

# 2021

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Easy Read Guide to Voting in the  
May local and Combined Authority  
Mayoral elections in England



The  
Electoral  
Commission

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# 1

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## What is voting?

This section explains what voting is and how it works



This section will explain what **voting** is and why it's **important**.

People with a learning disability have as much right to vote as anyone else. Don't let anyone else tell you different.



People with a learning disability should vote so they have a say about things that affect their lives.

It's important to remember that you must register to vote in order to vote.

## **What is a Council?**

The people that run your council are called councillors.



They make important decisions that can affect people's lives.

For example, your local council makes important decisions that can change:

- How people with a learning disability use local services
- How services like schools, community centres, parks, rubbish collection and libraries are run.



Different councillors have different ideas about the best way to run local services.



Councillors are elected. This means people living in the area get to decide which councillors are elected to run the council.

People call this a local election.



Councillors are usually part of a political party. There are lots of political parties.

The political party with the highest number of Councillors usually gets to control the Council and take decisions on how local services are run.

You can also vote for candidates who are not part of a political party. They stand as independent candidates.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



## What is a Combined Authority Mayor?

A Combined Authority Mayor, sometimes called a Metro Mayor, is the elected leader of a Combined Authority.

A Combined Authority is when different local authorities in the same area work together. For example the combining of a City Council and a County Council.

The metro mayors are in charge of a group of people, called a cabinet, that is made up of the leaders of the councils that have joined together.



Metro mayors were introduced in England so that different parts of the country have more of a say in making their own laws and choices.

The areas that are electing a Combined Authority Mayor are:

- Greater Manchester
- West Midlands
- Liverpool City Region
- Tees Valley
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- West of England



The West Yorkshire area will be choosing its first Combined Authority Mayor

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

## What do they do?

Combined Authority Mayors have powers and money to make decisions across whole city regions.



Some of these powers include housing, transport, skills and business support, this will help to improve jobs, wages and quality of life in cities.

## What can the Combined Authority Mayors do?

The powers of the metro mayor in each city are different because each city has a different agreement with the Government in Westminster.



But most mayors have powers over:

- skills
- housing
- and transport.

Some metro mayors like Greater Manchester also has more powers in areas like criminal justice and health and social care.



There will be Combined Authority Mayoral elections happening on **Thursday 6 May 2021** in many parts of England.

In some areas of England there will also be local Government elections on the same day.

Some areas will also have Police and Crime Commissioner elections.



To find out which elections are happening in your area you can add your postcode to the Electoral Commission website searcher and it will tell you what is happening in your area –

**[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information)**



## Who can vote in these elections?

To vote in these elections you must be:

- 18 years old or over
- a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of the European Union
- resident in the UK

More information on which countries are included within the Commonwealth can be found on the Electoral Commission's voter information website – **[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/register-vote-and-update-your-details#commonwealth](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/register-vote-and-update-your-details#commonwealth)**

# 2

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## Registering to vote

This section explains how you can register to vote



This section explains how to **register to vote**.

**It is important that you register to vote. If you are not registered to vote you won't be able to vote in an election.**

You can find out more about voting on the Mencap website:



**[www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections](http://www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections)**

People living in England can register to vote online at **[www.gov.uk/register tovote](http://www.gov.uk/register tovote)**



For these elections you will need to register by **midnight on Monday 19 April**.

**You need to register to vote every time you move home.**

Contact information  
email: **[campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)**  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



**There are three ways you can vote and you should pick the one that works best for you.**

**At a polling station** - Before an election you will be posted a poll card. Your poll card will tell you where your polling station is. Your local polling station is where you can vote in person. Polling stations are often at churches, community centres and schools. However they can be in all sorts of places.



**By post** - If you want to vote by post you will need to contact your local electoral services team who will send you a form. You should fill out the postal vote application form and send it back to your local electoral services team.

You can also print off the form at [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voting-person-post-or-proxy/voting-post](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voting-person-post-or-proxy/voting-post)

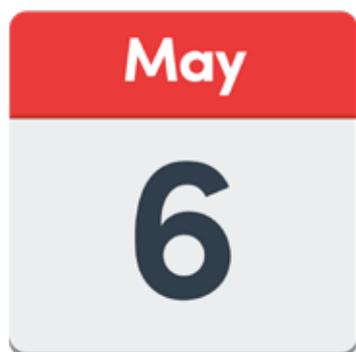
Before the elections you will receive your ballot paper or if you have more than one election in your area you will get one ballot paper for each election.



**By proxy** - Voting by proxy means choosing someone else to vote for you. You need to fill in a new form to choose who will vote for you. This person can visit a polling station or apply for a postal vote in order to vote on your behalf.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: 0207 696 6009

You can print off the application form at **[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voting-person-post-or-proxy/voting-proxy](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voting-person-post-or-proxy/voting-proxy)**



In an emergency where you cannot go to the polling station in person, including self-isolating due to Covid-19, you can apply for an emergency proxy up to **5pm on Thursday 6 May 2021**.



### **Need help?**

You can find out more about voting on the Mencap website:

**[www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections](http://www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections)**

If you have any questions you can call the Mencap election hotline on **0207 696 6009**.

Contact information  
email: **[campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)**  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

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## Voting by post

This section explains how you can apply for a postal vote.



## Voting by post

This section explains **how to apply to vote by post**.

If you would like to vote by post, instead of going along to a polling station on election day you need to get in touch with your local electoral services team at your council and say you would like to vote by post.



You will be sent a form to fill in and post back to the council.

If you don't know how to get in touch with your local electoral services team you can type in the postcode of your address on the Electoral Commission website and it will give you the name, address and telephone number of who to talk to at your council



**[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information)**

**The deadline for postal vote applications is 5pm, Tuesday 20 April.**

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



## Completing the Postal Vote Application

Once your application form has arrived in the post you need to fill it in.

### About You

First, fill out the About You section.

Write your full name.



There are boxes to write your phone number or your email in but you don't have to fill them in if you don't want to. They are just there to help the electoral services team get in touch with you if they need to for example if there are any issues with your application.

Your council may fill in some of the form for you.

### Address

Next, fill out the address section. You will need to write the address where you live and are registered to vote.



## How long do you want a postal vote for?

Fill out the 'How long do you want a postal vote for?' section.

You will need to say for how long you would like to vote by post.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: 0207 696 6009



If you would like to vote by post at all elections you should tick the box “until further notice.” That means you will be sent a postal vote for all elections unless you contact the electoral services team to say you would like to stop voting by post.

If you would rather just vote for post for one election, you should add the date for that election. Or you can pick a period of time to have postal votes. For example from 01/05/2021 and 01/05/2025.



## Address for Postal Ballot Paper

Next, fill out the ‘Address for postal ballot paper’ section.

Write the address you would like your postal ballot paper or papers if you have more than one election in your area to be sent to. This is usually your home address but if you are going to be away for example on holiday you can add the address where you will be staying.



## Declaration

Finally, fill out the ‘Your date of birth and declaration’. Write your date of birth and sign in the box. If you can’t sign get in touch with your local electoral services team and they can help.

Then post your form to the address provided.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: 0207 696 6009



If you can't post the form back yourself, either give it to somebody you know and trust to post it for you, or ring your local electoral services team to see if they can collect it from you.

Or ask your electoral services team if they will accept it by email.



## What happens next

Before the election, you will receive a postal ballot pack and a ballot paper or papers if you have more than one election in your area that show you who you can vote for.



The postal ballot pack will tell you where you should post it and will contain a prepaid envelope for you to send the ballot paper back.



You can also take your postal ballot pack to your local polling station on election day.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



## Need help?

You can find out more about voting by post on the Mencap website:

**[www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections](http://www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections)**



If you get stuck or have any questions, you can call the Mencap team on **0207 696 6009**.

Contact information  
email: **[campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)**  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



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## Voting by proxy

This section explains how you can apply to vote by proxy (this means someone votes on behalf of someone else)



This guide explains **how to apply to vote by proxy.**

Voting by proxy means that you choose someone to vote for you. This person must vote for the person or people you want to vote for. You can find out more about voting on the Mencap website:

**[www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections](http://www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections)**



If you would like to vote by proxy you should call your local electoral services team to tell them and they will be able to send you a form. You should tell the team you are asking for a proxy vote due to a disability. This will let you have a proxy vote for more than one election. You will be sent a form called 'Application to vote by proxy due to disability'.



The deadline for proxy vote applications is **5pm, Tuesday 27 April 2021.**

Contact information  
email: **[campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)**  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



## Now fill in the following sections

### About You

First, fill out the 'About you' section. You do not have to write your telephone number or your email address if you do not want to. But giving them your contact details can help them contact you if there is a problem with your application.

You will need to write the address where you are registered to vote.



### About Your Proxy

Next, fill out the details of the person you have chosen as your proxy. The person you choose to be your proxy must be a registered voter and able to vote in this election.

### How long do you want a proxy vote for?

Next, fill out the 'How long do you want a proxy vote for' section.

You will need to say for how long you would like to vote by proxy.

You can choose to vote by proxy until further notice. This means you will vote by proxy until you say that you don't want to vote by proxy anymore.



You can choose to vote by proxy for a certain length of time. For example, you could say you only want to vote by proxy between 01/05/21 and 01/05/25.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: 0207 696 6009

You can vote by proxy for a specific election. You will need to give the date and the name of the election.



## Why do you want a proxy vote?

If you would like to vote by proxy for all elections in the future you will need to request a permanent proxy application form from the electoral services team at your council. On the form you will be asked why you would like a proxy vote.

You can vote by proxy for many reasons including:

- You are registered blind
- You get the higher rate of the mobility component of the personal independence payment
- You need to work away from home. You can also explain why you think you should have a proxy vote.



You will also need someone to support your explanation. The following people can support your application:

- A doctor, dentist, pharmacist or nurse
- A social worker
- A manager of a residential care home.



Further options will be detailed on the application, or your local elections team will be able to give more information.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: 0207 696 6009

If you would like a proxy vote for just one election then you do not need someone like a doctor or a nurse to support your application, you just need give the reason why you cannot get to the polling station on election day.

## **Need help?**

You can find out more about voting by proxy on the Mencap website:

**[www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections](http://www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-mencap/elections)**

If you get stuck or have any questions, you can call the Mencap team on **0207 696 6009**.



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## Voting at a polling station

This section explains how you vote at a polling station



This section explains **how to vote at a polling station.**



When you have registered to vote, you can vote in person at a polling station.

Before an election, you will be sent a poll card.

This card will tell you where your polling station is.



Polling stations are often in churches, community centres and schools. However they can be in all sorts of places.



Polling stations are open from **7am to 10pm.**

It can be useful to take your poll card with you when you go to vote.



When you arrive at a polling station, you will be asked to give your name and address.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



If you are unsure what to do when you get to the polling station, ask the staff at the polling station – they are there to help you.

You can also ask someone to come along to the polling station with you to help you. For example, a family member who is over 18 or a support worker who can also vote in the same election as you are. **They can also help you fill in your ballot paper.** If they do this then you need to let the Presiding Officer know and the person helping you will need to fill in a form.

If you don't have anyone with you and you need help filling in your ballot paper the Presiding Officer can help you. The Presiding Officer is the person in charge at the polling station.



Everyone who is allowed to vote in this election and is registered to vote can do this.

At the polling station you will be given **ballot papers**. These are pieces of paper with all the names of the candidates on them.

## How to vote for your Councillor

You mark the ballot paper by putting an 'X' next to the name of the person you would like to represent you.



For the local elections you may have more than one Councillor representing your area and so you may be able to vote for more than one person. You then put your ballot paper into the ballot box.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: 0207 696 6009



## How to vote for your Combined Authority Mayor.

There are two columns. In Column 1 you put an 'X' next to the name of the person you want to be your first choice.

You can choose just one candidate if you want. If you want to do this just put an 'X' in the first column next to the name of the person you want to vote for.



If you want to give someone your second choice then you can put an 'X' next to the name of that candidate in the second column.

## Please read this carefully

If your area has only two candidates you will only need to choose one. Also, your ballot paper will only have one column. Once you have filled in your ballot paper fold it up and put it in the ballot box.

You can find out more about voting at the polling station on the Mencap website:

**[www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/guides-voting](http://www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/guides-voting)**



If you get stuck registering to vote or need help understanding voting, you can call the Mencap team on **0207 696 6009**.

Contact information  
email: **[campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)**  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

# 6

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## Important dates

This section tells you the important dates you need to remember for the Combined Authority Mayors and local elections in May 2021.

## Important dates for the elections

You might want to put some of these important dates in your diary or your calendar.



### Election Day

Election day for these elections is **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021**. You can vote in your polling station between 7am and 10pm.



### Register to Vote Deadline

If you want to vote in the local elections and Combined Authority Mayors, the deadline for registering to vote is **midnight on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021**.



### Postal Vote Application Deadline

If you would like to vote by post, your application must be received by your Electoral Services team by **5pm, Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021**.



### Proxy Vote Application Deadline

If you would like to vote by proxy, your application must be received by your Electoral Services team by **5pm, Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021**.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: 0207 696 6009

# 7

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## Terms we use in this guide

This section explains specific useful words, like councillor, ballot box, polling station etc. which you will come across in this guide



## Councillor

Councillors are **politicians** who are elected to represent your area on the local council. They help make decisions that affect services in your local area.



## Combined Authority Mayor

In some areas, there is a combined authority, where a group of local councils work together on issues that affect the whole area, such as transport and housing. Combined authorities are led by an elected mayor.



## Political Parties

A **political party** is a group of people who think the country should be run in a certain way.



**Politicians** are usually in political parties. There are also candidates that are independent from political parties.



## Electoral Register

The electoral register is the list of everyone that is allowed to **vote** in **elections**. You need to be on the electoral register to be able to vote.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: 0207 696 6009



## Voting

**Voting** means that you and other people choose who represents you on a **council** or in **parliament**. In politics, voting happens during an **election**. Voting is very important. It is one of the best ways to get your voice heard by some of the most important people in the country.



## Polling station

A **polling station** is a place where you go to **vote**. Polling stations are often at churches, community centres and schools however they can be in all sorts of places. You will be told where your polling station is on your poll card.



## Presiding Officer

The Presiding Officer is the person in charge of a polling station on election day. They are there to make sure the election goes smoothly and they are also there to help if you have a question or would like someone to support you when you vote.



## Ballot Box

The **ballot box** is where you put your ballot paper when you vote at a polling station. It is a big box used to keep all the votes safe until they are ready to be counted.

Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**



## Ballot Paper

This is a piece of paper with the names of the candidates on it. You should read the instructions on how to fill in the ballot paper or ask the staff for help. If you are voting in a polling station, once you have voted you put the ballot paper in into the ballot box.

After voting has closed all the ballot papers are counted and the winners are declared.



## Postal Vote

A postal vote is when someone is sent their ballot paper in the post and they fill it in and post it back. This means they don't vote at the polling station on polling day.



## Proxy Vote

Voting by proxy means choosing someone else to vote for you. You need to fill in a form to choose who will vote for you. This person can visit a polling station or apply for a postal vote in order to vote on your behalf.

# Notes

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Contact information  
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The  
Electoral  
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