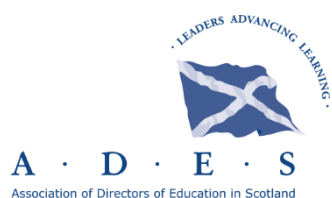


# Young people's political literacy and the 2021 Scottish Parliament election

There will be an election to the Scottish Parliament on 6 May 2021 which anyone aged 16 or over can participate in. This document sets out why it is important to support young people with political literacy and provides information on the 'Welcome to your Vote' initiative in February 2021, and also the support and resources available to help you empower the young people you work with.

This initiative is supported by:



## Why is political literacy important?

Teachers and educators have a significant role to play in providing young people with clear, impartial political literacy education. This helps and empowers them to make an informed decision so they can cast their vote with confidence.

The [Curriculum for Excellence Briefing 14](#) provides clear guidance on delivering political literacy education and highlights its value:

“...political literacy is central to citizenship education. It is the particular combination of attributes and skills [...] knowledge and understanding that helps learners to become responsible citizens and to participate in society's decision-making processes. Political literacy is one of the foundations of modern democracy and its guardian. It is the means by which citizens make informed choices about the kind of society they want to live in. It helps everyone to understand political decisions and how they affect their own lives.”

Research has shown that young people who receive political literacy education at school are more likely to participate in elections and believe that their vote matters. Furthermore, when young people participate in the first election in which they are eligible, they are more likely to continue to engage with politics in future. Research also tells us that political literacy education reduces the disparity in engagement levels between young people of different social classes.

## ‘Welcome to Your Vote’ week

To provide schools with a focus point for political literacy and encourage registration amongst young people in the lead up to the registration deadline, ‘Welcome to Your Vote’ week will take place from **22-28 February 2021**. Schools can deliver political literacy sessions during this week, or shortly after, to young people who will be eligible to vote in the election. There are a range of political literacy resources to choose from, and teachers are encouraged to use the resources they feel will work best for them and their young people.

Teachers are invited to attend one of the upcoming online sessions to find out more about the resources and tools available. These sessions are open to teachers and educators across Scotland.

### **Young People, Democracy and Political Literacy: Towards SDG 16 Wednesday 3 February, 4.00-5.30pm**

This workshop, facilitated by WOSDEC (West of Scotland Development Education Centre) in partnership with the Electoral Commission, provides information on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as practical ways for teachers to develop young people's political literacy using the Electoral Commission's new educational resources. You can register for this session [here](#).

### **Welcome To Your Vote – Teacher Information Sessions Wednesday 17 & Tuesday 23 February, 4.00-5.00pm**

This session, hosted by the Electoral Commission and the Scottish Parliament Education Service, will provide information on some of the tools available to teachers to develop young people's political literacy, including the Electoral Commission's new ‘Welcome to Your Vote’ resources. You can register for one of the sessions [here](#).

## Resources

A range of resources are available to support political literacy teaching ahead of the 2021 Scottish Parliament election. Some of these are short activities that take 10 minutes which could be delivered as part of a virtual assembly, while others would be more suitable as part of a full lesson. The resources have been designed to work at home and in the classroom, and teachers can pick and mix the resources to fit the teaching environment and the time available.

Regardless of which resources you choose to use, you should encourage the young people you work with to register to vote. They can register online at [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://gov.uk/register-to-vote). It only takes five minutes, so you could encourage your young people to register using their mobile phones during an assembly or a lesson.

Understanding the role of the Scottish Parliament could encourage engagement amongst young people, and some of the resources have been designed to support this.

### **The Electoral Commission**

The Electoral Commission launched a new set of political literacy resources for use with 14-18 year olds in November 2020.

The resources are designed to help young people feel more confident about casting their vote and to give them a stronger understanding about which elections they can vote in and the impact this has. These resources include an educator's handbook with activities, a voting guide for young people, videos and quizzes. These are available at: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/welcome-your-vote](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/welcome-your-vote)

### **The Scottish Parliament Education Service**

The Scottish Parliament Education Service provides a range of resources to help educators teach about the work of the Scottish Parliament. These resources range from online games to printable worksheets. The latest series of resources will support young people in understanding why they should vote in a Scottish Parliament election:

- Pieces of Parliament, which focuses on using short animations and quizzes to reinforce learning about a range of topics,
- The 'Our Words' comics tell Parliament stories in the words of the young people who helped to write them, with supporting materials for teachers.
- Resources focussing on the scrutiny and accountability role of the Scottish Parliament, aimed at older students.

These resources can be found at: [beta.parliament.scot/](http://beta.parliament.scot/)

### **Education Scotland**

Education Scotland's 'You decide' resource is aimed at developing professional capacity in practitioners, schools and community settings to develop and embed the key skills of political literacy in young people. The resource introduces the key skills of research, debate, and participation in political literacy. It includes workshop and reading materials supporting the professional development of political literacy skills.

'You decide' and other resources are available to download here:

[education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/you-decide-a-political-literacy-resource](http://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/you-decide-a-political-literacy-resource)

### **Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland**

The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland produces resources to support adults, children and young people to learn about children's participation rights. The resources can help educators understand what the United Nations means by participation and what they should do when helping children and young people take part in decision-making. The resources are available at: [cypcs.org.uk/get-help/i-work-with-younger-people/golden-rules/](http://cypcs.org.uk/get-help/i-work-with-younger-people/golden-rules/)

### **Scottish Youth Parliament**

The Scottish Youth Parliament is made up of elected young people aged 14-25 from across Scotland. More information about the Scottish Youth Parliament is available here: [syp.org.uk/about-syp/](http://syp.org.uk/about-syp/)

The Scottish Youth Parliament's manifesto, 'From Scotland's Young People', may support teaching around manifestos. You can find out more about how the manifesto was developed and download it here: [syp.org.uk/our-work/political-work/from-scotlands-young-people/](http://syp.org.uk/our-work/political-work/from-scotlands-young-people/)

## Ensuring impartiality in the classroom

While political literacy offers many opportunities for developing young people as active and engaged citizens who are better equipped to make informed voting choices, it can also expose teachers to challenge if any information or activities are perceived to be weighted towards one side of the debate over the other.

Teachers may find themselves in situations where they need to broker opinion or tease out evidence, and they might be asked about their own views. In a politically literate community this is only to be expected and teachers must ensure that they know how to respond appropriately and fairly in the context of GTCS professional standards. In all cases, teachers should continue to create conditions where reasoned discussion and evidence thrive and where challenge is informed and constructive.

Many campaigners also want to bring their arguments directly to young people in schools. This provides opportunities for young people to engage with and critically assess the strength of campaign arguments. While it is unlikely that these requests would be granted during the current pandemic, anyone allowing access for campaigners will need to be able to evidence a consistent approach to granting requests. In the Scottish Parliament, 8 MSPs will be voted in to represent constituents. One MSP is elected for the constituency and 7 for the Region. It is important to allow all candidates and/or competing parties equal opportunity to engage with their electorate. In the event of any doubt, requests must be discussed with the headteacher.

## Local sources for further support

### **Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)**

EROs are appointed by Councils and are responsible for registering voters. They can provide assistance with registration queries and some local EROs may offer further support including school visits or assistance at educational events.

You can find the details for your local Electoral Registration Officer by entering your school's postcode in the Electoral Commission search function here: [electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information).

### **Council election teams**

Your Council election team is responsible for running the election on behalf of the Returning Officer. They may be able to provide you with information on how the election is run and how to vote.