

Press release: Next round of Voter ID pilots announced for 2019

The local authorities taking part in the 2019 Voter ID pilots are announced today.

The pilots will take place at the 2019 local elections, providing further insight into how best to ensure the security of the voting process and reduce the risk of voter fraud. In addition, the pilots will generate insight into the methods of ID that work best for voters.

The Cabinet Office facilitated pilots in five local authorities as part of the 2018 local elections. The evaluation showed that the trials were a success, with the overwhelming majority of people able to cast their vote without a problem.

Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP, said:

I am pleased to see that so many local authorities came forward to participate in the 2019 pilots so we can gain a deeper understanding of how voter ID will work on a wider scale – and what works best for voters.

We want people to have confidence that our elections are safeguarded against any threat or perception of electoral fraud.

People are already required to show ID to pick up a parcel from the Post Office, rent a car, or apply for benefits, and this is a common sense next step to securing the integrity of our elections.

To verify that voters are who they say they are, each local authority will test one of four models of Voter ID checks in their pilot:

- photo ID
- photo and non-photo ID
- traditional poll cards
- poll cards with scannable barcodes

The Cabinet Office is engaging with a broad range of charities and civil society organisations – including members of the Accessibility of Elections Working Group – to ensure that the overall policy reflects the needs of all voters in the UK. Local authorities will provide alternative methods of ID to individuals who do not have a specified form of ID, free of charge, ensuring that everyone who is registered has the opportunity to vote.

Voters in Pendle, East Staffordshire and Woking will be asked to show photo ID before they are given their ballot papers.

Ribble Valley, Broxtowe, Derby, North Kesteven and Braintree will require voters to present either one form of photo ID or up to two forms of non-photo ID.

Mid Sussex, Watford and North West Leicestershire will test using poll cards as a means of identification.

In addition, Peterborough and Pendle will run a separate postal vote pilot, looking at the security of postal votes and providing additional guidance in postal vote packs.

Proxy voters in Peterborough will also be required to show ID before they can vote.

Northern Ireland has required paper ID to vote since 1985 and photo ID since 2003, without adverse effect on turnout or participation.

Corporate Director and Returning Officer for Pendle Council, Philip Mousdale, said:

We're pleased to be a pilot area to help to shape the government's introduction of photo ID at polling stations.

It also means we can tackle concerns we have in Pendle around fraudulent behaviour in relation to postal voting.

Director of Communications and Research for the Electoral Commission, Craig Westwood, said:

Our key recommendation following the 2018 voter ID pilots was that any future pilots should include a wider range of local councils, taking in a mixture of rural and large urban areas and areas with different demographic profiles.

We are pleased to see this reflected in the proposed list of authorities for 2019, to provide more detailed evidence about the impact of voter identification on different groups of people.

The Electoral Commission is responsible for carrying out an independent evaluation of the Cabinet Office's pilot schemes. We will publish our findings following the May elections, in the summer of 2019.