



A guide to voting in the Scottish Parliament Election and Local Council Election for people with learning difficulties.

Voting day for the Scottish Parliament election and the Local Council election is Thursday 3 May 2007.

outside
the box

This pack was produced for use in Scotland by Outside the Box and uses pictures from the Change Picture Bank.



It is based on an original design by The Disability Rights Commission, Valuing People and The Pollenshop.

It was originally distributed under the name 'Right to Vote Information Pack'.



Right to Vote Information Pack

Disability Rights Commission

the **pollenshop**

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Introduction

Some things in this pack might be new ideas or hard words. These ideas or words are **shown like this**.

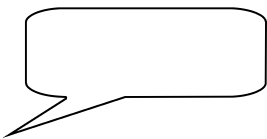
If you are not sure about some of these words or ideas, ask a friend or supporter.

You can also ask your nearest People First Scotland, Enable, Speaking Up or support group for help.



This pack is designed to help you vote at elections.

We would like to hear about what you liked and what you didn't like so that we can make it better. You will find feedback questions on the back page.



Where you see a sign like this, we have used what the other people with learning difficulties have said about elections.



Important things about voting

Nearly everybody over the age of 18 has a right to vote at elections.

This includes people with a learning difficulty.

Remember

- You do not have to vote.
- You decide who to vote for.
- It is wrong for someone to stop you from voting.
- It is wrong for someone to make you vote for someone you don't want to.



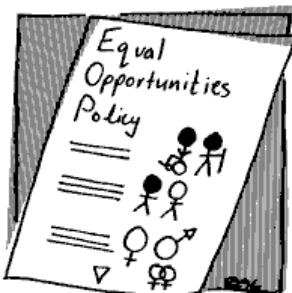


Why vote?

“Never done anything like this before. Elections very important, very interesting. You get to decide who should be elected.”

“Chance to put point of view across.”

There are a lot of things that affect the lives of people who have learning difficulties and people who have autism. These are some examples.



- Getting Jobs
- Feeling safe
- Living in your own house
- Getting good services
- Being treated with respect
- Being a volunteer



Politicians need to hear what people think about these matters.

One way we have our say is by voting for people in an election.

People who are elected can work to make things change.



A lot of people have said that they are not sure about voting in elections.

Sometimes it is because they have not done it before and are not sure what to do.

Sometimes it is because they don't get much practice in making choices and in having their say.

Sometimes it is because elections and politics seem really complicated.



How do you find out about who to vote for?

“Radio and just when they were **canvassing** locally.”

“Knowing the person, seeing them locally.”

“TV, talking to people, Mum got leaflets, discuss with family, put leaflets through doors with Mum.”

“Watching Question Time on TV.”



“**Canvassing** at door, listen and make up your own mind what to believe.”

“Papers, TV, leaflets through door.”



How do you choose who to vote for?

“The person that was ideal for the job, write and ask them their views on learning difficulties.”

“I make my own choice.”

“It’s sometimes hard, I decide in the polling booth.”



“I would get together with housemates to discuss.”

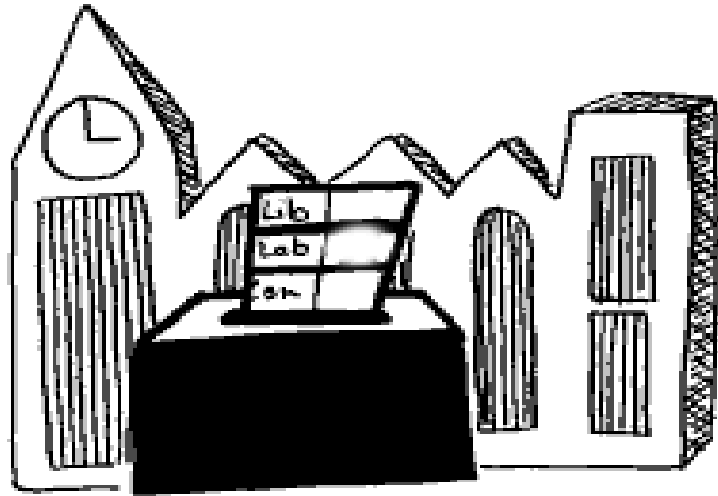
“In local elections, wanted someone voted out to get something done about state of where I live.”



Elections in Scotland

This pack is to help people with a learning difficulty vote at the **Scottish Parliament Election**.

A Scottish Parliament Election is when we decide who runs some things in Scotland.



We choose **Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs)** at a Scottish Parliament Election. **Laws** made in Scotland are rules for everybody in Scotland.



This pack will also help you vote in the election for your **Local Council**.

Local Councils are in charge of things like schools and day centres.

The people who are in charge of councils are called **Councillors**.

The Scottish Parliament Election and the Local Council Election are on the same day. That day is **Thursday 3 May**.

You can also vote at the **UK Parliament Election** for the whole of Britain.

That election will be happening in the next few years.



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Voting
It's your right

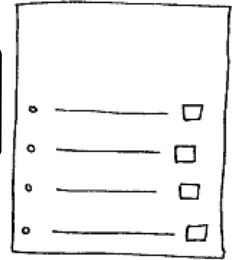


Register to Vote

To be able to vote you need to be on the **electoral register**.

The **electoral register** is an official list of everybody who wants to vote.

"I voted before so I am on the list."



Most people are on the electoral register. Some people may have been missed off.

In Scotland, you can phone a helpline about registration: **0800 0141 012**

They will be able to give you details of your local electoral registration office.

Ask a friend or supporter if you need help to do this.

"I have never voted before so I don't know if I am on the list."



If you are not on the electoral register you will have to fill in a form.

You can ask someone to help you do this.

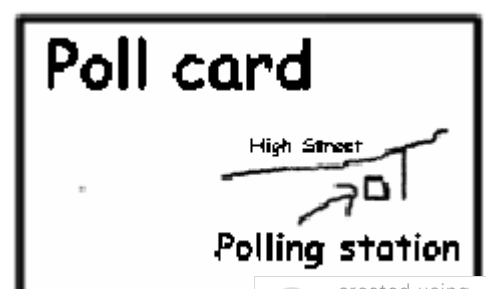
This form is called an **electoral registration form**.

You can get an **electoral registration form** by calling: **0800 0141 012** or go to www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

To vote in the Scottish Parliament election and the local Council election you must register by **Wednesday 18 April 2007**.

You will be sent a **poll card** before the **elections day**. A Poll card tells you where to go to vote.

Try to bring your poll card with you when you go to vote.





Getting help to vote

It is OK to ask for help to vote.

Ask a friend, supporter or someone from your support group to help you.



When you go to the polling station you can ask the person in charge for help if you cannot read or write.

A friend, supporter or family member can also help you vote at a polling station.

They can only help if they are also registered to vote.



You don't have to go to a polling station to vote.

Call **0800 0141 012**

and somebody should be able to give you advice.

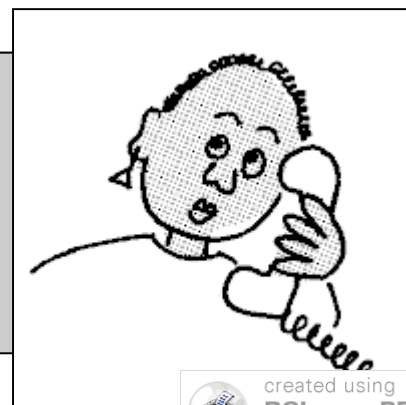
Ask a friend or supporter if you need help to do this.

“Easier for me to post vote.”

You must call before election day.



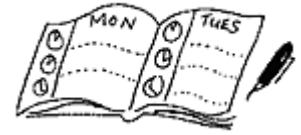
If you have any problems or if someone stops you voting you can phone the DRC helpline on 08457 622 633. The textphone number is 08457 622 644. You can also visit their website: www.drc.org.uk/easyread





Voting Day

You vote on the election day. The date of the election is Thursday 3 May.



The place where you vote is called a **polling place**, or a **polling station**. A polling place is often a school or community centre.

When you arrive at the polling place, you will be given **2 ballot papers**. A ballot paper is a list of people or parties you can vote for.

Ballot Paper	
Party A	
Party B	
Party C	

Ballot Paper	
Joe Bloggs - Party A	
Alan Smith - Party B	
Jane Patel - Party C	

The **first** ballot paper is for **the Scottish Parliament election**.

The ballot paper will have two lists of people.

The left-hand side is for choosing the **Party** you like best. This vote means the party might get more people elected.

Put an X next to the party or individual you think is best.

The right-hand side is for choosing the person you think would make the best Member of the Scottish Parliament for your **constituency** or local area.

Put an X next to the person you think is best.

“I vote for my rights.”

“I vote to change things.”

“No-one can make your decision for you.”

You can see what the ballot paper will look like on the next page.

Sometimes people don't belong to a party. They are called **Independent**. You might be able to choose them on the ballot paper instead of a party.

You then put the ballot papers in the **black** ballot box. This way of voting is the **Additional Member System**.





What a Scottish Parliament Election Ballot Paper will look like

Election of the Scottish Parliament
You have **two** votes

Regional Members		Constituency Member	
B Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	C Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/>
F Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	F Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/>
G Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	G Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/>
K Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	N Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/>
M Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	R Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/>
S Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	Z Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/>
T Party	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Y Party	<input type="checkbox"/>		
A Individual Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/>		
E Individual Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/>		
P Individual Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/>		



Voting Day

Your **second ballot paper** is for the Local Council election.



Local Councils are in charge of things like schools and day centres.

The people who are in charge of councils are called **Councillors**.

“Voting is important. It’s about our life.”

You must put the people on the list in an order.

Next to the person you think would make the best councillor you put a number **1**.

You put a **2** next to the person you think would be second best, and a **3** next to the person you think would be almost as good.

You can put down a number for as many people as you want.

You can only use a number once.

Ask the person in charge of the polling station if you are unsure.

Ballot Paper	
Joe Bloggs - Party A	6
Alan Smith - Party B	2
Jane Patel - Party C	4
John Smith - Party D	1
Tim Jones - Party E	5
Mary MacDonald - Party F	3

Do not put a cross (x) on this ballot paper. If you do, it will not be counted.

If you make a mistake at any time when voting, go and speak to the person in charge of your polling place.

You then put the ballot paper in the **white** ballot box.



This way of voting is called the **Single Transferable Vote**



What a Local Council Election Ballot Paper will look like

Election of Council A, Z Ward

Instead of using a cross, number the candidates in the order of your choice.

Put the number 1 next to the name of the candidate who is your first choice, 2 next to your second choice, 3 next to your third choice, 4 next to your fourth choice and so on.

You can mark as many or as few choices as you like.

Party C	CANDIDATE A	
Party D	CANDIDATE D	
Independent	CANDIDATE H	
Party A	CANDIDATE J	
Party F	CANDIDATE Q	
Party E	CANDIDATE S	
Party B	CANDIDATE W	
Party A	CANDIDATE Z	

PLEASE NOTE: These papers maybe subject to change. They were correct at the time of printing (March 2007).



Tell us what you think about this pack



We hope this pack has helped you understand more about how to vote. We would like to hear what you think about it.

Outside the Box are working with people who have learning difficulties and people who have autism. They will be explaining to other people why taking part in elections is a good idea, and showing them how to do it. By the end of the project, we will have lots of information that people who have learning difficulties and people with autism can use.

Some of the things we are planning are:

- a DVD
- posters
- a list of useful contacts
- ideas that other people and groups have tried.

The project will look at all the stages of electing someone.

- Telling the people who want your vote what you think
- Deciding who to vote for
- Voting at the election
- Keeping in touch with the person who gets elected

We want your help.

Can you tell us:

1. What was good about this pack?
2. What was bad about this pack?
3. Is there anything else you would like to know about
4. elections?
5. What could we do to make this pack better?
6. After reading this pack, do you want to vote? Why?
7. If we produced a DVD about voting what should be on it?

You can send your ideas to us at peervote@otbds.org. Call Rhoda on 0141 445 3062, or write to Outside the Box, Unit 19, 6 Harmony Row, Glasgow, G51 3BA. www.otbds.org/vote