

## **ELECTORAL COMMISSION ARTICLE - How to make your voice heard at the UK general election, even if you're serving overseas**

If you are a member of the armed forces serving overseas, casting your vote back home might seem like a complicated process. However, there are various methods in place to make sure you can make your voice heard in June's general election, whether you are based in Birmingham or Brunei.

First of all, you need to make sure you are on the electoral register if you want to take part in the election, and the deadline for this is Monday 22 May. There are two ways you and your family can register if you are a member of the armed forces: either in the [same way as anyone else](#), or as a ['Service Voter'](#). Registering as a Service Voter is the most convenient option if you are serving overseas or expect to be posted overseas in the future, as it allows you to link your registration to an address in the UK for five years while you move around. This option is also available to members of your family if they are likely to move with you.

Once you have registered, you need to consider how you are going to cast your vote, and there are two options. The voting method recommended both by the Electoral Commission and the Ministry of Defence is proxy voting, which is when you nominate someone you trust to go to your polling station and vote on your behalf. If you do not know anybody who lives locally to your polling station, you could nominate someone anywhere in the UK and they could then cast your vote by post by completing a [postal vote application form](#) and returning it to *your* local authority. Either way, the first step to voting by proxy is to fill in the application form and then return it to your local authority. Most will accept scanned and emailed versions of the completed form, but it is worth checking with them first.

The other absent voting method is postal voting although, as some of you may have experienced, this is unfortunately not always the most reliable way of taking part in elections if you are based somewhere that does not receive post regularly. If you do feel this is the voting method you would like to use, you need to fill in an application form and return this to your local authority. The first batch of postal ballot packs will go out shortly after the candidate nomination deadline on 11 May, so make sure that you apply as soon as possible to ensure you are in this early batch. If you leave it to the postal vote application deadline (23 May), then it is unlikely your local authority will be able to issue your postal ballot pack with enough time for you to receive it and return it.

At the Electoral Commission, we believe that there should not be any barriers to voting and are working hard to make sure members of the armed forces know exactly how to take part in the democratic process. If you have any questions about casting your vote at the UK general election on 8 June, you can contact us on 0800 3 280 280 or [info@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:info@electoralcommission.org.uk).

For more information and to download postal or proxy vote application forms, visit <https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/can-i-vote/armed-forces>.