

SUFFRAGE CENTENARY

Parliamentarian youth engagement toolkit



This toolkit includes:

- A Parliamentarian handbook
- Activity cards and worksheets
- A Toolkit campaign sign
- A Suffrage Centenary pin badge
- A Suffrage Centenary events calendar

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit supports the crucial work you do as a Parliamentarian to promote our democracy. It contains easy-to-use activities designed to help engage young people aged 13-16 in our democracy.

The activities have been developed with input from both young people and Parliamentarians.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

PARLIAMENTARIAN HANDBOOK



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FOREWORD

Parliamentarians are at the forefront of our democracy, the embodiment of the principle of representation and a vital connection between people and Parliament. In recognition of this unique role, I am delighted to launch this new toolkit to support the crucial work that you do to promote our democracy.

2018 marks 100 years since women first won the right to vote in the UK and the 90th anniversary of the Equal Franchise Act. There is no better way to mark these historic occasions than by building on their legacy and continuing to improve and encourage democratic participation. If we can teach our young people about our democracy and instil in them a sense of empowerment and civic duty, then our democracy will continue to go from strength to strength.

Many of you will have been inspired at an early age to explore how you make your voice heard on issues that are important to you. For some it will have been a conversation with a parent over the news, while others may have attended a march or been involved in a campaign. For many, their first awareness of politics and how decisions are made comes from contact with their local representative, sometimes in school but also at youth clubs and other extracurricular activities.

Those moments of contact can make an important impression. For young people who are developing their views of the world and testing the scope for speaking up on matters that they feel passionately about, they are an opportunity to learn about how democracy works.

The majority of teenagers will first experience direct contact with Parliamentarians during an organised visit. It is a prime opportunity for engagement which can have a lasting effect on our youngest citizens' understanding of our electoral system and how it works for them. I ask you to join me in making use of this new resource and making your interactions with young people effective and powerful.

Chloe Smith

Minister for the Constitution

UNDERSTANDING THE TOOLKIT

What is the purpose of this toolkit?

2018 marks 100 years since women first won the right to vote in the UK. As part of a programme of work to celebrate this anniversary, the Cabinet Office, in partnership with the Government Equalities Office, is launching a number of projects to help teach young people aged 13 to 16 about our democracy and the importance of democratic engagement.

This toolkit of short activities can be used to support existing work done with this age group to help them understand the work you do as an MP or peer. Activities are not designed to replicate the work Parliamentarians do on a day-to-day basis when communicating with young constituents and can be easily incorporated into current engagements such as school visits. One of the key insights we have heard from young people is that they find it challenging to relate democracy to their everyday lives. The activities are designed to get young people talking and thinking about how democracy affects them.

Who are the activities aimed at?

The target audience for the activities in this toolkit is **13 to 16 year olds**.

Recent research suggests that younger voters have less knowledge of our country's democratic systems when compared to older citizens.¹

Turnout estimates following the general election in 2017 present an unclear picture of democratic participation among the UK's youngest eligible voters. Polling data sources argue that there has been an estimated increase in turnout to 57% among 18 to 19 year olds from the previous election, while maintaining younger voters are still the least likely to vote in comparison to the national average of 69%.² A further survey issued this year by the British Election Study argues that there is no evidence of a surge in youth voter turnout or 'youthquake' from the previous election with estimates from the last two general elections between 40% and 50%.³

¹ House of Commons Library, 'Political Engagement in the UK: who is disengaged?', 2017

² YouGov, 'How Britain voted at the 2017 general election', 2017

³ British Election Study, 2018

In comparison with other European countries, the UK youth turnout in national elections is very low.⁴ A recent Demos report also stated that the UK has the largest turnout gap between young and old people in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.⁵

The most recent Hansard Society Audit of Political Engagement indicated that 18 to 34 year olds are much less likely than those aged 35 and older to feel knowledgeable about politics. Thirty-five percent of this age group claim to know at least a 'fair amount', compared to 52% of those aged 35 to 54 and 58% of those aged 55 and above. In terms of interest in politics, the gap between 18 to 34 year olds and those aged 55 and over remains large (41% to 62% respectively).⁶

As the next generation of voters, it is crucial to educate 13 to 16 year olds on the importance of democratic participation. This should minimise the potential for future voters to encounter the same barriers experienced by some young voters today.

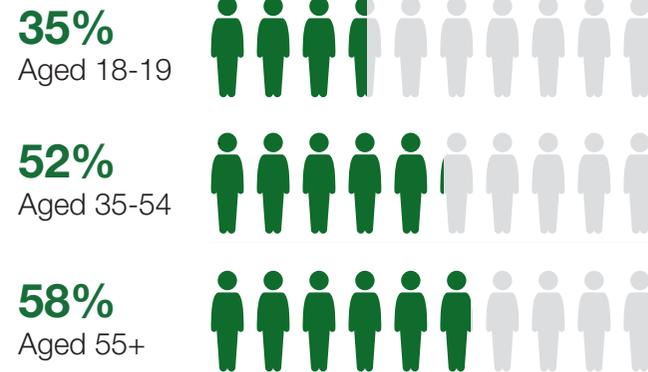
This toolkit has been designed to help young people understand our democracy. It is part of educating young people on systems of government and voting while still in a learning environment. We hope it will help ensure that future generations are empowered with the skills, knowledge and confidence to fulfil their roles as active citizens.

⁴ European Commission, 'European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life', 2013

⁵ Demos, 'The Rise in Digital Politics', 2017

⁶ Hansard Society, Audit of Political Engagement, vol.14, 2017

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE FEEL THEY KNOW A 'FAIR AMOUNT' ABOUT POLITICS?



There has already been a great deal of positive work done by Parliamentarians with this age group. These ideas are simply designed to make your work easier and provide some focused activities for different events during this centenary year and beyond.

How has the toolkit been developed?

To ensure this toolkit meets your needs, cross-party Parliamentarians were consulted on what they would find helpful from a resource of this kind. Their insights have been vital to the development of this toolkit. This has included learning from good examples of work Parliamentarians frequently undertake with this age group. We have also conducted interviews with Parliamentary staff to understand their needs and ascertain what would be useful and practical.

Additionally, we conducted workshops with focus groups of 13 to 16 year olds to better understand the knowledge they have of democracy and democratic structures and how they would like this information to be communicated. The techniques and methods of connecting with young people in this toolkit were informed by both this testing and also a larger body of research on communicating with this demographic.

How do I use the toolkit?

Activity cards and accompanying instructions can easily be taken with you on visits. Some activities relate to specific events such as the Suffrage Movement, while others are about democracy more broadly.

Several of the activities come with worksheets or materials for your audience to use. However, if you do not have time to prepare, each activity can be used to stimulate conversation without using the accompanying materials.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN 2018

Although turnout among the UK's youngest voters has traditionally been lower than other age groups, evidence suggests that young people are neither apathetic nor uninterested but locally engaged and globally connected.

Many young people have views on the issues which are important to them but they are often not translated into traditional forms of democratic participation. This has resulted in increasing levels of engagement in civic, voluntary and other informal ways to make a difference, as outlined below.

Youth councils, youth parliaments, youth boards and other formal structures: Some young people engage with local, regional and national programmes in which they elect their peers to represent their views and take part in campaigns and votes on youth-focused issues. This includes the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP), run by the British Youth Council, which is made up of approximately 600 elected youth members. UKYP runs the annual Make Your Mark vote, where young people vote on the issue UKYP should campaign on for the following year. In 2017, nearly one million young people voted and this shows how young people mobilise their peers in large numbers to provide a clear mandate upon which to act and lobby decision-makers.

Youth social action: Young people across the UK are increasingly leading social action projects through a range of organisations including the National Citizen Service. Youth-led social action projects have been promoted by the Step Up to Serve #iwill campaign and partners. Many youth social action campaigns have achieved positive outcomes on a number of local and national issues including mental health and sustainable development with youth-led projects raising funding for a range of charities across the UK.

Digital participation: Young people are increasingly participating in internet-based social action. For instance, many are finding their civic voice on digital platforms through online petitions, blogs, vlogs and charity sites. There is a growing trend towards interaction with elected representatives and political organisations via social media platforms.

Parliamentarian engagement: Parliamentarians across the UK also engage with their young constituents to build their views into both local and national decision-making. Engagement examples have included online surgeries on social media platforms targeting young people, hustings in schools and youth groups ahead of both local and national elections, and constituency summer schools for young people to gain knowledge of campaigning and collaborating with their peers on local issues. Parliamentarians are also hosting youth panels in constituencies to help shape policy making and involve young people in conducting research, evaluating a public service or running a local project.

BENEFITS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

A young population that is engaged in our democracy is beneficial to both young people and our society as a whole.

| WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE ARE POLITICALLY ENGAGED THEY | THIS CAN HELP TO |
|--|--|
| feel they are listened to and can make a difference. | improve decision-making and local communities – young people are experts on what affects them and can provide innovative solutions to problems. |
| feel more confident in expressing their point of view and challenging others' perspectives. | build trust in political systems – a lot of mistrust in political systems stems from a lack of understanding of the work Parliamentarians do; if young people have a better understanding of how Parliamentarians work for them, this will increase their trust in them. |
| develop skills and experience, e.g. public speaking, problem solving and developing arguments. | develop the next generation of leaders – if young people are engaged early they will see themselves as agents of change and will be more inclined to see themselves as future leaders. |
| can express their needs and ideas for change. | develop a more inclusive democracy where more people take part – if people understand the importance of exercising their rights they will be more inclined to do so. |
| have a better understanding of how political structures work. | bring about innovative changes and improvements through youth-led action – young people will approach issues with a different perspective from older generations and may be better placed to find solutions. |

BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Whilst we see many positive trends as outlined, research focusing on youth participation suggests that young people still face a number of barriers preventing them from engaging with the democratic process. These can include:

MOTIVATION/ATTITUDE



Young people are the **second least likely group** (after 25 to 34 year olds) to feel that getting involved in political activity was effective.⁷

AWARENESS OF RIGHTS/RESPONSIBILITIES



Young people are **less likely to believe it is a civic duty to vote** and are less likely to have taken part in conventional forms of participation.⁹

KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION



Young people are **more likely** than any other demographic **to report low levels of knowledge about politics**, or of the democratic functions underpinning UK political institutions.⁸

CULTURE/LANGUAGE



Young people also struggle with **relating formal democracy to their everyday lives** or local communities.¹⁰

⁷ House of Commons Library, 'Political Engagement in the UK: who is disengaged?', 2017

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ NatCen Social Research, 'British Social Attitudes – A Disengaged Britain? Political interest and participation over 30 years', 2013

¹⁰ The London School of Economics and Political Science, 'Apathy or lack of civic education? Why young people don't vote', 2017

HINTS AND TIPS

These have been informed by examples of good practice provided by Parliamentarians and research completed with young people aged 13 to 16.



For group sessions...

Keep things personal

This age group is engaged by personal stories and content which relates to the individual. Young people have told us that this can make the work of Parliamentarians and Parliament more relatable and can build up trust with your young audience. You may wish to discuss your background and interests with young audiences, e.g. what inspired you to become an MP or the journey that led to you being made a peer.

Focus on local issues

Research with young people suggests they are more interested in local issues that directly affect them rather than in broader national issues. You could focus on work you have done for the community and any plans you have for the future and use these as a springboard to discuss broader democratic and political issues. It is also a good idea to focus on what you can do for individuals, especially those in your audience. During this centenary year you could focus on a local suffrage hero – male or female – tell their story and what they did for their communities.

Incentivise

To gain interest, a clear purpose, outcome or benefit should be explained at the outset of a session i.e. what will the young person gain from attending a session to speak with you? This might perhaps include opportunities such as a trip to the Houses of Parliament, but may equally be something more immediate that they can expect to gain from the session, e.g. a commitment to follow up any concerns that arose in the session, or an explanation of how they can help the community.

Show the impact

Young people like to know that their participation makes a difference, e.g. some of the Parliamentarians who helped to shape this toolkit had raised youth issues through PQs, PMQs and other committee work and were able to demonstrate this to the young people in their constituency.

Focus on single issues

Young people want recognition of the issues they consider important. Tackle one issue at a time with a clear theme that the audience considers relevant. Talking about subjects the audience feels are significant or interesting will encourage connection. You can then use this example to explain decision making structures in a way that is both pertinent and easy to understand.

Use prompts

As some people can find it difficult to think of topics of interest on the spot, providing prompting stimulus or allowing time for people to discuss their ideas in groups is a good way to overcome shyness or potential mental blocks.

Make it part of a series

Young people may be more likely to engage once they have met you several times and become more comfortable with Parliamentarians and the work that they do. It can take several sessions to break down communication barriers. Where possible arrange follow-up meetings with schools or youth groups to emphasise a sustained commitment to youth engagement. For example, some Parliamentarians we spoke with held youth panels in their constituencies across the year to seek their feedback on youth issues with their youngest constituents.

Follow up

Once you have completed a session, follow this up with a message on social media or a written letter. People appreciate a written recognition that you have taken their views on board.

Make it fun

Humour is a great way to break down barriers and create a more open space for discussion with young people. Don't be afraid to inject humour and informality into sessions in this toolkit.

Make it fast paced and interactive

You could start sessions with quick-fire questions to get people engaged early. You should emphasise to the audience that they can ask you anything and questions do not have to be of a political nature.



Social Media

Social media is a fundamental part of life for most 13 to 16 year olds and it is a good place to try to connect with young people. However, this is not always simple. It is important to ensure you strike the right balance between reaching young people via the platforms they like to use, but doing so in a way that is authentic to you and them.

Use the right platforms

Young people don't like the social media spaces they use to connect with friends invaded by unwanted external attention. A platform like Instagram is a good middle ground, as it is used by variety of demographic groups for a range of different reasons and is very popular among 13 to 16 year olds.

Be personal

Young people take an interest in personal stories and find them more relatable. Instagram is a great place to share pictures of your everyday life, e.g. your pets or pictures of a holiday. These will add a personal touch and make you more memorable.

Use moving content

Evidence has shown that 13 to 16 year olds find short moving clips engaging. You could share short digestible videos of what you are doing both in and outside of Parliament to increase your social media presence.

Be persistent

Young people may not engage on social media immediately as this may not be a place where they expect to engage with people in authority. However, committing to continued content on social media platforms will increase likelihood of future engagement.

Key dates and timeline

The timeline includes dates which you could use to plan your engagements and could provide an interesting focus to help engage young people in our democracy. Some of the activities in the toolkit specifically address the events opposite to help you plan your engagements on these dates.

KEY ANNIVERSARIES AND EVENTS



National Democracy Week 2018

The inaugural National Democracy Week will kick off on Monday 2 July 2018, the 90th anniversary of the 1928 Equal Franchise Act which gave women the same voting rights as men.

Our aim is to work together to ensure every member of society has an equal chance to participate in our democracy and have their say.

As we look back on 100 years of votes for women, join us in celebrating our democracy. We believe that in working together, across public, private and third sectors, we will have a greater impact.

A range of events will be taking place across the UK to encourage participation in our democracy.

Visit the National Democracy Week website for more information about how you can get involved www.gov.uk/nationaldemocracyweek

**2-8
July**

#talkdemocracy

#democracyweek18

Let people know you are using the toolkit

When using the toolkit throughout 2018, share your activity with your constituents, Cabinet Office and fellow Parliamentarians on social media **@CabinetOfficeUK #talkdemocracy #democracyweek18**

You can share your activity with even more people by registering it on our website. It takes five minutes – visit www.gov.uk/nationaldemocracyweek

If you have any questions please contact nationaldemocracyweek@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

OGL

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democraticengagement@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Background

The Suffragettes and Suffragists fought for the right to have democratic equality. The actions they took highlight the importance of voting and the power voting gives to the public. You may want to speak about the difference between the Suffragettes and Suffragists. The Suffragists were members of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), who believed in peaceful campaigning. A smaller group broke away from the NUWSS to form the Women's Social and Political Union which believed in direct action (violence and militancy) and became known as the Suffragettes.

Aims

- Teach the audience about the importance of the Suffrage Movement and the fight for the right to vote
- Encourage the audience to think about the benefits the right to vote brings and why we should all exercise this right
- Teach the audience about civic action and how the public has the power to bring about change

Step 1

Give out the worksheets with the statements about the Suffragettes and Suffragists. Ask the audience to write down whether they think the statements are true or false. This will generate discussion about the importance of equality, how civic action can change the world and the importance of exercising our democratic right to vote.

If you do not have enough time to hand out the worksheets, you could read out the statements and ask the audience to vote by a show of hands whether they think the statements are true or false.

Step 2

When going through the answers, use the elaboration column to give the audience more information.

| Statement | True/False | Elaboration |
|---|------------|--|
| The Suffragettes knew jujitsu (martial arts) | True | Edith Garrud, who ran a martial arts school with her husband, started to teach suffragettes jujitsu to defend themselves against hecklers in the audience and later against the police. When the Government passed the 'Cat and Mouse Act' in 1913, under which hunger strikers were released and then later rearrested, the Women's Social and Political Union responded by setting up a dedicated bodyguard unit. This unit was trained in jujitsu to protect Emmeline Pankhurst and other leaders from arrest. |
| The Suffragettes were force-fed in prison | True | The first hunger strike was undertaken by Marion Wallace-Dunlop in 1909 as a protest when she was not given political prisoner status in prison. She had been arrested for damaging a wall in St. Stephen's Hall in the Houses of Parliament. Force-feeding was used on Suffragettes who were sent to prison and then went on hunger strike. It was a controversial method frowned on by many members of the public. As a result the Government had to end force-feeding. However, it then introduced what became known as the 'Cat and Mouse Act' in 1913. They then released hunger strikers only to re-arrest them when they had regained their strength. |
| The Suffragette motto was 'votes for women' | False | The Suffragette motto was 'deeds, not words'. Women's Social and Political Union members, known as Suffragettes, had split from others in the suffrage movement as they were frustrated with lack of progress. The Suffragists believed in peaceful campaigning while the Suffragettes used violent methods to fight for their cause. Both groups were instrumental in securing women the right to vote. |
| The UK was the first country in the world to give women the vote | False | In 1893, New Zealand was the first independent country to give women the vote in modern times. |
| The first woman sat in the House of Lords in 1922 | False | It was not until the Life Peerages Act 1958 that women were finally allowed to sit in the House of Lords as life peers. Female hereditary peers were finally allowed to sit in the House of Lords after the Peerage Act 1963. |
| Many women didn't think they should have the right to vote | True | It was not just men who were against female suffrage. Reasons many men and women were against female suffrage and political involvement included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the belief that women were too emotional and therefore incapable of making sound political decisions • the belief that women would be corrupted by politics • fears that chivalry would die out if women and men became more equal • fears that women would stop marrying and having children |
| During the time of the suffrage movement, women were not allowed to go into museums and art galleries in London | True | The Suffragettes damaged famous artwork as a form of protest. This led to some major museums and galleries banning women completely. The National Portrait Gallery only allowed women to enter if they were accompanied by a man. |
| One of the Suffragettes was killed by a horse | True | Emily Wilding Davison was killed by King George V's horse at the 1913 Epsom Derby after running in front of it to give a letter to the King. |
| The Suffragettes used violent tactics to promote their cause | True | The Suffragettes were well known for smashing windows, cutting electricity wires, chaining themselves to railings and blowing up post boxes. The most extreme act of violence was blowing up a house in Surrey that was being built for finance minister and future prime minister David Lloyd George. |
| The Suffragettes were given their name by the Daily Mail newspaper | True | The term Suffragette was first used by the Daily Mail, and intended as a term of abuse, replacing "-ist" with the belittling, gender-specific "-ette". The Suffragettes instead embraced this title. |

Background

Many people aged 13 to 16 struggle to understand how democracy and decision making affects them and therefore fail to take an interest in democratic participation. This activity encourages the audience to think about how the decisions that government and Parliament make have a direct bearing on their everyday lives.

Aims

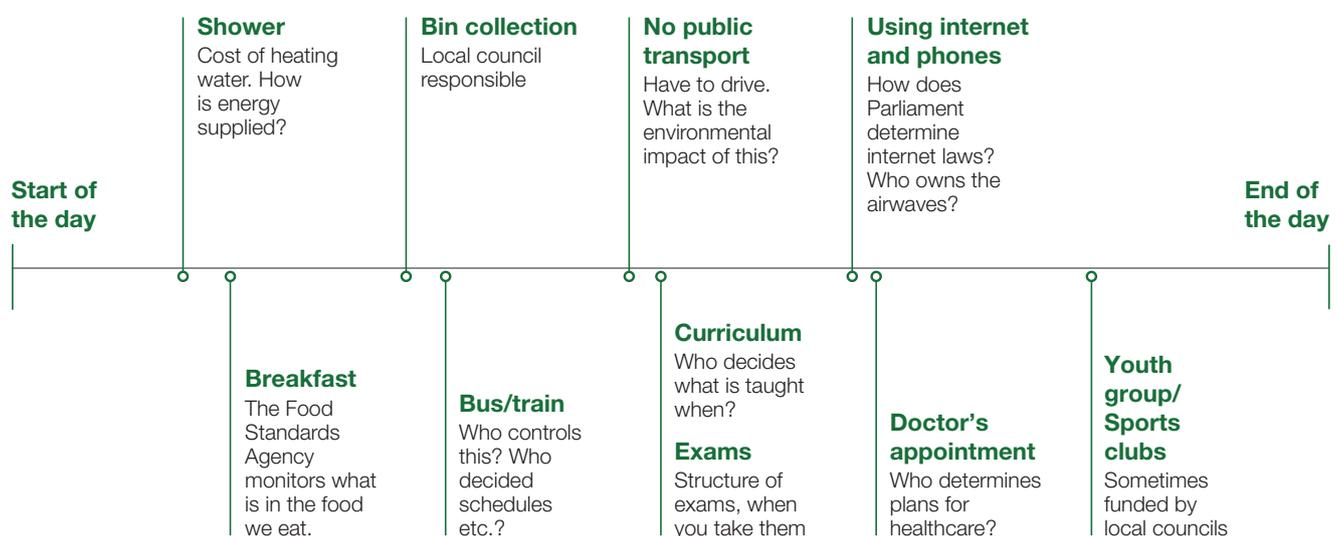
- Encourage the audience to think about how their lives are influenced by Parliament and the government
- Help the audience understand the work of an MP or peer and how they influence decision making
- Introduce the difference between local and national government structures and inform the audience who they can contact within these structures

Step 1

Ask the audience to think about their day so far. You might want to do this with everyone together or after splitting into smaller groups. What aspects of their daily lives have been influenced by the government? What decisions have been made by Parliament that have impacted them?

Step 2

Give everyone a worksheet and ask them to map out a normal day in their life, showing what decisions have been made for them in this process. The below diagram demonstrates what this might look like and has ideas you could use to prompt people if they get stuck.



Step 3

Once the audience has completed the activity you can use it as a stimulus for discussion. You could relate these topics back to the work you do, highlighting the differences between Members of the House of Lords, local councillors and MPs. This exercise is also a good way to introduce the devolved governments and the decisions they make. You could also use this exercise to compare the day of a young person in this country to other places in the world e.g. a child in USA can eat cereal with more additives. Why can't we here? Who decides this? In Sweden they would get on a bus powered by renewable fuels, in other countries they would not be able to get public transport at all. Who decides what happens with public transport in the UK? In China, the curriculum is influenced by political ideology. Who decides the curriculum in the UK?

Background

There are different types and forms of democracy around the world and in those systems people can have different rights and responsibilities. This activity helps to generate discussions about democracy in the UK and in other countries.

Aims

- Give the audience an understanding of their democratic rights and some key facts about what they can do to get involved with democracy
- Provide the audience with fun and interesting facts about democracy to pique their interest in the subject

Step 1

Give out the worksheet with the statements about democracy around the world. Ask the audience to write down whether they think the statements are true or false. This will generate discussion.

If you do not have enough time to hand out the worksheets, you could read out the statements and ask the audience to vote by a show of hands whether they think the statements are true or false.

Step 2

When going through the answers, use the elaboration column to give the audience more information.

| Statement | True/False | Elaboration |
|--|------------|---|
| The Queen cannot vote in a general election | False | The monarch is actually entitled in law to cast a ballot in general elections. However, in practice the Queen doesn't vote. This is because of a convention that she has to remain neutral about political matters. |
| UK astronauts can vote in a general election while they are in space | True | To vote in a UK election, an astronaut could appoint a proxy to cast their vote, or post their vote before going into space. In the USA, however, astronauts on the space station can vote in elections. |
| You can vote across the UK when you are 18 | True | You can vote for MPs to sit in the UK Parliament when you turn 18. |
| In one country, citizens vote by dropping marbles into a bin | True | In Gambia citizens vote for their president with a marble system. Voters enter a booth and drop a clear glass marble into one of three drums representing the candidates, instead of a putting a ballot paper into a box. As the marble falls into the drum, it hits a bell so officials can tell if anyone votes more than once. It was introduced in 1965 because of a high illiteracy rate. Afterwards voters have their finger dipped in indelible ink. |

| Statement | True/False | Elaboration |
|---|------------|---|
| You can take your pet to a polling station | True | There are no rules against having pets in polling stations and you are allowed to take dogs as long as they do not disrupt the voting process. The Electoral Commission advises that in some cases, unless they are service dogs, dogs may have to be left outside. |
| Elections are held in North Korea | True | Elections are held every five years in North Korea. However, there is only ever one name listed on the ballot paper. |
| General elections are held on a Thursday | True | Elections have been held on a Thursday in the UK since 1931. There is no reason for this although there are a variety of theories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday was traditionally payday so people thought everyone would be too busy in the pub to vote • in case people were influenced by church sermons, Thursday would put enough of a gap between Sunday and voting day • Thursday was traditionally market day and it was hoped people would go to the polling station while they were in town |
| Members of the House of Lords cannot vote in general elections | True | Members of the House of Lords cannot vote in general elections. This is because they are part of Parliament and so do not need to elect an MP to represent them in Parliament. However, they can vote in local authority elections and the European Parliament. |
| You can take a selfie of yourself voting | False | It is an offence to take/post a photograph of your completed ballot paper from a polling station as there are laws to maintain the secrecy of the ballot. The ballot is secret to prevent voters being intimidated or blackmailed or being paid to vote a certain way. The best place to take a photo if you want to record the moment you vote is outside the polling station. |
| There is no way for young people to get involved with Parliament before the age of 18 | False | You can stand for the Youth Parliament (UK and devolved) from the age of 11. You can write to your local MP on issues which matter to you. You can also start and sign petitions on the petition.parliament.uk website. If a petition gets 10,000 signatures the government will respond, if it gets 100,000 signatures, it will be considered for debate in Parliament. You can also apply to be a member of the Youth Select Committee which focuses on issues important to young people. |
| You can't join a political party until you turn 18 | False | All major political parties in the UK have a youth arm and you can join these before you turn 18. The exact age you can join varies from party to party but you can easily find this out through party websites. |
| The UK only has one voting system for all elections | False | The House of Commons, devolved assemblies and mayors in the UK are elected using different voting systems. The Commons and the House of Lords also use a variety of voting systems for internal elections. There are a number of different systems used including first-past-the-post, Alternative Vote, Supplementary Vote and Single Transferrable Vote. |
| In some countries voting is compulsory | True | In Australia, for example, it is compulsory to vote. Anyone who does not vote is subject to a fine of 20 AUS dollars. |
| All decisions in the UK are made through the UK Parliament | False | The UK Parliament has given a range of powers to devolved legislatures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This allows the devolved administrations to make decisions on specific policy areas at a more local level to the people of the devolved nations. Some decisions are also devolved to local government. This is important because it ensures that decisions are made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect. |

Background

Social media is an important form of communication for young people aged 13 to 16. This age group gets most of its news through social media and is greatly influenced by those they engage with on these platforms. Using social media to engage with this demographic might seem easy. However, research has shown that young people are very protective of their social media presence and privacy is important to them. Since many young people have a limited understanding of the work of MPs and peers they can be resistant to engaging with them online. The exercise below is a good way of introducing online engagement in a formal setting, which in turn could help develop this kind of engagement in the future.

Aims

- Use social media as an opportunity to engage young people aged 13 to 16 and to broadcast parts of your role that may not come across in a formal visit
- Allow the audience to respond to topics of debate through a platform they are comfortable using

Step 1

Rather than visiting a school in person you could set up an online Q&A session via Instagram Live. This bridges the gap between face-to-face and online engagement. It can be conducted from anywhere and potentially watched by a much larger audience. You could, for example, conduct a live Q&A from the Houses of Parliament – a place young people are often interested in but cannot all attend on a formal visit.

Step 2

When setting up this engagement with a school or youth group it is a good idea to offer the students a choice of what to talk about from a selection of topics. Provide a selection of roughly five topics, and then ask them to vote on the top two or three to discuss. This ensures the audience feels they are being listened to and their views are being taken into account. Focusing on a single issue in detail and then broadening this out to explain democratic structures is also a good way to promote understanding among young people, as they find it easier to understand situations they can relate to.

Step 3

Instagram Live allows viewers to post comments during the session. If the school/youth club allows students to use their phones this a good way for the audience to ask questions while you are speaking. This may help tackle shyness among those who do not want to ask a question out loud, and is a good way for you to see whether the same questions arise.

Background

It is important to teach young people about the different aspects of our democracy and UK constitution so that they can understand the different institutions which make up the constitution and how powers are distributed. Young people may not know how decisions are made on a local and national level and that different parts of the UK have their own governments with different powers and laws.

Aims

- Teach young people about the different institutions that make up the UK constitution
- Help the audience to understand the difference between local and national decision-making

Step 1

Explain to the audience that a constitution is a set of important rules that describe how a country is run. Give out the worksheets with information on the different parts of the UK constitution and ask the audience to match up each element with the correct definition.

Step 2

Go through the answer sheet with the audience. When going through the answers use the factsheet overleaf to elaborate on each of the different points. Some comparisons with other countries have been included to help the audience think about how our democracy functions compared with others and the reasons for this.

Step 3

Ask the audience some thought-provoking questions relating to the different areas of the constitution. Some potential prompt questions have been included on the factsheet. You may only have time to discuss one or two areas in detail. It may be a good idea to split the audience into smaller groups so they can discuss these questions amongst themselves before feeding back. Research has shown that this age group finds it difficult to think up answers on the spot and initially may feel more comfortable discussing answers with their peers.

Factsheet

Constitution: Elaboration

You could point out that the UK is unusual in that it does not have a written constitution. Instead the constitution comes from a number of sources. Its principal sources are common law and statute law, i.e. laws passed by the UK Parliament. There are also a number of customs and unwritten rules that are part of the constitution. For example, it is convention that the Monarch acts on the advice of his or her ministers and signs any Acts of Parliament that both Houses have agreed should become laws.

You could compare this with the USA, a country with a clear written constitution. You could also explore the potential benefits and difficulties of having a written constitution using a recent example such as the debate about the Second Amendment in America.

Potential discussion question: Why is it important for a country to have a set of rules and principles that everyone has to follow?

What are the potential problems of having a written constitution? For example, if the principles of the constitution were established many years ago are they still relevant today?

Parliament: Elaboration

You could explain the ways in which Parliament has changed over the past 100 years. This year is the 100 year anniversary since some women (over 30 and with property) won the right to vote and 90 years since all men and women won equal voting rights. You could then build on these examples and explain the other ways in which the UK Parliament has become more diverse in the last century. There are now more BME Parliamentarians, LGBTQ+ Parliamentarians and Parliamentarians with disabilities than ever before. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that there is still more to do to improve diversity amongst those who hold positions of power.

| | MPs | Peers |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| In 1918 there were: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 female MPs 0 BME MPs 0 openly LGBTQ+ MPs 0 MPs with known disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 female peers 0 BME peers |
| In 2018 there are ¹ : | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 208 female MPs 52 BME MPs 45 LGBTQ+ MPs 5 MPs with known disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 214 female peers² c. 44 BME peers³ |

Potential discussion question: Why is it important to have diversity among those who hold leadership positions?

What could be done to increase diversity in the workplace/media etc.?

Government and the electoral system: Elaboration

You could note that the UK Parliament uses the first-past-the-post electoral system which means that the MP who receives the most votes in their constituency wins.

Potential discussion question: What are the benefits of having an elected government?

Devolved administrations*: Elaboration

You could explain that in September 1997, referendums were

held in Scotland and Wales, and a majority of voters chose to establish a Scottish Parliament and a National Assembly for Wales. In Northern Ireland, devolution was a key part of the Good Friday Agreement, sometimes called the Belfast Agreement, supported by voters in a referendum in May 1998. The devolution settlements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are all different, and that the devolved administrations all have slightly different powers.

You could note that this is not the first time Scotland had a parliament. Before the Treaty of Union 1707 Scotland had an independent parliament known as the Parliament of Scotland.

You could ask the audience if they know which powers are devolved and which are reserved in the UK.

Potential discussion question: What are the benefits of giving powers to devolved administrations?

***Extension:** Activity 6 encourages a more extended discussion on devolution. This can be used as an extension to this exercise or as a stand-alone session.

Local government: Elaboration

You could explain that some decisions on services for people and businesses are devolved to local government. This is important because it ensures that decisions are made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect.

Some of the services that local government decides on include:

- housing
- local transport
- community centres
- libraries
- rubbish collection

You may want to discuss the role your local council plays in delivering these services and ask the audience about their experiences with these services.

You may also wish to discuss the different structures in local government as detailed below.

England

In most of England, there are two tiers – county and district – with responsibility for services split between the two tiers. County councils cover the entire county area and provide around 80 per cent of the services. Within the county, there are several district councils which cover a smaller area and provide more local services.

London, other metropolitan areas and some parts of shire England operate under a single-tier council structure.

Since the establishment of Greater Manchester in 2011, groups of councils have formed combined authorities in some areas of England. These combined authorities receive additional powers and funding from central government. They are particularly important for transport and economic policy across the regions in which they are based.

Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

All of Wales's 22 authorities, Scotland's 32 authorities and Northern Ireland's 11 authorities are unitary – they only have one tier of local government. This means that they do not split responsibilities between county and district services and instead each authority is responsible for all the decisions in the area.

Potential discussion question: What are the benefits of giving powers to local people and governments?

¹ House of Commons Library, 'Diversity in the 2017 Parliament', 2017

² House of Lords Library, 'Lords Membership: Lists of Current and Former Female Peers', 2018

³ House of Commons Library, 'Ethnic Minorities in Politics and Public Life', 2017

Background

Young people may not know that much about the devolved administrations in the UK and the different powers that they hold, although those living in the devolved nations are likely to have a far greater knowledge of devolution. This exercise explains the different powers of the devolved administrations and encourages the audience to think about the benefits of devolution.

Aims

- Teach young people about devolution in the UK and what it means in practice
- Teach young people about the different powers held by devolved administrations

Step 1

Ask the audience if they know anything about devolution in the UK. The definitions below may be helpful when explaining the different aspects of devolution.

| Term | Definition |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Devolved administrations | The devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, formed from parties elected in the devolved Parliaments or Assemblies. They are led by First Ministers. In Northern Ireland there is also a deputy First Minister. |
| Devolution | Devolution in the UK created a national Parliament in Scotland, a National Assembly in Wales and a National Assembly in Northern Ireland. This process gave the UK nations powers to make various decisions that had previously been made by the UK Parliament. The powers given to these nations have developed over time. |
| Devolved Parliaments or Assemblies | The democratically elected national Parliament or Assembly that represents the interests of the people of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, and is empowered to make laws on devolved matters such as education and health. The elected Members are different to the Members of the UK Parliament. |

You could explain that in September 1997, referendums were held in Scotland and Wales, and a majority of voters chose to establish a Scottish Parliament and a National Assembly for Wales. In Northern Ireland, devolution was a key part of the Good Friday Agreement, sometimes called the Belfast Agreement, supported by voters in a referendum in May 1998. The devolution settlements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are all different, and that the devolved administrations all have slightly different powers.

You could note that this is not the first time Scotland had a parliament and that before the Treaty of Union 1707 Scotland had an independent parliament known as the Parliament of Scotland.

The devolution settlements have developed on a number of occasions since they were first introduced. Following the Scotland Act 2016, the Scottish Parliament was given more controls over how it charges people tax. It is also now responsible for raising 50% of the money it spends. Moreover, it can legislate on new areas such as equal opportunities, speed limits and gaming machines.

The Wales Act 2017 granted powers for the National Assembly for Wales to change its electoral rules, size and other internal affairs. The act sets out the things the Assembly cannot do, called ‘reservations’, instead of setting out what the Assembly can do, as was previously the case. This model has been used for the Scottish Parliament since the first Scotland Act in 1998.

Step 2

Explain that the powers devolved assemblies and governments hold are called devolved powers and the powers that the UK Parliament and UK government hold are called reserved powers. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 is different in that it specifies transferred matters, devolved matters and excepted matters. Each devolved government is responsible for all devolved powers and makes decisions on policy and spending in these areas.

Ask the audience to complete the worksheet, identifying some of the powers which are devolved and some of the powers which are reserved. Once this has been completed go through the correct answers below:

| Devolved (or ‘Transferred’ in NI) | Reserved (or ‘Excepted’ in NI) |
|--|--|
| Education | Foreign affairs (managing relationships with other countries) |
| Housing | Defence |
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing (supporting and making laws about farming, forestry and fishing industries) | National security (keeping the public safe from terrorism and cyber-attacks) |
| Local government | The constitution |
| Health and social care | International trade (buying and selling goods with other countries) |
| Policing and justice* *you should point out that these powers are devolved for Scotland and Northern Ireland, but reserved for Wales. | Broadcasting (TV, Radio and other media) |
| Fire services | Nuclear energy (energy created through nuclear power) |
| Environment | Immigration (controlling who comes in and out of the UK) |
| Tourism, sports and the arts | |
| Transport* *you should point out that some aspects of transport are reserved. | |

Step 3

Ask the audience to consider why certain powers are devolved and certain powers are reserved. You could split the audience into groups and give each group one or two powers to discuss. Bring the group back together to discuss their answers, and have a wider discussion about the benefits of both giving powers to devolved administrations and reserving some powers to the UK Parliament and UK government.

Background

Young people aged 13 to 16 have lots of opinions about what's going on in the world around them but often find it difficult to think about and discuss these issues unprompted. This activity encourages you to think of some thought-provoking questions on topics of interest to help prompt constructive discussion.

Aims

- Encourage the audience to think about the different areas of their lives that are affected by government decisions
 - Encourage the audience to think about the way they would do things differently, and think of themselves as people who can influence change
 - Help the audience to understand that every government decision has to be paid for and implemented
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Step 1

Think of some national or local issues that are relevant to young people in your area. Research has shown that this age group are often particularly interested in local issues and issues on education, the environment, animal welfare and mental health.

Prepare some open ended questions to encourage the audience to think about what they would do to help resolve these issues if they were in power.

Step 2

Split the audience into small groups and give each group one or two questions to consider. The questions should be designed to get the audience thinking – emphasise that these should be used as a springboard to generate discussions and that they don't have to stick to the questions allocated to them if there are other issues that they would like to discuss.

Step 3

Ask the groups to feed back what they think is the most important issue they have been talking about. You can then use these examples to explain how you would go about making these changes in Parliament, the process of passing laws and the different roles of MPs and peers. This is also a good way for you to understand what the biggest priorities are for your young constituents.
