

# The Electoral Commission

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## Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

### The accessibility requirements of a polling place review

Every person should be able to vote without facing barriers. By identifying and understanding the physical, psychological and information barriers disabled people may face when voting, ROs will be better able to make appropriate arrangements to help support them.

You can find more information in our guidance: [Understanding the barriers to voting for disabled people](#).

As part of the compulsory review, local authorities must consider the accessibility of potential polling stations when considering designating or reviewing a polling place. In doing so they must seek to ensure that:

- all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled

### Engaging with accessibility experts

As part of the review the local authority must seek representations from those who have a particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability, as well as engaging any disability access groups and/or disability officer.

### Your duty to consider the accessibility issues

Local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of all polling places to disabled voters and ensure that every polling place, and prospective polling place, for which it is responsible is accessible to disabled voters 'so far as is reasonable and practicable'.

According to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission the duty to make reasonable adjustments comprises three requirements.

For service providers and those exercising public functions, these requirements are:

- Where a provision, criterion or practice puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled, to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.
- Where a physical feature puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled to avoid that disadvantage or adopt a reasonable alternative method of providing the service or exercising the function.
- Where not providing an auxiliary aid, for example a ramp for wheelchair user<sup>1</sup>, puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled, to provide that auxiliary aid.

Access to the polling station is still a barrier to some disabled people who want to cast their vote in person. Some of the main physical access issues which should be considered as part of a review are:

- polling places and stations with steps into the entrance, or otherwise inaccessible
- narrow doorways and corridors
- lack of space within the polling place that did not enable motorised wheelchair manoeuvrability
- lack of space and secrecy for the elector and their companion to discuss the elector's choice of vote
- lack of low level polling booths or booths/tables that didn't provide disabled voters with confidence that they could cast their vote in secrecy as they were positioned close to the polling station staff
- a lack of chairs to enable people to rest
- a lack of a clear display of guidance or aids (such as tactile voting devices) to enable people to feel confident about the process
- inadequate lighting

The Elections Act 2022 provides a duty for ROs to provide each polling station with such equipment as it is reasonable to provide for the purposes of enabling, or making it easier for, relevant persons to vote independently and in secret<sup>2</sup>. The review should therefore include consideration of whether the building can accommodate the equipment you will provide to support disabled voters.

We have produced an accessibility checklist that can be used to assess the suitability of each polling place and polling station which covers these, as well as other issues.

☞ 1. In the context of a polling station, an auxiliary aid could, for example, be a ramp for wheelchair users.  
 ☞ 2. Rule 29(3A)(b) Schedule 1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by s.9 Elections Act 2022).



## **REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES**

**DATE OF VISIT:**

**WARD:**

**POLLING DISTRICT:**

**ELECTORATE:**

**STATUS:**      **SINGLE / DOUBLE / OTHER**

**POLLING STATION FULL ADDRESS:**

**EXISTING NOTES / COMMENTS**

1	Is the Polling Station a school?	YES / NO / N/A
2	Is the Polling Station a Council owned building?	YES / NO / N/A
3	Are the owners/users happy for the building to be used as a polling station in future elections?	YES / NO / N/A

### **GENERAL LOCATION**

4	Is it at the top or bottom of a steep hill / incline?	YES / NO / N/A
5	Is it located on or just off a main or busy road?	YES / NO / N/A
6	Does it have suitable access from the road?	YES / NO / N/A
7	Is the polling place clearly visible or sign-posted from the road?	YES / NO / N/A

Additional Comments on location:

### **PARKING**

8	Are there adequate parking facilities close to the entrance?	YES / NO / N/A
9	If not, is there anywhere close by that could be used for parking just on Polling Day?	YES / NO / N/A
10	How far do electors have to walk from car park to Polling station?	Less than 15m 15m-30m 30m-45m 45m-60m 60m-75m 75m-90m • 90m-100m Over 100m No Car Park
12	Is there a dropped kerb from parking area to the polling station?	YES / NO / Don't know
13	Are parking facilities clearly sign-posted from the road	YES / NO / No car park

### **ENTRANCE**

14	Is the approach to the polling station obstructed, broken gravel etc	YES / NO / N/A
15	Does the building have a level entrance?	YES / NO / N/A
16	Are there any steps to the entrance of the building?	YES / NO / N/A
17	Are any stairs/steps highlighted in any way?	YES / NO / N/A
18	Is there a handrail by the steps?	YES / NO / N/A
19	Is a permanent ramp provided?	YES / NO / N/A
20	If not, could a temporary ramp with a suitable gradient be provided safely?	YES / NO / N/A
21	Is there another entrance which people with disabilities or other electors could use?	YES / NO / N/A

22	Is there an area for good signage for any separate disabled access, and could it be read by somebody in a wheelchair?	YES / NO / N/A
23	Is the door wide enough for a wheelchair to gain access?	YES / NO / N/A
24	How heavy are the doors for a frail or elderly person to open? Would they need to be propped open?	YES / NO / N/A
25	Is there an undercover area for Tellers?	YES / NO / N/A

### INSIDE THE BUILDING

26	Are there any internal steps or barriers for electors?	YES / NO / N/A
27	Are doormats level with the floor? If not, can they be removed?	YES / NO / N/A
28	Are there any other trip hazards?	YES / NO / N/A
29	Is there a suitable non-slip floor covering?	YES / NO / N/A
30	Are there any corridors which may be difficult to negotiate for any electors using wheelchairs or those who find walking difficult?	YES / NO / N/A

### INSIDE POLLING STATION ROOM

31	What are the dimensions of the Polling Station?	
32	How many stations could it hold (allowing for free flow of voters — inc. wheelchair users, rams etc.)	0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4+
33	Is there sufficient room for display of notices and banners etc.	YES / NO N/A
34	Is there adequate lighting in the room?	YES / NO / N/A
35	Is there any need for additional lighting?	YES / NO / N/A
36	Does the premise have suitable adult size tables and chairs available for use?	YES / NO / N/A

### STAFF

37	Are there adequate toilet facilities?	YES / NO / N/A
38	Is there a kitchen or access to tea and coffee making facilities?	YES / NO / N/A
39	Adequate heating / cooling?	YES / NO / N/A
40	A separate area in which breaks could be taken?	YES / NO / N/A
41	A telephone for use in emergencies?	YES / NO / N/A

42	Are there parking facilities for at least 1 officer on the day of the election?	YES / NO / N/A
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### **VOTER ID**

43	Is there an area where electors can have their ID checked in private?	YES / NO
44	Is there a separate area or room away from the polling station itself that can be used as a privacy area?	YES/ NO
45	Is there space in the station to set up a privacy area behind your polling booths?	YES/ NO
46	Is there equipment on site that could be used as a privacy screen?	YES/ NO
47	Do you think it would be beneficial for Electoral Services to include a portable privacy screen with your polling station equipment?	YES/ NO

### **ACCESSIBILITY**

48	Temporary ramps are put in place to support access for voters who use a wheelchair or have difficulty using steps	YES/ NO
49	Car parking provision so that disabled voters may park as close as possible to the station	YES/ NO

### **ANY OTHER COMMENTS**

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