



NHS Management Executive
St. Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

13 September 1996

Dear Colleague

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Summary

1. This MEL outlines the provisions relating to the electoral registration of people with mental illness contained in the Representation of the People (ROP) Act 1983, and give guidance on their implementation. This MEL updates and replaces the circular issued on 14 September 1983 (NHS Circular No 1983 (GEN) 23), which can be destroyed.

Action

2. In light of the attached guidance, Health Boards and Trusts are asked to make the necessary arrangements so that voluntary patients, and where appropriate detained patients, in mental hospitals who so wish can be included in the electoral register for 1997, and to operate these arrangements in subsequent years. Health Boards and Trusts are urged to take all practicable steps to ensure that patients are informed of their entitlements and that those who so wish are able to exercise their right to vote. The responsibilities of staff in this respect should be clearly identified. Health Boards are asked to draw the contents of this letter to the attention of any independent providers of mental health services in their area.

Yours sincerely

KEVIN J WOODS
Director of Purchasing

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COMMON SERVICES AGENCY	
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FILE No	
REFERRED TO	ACTION TAKEN
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INTRODUCTION

1. The relevant provisions are contained in Section 7 of the ROP Act 1983, attached at Annex B. Related regulations have also been made under Section 53 of the Act. These regulations (ROP (Scotland) Regulations 1986) prescribe the manner of attestation of a patient's declaration, of its transmission to the electoral registration officer (ERO), and of the insertion of the patient's name in the register of electors. The relevant extracts from these regulations are also attached at Annex C.

2. For electoral registration purposes 10 October is the qualifying date.

3. In order to be included on the electoral register a person must be a citizen either of the United Kingdom, of another Commonwealth country or of the Republic of Ireland. A list of British Dependent territories and other Commonwealth countries is attached at Annex D to this letter. Citizens of other Member States of the European Union resident in the United Kingdom are also entitled to be registered, but only for local government and European parliamentary elections.

VOLUNTARY PATIENTS

4. A "voluntary patient" (also known as "informal patient") is a patient in a mental hospital who is not liable to be detained there (Section 7(2) ROP Act 1983). For these purposes a mental hospital is any establishment maintained wholly or mainly for the reception and treatment of people suffering from any form of mental disorder. A general hospital which provides treatment for people with mental illness does not come within this definition.

5. Voluntary patients may register as electors, but only by completing a "patient's declaration" (unless their stay in the hospital is so short that they have not lost their residence for electoral purposes at their home address). Form RPF32 (Scotland) - specimen at Annex E - is provided for this purpose. Section 7 of the 1983 Act and regulation 20 of the ROP (Scotland) Regulations 1986 lay down a number of conditions relating to the completion of patients' declarations and the registration of voluntary patients. These include:-

- declarations must be made with a view to registration for a particular year, with reference to the qualifying date for the register;
- declarations must be made during the 12 months ending with the qualifying date;
- voluntary patients must be able to make their declarations unaided, though they may be given assistance if they find it difficult to make their declaration because they are blind or suffer from other physical incapacity;
- declarations must be attested by an authorised member of the hospital staff.

6. Voluntary patients are registered in respect of either:-
- (a) an address in the United Kingdom where they would be resident if they were not in hospital; or, if they cannot give such an address,
 - (b) an address in the United Kingdom (other than a mental hospital) where they have lived in the past.

A voluntary patient cannot be registered in respect of the hospital where he or she is a patient.

DETAINED PATIENT

7. A "detained patient" is a person who is "detained at any place by virtue of any enactment relating to persons suffering from mental disorder" (Section 7(1) of the 1983 Act).

8. The question of whether a detained patient on the qualifying date can register as an elector is a question of fact, relating to the residence enjoyed before their detention. EROs will be required to decide on the facts of a particular case, whether or not a person had residence at a particular address prior to their detention as a mental patient.

9. A person with established residence at an address in the community who becomes a detained patient shortly before the qualifying date, and who intends to return to that address at the end of their detention, is likely to qualify for inclusion in the register which makes reference to that qualifying date, whereas a person who has severed links with their previous address is unlikely to do so. It might be difficult for a person who had been detained for more than 6 months on the qualifying date to claim that he or she was entitled to be considered as still resident at the former address.

10. A detained patient who has not had a presence at a particular address in the community for one year or more is unlikely to be able to claim residence there and would then cease to be eligible for registration in respect of it. It therefore seems unlikely that anyone who had been registered as an elector on the basis of this advice would, if continuously detained in the interim period, continue to be eligible for registration on the next qualifying date. Consideration will also have to be given to any periods of leave of absence a patient may have had. This is, however, a matter on which certainty could be obtained only on the basis of a court's consideration of the facts.

11. A registered elector who subsequently becomes a detained patient is not thereby disqualified from voting during the currency of the register on which they are registered.

PROCEDURE

12. Electoral registration officers will send Form A (the form which has to be submitted to the ERO listing residents at a particular address who are eligible to vote) to all hospitals during the autumn, or other arrangements will be made to obtain this information. The form should be completed by listing the names of patients, and of staff and their families, who are resident in hospitals and eligible to vote.

13. At the same time as Form A is received, or earlier if considered appropriate, Health Boards and Trusts are asked to inform all patients who are likely to be in mental hospitals on the qualifying date, of the provisions enabling them to register as an elector by virtue of a patient's declaration.

DOUBLE REGISTRATION AND VOTING

14. While patients are entitled to submit declarations if they are, or will be, in a mental hospital on the qualifying date, it would clearly be inappropriate for them to do so if they are short-stay patients who may have been in hospital for only a few weeks and who expect to return home soon. Their name should already have been submitted by their heads of household in the normal way in respect of their home address. However, there is no need for Health Boards and Trusts to seek to establish whether or not this is the case and informal patients should not be prevented, if they wish to do so, from making a declaration in circumstances where they may already be qualified to be registered as electors in the usual way. The ERO will normally notice the duplication if it is in respect of the same address (as will usually be the case). If it is in respect of a different address, no offence will have been committed by the patient in being registered twice. It is, however, an offence to vote more than once at an election.

PATIENT'S DECLARATION

15. Those patients who express a wish to make a patient's declaration should be asked to make it a few weeks before the qualifying date. Under the Regulations the declaration must state that it was made by the patient without assistance, guidance on which is given in paragraphs 21 to 24 below. The statements required in the declaration are contained in Section 7(4)(d) of the 1983 Act (Annex B).

16. The provision at Section 7(4)(d)(iv) is intended to ensure that all informal patients who wish to make a declaration should be able to supply an address for that purpose. The address where the patient would be resident if they were not in hospital might be, for example, the home of the patient's family, if any, or perhaps the address of a relative or a friend. If the patient cannot say where they would live if they were not in hospital, they may declare any address at which they have resided in the United Kingdom at any time previously. Such an address might be, for example, a local authority or private residential home, or an orphanage. The fact that a former address no longer exists because of redevelopment, etc, does not preclude it from being given in a patient's declaration.

17. A patient who is not 18 years of age on the date of the declaration but who will reach this age before the expiry of the next register may make a declaration on or before the qualifying date and vote at elections on or after his 18th birthday.

18. Section 7(4)(b) of the ROP Act 1983 requires a patient's declaration to be made annually, on or before the qualifying date. The need to make an annual declaration is intended to ensure that a patient whose mental condition has deteriorated a year after a declaration is made is not automatically included in the next year's register (see paragraph 21 below).

19. Health Boards and Trusts are asked to make available to patients the standard patient's declaration form (RPF32 (Scotland)). Copies of the form (Annex E) can be obtained from electoral registration officers whose addresses are given at Annex F.

ASSISTANCE

20. The ROP Act 1983 requires that the patient's declaration must be made without assistance, with the qualification that assistance for this purpose does not include assistance necessitated by blindness or physical incapacity. The requirement that the declaration must be made without assistance is intended to provide an indication of the patient's capacity to vote.

21. The "without assistance" requirement implies that the patient must be able to understand the information required to make the declaration and be able to communicate that information to the person responsible for attesting the declaration. "Without assistance", however, applies only to the making of the declaration. It does not, for example, preclude the person responsible for attesting the declaration helping with the completion of the form if the patient is blind or has some other physical disability. Nor would it preclude the answering of queries on particular aspects of the form which might reasonably be raised by a member of the general public if asked to complete a similar form, eg on the definition of a Commonwealth citizen. The staff of the hospital could also help with enquiries to establish or confirm a previous address, and Health Boards and Trusts are asked to ensure that hospital staff are encouraged to give this kind of help to patients where required. It is not necessary, however, for staff to verify addresses provided by patients.

22. A patient who is mentally capable of making the declaration but is unable to read or write may be assisted as necessary with the completion of the form.

23. A patient who is unable to sign the declaration form should make a mark in the space for the signature.

ATTESTATION OF PATIENT'S DECLARATION

24. The ROP Regulations 1986 require that the patient's declaration shall be attested by a member of staff of the hospital who has been authorised for this purpose by the Health Board or Trust (or, in the case of a private mental hospital, by the person or persons registered as managers of the hospital), who shall certify that, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, the statements contained in the declaration are true. It will be for Health Boards and Trusts, after consulting the staff concerned, to determine the members of the staff of the hospital who will be authorised to attest patients' declarations, but it is envisaged that the staff who will be authorised will normally be first-level nurses trained in nursing people suffering from mental illness or mental handicap.

TRANSMISSION OF PATIENT'S DECLARATION

25. The patient's declaration should be sent by the Health Board or Trust to the ERO for the electoral registration area which includes the address declared in the patient's declaration. In cases of doubt the declaration should be sent to the ERO for what appears to be the most

appropriate area. Declarations delivered to the wrong ERO will be forwarded to the right one. The declaration should be sent under cover of a letter which names the patient and which confirms that the declaration has been attested and certified by a person authorised by the Health Board or Trust for this purpose. A separate letter must be sent to each of the EROs involved, although where a number of patient's have declared addresses in the same electoral registration area their names may be listed together in one letter.

26. A record should be kept of all patients who have made declarations. The record should include:-

- 26.1 the names of the patient;
- 26.2 the qualifying address shown on the declaration;
- 26.3 the year to which the declaration relates;
- 26.4 the date the declaration was made;
- 26.5 the names of the person attesting the declaration;
- 26.6 the date it was sent to the ERO.

27. If the record comprises a copy of the patient's declaration form it is suggested that the copy should be kept for at least 12 months after the end of the year to which it relates.

RECEIPT OF DECLARATION

28. The ERO will notify the patient of the receipt of the declaration.

ENTRY IN REGISTER

29. Subject to the declaration having been properly made and attested, and the patient being otherwise qualified, the patient's name will be entered in the register of electors in the manner prescribed in regulation 47 (see Annex C).

APPLICATION TO VOTE BY POST

30. A patient who is registered by virtue of a declaration will be entitled to a postal vote in elections for which they are registered, and Health Boards and Trusts are asked to inform the patient of this entitlement at the time the patient's declaration is made. It is necessary to apply for a postal vote, and a fresh application must be made for each election. Health Boards and Trusts are asked to remind patients prior to elections of the need to apply before the closing date for postal voting applications, and to supply application forms for this purpose to patients who have made a patient's declaration. (For guidance on closing dates and dates for elections see paragraphs 32 and 40 below.)

31. Applications for postal votes should be made on form RPF9A (Scotland). A specimen is attached at Annex G. Health Boards and Trusts are therefore recommended to

carry a stock of the form which can be obtained from electoral registration officers. A member of staff of the hospital (who should normally be the person identified in paragraph 35 below) should assist the patient, if required, in completing the application form.

32. An application for a postal vote must be received by the ERO for the electoral registration area which includes the address declared in the patient's declaration not later than noon on the 11th day before polling day at a parliamentary or a local government election, in both cases excluding Saturdays, Sundays and extra days at public and bank holidays. Health Boards and Trusts are advised to confirm the closing date for postal voting applications at a particular election with an ERO.

33. Patients who are registered in respect of a home address other than by virtue of a patient's declaration and who are entitled to apply for a postal vote should also use form RPF9A. Form RPF7B should be used if the application for a postal vote is on the grounds of blindness or any other physical incapacity.

VOTING BY POST

34. Patients voting by post will receive between nomination day and the day of the poll a ballot paper and form of declaration of identity, together with 2 envelopes. Full instructions about the procedure for voting are set out on the back of the form of identity. To avoid any possible allegations that a patient had been persuaded or unduly influenced to cast his or her vote in a particular way, it is recommended that a member of the hospital's administrative staff - who should not be involved directly in the patient's treatment programme - should personally deliver the envelope containing the necessary documents to the patient and then or subsequently be present not only to assist the patient, if required, in completing the declaration of identity and to witness it, but also to ensure that the patient may record his vote without any person seeing how he has recorded it. Hospitals should ensure that the envelope addressed to the Returning Officer, which should contain the ballot paper sealed in its envelope and the form of declaration of identity, is despatched without delay.

35. If ballot papers are returned by post they should be posted in time to reach the Returning Officer on or before polling day.

VOTING IN PERSON

36. Alternatively, a patient who has made a declaration can, if they so choose, vote in person at the appropriate polling station for the constituency for which they are registered by virtue of their declaration.

TRAVELLING EXPENSES

37. A patient who chooses to vote in person will be responsible for meeting any travelling and other expenses they may incur, including if appropriate those of anyone who may accompany them.

FORWARDING OF BALLOT PAPERS

38. A patient who leaves hospital after the qualifying date to which the declaration relates remains entitled to vote at elections in respect of the address declared. If a ballot paper is received at a hospital in respect of such a person who is no longer a patient at the hospital it should be forwarded without delay to that person if their latest address is known. If the patient's address is not known the document should be returned to the Returning Officer at the address shown on the covering envelope.

DATES OF ELECTIONS

39. Local government elections in Scotland take place on the first Thursday in May 1999 and every 3 years thereafter. Elections to the European Parliament are held every 5 years with the next taking place in May/June 1999. The dates of general elections and parliamentary and local government by-elections cannot be predicted but the publicity generated by these elections should provide sufficient notice to Health Boards and Trusts of when such elections are to be held.

POLITICAL CANVASSING

40. Health Boards and Trusts should decide in the light of local circumstances whether it is desirable for candidates to come to hospitals to canvass patients who have made declarations. If one candidate is allowed this facility the opportunity should be extended to all candidates who are standing in the particular election. The overriding concern must be to avoid disruption to patients' treatment. Political parties should not be allowed to film on NHS premises.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT 1983

Section 7

(1) A person who is detained at any place by virtue of any enactment relating to persons suffering from mental disorder shall not by reason thereof be treated for the purposes of Sections 1 and 2 (of the Representation of the People Act 1983) (ROP Act 1983) as resident there.

(2) In the following provisions of this section -

“Assistance” does not include assistance necessitated by blindness or other physical incapacity;

“Mental hospital” means any establishment maintained wholly or mainly for the reception and treatment of persons suffering from any form of mental disorder;

“Patients Declaration” means a declaration made under this section by a voluntary mental patient;

“Voluntary mental patient” means a person who is a patient in a mental hospital but is not liable to be detained there by virtue of any enactment.

(3) A person who on the qualifying date is a voluntary mental patient shall not be entitled to be registered as mentioned in Section 12(1) or (2) (ROP Act 1983) except in pursuance of the declaration made with reference to that date in accordance with sub-section (4) below.

This sub-section is without prejudice to the registration of a voluntary mental patient by virtue of his residence at an address other than the mental hospital in which he is a patient in any case in which he would be entitled to be so registered apart from this sub-section and the following sub-sections of this section.

(4) A voluntary mental patient may make a declaration under this sub-section if he is able to do so without assistance; and a patients declaration -

(a) shall be made with a view to registration in the register of electors for a particular year and with reference to the qualifying date for that register;

(b) shall be made during the 12 months ending with the qualifying date by reference to which it is made but shall not have effect if after it is made and before that date the declarant ceases to be a voluntary mental patient or cancels the declaration;

(c) may be made by a declarant notwithstanding the fact that by reason of his age he is not yet entitled to vote;

(d) shall state that it was made by the declarant without assistance, and shall state -

(i) the date of the declaration,

(ii) that on that date and, unless it is the qualifying date, on the qualifying date next following the declarant is or will be a voluntary mental patient,

(iii) the address of the mental hospital in which the declarant is a voluntary mental patient,

(iv) the address where the declarant would be resident in the United Kingdom if he were not a voluntary mental patient or, if he cannot give any such address, an address (other than a mental hospital) at which he has resided in the United Kingdom,

(v) that on the date of the declaration the declarant is a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a relevant citizen of the Union, and

(vi) whether the declarant had on the date of the declaration attained the age of 18 years and, if he had not, the date of his birth,

and a patient's declaration shall be attested in the prescribed manner.

(5) If a person -

(a) makes a patient's declaration declaring to more than one address; or

(b) makes more than one patient's declaration bearing the same date and declaring to different addresses;

the declaration or declarations shall be void.

(6) A patient's declaration may at any time be cancelled by the declarant and (subject to sub-section (5) above) a patient's declaration bearing a later date shall, without any express cancellation, cancel a declaration bearing an earlier date if it is made with reference to the same qualifying date.

(7) A voluntary mental patient whose patient's declaration is made with reference to the qualifying date for any register shall be treated in relation to that register -

(a) as resident on the qualifying date at the address specified in the declaration pursuant to paragraph (d)(iv) of sub-section (4) above;

(b) in the case of registration in Northern Ireland, as resident in Northern Ireland during the whole of the period of 3 months ending on the qualifying date; and

(c) in any case, until the contrary is proved, as being a Commonwealth citizen or citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a relevant citizen of the Union of the age appearing from the declaration and as not being subject to any legal capacity except as so appearing.

(8) Where a patient's declaration appearing to be properly made out and attested is transmitted to the registration officer in the proper manner, the declarant shall, until the contrary is proved, be treated for the purposes of registration as having been from the date of the declaration or such later date, if any, as appears from it, and as continuing to be, qualified to be registered as an elector.

(9) No patient's declaration shall be specially made by a person for the purpose of local government elections, and any patient's declaration made for the purpose of parliamentary elections shall have effect also for the purpose of local government elections; but -

(a) a patient's declaration may be made for the purpose of local government elections only by a person who is a peer subject to a legal incapacity to vote at parliamentary elections or by a relevant citizen of the Union; and

(b) where so made, shall be marked to show that it is available for local government elections only, but shall in all other respects be the same as any other patient's declaration.

**EXTRACT FROM THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (SCOTLAND)
REGULATIONS 1986**

Patients Declaration

Regulation 20

- (1) A patient's declaration shall be attested by a person who is -
 - a. a member of the staff of the mental hospital (as defined by Section 7(2) of the Act of 1983) in which the person making the declaration is a voluntary mental patient on the date of the declaration, and
 - b. authorised for the purpose by the managers (as defined by Section 125(1) of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 of that hospital.
- (2) A person shall not attest a patient's declaration unless he is satisfied whether on production of such evidence as he may reasonably require or by virtue of his own knowledge that the particulars which are included in the declaration in accordance with the requirements of Section 7(4)(d) of the Act of 1983 are true.
- (3) A person attesting a patient's declaration shall record on it -
 - (a) his full name;
 - (b) the office that he holds;
 - (c) that he is satisfied as to the matters referred to in paragraph (2) above; and
 - (d) that the declaration was either made without assistance by the person named in it or, if that person was assisted, that assistance was necessitated by reason only of blindness or other physical incapacity;and he shall attest the declaration by signing it.
- (4) A patient's declaration shall be transmitted to the registration officer for that part of a constituency within which is situated the address specified in the declaration under Section 7(4)(d)(iv) of the Act of 1983.
- (5) Where the registration officer is satisfied that the patient's declaration is duly made he shall so notify the declarant.

LIST OF COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES AND BRITISH DEPENDENT TERRITORIES AS AT OCTOBER 1995

Commonwealth Countries

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----|----------------------|
| 1. | Antigua and Barbuda. | 38. | Seychelles. |
| 2. | Australia. | 39. | Sierra Leone. |
| 3. | Bahamas. | 40. | Singapore. |
| 4. | Bangladesh. | 41. | Solomon Islands. |
| 5. | Barbados. | 42. | South Africa. |
| 6. | Belize. | 43. | Sri Lanka. |
| 7. | Botswana. | 44. | Swaziland. |
| 8. | Britain. | 45. | Tanzania. |
| 9. | Brunei. | 46. | Tonga. |
| 10. | Canada. | 47. | Trinidad and Tobago. |
| 11. | Cameroon. | 48. | Tuvalu. |
| 12. | Cyprus. | 49. | Uganda. |
| 13. | Dominica. | 50. | Vanuatu. |
| 14. | The Gambia. | 51. | Western Samoa. |
| 15. | Ghana. | 52. | Zambia. |
| 16. | Grenada. | 53. | Zimbabwe. |
| 17. | Guyana. | | |
| 18. | India. | | |
| 19. | Jamaica. | | |
| 20. | Kenya. | | |
| 21. | Kiribati. | | |
| 22. | Lesotho. | | |
| 23. | Malawi. | | |
| 24. | Malaysia. | | |
| 25. | Maldives. | | |
| 26. | Malta. | | |
| 27. | Mauritius. | | |
| 28. | Mozambique. | | |
| 29. | Namibia. | | |
| 30. | Nauru. | | |
| 31. | New Zealand. | | |
| 32. | Nigeria. | | |
| 33. | Pakistan. | | |
| 34. | Papua New Guinea. | | |
| 35. | St Christopher and Nevis. | | |
| 36. | St Lucia. | | |
| 37. | St Vincent and the Grenadines. | | |

British Dependand Territories

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Anguilla. |
| 2. | Bermuda. |
| 3. | British Antarctic Territory. |
| 4. | British Indian Ocean Territory. |
| 5. | British Virgin Islands. |
| 6. | Cayman Islands. |
| 7. | Falkland Island and Dependencies
(South Georgia and South Sandwich
Islands). |
| 8. | Gibraltar. |
| 9. | Hong Kong. |
| 10. | Monserrat. |
| 11. | Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno
Islands. |
| 12. | St Helena and Dependencies
(Acension and Tristan da Cunha
Islands). |
| 13. | Turks and Caicos Islands. |

R.P.F. 32 (Scotland)
(Regulation 20)

<p>FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY</p> <p>CONSTITUENCY</p> <p>POLLING DISTRICT</p> <p>BALLOT NUMBER</p> <p>DATE STAMP</p>
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REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACTS
PATIENT'S DECLARATION

**PART 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBER OF STAFF
ATTESTING THE DECLARATION**

Register of Electors coming into effect on 16th February 19.....
Qualifying Date 10th October 19.....
To: - The Electoral Registration Officer
Address.....
.....
.....

PART 2 DECLARATION TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PATIENT

Notes (1) Fill in the form and have it attested no later than 10th October in a year to enable you to vote at elections during the twelve months beginning on 16th February in the following year.

(2) You should make the declaration only if on 10th October you are or will be an informal patient in a mental illness or mental handicap hospital.

Where you have only recently been admitted to hospital and expect to go home soon **you should not use this form** as you can be registered for your home address in the normal manner.

(3) **To be read to the patient if necessary**

You must make this declaration yourself in the presence of the member of staff who is going to attest it but: -

- (a) If you are blind or suffer from some other physical incapacity you may ask for assistance when you make the declaration
or
- (b) If you cannot write you can ask the member of staff to write what you ask him/her to, but **you** should sign or make your mark

DECLARATION (BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

Surname and Title.....

Forenames.....

I hereby declare that: -

- (1) I am personally making this declaration (see note 3 above)
- (2) I am a British citizen or other Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a citizen of another Member State of the European Community.

(OVER

Electoral Registration Officer	Councils
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Application to vote by post or proxy at a particular election

Read the notes below before completing both sides of this form in BLOCK LETTERS

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Constituency _____
 Polling District _____
 Elector Number _____

DATE STAMP

Part 1

About yourself

Your name

Surname _____

Present Address

Forenames in full _____

Address on Register

Postcode _____ Telephone Number(s) (if any): _____

This might not be your present address—see notes below

Which election?

My application is for the—

Tick box which applies

Parliamentary Election

European Parliamentary Election

Local Government Election

Date of Election

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Reason for this Application

Important—see notes below. Give detailed reasons why you need an absent vote:
I cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at my polling station at that election because—

Applicant's Signature

Date

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Now complete the other side of this form

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

*Representation of the People Acts
European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978*

About this form

This form tells the Electoral Registration Officer that you want to vote by post, or let someone else to vote on your behalf, at a particular election. It is for registered electors who cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at their polling station on the day of the poll. This form is a legal document and your vote may depend on it. Fill it in carefully using BLOCK LETTERS throughout—except for your signature. Each elector must apply on a separate form—so for example a married couple who want to apply need two forms. **An application form showing more than one elector's name will be rejected.**

How to fill in this form—Important advice from the Electoral Registration Officer

About Part 1

Fill in your full name and present address in the space provided. The **Address on Register** is the address for which you are entered in the register of electors. You cannot be given an absent vote unless your name is on the register of electors.

If you were living at your present address on 10th October last year then it is likely that you are registered for your present address. In that case just write "as above".

If you have changed address within the last 16 months, it is possible that you are still registered at your previous address and not at your present address. If you are in any doubt you should check the register and fill in the address given there. (Copies of the register are available at the Electoral Registration Office and some libraries, post offices and council offices.)

If you are registered to vote as a service voter, an overseas elector or following a "patient's declaration", the address you give should be that for which you are registered as an elector. **Contact the Electoral Registration Officer if you are in doubt about what address to give in Part 1.** His address can be obtained from most council offices, post offices and libraries, and the phone book. Now fill in the details of the election at which you want to vote by post or proxy and give the reason for your application. Explain where you expect to be on polling day and why you cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person, eg "I shall be away on holiday at ... on polling day" or "I have moved and am not yet registered to vote at my new address". If the application is because of illness please state what the illness is.

There is a separate form RPF9(B) for people who need a postal or proxy vote because of unexpected illness and have missed the normal closing date.

Part 2

Post or proxy voting?

Read the notes below before you fill in either the By Post or the By Proxy section.

By Post → If you choose to vote by post give here the UK address to which the ballot paper is to be sent.

OR

By Proxy → If you choose to vote by proxy give the name and address of your proxy below. *You must first make certain that the person is willing, and is allowed, to vote on your behalf—please read the notes below.*

Proxy's full name

Proxy's address

Postcode

Postcode

Proxy's relationship to you (if any)

Now ask your proxy to sign the statement below (you may sign it yourself instead if you wish)

The person named above as proxy is able and willing to be appointed to vote on behalf of the applicant

Signature

Warning

A fine of up to £5,000 can be incurred by anyone who on this application makes a statement he or she knows to be false, or signs an application when not authorised to do so or signs an application which he or she knows contains a false statement.

About Part 2

You can choose whether you want to vote by post or get someone else (called a 'proxy') to vote on your behalf. You cannot choose both. If you prefer a postal vote, fill in the address to which your ballot paper should be sent. **It must be within the U.K. Postal ballot papers are usually sent out about a week before polling day.** So if you are not likely to receive yours around that time at the address you give, you should consider choosing a proxy. **Ballot papers cannot be sent abroad.**

If you decide to apply to vote by proxy you must find someone suitable to agree to act for you before giving his or her name. You must also sign, or get your proxy to sign, the special statement on the application form. Not everyone is allowed to act as a proxy. Your proxy must:

- be able to vote in U.K. elections, (he/she need not be currently registered as an elector)

- not have agreed to act as a proxy for more than two electors including yourself. He/she is however allowed to act as proxy for any number of his/her relatives (husband/wife, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild).

Note too that:

- if granted a postal vote, you are not allowed to vote at the polling station
- if granted a vote by proxy, you may vote in person, but only if your proxy has not already voted on your behalf or has not applied for a postal vote to vote on your behalf.

How to return this form

The form should be returned to the Electoral Registration Officer for the area in which you are registered to vote. **You must make sure that this application reaches him by NOON on**

NOTE If there is no date given on the form, the closing date is noon, 13 working days before polling day (working days exclude weekends; bank holidays such as Good Friday, the first and last Mondays in May, Christmas Day and New Year's Day; and Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve. If you are in any doubt about the closing date, check with the Electoral Registration Officer or the press notices about the election.

Don't lose your right to vote

