



We want to make changes to elections in Wales

We want to know what you think



This document was written by the **Welsh Government**. It is an easy read version of '**Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper**'.

October 2022

How to use this document



This is an easy read document. But you may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what the words in blue mean on **page 25**.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Where the document says **we**, this means **Welsh Government**. For more information contact:

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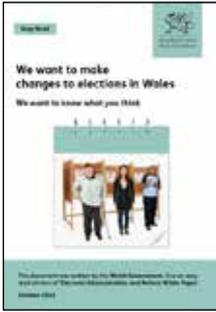
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About this document



This document is all about the changes we are thinking about to make it easier to vote and stand for elections in Wales.



We will be talking about the changes we want to make to the law.



And the ideas we have for making the **electoral system** better.

The **electoral system** means the way we vote for the people we want to represent us in government in Wales.



There is a **response form** to go with this booklet.



Please read through this document. Then answer the questions in the **response form**. Please send us your answers by **10 January 2023**.

Introduction



In Wales we can make our own rules and laws for how local government is run. And how we do **Senedd** elections.



The **Senedd** is another name for Welsh Parliament. It is where laws are made in Wales.



We vote for people in elections to represent us in Welsh Parliament. The people elected are called **Members of the Senedd**.



We vote for people to represent us in councils and community councils too. These people are called **elected members or councillors**.



Wales started making more decisions about elections through a law called the **Wales Act 2017**.

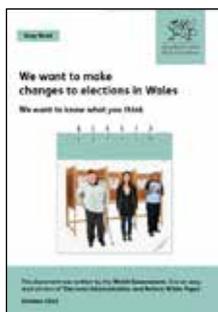


When this happened, Wales made some changes to how we vote for people to represent us.

For example:



- 16 and 17 year olds can now vote.
- Some people living in the UK who are from other countries can vote.
- Local authorities can decide which type of voting system they use.



This document will talk about the other changes we want to make.

6 principles



The changes we want to make are based on **6 principles**. Principles are ideas that we want to follow.

The 6 principles are:



1. **Equity** – Every person who wants to vote should be able to do so. And in a safe and respected way.



2. **Accessibility** – Everyone who wants to vote should be able to do so easily. No matter what their needs are.



3. **Participation** – We want as many people as possible to use their right to vote.



4. Improving citizen experience – People should be given the things they need to make changes in their communities and in Wales.



5. Simplicity – Every part of voting should be easy for people.



6. Integrity – This means the voting system must be something people trust.

Some of our long-term goals



We want to make sure laws about elections are easy to use. And in the Welsh language.



We want it to be easy for people to vote. No matter what their needs are.

Voting online



Being able to vote online would be the best way to vote for a lot of people.



But at the moment, we don't think there is enough security to do this.



So, we are not going to try and make laws about online voting yet.



But we will look into what is needed for this type of system to run.

Diversity



We believe the **Senedd** and **local government** should be more **diverse**.

Diverse means more candidates in the **Senedd** and **local government** from different backgrounds, with different abilities and views.



An example of this would be to make sure there are more female candidates.

All-Wales Database



We are thinking about setting up an **All-Wales database**.



This would be a set of information online.



It would make it easier to register to vote.



But it would take time and money to set up. So, we're still deciding if this is a good idea.

How long people are in Government



We need to decide how long people should hold their positions in local government elections.



At the moment, people stay in their position for 5 years, but this could change.

Making it easier to vote

At the moment, someone can vote for the Senedd and councils in Wales if they:



- can be registered to vote and
- are of voting age – 16 years or older on voting day
- unless they are specifically not allowed to vote, like most prisoners.



We want to put the rules for who can vote in one law so it is clearer.

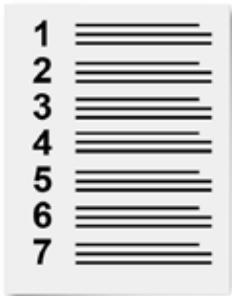
Automatic registration



At the moment, people have to register to vote. This is called the **Individual Registration Process**.



The local authority contacts every household and checks their details are up to date. Or if they need to register.



Everyone who is registered is on a list called the **electoral register**.



We would like to change to an **automatic registration** system for Senedd and council elections.



This would mean anyone eligible could be added to the **electoral register** by their local authority.



We think this would be helpful for young people who are now of the age to vote.



And for people who have moved here from abroad who are allowed to vote.



We also think it will make the system simpler.



We would like to remove the **open register** for elections in Wales.



The **open register** is an extract of the electoral register but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm name and address details.



This would mean people's private information could not be sold to companies.



But the information would still be available for some organisations. For example, if you wanted to apply for credit with a bank.



We want to know what people think about making the system easier.



But also making sure people's information is kept safe.



So, we need to know what people's views are on collecting and storing their information.

Students and voting



Many university students in Wales do not vote.



One reason might be because they often change their address when in university.



We would like to start asking students to register to vote when they start university.



This has been found to be helpful to students.



We would need to work with Local Authorities and Universities in Wales for this to happen.



In the long term, we would like students to become part of the **Automatic Registration** system we talked about on **page 13 to page 16**.

Making our electoral system stronger

The Welsh language



Every council must have a **Returning Officer**. Their job is to make sure elections are run properly. And that voters have a good experience.



Elections are usually run in English and Welsh but **Returning Officers** do not have to follow special laws or rules about the Welsh language.



However, we want the Welsh and English languages to be treated equally.



We would like people's views about these issues.

Improving voting



There is not always enough information to help people when voting.



When people do not have the information they need, it can put them off voting.



Better information about political parties or candidates is needed to help people decide to vote.



People must get the information they need. And in the way that they need it.



For example, information about voting in Easy Read.



Some people with a learning disability do not know that they **can** vote.



We are working with organisations to help make sure people know about their rights to vote.



We also want to make sure that disabled people can get to and use **polling stations**.

A **polling station** is where people go to vote.



We want to make sure that the right equipment is available to help disabled people to vote.

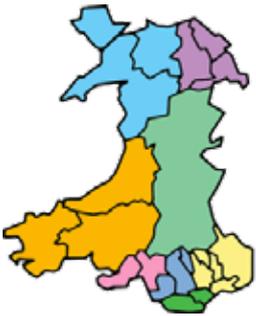


We want to make sure people can vote, whatever needs they have. Their vote should be kept private, whatever their needs are.

Welsh elections in the future



We want to make sure people have the best chances to vote.



We tried out different ways of voting in some parts of Wales.



For example, being able to vote earlier.



People said they liked the chance to vote earlier. It made it easier for them to vote.



However, this did not increase the number of people who voted.



We think we need to do more work on this before deciding to use this type of voting.



We also need to look at postal voting.



Postal voting is a reliable way of voting.



But people do not know whether their votes have been received or whether they have made mistakes that would mean their vote won't be counted.



We would like people to be able to correct any mistakes on their postal vote.



We have tried out **Digital Registers** in some parts of Wales.



This is where people's information is held on a computer instead of paper.



And it has worked well.



We would like to develop this way as a choice for elections in the future.

Training



At the moment, councillors attend training courses if they want to.



For example, councillors often do a lot of work to support people most at risk of harm. So, it is important they understand their needs.



We would like to know your view on whether you think that all councillors should have training in some important areas.



It would be important for councillors to know that they must do some training before they got elected.



Please now go to the response form to answer the questions.

Hard words

Diverse

Diverse means more candidates in the Senedd and local government from different backgrounds, with different abilities and views.

Electoral system

The electoral system means the way we vote for the people we want to represent us in government and run Wales.

Open register

The open register is an extract of the electoral register but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm name and address details.

Polling station

A polling station is where people go to vote.