

Canvassing, distribution or display of party political leaflets, posters or circulars at accommodation centres

To all Centre Managers,

Accommodation centres for those seeking international protection must remain a safe and politically neutral environment for all residents.

Residents are entitled to their own political views and are free to communicate with political representatives as they wish. This must occur in full accordance with the law and with full respect to the privacy of a person's accommodation and the protection of children in accommodation centres.

The personal political views of the manager or staff should not interfere with this activity.

In the 30 day period leading up to a referendum or election (local, national or European) in which residents may be eligible to vote, canvassers and political representatives may leave material for display in a designated area, e.g. on the public notice board / tables in the accommodation centre for the information of residents.

Canvassers and candidates may arrange to meet by appointment with residents in communal spaces, in keeping with the agreed procedures for visitors to centres as outlined in '*RIA House Rules & Procedures - Revised January 2019*'. Centre managers should put measures in place to facilitate such visits.

In instances where a centre is comprised of individual accommodation units and includes mobile homes, houses and self-catering apartments, candidates and canvassers may be facilitated where they wish to call 'door to door'. However, there is no requirement on the part of a resident to engage with any candidate unless they choose to do so.

Centres should display notices in prominent locations throughout the accommodation centre within the 30 day period leading up to a referendum or local election indicating that:-

1. A referendum/local elections is being held (insert date)
2. Residents in accommodation centres with the right to vote in local elections may be approached by candidates and/or canvassers on their behalf
3. They are not required to engage with any candidate and/or canvasser
4. It is the responsibility of each resident to ensure that they are registered to vote within an appropriate time frame.

Mark Wilson
Principal Officer
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RIA Information Sheet on the Right to Vote

Introduction

The right to vote is as follows:

- Irish citizens may vote at every election and referendum.
- British citizens may vote at Dáil elections, European elections and local elections.
- Other European Union (EU) citizens may vote at European and local elections.
- Non-EU citizens may vote at local elections only.

In order however to exercise this right to vote, irrespective of the type of election or referendum, you must ensure that your name has been entered on the Electoral Register.

The Electoral Register

Every local authority is responsible for compiling and publishing a list of voters in its area. This is called the Register of Electors or the Electoral Register. Anyone can inspect this Register and it is available in all local authority offices, post offices, Garda stations and public libraries. You can also check the Electoral Register online at: www.checktheregister.ie/.

In order to be entered on the Electoral Register, you must be at least 18 years of age on 15 February, the day the Register comes into force. You must also have been ordinarily and legally resident in the State on 1 September in the year before the Register comes into force.

The registration authority will need to know your citizenship and your type of residency in Ireland because this will determine the elections at which you may vote.

How to apply

Application forms for inclusion on the Electoral Register, Special Voters List, Postal Voters List and Correction of the draft electoral register are available from all local authorities, post offices and public libraries. Forms are also available on www.checktheregister.ie/. Completed forms must be returned to your Local Authority.

You should contact your Local Authority for application forms for inclusion on the Supplement to the Postal Voters List or the Supplement to the Special Voters List.

Questions regarding your right to vote should be addressed to the Franchise Section of your Local Authority.

If you change your address, you will need to bring a change of address form to the Local Authority for the area you now live in. This form can be found at www.checktheregister.ie/.

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