

Proxy voting scheme

This scheme will take effect from 25 November 2024

A. Eligibility

1. Proxy voting is available:
 - (a) to new mothers, new fathers and adoptive parents;
 - (b) in circumstances where there have been complications related to childbirth or pregnancy, in circumstances of miscarriage or baby loss, or where there is a need for extended absence for fertility treatment;
 - (c) in cases of serious long-term illness or injury, for the remainder of the current Session; and
 - (d) in cases of risk-based exclusion from the parliamentary estate.
2. A Member should demonstrate eligibility for the scheme under paragraphs 1(a) and 1(b) by self-certifying that they meet the eligibility requirements.
3. A Member should demonstrate eligibility for the scheme under paragraph 1(c) by providing a written statement from a hospital consultant that the Member is, for reasons of serious long-term illness or injury, unable to attend divisions or elections in the House in person for a specified period of not less than one month. The statement must specify an end date which should not be more than seven months from the proposed start date. The Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service will make an assessment and, on that basis, provide a proforma to the Speaker. The proforma will translate the medical information into relevant points for the Speaker to consider.
4. A Member is eligible for the scheme under paragraph 1(d) if:
 - (a) under the Standing Order on the Risk-based exclusion policy, the Speaker has been informed by the risk assessment panel that a Member should be subject to exclusion; and
 - (b) the Speaker has approved an application from the Member for a proxy vote.
5. It is not compulsory to take up eligibility for a proxy vote.

B. Duration

6. Any proxy voting arrangement can be brought to an end earlier than the designated end date, with notice (see paragraph 22).
7. The duration of the dispensation to vote by proxy under paragraphs 1(a) and 1(b) is as follows:
 - (a) for the mother or father of a baby, the partner of a person giving birth, or an adoptive parent: a maximum of one month may be taken before the due date or adoption date and a maximum of six months after the due date or adoption date;
 - (b) in circumstances of miscarriage or baby loss, where there have been complications related to childbirth or pregnancy, or where an extended absence is required for fertility treatment: a maximum of seven months, with any extension beyond the initial seven months determined by the Speaker in consultation with the Member concerned.

8. The duration of the dispensation to vote by proxy under paragraph 1(c) will be a minimum of one month and a maximum of seven months from the date specified by the Speaker in the proxy voting certificate. At the end of the seven-month period, the Speaker, following an assessment by the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service, may grant an extension for a further, time-limited period, only if the Member provides a further statement from a hospital consultant:
 - (a) stating that continuing to hold a proxy vote is necessary for the Member's continued recovery; and
 - (b) providing a final date by which the proxy voting period should end.
9. The duration of the dispensation to vote by proxy under paragraph 1(d) will, in the first instance, be a maximum of seven months from the date specified by the Speaker in the proxy voting certificate, subject to the Member continuing to be subject to risk-based exclusion. The dispensation can be extended multiple times, for as long as the risk assessment panel advises that the Member continues to be subject to risk-based exclusion, provided that in each instance the extension is for no more than seven months. If the risk assessment panel informs the Speaker that the Member has ceased to be subject to risk-based exclusion, the proxy voting arrangement must end with effect from the following sitting day.
10. In calculating the maximum periods referred to in paragraphs 7-9, periodic adjournments (and periods of prorogation, if relevant) shall be included. A Member can suspend a proxy vote with notice (see paragraph 21), but doing so will not result in any extension to the proxy voting period.
11. Proxy votes under paragraph 1(c) will cease at the end of the current Session, regardless of the specified end date. All other proxy voting arrangements cease at the end of a Parliament, and Members with proxy voting arrangements will need to reapply in the new Parliament, if they are re-elected to the House and remain eligible for the scheme. If, after a dissolution, a Member reapplies for a proxy vote, the start date is taken as the date on which the proxy voting arrangement first took effect in the previous Parliament.

C. Short-term absence from the Estate

12. The existence of proxy voting in the House of Commons is based on a general expectation of long-term absence from the Estate. Members should not apply for or retain a proxy vote if they intend to or become able to attend the Estate on a regular basis, except in circumstances as set out in paragraph 14. Short-term absences and individual medical appointments (not requiring extended absence from the Estate) should be dealt with by other means.

D. Application process

13. Members eligible for a proxy vote under paragraphs 1(a) or 1(b) should email the Public Bill Office (pbohoc@parliament.uk) specifying the dates on which the proxy vote shall begin and end, subject to the maximum durations set out in the scheme.
14. Members eligible for a serious long-term illness or injury proxy vote under paragraph 1(c) should email the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service (phws@parliament.uk) (cc-ing the

Speaker's Office for information (speakersoffice@parliament.uk)), providing the written statement from a hospital consultant (see paragraph 3). Members should specify the dates on which they wish the proxy vote to begin and end, subject to i) the minimum and maximum durations set out in the scheme, and ii) the period specified in the medical statement. On application, Members should state whether, for exceptional reasons, they intend both to hold a proxy vote and to be present on the Estate, including to take part in some proceedings. The Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service will complete a standard proforma that includes an assessment of whether it may be appropriate for a Member to attend the Estate whilst holding a proxy vote for a limited period, as part of their recovery. The Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service may ask to speak to the Member concerned if further information is required. The Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service will provide the Speaker's Office with this completed proforma.

15. Members eligible for a risk-based exclusion proxy vote under paragraph 1(d) should inform the Speaker if they wish to apply for a proxy vote, specifying the dates on which they wish the proxy vote to begin and end, subject to the maximum durations set out in the scheme.
16. A Member may apply for a proxy vote under paragraphs 1(a), 1(b) or 1(d) on any working day before the specified start day. Applications may be taken until the rise of the House on any sitting day and 3pm on any other working day. If, in the Speaker's opinion, the circumstances are urgent and exceptional, the Speaker may accept such an application on the day the change takes effect, provided it is received before the start of the sitting.
17. A Member may apply for a proxy vote under paragraph 1(c) on any working day. Processing times may be subject to any additional information required by Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service, which will be on a case-by-case basis. In most cases, it will take no longer than three working days for the service to complete their assessment.

E. Designation of proxy

18. When applying for a proxy vote, the Member eligible for proxy voting must name the Member who has agreed to exercise their proxy vote and, in doing so, confirms that an agreement has been entered into.
19. A Member is free to choose any Member of the House who is eligible to vote in divisions to act as a proxy.
20. A Member may nominate no more than one proxy at a time.

F. Publishing the arrangement

21. When the Speaker has issued a certificate, he will cause it to be published in the Votes and Proceedings either on the day that it is issued or on the first sitting day after issue if the day of issue is a non-sitting day. The certificate will not specify the reason for which a proxy vote has been granted.

G. Varying the arrangement

22. A Member who wishes to change the Member who is their proxy or to suspend, end or, in the case of proxy votes held under paragraph 1(a) or 1(b), extend their period of proxy voting, should give written notice to the Public Bill Office as early as possible. A Member who, in the case of proxy votes held under paragraph 1(d), wishes to extend their period of proxy voting, should similarly give written notice to the Speaker's Office. Such applications can be received on any working day before the change takes effect: the deadline for any such an application is the rise of the House on a sitting day or 3pm on a non-sitting day. As with applications for a proxy vote, if, in the Speaker's opinion, the circumstances are urgent and exceptional, the Speaker may accept such an application on the day the change takes effect, provided it is received before the start of the sitting. An application to change proxy may be made by the existing proxy on behalf of the Member whose proxy they hold, provided that the proxy has obtained the Member's permission.
23. For proxy votes under paragraph 1(c), at the end of the initial seven-month period, if a Member wishes to extend their proxy voting arrangement, they should email the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service (phws@parliament.uk (cc-ing the Speaker's Office for information speakersoffice@parliament.uk)), providing the required information (see paragraph 14).
24. The Speaker will issue a new certificate, and cause it to be published as set out in paragraph 21.

H. Exercising the proxy vote

25. No Member may vote in person, or act as a teller, if they have a proxy vote in operation.
26. A Member eligible to vote by proxy must agree with the Member nominated as their proxy when the proxy vote will be cast and how it will be exercised.
27. A Member designated as a proxy will be expected to act in strict accordance with the instruction given by the absent Member.
28. A Member designated as a proxy may cast their own vote one way and the proxy vote the other, and may cast a proxy vote without casting their own vote at all.
29. A Member designated as a proxy may not act as a teller.
30. A Member registered as voting by proxy who wishes to suspend their arrangement for a specified period so as to be able to vote in person shall be entitled to do so only if the Speaker has been notified by the previous working day that the proxy arrangement is to be suspended. The deadline for such a notification is the rise of the House on a sitting day and 3pm on a non-sitting day.

I. Recording a proxy vote in a division in the House or Committee of the whole House

31. A Member casting a proxy vote in a division must inform the tellers.

32. At the same time, the Member casting the proxy vote must make it clear whether that Member is also casting their own vote.
33. When listing the result of divisions, both online and in its printed edition, the Official Report (Hansard) shall note votes cast by proxy, including the Member who cast the proxy vote.
34. The record of a proxy vote shall be treated as part of the record of the Commons.

25 November 2024