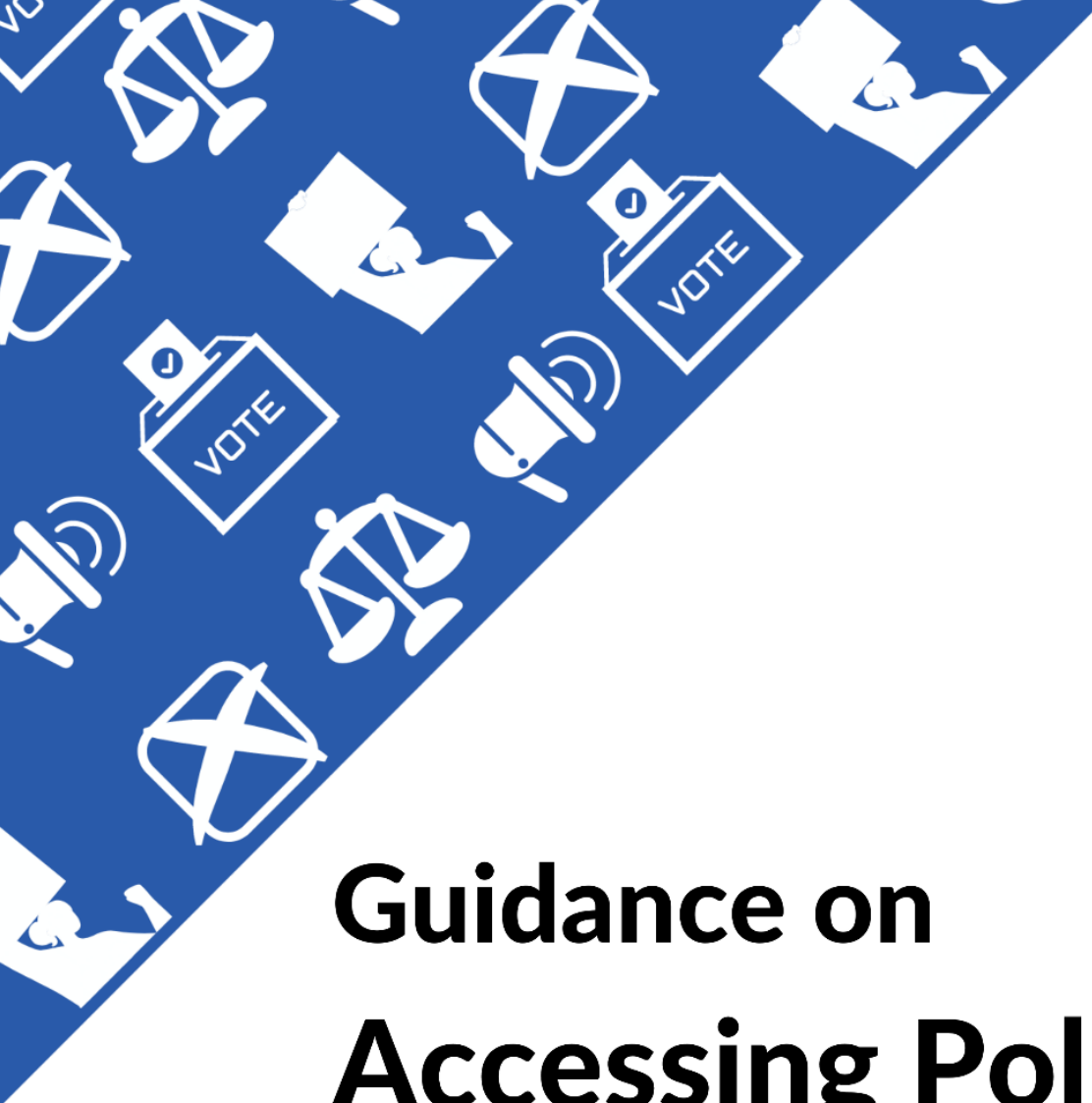




Guidance on Accessing Politics Easy Read Part 2



**Inclusion
Scotland**

Disabled People's Organisation

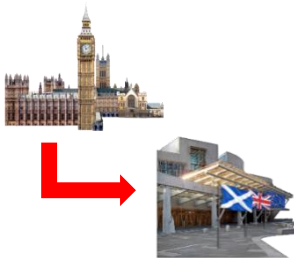
Our voices ■ Our choices

Access to Politics

Part 2



Who represents me?



Who has the power?



Inclusion Scotland made this guide:

- to show disabled people how to get involved in politics.
- to show how to make politics accessible for disabled people.



It is in 8 parts:

1. What are my rights? What can change to make it easier for me?
2. Who represents me?
3. Petitions.
4. How to take part (1).
5. How to take part (2).
6. Tips for campaigning.
7. Election day.
8. Accessibility checklist.



We hope this guide is useful to you.

Get in touch with us at:

civicparticipation@inclusionscotland.org

to tell us what you think of the guide or if you need advice and support.



Who represents me?

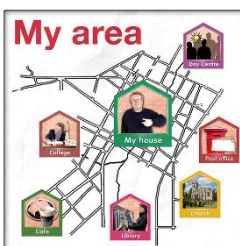


Each person in Scotland is represented by:

- Several community councillors.
- Three or four local councillors.
- One constituency MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament).
- Seven regional MSPs.
- One constituency Member of the UK Parliament (MP).

A constituency is an area.

Community Councils



Community Councils are set up by Local Authorities.

They are run by residents in a local area.

They are not paid.

Community councils are the most local level of elected representation in Scotland.



There are around 1,200 community councils in Scotland.



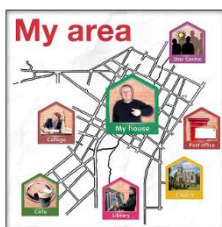
Community councils are separate from local councils but get support from them.

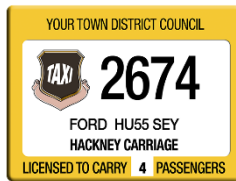


Community councils bring local people together to help make things happen.

Their work can include:

- Projects that will make their community better for everyone.
- Community newsletters.
- Surveys or questionnaires to find out what local people think about things.
- Campaigns about local issues.
- Organising community events like local galas.





They have to ask community councils about:

- planning applications – what is built where
- and who can get licenses – for taxis, or for places that sell things like alcohol.

More information on Community Councils is available [here](#).

Local Councils



Local Councils are in charge of many important public services like:

- theatres and libraries
- sports centres and swimming pools
- schools, nurseries, colleges and community education
- housing
- roads and public transport
- social work and community care
- getting rid of waste.

There are 32 [councils](#) in Scotland.

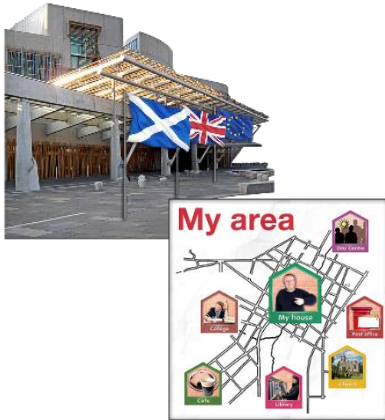
Each local council area is divided into a number of 'wards' or smaller areas.

Each ward has 3 or 4 councillors.

More information on Local Authorities is available [here](#).



Scottish Parliament (Holyrood)



The Scottish Parliament is at Holyrood in Edinburgh.

It has 129 MSPs (Member of the Scottish Parliament).

They each have a region or 'constituency'.

This is the area they represent.



They are elected every five years in Scottish Parliament elections.

Every person in Scotland is represented by an MSP.



The Scottish Parliament passes laws and looks at the work of the Scottish Government.

Most work is done by Scottish Parliament committees, made up of MSPs from different parties.



Final decisions are taken by a vote of the whole Scottish Parliament.



Changing laws or making new laws can be suggested by:

- the Scottish Government
- MSPs
- Scottish Parliament committees
- or by people or groups using the Scottish Parliament's petition system.



More information on the Scottish Parliament is available [here](#).

UK Parliament (Westminster)



The UK Parliament is at Westminster, in London.

There are two Houses of Parliament.

1. The House of Commons.

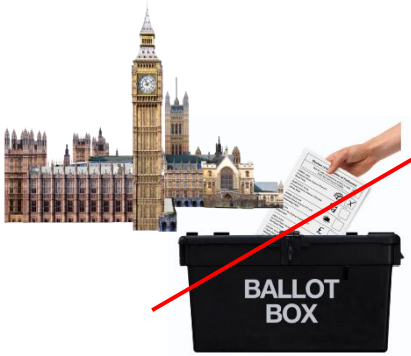
There are 650 MPs.

They are elected in UK General Elections which usually happen every five years.

There are 59 Scottish MPs.

Each MP represents a 'constituency' – an area of Scotland.





2. The House of Lords.

Lords are called peers.

They are not elected.

They are chosen by the Government.

They do not represent an area.

The UK Parliament passes laws and looks at the work of the UK Government.

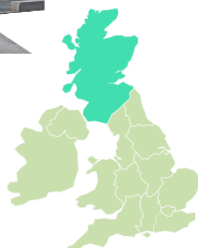
Most of the work is done by committees, made up of MPs and peers from different parties.



Final decisions are made by voting in the House of Commons and then the House of Lords.

More information on the UK Parliament can be found [here](#).

Holyrood or Westminster – who has powers?

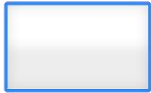


The Scottish Parliament passes laws on things that affect many parts of everyday life in Scotland.

These are called **devolved** matters.



This means the UK Parliament has given the Scottish Parliament the right to make decisions in these areas.



Devolved matters include:

- agriculture, forestry and fisheries
- education and training
- health and social services
- housing
- law and order
- local government
- sport and the arts
- tourism
- and some parts of the benefits system.

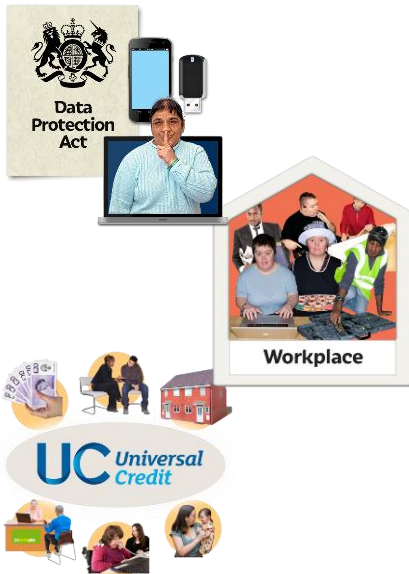
The Scottish Government decides what taxes we pay in Scotland.

Most of the money that Scotland uses comes from the UK Government.

The Scottish Government decides how to use this money.



The UK Parliament passes laws on things that affect the whole of the UK. These are called **reserved** matters.



Reserved matters include:

- TV and radio stations
- data protection
- defence and energy
- employment
- immigration
- trade and industry
- transport
- and some parts of the benefits system including Universal Credit.



You can find out more about the powers of the Scottish Parliament in the Scotland Acts of 1998, 2012 and 2016.

These documents are available on the [Scottish Parliament website](#).



The [Legislative Consent Memorandums](#) have information about the powers the UK Government has and what powers it has given the Scottish Parliament.

How to find who represents you.



You can find your community councillors and local councils on their council websites.

You can find your local MSPs [here](#) and your local MP [here](#).

Search for their name, party, or the area they represent.



You should be able to find information on the things they are interested in and what work they do.

This will help you to find who will be the best people to help you.

Get in touch with your representative



You can get in touch with your representative by:

- Phone
- E-mail
- Social media



When you get in touch with your representative or arrange a meeting ask for reasonable adjustments if you need them.

A reasonable adjustment is something that would make it easier for you to take part.



If you can't go to a meeting ask your representative to visit you at home, or have a meeting online using Skype/Zoom.



Support

Ask for communications support like a British Sign Language interpreter or palantypist if you need one.

Talking to your representative about what is important to you.



Remember your representative will not know about everything.

They will be able to help you better if you can give them as much information as possible.

Think about these points before you get in touch with your representative:



- **WHAT** do you want to talk about?
Be clear and keep it simple.

- **WHO** will it make a difference to?
This will show how important your problem is.

- **WHY** does something need to be done?
What will happen if nothing is done?



- **WHO** needs to make the changes you want?

- **HOW** can the problem be sorted?
What needs to happen?



For example:

- **WHAT:** I can't put my household rubbish in the outside bins because they are not accessible.



- **WHO:** 6 other people on my street have the same problem.



- **WHY:** It is not healthy.
It stops me living independently.
If rubbish is not cleared we get rats.
- **WHO:** This is a local council problem.



- **HOW:** I have a design for accessible bins.
Is this something the council would be willing to change?