

Section 2

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About this guidance

Our aim

The aim of this guidance is to improve the usability and accessibility of voter materials, by considering voters' needs, so that voters can be confident that they have voted the way they intended to, and that their vote will be counted. The guidance should also help to bring greater consistency to the design of materials used across the UK, so that voters have a similarly good experience wherever they are voting.

We hope that it will:

- Help electoral administrators to produce voter materials that meet legislative requirements, carry out the function of the material effectively, and are accessible and usable.
- Demonstrate to policy-makers the need to include user-focused design as a key consideration in the development of electoral policy and law.
- Encourage changes and developments in electoral law and policy to ensure voter materials for use at elections and referendums are usable and accessible.

There is no easy solution to designing voter materials. The circumstances of each election vary, including the number of candidates or parties standing, the body or office being elected to, the number of seats being elected to, and whether or not the election is combined with another election. These variations affect the requirements of electoral stationery, which makes it impossible to take a 'one size fits all' approach.

Although the guidance does not cover all materials a voter may have to use in relation to elections and referendums, much of the good practice it contains can be applied to other materials, such as registration forms and poll cards.

Using this guidance

This guidance does not replace or supersede any existing requirements, statutory or non-statutory, for Returning Officers to produce materials in accessible formats.

Organisation and structure

This guidance is for government policy-makers, and reflects how voter materials should ideally be designed. It includes design recommendations which would require amendments to the relevant legislation before they could be implemented.⁶

Terms used in this guidance

Where the guidance refers to voting for a candidate or party, this means voting for one, or more than one candidate or party, depending on the electoral system in use.

⁶ The version of this guidance for electoral administrators contains only the parts of guidance which can be applied within current legislation (at the time of publication).

Symbols used in this guidance



Indicates a link to another section of the guidance.



Indicates an explanation of the preceding text.



Indicates a link to detailed guidance giving a fuller explanation of the subject.

Contents

Section 1

An introduction to the guidance, including a background to the principles behind it.



Section 1

Section 2

'About this guidance', which explains the purpose of the guidance and how to use it.



Section 2

Section 3

General guidance on design considerations that applies to all materials, and should be read first, as context for the rest of the guidance. It covers style, and content and structure.



Section 3

Section 4

Deals with each type of voter material, covering the function, style, and where applicable, content and structure of:

- ballot papers
 - polling station notices
 - polling booth notices
 - postal voting guidance
 - postal voting statements (Great Britain)
 - declarations of identity (Northern Ireland)
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Section 4

Section 5

Guidance for bilingual (English and Welsh) materials, covering style, and content and structure.



Section 5

Section 6

Contains detailed guidance relating to specific features of design. This is cross-referenced from Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the guidance. In Section 6, we have collated existing good practice from professional organisations and provided links to further references and resources. This section covers:

- adding emphasis
 - choosing a font
 - text layout and alignment
 - colour and contrast
 - writing in plain language
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Appendix 1

Contains a design checklist that you can use to assess the design of your materials.

Section 6

Appendix 1