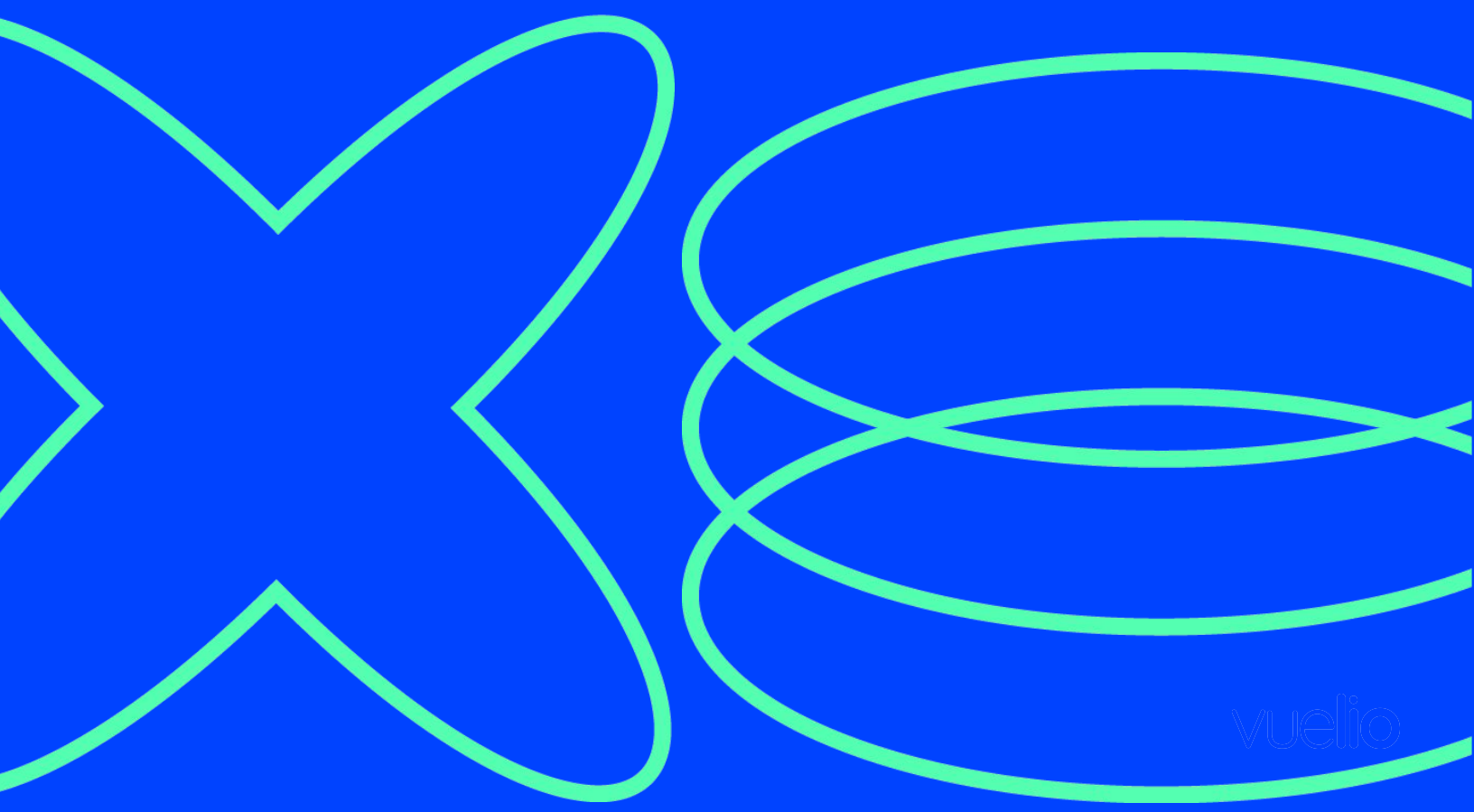


# How Sefton Council helped to get the word out about voter ID in time for local elections in the UK



**Sefton Council is the local authority playing a key role in the Liverpool City Region. The borough has more than 280,000 residents across towns including Bootle, Litherland, Seaforth, Crosby, Formby, Maghull, and Southport.**

2023 marked the first year that ID would be required by all to vote in a UK local election, and Sefton Council would need to equip their community with this information in time for voting in the May local elections.

With this change to voting legislation attracting its share of controversy and confusion at the time, communications to the public needed to be clear on the incoming requirements.

### **The challenge of communicating controversial legislation**

‘As a local authority, our sole duty is to make it as simple and as easy as possible to allow people their right to vote,’ says Sefton Council communications officer Ollie Cowan.

‘It was pivotal that we put together a wide reaching campaign to target anyone over the age of 18 to let them know that they would need photo ID at the polls.

‘As this is a controversial change to the way people vote, and could cause alienation and isolation of people without ID, it was imperative that our communications were clear about where these changes came from, how we are involved, and what people can do if they do not have ID.’

### **Getting internal and external buy-in**

This change in law was seen as a heavily-politicised move from the Conservative government of the time. It would require the full backing of the council before any communication to external stakeholders:

‘Buy-in from both internal and external partners as well as the public was key in ensuring our message was suitably saturated,’ said Ollie. ‘We would need to keep the number of ‘turned away’ voters to an extreme minimum, and change the public misconception that this was a rule brought in by Sefton Council’.

Both of these aims would come with difficulties:

‘We knew from the introduction of Photo ID requirements that this change would not be well received by some of our communities,’ admitted Ollie.

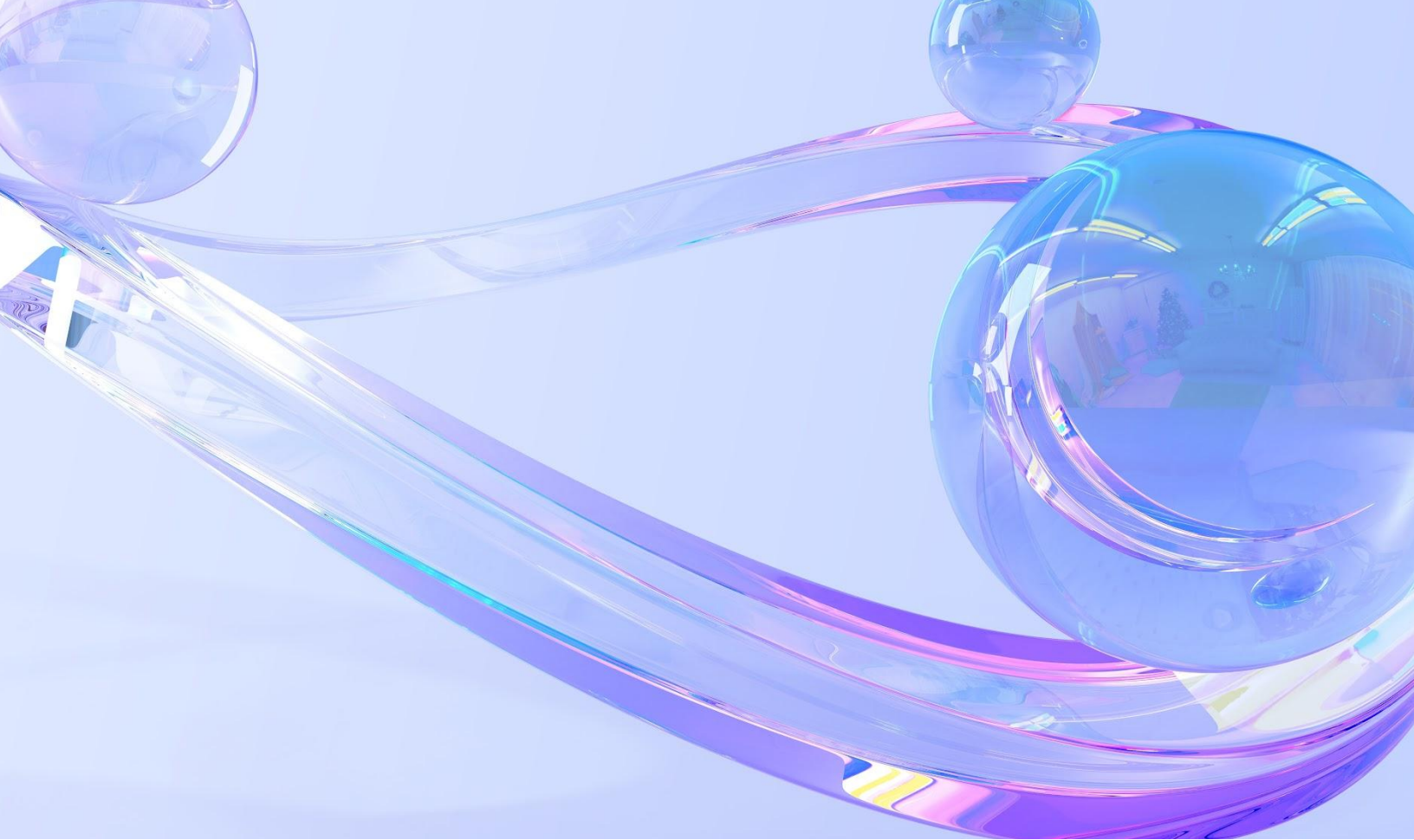
Alongside the practicalities of ensuring people could vote came a need to protect the hard working council staff who would be helping on polling day from potential abuse. A fore-warned public would mean voters fore-armed against any confusion and panic that would come with being turned away.

### **Empowering the community with the information they need**

‘[Vuelio](#) was exceptionally helpful in allowing us to reach a wider pool of community journalists and influencers who were able to share our message wider,’ said Ollie.

‘We also utilised mailing lists with ‘community gatekeepers’ who run independent social media forums on channels like Facebook,’ said Ollie.

‘The majority of our learning came from a change of approach during the COVID-19 pandemic where our dedicated digital marketing arm made direct contact with group admins on Facebook looking at geographically-centred pages that had either been created or grown exponentially as a result of the increase in ‘good neighbour’ behaviour during lockdown.’



### **Success at the polls**

Measuring the success of this campaign would be simple – how many people cast their vote on polling day?

‘We looked at the number of voters who turned out in 2022 and compared that with polls in 2023,’ said Ollie. ‘A steady number with little drop or slight improvement would be considered a success given that this shows people were not discouraged or restricted from voting.’

‘The key successes for us – seeing a steady number of voters turn out in comparison to previous years with no restrictions.’

‘It’s nice when a campaign runs smoothly.’

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