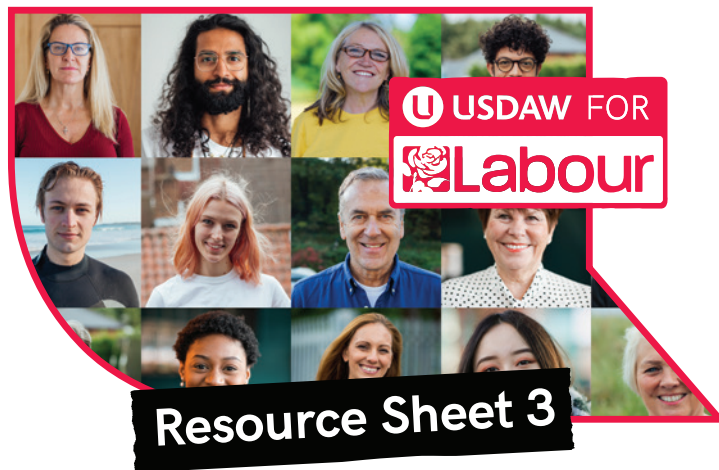


Organising Postal Votes for Members



Anyone can get a postal vote – you don't have to give a reason. Postal votes make it much easier to vote, meaning that postal voters are much more likely to actually use their vote.

Encouraging and organising members to apply for postal votes is therefore one of the most valuable ways of helping Labour win. It is an important job that can be done at any time up to 11 working days before the election by members in the workplace.

Why do Members Need Postal Votes?

It's very easy not to vote. We've all done it and just run out of time on Election Day. But every vote really does count, especially in a General Election.

Postal votes just make it easier to vote. Twice as many people vote who have them than those who just rely on getting to the polling station themselves.

Many people enjoy going to vote. Having a postal vote doesn't mean you can't go along and vote in person if you decide you can – it just gives you the option of posting your vote if that's easier.

Usdaw is very keen that as many members sign up for a postal vote as possible – the more of our members who vote, the more notice politicians will take of our views!



Encouraging Usdaw Members to Sign Up for Postal Votes

All Usdaw members should be encouraged to apply for a postal vote, but those in the following situations can often miss out on their chance to vote:

- Anyone who can be asked to work longer hours at short notice.
- Anyone on changing shift patterns.
- Anyone with caring responsibilities – for children or for others – which may mean they are unable or find it difficult to go out to vote on Election Day.
- Anyone who may go on holiday – early May is a good time to go away, but it's easy to forget to arrange a postal vote before you go.
- Anyone whose journey home after work can be delayed.
- Drivers – because they cannot guarantee a finishing time to their working day, ie breakdowns, traffic delays, etc.
- Anyone who does not have a fixed, regular workplace, or can be asked to work away from their normal workplace.
- Any worker who has to, no matter how infrequently, work away from home.

When talking to members about postal voting, please ensure they understand the following points:

- Postal votes are totally secure. Your ballot paper will be posted to you at home and you sign it when you return it so it can be checked.
- Having a postal vote is FREE. The ballot paper even comes with a stamped addressed envelope for the voter to return it in.
- You can cancel your postal vote at any time.
- You can still cast your vote by going to a polling station, as long as you take the ballot paper that was posted to you with you.
- Postal voting is the easiest way to vote. You can do it in the comfort of your own home up to a week before polling day.

Who can Apply?

Any voter can apply for a postal vote.

When to Apply

As soon as possible; we recommend that Usdaw members apply for a permanent postal vote – you only need to apply once, and your absent vote will apply at all elections unless you choose to end it, or you change address.

Deadline: 11 working days before polling day.

For example, a General Election held on Thursday 7 May would mean postal vote applications have to be received by your local council by 5pm on Tuesday 21 April.

How to Apply

Postal vote forms are available from a number of sources including Usdaw Head Office, your local council, or the 'Voting by post' section of the Electoral Commission website: www.aboutmyvote.co.uk. Alternatively, you can photocopy the example on the opposite page of this Resource Sheet.

All you have to fill in is:

- Your name and address.
- Whether you want your postal vote for every election or just the next one.

Remember if you ask for a permanent postal vote you can still cancel it at any time.

Send your completed form to your local electoral registration office. To find your local office call **0333 103 1928** or go online to: www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

It's important to return your completed form to your local electoral registration office straight away.

Postal Vote or

Proxy Vote?

Postal votes are much easier to apply for. However, if you will be abroad one week before polling day or cannot give an address where you can receive mail one week before polling day you should apply for a proxy vote.

Postal Votes: Postal votes are sent to the voter one week before polling day. When it arrives the voter simply puts a cross on the ballot paper, completes and signs the accompanying slip, and returns it in a stamped addressed envelope.

Proxy Votes: This is where a voter appoints someone to go to the polling station on their behalf and cast their vote. The application must state the name and address of the voter and the person who is the proxy, also the reason for the proxy vote (ie working abroad, etc) and a declaration by the proxy voter that they are capable and willing to be appointed.

Depending on the reason for the proxy vote, the application may need to be supported by appropriate people:

- If the proxy vote is for employment reasons the application must be countersigned by the voter's employer.
- If the proxy vote is for incapacity reasons the application must be countersigned by a doctor, registered nurse or Christian Science practitioner who is treating the voter.
- An application can also be countersigned by a warden, matron or registered carer based in the accommodation in which the applicant lives.

Any questions?

Usdaw's Politics Office can be contacted on **0161 249 2452**
or by email: politics@usdaw.org.uk

www.usdaw.org.uk



UsdawUnion

