

FAQs

**about the Annual Canvass of Properties for
Electoral Registration 2020**

Brentwood Borough Council

Help line: 01277 312708 or 312500

Email: elections@brentwood.gov.uk

The annual canvass

You can vote in elections and referendums only if your name appears in the Register of Electors.

A revised Register of Electors is published at the beginning of December each year, based on information relating to those persons eligible to be registered and currently resident at properties in the Borough. The register is the basis of our democracy, so an accurate register is very important.

The information is gathered through the 'Annual Canvass of Properties'. Canvass communications will be delivered to every residential property in the Borough during August to confirm the details. Householders will be able to respond by a variety of methods, including online, by freephone, SMS, or completing and returning a Household Enquiry Form.

Some Frequently Asked Questions about the annual canvass

I've already registered. Will I still get an annual canvass communication?

You will be contacted every year to find out if there have been any changes to who is living at your address. If there are changes, you must provide the information requested. The purpose of the canvass communication is to confirm who lives at your address. This means we can invite other residents, including any 16- and 17-year-olds, to register to vote if we need to.

Why do you still need to send a canvass communication every year?

In order to know who is eligible to register to vote, including any 16- or 17-year-olds, we need to know who lives at your address. The canvass communication is designed to collect this information. The information you provide will allow us to send a separate individual registration form to all the people in your household who are eligible and need to register. It will also help us to make sure that anyone who is no longer at the property is removed from the register.

Do I have to respond to a canvass communication?

The Government has introduced changes to the canvass in 2020 which has allowed some details to be confirmed automatically. This means some households may not need to complete a form.

If you have been sent a canvass letter confirming the names of people already living at your address, you must respond if any information is wrong, or if there are people eligible to register to vote who have not been included. The letter will tell you the circumstances in which you do not need to reply.

However, if you have been sent a canvass communication which says you must respond, you are required to do so by law, and must provide the information requested on the form, even if there are no changes.

There is a criminal penalty for failing to provide the information required by the canvass form to the Electoral Registration Officer of a maximum of £1,000. The penalty for providing false information to an Electoral Registration Officer is imprisonment of up to 51 weeks, or (on summary conviction) an unlimited fine.

How do I complete the information requested on the canvass communication?

The quickest and easiest way to provide the information or confirm that there are no changes is to use the online reply service. Go to www.householdresponse.com/brentwood and enter the two parts of your unique security code when prompted.

Completing the information only takes a few minutes. You need to include the name and nationality of everyone aged 16 or over who is resident and eligible to register to vote. You can also say if anyone listed no longer lives at the property, or if there are no eligible residents.

Do I put down everyone who lives here?

You need to include the name and nationality of everyone aged 16 or over who is resident and eligible to register to vote. If there are no eligible residents, you should state why this is the case.

Be sure to include:

- All British, Irish Republic and qualifying Commonwealth citizens who are resident. (Qualifying Commonwealth citizens are those persons who have leave to enter or remain in the UK, or who do not require such leave.)
- All citizens of Member States of the European Union who are resident at the property.
- All 16- and 17-year olds. (They will be eligible to vote when they become 18, but not before.)
- All persons who normally live at your address but are temporarily away - e.g. on holiday, as students, in hospital.
- Anyone who is away working, unless their absence will total more than six months.
- Any other residents, lodgers and guests (but not short stay visitors).

Who not to include:

- Anyone not resident at your address.
- Foreign nationals - except for European Union and qualifying Commonwealth citizens.
- People who are 15 or under.

I have a son / daughter away at university. Should they be included on the form?

Students temporarily living away from home are entitled to be included on the register for their temporary university address and their permanent family home address. They are allowed to vote from both addresses for local elections but are not allowed to vote twice in the same election.

There are people listed on the canvass communication that don't live here. What do I do?

If anyone listed on the form is not living at your address, you should provide the information via the online reply service. Go to www.householdresponse.com/brentwood and enter the two parts of your unique security code when prompted.

Nobody is entitled to register to vote, so what do I do?

You still need to respond to the canvass communication if the property is empty, a second home, used only for business purposes or no-one is eligible to vote. The person in charge of the property should respond via the online reply service at www.householdresponse.com/brentwood.

We are due to move soon. What should we do?

You should respond to the canvass communication by the deadline, stating the current situation. Once you have moved, please go online to register to vote at your new address. The government site is www.gov.uk/register-to-vote - you should enter your previous address when prompted. We will receive confirmation that you have registered at your new address and we will remove your details from our register.

I received a canvass communication, but some of my information needs changing. How can I update it?

You can tell us about any alterations as part of the online reply service. For instance, if your nationality has changed, you are now 76 or over, you have had a name change or want to opt out of the 'open register', you can provide the information online. We will then make the change or contact you if we require further information. Please make sure you provide a contact telephone number or email address to ensure that we can get in touch with you.

I need to respond. How can I confirm that there are no changes to make to the information?

The quickest and easiest way to confirm that there are no changes is to use the online reply service. Go to www.householdresponse.com/brentwood and enter the two parts of your unique security code when prompted.

Alternatively, you can use the freephone service by calling 0800 197 9871 and enter the security codes when prompted.

If you prefer to use SMS, text NOCHANGE followed by your security codes to 80212.

I haven't got access to the internet. How can I respond?

The online reply service is the most efficient method of responding but we recognise that not everyone has access to the internet. If you cannot respond via one of the methods listed, you can make the alterations on the canvass communication and return it by post to Electoral Services at the Town Hall. Please make sure that any alterations are clear and that you sign the form and provide a contact telephone number or email address in case of any queries.

What will happen after I complete the canvass communication?

Any new names provided in the response will allow us to send a separate individual registration form to those in your household who are not yet registered. Or if names are deleted, it will allow us to start the process to remove anyone who no longer lives in the property.

Do I need to include my email address and phone number?

You are invited to provide your email address and phone number as part of your response, but you do not have to. We will use this information only in connection with your registration, and it helps us to contact you if there is a problem.

I have already applied to register. Do I need to respond to the canvass communication I've received too?

Yes. The canvass communication is not a registration form, but instead provides us with information on who lives in your household. This means we can invite other residents, including any 16- or 17-year-olds to register to vote if we need to.

I have already responded to a canvass communication. Do I need to return the individual electoral registration form I've received too?

Yes, you should complete and return the registration form or register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. The canvass communication is not a registration form, but instead provides us with information on who lives in your household. The Individual Electoral Registration Form asks for additional information so that we can process your voter application.

I never vote in elections. Do I need to return the form?

You should respond to the information required even if you do not intend to vote. The information published in the register also gets used for credit reference purposes so next time you try to buy a mobile phone or other item, a credit check could prove difficult.

How can I get help with responding to the canvass communication or completing a Household Enquiry Form?

You can contact Electoral Services at Brentwood Borough Council for further help and advice about your registration.

As we are currently working remotely, please email your name, address and query to elections@brentwood.gov.uk and one of the team will get back to you. Alternatively, you can telephone the helpline on 01277 312708. If we are unable to take your call immediately, please leave your details on the answerphone and someone will call you back.

You can find more information about voter registration online at www.brentwood.gov.uk and on the Electoral Commission website at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

If you are not currently registered for voting purposes, you can register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Security and privacy

Will my details be shared with other organisations?

Using information received from the public, electoral registration officers keep two registers – the electoral register and the open register (also known as the edited register).

The electoral register lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in public elections. The register is used for electoral purposes, such as making sure only eligible people can vote. It is also used for other limited purposes specified in law, such as detecting crime (e.g. fraud), calling people for jury service and checking credit applications.

The open register is an extract of the electoral register, but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm name and address details.

Your name and address will be included in the open register unless you ask for them to be removed. Removing your details from the open register does not affect your right to vote. You can change your opt-out preference at any time by making a request with your full name, address and an indication of whether you wish to be included in or omitted from the edited register. You can do this in writing by post or email to elections@brentwood.gov.uk or over the phone by calling 01277 312708. We will write to you to confirm any change.

The electoral registration officer will process your personal information in accordance with current data protection legislation. You can access the privacy statement via the website www.brentwood.gov.uk

Is the data I enter online secure?

The online registration service and the data you provide is secure. It has been independently accredited, tested for security and developed to meet best practice guidelines for data security.

Why do you want my National Insurance number?

Under the individual electoral registration system, people need to provide a few more details about themselves to register – these are date of birth and National Insurance number. These details are checked against government records to verify the person's identity. This is intended to make the system more secure.

Why do you want my date of birth?

Under the individual electoral registration system people need to provide a few more details about themselves to register – these are date of birth and National Insurance number. These details are checked against government records to verify the person's identity. This is intended to make the system more secure.

How do I join or get removed from the open (edited) register?

Using information received from the public, registration officers keep two registers – the electoral register and the open register (also known as the edited register).

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The open register is an extract of the electoral register, but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm name and address details.

Your name and address will be included in the open register unless you ask for them to be removed. Removing your details from the open register does not affect your right to vote.

You can change your opt-out preference at any time by making a request with your full name, address and an indication of whether you wish to be included in or omitted from the edited register. You can do this in writing by post or email to elections@brentwood.gov.uk or over the phone by calling 01277 312708. We will write to you to confirm any change.