

## Overseas electors

Since 1985, British citizens who are living outside the UK have been entitled to be registered as electors. Once registered as an overseas elector, you are entitled to vote in UK Parliamentary and European Parliament elections.

### Who can register

You can register as an overseas elector if you are a British Citizen and you have been on a UK Electoral Register at any time within the past 15 years.

If you have never been registered as an elector in the UK, you will not be eligible to register as an overseas voter. However, if you left the UK before you were 18 years of age you can register at your parents' or guardians' address, providing that you left the country no more than 15 years ago. You will need to contact the electoral registration office at the local council where your parents or guardian were last registered.

If you are overseas serving in the armed forces or as a Crown Servant, separate provisions apply; please contact your local electoral registration officer.

### How to register

You can get an application form from the electoral registration office for the local authority you wish to register for. You can register as an overseas elector at any time, but you should be aware that for most of the year the register can close up to six weeks before an election. The annual canvass carried out between 1 September and 1 December means that the September register is used for any election during this period.

You will need to provide:

- your full name and overseas address;

- the UK address where you last registered (or the address where you were living on the last qualifying date before you left); and
- the date you left the UK.

If this is the first time you have made an overseas elector's application (or if you have been registered as an elector living in the UK since making a previous application) you will have to give additional information to show you are a British citizen. If you left the UK before you were old enough to be registered, you will have to provide a copy of your full birth certificate and information about the parent or guardian whose registration you are relying on.

If this is the first time you have made an overseas elector's declaration, you will also have to find someone to support what you say in your declaration. He or she can be anyone who:

- is aged 18 or over;
- is a British citizen;
- is not living in the UK; and
- is satisfied that you are not living in the UK on the date of the declaration but is not a close relative.

You should return the form, and any required supporting documents to the electoral registration office where you were last registered to vote in the UK, or where you would have been eligible to vote if you were old enough. The electoral registration office is run by the local authority

(council). Your application must reach the electoral registration office within three months of the date you sign the form.

Your registration will last for 12 months and must be renewed every year, but can be cancelled by you at any time. The electoral registration office will send you a reminder 2–3 months before your registration runs out. When you renew your registration you do not need to have a witness.

### The electoral register

There are now two versions of the electoral register – the full version and the edited version. Your details will appear on the full version, but you can choose whether or not your details appear on the edited register.

The full register is used for elections, preventing and detecting crime, and checking applications for credit. The edited register is available for general sale and can be used for commercial activities such as marketing.

If you do not wish to appear on the edited register you should tick the box provided on the registration form. More information on this issue can be found in a leaflet 'Who has your details' produced by The Electoral Commission which can be downloaded from [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

### Voting

Registered overseas electors are eligible to vote in elections to the UK and European Parliaments, but not UK local government elections or elections for the devolved assemblies. UK citizens resident in other member states of the European Union are entitled to register and vote in local and European Parliament elections in their country of residence, but can only vote in one country for members of the European Parliament. As any UK referendum requires special legislation to be passed, this legislation would also determine who can vote in such a referendum.

### Voting by post

If you want to vote by post you need to fill in a postal vote form. If you decide to vote by post your ballot paper will be sent to you about a week before the election. You should be aware that this may not be enough time to allow you to receive your ballot paper, mark your vote and send it back to be received by the close of poll.

### Voting by proxy

You can appoint someone in the UK to vote for you. This is called a proxy vote. This is done by filling in a proxy vote application form.

Your proxy must be:

- able and willing to vote on your behalf;
- living in the UK;
- a British, Irish or Commonwealth citizen;
- old enough to vote; and
- legally allowed to vote.

Your proxy can be anybody you trust to vote for you in the way you wish. You will need to tell your proxy which candidate you wish them to vote for. A person can only act as a proxy for two people at each election to whom they are not related and/or any number of close relatives. The proxy can vote either at the polling station for the area where you are registered or by post. You can send the proxy appointment form directly to the electoral registration officer; the proxy does not need to sign the form. You can appoint a proxy to vote for you for an indefinite period but can change this arrangement at any time.

### Voting in person

If you are in the UK on election day and you or your proxy have not applied for a postal vote you can vote in person at the polling station where you are registered to vote in the UK. It is not possible to vote at your local embassy or consulate. If you have appointed a proxy you can still vote in person, provided that your proxy has not already voted or applied to vote by post.

### Further information

Registration and voting as an overseas elector will not be taken into account in determining whether you have UK domicile for tax purposes.

### Contacts

If you need more information you can contact the electoral registration officer for your UK registration address; you will find the council's details at the Commission's rolling registration site [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/your-vote/rollingreg.cfm](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/your-vote/rollingreg.cfm) or go direct to [www.upmystreet.com/](http://www.upmystreet.com/)

Contact details for your nearest British consulate can be found at [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

You can also contact The Electoral Commission at the address below.

### Feedback

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