

Our Vote, Our Voice

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Additional member system

A way of voting used for the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales. You have two votes - one for the person you want to represent your local area, and one for the party or individual to represent your region.

Assembly Member (AM)

Somebody who is elected to work in the National Assembly for Wales.

Ballot box

The box that you put your ballot paper in when you are finished voting.

Ballot paper

The piece of paper you use to vote with. It has a list of people or parties you can vote for, with spaces for you to mark your vote.

Cabinet

A group of senior ministers of the

UK government chosen by the Prime Minister to decide on government policy, and take action on it.

Candidate

Somebody who is standing (taking part) in an election because they hope to be elected.

Canvassing

This is when a candidate comes to your door to talk to you.

They might also speak to you in the street. They will tell you about why they think they should be elected.

Chair or chairperson

The person who is in charge of an organisation or meeting.

Closed regional list

This is the way that people are elected to the European Parliament in England, Scotland and Wales.

You vote for the party you want to win, not for a person. (Unless a person stands as an independent, so does not have a party.)

Constituency

The local area for which you elect a representative.

Councillor

A person elected to work in the local council.

Dissolution

The official term for the end of the UK Parliament each year.

Election

This is when people vote for who they want to run something, which could be an organisation, a local council, or a country.

Election campaign

The things a party does to tell people about what they will do if

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they get elected. They might use TV, leaflets, or come to your door to talk to you.

Electoral register

The official register of everybody who is allowed to vote, and wants to vote, in a local area.

Electorate

Everybody who is allowed to vote.

European Parliament

The European Parliament is the elected part of the European Union. Elections take place every five years. The work of the European Parliament is important because it helps to make decisions on new European laws.

First Minister

The name for the person in charge of the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, or the Northern Ireland Assembly.

First past the post [voting] system

The party that wins the most seats is the party that is the government. This is what happens for the UK Parliament.

Government

The group of people from the biggest party who are in charge of running the country.

House of Commons

The part of parliament where the people elected as MPs work together.

House of Lords

The part of parliament where people called peers work together.

Independent

The name for people who want to be elected but don't belong to a party.

Law

Rule which everybody in the country has to follow.

Legislation

Another word for laws.

Legislature

A way of describing somewhere that makes laws.

Local council

The group of people elected to run things in your local area.

Local government

Another name for your local council.

London Development Agency

The organisation that works with the Mayor of London to look after London's economy. To do this they work with other organisations from industry, and the public and voluntary sectors.

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Manifesto

What a party promises it will do if it gets elected. A manifesto is often published like a magazine or a book. An independent candidate might also have a manifesto.

Member of Parliament (MP)

Somebody who is elected to work in the UK Parliament.

Member of the European Parliament (MEP)

Somebody who is elected to work in the European Parliament.

Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)

Somebody who is elected to work in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Member of the London Assembly (MA)

Somebody who is elected to work in the London Assembly.

Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP)

Somebody who is elected to work in the Scottish Parliament.

Metropolitan Police

The police force for London.

Minister

In politics, a minister is somebody who is in charge of a part of the government, like health, education or transport.

National Assembly for Wales

This is where people who have been elected as Members of the National Assembly for Wales work. They talk about important topics and make laws for Wales.

Northern Ireland Assembly

This is where people elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly work. It is based in Belfast. It can make laws about local matters.

Party

A group of people who have the same ideas about how the country should be run.

There are lots of different parties with different views.

Parliament

A place where changes to laws are debated and new laws decided on.

Party election broadcast

A short TV programme where a party tells you what it plans to do if it is elected.

Peers

People who work in the House of Lords. Peers are mostly selected by other politicians and do not stand for election.

Petition

A demand signed by a lot of people. It is usually given to a

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person in charge who can decide to agree to the demand.

Policy / Policies

Another word for the things people who want to be elected say they will do.

Poll card

The card that comes through your door before an election to tell you when and where to go and vote.

Polling station

The place where you go to vote. It is usually in a school or a community centre.

Postal voting

You can ask to vote by post. You will get your ballot papers in the post before the election and you have to fill them in and send them back. You need to ask for a postal vote well before an election.

Prime Minister

The leader of the government in the UK Parliament.

They are the leader of the party who wins the most votes at the UK Parliament election. They choose the other members of the government.

Proxy voting

This is when somebody you trust goes to vote for you. You tell them who you want to vote for. You need to ask for a proxy vote well before an election.

Referendum

A special vote where people are asked to answer a question which is important to their area.

Region

A region is a big election area.

Registering to vote

This is when you fill in a form that you are sent every year to make sure that your name is included in the electoral register. In Northern Ireland, you don't need to register every year, but only if you move house or your details change.

Representative

Another name for the person who is elected. They represent you by speaking in Parliament or the Council about issues that affect you.

Returning Officer

The person who announces who has won the election in each constituency.

Scottish Parliament

This is where people elected as MSPs work. They talk about important topics and make laws for Scotland.

Single transferable vote

This is a way of voting which is used for all elections in Northern Ireland apart from UK Parliament elections. It is also used for elections to local councils in Scotland.

Each constituency elects several people. When you go to vote, you fill in the ballot paper using numbers to show which is your favourite candidate, your second choice, third choice and so on.

You can choose between candidates of the same party as well as between those of different parties.

Surgery

The time and place where you can go and talk to the person who is elected to represent your area. Your local councillor, as well as

members of parliament or assemblies, have surgeries.

Transport for London

The organisation that works with the Mayor of London to look after London's transport system

UK Parliament

Where new laws are debated, and where people who have been elected to the UK Parliament work. It includes the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Vote

The choice you make in an election or at a meeting when a decision has to be made.

Voting

Going to the polling station to cast your vote.

You can also vote by post. That is called postal voting.

Another way to vote is voting by proxy. This is when somebody you trust goes to vote for you. You tell them who you want to vote for.

Ward

The word for election areas for the local council.

Useful resources

www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

This website is by the Electoral Commission. It tells you all about registering and how to vote. It is Access Enabled.

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

This is the main website for the Electoral Commission. It has information about elections all over the country.

www.drc-gb.org/easyread

This is the Disability Rights Commission website. It has lots of useful information about voting. It is easy to read.

www.vote.org.uk

This is Capability Scotland's website called Vote 2007.

www.otbds.org/vote

This is the Outside the Box voting website. It has lots of useful information about voting. It is easy to read.

www.dopolitics.org.uk

This website from the Electoral Commission has lots of useful resources, like the Democracy Cookbook, designed to download.

You can also order paper copies of resources from the Electoral Commission.

www.scottish.parliament.uk

This website is about the Scottish Parliament.

www.wales.gov.uk

This website is about the National Welsh Assembly.

www.niassembly.gov.uk

This website is about the Northern Ireland Assembly.

www.parliament.uk

This website is about the UK Parliament.

www.london.gov.uk

This website is about the Greater London Authority.

www.europarl.org.uk

This website is about the European Parliament.

Useful contacts

The Scottish Parliament

Find out who your MSPs are by calling 0845 278 1999 or visiting www.scottish.parliament.uk

You can also find your MSPs' email addresses on this website.

You can also contact your MSPs by writing to them at:

**The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP**

National Assembly for Wales

Find out who your AMs are by calling 029 2082 5111 or by visiting the National Assembly for Wales website www.wales.gov.uk

You can email them from this website or write to them at:

**National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA**

Northern Ireland Assembly

Find out who your MLAs are by calling 028 9052 1333, or by visiting www.niassembly.gov.uk

You can email them from this website, or write to them at:

**Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Belfast BT4 3XX**

The UK Parliament

Find out who your MP is by looking them up on the UK Parliament website www.parliament.uk

You can also find your MP's email address and website here.

If you would like to meet with your MP, their website should have details of their next surgery. You can write to them at:

**House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA**

Greater London Authority

Find out who your Assembly Members are and contact the Mayor by visiting www.london.gov.uk or calling 020 7983 4100. You can email them from this website or write to them at:

**Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA**

The European Parliament

You can find out who your MEPs are by visiting the UK Office of the European Parliament website www.europarl.org.uk

This website has the contact details of all MEPs in the UK.

Alternatively you can ring the UK Office of the European Parliament on 020 7227 4300.

Supporter and family information

Introduction

This fact sheet accompanies the **Our Vote, Our Voice** pack. It provides additional information for anyone supporting a person with learning difficulties to vote.

Right to vote

Nearly everybody over the age of 18 has a right to vote at elections. This includes people with learning difficulties.

Voter registration

A person must be on the electoral register to be able to vote.

The easiest way to check if a person is registered is to contact your local Electoral Registration Office.

You can get their contact details by visiting www.aboutmyvote.co.uk or by calling your local council.

You can also find the contact details of the person in charge of elections in your area by visiting www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

Electoral registration forms

Electoral registration forms are difficult to fill in and many people with learning difficulties might need help with them.

You can complete the form for someone else provided you have the correct information but it must be signed by the person registering to vote.

Supporter and family information

A person can use a “mark” instead of a signature. Where a person is unable to mark or sign the form you should contact their local Electoral Registration Officer directly.

Supporting people with learning difficulties to vote at a polling place

If a person cannot read or mark a ballot paper the person in charge of the polling station can do this for them. The person with the learning difficulty must give their permission for this to happen. You can also provide this support if you are a close relative of the voter or are also able to vote at this general election. To prove you are able to vote at this general election it would be a good idea to bring your poll card.

Postal and proxy voting

People with learning difficulties are also able to vote by post or via a proxy. Postal voting is voting by post. Proxy voting is asking someone to vote on your behalf.

To find out more about voting in these ways it is best to contact the person in charge of elections directly.

Coercion

It is a serious criminal offence to make someone vote for a particular person or party. Where you are marking a ballot paper for somebody with a learning difficulty you must follow their instructions exactly.

You should only complete a ballot paper where the person is able to give a clear indication of who they wish to vote for.

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outside
the box

