

Voter fraud measures announced in the Queen's speech

- New measures to protect voters, ensuring your vote is yours, and yours alone
- New laws announced in the Queen's Speech will strengthen the integrity of UK elections and protect our democracy from fraud and intimidation
- It will become an offence to attempt to find out or reveal who a postal voter has chosen to vote for

Undue influence offence will be updated to encompass wider range of harms such as voter intimidation and undue spiritual pressure

New measures to be brought into law this year will deliver on a manifesto commitment to crack down on the potential for different forms of voter fraud and intimidation, further strengthening the integrity of UK elections.

Following the announcement of the Elections Bill in this week's Queen's Speech, the government is setting out further details on measures to: tighten the rules for absent voting and prevent voter intimidation.

An independent review of electoral fraud conducted by Lord Pickles highlighted the events of cases such as Tower Hamlets – in which the 2014 Mayoral election was declared void by corrupt and illegal practices – as evidence of vulnerabilities in our system which must be addressed.

Minister for the Constitution and Devolution, Chloe Smith said:

“Stealing someone's vote is stealing their voice. We must go further to protect and modernise our precious democracy.

“Our robust package of measures will stamp out the space for such damage to take place in our elections again and give the public confidence that their vote is theirs and theirs alone – no matter how they choose to cast it.”

Measures to tackle forms of voter fraud and intimidation set out today include:

Postal votes

Currently, anyone is able to collect postal votes from any number of electors and hand them in at a polling station, which presents a risk of postal votes being appropriated and stolen, or voters completing postal ballot papers under duress.

We are making changes that:

- Ban party campaigners from handling postal votes altogether (with some limited exceptions), making it a criminal offence
- Stop postal vote harvesting, by limiting the number of postal votes that a person may hand-in on behalf of others;
- Extend secrecy provisions that currently protect voting in polling stations to absent voting – making it an offence for a person to attempt to find out or reveal who a postal voter has chosen to vote for;
- Require those registered for a postal vote to reaffirm their identities by re-applying for a postal vote every three years (currently registration is indefinite, so long as the elector provides a signature periodically).

Proxy voting

Current proxy voting rules give rise to the potential for someone to be coerced into appointing a proxy – particularly by close relatives, as a single person can act as a proxy for their entire family.

As recommended in Lord Pickles' independent review, we are limiting the total number of people for whom someone can act as a proxy to four, regardless of their relationship.

Undue influence

Although it is already an offence to unduly influence a voter, the outdated legislation requires modernising in order to provide voters with the protection they deserve.

We will improve and update the offence so that:

- Intimidation of voters is explicitly listed, in law, as a form of undue influence, to address the concern of the Tower Hamlets Election Court that current legislation “does not penalise thuggish conduct at polling stations of the sort that occurred in 2014”;
- Undue influence encompasses a wider range of harms, such as physical violence, damage to a person's property or reputation, exerting undue spiritual pressure and inflicting financial loss;
- Undue influence also counts as deceiving a voter about the conduct or administration of an election or referendum.

Voter identification

Asking voters to prove their identities will safeguard against the potential in our current system for someone to cast another person's vote at the polling station. This approach is supported by the independent Electoral Commission and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, who say its absence is a security risk.

Legislation will make clear that local authorities must provide a Voter Card free of charge to anyone who does need it, and a broad range of approved documents will be accepted – not limited to UK passports and driving licences – including various concessionary travel passes, Blue Badge parking permits.

[New research](#) published by the Government draws on the most comprehensive data available to date and shows that 98% of electors already own a form of acceptable identification to prove who they are before casting their vote.

The data shows that 99% of ethnic minorities had a form of identification that would be accepted under our proposals, as did 98% of people who identify as white. 99% of 18-29 year olds hold the relevant identification, as do 98% of those aged 70 and above.

Voter identification has been used in Northern Ireland since 1985, requiring photo identification since 2003, and is a proportionate, reasonable response to tackling voter fraud. Showing identification is something people of all backgrounds do every day.

A broad range of approved documents will be accepted – not limited to UK passports and driving licences – including various concessionary travel passes, Blue Badge parking permits.

And as part of our resolute commitment to public sector equality, we will continue working constructively with charities and civil society organisations, to communicate these changes, close any gap and make sure that everyone who is eligible to vote will continue to be able to.