



# **Polling Station Handbook**

## **Guide to the May 2026 Elections**

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## Election Details

### Election Taking Place:

- West Sussex County Council Elections

### Polling Day:

- Thursday 7 May 2026

### Count Date & Location:

- Date: Friday 8 May 2026
- Venue: Triangle Leisure Centre, Triangle Way, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 8WA

## Before Polling Day – Key Tasks for Staff

### All Polling Station Staff must:

- Attend training and read all guidance materials provided.

### Presiding Officers must also:

- Contact keyholders for access arrangements, and visit the polling station at least once prior to poll to check facilities, parking, wi-fi etc.
- Confirm wi-fi or mobile signal availability for iPads.
- Contact team members and confirm arrangements on polling day, including setup and available kitchen facilities.
- Collect and check ballot boxes, polling booths and other polling station equipment prior to polling day, as instructed.

## Polling Day - Before the Poll Opens

### Initial Tasks - Polling Day Setup

- Arrive by 6:30am. If you have trouble accessing the polling station, contact the Electoral Services Team immediately.
- Set up the station using the checklist in the Green Folder, manual handling guidance can be found in the Electoral Commission handbook.
- Log the layout of the station in the Polling Station Logbook (also in the Green Folder).
- Ensure accessibility for all voters, including:
  - Keep pathways clear.
  - Use appropriate lighting.
  - Provide seating.
  - Set up the wheelchair-accessible booth and angle so that it is easily accessible.
- Prepare for private ID checks using the designated privacy space (details in the Green Folder) or set up the privacy screens if no designated space is available.
- Display all required signage, as per instructions.

## Accessibility Requirements

Polling stations must consider accessibility during setup and throughout the day. The following items must be clearly displayed and are included in your equipment:

- **‘How to vote at these elections’ notice** – displayed both inside and outside the station, where all voters can see it.
- **A notice explaining how to mark the ballot paper(s)** – displayed in each polling booth.
- **Large-print sample ballot paper(s)** - displayed inside the station.
- **Hand-held enlarged sample ballot paper(s)** – available for voters to take into the booth for reference.

To further support voters with disabilities, the following equipment is provided:

- **Magnifiers** – to help visually impaired voters read documents.
- **Writing aid** – to assist voters who may have difficulty holding or using a pen.
- **Tactile voting device** – to assist visually impaired voters in marking their ballot correctly.
- **Wheelchair-accessible polling booth** – with a lower writing surface for privacy and ease of use.
- **Staff ID badges** – to help voters identify who to approach for assistance.

When setting up the station, staff should also consider:

- **Seating** – for voters who need to rest or take time before voting. A mix of chairs with and without armrests is preferred (where available).
- **Lighting** – ensure good visibility throughout the venue, especially in polling booths.
- **Disabled access signage** – clearly mark accessible entrances using the signs provided.
- **Windows and polling station visibility** – be mindful of where you place polling booths and the secrecy of the ballot.

## Assistance with Ballot Papers – Voters with Disabilities

### Help from a Companion

- Anyone aged 18 or over can act as a companion to help a voter with disabilities complete their ballot paper.
- The companion must complete a form called **‘Declaration by the companion of a voter with disabilities’**, found in **Packet 6** in the **Red Bag**.
- The Presiding Officer must also record the elector’s name and number, and the companion’s name and address on the **‘List of voters with disabilities assisted by companions’** – also in **Packet 6**.

### Help from the Presiding Officer

- Voters may ask the Presiding Officer to help mark their ballot paper.
- If this happens, the Presiding Officer must complete **the ‘List of votes marked by the Presiding Officer’** form in **Packet 6** in the **Red Bag**.
- At the close of poll, they must also fill out **the ‘Statement of the number of voters whose votes are marked by the Presiding Officer’**, also in **Packet 6**.

For more details, refer to the Electoral Commission’s Polling Station Handbook.

## Using iPads – Modern Polling Setup

iPads will be used to process voters and manage the election using the Modern polling app.

### Follow these steps to get started:

1. Turn on the iPad and enter the passcode: 070526 (the election date).
2. Open the Modern Polling app.
3. Presiding Officer logs in by entering their mobile number and tapping submit.
4. A 6-digit verification code will be sent via SMS from 'M-Democracy'. Enter this and tap confirm.
5. Check the polling station details and ballot paper numbers are correct.
6. You are now ready to open the polling station.

### Important Notes:

- Presiding Officers should log in at home if possible, so the iPad is ready to use on arrival.
- Keep the iPad plugged in and charging all day to avoid any disruptions, extension leads will be provided to all polling stations. Please ensure you consider the placement of the issuing table when setting up your polling station, as access to a wall socket for charging is essential.

## Polling Day: Opening & Conducting of Poll

### Opening the Polling Station

If voters are waiting, greet them and invite them in at 7am. Do not issue ballot papers before 7am.

### Voter ID Requirements and Polling Station Entry

Voters must show an acceptable photo ID before receiving a ballot paper. Staff must check this carefully. Poll cards are encouraged, as scanning the QR code helps speed up processing.

Some stations may have **Polling Station Stewards** to help manage queues.

### Administering the Vote

- Details of who is eligible to vote at these elections can be found in the Electoral Commission's Polling Station Handbook. In addition, the iPad will automatically detect if a voter is not eligible to vote at the polling station.
- Staff must check photo ID and confirm the voter's identity before issuing a ballot paper.

### Common Voter ID issues

Staff may encounter the following issues when requesting ID:

- No ID presented
- Unacceptable form of ID
- The voter's name or appearance not matching their ID
- Suspected forged ID
- Refusal to show ID

Further actions for these scenarios are explained in the relevant sections of this handbook.

## Supporting Particular Groups

Staff should be mindful of voters who may face challenges with ID or identification, including:

- People wearing religious coverings
- Trans and non-binary individuals
- Disabled voters
- Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities
- Older people
- People experiencing homelessness

## Processing a Voter

1. Ask the voter for their poll card, or confirm their name, address and postcode.
2. Locate their details on the iPad by scanning the poll card's QR code, or by using the **“Search Register”** tab.
3. Ask the voter to confirm their details and tap **“Continue”**.
4. Request the voter's ID, acceptable forms of ID are detailed in the table below.

Passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or a British Overseas Territory	Passport or passport card issued by an EEA state or a country whose citizens are Commonwealth citizens	Photographic driver's licence issued by the UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state (including provisional)	National identity card issued by an EEA state
Biometric immigration document	Digital eVisas (may be presented on a mobile phone or other device)	An identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (PASS card)	Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
Ministry of Defence Form 100 (HM Armed Forces Veteran Card) or a digital Veterans' card.	A Blue Badge	Older Person's Bus Pass funded by the Government of the UK	Disabled Person's Bus Pass funded by the Government of the UK
Oyster 60+ Card funded by the Government of the UK	Freedom Pass	National Entitlement Card issued in Scotland	60 and over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card	Senior SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland	Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's Smartpass issued in Northern Ireland	War Disablement Smartpass or War Disabled Smart Pass issued in Northern Ireland
60+ Smartpass issued in Northern Ireland	Half Fare SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland	Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland	Voter Authority Certificate
Digital veterans' card (may be presented on a mobile phone or other device)			

\*a full list of EEA Countries, Commonwealth Countries and British Overseas Territories can be found in the Electoral Commissions Polling Station Handbook.

**Note:** If while processing, on the next screen, the voter appears to:

- Have already been marked as voted; or
- Have a postal vote in place; or
- Have a postal proxy in place.

The voter will not be eligible to vote, contact the Electoral Services Team for guidance and tap **“Complete”** to finish.

5. If ID is presented, complete the following checks:

- Is the ID on the accepted photo ID list?
- Does the ID resemble the type of document it purports to be?
- Does the ID bear a suitable likeness to the voter? **You should not refer to any other markers on the photographic ID (e.g. address details, nationality, age or gender markers).**
- Does the name on the ID match the register? **Please disregard any middle names or initials.**
- Is the ID an original document? Most accepted IDs cannot be a scan, photo, or copy, except for approved digital forms.
- Check that the ID shows no signs of tampering or damage near the photo or name. (Cancelled passports with cut corners are acceptable as they indicate the document is no longer valid for travel).
- Check that the ID appears to be genuine and not forged.
- For Voter Authority Certificates and Anonymous Elector Documents, also check the date of issue and expiry date.

After completing the ID check, follow the next steps based on the relevant scenario.

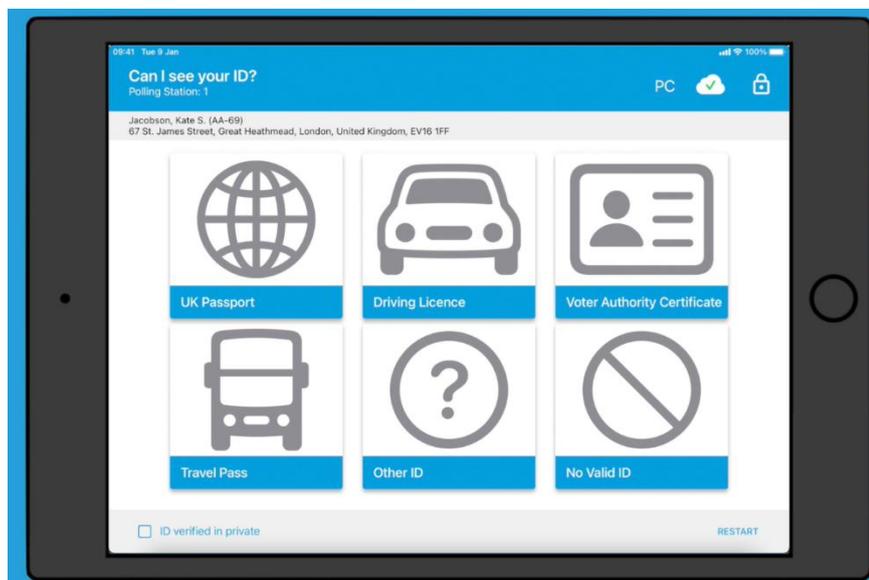
## Scenario 1: Voter presents an acceptable form of ID



If a voter presents acceptable ID with no issues, follow the steps below to process their vote.

1. Select which ID the voter has presented on the “Can I see your ID?” screen.

**NOTE:** On the “Can I see your ID” screen, the following options appear first:



**If a Voter Authority Certificate is presented, tap this option as the use of Voter Authority Certificates are recorded as part of our data collection requirements.**

**If a passport from a valid EEA state or Commonwealth Country is presented, tap “Other ID” then tap “Passport (EEA)” to record this.**

**If a travel pass is presented, tap “Travel Pass” then select the type of travel pass presented.**

For all **other types of IDs**, please tap “Other ID” to locate these.

2. Next, the elections the voter is eligible for will appear. Assume they wish to vote in all unless they state otherwise - deselect any they do not wish to vote in.
3. Using the iPad, scan the QR code on the ballot paper(s) for each election and check the ballot paper number on screen matches the one being issued. **Do not pre-tear ballot papers, and please ensure they are issued in numerical order.**
4. The voter has now been processed, tap “Complete”.
5. Fold the ballot paper, then unfold it and issue this to the voter. Direct the voter to the polling booth. Issue the ballot paper and direct the voter to the polling booth.

## Scenario 2: Voter arrives without ID or where ID issues exist



If a voter arrives without ID, presents an unacceptable form of ID, or there are concerns about its validity, we may take one of the following actions:

- Ask them to return before 10pm with acceptable ID.
- Refer to the Presiding Officer for further checks.
- Where applicable, contact the Electoral Services Team to reissue Voter Authority Certificates or Anonymous Elector Documents.
- Where applicable and eligible, contact the Electoral Services Team to arrange an emergency proxy.

You cannot issue a ballot paper without an acceptable form of ID. Where a ballot paper is refused, the appropriate reason must be recorded on the Return of Postal Voting Document Form.

### Emergency Proxy Rules on Grounds Relating to Voter ID

A voter may apply for a proxy vote if one of the following statements apply to them:

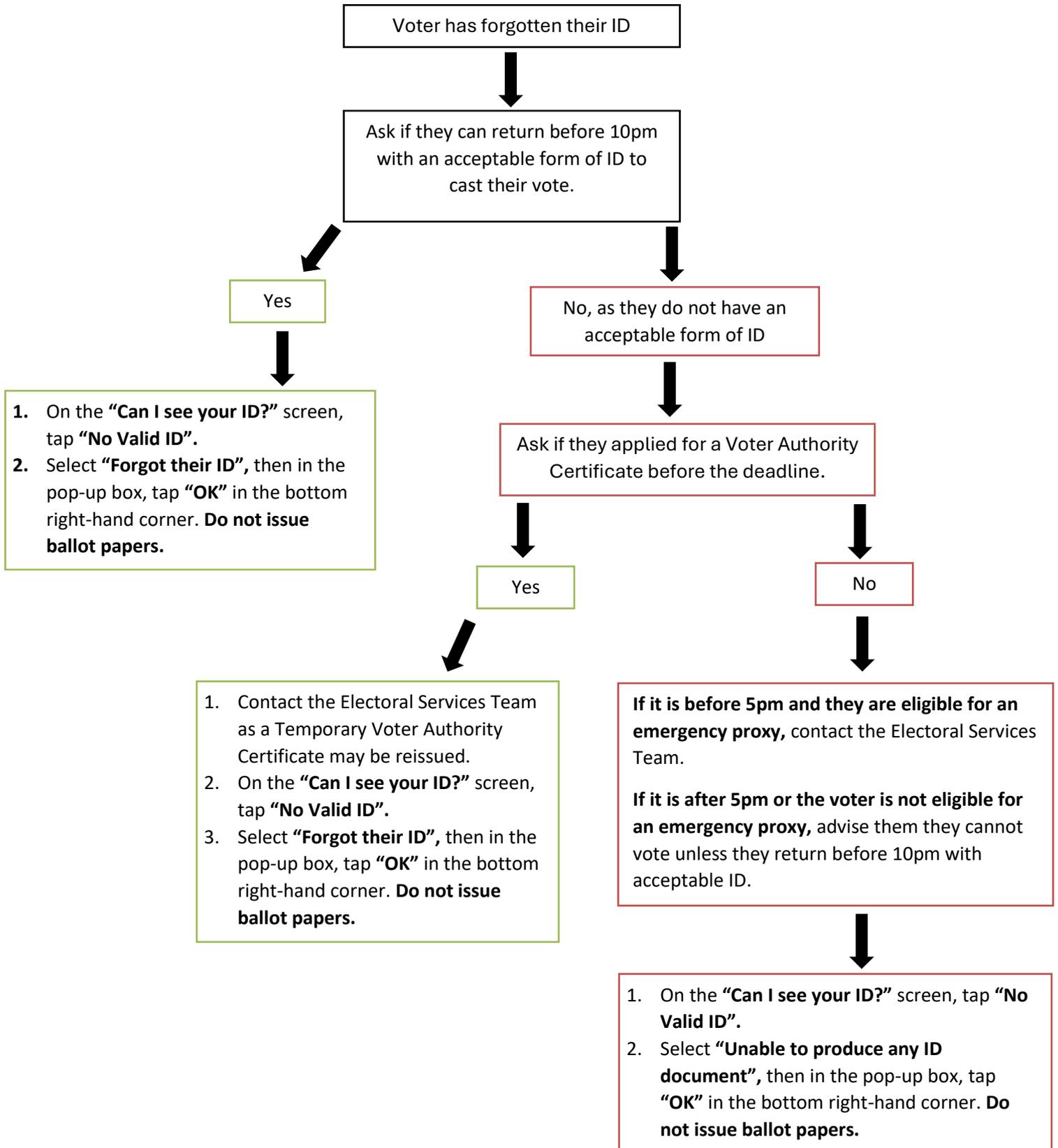
- My ID has been lost, stolen, or damaged to the point it is no longer usable and the loss, theft or damage took place after 5pm, 6 working days before the election I want to vote in.
- I sent my ID to someone else to prove my identity after 5pm, 6 working days before the election I want to vote in and I think it is unlikely that my ID will be returned to me before the election.
- I am an anonymous elector and do not have a valid Anonymous Elector's Document.
- I had a temporary Voter Authority Certificate for a specific date but the election was adjourned.

If an emergency proxy is requested, please contact the Electoral Services Team for instruction.

## Example 1: Voter arrives without any ID



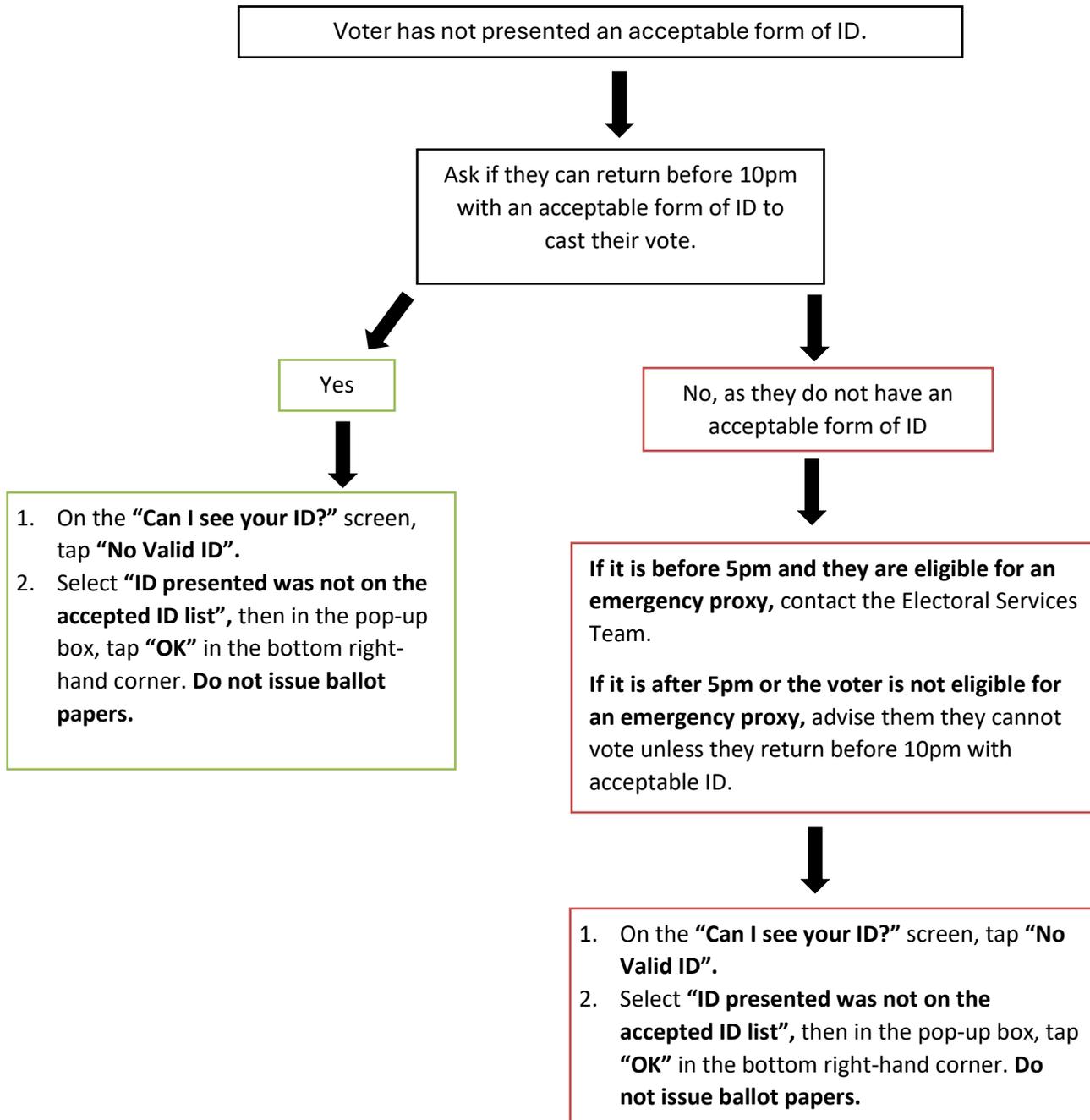
Explain the Voter ID requirements and ask why they have no ID, then follow the steps below.



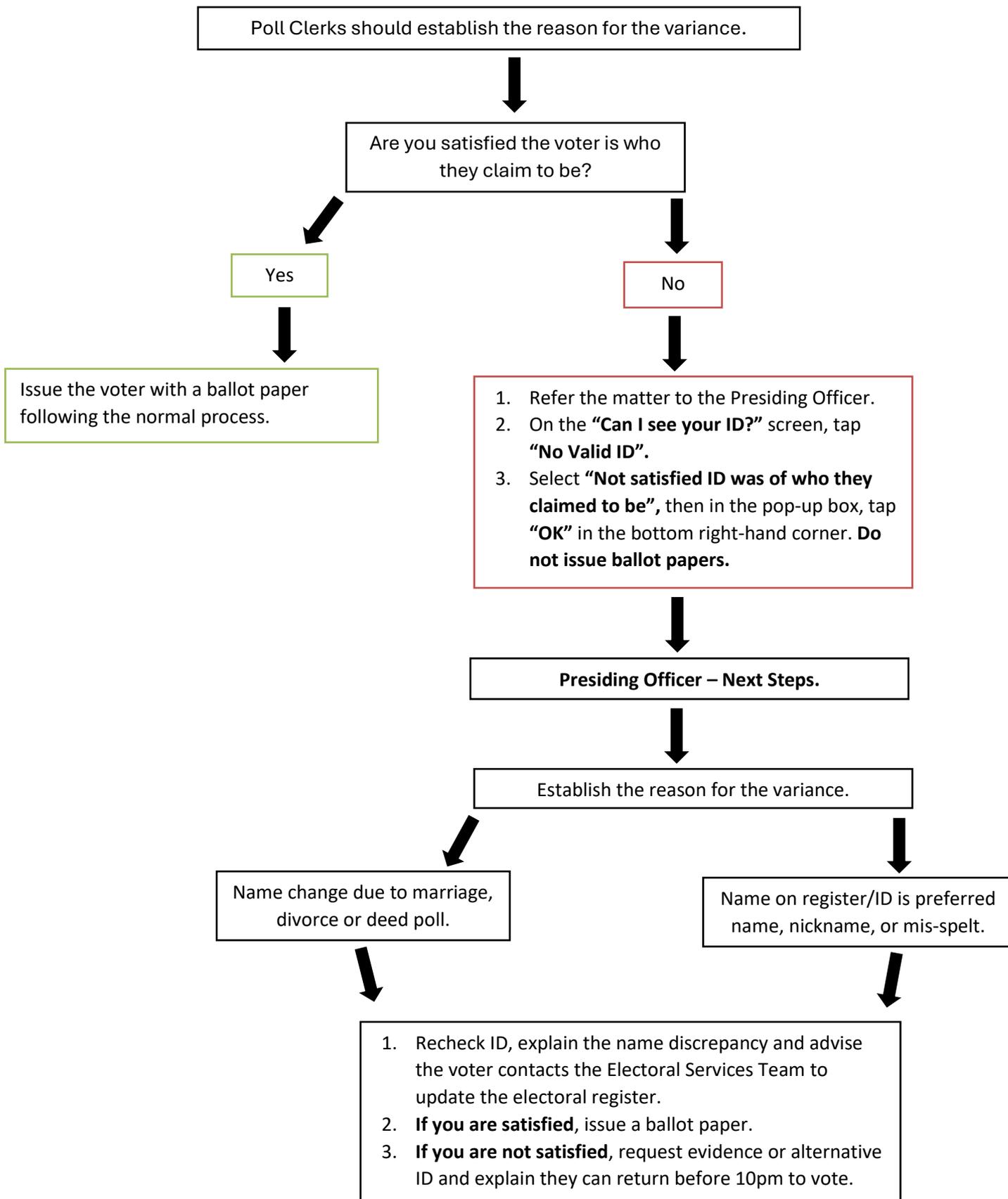
## Example 2: Voter arrives with a form of ID which is not accepted



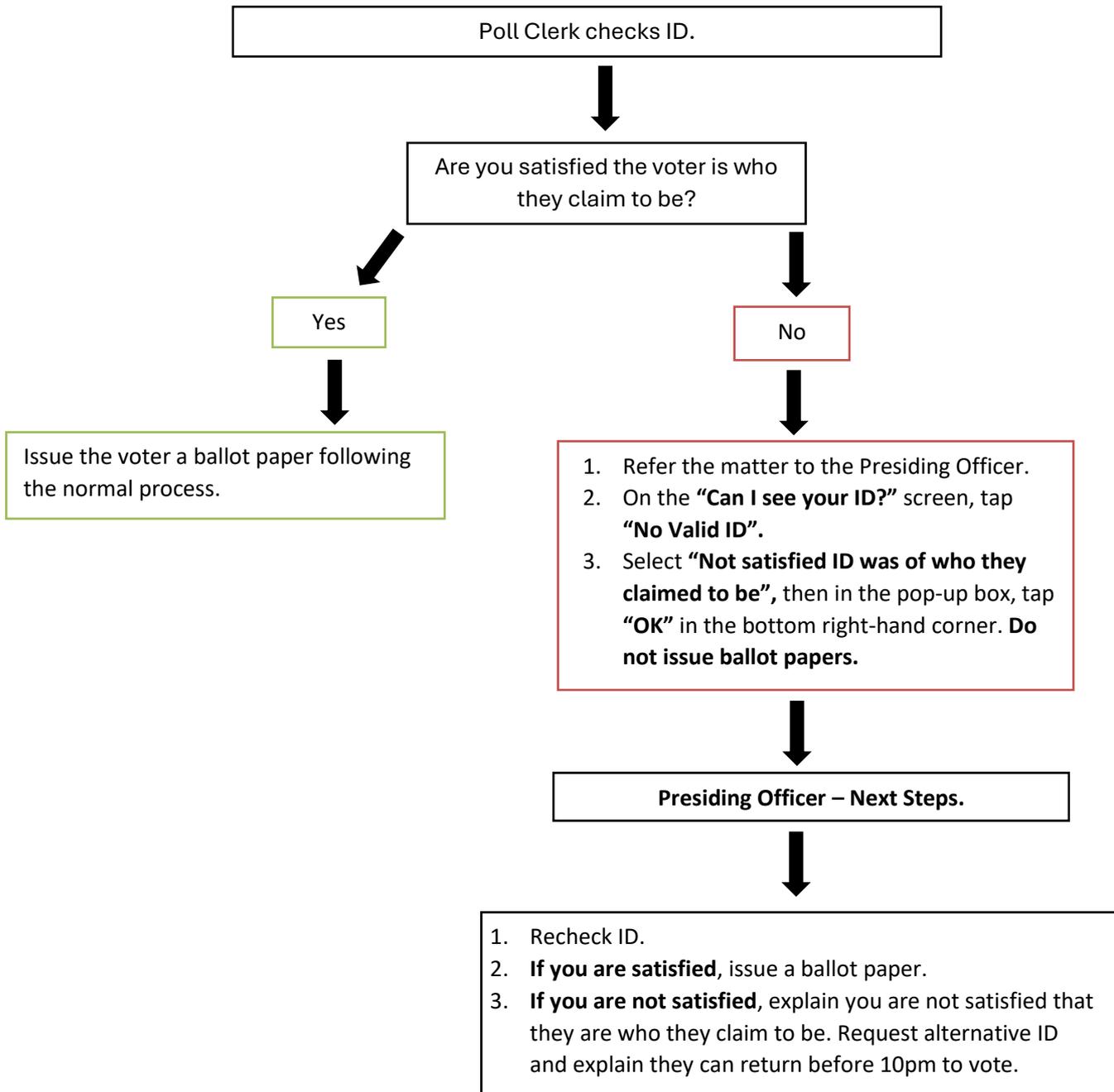
Explain the Voter ID requirements and follow the process below.



### Example 3: Voter's name doesn't match their ID



## Example 4: Voter's appearance doesn't match their ID



## Example 5: Voter's ID is suspected to be forged or not genuine



Poll Clerk suspects an ID may be forged or not genuine.

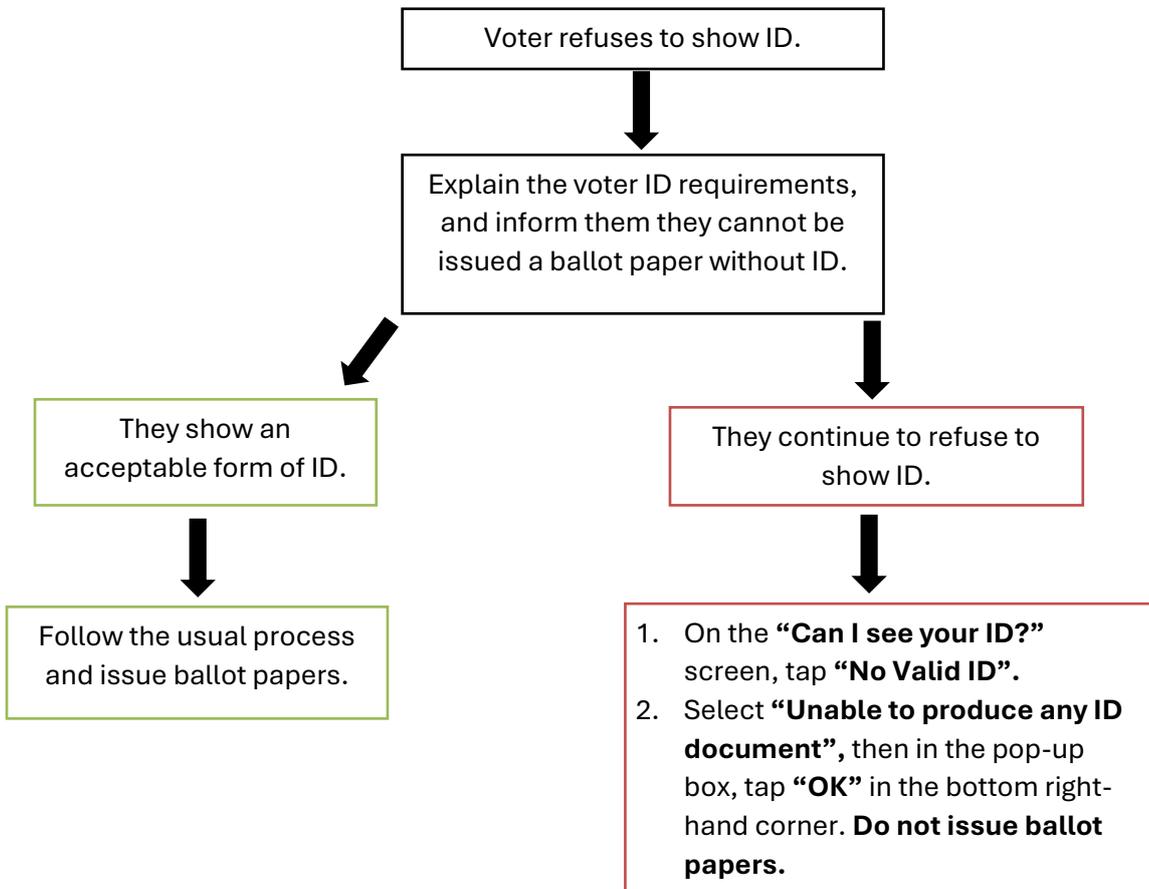
Are you satisfied the voter is who they claim to be?

1. Refer the matter to the Presiding Officer.
2. On the **"Can I see your ID?"** screen, tap **"No Valid ID"**.
3. Select **"Suspected Forgery"**, then in the pop-up box, tap **"OK"** in the bottom right-hand corner. **Do not issue ballot papers.**

**Presiding Officer – Next Steps.**

1. Recheck ID.
2. **If you are satisfied**, issue a ballot paper.
3. **If you are not satisfied**, explain you are not satisfied that the ID is genuine. Request alternative ID and explain they can return before 10pm to vote.
4. Notify the Electoral Services Team.

## Example 6: Voter refuses to show ID



## Scenario 3: Checking a voter's ID in private



Voter's may request their ID to be checked in private and can bring a chaperone if needed.

Those wearing masks for medical reasons or face veils for religious reasons must remove them for the check. Each polling station will have either a female staff member or a female Polling Station Inspector available if requested.

A designated privacy area or privacy screens will be provided - check your **Green Folder** for details.

**NOTE: Observers and Election Agents are not permitted to witness private ID checks.**

**Recording private ID checks:** On the "Can I see your ID?" screen, please select the "ID verified in private" box in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen to record a private check.



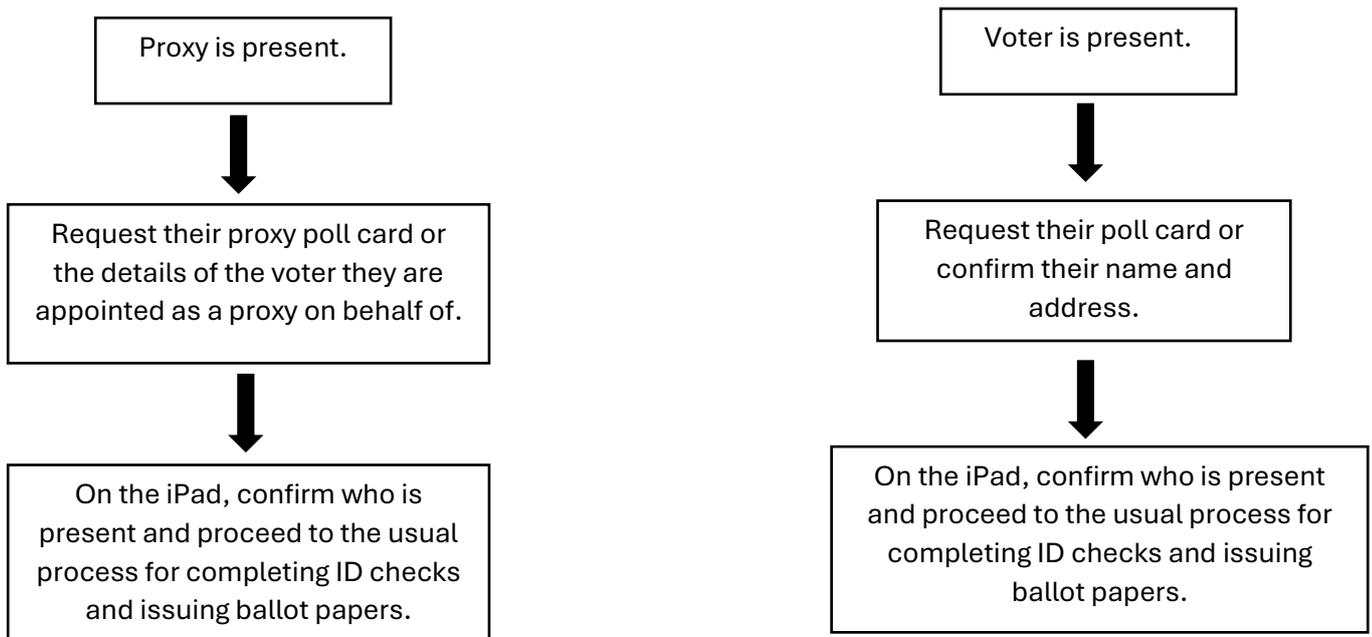
## Scenario 4: Proxy voters at the polling station



Anyone can apply for a proxy vote, and an individual can act as a proxy for up to two voters in the UK. If voting for UK electors living overseas, they may act as a proxy for up to four electors, but only two can live in the UK. Eligibility is checked during the application process. If you suspect someone is acting as a proxy for more electors than allowed, contact the Electoral Services Team for guidance.

### Processing proxy voters at the polling station

Either the voter or their proxy may vote at the polling station, but each must present their own acceptable photo ID. Please note that individuals with a proxy vote in place can only cast their vote once. Follow the steps below to process them.



## Scenario 5: Postal Voters at the Polling Station



Postal voting means ballot papers are sent to voters in a postal voting pack. Voters must complete and return the pack by **10pm on Polling Day**.

Postal voters can return their pack via post, to the council offices or at any polling station in the District. If postal votes are returned in-person, they are subject to the rules outlined below:

- Political parties and campaigners are now banned from handing in postal votes and postal vote envelopes. The only exception to this is where the postal vote is their own, that of a close family member or someone that they provide regular care for. If they handle any postal votes outside of this, it is now a criminal offence to do so.
- The maximum number of postal votes which can be handled in at a polling station by an individual is now limited to **five** (in addition to their own) **per poll**.
- A form must be completed by both the person handing in postal votes and the Presiding Officer on receipt of any postal votes at the polling station.

**Important:** Registered postal voters **cannot vote in person at a polling station**, even if they say they did not receive their postal vote. If they require a replacement pack and it is before 5pm on polling day, please contact the Electoral Services Team.

All postal votes returned to a polling station or council office must be packaged according to the provided instructions, and the total number received must be recorded in the Postal Vote Log located in the Green Folder.

### Accepted Postal Vote(s) Procedure

The standard procedure for accepting postal votes handed in at a polling station is set out on the next page. Guidance on resolving queries and rejecting postal votes, where necessary, is provided later in this handbook.

Confirm that the postal vote(s) can be returned to your polling station and inform the individual that they must provide details and complete the required form for the postal vote(s) to be accepted.

### Section 1 of “Return of Postal Voting Documents Form”

**The individual must complete section 1 of the form.** This section asks:

1. If they are handing in their own postal vote?
2. If they are handing in the postal vote for others, and if so – how many?
3. If they are a political campaigner, and if so, confirmation that they are only handing in postal votes they are permitted to handle.
4. In total, how many postal votes they are handing in?

### Section 2 of “Return of Postal Voting Documents Form”

**The individual must complete section 2 of the form.** This section asks:

1. Their name.
2. Their address.
3. If they are handing postal votes in for other individuals, a reason for this.
4. The individual to complete a declaration, signed and dated.

**Polling station staff must then check the form is complete, and that the individual complies with the rules detailed on page 17, if they do – proceed to next steps. If not, follow the appropriate process outlined in this handbook.**

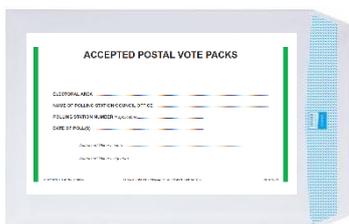
### Section 3 of “Return of Postal Voting Documents Form”

**Polling station staff must complete section 3 of the form.** This section asks for:

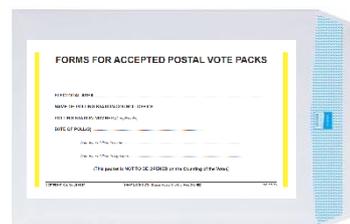
1. The polling staff member’s name.
2. The polling station name/location.

If the form is complete and the individual meets the requirements, tick the first statement, confirm the postal votes are accepted, and record the total accepted in the Postal Vote Log.

**Step 1: Place the postal vote(s) into the “Accepted Postal Vote Packs” envelope.**



**Step 2: Place the form in the “Forms for Accepted Postal Vote Packs” envelope.**



## Rejected Postal Vote(s) Procedure

You must reject any postal vote(s) handed in at the polling station if **any** of the following apply:

These reasons are that the individual:

- Did not fully complete the “Return of Postal Voting Documents Form” (i.e. incomplete).
- Handed in postal votes on behalf of more than the permitted number of electors.
- Was a political campaigner not permitted to handle the postal votes.
- Did not complete the “Return of Postal Voting Documents Form” (i.e. left behind their postal voting documents (i.e. their postal votes)).

If any of these situations occur, follow the prescribed rejection process outlined in this handbook.

### Section 3 of “Return of Postal Voting Documents Form”

**Polling station staff must complete section 3 of the form.**

First, please:

1. The polling staff member’s name.
2. The polling station name/location.

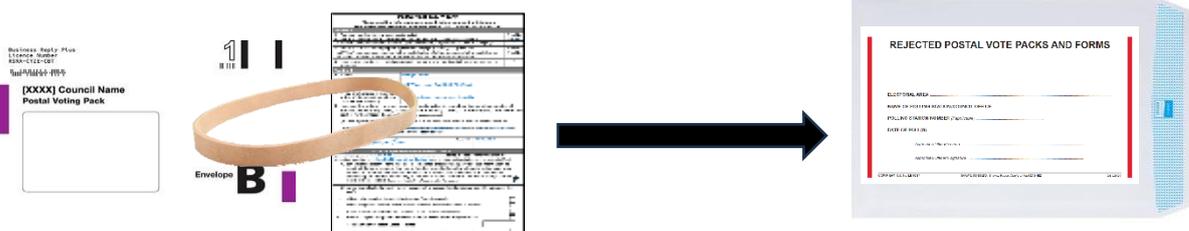
Next:

3. Tick the box next to the statement which reads: “Reject the attached postal vote(s) because the person handing it/them in:”.
4. Tick the reason for the rejection.
5. Insert the total number of postal votes rejected into the appropriate box.

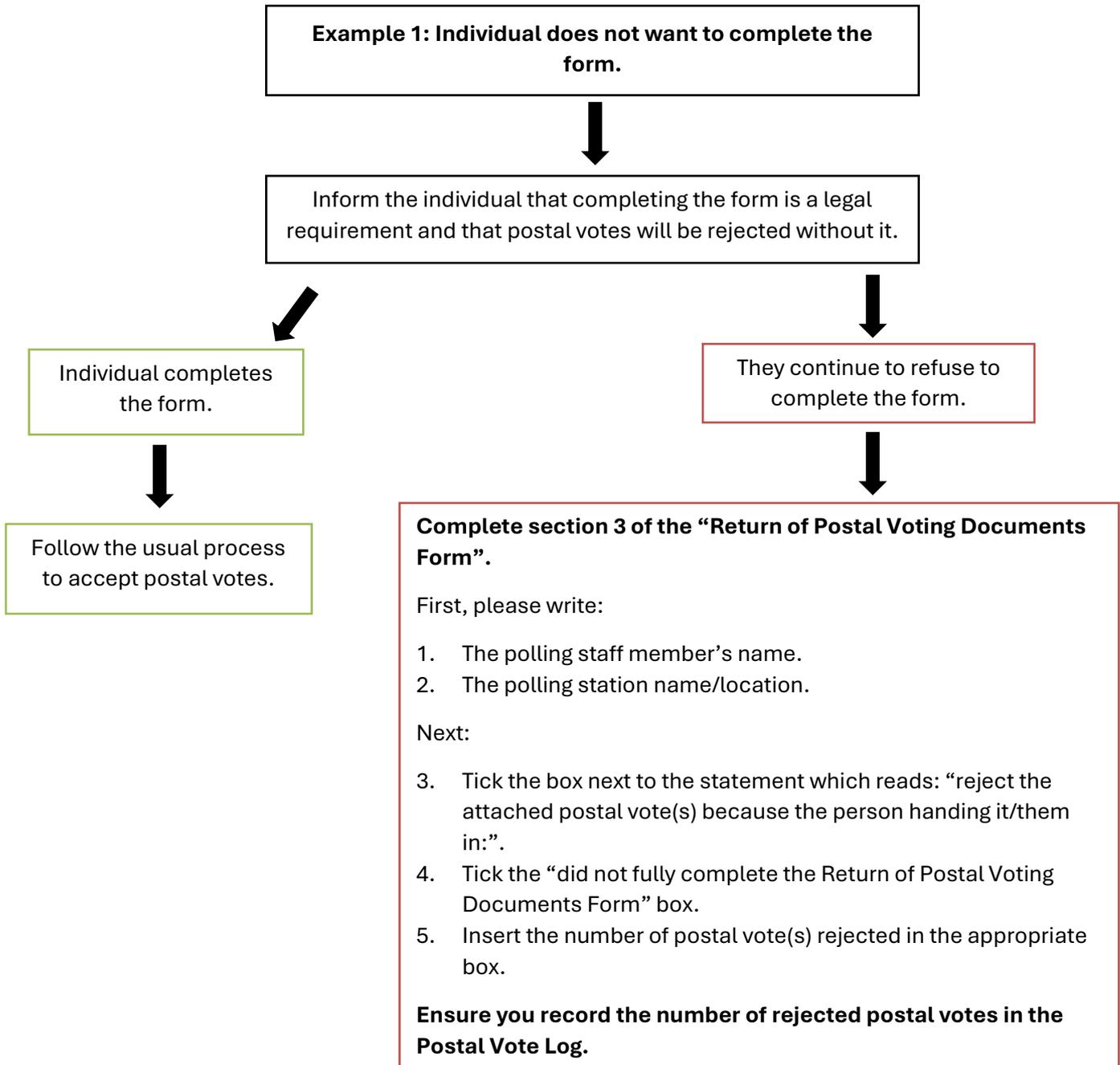
If you have accepted the individual’s own postal vote, please also tick this box. Ensure you record the number of rejected postal votes in the Postal Vote Log.



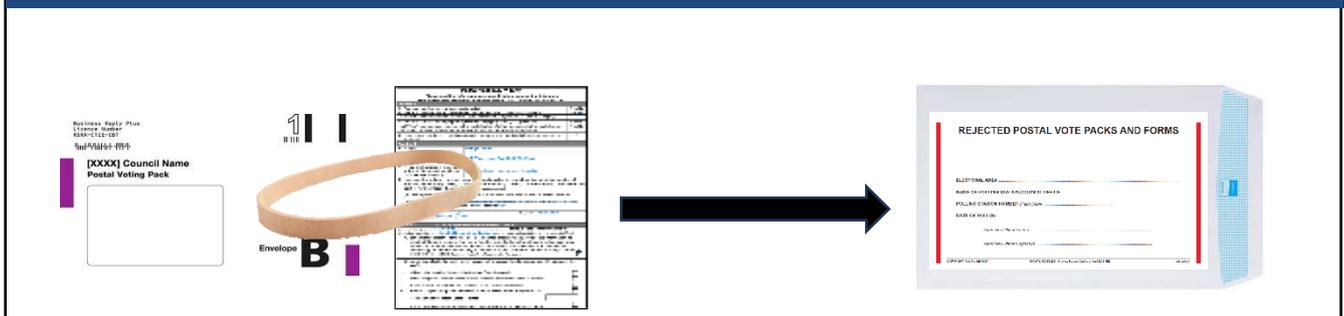
Secure the postal vote(s) and form together with a rubber band, then place in the envelope marked “Rejected Postal Vote Packs and Forms”



## Rejected Postal Vote Scenarios:



Secure the postal vote(s) and form together with a rubber band, then place in the envelope marked "Rejected Postal Vote Packs and Forms"



**Example 2: An individual leaves their postal vote(s) at the Polling Station and does not complete a “Return of Postal Voting Document Form”.**



**Complete section 3 of the “Return of Postal Voting Documents Form”.**

First, please write:

1. The polling staff member’s name.
2. The polling station name/location.

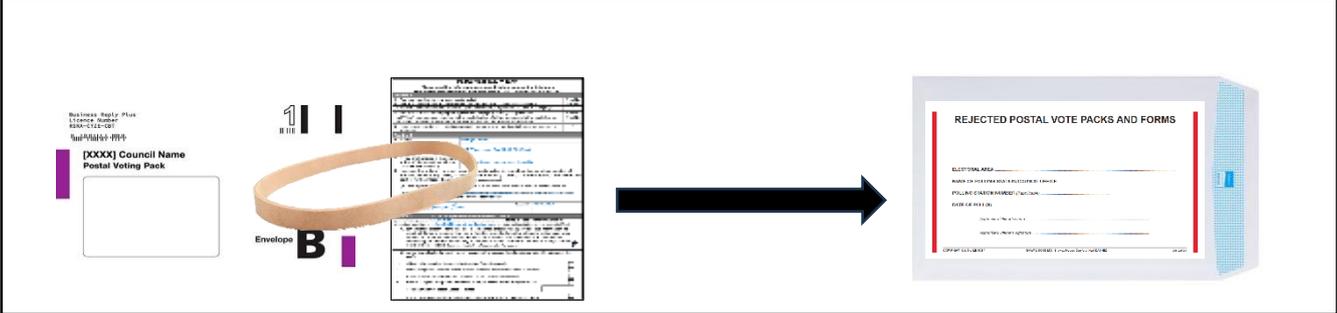
Next:

3. Tick the box next to the statement which reads: “reject the attached postal vote(s) because the person handing it/them in:”.
4. Tick the “did not complete the Return of Postal Voting Documents Form” box.
5. Insert the number of postal vote(s) rejected in the appropriate box.

**Ensure you record the number of rejected postal votes in the Postal Vote Log.**



**Secure the postal vote(s) and form together with a rubber band, then place in the envelope marked “Rejected Postal Vote Packs and Forms”**



**Example 3: An individual wishes to hand in postal vote(s) for more than 5 other people per poll.**



Explain the limitation to the individual and advise them that if they attempt to hand in more than the permitted number the postal votes will be rejected.



Individual wishes to hand in the permitted number.



Follow the usual process to accept postal votes.

They continue to refuse to complete the form.



If an individual attempts to hand in postal votes for more than five other people per poll, the additional votes must be rejected. Only the individual's own postal vote can be accepted, and staff must not assist in identifying which vote belongs to them.



**Where you are accepting the individual's own postal vote, follow the following process.**

1. Complete section 1 and 2 of the form.

Next, in section 3 of the form:

2. Tick the box next to the statement which reads: "reject the attached postal vote(s) because the person handing it/them in:".
3. Tick the "handed in postal votes on behalf of more than the permitted number of electors" box.
4. Insert the number of postal vote(s) rejected in the appropriate box.
5. Tick the "Tick here if you have accepted the individuals own postal vote(s)" box.

**Ensure you record the number of accepted and rejected postal votes in the Postal Vote Log.**



Package the accepted postal vote according to procedure.

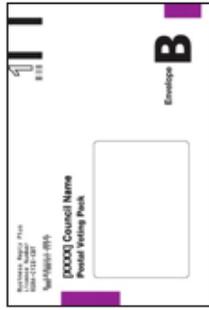


Package the rejected postal votes according to procedure.

# POSTAL VOTE PACKING INSTRUCTIONS PICTORIAL

## Accepted Postal Vote(s) Procedure

### Accepted Postal Vote(s)



Place in “Accepted Postal Vote Packs” envelope

- You will receive between 3-5 of these envelopes.
- Polling Station Inspectors **will collect** these envelopes during the day. On arrival, they'll check each envelope - staff must then seal it using the tamper evident seals.
- Please write the total number of postal votes contained within on the envelope and ensure details on the envelope are complete.
- Any envelopes not collected by the close of poll should be placed inside the Red Bag.

## Return of Postal Voting Document Form for Accepted Postal Vote(s)

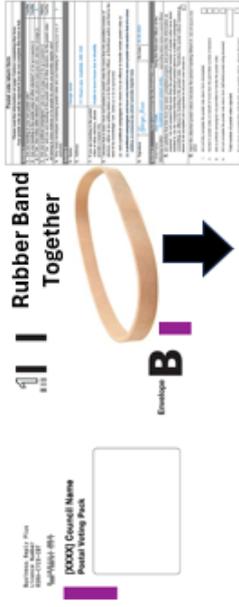


Place in “Forms for Accepted Postal Vote Packs” envelope

- You will be provided only one copy of this envelope.
- This envelope **will not** be collected during the day.
- At the close of poll, seal the envelope using the tamper evident seals. Ensure all required details on the envelope are completed.
- Place the sealed envelope in the Red Bag at the close of poll.

## Rejected Postal Vote(s) Procedure

### Rejected Postal Vote(s) and Return of Postal Voting Document Form



Place in “Rejected Postal Vote Packs and Forms” envelope

- You will be provided only one copy of this envelope.
- This envelope **will not** be collected during the day.
- At the close of poll, seal the envelope using the tamper evident seals.
- Please write the total number of postal votes contained within on the envelope and ensure details on the envelope are complete.
- Place the sealed envelope in the Red Bag at the close of poll.

## Scenario 6: Anonymous Elector arrives at the polling station



Anonymous voters must present both their Anonymous Elector Document and Poll Card to the polling station to cast their vote.

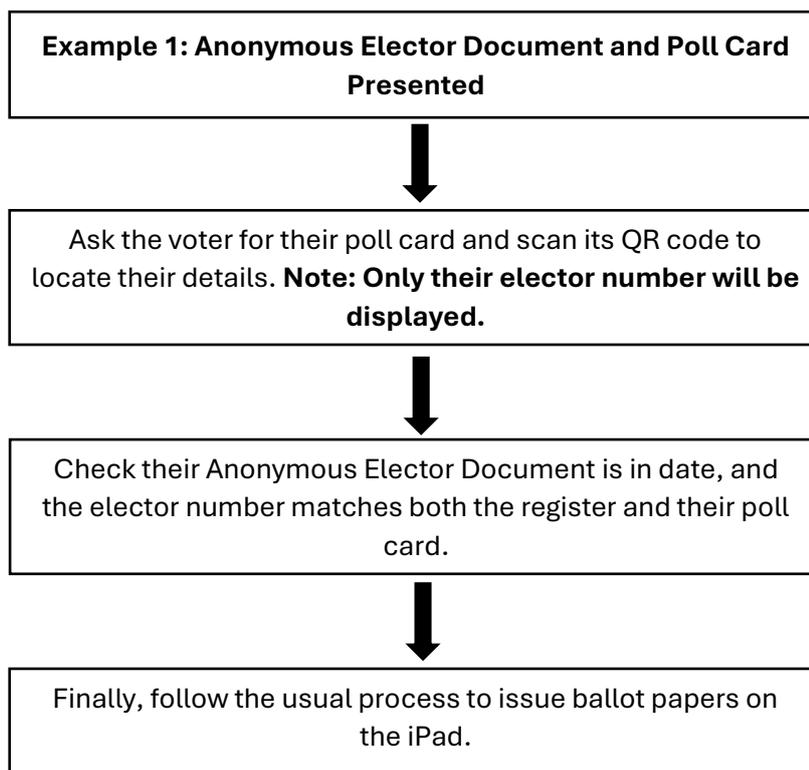
Proxies voting on behalf of an anonymous voter must also present their proxy poll card.

When checking the Anonymous Elector Document:

- Ensure the photo is a good likeness of the voter.
- Confirm the elector number matches the register.

These documents are reissued annually, so they should be valid and free from discrepancies. If you encounter any issues or have queries, contact the Electoral Services Team.

Depending on the scenario you encounter, please follow the appropriate process.



**Example 2: Anonymous Elector Document not presented.**

Ask the voter if they have applied for an Anonymous Elector Document.

Yes, and it is before 5pm, and:

- They have applied before the deadline, but it has not been issued ; OR
- It has been lost, stolen, destroyed or damaged during the replacement period

A replacement can be issued until 5pm. Contact the Electoral Services Team to arrange a replacement.

If they have not been issued with an Anonymous Elector Document / they are not eligible for a replacement, and it is before 5pm - contact the Electoral Services Team.

If it is after 5pm, inform them that on this occasion they will be unable to cast their vote.

1. On the iPad, tap “No Valid” ID.
2. Next, on the “What is the problem with the voter’s ID” screen, select “Didn’t bring the poll card and/or Document”.

Do not issue a ballot paper.

**Example 3: If a poll card is not presented**

If no poll card is presented, you cannot manually search the voter’s details. Inform the voter that on this occasion – they will be unable to cast their vote unless they return with both their poll card and Anonymous Elector Document.

## Spoiled Ballot Paper Procedure

If a voter returns with a spoiled ballot paper, issue a replacement using the iPad by following the steps below:

1. On the home screen, tap **“Spoilt Ballot”** on the bottom left of the screen.
2. Firstly, scan the spoiled ballot paper’s QR code with the iPad camera.
3. Confirm the voter’s details and spoiled ballot paper info on the next screen and tap **“Continue”**.
4. Next, scan the QR code of the replacement ballot paper being issued.
5. Confirm the details on the next screen and tap **“Continue”**.
6. On the next screen, tap **“Complete”** to conclude processing.
7. Place the spoiled ballot paper into the **Green Bag, it must not go in the ballot box.**

## Other Types of Scenarios/Situations at the Polling Station

The Electoral Commission’s handbook covers a range of other scenarios or situations where use of the prescribed questions and/or issuing of tendered ballot papers are required. In the unlikely event that you experience one of these situations, please contact the Electoral Services Team for assistance.

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### Polling Day: Close of Poll

The poll closes at 10pm, any voters who are in the queue before 10pm must be allowed to vote. In the Green Folder, you will find the following guidance:

- Closing the Polling Station on the iPad and Completing the Ballot Paper Account Guidance
- Checklist of Paperwork to be Completed
- Close of Poll Packing Instructions

Both a paper and electronic Ballot Paper Account (BPA) must be completed. After completing these steps, Presiding Officers should deliver the ballot box to the designated count centre located at The Triangle Leisure Centre, Triangle Way, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 8WA.

Finally, ensure all staff complete their mileage/travel expense forms before the close of poll to allow prompt payment processing.

### Further Information and Contact Details

The Electoral Services Team details are as follows:

**Telephone:** 01444 477222

**E-mail:** [elections@midsussex.gov.uk](mailto:elections@midsussex.gov.uk)