About household enquiry forms (HEF)

There are people listed on the HEF that don't live here, what do I do?

If anyone listed on the HEF is not living at your address, their name/s should be clearly crossed through.

Do I put down everyone who lives here?

You need to include the name and nationality of everyone aged 16 or over who is resident and eligible to register to vote. If there are no eligible residents, you should state why this is the case.

Do I have to fill in the HEF?

By law, you need to provide the information requested on the HEF.

There is a criminal penalty for failing to provide the information required by the HEF to the electoral registration officer of a maximum of £1,000. The penalty for providing false information to an electoral registration officer is imprisonment of up to six months or a fine (on summary conviction) of a maximum of £5,000.

I received a HEF, but the information needs changing. How can I update it?

If anyone listed on the HEF is not living at your address, their name can be crossed out.

The name and nationality of everyone aged over 16 who is resident and eligible to register to vote should be added if they are missing.

If your nationality has changed, or you are now over 70, correct and return the form and we will make the change. The form will have instructions on how to change your open register choice.

Do I need to include my email address and phone number on the HEF?

You are invited to include them, but you do not have to. We will use this information only in connection with your registration, and it helps us to contact you if there is a problem.

I have already returned a HEF, do I need to return the registration form (ITR) I've received too?

You should complete and return the registration form (ITR) or register online by visiting the GOV.UK registration page. The HEF is not a registration form, but instead provides us with information on who lives in your household. This means we can invite other residents to register to vote if we need to.

I've returned a registration form, do I need to return the HEF I've just received too?

You should complete and return the HEF even if you registered to vote online or by returning a completed paper form. The HEF provides us with information on who else lives in your household. We can then invite other residents to register to vote if we need to.
About online registration

Can I register online?

You can make an application to register online, but ultimately local electoral registration staff will decide if that is a successful application. So your registration is not complete until the application has been accepted.

Online registration is available for ordinary electors, overseas electors, armed forces voters (and their spouses or civil partners) and crown servants (and their spouses or civil partners).

The online registration system can be accessed by visiting the GOV.UK registration page.

My online form won’t submit

If you have your date of birth and national insurance number, you can also phone us on 01670 624811 to register.

The online service is designed with one question per screen and provides clear error messages when something has gone wrong, so it should be straightforward to find out what the problem is.

How will I know if my online registration was successful?

You'll be sent a letter from local electoral registration staff confirming that your registration was successful, or asking for more information if that is required. If you have provided your email address or phone numbers, you may be contacted that way instead.

Will my email address or phone number be used for anything else?

If you provide an email address or phone number as part of your application, this will only be used to contact you about your application to register to vote. We won't give it to anyone else, or use it for any other purpose unless we are required to do so by law.

Can I register someone else online?

No, everybody needs to register themselves. It's straightforward and quick and you can register online by visiting the registration page.

If you are unable to register yourself, it's okay to get help to fill in your details but you must make the declaration yourself.

Can I include someone else on the form?

No, this is an individual registration form. If you know someone who wants to register to vote, they can do so by visiting the registration page or we can send them a paper registration form.

If I have applied online, do I need to return the paper form you sent me?

You don't need to return the paper form if you have completed an online application.
**Difficulties registering and accessibility to registration**

**How do I find my national insurance number?**

A national insurance number is a reference number used by government. The easiest place to find your national insurance number is on official paperwork, such as your national insurance card, payslips or letters from the Department for Work and Pensions or HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Students may be able to find it in their university registration details or application for student loan. If you still can't find it, you can use the [HMRC enquiry service](https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-enquiry-service).

If you don't have access to the Internet you can call the national insurance registrations helpline on 0300 200 3502.

Please be aware HMRC won't tell you your national Insurance number over the phone, they'll post it to you.

Alternatively, you can write to:

HM Revenue and Customs  
National Insurance Contributions and Employer Office National Insurance Registrations  
Benton Park View  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE98 1ZZ

Most people in the UK have a national insurance number. If you do not have one, you will be asked to explain why you are unable to provide it. Local electoral registration staff may contact you to ask you for proof of identity.

**I don’t know my date of birth**

If you do not know your actual date of birth, you may have been given an official one in the past and this can be used to register to vote. This can be found on paperwork, including a passport, adoption certificate, driving licence or naturalisation certificate.

If you do not have one, you will need to explain why you are unable to provide it in your registration application. Local electoral registration staff may contact you to ask you for proof of identity.

**I don’t have internet access - how can I register?**

You can use computers in local libraries, Contact centres and internet cafes. We can also send you a paper electoral registration form for you to fill in and post back to us.

If you have your date of birth and national insurance number, you can also phone us on 01670 624811 to register.

**I am unable to read the letter I was sent from you**

We recently wrote to you about the new electoral registration system. Please contact us on 01670 624811 for assistance.

**Can information be provided in another format (braille, large print, etc)?**

Some information is available in alternative formats.

If you want to register to vote, please visit the [GOV.UK registration page](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote) which works with assistive technologies such as screen readers or we can send you a application to register form in your preferred
format where available, or if you have your date of birth and national insurance number, you can also phone us on 01670 624811 to register.

**I don’t want to register online, what other ways can I register?**

It's easy to register online, but if you can't or don't want to we can send you a paper registration form for you to fill in and post back to us.

If you have your date of birth and national insurance number, you can also phone us on 01670 624811 to register.
The registration process and eligibility to register

Can I register over the phone?

You can register by visiting the [GOV.UK voter registration page](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote). If you have your date of birth and National Insurance number, you can also phone us on 01670 624811 to register.

Can a family member register me?

No, everybody needs to register themselves. It's straightforward and quick and you can register by visiting the registration page.

If you are unable to register yourself, it is ok to get help filling in the details but you must make the declaration required on the registration form yourself.

Will I still get an annual canvass form?

Instead of your old annual canvass form, all households will receive a new type of form called a household enquiry form. You should use this form to confirm who lives in your home. If new adults aged 16 or over have moved in you should add them to the form, and if they have not registered we will send them an invitation to register.

Do I need to re-register each year?

You don't need to register again unless you change address. You should however return the form that you will receive every year that confirms who is living in your household. You should also inform us if any of your details, such as your name, changes.

I moved house, am I still registered?

When you move home you need to register at your new address. You can do this by visiting the registration page.

Can I register at two addresses?

Normally people are registered at one address - their permanent home address. Students may register at both their term-time address and their non-term-time address. If you are living somewhere temporarily but have a permanent address elsewhere, you should register at the permanent address.

Having a second home doesn't necessarily mean that you can register there as well as at your permanent address. A person's name may appear on the electoral register only if they reside at an address within the electoral area. Residence is not defined in law; however, in England and Wales it has been held by the courts to entail a 'considerable degree of permanence'. Based on this criteria, it is possible for a person to be registered to vote in two different electoral areas.

However, it is unlikely that ownership of a second home that is used only for recreational purposes would meet the residency qualification. Ownership of a second home that a voter pays council tax on but is not resident in does not qualify them to be registered to vote in that area. It is for the local electoral registration officer to decide in the light of an individual voter's circumstances whether they may be said to be resident at an address, and therefore eligible for registration. Electoral registration officers are required to consider each case on its own merits. Contact us on 01670 624811 should you need any clarification.
Must I register and what happens if I don't?

If we have invited you to register to vote it is important that you respond. If you don't, we will send you reminders through the post and someone will visit your home. At the end of this process we may send you a requirement to register; if you fail to do so without providing adequate reason why you have not, you may be fined £80. Not being registered can also impact on applications for mortgages or mobile phones, since credit reference agencies use the register to validate applications.

How do I change my name on the register?

If your name has changed you must complete a change of name form with your previous and new name and the date of the change. You will need to provide evidence to support the change of name, such as a marriage certificate or deed poll certificate, although there is a process if you can't provide this.

I have no fixed address, can I register?

If you have no fixed address you can still register to vote. You need to make something called a 'declaration of local connection' to show that you are connected to and spend time at a particular place. You can normally do this only for one place.

If you want to register through a declaration of local connection you will need to do so under the new registration system. This means you will need to provide your date of birth and National Insurance number.

Contact us on 01670 624811 to find out more.

I live overseas, can I register?

British citizens living abroad can vote in UK Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections, but not in local elections. British citizens living abroad for more than 15 years are not eligible to register to vote in UK elections. You can register as an overseas elector by visiting the registration page. You will need the address where you were last registered in the UK.

Can I register anonymously?

Anonymous registration is available if your safety or that of any other person in the same household would be at risk if your name or address were made public. You must provide court documents or an attestation, eg from a senior police officer or director of social services, in support of the application. A separate application form must be completed in writing - you are not able to register anonymously online. If you want more information on this, or have concerns about the attestation, please contact us on 01670 624811.

I am a service voter, how do I register?

A member of HM Forces and their spouse or civil partner can register as an ordinary elector or they have the option to register as a service voter.

You can register as a service voter by visiting the registration page.

A service declaration must be completed which is valid for five years. Each unit of the services has designated one member of staff to be a Unit Registration Officer who will be able to provide further advice.

Who is eligible to register to vote?

You can register to vote if you are 16 years old or over and a British citizen or an Irish, qualifying Commonwealth or European Union citizen who is resident in the UK, except for service voters or overseas voters.
17 year-olds and some 16-year olds are entitled to be included on the register as ‘attainers’. They can vote once they are 18.

To qualify, Commonwealth citizens must be resident in the UK and either have leave to enter or remain in the UK or not require such leave. The definition of a ‘Commonwealth citizen’ includes citizens of British Crown Dependencies and British Overseas Territories.

Citizens of the European Union, who are not Commonwealth citizens or citizens of the Republic of Ireland, can vote in local elections in the UK and some referendums, based on the rules for the particular referendum, but are not able to vote in UK parliamentary general elections. They can also vote in European elections by completing a separate application and making a declaration stating that they will vote only in the UK at any European election during the 12 months of the declaration.
Letters and forms received/not received

I received an invitation to register, why?

The voter registration system changed in June 2014. You have received an invitation to register form letter because you need to register under the new system. It's straightforward to do this - visit the GOV.UK voter registration page.

I received an invitation to register form, what is this?

The new process for registering to vote, introduced in June 2014, now requires each individual to register themselves by providing their national insurance number and date of birth. The invitation to register form is the form that we use to obtain these additional details. However, please note that it is quicker and easier to register by visiting the registration page.

I received a household enquiry form, what is this?

The household enquiry form is the form that we issue to obtain details of all those persons living in a property who are eligible to vote. It is an enquiry form and is not used to register an individual. Once we are made aware of new individuals who are eligible to vote from the household enquiry form, we will then issue an invitation to register form.

I received an invitation to register, but I already registered online

Online registration can take a few days to process so it's possible that the invitation was prepared before your online registration was processed. You do not need to return the paper form if you have received confirmation that your online application has been received. We will contact you to confirm your registration.

I received an invitation to register, can I still vote if I don't register?

If you have received an invitation to say that you need to re-register to vote, it is important that you respond. You can register by visiting the registration page or by returning the form included with the letter.
The change to individual electoral registration

Has the electoral registration system changed?

The electoral registration system in Great Britain changed in June 2014. The new system is called individual electoral registration.

What is individual electoral registration?

Previously, the 'head of household' was responsible for registering everyone who lived at the address, but now every individual is responsible for their own voter registration. The new system also means that people are now able to register online. Anyone newly registering under the new system will need to register themselves individually by filling out a paper or online form.

The other difference is that people need to provide a few more details about themselves to register - these are date of birth and National Insurance number.

Do I need to do anything or do I need to re-register?

Are you currently registered to vote?

In August 2015, we will be sending a household enquiry form to all households seeking information on persons living at the property who are eligible to vote. You must return the form indicating whether:

- There are no changes required, ie all persons named on the form are still residing at the property
- There are new people eligible to be registered
- There are people on the form whose names need to be deleted from the register in connection with the address - please note that any person deleted from a household enquiry form who is now residing elsewhere in Northumberland will need to register at this new address

Any new people added to a household enquiry form will be sent an invitation to register form, requesting their national insurance number and date of birth. The invitation to register form is used to register an individual.

It is possible to check whether you’re registered under the new system. Contact us on 01670 624811 to find out.

Why has the registration system changed?

Individual electoral registration gives you the right and responsibility to register yourself, instead of giving the responsibility to a 'head of household'. As such, it encourages people to take individual responsibility for their own vote. The change has also allowed more convenient methods of registration, for example, by internet. Because the new system asks you for a few more details before you are added to the register - your National Insurance number and date of birth - the electoral register will be more secure and more resistant to threats of electoral fraud.

Who is responsible for changing the registration system?

The system was introduced by the UK government through the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 which became law on 31 January 2013.

How much is it costing the taxpayer?

Public money is spent on voter registration because we want to ensure that people get a chance to register so that they are able to have their say at elections.
In the 2010 spending review, £108 million was set aside to cover the cost of the transition to individual electoral registration in Great Britain.

The government believes that by spending money now, costs will be reduced in future. For instance, people can now register online so will not need to use paper forms and so there will be savings on printing and postage.

**Does the change affect how I vote?**

No, voting processes haven't changed. However, if you want to vote by post or proxy you will need to ensure that you are registered under the new system. If you haven't already applied to vote by post, you will need to do so by 5.00pm 12 working days before an election to vote by post at that election.

If you haven't already applied to vote by proxy, the deadline is normally six working days before an election, apart from in the case of a medical emergency or if you are called away unexpectedly for work reasons, when you may be able to apply up to 5.00pm on polling day.
Frequently asked questions

Am I registered to vote?

To find out if you are registered to vote, you can either telephone us on 01670 624811 or use our email us on elections@northumberland.gov.uk. If you are not registered at your current address, you will not be able to vote in the elections unless you register before the given deadline. However, you still may be eligible to vote elsewhere if you are registered at your previous address.

How do I register to vote?

- Visit the GOV.UK registration page
- Fill in your name, address, date of birth and a few other details. You'll also need your National Insurance number, which can be found on your National Insurance card, or in official paperwork such as payslips, or letters about benefits or tax credits
- Look out for a confirmation to say you're registered

How do I vote in person?

Read our guide to voting in person.

What if I can’t get to the polling station on election day?

You can apply for a postal vote or proxy vote.

I've just moved, how do I change my details on the electoral register?

- Visit the registration page
- Fill in your name, address, date of birth and a few other details. You'll also need your National Insurance number, which can be found on your National Insurance card, or in official paperwork such as payslips, or letters about benefits or tax credits
- Look out for a confirmation to say you're registered
Alternatively, you can complete our online enquiry form.

Can anyone see my name on the electoral register?

Anyone can inspect a copy of the full register at Northumberland County Hall, Morpeth and Contact centres in Northumberland under supervision, but they would have to know your address to be able to find your name, because the register is compiled in address order.

It would be very difficult for anyone to find your address by just knowing your name.

Can I trace friends or relatives using the electoral register?

If you know where a friend/relative lives we can confirm whether they are registered there or not. If you only have a name and no address we cannot give out these details as regulations prevent electoral registration officers from making information available in this way. However, we can write to the person you want to contact, forwarding your name, address and telephone number.

Am I automatically registered if I pay council tax?

No, the council tax register and the electoral register are two separate registers and are completely different. The council tax register may show the name of the owner of a property and not necessarily the residents of the property. For this and other legal reasons, the electoral registration officer is not permitted
to take names from the council tax register and put them on the electoral register and vice versa. Additionally, electors are required to make a declaration for electoral purposes.

**Why can’t I get credit?**

There may be a number of reasons for this, some of which have nothing to do with the register of electors. However if you have been told by a bank or credit reference agency that you have been denied credit because your name does not appear on the register of electors, you will need to contact the electoral registration office direct, by telephoning 01670 624811. If your name appears on the register of electors we can supply you with a letter confirming your registration at a cost of £15.

Sometimes the records maintained by credit reference agencies are incorrect. If you have any further problems, these will need to be taken up with the bank or credit reference agency, and not with the electoral registration office.

**I’m a student - where should I register to vote?**

As a student you can register for more than one address if you are studying away from home, at college or university. You can register to vote at both your home and term-time address. You have a right to vote in respect of both addresses in a local government election but you must choose which address you wish to vote from in respect of parliamentary and European parliamentary elections.

**Individual Electoral Registration (IER) queries**

For queries relating to the new electoral registration process, Individual Electoral Registration, please go to our IER frequently asked questions pages.

**When will my name appear on the register?**

We publish updates to the register every month, except when we are undertaking our annual registration process. There is a set date in each month when applications to register have to be submitted in order to get on the register published that month. The sooner you apply to register, then the sooner we can get your name on the register.

You should be aware that in the run up to an election, you will only be able to vote at that election if your name has been added to the register of electors by not later than 12 working days prior to the election date.

**Who is eligible to be registered?**

Eligibility criteria:

- You are over 18 years old (we do also place people aged 16 and 17 on the register ahead of their 18th birthday but they will not be able to vote until they are 18)
- You live in the city of Salford
- You are a British, Commonwealth, Irish or European Union citizen (a list of eligible countries can be downloaded below)
- Anyone who normally lives in your home but is away temporarily
- Anyone who is working away from home for less than six months
- Students, if this is their normal home address out of term time
- Lodgers and anyone else who lives in your home (but not short stay visitors)

The following persons cannot be registered to vote:

- People who are not British, Commonwealth, Irish or European Union citizens
- People who live or work abroad for more than six months of the year (although they can apply to vote as overseas electors)
- People who are long stay patients in psychiatric hospitals (special arrangements can be made for long stay voluntary patients)
- Convicted prisoners (but not prisoners on remand)

**Who can inspect and buy the register?**

Using information received from the public, electoral registration officers keep two versions of the register:

- The **electoral register**, and
- The **open register**

The **electoral register** lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in public elections.

The register is used for electoral purposes such as making sure only eligible people can vote and for other limited purposes specified in law. The personal data in the register must always be processed in line with data protection legislation.

**Who uses the electoral register?**

- Election staff, political parties, candidates and holders of elected office use the register for electoral purposes
- Your local council and the British Library hold copies that anyone may look at under supervision. A copy is held by the Electoral Commission, the Boundary Commissions, which set constituency boundaries for most elections, and the Office for National Statistics
- The council can use the register for duties relating to security, enforcing the law and preventing crime. The police and the security services can also use it for law enforcement
- The register is used when calling people for jury service
- Government departments may buy the register from local registration officers and use it to help prevent and detect crime. They can also use it to safeguard national security by checking the background of job applicants and employees
- Credit reference agencies can buy the register. They help other organisations to check the names and addresses of people applying for credit. They also use it to carry out identity checks when trying to prevent and detect money laundering

It is a criminal offence for anyone to supply or use the register for anything else.

The **open register** is an extract of the electoral register but it is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm name and address details. The personal data in the register must always be removed. Removing your details from the open register would not affect your right to vote.

**Who uses the open register?**

Users of the open register include:

- Businesses checking the identity and address details of people who apply for their services such as insurance, goods hire and property rental, as well as when they shop online
- Businesses selling age-restricted goods or services, such as alcohol and gambling online, to meet the rules on verifying the age of their customers
Charities and voluntary agencies, for example, to help maintain contact information for those who have chosen to donate bone marrow and to help people separated by adoption to find each other
Charities to help with fundraising and contact people who have made donations
Debt collection agencies when tracing people who have changed address without telling their creditors
Landlords and letting agents when checking the identity of potential tenants
Local councils when identifying and contacting residents
Online directory firms to help users of the website find people, such as when reuniting friends and families
Organisations tracing and identifying beneficiaries of wills, pensions and insurance policies
Private sector firms to verify details of job applicants

**Can I buy the register?**

Only the **open register** is available for general purchase. The cost of the register depends on how many names appear on the register for the area you want to buy. To check the price for a certain part of the register, email us at elections@northumberland.gov.uk including details of the part of the register you want to buy, whether you require it in paper or data format and to check postage costs.

The cost of purchasing the register is set out in the Representation of the People Act and is not determined by Salford City Council. Legislation sets out the basic formula for the cost of the register as follows:

- **Paper copy** - £10 plus £5 per 1,000 names (or part of)
- **Data copy** - £20 plus £1.50 per 1,000 names (or part of)

Please note: neither the **electoral** or the **open** registers are on the internet.