



For women and children.
Against domestic violence.

YOUR VOTE MATTERS, YOUR SAFETY TOO

**A Guide to registering
to vote anonymously**

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Introduction to This Guide

In 2026, there will be local elections in England and national elections in Scotland and Wales.

Refuge believes it's vital that survivors of domestic abuse get to have a say in the running of the country just the same as everyone else.

Beyond the broader decisions that affect everyone's everyday lives, the national and local governments also have the authority to make key decisions **directly affecting survivors** - including allocating funding to domestic abuse services, and ensuring no one is turned away from safe accommodation when they need help.

Survivors have the right to vote for the candidates they believe will best represent them, but it can be difficult for survivors who need to remain anonymous and protect confidential information to register to vote safely.

This Guide is designed for survivors of domestic abuse who want to vote safely in the upcoming elections. We understand that your safety is crucial, and that's why we're here to help you navigate the process of registering to vote anonymously.



In this Guide, we'll explain why it's important to keep your voting information private, go over your rights, and give you easy steps to follow to protect your identity while registering to vote.

Our goal is to make sure you can vote without worrying about your safety being compromised.

Because your vote counts, and your safety does too.

How Voter Registration Works

When it comes to signing up to vote without revealing your identity, it's important to understand how it works.

Normally, when you register to vote, you have to give some basic information to your local Electoral Registration Office to check if you're eligible.

The basic information you give, such as your name or address, will sit on the Electoral Register

However, there's an option for **anonymous registration**, which protects personal details.

There are two voter lists: the Electoral Register and the 'open register'!

The open register is accessible to be purchased by businesses and can be accessed by anyone on certain websites, but isn't used for elections. The Electoral Register is reserved for electoral management and crime prevention.

Usually, you can opt-out of the open register, but you can't choose not to be on the Electoral Register – **except if you're signing up to vote anonymously.**



Survivors who wish to register to vote have two options:

OPTION 1.

Register to Vote Anonymously

We recommend that survivors register to vote anonymously if they have concerns about their own safety or that of their family/ household if their names and addresses are on the Electoral Register.

Survivors in refuges or safe accommodation where addresses need to be kept confidential should consider this option.

Voting anonymously may be the best option for you because anyone can request to look at the Electoral Register. Whilst copies of the Electoral Register cannot be made, and information stored on it can't be used for marketing, there is a risk that perpetrators could use it to determine survivors' addresses. If you register to vote anonymously, only the Electoral Registration Office and election staff can see your information.

With anonymous registration, personal details won't appear on the Electoral Register. **Those who register this way also won't be on the open register.**

OPTION 2.

Opt Out from the Open Register

You can also opt out of the open register, but remain on the Electoral Register.

If you choose this option, you can also benefit from the positive impact that being on the Electoral Register has on your credit score.

Remember, your safety is paramount, and there are options available to protect your privacy while exercising your right to vote.



Remaining on the open register and Electoral Register:

DOWNSIDES/ RISKS	BENEFITS
Anyone can buy access to the open register, and anyone can also request to view the Electoral Register.	

Opting out of the open register, but remaining on the Electoral Register:

DOWNSIDES/ RISKS	BENEFITS
Anyone can request to look at the Electoral Register, and although they can't make copies or use the information for things like marketing, there is a risk that perpetrators could do so to determine survivors' addresses.	Being on the Electoral Register can have a positive impact on your credit score. You just have to opt out of the open register once unless you move, and it's easy to do.

Registering to vote anonymously:

DOWNSIDES/ RISKS	BENEFITS
<p>You will need to make an application to do this and re-register every year.</p> <p>A small number of staff at your local council will still be able to access your personal data.</p> <p>There may be an impact on your credit score, as the Electoral Register is used by credit agencies.</p>	<p>Your privacy will be protected as your personal details won't appear on the Electoral Register or the open register.</p> <p>If you choose to vote in person, polling stations will provide a private area where you can choose to speak to local election staff about the fact that you are registered to vote anonymously.</p>

Option 1. Register to Vote Anonymously

We recommend that survivors with concerns for their own safety or that of their family / household register to vote anonymously as names and addresses will be placed onto the open or Electoral Register.

If you are currently living in a refuge, please speak to your refuge manager as they can advise on how to best register to vote anonymously.

1 Fill out an application form to register to vote anonymously.

You can download the form here.

Please note that different forms are required for registration in England, Wales and Scotland.

You should explain briefly why your safety would be in danger if your details are on the electoral register.

You will also need to provide personal details like your name, address, contact information, whether you've changed your name or moved in the last year, date of birth, nationality, National Insurance (NI) number, and whether you prefer to vote by post or have someone vote on your behalf (proxy).

If you don't know your date of birth, nationality, or NI number, you can explain why on the form.

2 Sign the declaration.

3 Provide documents to support your application

such as:

- a. A court order in force on the day you apply to register anonymously, or
- b. An attestation from an authorised person (including managers of refuges).

For more information on acceptable documents, visit the **[electoral commission website.](#)**

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4 Send the completed form and supporting documents

These need to be sent to your **local Electoral Registration Office**, usually located in your local council building.

Once registered, anonymous voters will then receive a signed 'certificate of anonymous registration' as confirmation.

5 Apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document.

Please remember, voters in England now need to show photo ID at polling stations during elections.

If you're an anonymous voter and want to vote in person, you will need to apply for an **Anonymous Elector's Document** to act as your ID before polling day.

Your local council will invite you to apply if you're already registered as an anonymous voter or if you register to vote anonymously.

Please contact your **local Electoral Registration Office** if you have not been contacted directly.

Anonymous registration is valid for one year, so you need to reapply annually. Your Electoral Registration Office will let you know when it's time to reapply.

Unfortunately, if you register to vote anonymously you won't be able to benefit from the positive impact that being on the Electoral Register has on your credit score.

You can contact your credit reference agency to let them know you are registered to vote anonymously.



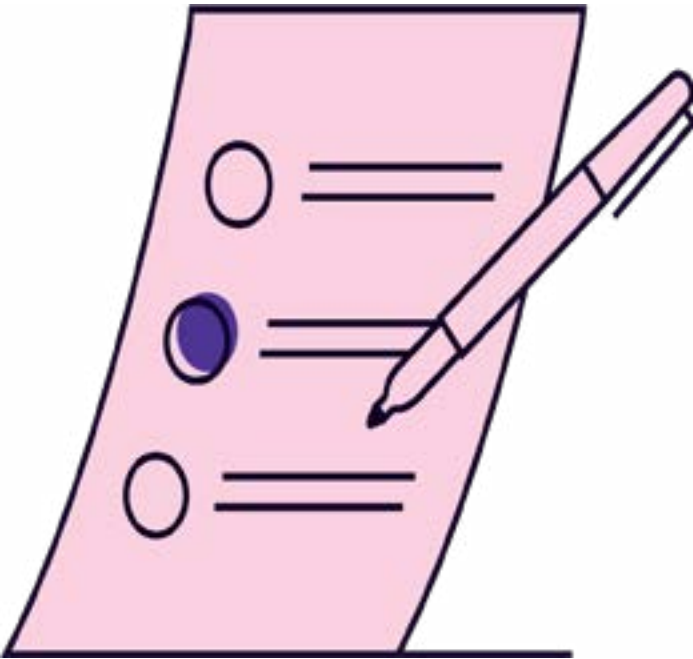
How do Anonymous Voters Vote on Election Day?

On the day checklist:

- Poll card
- Anonymous Elector's Document

If you're an anonymous voter, you can cast your vote in person at a polling station or apply to vote by post or proxy, just like any other registered voter.

A few weeks before election day, you will receive a poll card by post.



It's important you bring this poll card with you when you go to vote at the polling station; without it, you won't be able to vote.

If you've lost your poll card or never received it, you should contact the Returning Officer by getting in touch with your **local Electoral Registration Office**.

In addition to the poll card, **you must also bring your Anonymous Elector's Document to be allowed to vote on the day.**

Polling stations provide a private area where you can choose to have your Anonymous Voter Document viewed confidentially. This area might be a separate room or an area screened off for privacy, depending on the polling station.

You can also ask for a female member of staff to check your Anonymous Elector's Document, and this request will be accommodated if possible.

Option 2. Opt Out from the Open Register

We recommend survivors opt-out of appearing on the open register.

However, your details will still be on the Electoral Register, unless you also register to vote anonymously.



To opt out:

1 **Fill in the form on the register to vote service, even if you're already registered.**

Or you can print out a form and send it to your **local Electoral Registration Office**.

2 **Opt out of 192.com via this online form.**

If your information is on the open register, it might also appear on 192.com, a website that shares open register details. You can request online to have your details removed from there.

Opting out won't stop you from being able to vote.

Your details will still be on the Electoral Register. This can also have a positive impact on your credit score.

What Documents do You Need on Election Day?



Please note that voters in England and Wales and in most Scottish elections must now present photo ID at polling stations for elections

You'll need ID to vote in:

- UK parliamentary elections, including general elections and by-elections
- recall of MP petitions, to trigger a by-election in England, Scotland and Wales
- local elections in England (including councils, mayors, the Greater London Authority and parishes)
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales
- neighbourhood planning referendums in England
- local authority referendums in England (including Council Tax increase referendums)

Depending on how you registered to vote, you need to bring different documents with you on Election Day.

If you've chosen to register to vote anonymously, you'll need to bring your poll card and Anonymous Elector's Document. These will act as your Photo ID on Election Day.

For everyone else, including those who opted out from the open register, you will need to bring a photo ID on Election Day to be able to vote.

You don't need photo ID to vote by post.

If you don't have a photo ID you can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate which will act as your photo ID on Election Day.

The **deadline** to apply for free voter ID for the 7th May elections is the **28th April.**

Apply for free voter ID now.

Visit our website to find more information about our work and the support we offer to survivors of domestic abuse.

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