

General Election 2024

A guide for young people



Welcome!



On 4 July 2024, a General Election is taking place in the UK. This is a great opportunity to shape the future of the country and make sure that politicians represent the views of young people. So get ready!

We've pulled together everything you need to know to get involved in the election – and beyond. This guide is especially relevant if you're 18 or over and eligible to vote, but we've also included information for under-18s about how to make your voice heard.

What do you care about most?

Before you get started, take a minute to think about what you care about most right now. Getting a job? Finishing your education? The environment? Your loved ones getting the support they need? Finding affordable housing? All of these things – and more! – are affected by politics. Whichever party forms the next government will make decisions that will affect your life, and the direction of the country, for years to come.

If you want to have a say on the things you care about – make sure you have a say at the General Election.

In this guide

- What is the General Election, and why does it matter?
- Can I vote?
- How do I register to vote?
- What's the difference between the political parties?
- What happens on polling day?
- What happens after the election?

Election Q&A

What is the General Election, and why does it matter?

The General Election is our chance to decide who we want to represent us in **Parliament**. In each area of the country (called a 'constituency'), all eligible people aged 18 or over can vote for their Member of Parliament (MP).

Whoever is elected in your area will be an MP for up to five years. The election is an important opportunity to **decide who will represent you** in Parliament and take actions to make a real difference to you and your community.

Voting for your local MP also has an impact on who runs the country. Whichever party or parties has the highest number of MPs will be given the opportunity to form a government, and their party leader will be the Prime Minister.

That's why young people like you need to get involved!

Did you know?

In the last General Election in 2019, **less than half** of those aged 18 to 24 voted. (That's in comparison to almost three quarters of those aged 65 and over.)

Voting is an important way to ensure that young people's concerns and experiences are considered by people in power.

Can I vote?

To vote in the general election, you must be:

- 18 years old or above on the date of the election
- A British citizen, a resident Irish citizen or qualifying resident Commonwealth citizen
- Registered to vote



If you aren't sure whether you are eligible to vote, check using the [Can I Vote? Tool](#).

If you aren't eligible to vote, you can still make your voice heard!

Right now, you can sign the [petition](#) calling for the Prime Minister to be a champion for children.

After the election, your MP has a duty to represent you whether or not you voted for them. You can contact them to share your views (see 'What happens after the election?').

How do I register to vote?

Registering to vote only takes 5 minutes. You [can register online via the GOV.UK website](#) – you will need to share where you live, your date of birth, name, nationality and National Insurance number. You can also [register anonymously](#) if you're concerned about your name and address appearing on the electoral register for safety reasons.

If you are a **university student**, remember that you can register to vote at both your home address and your term-time address. You can then choose to vote in one of these areas on polling day.

If you can't vote in person on polling day, you have two options:

[Register to vote by post](#). This means that you will be sent a postal vote ballot pack before the election, which you then complete and return by post. The deadline to register for a postal vote is 5pm on 19th June.

[Register to vote by proxy](#). This means that you ask someone you trust to cast your vote on your behalf. The deadline to register to vote by proxy is 5pm on 26th June.



What's the difference between the political parties?

In the weeks before polling day, each political party will release a **manifesto**. A manifesto is a document outlining the policies that each party will support and the promises that they will keep if they are elected.

All parties will make **different commitments about key issues affecting young people** – like mental health, education and housing. We want all parties to make sure that the concerns and experiences of children and young people are at the heart of their manifestos.

Your local candidates will also hold meetings in your area (known as 'hustings') where you can hear from them directly and ask questions about their priorities. You can find out who your local candidates are on [Who Can I Vote For?](#)



What happens on polling day?

Polling day is the day the election takes place – **Thursday 4th July**.

Before polling day, you will be sent a **poll card** to your home address which will tell you where your closest polling station is. This is where you will cast your vote. If you have not received a poll card but think you should, contact your local [Electoral Registration Office](#). Polling stations will be open from **7am to 10pm** on the day of an election. It's a good idea to make a plan for when you will vote.

At the polling station, you will be given a **ballot** with the names of your local candidates and their party (if they have one). You will be able to vote for one candidate only.

Remember to bring photo ID when you go to vote!

You need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in elections. Check the list of [accepted forms of photo ID on the Electoral Commission website](#).

If you don't have a photo ID, you can register for a [free Voter Authority Certificate](#) – you'll need to do this before 5pm on 26th June.

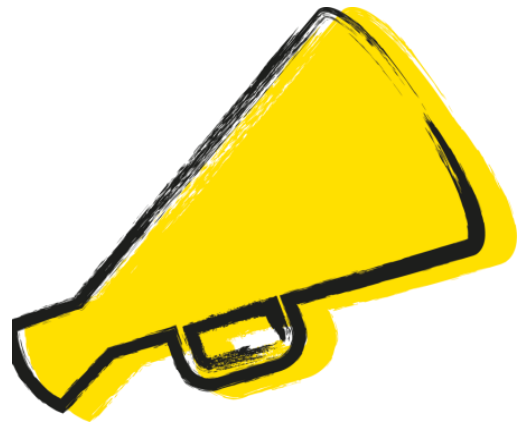
What happens after the election?

After the election, the party with the most MPs will have the opportunity to form a government. In their first weeks in power, they will set out their plans and priorities.

Whoever wins at the General Election, they need to tackle **major challenges facing young people**: rising poverty and the cost-of-living crisis, long waits for mental health support, and more children being impacted by exploitation and online harm.

What happens after polling day will be critical. Once the next government starts making commitments, it will be down to all of us to hold them to account.

We will all need to work together to ensure the concerns and experiences of children and young people are prioritised.



Alongside people like you, The Children's Society and other children's charities (Action for Children, Barnardo's, the National Children's Bureau and NSPCC) are calling on the next government to put [Children At The Table](#).

Together, we will continue to campaign for young people to be at the heart of government.

If you want to make sure that your local MP and the next government hears your voice, [sign up for campaign news](#).

After the election, we'll send you all the information you need to know about contacting your MP and calling for the changes that you want to see.

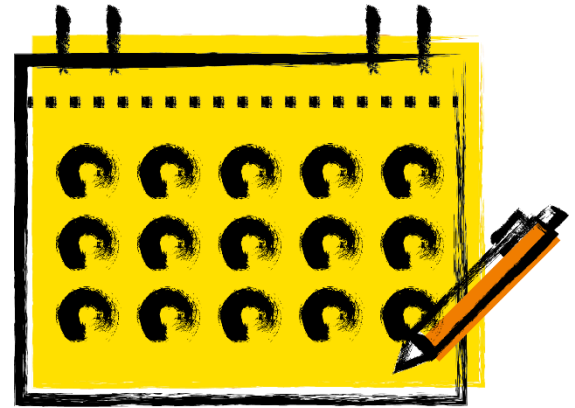
Dates for your diary

Tuesday 18 June, 11.59pm –
Deadline to register to vote

Wednesday 19 June, 5pm –
Deadline to register for postal vote

Wednesday 26 June, 5pm –
Deadline to register for proxy vote

Thursday 4 July, 7am to 10pm –
Polling day



Useful links

- [Register to vote](#) – The website to register before 18 June
- [Register anonymously](#) – If you're concerned about your safety
- [Can I Vote?](#) – A tool to check whether you are eligible to vote
- [Who Can I Vote For?](#) – A tool to find your local candidates
- [Register to vote by post](#) – If you can't vote in person on polling day
- [Register to vote by proxy](#) – If you can't vote in person on polling day
- [Electoral Registration Office](#) – If your poll card doesn't arrive
- [Accepted forms of photo ID](#) – Types of ID you can use when voting
- [Voter Authority Certificate](#) – If you don't have valid photo ID
- [Give An X](#) – A youth-led campaign to get young people voting. They offer information, support, and a free Lime code to cycle to vote on polling day.