

Registering homeless people to vote

Since the introduction of new legislation in 2000, homeless people are now entitled to be registered as electors by completing a declaration of local connection.

The person may register at the address of, or which is nearest to, a place in the UK where they commonly spend a substantial part of their time (whether during the day or night). This does not have to be a full postal address and could be a park bench or shop doorway. Some location must be identified because a person must be registered in a specified local government area.

Submission of declarations

Forms to register can be obtained from electoral services departments at local councils. Help and advice can also be given by electoral services staff.

Declarations of local connection can be made at any time throughout the year. The names of applicants are then be added to the register with effect from the first working day of the following month after the closing date for receipt of additions. Declarations received during the period mid-August to late November will be included in the register to be published by 1 December.

At a parliamentary by-election any declaration of local connection made by a homeless person received during the period from the date of the vacancy to the close of nominations must include a statement that the declarant has spent a substantial part of time during the past three months at or near to the address at which they claim to be entitled to be registered.

Content of declaration

A declaration of local connection shall be signed and dated by the declarant and shall state:

- declarant's name in full
- date of the application
- address to which correspondence for them can be delivered or a statement confirming that they are willing to collect correspondence from the electoral registration officer
- category in which their declaration falls, i.e. homeless person
- in the case of a homeless person the address of, or near to, a place where they commonly spend a substantial part of their time
- that they have attained 18 years of age or if not their date of birth
- that they are a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a relevant citizen of the Union, and declare that the information supplied is true

The application form should include information on the 'opt-out' provision, with the prescribed wording, or a form of words to the same effect explaining about the two versions of the register.

Validity of description

A declaration of local connection is valid for a period of twelve months commencing from the date when the entry in the register first takes effect. Only the elector can cancel their declaration, and this may take place at any time.

Renewal of declaration

The electoral registration officer is required to issue to every person registered in pursuance of a declaration of local connection a reminder of the need to make a fresh declaration if they wish to remain registered as a voter and their circumstances remain unchanged. Failure to renew will result in the name of a person being removed from the register at the expiry of 12 months from the date that their declaration became effective. Their names cannot be retained on the register if they fail to respond.

Method of voting

Homeless people may choose to vote in person or by post or proxy. If they wish to vote by post or proxy, they need to make a separate declaration to the electoral registration officer.

For advice and information or registration forms contact your local council electoral services or the Electoral Commission on 020 7271 0500 or www.electoralcommission.org.uk.