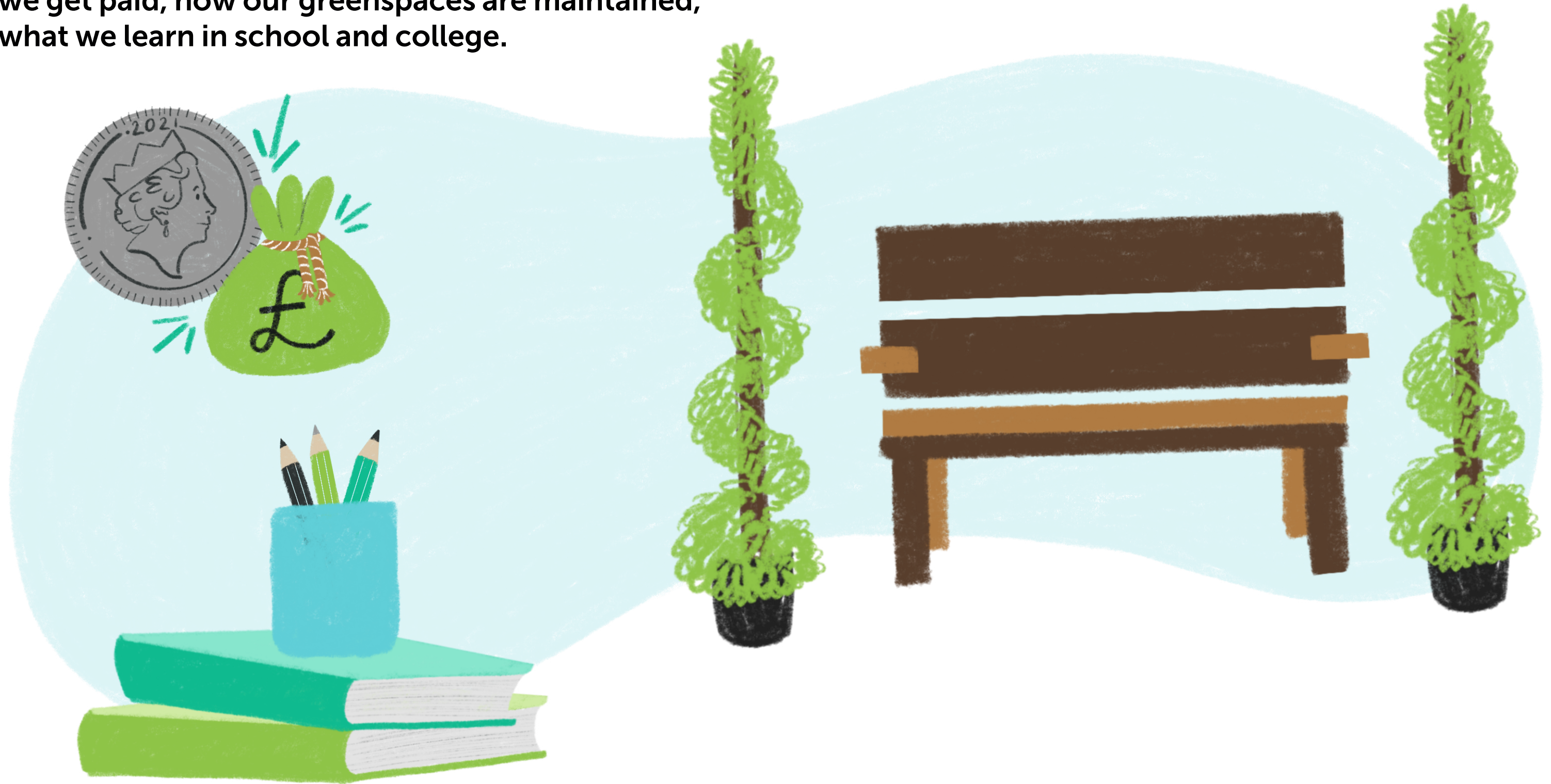


12 Ways Young People Can Get Involved in Politics

This guide was written by Emily Beever, Senior Development Officer at YouthLink Scotland.



Politics affects everything around us – how much we get paid, how our greenspaces are maintained, what we learn in school and college.

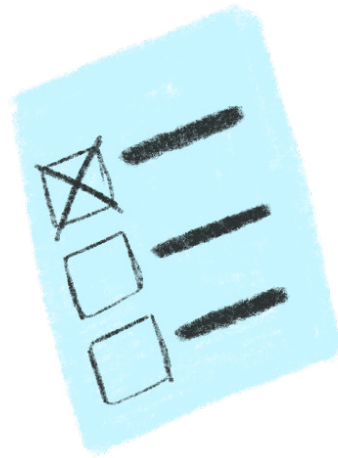


But **how do we have a say** in that?

All young people have a right to have their voice heard on matters that affect them and there are many ways for young people to get involved in politics, even if you aren't yet old enough to vote.

1. VOTE

Voting deserves the top spot on this list – it is the **ultimate way** that democracy works and the **voice of the people is heard**. Voting isn't just restricted to UK-wide elections either. Look out for local council elections, parliamentary elections if you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, or **local mayoral** elections. You can **vote from age 16 in Scotland and Wales**, and **18 in England and Northern Ireland**.



2. GET INVOLVED IN YOUR YOUTH PARLIAMENT

There are now **Youth Parliaments** or **Assemblies** in **every nation** of the **UK**. Getting involved in your youth parliament will give you an opportunity to **represent other young people** and help their issues to be heard.

[UK Youth Parliament](#)
[Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland](#)
[Scottish Youth Parliament](#)
[Welsh Youth Parliament](#)

3. LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW IT ALL WORKS

Politics can seem really confusing if you're not in the know. **Never fear** – there's ways to get the essential info without being overwhelmed. The **UK Parliament runs online sessions to support people** to get their **voice heard** and to **strengthen community** ties.

You can find more [here](#).



4. CONTACT YOUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

If there is something happening that you **don't agree with** or want to **take action on**, you can **contact your elected representatives directly**. They all have email addresses and lots of them are also on social media. You may want to discuss a question or issue with your representatives face to face, and you can do so by attending a **surgery**. A political surgery or constituency surgery, in British and Irish politics, is a series of one-to-one meetings that a Member of Parliament (MP) or other political officeholder may have with their constituents. This is often the **best way to raise an issue with them directly!**



5. RESPOND TO CONSULTATIONS

The **government**, **parliamentary committees** and **government agencies** often **run consultations on different issues** they are exploring, for example before a law is passed. Usually they anticipate a **written response**, sometimes through a **digital form**, but increasingly they will accept **video responses**. You don't need to answer every question they ask – just **share how the issue impacts you** and what you would like to see happen.

[Scottish Government consultations](#)
[Welsh Government consultations](#)
[NI Government consultations](#)
[UK Government consultations](#)

6. START OR SIGN A PETITION

A petition is a document of **agreed ideas** or actions to be **changed to Laws on a national level**. You can now do this digitally via the government's website. Each national parliament (except NI Assembly) has its own petition function where you can start and sign petitions. If a petition gets **over a certain amount of signatures**, the parliament are **obligated to take action** on it, like hold a debate. There are also other petition websites like Change.org but politicians don't have to recognise petitions on these sites. In Wales you need 50 signatures for the Senedd to discuss the petitioned topic. In England you need 100,000 signatures for parliament to discuss the petitioned topic. In Scotland you only need 1 signature for the public petitions committee to discuss the petitioned topic.



[Scottish Parliament petitions](#)
[UK Parliament petitions](#)
[Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru petitions](#)

7. JOIN A CAMPAIGNING GROUP OR ORGANISATION

There are loads of national or local organisations that are already working on an issue you care about. You could join them as a [member](#), [volunteer](#), or even get involved in their decision-making as a [youth trustee](#).

The Wildlife Trusts
Friends of the Earth
RSPB
WWF



8. JOIN A POLITICAL PARTY

This is a great way to [stay involved with a political party that reflects your views](#). By being a member of a political party, you can also play a [role in deciding the party's priorities](#) and [who the local candidates are](#).

9. HOST AN EVENT WITH LOCAL POLITICIANS

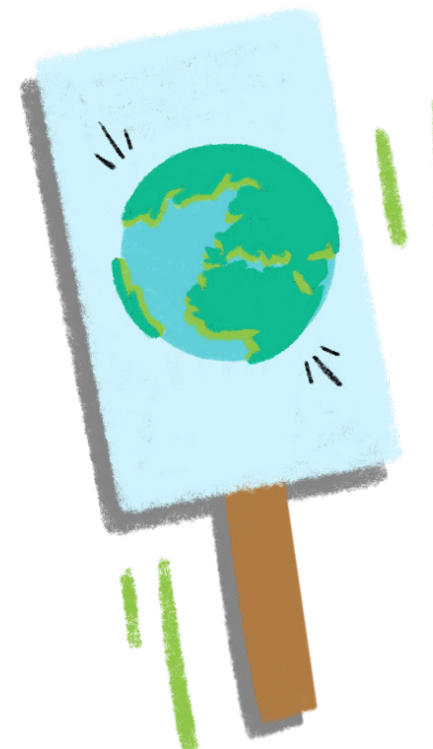
Want to make sure other young people know what's going on in your area? Why not host an event with local politicians! It could be a simple [question and answer](#) format on a [specific issue](#), an assembly or even a hustings event in the run up to an election.

An [assembly](#) is a group of people brought together to discuss an issue/s, and reach a [conclusion](#) about what they think should happen. Assemblies give members of the public the time and opportunity to learn about and discuss a topic, before reaching conclusions. Sometimes politicians are invited to assemblies to hear the needs of the public. For more information on organising a hustings, see our other guide in this series.

A hustings is a meeting where election candidates or parties debate policies and answer questions from the audience. Hustings provide voters with an opportunity to hear the views of candidates or parties. When all candidates or parties standing are invited, a hustings [does not promote any particular candidate or party](#) because they all have the opportunity to speak and be questioned.

10. SHARE YOUR MESSAGE

Get your message out to others by [sharing what you've learnt](#) or experienced. [Social media](#) is a great way to [connect with others](#) and you can be really innovative in how you do this. Youth Cymru have started a [podcast](#) to educate and engage young people on different topics.



11. PROTEST

The [school strikes for climate](#) are an example of how [powerful collective action](#) can be. Protests come in many forms – even a few people can make a difference.

12. RUN FOR A POLITICAL POSITION

This one is a big commitment but if you're [18](#) you can [run for political office](#). For more information on running in a [parish council election](#), see our other guide in this series.



The **youngest** members of parliaments
across the UK at the time of their election:

21

Northern Ireland Assembly

21

Scottish Parliament

**'All young people
have a right to have
their voice heard.'**

23

Welsh Parliament/
Senedd Cymru

23

UK Parliament

Useful Links

[Our Bright Future](#)
[Welcome to Your Vote – Electoral Commission](#)
[UK Student Climate Network](#)
[Youth Politics](#)

Our Bright Future is an ambitious and innovative partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts which brings together the youth and environmental sectors. This £33 million programme, funded by the [National Lottery Community Fund](#), is formed of 31 [projects](#) across the UK. Each project is helping young people aged 11-24 gain vital skills and experience and improve their wellbeing. At the same time, they act as catalysts for delivering change for their local environment and community; whilst contributing to a greener economy.

