



MOMENTS OF FREEDOM

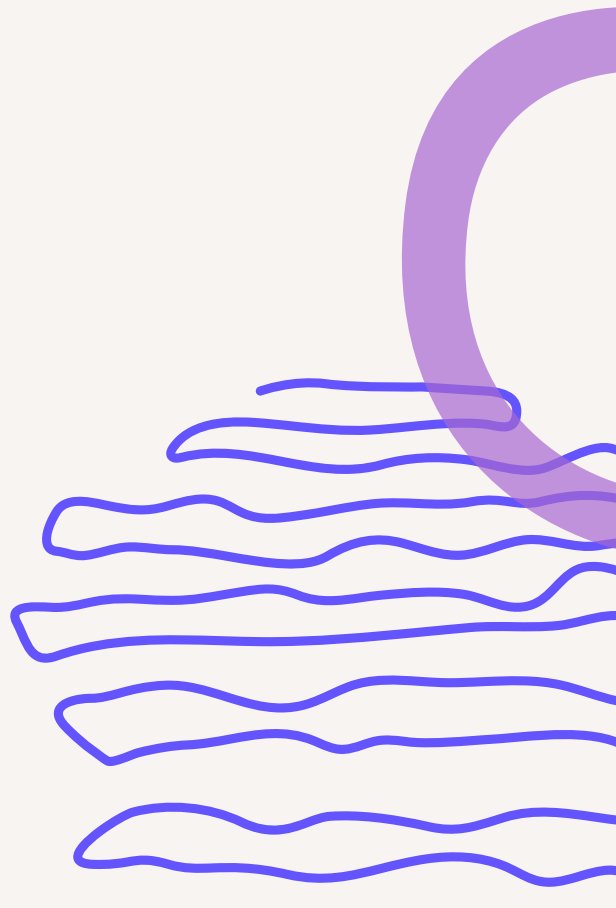
Tips for voting and taking
part in local politics

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MOMENTS OF FREEDOM

Useful Words to Know

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Useful words and phrases

Constituency:

There are 73 areas across Scotland called 'Scottish Parliament constituencies'.

There are 59 constituency areas in Scotland for the UK Parliament.

Constituent:

A constituent is someone who lives in a constituency, each constituency differs in its total amount of constituents.

Region:

Scotland has 8 big areas called Scottish Parliament regions. Seven people are elected as regional MSPs for each region.



Useful words and phrases

MSP:

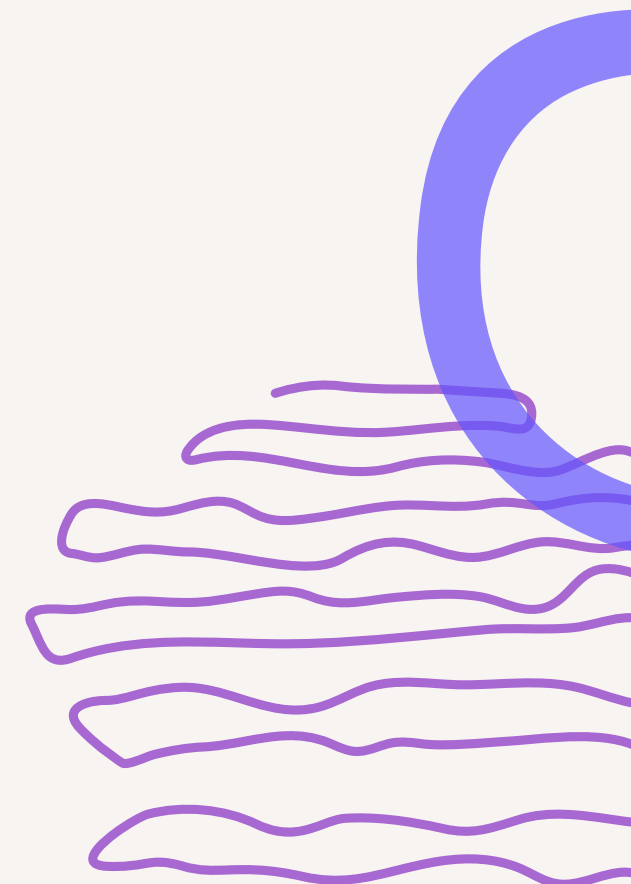
This is short for Member of the Scottish Parliament. People vote for MSPs to speak for them in the Scottish Parliament.

MP:

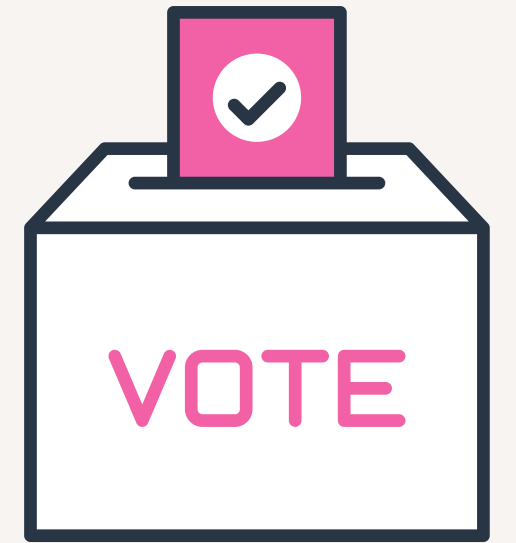
This is short for Member of Parliament. MPs are elected to represent their constituents in the House of Commons.

Councillor:

A Councillor's role is to represent their ward, an area within a constituency. Councillors bridge the gap between the community and the Council.



Useful words and phrases



Election:

This is when people can vote for who they want to run the country or region. There are elections for your MP, MSP and Councillor, elections fall on Thursdays.

Electoral register:

This is a list of people who can vote in an election. You can see the list at your local library.

Polling place:

This is where you can go and vote in person. Polling places are usually primary schools or community halls.

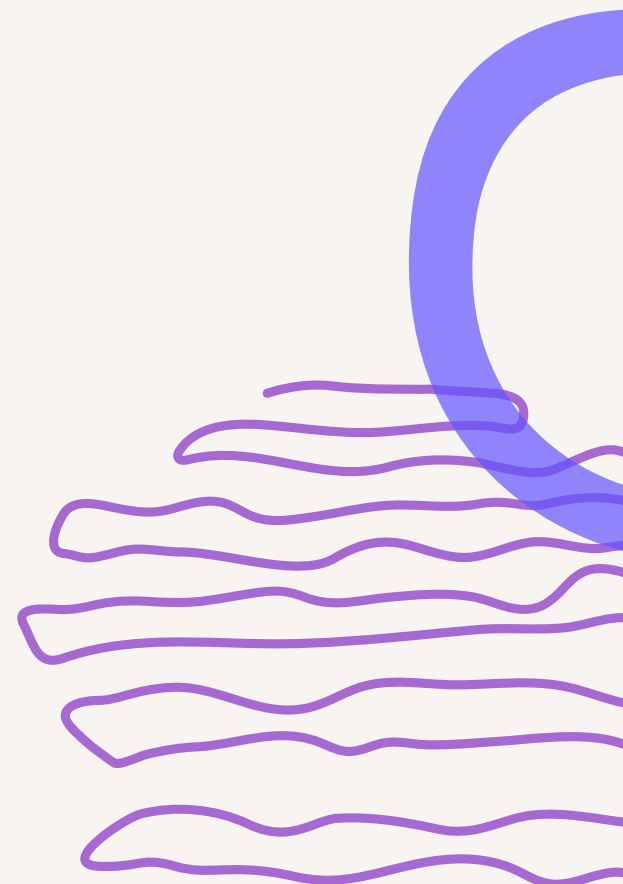
Useful words and phrases

Ballot Paper:

This is the sheet of paper you are given when you enter a polling place where you cast your vote. For each type of election there will be a different type of ballot paper. You will either put a number next to the candidate you wish to vote for or you will mark a cross.

Proxy Vote:

This is when you allow someone else to vote on your behalf. For proxy you will also need to complete an application form and send it to your local electoral registration office by a set deadline.



Useful words and phrases

Reserved matters:

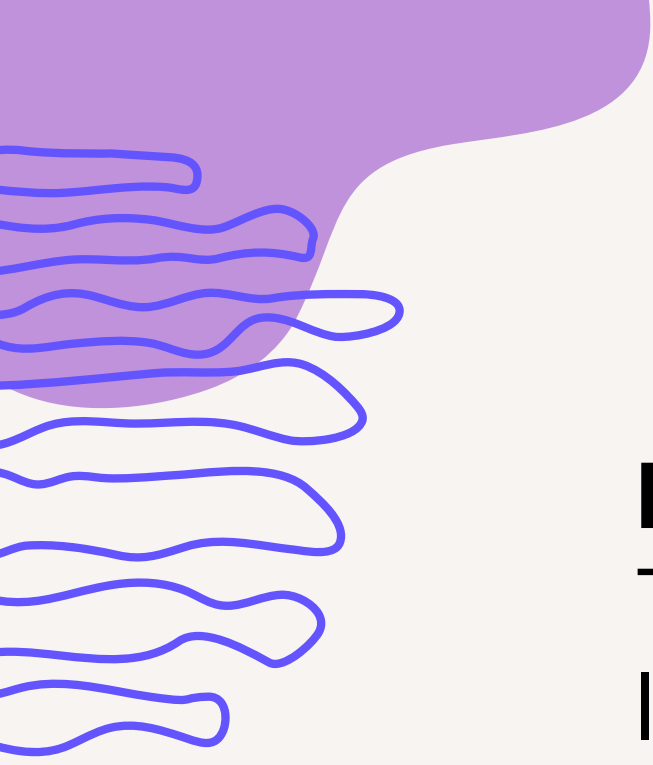
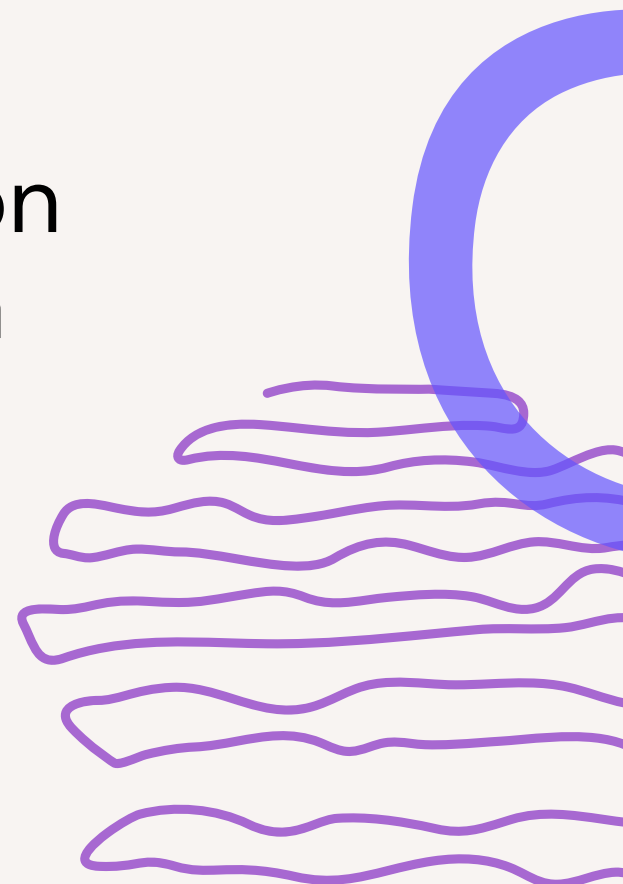
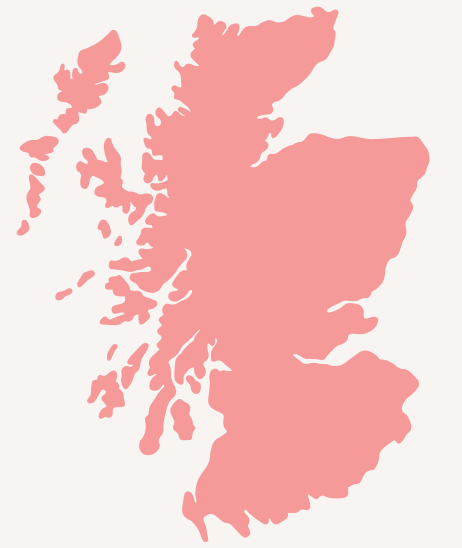
These are things that the Scottish Parliament cannot make laws about, like Immigration

Devolved matters:

These are things that the Scottish Parliament can make laws about like Education.

Consultation:

Consultations are usually open to the public and organisation and take place at a stage when there is scope to influence a policy. Consultations normally last for at least 12 weeks and allows Government to make informed decisions on policy.



Useful words and phrases

Health Boards:

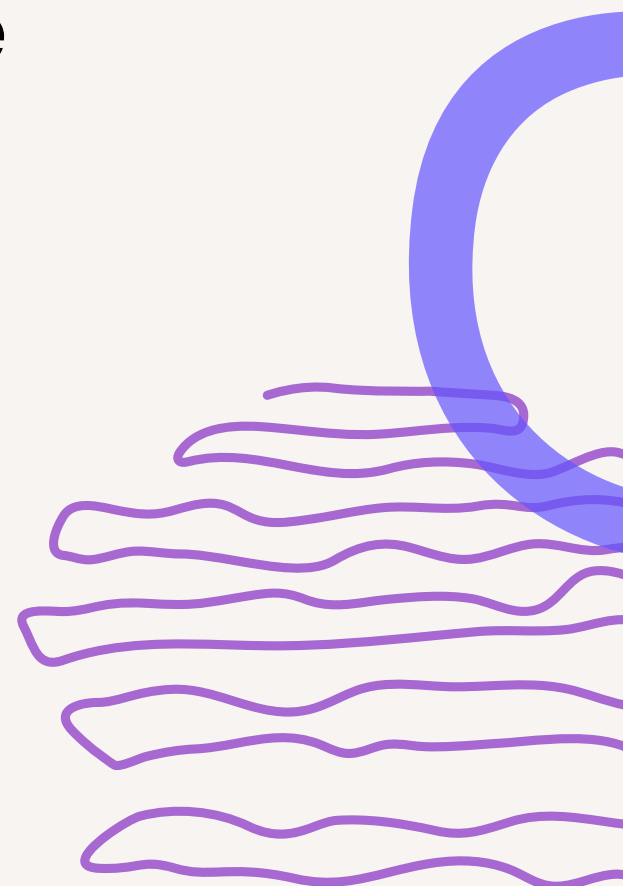
NHS Scotland provides public health care through 14 health boards across Scotland. Each board is responsible for the delivery of health care and services to the local population.

Petition:

You can create or sign a petition that asks for a change of law or policy. After 10,000 signatures the government must issue a response.

CPG:

Cross-party groups (CPGs) are groups of MSPs and other people who are interested in a subject or issue. There are CPGs on a whole host of subjects.





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Scottish Council Elections

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Who can vote?

You can vote in the council elections if you are registered to vote in Scotland and are aged 16 or over on the election day.

You must also be either:

A British or Irish citizen or

A Commonwealth or EU citizen or any other foreign national who has permission to enter or stay in the UK or who does not need such permission.

British citizens living overseas cannot vote in Scottish council elections.



What are the voting steps?

At Council elections you will vote using numbers.

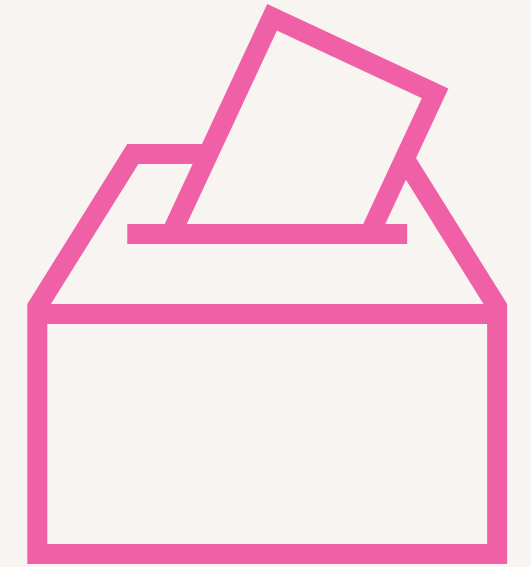
A ballot paper will be given to you and it will list all the candidates standing to be Councillors in your ward.

You will be asked to number the candidates in order of your choice using 1, 2, 3 and so on.

In the election you can make as many choices as you like.

For your first choice of candidate put a number 1 and for your second choice put a number 2 and so on.

You do not have to number every candidate and if you make a mistake on your ballot paper then you can ask for a new one.



Different ways to vote

You can vote in the election in three different ways.:



In person

You will receive a polling card in the post which will tell you your polling place. Polling places are open from 7am to 10pm.

By post

To apply to vote by post you will need to complete a postal vote application form and send it to your local electoral registration office by a set deadline. Then you will receive your ballot paper by post.

By proxy

This is when you allow someone else to vote on your behalf. For proxy you will also need to complete an application form and send it to your local electoral registration office by a set deadline.



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MSPs and Councillors

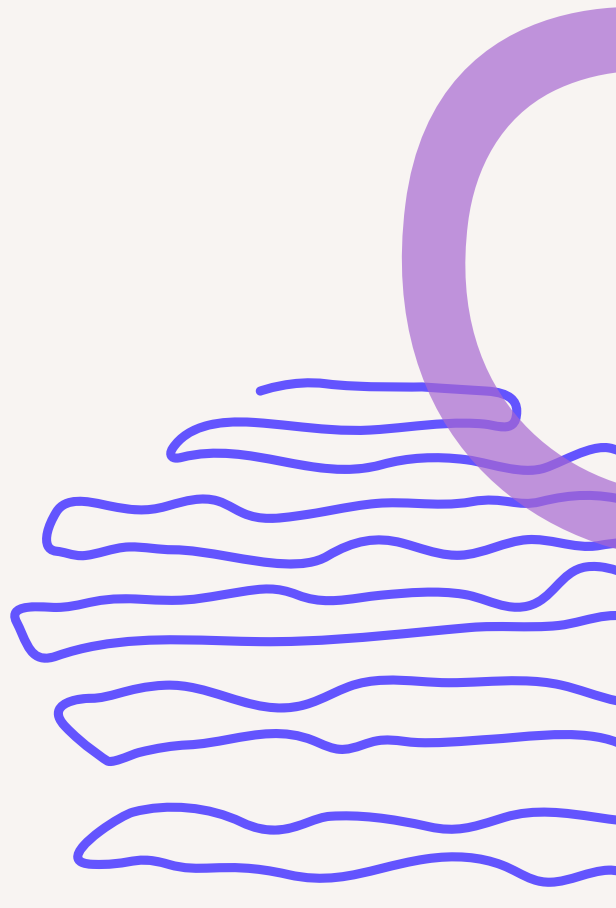
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MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament)

The Scottish Parliament makes laws on a wide range of issues that affect Scotland and the people living here.

The Scottish Government is accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

- There are 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament.
 - The MSPs are elected to represent people in an area.
 - They contribute to debates and vote on laws and other matters.
 - They can ask questions and raise issues in the Parliament.
 - They also do a lot of work in Committees, for example looking in detail at the planning stage of new laws and reviewing the progress and impact of changes.
- 

The Scottish Government



The Scottish Government is the body that runs the country, for example by setting policies and allocating money for services that are used by the public.

Most of the detailed work is done by civil servants who are accountable to the Ministers for that topic.

The First Minister and all the other Ministers are also MSPs.

You can find out more and see who the Ministers are and the topics they deal with at <https://www.gov.scot/about/who-runs-government/>

Finding who represents you



Every person in Scotland has eight Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs) that they can contact:

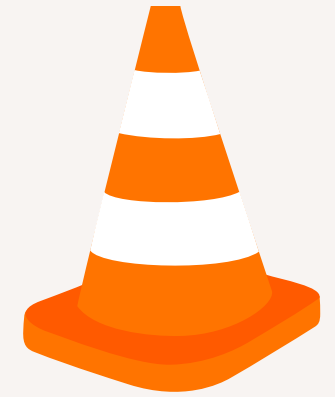
- One MSP who represents people in a local area or constituency.
- Seven MSPs who represent all the people in a bigger region.
- You can contact any of them.
- It does not matter whether or not you voted for that person. Once they are elected the MSP represents everyone in that area.

The Scottish Parliament website has details of the current MSPs:

<https://ballotbox.scot/scottish-parliament/maps>

If you are not able to look up information online, you can contact Public Information by calling 0207 624 2993 and ask them for the names and contact details of your MSPs.

What do Councils do?



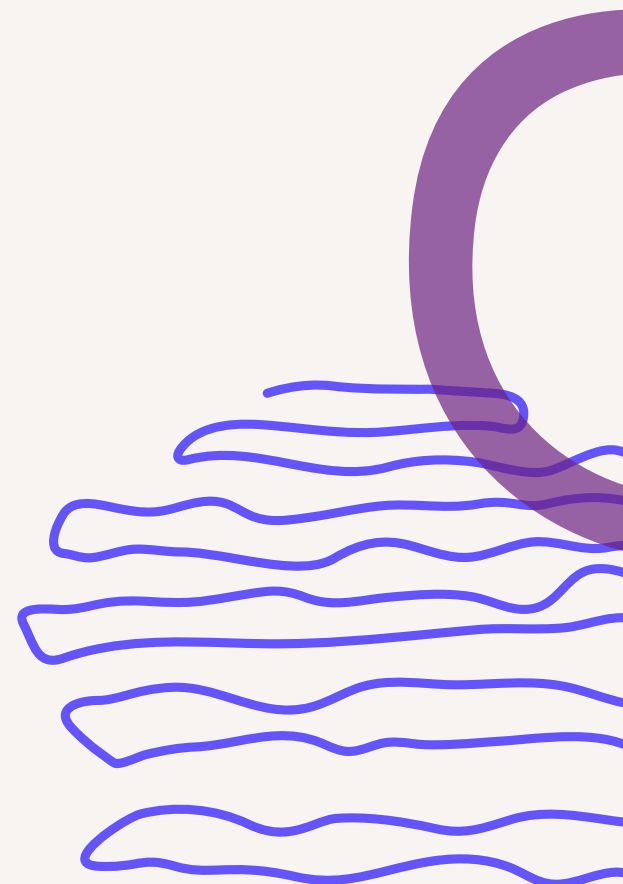
When you vote in the election you will be voting for candidates who are standing to be elected as councillors.

Elected councillors will represent you on your local council.

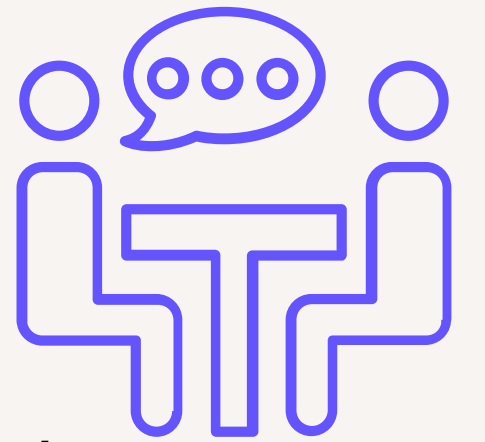
Local councils are responsible for making decisions about how money is spent to provide local public services.

This includes:

Education, social care, housing, environment, waste, public transport, roads, library and leisure services.



Who are my Councillors?



Constituencies are split up into smaller areas called wards. In each ward there will be three or four Councillors. You can contact any of them.

You can find out who your Councillors are by looking at your local Council website or by directly contacting your Council and asking them.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) also has information on the contact details for Councils.

You can contact COSLA by calling 0131 474 9200 or by emailing info@cosla.gov.uk.

Many Councillors can also be contacted on social media, like Twitter or Facebook, too.

Tips on contacting your MSP or Councillor



Most contact with MSPs or Councillors is done by email, phone or post.

- Try to be as clear as you can and don't be tempted into giving lots of information that isn't needed at this stage. Your MSP or Councillor is more likely to help you with your problem if they can clearly understand the situation.
- If they need more of the background or details later, they will ask you.
- Try to be clear what you are asking the MSP or Councillor to do. For example they might give you advice on what to do next, look into something for you, or contact someone about the problem.

Surgeries



After you contact your local MSP or Councillor you might want to arrange to meet up with them to talk more about the issues you are experiencing.

You may have a constituency office in your local area where you can reach your MSPs or Councillors. MSPs and Councillors also hold surgeries.

Surgeries are a time and place when people can come and speak to MSPs and Councillors about any issues affecting them.

You can find out the surgery details for your Councillors by searching for this on your Council's website.



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What to do after elections

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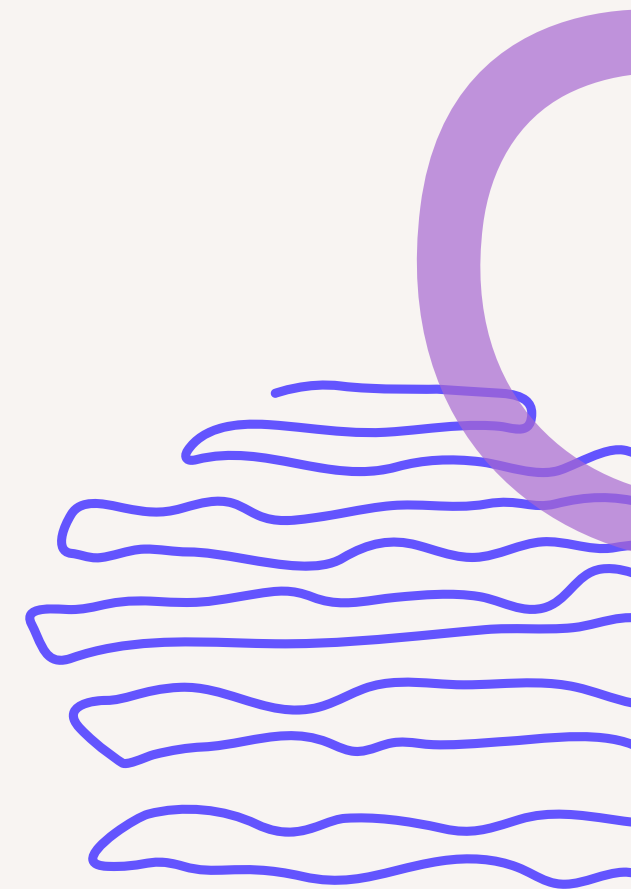
What to do after elections



After an election it can be tempting to think “well, that’s it all over now. I’ve done my bit.”

If you weren’t able to vote in the first place you might feel even more distanced from taking an interest in who is in charge of what where you live.

But this is a great time to try to make the improvements you want in your community.





What to do after elections

The newly-elected local MPs/MSPs are now looking for projects to get stuck into and they want to hear from people like you about what could be better where you live.

You can ask one of your MSPs to come and talk to your community group.

It's important to remember that politics doesn't just happen on polling and election days, it happens all year round.

By working with your local MPs/MSPs you can work towards making your community better.

You can register to vote for future elections here:
<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>



Other ways to get involved

Give evidence to a committee:

A committee is a small group of MSPs who look at subjects in detail. They often “call for evidence”. This means that anyone else who is interested in the subject can write in and say what they think.

Go to a committee event:

Committees meet all over Scotland so that lots of people can have their say. Your local newspaper will have details of committee events coming to your area.

Join a Cross-Party Group:

If you join a Cross-Party Group you can meet MSPs and other people who are interested in the same thing as you. You can see a [list of Cross-Party Groups here](#).



We hope you find
this helpful!

Moments of Freedom



This project has been part funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Making management of migration flows more efficient across the European Union.