

Postal vote handling

Changes to postal vote handling and secrecy

These provisions will be in effect for polls taking place from 2 May 2024.

Limits on handing in postal votes at polling stations

- There will be a limit on the number of postal votes a person can hand in at a polling station – they will not be allowed to hand in more than five postal ballot packs for other electors plus their own.
- If a person hands in more than five postal ballot packs for other electors, all the postal votes (other than their own) will be rejected.
- If there is reason to suspect that a person has already handed in the maximum number of postal votes on any previous occasion at the election, any subsequent postal votes handed in will be rejected.

Completion of postal vote return form

Anyone handing in postal votes will need to complete a postal vote return form. The person handing in the postal vote(s) will need to complete the form with their name, address and the reason for handing in other people's postal votes (where appropriate). They will also need to complete a declaration that they are not handing in more than the permitted number, and that they are not a political campaigner.

If the form is not completed with all the required information, or to the authorised officer's satisfaction, the postal vote(s) will be rejected. Rejected postal votes will not be included in the count. After the election, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) will write to electors who have had their postal votes rejected, telling them why.

Where can I hand in my postal votes and complete the postal vote return form?

If there is sufficient time for the pack to be received, please post your postal vote pack into any Royal Mail post box.

If handing in your postal vote ballot pack by hand, there are only **TWO authorised locations** where this can be undertaken in the London Borough of Hillingdon:

- During the hours of poll (07:00 – 22:00), to the **Presiding Officer** of any polling station in the electoral area of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
- To the **Postal Vote Authorised Officer** at the London Borough of Hillingdon, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 2UW. Monday to Friday, 09:00 – 16:00 only. On the day of the poll, the office will be available until 22:00.

Postal vote packs handed in at any other location will not be accepted as there will be nobody present who is authorised to receive your postal vote pack. Postal vote packs which are left behind at any council building without completing the postal vote returning form will also be rejected.

Please note, any postal packs left in the letterbox at the Civic Centre will be rejected as they will not have the relevant authorised form with them.

Ban on political campaigners handling postal votes

Political campaigners will be banned from handling postal votes, except where the postal vote is their own, that of a close family member, or someone they provide regular care for. They are not banned from handling postal votes if they do so in the course of their usual duties (for example, if they work for Royal Mail).

A political campaigner is defined in legislation as:

- a) a candidate at the election
- b) an election agent of a candidate at the election
- c) a sub-agent of an election agent at the election
- d) employed or engaged for the purposes of that person's activities as a candidate
- e) a member of a registered political party and carries on an activity designed to promote a particular outcome at the election
- f) employed or engaged by a registered political party in connection with the party's political activities
- g) employed or engaged by a person within paragraphs (a) to (f) to carry on an activity designed to promote a particular outcome at the election
- h) employed or engaged by a person within paragraph (g) to carry on an activity designed to promote a particular outcome at the election

If found guilty of handling postal votes as a campaigner, a person could face a fine and/or imprisonment up to two years.

Secrecy requirements extended to postal and proxy votes

The secrecy requirements which apply at a polling station are being extended to postal and proxy votes. It will be an offence to try to find out how someone has voted when completing their postal vote, or to communicate how a postal or proxy voter has voted. Anyone found guilty of breaching the secrecy requirements could face a fine or imprisonment up to six months.

For further information, please contact electoralservices@hillington.gov.uk