

DANIEL KAWCZYNSKI MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

3 February 2023

Dear Constituent

Photographic Identification at Polling Stations

Thank you for contacting me about identification at polling stations.

A secure electoral system is a vital component of a healthy democracy, and the public must have confidence that our elections are secure and fit for the 21st century. Asking voters to bring photographic identification to their polling station is an important way of achieving this and the Elections Act puts such a requirement into law. This is part of a wider package of measures in the Elections Act to strengthen electoral integrity – including by tackling postal and proxy voting fraud, tackling intimidation, increasing transparency of digital campaigning, and preventing foreign interference in elections.

Identification to vote has been backed by the Electoral Commission and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which state that its absence is a security risk. Without a requirement for identification at the polling station, it is harder to take out a library book or collect a parcel at a post office than it is to vote in someone else's name.

In Northern Ireland voters have been required to produce personal identification before voting in polling stations since 1985, with photographic identification being required since 2003 when introduced by the last Labour Government. Ministers at the time noted that "the Government [has] no intention of taking away people's democratic right to vote. If we believed that thousands of voters would not be able to vote because of this measure, we would not be introducing it at this time."

The Electoral Commission has also commented that "since the introduction of photo ID in Northern Ireland there have been no reported cases of personation. Voters' confidence that elections are well-run in Northern Ireland is consistently higher than in Great Britain, and there are virtually no allegations of electoral fraud at polling stations." I should add that the Electoral Commission's 2021 Public Opinion tracker recorded that not a single Northern Ireland respondent reported: 'I don't have any identification / I would not be able to vote'.

Anyone without a form of identification will be able to apply for a new free Voter Authority Certificate, meaning that no voter will be disenfranchised. To apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate online go to <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'Kaw' followed by a horizontal line.

Daniel Kawczynski MP
Member of Parliament for Shrewsbury & Atcham