



RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Electoral Registration

16 or 17? Don't Lose Your Right to Vote

Introduction

Each year nearly a quarter of young people who should be included on the electoral register for the first time are left off. It means that they can't vote when there is an election. This leaflet explains how to make sure you are on the electoral register so that you don't lose your right to vote.

Why should I vote?

This country is a democracy. Every day, vital decisions affecting all our lives are taken by Members of Parliament and local councillors elected by the people. You can help choose them. Make sure you have your say - use your right to vote. If you don't, you will lose your chance to influence the way things are run in the country, or your part of it. All votes are equal - your vote is as important as anyone else's.

Can anyone vote?

No. You have to be 18 or over. You must also be:

- a British citizen; or
- a citizen of another Commonwealth country; or
- a citizen of the Republic of Ireland; or
- for certain elections, a citizen of another European Union country

Your name must be included on the register of electors, otherwise you can't vote.

How do I get on the register?

That's easy. Each year, at the end of the summer, the local Electoral Registration Officer (whose job it is to compile the register) sends the electoral registration form (called Form A) to every household in his or her area. Form A varies in appearance from area to area.

If your household has not received the form by the middle of September contact the Electoral Registration Officer at your local council offices. Form A has to be filled in by one of the householders.

If you are a citizen of another European Union country, you should ensure that the person who completes the form includes your name on Form A to register to vote in

local government elections. If you want to register to vote in European Parliamentary elections in the UK, ask the Electoral Registration Officer for a separate application form.

- If you live in a hostel the form should be filled in by people who run it.
- If you are a lodger someone's house it should be filled in by the owner of the house.
- If you live in a flat with friends, one person should take responsibility for filling in the form.
- If you live on your own, in a bedsit for example, you should fill in the form.

Make sure your name is included

Form A explains which people are allowed to vote so that the householder can list their names. All 16 and 17 year olds should be included. This is because they may reach the age of 18 (and become eligible to vote) while the register is still being used.

What happens when Form A has been completed?

It should either be returned to the Electoral Registration Officer by post as soon as possible, or it will be collected. Either way the householder will be told what to do. If a householder doesn't complete and return Form A a fine of £1,000 may have to be paid, The same applies if the householder gives false information or deliberately leaves something out.

When the forms are returned the Electoral Registration Officer will use them to make up a draft register for people to check. This is usually published on 28 November each year. It shows the names and addresses of the people who appear to the Electoral Registration Officer to be eligible to vote.

You can see a copy of the draft register in your local council offices, or at post offices and libraries, between 28 November and 16 December. Check that your name is on it. If it isn't, ask the Electoral Registration Officer to add your name before the final register is published on 15 February. You can still have your name added after that date. But don't leave it too late. It takes time to change the register and you may not get on in time for an election,

How do I vote?

If your name is on the register of electors, and you are aged 18 or over, you should get a poll card about a week before an election, This will tell you how and when to vote, and where (usually a local school or community hall). "Polling" is just another word for voting. This card is for information only. Don't worry if you lose it or forget it - you can still vote without it. It just makes it easier if you take it to the polling station and show it to the clerk there. He or she will give you a ballot paper which is stamped with an official mark.

The ballot paper will say how many candidates you can vote for. (In local elections you may have more than one vote; in parliamentary elections you will have only one vote.)

Take the ballot paper to one of the polling booths and put a cross in the box next to the name of the candidate(s) you want to support.

DO NOT write anything else on the ballot paper, otherwise your vote might not count. Once you have voted you must fold the ballot paper to hide your vote. Then

show your folded ballot paper to the clerk before you put it in the locked ballot box.
You don't have to tell anyone who you voted for.