# Making changes to elections and how we vote

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**A young people's consultation**
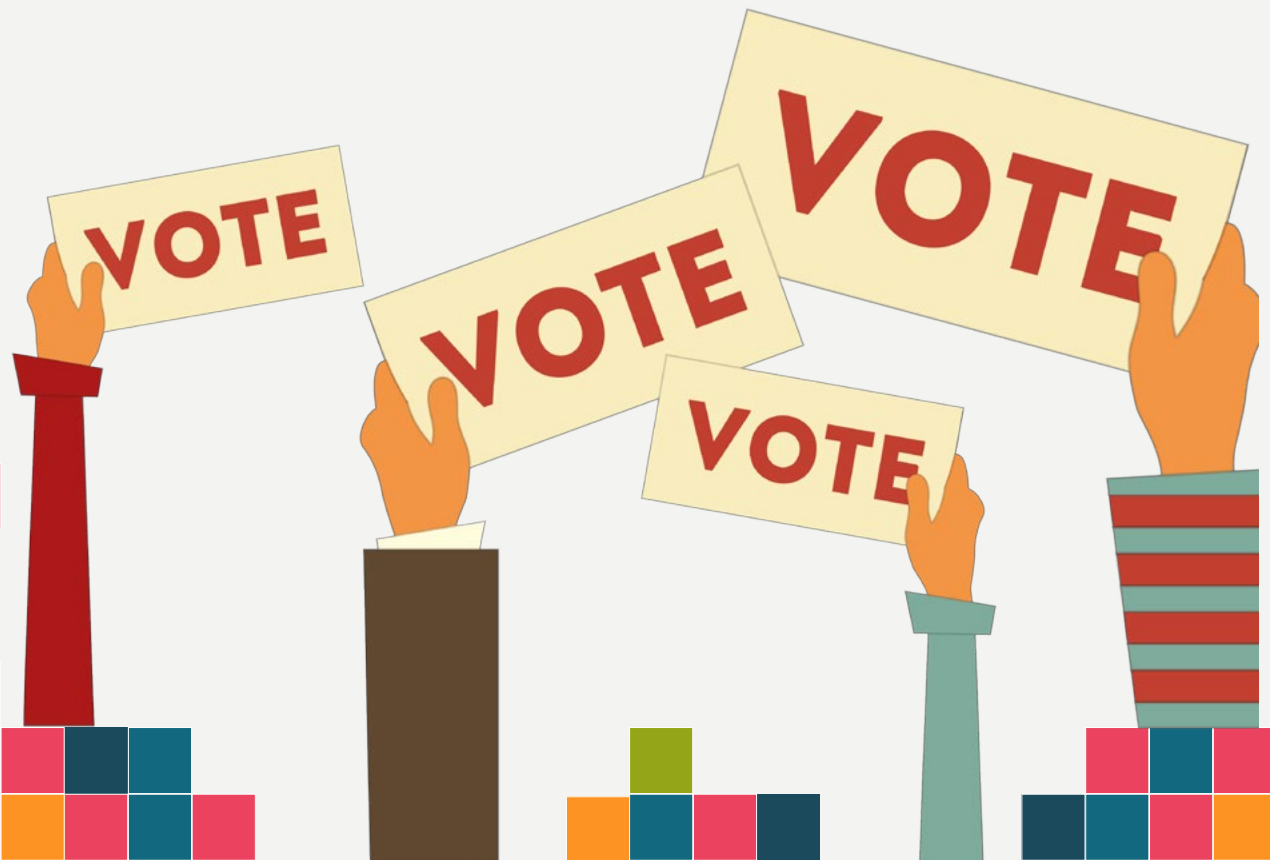
# Introduction

The Welsh Government wants as many people as possible to have a say in Wales. We want people to register and vote in elections.

Wales has a democratic system. This means:

- it's free for people to vote
- your rights to take part and have a say are protected.

Taking part in elections is important. There are elections for:

- the 22 local councils every four years
- the Assembly for Wales every five years.

## How it works

Elections haven't changed much in the last hundred years:

- People register with their local council and can then vote.
- On election day, they walk into their local polling station.
- Then mark their ballot paper and vote.

Some people choose to receive their ballot paper in the post.

- They mark their ballot paper and vote.
- Then they sign the declaration, put it all in the envelope and post it back.

## New law

There's a new law called the Wales Act (2017). It gives Welsh Ministers more powers over some laws and decisions in Wales.

**The Wales Act (2017) also allows us to make changes on how elections work in Wales.**

This booklet is about some of the changes we want to make.

**We want to know what you think so we don't leave anything important out.**
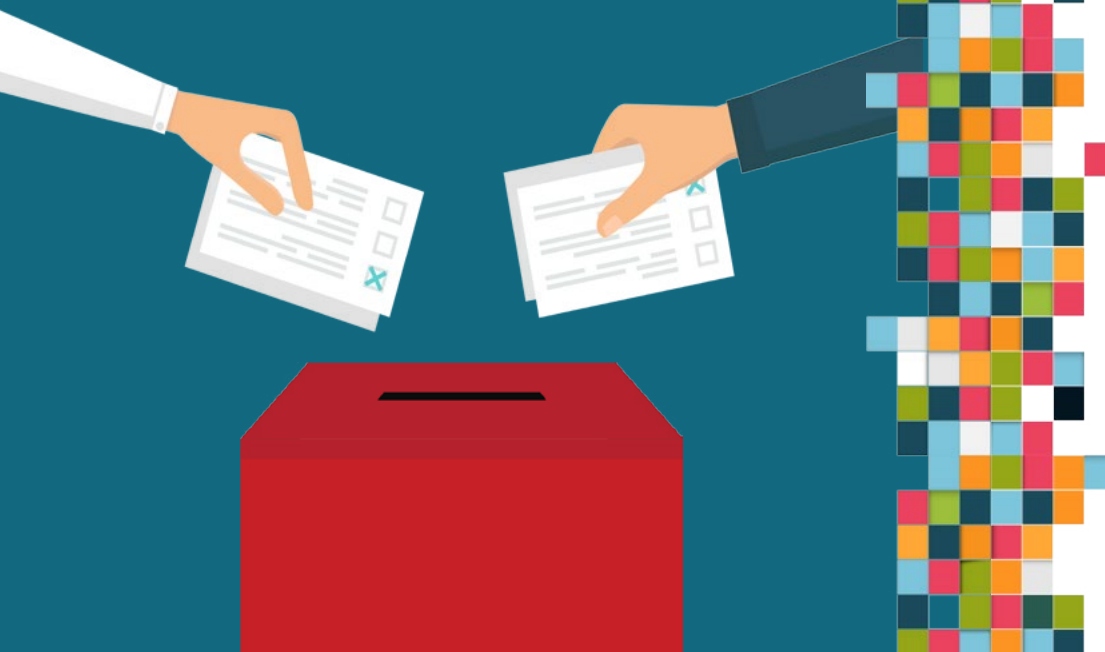
# Changing who can vote

## Age to Vote

To vote in elections you must be over 18. We want to include 16 and 17 year olds too.

The Scottish parliament lowered the voting age in 2014. It worked well:

- 75% of 16 -17 year olds in Scotland voted
- only 54% of 18-24 year olds voted.

**?** Do you think we should lower the voting age for Welsh elections?

Yes        No

## Citizens

There are rules about who can vote in elections.

### Countries in the European Union like France or Germany

People who already live here from EU countries can vote in our elections. We don't want this to change when we leave the EU. We also don't know if people who move here from EU countries after we leave the EU will have the same rights to vote or not.

### Commonwealth countries like Canada or Australia

People who live here from Commonwealth countries can vote in our elections.

### All other countries like USA, Russia or China

People who live here from outside the EU can't vote in our elections.

Some people think if you live in Wales, then you should be able to vote no matter where you come from.

**?** Do you think EU citizens who move to Wales after we leave the EU should be able to vote in our elections?

Yes        No

Should everyone legally living here be able to vote?

Yes        No

Is there anything you want to say on this section?

# Changing how to register

Registering means applying to put your name on the list allows you to vote. This list is run by the local **Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)**.

## How it's done

It's up to you whether you register or not. But we could make changes so:

- information is shared with the ERO from services like the DVLA or HMRC

- the ERO could then add people to the register.

This would be more like an automatic registration system where everyone is included.

This doesn't mean you have to vote – it just means everyone who has the right to vote, can vote.

**?** Do you think EROs should have more ways to help them add people to the register?

Yes          No

## Helping people register

We could get council staff to help people register in places like libraries. We'd need a new system that works well so details don't get lost or copied.

The ERO would still be in control over the register and see all changes.

**?** Do you think local authority staff should be able to help people register?

Yes          No

## Having an all-Wales electronic register

We could make one single electronic register for the whole of Wales. It could cover the 22 local authorities and be the same for everyone.

**?** Do you think we should have a single electronic register for Wales?

Yes          No

Is there anything you want to say on this section?

# Changing the voting system

There are two different voting systems being considered.

**First past the post**
This is the system we use in the UK and Wales.
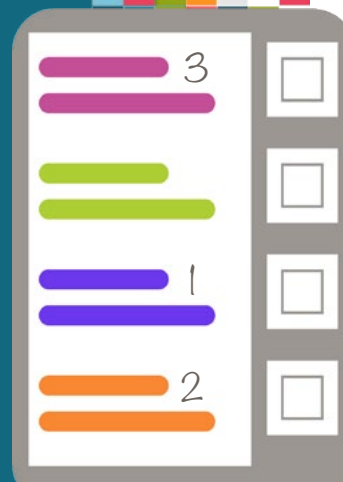
It means each vote is counted once.
The person with the highest number of votes, wins.

**Single Transferable Vote (STV)**
Lots of other countries use this system.
Voters are asked to rank candidates in the order they want.

Voters can choose to rank all or only a few.

## Deciding what system to use
We could allow each local authority to decide which voting system they want to use.

If they change their system they can only change back after two elections have passed.

**?** Do you think each council should be able to choose their voting system?

Yes          No

## Five year terms
We want to change local council elections from every four years to every five years. The next date for an election would be May 2022.

**?** Do you think elections should be every five years?

Yes          No

Is there anything you want to say on this section?

# Changing the ways to vote

## Online

People vote for TV shows and competitions all the time. They use a computer, mobile phone or apps.

We could use more modern technology for voting in elections. This could help deal with security issues and get more people to vote.

**?** Do you think we should change the voting system to get more people to take part?

Yes          No

## By post

It's possible to make everyone vote by post. Other areas of the UK have tried this and voting numbers went up. If we did this, we'd need to change the law to make sending in someone else's postal vote a crime.

**?** Do you think councils should be able to choose to use all-postal voting for their elections?

Yes          No

## An electronic system

Some countries have electronic voting systems. This means putting touch-screens in polling stations. Council officers would check each voter's' ID before they vote.

It will cost money. But, it could also save time and money spent on people counting votes and hiring halls.

**?** Do you think electronic voting should be available?

Yes          No

## Remote voting

This is a way of voting through the internet by an electronic device. Each person will have their own code and it's quite easy to use. Some banks already use these to keep people's information safe. We'd need other ways for people to vote who don't want to vote this way.

**?** Do you think remote voting should be available at local elections?

Yes          No

Is there anything you want to say on this section?

# Changing the places to vote

**Mobile polling stations.**
Some communities already have mobile libraries we could use as mobile polling stations. This may help people to vote including old people who find it hard to travel to polling stations.

We would make an electronic register that updates after people vote. This would make sure people didn't vote twice.

**?** Do you think mobile polling stations should be available?

Yes          No

## New places
We could put polling stations in places people use every day. Places like supermarkets, libraries, leisure centres or railway stations.

We would make an electronic register that updates after people vote. This would make sure people didn't vote twice.

**?** Do you think we should have these as polling places as well as fixed polling stations?

Yes          No

Is there anything you want to say on this section?

VOTE
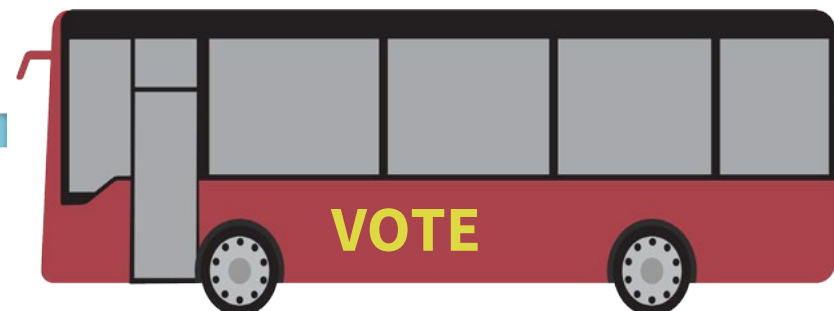
# Changing things to make it easier

**Voting on different days and on more than one day.**

Elections are on Thursdays. Some countries have elections on Sundays because more people are off work.

We could also allow voting on more than one day. This could help voting numbers or overcome issues with bad weather or transport.

**?** Should local elections be held on more than one day and on days other than a Thursday?

Yes          No

## Showing personal ID

Registering to vote means you don't have to take personal ID like a passport with you. When you go to the polling station they will know who you are from the list. This makes it easy for people on voting day.

But some people think bringing personal ID could stop fraud.

Others think having to show ID could stop people voting. Especially if they don't have it with them on the day.

**?** Should people have to show ID before they can vote?

Yes          No

Is there anything you want to say on this section?

# Changes to standing for election

## Candidate information

Most candidates just want to support their area and help people. But, some candidates face abuse and bullying. Their personal address is published. This means they can face this at their home. We think this should change

**?** Do you think we should stop publishing a candidate's home address?

     Yes          No

## What they believe

It's important people know what a candidate believes and what their plans are. Each candidate could write a statement that would be online in one place. This would help people see the different ideas and vote with more information.

**?** Do you think each candidate should have to give a personal statement?

     Yes          No

## Their political party

Not all candidates are part of a political party. Some run as independents. Candidates must let people know if they are a member of a political party and not stand as independent.

**?** Do you think candidates should say which political party they are part of, if they have one?

     Yes          No

Is there anything you want to say on this section?

# Next steps

We want to make changes that help people in Wales have a say in elections.

**We want to hear what you think.**

Please send your answers to:
RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk

by 10 October 2017.