



# **Improving electoral participation and voter turnout**

Policy Paper

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## **Executive Summary**

Voting is a democratic right and one which should be both protected and promoted. The Democratic Unionist Party want to ensure that everyone in Northern Ireland who is eligible to vote has the right to vote. This executive summary briefly outlines our proposed plans to improve electoral participation.

### **Increasing voter turnout**

- A review into Thursday polling days to assess if this truly is the best day to hold elections in Northern Ireland.
- Investigating mandatory voting and the possibility of introducing fines for non-voting.
- Further collaboration with schools, further education colleges and universities to educate individuals on the importance of voting, further to that which already takes place in citizenship and learning for life and work classes.
- Undertaking a review into the introduction of e-voting in the United Kingdom.
- Undertaking a review into the introduction of e-counting in the United Kingdom.

### **E-voting and virtual turnout**

- A review into Thursday polling days to assess if this truly is the best day to hold elections in Northern Ireland.
- Investigating mandatory voting and the possibility of introducing fines for non-voting.
- Further collaboration with schools, further education colleges and universities to educate individuals on the importance of voting, further to that which already takes place in citizenship and learning for life and work classes.
- Undertaking a review into the introduction of e-voting in the United Kingdom.
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### **Increasing voter registration**

- Targeted social media campaigns throughout the year to increase voter registration and promote the electoral ID card.
- Further examining the possibility of introducing mandatory voting in the United Kingdom.

- Greater collaboration with community groups and organisations to promote the importance of registering to vote, particularly in hard to reach communities.

#### **Electoral fraud**

- A public awareness campaign held at election times highlighting the facts surrounding electoral fraud and how to report it.

#### **Postal and Proxy voting**

- Separating the current form into two distinctive forms to prevent confusion and electoral fraud.
- An awareness campaign outlining who can apply to vote via postal and proxy, particularly aimed towards vulnerable groups to increase electoral participation.
- A review on how to improve the voting experience of overseas voters.
- Lowering the time period for overseas voters from fifteen years to ten or five years.

## **Introduction**

Elections and voting are a vital and core principle of our democracy. Without them, the social contract between the government and the people would not be established and there would be no legitimate mandate for government. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we continuously review and assess our election processes to ensure that they are fit for practice, both for the electorate and for political candidates. The Democratic Unionist Party is committed to improving and enhancing electoral administration and participation.

This is the second in a series of policy papers by the Democratic Unionist Party on electoral reform and addresses measures to increase and improve voter participation. Electoral participation is a core principle of democratic societies. This process should be fair, open and easily accessible to all within our society. We are committed to improving public confidence in our electoral processes.

## **Voter turnout**

In the United Kingdom turnout has been as low as 59.4% in the 2001 and as high as 69% in 2017<sup>1</sup>. Turnout for the 2016 Referendum was higher still at 72.2%<sup>2</sup>. Understandably, referendums tend to have higher turnout figures than so called 'ordinary' elections due to their single-issue nature. Also, as referendums are only held in specific circumstances, there has been no opportunity for voter fatigue to set in. The 2017 General Election was a peak year for voter turnout which saw 46.8 million people on the electoral register.

In the 2019 General Election Northern Ireland had the lowest regional turnout figures with only 61.8%. This low turnout within Northern Ireland may be a result of voter apathy caused by the collapse of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2017. The high number of elections held in Northern Ireland may also have a detrimental effect on voter turnout. Since 2016 there has been two Assembly Elections (2016, 2017), two General Elections (2017, 2019), one Local Council Election (2019), one European Parliament Election (2019) and the European Referendum (2016).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/uk-general-elections/results-and-turnout-2017-uk-general-election>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu\\_referendum/results](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results)

Voter turnout can be influenced by a variety of factors, including the type of electoral system being used, socio-economic factors, level of media coverage and how many political parties are running. Unfortunately, not every factor regarding elections can be controlled. An argument can be made that holding multiple elections on one day, whilst effective for lowering electoral administration costs, can confuse the electorate, particularly if the elections in question use different systems, such as First Past the Post for General Elections and Single Transferable Vote (STV) for Assembly Elections. The timing of the 2019 General Election could have had a detrimental effect on the turnout based on historical issues with low turnout for winter election, yet this was not the case.

The DUP is dedicated to improving the accessibility of elections to promote voter turnout and will investigate a wide range of possible options. In 2016 the Law Commission published a report on elections in the United Kingdom which comprised 108 recommendations covering everything from the legislative framework of elections to voter turnout. Suggestions within the Law Commission report to increase voter turnout included:

*'moving polling to the weekend, requiring voters to produce identification documentation at the polling station, replacing postal voting on demand to make it available only where a reason for requiring it is shown, making provision for electronic or internet voting and abolishing the possibility of an elector being registered to vote in more than one district.'*

One of the suggestions, that of voter identification, is already in place within Northern Ireland and has been for some years (see section **Photographic ID**). The idea of replacing postal voting on demand will be discussed later within this paper, as will electronic voting (see sections: **Postal and Proxy Voting** and **E-voting and virtual turnout**).

Australia is known for its high electoral turnout, partly due to the fact that election there are held on Saturdays and that fines are occurred for non-voting. Weekend voting would cause less disruption as schools, which are often used as polling stations in Northern Ireland, would not be required to close and parents would not have to find alternative sources of child care. There is also the added factor that less people work on weekends, a factor which may held contribute to a rise in voter turnout. However, the possibility of holding elections on weekends may raise issues in Northern Ireland as it could lead to votes or counts taking place on Sundays. It is also important to note that low turnout is caused by a variety of reasons, not least the day on which an election is held. While moving polling days to the weekend may slightly improve voter turnout rates, we should not view it as our only option. There are other feasible options to explore.

The introduction of mandatory voting or automatic registration as a means of improving voter turnout is another possible option and the experience of this across the world can be used to help shape and develop our own policies by examining what has worked, and also what has not. Mandatory, or automatic, registration is when people's names are automatically added to the electoral register, hence removing the need for them to register themselves. However, this does not necessarily mean that the individual will choose to then go out and vote in an election.

Mandatory or compulsory voting, on the other hand, means that an individual can be fined for not going out to vote unless they are exempt. This does lead to higher levels of electoral turnout, but can be an unpopular method of achieving this as it removes an individual's free choice as to whether they want to vote or not. It can also be argued that this in itself can in fact undermine the democratic process.

Measures such as imposing fines for non-voting have been introduced in countries such as Australia, Belgium and Luxembourg. Whilst compulsory voting is an attractive viable option in theory, there have been issues surrounding the enforcement of it. In many countries non-voting is not strictly enforced which undermines the entire process.

### **E-voting and virtual turnout**

E-voting has been considered as a method of increasing electoral participation. There are two distinctive types of e-voting: e-voting, which is done physically via a machine and i-voting, which is done via the internet. In a 2002 report, the Electoral Commission examined possible options for how e-voting could be implemented within the United Kingdom<sup>3</sup>. These options included voting via landlines, mobile phones and the internet. Recommendations contained within the report include:

- Piloting different options before general release across the United Kingdom
- Only releasing once security has been addressed
- Combining e-voting with physical voting at polling stations, possible electronic voting at polling stations

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<sup>3</sup>[https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/electoral\\_commission\\_pdf\\_file/Implementationof-e-votingsummary\\_6720-6268\\_ENSW.pdf](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/electoral_commission_pdf_file/Implementationof-e-votingsummary_6720-6268_ENSW.pdf)

- The possibility of being able to e-vote at any polling station across the country, not just at your closest
- Government policies to allow access to e-voting by bridging the digital divide
- Public education
- In-depth risk analysis
- A review of the electoral system by the Government to bring voting into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Whilst these recommendations are great in theory, developing them into practice may be a different matter entirely. For example, people tend to be cautious of change, particularly a change of this size and importance. It is also important to consider the cost factor which this type of change would incur. However, costs may be saved overall by the reduction of physical staff needed to man polling stations and count votes. Realistically, this could be a reasonable cost saving measure. E-counting also has the potential to limit potential human error from the vote counting process and therefore help to make it a more effective and efficient system. Time, another vital resource, can be saved through the use of e-counting in particular.

There is also the valid concern of the security of e-voting and potential risks of vote tampering and/or coercion. Whilst every possible method is taken to ensure the security of e-voting, the possibility of electoral fraud is still present. The capacity of voters to use e-voting methods may be a problem, perhaps an even larger problem than that of access to suitable forms of technology for the casting of votes. In particular, this may hinder those who are most vulnerable in our society from voting, particularly older people who may have little knowledge of, or no access to, the types of technology which are needed for e-voting<sup>4</sup>.

Public opinion on e-voting is of the utmost value to all possible discussions surrounding it. For example, in surveying individuals for the above report it was noted that text voting was viewed as 'trivialising' the voting process and as such was not a desirable method of e-voting. There are massive concerns around the security of the e-voting process which will need to be addressed if we are ever to fully support a move to this system. The biggest concerns surround confidentiality of the votes casts, and how secure the system is from fraud and electoral offences.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/post/pn155.pdf>



Estonia was one of the first countries to introduce i-voting<sup>5</sup>. An electoral identity card is used to verify the identity of the voter, although registering to vote is still a personal decision of each individual to make<sup>6</sup>. This card is linked to an electronic signature, and fingerprints have been added to newer electoral cards. On a positive note, there have been no serious security breaches since the introduction of this system of voting in Estonia. This may in part be due to the constant updating of the i-voting software. If we are to examine i-voting in greater depth, Estonia is a vital case study of what can be achieved.

However, not every country has had a positive experience with e-voting. America has experienced problems with cyber-attacks effecting voting which in turn has damaged voter confidence in the American electoral system. In 1999 the Republic of Ireland began trials and discussed the introduction of e-voting. However, concerns raised over the security of e-voting and the lack of an accountable paper trail resulting from this has meant that e-voting has not been introduced there<sup>7</sup>. Instead, it has only resulted in expensive problems for the Irish Government as the costly e-voting machines which were bought for €54 million in 2002 were sold for scrap at €9.30 each<sup>8</sup>.

The DUP propose:

- A review into Thursday polling days to assess if this truly is the best day to hold elections in Northern Ireland.
- Investigating mandatory voting and the possibility of introducing fines for non-voting.
- Further collaboration with schools, further education colleges and universities to educate individuals on the importance of voting, further to that which already takes place in citizenship and learning for life and work classes.
- Undertaking a review into the introduction of e-voting in the United Kingdom.
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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-39955468>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.valimised.ee/en/right-vote>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/rise-and-fall-of-irish-e-voting-a-brief-but-expensive-history-1.751993>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/54m-voting-machines-scrapped-for-9-each-26870212.html>

## **Increasing voter registration**

Voter registration increased within the United Kingdom in 2019, particularly during the period leading up to the General Election. This increase was experienced across the United Kingdom, with both Northern Ireland and Wales seeing the biggest increases to voter registration with rises of 3.8%. From December 2018 to December 2019, new registrations increased by 2.8%, resulting in an extra 1,299,100 people being added to the electoral register. Impressively, 47,074,800 of these registrations happened in December 2019. We must work to ensure that registration does not only happen at election time to prevent extra stress being placed on the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI).

In the United Kingdom as a whole, 2019 saw a large increase in the number of under 25 year olds who registered to vote. 1.4 million young people under 25 registered to vote in the 2019 General Election, possibly due to the prevalence during the election campaign of important political decisions such as Brexit. This is a positive step forward and is a trend which must be encouraged and promoted. However, turnout for under 25s registered to vote in 2019 was 47%, down from 54% in 2017<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup>. This raises serious questions as to what is preventing young people from voting and what more can be done to encourage them.

How do we encourage more people from traditionally hard to reach groups to vote? Young people, ethnic minorities and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are often disproportionately represented within non-voting statistics. Online electoral registration is helping to bridge this gap and is making access to the electoral register easier and open to more people. However, there is still a barrier for individuals who do not have access to the necessary technology or who struggle with poor broadband, particularly in rural areas. More must be done to ensure that this process is continually reviewed and adapted so that it continues to help more people to register. Online registration also provides benefits for the EONI itself as it is more time and cost effective for the organisation than travelling to different locations to manually complete forms.

Currently, EONI has initiatives in which they visit secondary and grammar schools, further education colleges and universities as part of a roadshow to promote voter registration. The DUP supports the

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/how-britain-voted-2019-election>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/how-britain-voted-2017-election>

extension of this to include registration events based in community centres or those organised by community-based organisations as this help to increased access by ensuring those who may not have the means to register to vote can have the opportunity to do so. With the closure of many EONI branches in rural communities, travelling to Belfast to register to vote is not feasible for those who do not have access to a car or reliable and frequent public transport routes.

Age can impact who you are more likely to vote for in an election, but also how likely you are to be registered to vote. Traditionally, older people are more likely to be registered to vote, with young people often found to be more disenfranchised from politics. Between the 2017 and 2019 General Election the voting gap between 18 to 24 year olds and the over 65s has increase from 54% and 71%, to 47% and 74%<sup>11</sup>. On one hand, two snap General Elections within the space of two years does very little to promote a feeling of confidence within our political institutions. For young first-time voters this may be an extremely off-putting scenario to find oneself in. However, as both of these elections were about important topics such as Brexit, this may have encouraged others to use their right to vote. It is positive that more young people are registering to vote, but it is vital that we continue to encourage them to take the next step and cast their vote.

Whatever the reasons, more must be done to encourage young people to use their democratic right to vote. Our education system has an influential and vital role to play in teaching young people to be engaged with politics and to take an active interest in voting and holding the government to account. One way to do this is to further highlight the importance of our political system and voting in citizenship classes in school.

### Photographic ID

When it comes to questions surrounding the effectiveness of mandatory photographic ID for voters, Great Britain has been closely examining the experience of Northern Ireland. Bringing photographic ID to polling stations has been the norm in Northern Ireland since 1985 due to the historical high risk of voter fraud.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/how-britain-voted-2019-election>

An argument remains that mandatory photographic identification at polling stations may hinder some individuals from voting as it could disproportionately impact on those from lower incomes. The most common forms of photographic ID are passports and drivers' licences, yet for many within our society socio-economic factors mean that these items are unattainable. This creates a barrier that may prevent the poorest in our society from voting, not through choice, but through economic difficulty. In turn, not being able to vote can increase scepticism in the integrity of the electoral system.

The free electoral card available in Northern Ireland has helped to address this issue. Anyone who registers to vote in Northern Ireland can apply for a free electoral photographic ID card that can be used when voting. A similar scheme in Great Britain would help to address some of those issues raised above. The card is particularly useful for those in the 18 to 24 age category who are registering to vote for the first time.

However, issues still exist with these cards. For example, to have the photograph taken within the Electoral Office individuals have to be able to travel to them and if they do not have access to a car or public transport this can be a barrier. Individuals can apply for an a passport size photograph, meaning access to a printer and the cost of having passport photographs taken. Also, the take up rate for the cards is lower than it could be and more can be done to promote it. The DUP would encourage a social media campaign to promote the uptake of electoral ID cards and the need for more community outreach events.

The DUP will support:

- Targeted social media campaigns throughout the year to increase voter registration and promote the electoral ID card.
- Further examining the possibility of introducing mandatory voting in the United Kingdom.
- Greater collaboration with community groups and organisations to promote the importance of registering to vote, particularly in hard to reach communities.

## Electoral fraud

Electoral fraud is illegal interference in an election through vote rigging, stealing the vote of another person, or coercing an individual to vote a certain way. The legal processes for dealing with electoral fraud are outlined within the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the CPS Special Crime Division was created and tasked with the responsibility of dealing with reported electoral fraud. For anyone found guilty of committing electoral fraud, the punishments can range from fines to imprisonment.

The Electoral Fraud (NI) Act 2002 provides the framework for investigations of electoral fraud in Northern Ireland. In 2017, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) investigated 10 alleged cases of electoral fraud, only one of which was in relation to the Northern Ireland Assembly Election held that year. The 2002 Act changed how elections and voting work in Northern Ireland and in a public opinion survey, 72% of respondents believed that this Act could reduce electoral fraud. However, there is a lack of data, both historical and recent, on electoral fraud in Northern Ireland. Partly due to this, perception of fraud is just as important as the actual numbers. Concerningly, 38% of those surveyed by the Government regarding the 2019 General Election believed that electoral fraud had occurred. Without confidence in the system, how can we expect individuals to either register to vote or actually vote.

If a query arises that an individual arriving to vote at a polling station has been marked as having already voted, a series of questions will be asked by staff before what is known as a tendered ballot is issued to the individual so that they can cast their vote<sup>12</sup>. This is then reported to the Electoral Office and investigated. Electoral fraud in Northern Ireland has decreased in recent decades with only 55 tendered ballots being given out in 2005, a drop of 94% from the figures in 1983.

Electoral fraud has been widespread since the creation of Northern Ireland in 1921<sup>13</sup>. As a consequence of the prevalence of this during the Troubles, it was necessary to introduce mandatory photographic ID at polling stations to preventing this, meaning it would now be extremely difficult to undertake this type of electoral fraud. In 2017, a former Chief Electoral Commissioner stated that

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-09/UKPGE%20Polling%20Station%20Quickguide%20English%20WEB.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/voter-fraud-endemic-since-the-foundation-of-northern-ireland-study-35835051.html>

our electoral system is too simplistic and that a different system should be introduced in Northern Ireland to prevent further electoral fraud from happening<sup>14</sup>. This argument is interesting as it suggests that our voting system is too simplistic and as a result it is easy to manipulate. However, changing an entire voting system would take cross-party support and political interest. The DUP does not support any calls to change the voting system in Northern Ireland.

There have been calls over recent years to reform the postal and proxy voting system (see section **Postal and Proxy voting**). Postal and proxy voting has the potential to be the easiest means of engaging in electoral fraud. Individuals who request postal or proxy votes may be elderly or vulnerable and at a higher risk from those seeking to take advantage. We cannot, and will not, allow this trust to be abused.

However, these types of fraud are not as widespread as the media has led us to believe, although any allegations that are made of electoral fraud must be taken seriously. Calls to remove postal votes in order to prevent electoral fraud would ultimately cause more problems than it would solve and lead to a large drop in voter turnout. Instead, more must be done to educate the public about postal and proxy voting and how they should be correctly used. Those in positions of responsibility must not demonise the use of postal and proxy votes. For many of the most vulnerable in our society, postal and proxy votes are the only way in which they can engage with the voting process. If we take these options away, we will be removing the democratic right to vote from those who need their voice heard the most.

The DUP are committed to ensuring that the voices of the most vulnerable in our society are heard and support harsher punishments for those who take advantage.

Aside from the types of voter fraud which we are familiar with, that of planned fraud, there is also individual fraud in which young people are told how to vote by their parents. Historically there is a cohort within our society where the voting habits of young people are heavily influenced by family traditions. This is most obvious in Northern Ireland given our history of ethno-national conflict and

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/voting-fraud-in-northern-ireland-has-been-going-on-for-years-says-former-electoral-office-chief-35827669.html>

related voting patterns. This is an area which we need to address. Ideally, we would like to ensure that all young people have the confidence and knowledge needed to make an informed voting decision themselves. Public campaigns are needed to encourage more people to read election literature and to make informed decisions themselves about how to vote. By doing so we will move our societal voting patterns away from the entrenched divide we are currently in to a more informed system.

The DUP will support:

- A public awareness campaign held at election times highlighting the facts surrounding electoral fraud and how to report it.

### **Postal and Proxy voting**

Postal and proxy voting rates in Northern Ireland are a particular area of interest. This is not a new issue. In 1998, the Northern Ireland Select Committee published a report outlining the Electoral Malpractice in Northern Ireland. Within this report, concerns were raised over the abuse of absentee voting with it being noted that:

*Absent voting provides a serious threat to the integrity of the electoral system in Northern Ireland<sup>15</sup>.*

In 2002 the Electoral Reform Society recommended abolishing proxy voting in an attempt to reduce electoral fraud<sup>16</sup>. We are still discussing this today. Vote harvesting is still a serious concern and it is vital that we protect our postal and proxy voting system from abuses such as this.

In the 2015 and 2017 General Elections, Northern Ireland constituencies which elected a Sinn Féin MP tended to have a much higher number of proxy votes, particularly in terms of the increase in proxy votes from 2015 to 2017. In 2015 the Northern Ireland average for proxy votes was 3.3 per thousand people. However, in Sinn Féin held constituencies this figure rose to 12.8 per thousand people. In 2017 this figure rose again to 23.5 per thousand people.

*Table 2: Proxy Voting Statistics*

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<sup>15</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmniaf/316ii/nis207.htm>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/nov/29/politicalnews.uk>

Constituency	2015	2017
Belfast West	168	1026
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	1454	1707
Foyle	339	1282
Mid Ulster	488	1127
Newry and Armagh	870	1304
South Down	203	564
West Tyrone	505	914

Interestingly, applications for postal and proxy votes dropped during the 2019 Westminster Election when compared to similar figures for the 2017 Westminster Election. Postal vote registrations in Northern Ireland dropped from 23,687 to 16,969 and proxy vote registrations fell from 11,707 to 8,820<sup>17</sup>. Why is this the case? Afterall, electoral registrations increased in 2019 compared to previous years. However, postal and proxy votes tend to be used more in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the United Kingdom. There is a clear disparity between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom in terms of postal and proxy voting.

It may also be that people who could apply for a postal or proxy vote do not know that they are entitled to do so. If this is the case, more must be done to promote it so that the most vulnerable in our society are aware of this option, and as a result get to have their vote heard in the democratic process.

Perhaps one of the biggest issues to emerge from postal and proxy voting is the very form which is used to request them. Currently, the same form is used for both postal and proxy voting depending on which part of it has been filled in. This can leave the system open to fraud, particularly during election periods. It is also easy for individuals to fill in the wrong section by mistake. Campaigners for political parties often help vulnerable people to complete this form. However, some may take advantage of this trust and complete the wrong section of the form on purpose to ensure that the vote is cast in a particular way, even if that was not the intention of the individual who needed the form completed. This could be easily solved by slightly modifying the system to create two separate

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50735423>



and distinctive forms for both postal and proxy voting. This would take away the risk of the forms being intentionally tampered with and would result in greater public confidence in the postal and proxy voting system.

Across the United Kingdom there have been issues regarding overseas voters and the way in which their requests for postal votes were handled. In 2019 over 230,000 people were registered to vote overseas<sup>18</sup>. Timing had a detrimental effect on this as there was not enough time after an individual had received their ballot paper for it to be sent back and included in the count. It is a right of British citizens who live abroad, and have been registered to vote in the UK within the last 15 years, to be able to vote in General Elections<sup>19</sup>.

We need to raise the threshold for postal and proxy voting to try and limit them to those who truly do need them. For example, needing to submit evidence to prove that the individual will not be available to vote themselves on election day. This is currently the case for anyone seeking a postal or proxy vote on medical grounds. It may be that an individual must submit proof of holiday or other reasons why they cannot make it. The biggest issue with this is inevitably the backlash from the public which would result in going down this path. It may also be queried as a breach of privacy and, perhaps even, create any more problems than it was introduced to solve. This is the fine line which we must explore in order to protect the integrity of postal and proxy voting.

The DUP propose:

- Separating the current form into two distinctive forms to prevent confusion and electoral fraud.
- An awareness campaign outlining who can apply to vote via postal and proxy, particularly aimed towards vulnerable groups to increase electoral participation.
- A review on how to improve the voting experience of overseas voters.
- Lowering the time period for overseas voters from fifteen years to ten or five years.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-04/UKPGE%20election%20report%202020.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/voting-when-abroad>