

# Postal voting guide

## Your questions answered

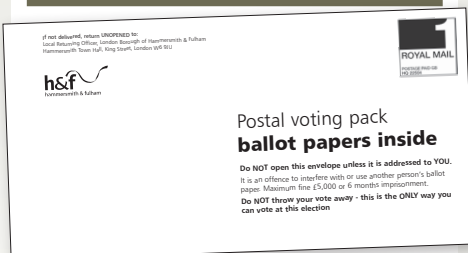
### When will I get my postal voting pack?

Before we can send your ballot papers to you, candidates have to tell the Returning Officer they are standing for election, and ballot papers have to be printed.

**We will be sending the first postal voting packs out by first class post on 17 April 2015.**

People can still apply for a postal vote, or ask to change or cancel their existing postal vote arrangement until **5pm on 21 April 2015**. These electors will be sent their postal voting packs as soon as possible after 17 April, depending on the date that we receive their application and/or the nature of the change they have asked for.

### Watch out for the pack!



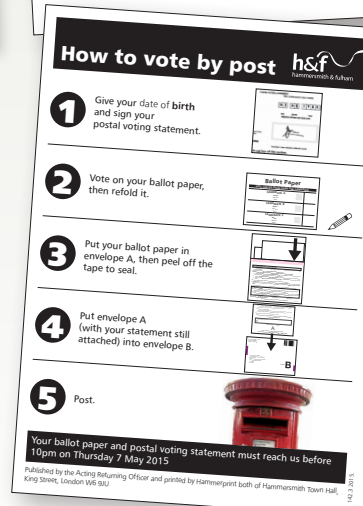
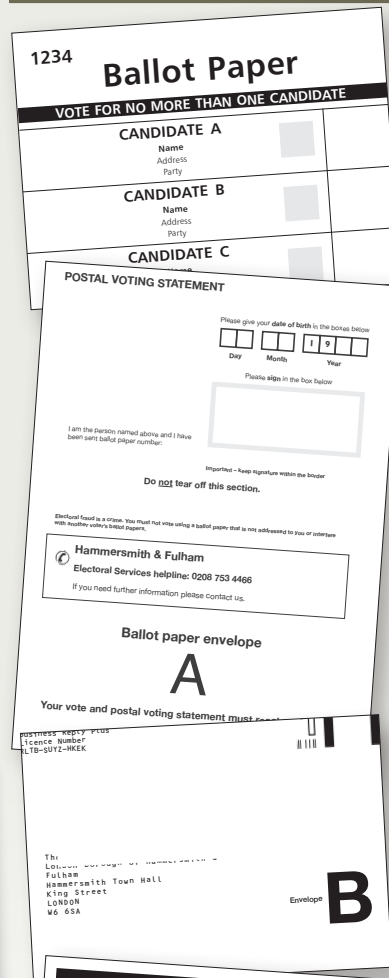
If you are not voting straight away, please keep your pack in a safe place.

If your pack does not arrive by 30 April we can give you a new one. Just contact Electoral Services as soon as possible, but before 5.00pm on 7 May, at the latest. A replacement cannot be given to you in a polling station.

## The UK Parliamentary General Election is on 7 May this year.

In your postal voting pack we will send you:

- ✓ Ballot paper
- ✓ Postal voting statement and ballot paper envelope A
- ✓ Return envelope B
- ✓ Information sheet



## Can I vote at the polling station instead of using my postal vote?

**The simple answer is NO.** If you get a postal voting pack for an election you cannot change your mind and go to vote at a polling station instead.

You can only use the ballot paper sent to you in your pack. You cannot get a ballot paper at a polling station because, of course, your paper has already been issued to you.

**If you want to vote in person at the polling station, or ask someone else to vote on your behalf, you will have to cancel your postal vote. This must be done in writing and reach us by 5.00pm, Tuesday 21 April.**

## What is the postal voting statement?

The statement is very important. It helps to stop voting fraud. It tells us that you - the voter - received your ballot paper safely. It does NOT mean who you vote for can be identified. You have to sign the statement and give your date of birth. These will be checked against your original application form.

## What if my signature has changed or I cannot sign?

If you have a different signature because your name has changed (e.g marriage) you should make a new application to vote by post.

**This needs to reach us by 5.00pm, Tuesday 21 April.**

If you cannot sign because of an accident, please contact Electoral Services straight away for more advice on 020 8753 2174.

**It is against the law for someone else to sign your postal voting statement for you.** "Power of Attorney" does not apply to postal voting.

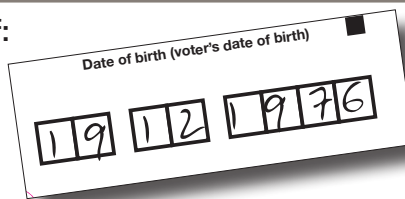
## Can I get independent help?

If you need independent help from the Returning Officer's staff, please call the helpline: 020 8753 2174.

If you have been given an exemption from signing (because of disability) the Returning Officer's staff will deliver your voting pack to you.

### Your vote will NOT be counted if:

- X** you do not return the postal voting statement
- X** you do not sign it
- X** someone else signs for you
- X** you do not give your date of birth
- X** you give the wrong date of birth



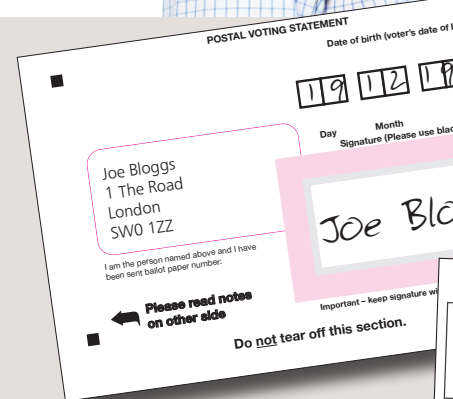
Date of birth checked - ok ✓



Signature checked - ok ✓

## How we open your postal vote

- 1** We check your signature and date of birth against your original application form.
- 2** We separate your statement from your ballot paper envelope.
- 3** The statements are sealed away in special packets. This means that no one will be able to know who you voted for.
- 4** We take the ballot paper out of the envelope, and check the number are the same as on the envelope.
- 5** Votes are not counted at this stage. The ballot papers are put into ballot boxes, which are kept in locked storage until polling stations close on election day. The boxes go to the counting of votes and are opened in the same way as the boxes from polling stations.



## Can someone else use my postal vote for me?

If you have a disability, you can ask someone you trust to help you fill in your postal vote. They have to keep your vote secret.

You can arrange for someone to vote by post for you - called a "postal proxy" - but you and your proxy have to apply to Electoral Services to do this (before 5.00pm, Tuesday 21 April).

**Except in these cases, it is a serious voting offence to give your vote to someone else or to use another person's vote. The penalty is a £5,000 fine, six months in prison, or both.**

## Can you send my pack overseas?

We can send postal voting packs overseas. But please remember, you have very little time to receive your pack, vote, and post it back to us (you cannot fax your ballot paper).

**Your vote has to reach us by 10.00pm on election day (7 May).** Votes received after this time cannot be counted - even if postmarked before election day.

If you are overseas, our advice is to appoint a "proxy" in the UK to vote for you - although it is, of course, your choice. Contact Electoral Services straight away for more advice.

## How do I return my postal vote?

Postal voting - like voting in person - is not compulsory. But, if you do vote, your pack must reach the Returning Officer by 10.00pm on 7 May for it to be counted.

You can do this:

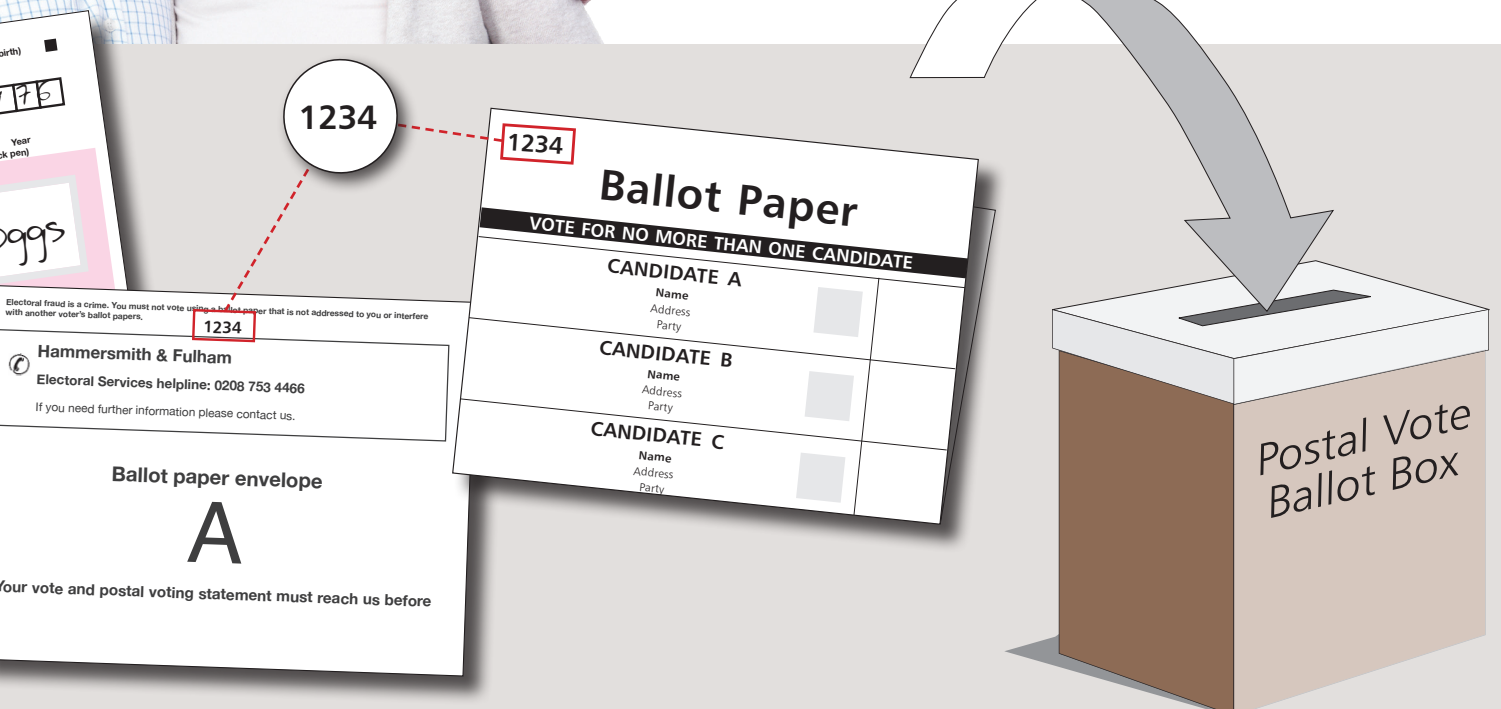
- ✓ By post (no stamp needed)
- ✓ By hand at Hammersmith Town Hall
- ✓ By hand, on 7 May, at any polling station in the electoral area

## What happens when you get my postal vote?

All returned postal votes are put into special ballot boxes, until it is time to open the envelopes.

There are special opening sessions before polling day. These are to make sure it is you - the voter - who has used the voting pack, but also to keep your vote secret. The opening is done according to electoral law by the Returning Officer's staff.

Candidates and their helpers can watch to make sure the rules are followed. Everyone present has to keep the proceedings secret.





## What about postal voting fraud?

There have been cases of postal voting fraud in some parts of the country, and people have been sent to prison. We take these concerns very seriously. However, we must stress that there has never been any evidence of organised postal voting fraud in Hammersmith & Fulham.

### Some safeguards we have in place

- Every request for a postal vote is checked against our computer records of electors. You cannot get a postal vote unless you are on the Register of Electors. You can only get one postal voting pack at an election, even if you send in more than one application form.
- A request for a postal vote is turned down if the application form is not signed or there is no date of birth. You also have to sign any request to cancel or change your postal vote.
- We write back to everyone who arranges a postal vote.
- We are sending this guide to everyone on the postal voters list.
- The postal voting statement is there to prevent fraud.
- Signatures and dates of birth are cross-checked with original application forms.



### What you can do:

- ✓ Let us know if your postal voting pack does not arrive.
- ✓ Keep your voting pack in a safe place if you are not voting straight away.
- ✓ When you vote, keep it secret.
- ✓ If you can, post it back yourself.
- ✓ Don't give your pack to someone else to post unless you trust them.
- ✓ If you decide not to vote, never give your pack to someone else - dispose of your pack safely.
- ✓ Tell us if you move, so your postal voting details can be kept up to date.

**Never give your postal vote to anyone who says they are collecting for the Returning Officer. We never do this, unless you ask us to.**

### It is an offence to:

- vote using ballot papers that were not sent for your use or interfere with another voter's ballot papers.
- vote more than once at these elections, unless you are voting on your own behalf and as proxy for another person.
- vote as a proxy these elections for more than two people, unless you are their spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild.
- vote as a proxy for someone if you know that by law they are not allowed to vote.

**Helpline 020 8753 4466**

Open 9.00am to 5.00pm

Monday to Friday

For more information visit:

**[www.lbhf.gov.uk/electoralservices](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/electoralservices)**

This guide is also available online.