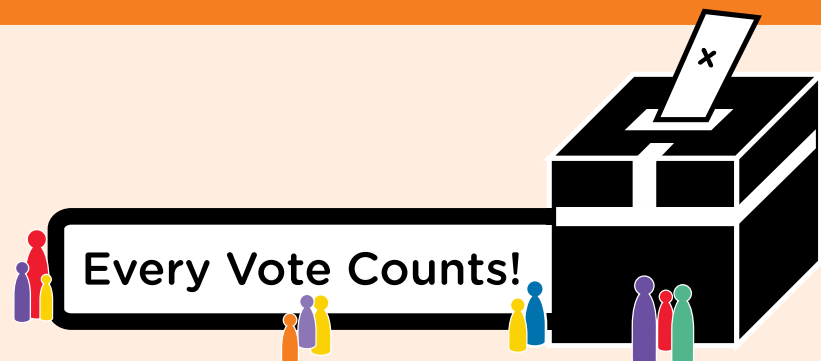




How politics works



How politics works



Politicians make lots of decisions which affect your life.



In the UK there are local politicians called **councillors**, **Members of Parliament** and **Members of the European Parliament**.



If you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, there are also politicians who make decisions about each nation.



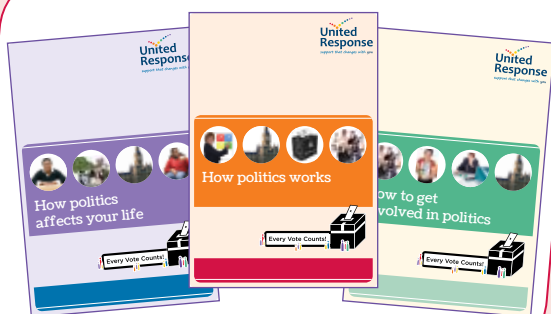
You have the right to vote and choose who becomes a politician.



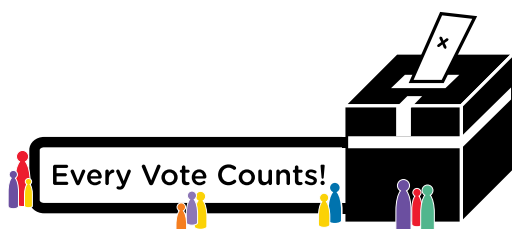
You have the right to talk to politicians about what matters to you and tell them what you think.



This booklet explains what politicians do and how politics works.



It is one of three **Every Vote Counts** booklets.



Every Vote Counts is a campaign to make politics easier to understand for everyone.

The Government



The **Government** is the name for the group of people who are elected to help run the country. It has the power to make decisions which affect everybody's lives.



The Government is made up of politicians called **Members of Parliament (MPs)**.



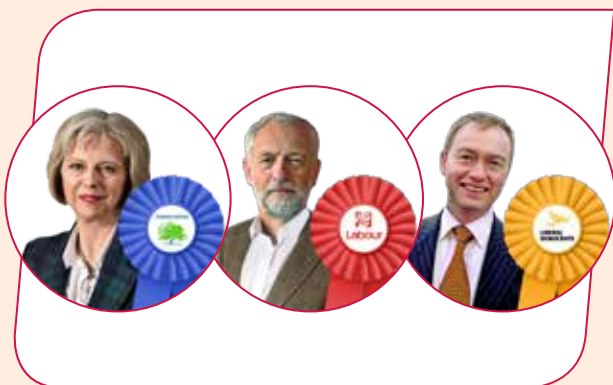
Every 5 years you get to choose our Government by voting for the people you want to become MPs.



The Government is usually made up of MPs from the political party that gets the most MPs voted in.



The political party that comes 2nd becomes the official opposition. It makes sure the Government keeps its promises and says what it would do if they were the Government.



The leader of the winning political party becomes the **Prime Minister**. The Prime Minister is the leader of the country and decides how the country should be run.



Cabinet ministers are chosen by the Prime Minister to help run the Government. They make decisions about different areas of life, like health, money and schools.

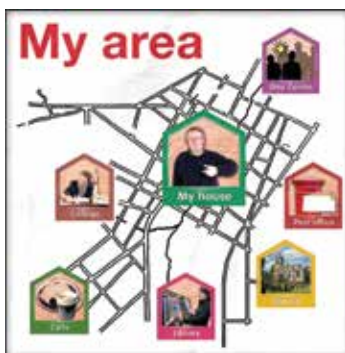


Cabinet ministers run different parts of the Government. They are helped by **civil servants**, who are not elected. Anyone can apply for a job as a civil servant.

Local politicians



As well as Members of Parliament, you can also vote for local politicians called **councillors**.



Local councils are responsible for making decisions about things that affect their local area.



Councillors make decisions about how a council should be run.



Each council has money to spend on services for people in that area. Some money comes from the Government and some comes from council tax.



These services are things like collecting rubbish, running libraries and repairing roads.



Councillors decide how to spend the council's money and which services are most important to local people.



Councillors are elected to represent the views of people in their area. You can talk to your councillor about the decisions they make and the things that are important to you.

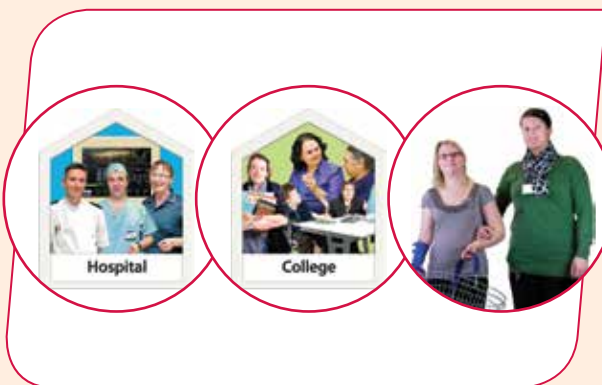


Almost anyone can try to become a councillor if they want to. You can find out more from your council.

Devolution



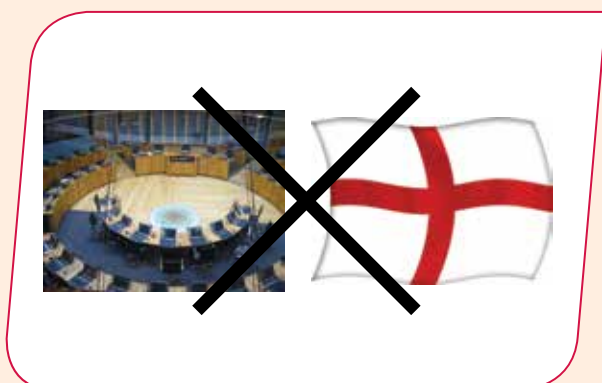
Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have their own Parliaments or Assemblies.



They have the power to decide how things like health, education and care works in their countries.



People in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can vote and decide who becomes a politician in their Parliament or Assembly.



England does not have its own Parliament or Assembly. This could change in the future.

Members of the European Parliament



The UK is part of a large group of countries called the **European Union (EU)**.



The **European Parliament** is one of the organisations that helps to run the EU. **Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)** represent people's views in the Parliament.

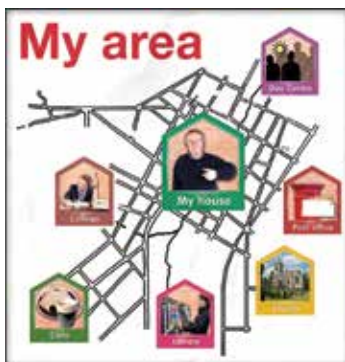


In June 2016, people in the UK took part in a **referendum**. This is a vote to help the Government make an important decision. They voted for the UK to leave the EU.



The process of the UK leaving the EU has now begun. This process is called '**Brexit**.' It will take several years for the UK to leave the EU.

Members of Parliament



Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected to represent their area in Parliament. Their area is called a **constituency**.



MPs help to run the country by working in Parliament.



Almost all MPs are members of a political party. Some are not and they are known as **independent MPs**.



Every 5 years there is a **general election**. This is when you can vote to decide who becomes an MP. A general election can happen sooner if the Prime Minister wants one and lots of MPs agree.



The person with the most votes becomes the MP for their constituency. Almost anybody can decide to try and become an MP.



MPs spend some of their time working in Parliament in Westminster. They ask questions, give speeches and make decisions about laws.



They spend some of their time in their constituencies. They are meant to listen to what people in their area say and represent what people think.



You can talk to your MP about anything that is important to you. You can also ask them for help if you have a problem.

Parliament



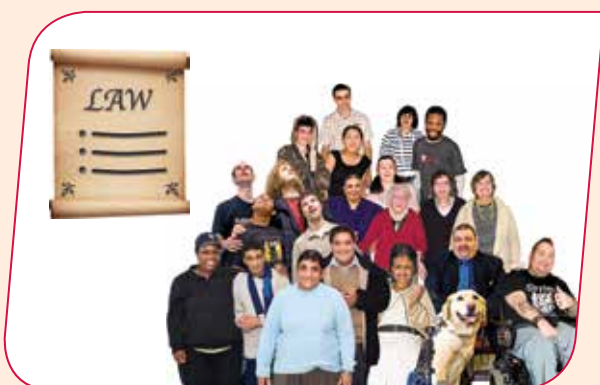
The Parliament building is in part of London called Westminster. It is the place where important decisions about running the country are made.



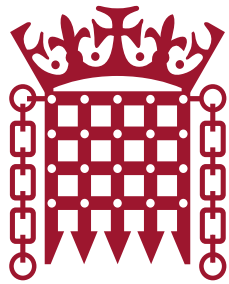
There are two parts to Parliament – the **House of Commons** and the **House of Lords**. They are not really houses, but are big rooms where politicians meet.



The House of Commons is where MPs meet. They talk about things that are happening in the country and all across the world.



MPs make decisions and laws about things that affect everybody in the country.



Another part of Parliament is the House of Lords. This is where people called **Peers** or **Lords** meet.



You do not vote for the Lords. They are chosen by the Prime Minister or political parties and are given the job by the Queen.



The Lords check the work that the Government is doing. They help make decisions about new laws.



The Queen has a role in Parliament too. She approves new laws made by Parliament. She also asks the political party that wins an election to form a Government.

Political parties



A **political party** is a group of ordinary people who join together because they have similar ideas about things.



A political party can have ideas about how to run the whole country, or about just one thing they think is important.

The
Electoral
Commission

Almost anyone can set up a political party, although there are some rules about it. You can find out about these rules from the **Electoral Commission**.



There are lots of political parties in the UK. Each party has different ideas about how the country should be run.



It is important to know what each political party thinks. This can help you to decide whether you want to join a party or vote for them at an election.



Most political parties publish a **manifesto** which explains their ideas. Manifestos tell you what a party thinks about things like health, education and the environment.



Before an election, political parties send people information about what they will do if they win the election.



Most politicians are members of a political party. They usually support the ideas of the party, but sometimes disagree.



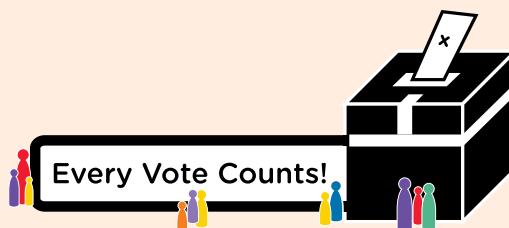
If you would like to find out more about how politics affects your life, go to www.everyvotecounts.org.uk



There are three booklets in the **Every Vote Counts** series.



If you would like to read the other booklets, you can download them at www.unitedresponse.org.uk/every-vote-counts-resources



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