

Brits abroad can claim their voting rights from overseas now - please spread the good news!

FOR RELEASE ON: 00:30 GMT, 16th January 2024

From today, British citizens living abroad are finally able to sign up to vote where they used to live in the UK, regardless of how long they have been living overseas.

With a crucial UK General Election on the horizon this year – possibly as early as this Spring – over 2 million more UK citizens, including those who have been living abroad for more than 15 years, are now eligible to register to vote. This brings the total number of potential overseas electors to around 3.5 million.

As a partner in the public information campaign to promote these changes, Liberal Democrats Abroad are encouraging Brits abroad to ‘spread the word’ to anyone they know who may be affected.

Says Jenny Shorten, Chair of LibDems in France, “I’m so pleased we can now say ‘yes you can’ to everyone who’s been waiting to register to vote from overseas, some for many, many years. We know from our surveys and helpline messages just how important it is to Brits abroad that they can have their say at UK elections. It’s been a long time coming - but we’re finally there! “

The online registration system can be found on the government website [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote). Any British citizen who has lived in the UK at any time and at any age, or who was registered to vote there, however long ago that was, can sign up there from the 16th

January.

Anyone registering from now will make sure their vote is valid for the next UK General Election, which must be held by January 2025 and their registration will now be valid for three years instead of having to renew it annually.

Liberal Democrats Abroad, including campaigners in France, are also happy to play their part in the official campaign to ask people both in the UK and overseas 'spread the news' about the new voting rights to people they know who may now be eligible.

"It's clear from contact via our mailing lists and website, that there are still lots of people who haven't heard about the changes. Some don't even realise that as a British citizen, they still have voting rights in the UK parliament even after they move overseas.

"We've created a dedicated website www.britsabroad.vote to support this publicity campaign, where people can see the official links and sign up for special seminars and regular updates as we approach the general election."

Another welcome change to the registration system is the introduction of an online system for appointing a proxy to vote [on](#) the overseas elector's behalf. For more information about the qualifications to act as a proxy, go to <https://www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote>

"This is really helpful," added Kay Braine, founder member of the LibDem group in France, who's regularly been in touch with British citizens living here. " We've heard from many Britons abroad that getting their postal ballot back in time to be counted is a real worry, even from France. That's why we are recommending people find someone in the UK who can vote on their behalf (known as their proxy) and so reduce the risk of these delays.

We understand not everyone realises that their proxy doesn't have to be from the constituency where they have a vote, because the proxy can do this by post. This should give people a much wider choice of who they can ask for help and could be especially important for those who have lived outside the UK for more than 15 years."

“I left the UK a long time ago, but still pay UK taxes on a public service pension” says John Ketchell, resident abroad since 1990. “Getting the vote back at long last will help European residents to push for a much-needed improved relationship between the UK and its European neighbours.”

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Notes to editors & contact information

- The Liberal Democrats are a UK political party with 15 Members of Parliament in the House of Commons and 84 members of the House of Lords.
- LibDems Abroad represents the Party's members living outside the UK and is made up of *LibDems in France*, *LibDems in Europe*, and *Lib Dems Overseas*.
- Interview availability and further information in France can be obtained from Kay Braine on press@libdemsinfrance.org or via
- Representatives of LibDems Abroad in other locations, can be contacted via Tom McAdam - +41 79 858 3826 (Signal, WhatsApp) or press@libdemsabroad.org

Background briefings

- Abolishing the 15 year rule and establishing overseas constituencies were included in the LibDems' Manifesto in 2017 and 2019.
- [House of Commons report on overseas voters](#)
 - In the 2019 General Election, there were 233,000 registered overseas voters, an estimated 16% of those then eligible (~1.45 million)
 - An estimated 3.5 million Brits living abroad will be eligible to vote under the new law
- Online sign up rates via government portal can be consulted under 'Applications by types of elector' (British citizens abroad) on the following dashboard <https://www.registertovote.service.gov.uk/performance>