

Registering to vote and voting information leaflet

The purpose of the information leaflet is to provide information and guidance for anyone interested in helping people who don't have a permanent address register to vote and vote in the Scottish Parliament election on **Thursday 5 May 2016**.

About the Scottish Parliament election

The Scottish Parliament has powers to make laws for Scotland in a range of areas including health, education, housing, justice and the environment. In Scotland you are represented by eight Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). One represents the Scottish Parliament constituency and the other seven represent the region.

For more about the Scottish Parliament, go to: www.scottish.parliament.uk

Registering to Vote in the Scottish Parliament election

To vote in any election or referendum people must be registered.

Each person is responsible for registering themselves and they can do this by visiting gov.uk/register-to-vote.

If people would prefer they can apply using a paper form. The form can be downloaded from www.aboutmyvote.co.uk or they can request one from their local electoral registration team and send it back to them by no later than **18 April 2016**.

People can find details of their local electoral registration team by entering a postcode from their area in the pink box marked 'Your local area' on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

When registering to vote people need to provide their:

- National Insurance number (if they are 16 or over¹)
- Date of birth
- Address²

¹ People who are not yet 16 won't need to provide their National Insurance number to register.

We strongly encourage everyone to get registered as soon as possible, but the final deadline to register in time to vote in the Scottish Parliament election is midnight on **Monday 18 April 2016**.

What address can someone who doesn't have a permanent address use when registering?

Registering in temporary accommodation

People in temporary accommodation may be able to register at that address, provided they don't have a permanent address elsewhere. If they are unsure if this is the case they should contact their local electoral registration officer.

People can find details of their local electoral registration team by entering the postcode of their area in the pink box marked 'Your local area' on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

Registering with no fixed address

Homeless people can still register to vote even if they don't have a fixed address. To register, people need to fill in a form called a '**Declaration of local connection**'³.

This form is available to download from gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions or it can be requested from the local electoral registration office.

People can find details of their local electoral registration team by entering the postcode of their area in the pink box marked 'Your local area' on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

Anonymous registration

People who wish to register anonymously, instead of their name and address appearing on the electoral register, a code will be added to the register instead.

People can request to register anonymously for safety reasons – such as if someone is escaping violence or have a job that puts them at risk from other people.

² Please refer to page 2 'What address can someone who doesn't have a permanent address use when registering?'

³ A declaration of local connection means you register to an area where you spend a significant amount of time, such as a shelter or park bench, or the area where you would be living were it not for your current situation.

To register to vote anonymously documentary evidence of a court order or an attestation from an authorised person to support an application is required.

To register to vote anonymously a form can be downloaded from www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions.

To find out more, people should contact their local electoral registration office. People can find details of their local electoral registration team by entering the postcode for their area in the pink box marked 'Your local area' on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

What is the electoral register?

Registration officers keep two registers – the **electoral register** and the **open register** (also known as the edited register).

The Electoral Register

The electoral register lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in public elections. The register is used for electoral purposes, such as making sure only eligible people can vote. It is also used for other limited purposes specified in law, such as: detecting crime (e.g. fraud), calling people for jury service, checking credit applications.

The Open Register

The open register is an extract of the electoral register, but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm name and address details.

Your name and address will be included in the open register unless you ask for them to be removed. Removing your details from the open register does not affect your right to vote. In Scotland, details of 14 and 15 year olds will not be included in the open register.

Voting in the Scottish Parliament election

People can vote in the Scottish Parliament election if they are registered to vote in Scotland and will be 16 or over on Thursday 5 May 2016 and are:

- a British or Irish citizen, or
- a citizen of another European Union country, or
- a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK

How people can vote

1. At their polling station on Thursday 5 May 2016

Voting in person happens in a polling station, which is usually a school or community centre near the place where the person has registered to vote.

If people are registered to vote they will receive a poll card telling them where their polling station is. Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm.

A poll card is not needed to vote and if it is lost or not received details of where people can find their polling station can be obtained by contacting the local council.

2. By post

If someone can't attend a polling station on Thursday 5 May, the option of voting by post is available. A reason is not required for why a postal vote is needed.

To apply to vote by post, a postal vote application form must be completed and sent to that person's local electoral registration office to arrive by **5pm Tuesday 19 April 2016**.

Download the postal application form at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/register-to-vote/postal-vote-application

The local council can send the ballot papers to the address that was used to register or any other address given.

Postal ballot papers arrive by post and they must be completed and returned ensuring enough time is left for them to arrive by **10pm Thursday 5 May 2016**.

3. By proxy (allowing somebody you trust to vote on your behalf)

If a person cannot go and vote themselves, or vote by post, they can ask someone else to vote for them. This is called voting by proxy.

To apply to vote by proxy, an application form must be completed and sent to the local electoral registration office to arrive by **5pm Tuesday 26 April 2016**.

Download the proxy application form at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/register-to-vote/apply-to-vote-by-proxy

When an application is made for a proxy vote it must state why the person can't in person.

In an emergency when someone can't go to the polling station in person they can apply for an emergency proxy up to **5pm Thursday 5 May 2016**.

Find out more

Visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk or contact the local electoral registration office.

Details of local electoral registration teams can be found by entering a postcode for a particular area in the pink box marked 'Your local area' on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.