with providing training to support making voting accessible for all?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Not applicable

If not, what other information should the draft guidance include?

The advice given here is quite general. It makes reference to more concrete training resources, but we were not able to identify where these were. It would be good to link the training that staff are supposed to take to make sure elections are accessible.



Raising Awareness

Status message

It is important that ROs have a clear communications strategy to help tackle the information and psychological barriers some voters face, as well as to ensure voters are aware of the support available to enable them to vote confidently.

The draft guidance aims to support ROs to communicate with voters with disabilities by highlighting a range of ways they can provide and promote

information about the voting process and available support. It also covers the importance of identifying and working with relevant partners to explore opportunities to work together to raise awareness.

Does the draft guidance give enough information for Returning Officers on how they can engage with voters and publicise information about elections and the support available to them?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Not applicable

If not, what other information should the draft guidance include on how Returning Officers can engage with voters and publicise information?

We are very happy to see guidance that encourages returning officers to engage with local disability groups. It would be good to add some more detail to this. Disabled people are not a monolith and people with different impairments and conditions will have very different accessibility needs. It would therefore be good to add some guidance on the different kinds of disability groups/organisations returning officers are likely to find in their area.



Evaluation

Status message

The draft guidance sets out how, after each election, ROs should evaluate their processes and communications in relation to providing equipment at the polling station, including inviting feedback from voters and accessibility groups.

The Electoral Commission will also ask for feedback on the equipment ROs provided to support voters with disabilities as part of our reporting on elections and to support the identification and sharing of good practice.

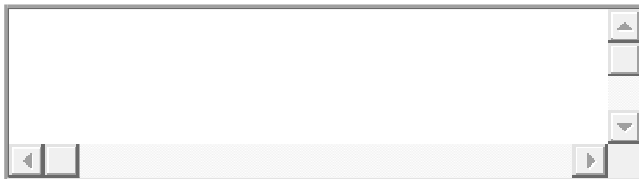
Does the draft guidance effectively support Returning Officers to evaluate, learn lessons and build on their approach to supporting the needs of voters with disabilities for future polls?

- Yes

- No
- Don't know / Not applicable

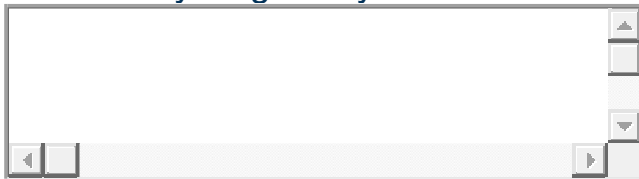
Please provide any further detail to explain your response here.

The methods of evaluating how accessible elections are seem suitable to us. It would be good to not only involve disabled people in focus groups but also to make sure disabled people are hired into paid positions to form and lead this evaluation process.



Anything else you want to tell us?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us in response to this consultation?



About you

Are you replying to this consultation as/on behalf of:

If other, please specify

Status message

Your contact details (optional):

Please provide your name and email address or phone number if you are happy to do so. We may use these contact details to follow up with you regarding your consultation response.

Your name

Email address

Phone number