



Representation of the People Act 1983

1983 CHAPTER 2

PART I

PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT FRANCHISE AND ITS EXERCISE

Place and manner of voting at parliamentary elections

^{F1}18 Polling districts and places at parliamentary elections.

- (1) Every constituency shall be divided into polling districts and subject to the provisions of this section there shall be a polling place designated for each polling district.
- (2) In England ^{F2} . . . it is the duty of the council of each district or London borough [^{F3}, and in Wales it is the duty of the council of each county or county borough,] to divide their area into polling districts for the purpose of parliamentary elections for so much of any constituency as is situated in their area, and to designate the polling places for those polling districts, and to keep the polling districts and polling places under review, in accordance with the following rules—
 - (a) the council shall exercise the powers conferred by this section with a view to giving all electors in so much of the constituency as falls within their area such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances [^{F4}and, in particular, they shall, so far as is reasonable and practicable, designate as polling places only places which are accessible to electors who are disabled];
 - (b) ^{F5} . . . , each parish or community shall in the absence of special circumstances be a separate polling district or districts;
 - (c) the polling place for any polling district shall be an area in that district, except where special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the polling district, and shall be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station;
 - (d) a polling place need not be designated for any polling district, if the size and other circumstances of the district are such that the situation of the polling

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stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors or any body of them.

(3) In Scotland it is the ^{F6}duty of every local authority to divide their area into polling districts for the purpose of parliamentary elections for so much of any constituency as is situated in their area and to designate the polling places for those polling districts], and to keep the polling districts and polling places under review in accordance with the following rules—

- (a) the ^{F7}local authority] shall exercise the powers conferred by this section with a view to giving all electors in ^{F8}so much of the constituency as falls within their area] such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances ^{F9}and, in particular, ^{F10}the local authority] shall, so far as is reasonable and practicable, designate as polling places only places which are accessible to electors who are disabled];
- (b) ^{F11}each electoral ward, within the meaning of section 5 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, which is wholly or partly within so much of any constituency as falls within their area], shall, in the absence of special circumstances, be a separate polling district or districts;
- (c) the polling place for any polling district shall be an area in that district, except where special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the polling district, and shall be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station;
- (d) a polling place need not be designated for any polling district, if the size and other circumstances of the district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors or any body of them.

(4) In the case of a polling district for which no polling place is designated the polling district shall be taken to be the polling place for the purposes of this Act.

(5) If ^{F12}. . . not less than 30 electors in a constituency make a representation to ^{F13}the Electoral Commission] that the powers conferred by this section have not been exercised so as to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency or any body of those electors, ^{F13}the Electoral Commission] shall consider the representation and may, if ^{F14}they think fit]—

- (a) direct the council ^{F12}. . . by whom the powers are exercisable, to make any alterations which ^{F13}the Electoral Commission] thinks necessary in the circumstances, and
- (b) if the council ^{F15}. . . fails to make those alterations within a month after the direction is given, himself make the alterations,

and any alterations made by ^{F13}the Electoral Commission] under this subsection shall have effect as if they had been made by the council ^{F15}. . .

In this subsection the expression “interested authority”, in relation to any constituency, means—

- (i) as respects England, the council or where there is no such council the parish meeting of a parish which is wholly or partly situated within the constituency;
- (ii) as respects Wales, the council of a community which is so situated;
- ^{F16}(iii)

(6) On the exercise of any power given by this section, the council ^{F17}. . . —

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- (a) shall publish in the constituency a notice showing the boundaries of any polling districts or polling places constituted as a result of the exercise of the power;^{F18}
- ^{F19}(b)
- (7) Subsections (2) to (6) above do not apply to Northern Ireland, and in Northern Ireland the polling districts and polling places are those for the time being established under the law relating to [^{F20}local elections within the meaning of section 130 of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962].
- [^{F21}(8) Where any alteration of polling districts in an area is made under this section—
- (a) the registration officer who acts for the area shall make such adaptations of his register of parliamentary electors as are necessary to take account of the alteration; and
- (b) the alteration shall be effective on the date on which the registration officer publishes a notice stating that any such adaptations have been made by him.]
- (9) An election shall not be questioned by reason of—
- (a) any noncompliance with the provisions of this section; or
- (b) any informality relative to polling districts or polling places.

Textual Amendments

- F1** Ss. 18A-18E substituted (1.1.2007 for E.W.S. and 1.7.2008 for N.I.) for s. 18 by [Electoral Administration Act 2006 \(c. 22\)](#), **ss. 16(1)**, 77; S.I. 2006/3412, art. 3, **Sch. 1 para. 14(c)** (subject to transitional provisions in art. 4, Sch. 2); S.I. 2008/1316, **arts 2**, 4
- F2** Words in s. 18(2) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 19, s. 66(6)(8), Sch. 16 para. 68(2), **Sch. 18** (with ss. 54(4)(7), 55(5), Sch. 17 paras. 22(1), 23(2)); S.I. 1996/396, art. 4, **Sch. 2**
- F3** Words in s. 18(2) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 19, s. 66(6), **Sch. 16 para. 68(2)** (with ss. 54(4)(7), 55(5), Sch. 17 paras. 22(1), 23(2)); S.I. 1996/396, art. 4, **Sch. 2**
- F4** Words inserted by [Representation of the People Act 1985 \(c. 50, SIF 42\)](#), s. 24, **Sch. 4 para. 4(1)(a)**
- F5** Words repealed by [Representation of the People Act 1985 \(c. 50, SIF 42\)](#), ss. 24, 28, **Sch. 4 para. 4(1)(b)**, Sch. 5
- F6** Words in s. 18(3) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(a); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F7** Words in s. 18(3)(a) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(b)(i); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F8** Words in s. 18(3)(a) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(b)(ii); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F9** Words inserted by [Representation of the People Act 1985 \(c. 50, SIF 42\)](#), s. 24, **Sch. 4 para. 4(2)**
- F10** Words in s. 18(3)(a) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(b)(iii); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F11** Words in s. 18(3)(b) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(c); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F12** Words in s. 18(5) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, ss. 142(3)(a), 180(2), **Sch. 14**; S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a)(b)(d), **Schs. 1**, 2
- F13** Words in s. 18(5) substituted (1.7.2001) by 2000 c. 41, s. 158(1), **Sch. 21 para. 6(2)(a)** (with s. 156(6)); S.I. 2001/222, art. 4, **Sch. 2 Pt. I** (subject to transitional provisions in Sch. 2 Pt. II)
- F14** Words in s. 18(5) substituted (1.7.2001) by 2000 c. 41, s. 158(1), **Sch. 21 para. 6(2)(b)** (with s. 156(6)); S.I. 2001/222, art. 4, **Sch. 2 Pt. I** (subject to transitional provisions in Sch. 2 Pt. II)
- F15** Words in s. 18(5) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, ss. 142(3)(b), 180(2), **Sch. 14**; S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a)(b)(d), **Schs. 1**, 2
- F16** S. 18(5) para. (iii) of the definition of “interested authority” ceased to have effect and repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, ss. 142(3)(c), 180(2), **Sch. 14**; S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a)(b)(d), **Schs. 1**, 2

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- F17** Words in s. 18(6) ceased to have effect and repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, ss. 142(4), 180(2), **Sch. 14**; S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a)(b)(d), Schs. 1, 2
- F18** Word repealed by Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50, SIF 42), ss. 24, 28, Sch. 4 para. 4(3), **Sch. 5**
- F19** S. 18(6)(b) repealed by Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50, SIF 42), ss. 24, 28, Sch. 4 para. 4(3), **Sch. 5**
- F20** Words substituted by Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50, SIF 42), s. 24, **Sch. 4 para. 4(4)**
- F21** S. 18(8) substituted (29.1.2001 for certain purposes and 16.2.2001 otherwise) by 2000 c. 2, s. 8(a), **Sch. 1 para. 11**; S.I. 2001/116, **art. 2(1)(2)** (with art. 2(4))

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 18 applied (with modifications) (31.7.1997) by 1997 c. 61, s. 3, **Sch. 3 para. 13** Table 1
S. 18: functions of local authority not to be responsibility of an executive of the authority (E.) (16.11.2000) by S.I. 2000/2853, **reg. 2(1)**, **Sch. 1 D8**
- C2** S. 18(1) applied (N.I.) by S.I. 1986/2250, regs. 2, 3, 5, **Sch. 1 Pt. I**
- C3** S. 18(1) applied with modifications (E.W.S.) by S.I. 1986/2209, regs. 2, 3, 5(1)(6)–(8), **Sch. 1 Pt. I**
- C4** S. 18(1)(7)(9) applied (with modifications) (N.I.) (4.5.1996) by S.I. 1996/1220, arts. 3(1)(b)(5)–(8), **Sch. 1**
S. 18(1)(7)(9) applied (N.I.) (25.4.1998) by S.I. 1998/1126, **art. 6**, **Sch. 2**
S. 18(1)(7)(9) applied (with modifications) (1.8.2001) by S.I. 2001/2599, **art. 3**, **Sch. 1**
- C5** S. 18(2) extended (11.3.1999) by S.I. 1999/450, **art. 6(4)** (which S.I. was revoked (29.2.2003) by S.I. 2003/284, **art. 1**)
- C6** S. 18(3) applied (11.3.1999) by S.I. 1999/787, **art. 5(2)**
- C7** S. 18(7) applied (N.I.) by S.I. 1986/2250, regs. 2, 3, 5, **Sch. 1 Pt. I**
- C8** S. 18(9) applied (N.I.) by S.I. 1986/2250, regs. 2, 3, 5, **Sch. 1 Pt. I**
- C9** S. 18(9) applied with modifications (E.W.S.) by S.I. 1986/2209, regs. 2, 5(1)(6)–(8), **Sch. 1 Pt. I**

[^{F22}18A Polling districts at parliamentary elections

- (1) Every constituency is to be divided into polling districts.
- (2) A relevant authority must—
 - (a) divide its area into polling districts for the purpose of parliamentary elections for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area, and
 - (b) keep the polling districts under review.
- (3) The following rules apply—
 - (a) the authority must seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in its area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - (b) in England, each parish is to be a separate polling district;
 - (c) in Wales, each community is to be a separate polling district;
 - (d) in Scotland, each electoral ward (within the meaning of section 1 of the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004) is to be divided into two or more separate polling districts.
- (4) Subsection (3)(b) to (d) does not apply if, in any case, there are special circumstances.
- (5) If an alteration of polling districts in an area is made under this section—
 - (a) the registration officer who acts for the area must make such adaptations of his register of parliamentary electors as are necessary to take account of the alteration, and

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- (b) the alteration is effective on the date on which the registration officer publishes a notice stating that the adaptations have been made by him.

Textual Amendments

F22 Ss. 18A-18E substituted (1.1.2007 for E.W.S. and 1.7.2008 for N.I.) for s. 18 by [Electoral Administration Act 2006 \(c. 22\)](#), **ss. 16(1)**, 77; S.I. 2006/3412, **art. 3**, Sch. 1 para. 14(c) (subject to transitional provisions in [art. 6](#), Sch. 2); S.I. 2008/1316, **arts 2, 4**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C10 S. 18A(1) applied (with modifications) by S.I. 2001/2599, **art. 3**, Sch. 1 (as substituted (10.2.2009) by S.I. 2009/256, **arts. 1(2), 3**, **Sch. 1**)

18B Polling places at parliamentary elections

- (1) A polling place is to be designated for each polling district in a constituency.
- (2) But subsection (1) does not apply if the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors or any body of them.
- (3) A relevant authority must—
 - (a) designate the polling places for the polling districts in its area, and
 - (b) keep the polling places in its area under review.
- (4) The following rules apply—
 - (a) the authority must seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in its area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - (b) the authority must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled;
 - (c) the authority must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing;
 - (d) the polling place for a polling district must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district;
 - (e) the polling place for a polling district must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.
- (5) If no polling place is designated for a polling district the polling district is to be taken to be the polling place.

Textual Amendments

F22 Ss. 18A-18E substituted (1.1.2007 for E.W.S. and 1.7.2008 for N.I.) for s. 18 by [Electoral Administration Act 2006 \(c. 22\)](#), **ss. 16(1)**, 77; S.I. 2006/3412, **art. 3**, Sch. 1 para. 14(c) (subject to transitional provisions in [art. 6](#), Sch. 2); S.I. 2008/1316, **arts 2, 4**

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Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C11 S. 18B(1) applied (with modifications) by [S.I. 2001/2599, art. 3, Sch. 1](#) (as substituted (10.2.2009) by [S.I. 2009/256, arts. 1\(2\), 3, Sch. 1](#))

18C Review of polling districts and places

- (1) Each relevant authority must complete a review under sections 18A and 18B of all of the polling districts and polling places in its area before the end of the period of 12 months starting with the date on which section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 comes into force.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply in the case of a polling district or polling place (as the case may be) which is designated for the first time during that period.
- (3) In such a case, the first review of the polling district or polling place must be completed before the end of the period of four years starting with the date on which that designation is made.
- (4) The authority must complete a further review of each polling district and polling place in its area before the end of the period of four years starting with the completion of the previous such review.
- (5) Subsections (1) to (4) do not prevent a relevant authority carrying out at any time a review of a particular polling district or polling place.
- (6) Schedule A1 has effect in relation to a review.

Textual Amendments

F22 Ss. 18A-18E substituted (1.1.2007 for E.W.S. and 1.7.2008 for N.I.) for s. 18 by [Electoral Administration Act 2006 \(c. 22\), ss. 16\(1\), 77; S.I. 2006/3412, art. 3, Sch. 1 para. 14\(c\)](#) (subject to transitional provisions in [art. 6, Sch. 2](#)); [S.I. 2008/1316, arts 2, 4](#)

18D Review of polling districts and places: representations to Electoral Commission

- (1) This section applies if in relation to a constituency in the area of a relevant authority a relevant representation is made to the Electoral Commission by—
 - (a) an interested authority in England and Wales;
 - (b) not less than 30 electors in the constituency;
 - (c) a person (other than the returning officer) who has made representations under Schedule A1;
 - (d) a person who is not an elector in a constituency in the authority's area but who the Commission think has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons to polling places in the area or has particular expertise in relation to the access to premises or facilities of disabled persons.
- (2) A relevant representation is a representation that a review under section 18A or 18B has not been conducted by a relevant authority so as to—
 - (a) meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency or any body of those electors, or
 - (b) take sufficient account of the accessibility to disabled persons of polling stations within a designated polling place.

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- (3) The returning officer for the constituency may make observations on representations made under this section.
- (4) The Electoral Commission must consider such representations and observations and may, if they think fit—
 - (a) direct the relevant authority to make any alterations to the polling places designated by the review which the Commission think necessary in the circumstances;
 - (b) if the authority fails to make the alterations before the end of the period of two months starting on the day the direction is given, make the alterations themselves.
- (5) Alterations made by the Electoral Commission under subsection (4) have effect as if they had been made by the relevant authority.
- (6) An interested authority in relation to a constituency in England and Wales is—
 - (a) in England, the council of a parish, or where there is no such council the parish meeting of a parish, which is wholly or partly situated within the constituency;
 - (b) in Wales, the council of a community which is so situated.
- (7) The reference in subsection (1)(b) to electors does not include persons who have an anonymous entry in the register of parliamentary electors or local government electors.

Textual Amendments

F22 Ss. 18A-18E substituted (1.1.2007 for E.W.S. and 1.7.2008 for N.I.) for s. 18 by [Electoral Administration Act 2006 \(c. 22\)](#), **ss. 16(1)**, 77; S.I. 2006/3412, **art. 3**, Sch. 1 para. 14(c) (subject to transitional provisions in [art. 6](#), Sch. 2); S.I. 2008/1316, **arts 2**, 4

18E Sections 18A to 18D: supplemental

- (1) This section applies for the purposes of sections 18A to 18D.
- (2) No election is to be questioned by reason of—
 - (a) any non-compliance with the provisions of those sections, or
 - (b) any informality relative to polling districts or polling places.
- (3) Each of the following is a relevant authority—
 - (a) in relation to England, the council of a district or London borough;
 - (b) in relation to Scotland, a local authority;
 - (c) in relation to Wales, the council of a county or county borough.
- (4) The following do not apply to Northern Ireland—
 - (a) section 18A(2) to (5);
 - (b) section 18B(2) to (5);
 - (c) sections 18C and 18D,and in Northern Ireland the polling districts and polling places are those for the time being established under the law relating to local elections within the meaning of section 130 of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962.]

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Textual Amendments

F22 Ss. 18A-18E substituted (1.1.2007 for E.W.S. and 1.7.2008 for N.I.) for s. 18 by [Electoral Administration Act 2006 \(c. 22\)](#), **ss. 16(1)**, 77; S.I. 2006/3412, **art. 3**, Sch. 1 para. 14(c) (subject to transitional provisions in **art. 6**, Sch. 2); S.I. 2008/1316, **arts 2**, 4

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C12 S. 18E applied (with modifications) by S.I. 2001/2599, **art. 3**, Sch. 1 (as substituted (10.2.2009) by S.I. 2009/256, **arts. 1(2)**, 3, **Sch. 1**)

^{F23} **19**,
20.

Textual Amendments

F23 Ss. 19, 20 repealed by [Representation of the People Act 1985 \(c. 50, SIF 42\)](#), s. 28, **Sch. 5**

^{F24} **21**,
22.

Textual Amendments

F24 Ss. 21, 22 repealed by [Representation of the People Act 1985 \(c. 50, SIF 42\)](#), s. 28, **Sch. 5**

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