



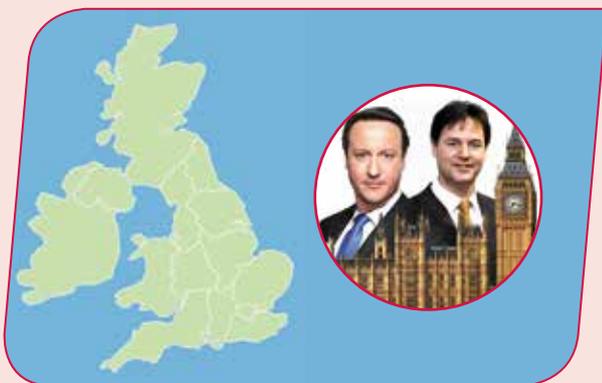
How politics works



How politics works



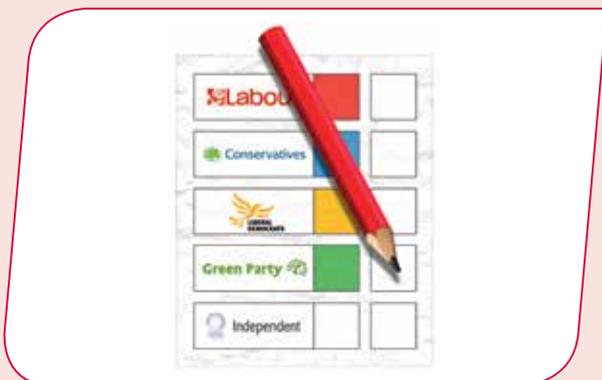
Politicians make lots of **decisions** which affect **your life**.



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.



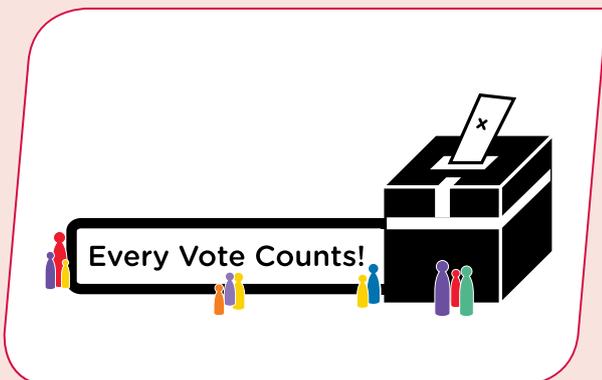
You **have the right** to talk to politicians about what **matters to you** and tell them what **you think**.



This booklet **explains** what politicians **do** and how politics **works**.

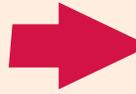


It is one of three '**Every Vote Counts**' booklets.



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 five 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 votes** and MPs.



The political party that **comes second** 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 it 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.

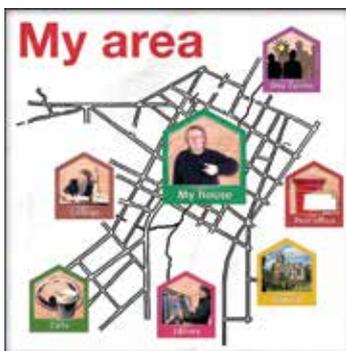


Cabinet ministers run different parts of the Government. They are helped by **civil servants**, who are not elected. **Anyone** can apply for a job as a civil servant.

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



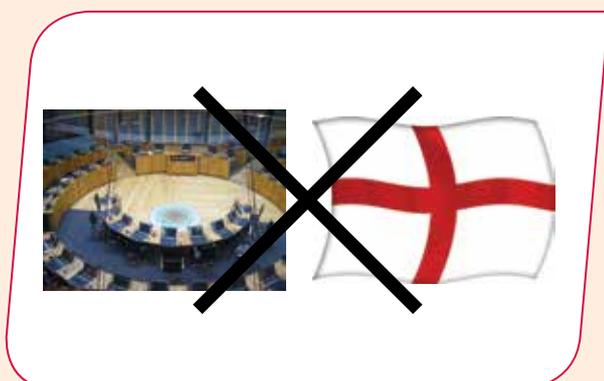
Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have **their own** Parliaments or Assemblies.



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

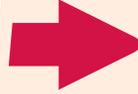


People in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can **vote** and decide who becomes a politician in their Parliament or Assembly.



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.



Together this group **decides** which laws and rules will be used by all countries in the European Union.

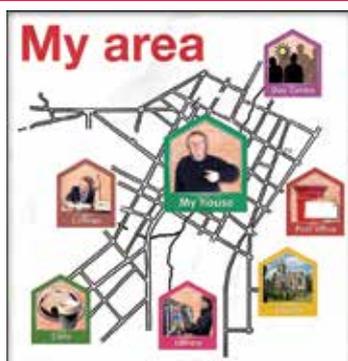


The **European Parliament** one of the organisations that helps to run the European Union. You **can vote** for the people who become Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).



MEPs do a **similar job** to MPs. They are elected to represent the people in their area and make decisions about things that **affect everyone** in Europe.

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 five years there is a **general election**. This is when **you can vote** to decide who becomes an MP.



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.

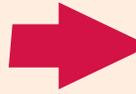


They spend some of their time in their constituencies. They are meant **to listen** to what people in their area say and represent what people **think**.



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.



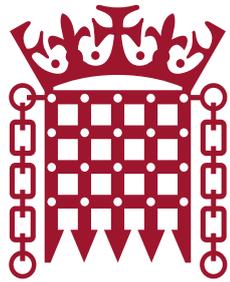
There are two parts to Parliament – the **House of Commons** and the **House of Lords**. They are not really houses, but are big rooms where **politicians meet**.



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.



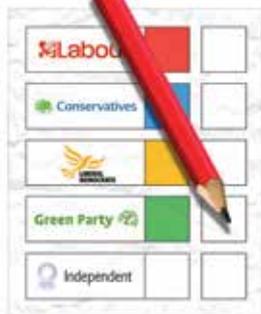
A political party can have ideas about **how to run** the whole country, or about just one thing they think is **important**.



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 send an email to everyvotecounts@unitedresponse.org.uk

