

# Scottish Election Toolkit

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This guide aims to give clear and accessible information and resources to help you, or someone you support, prepare for voting in the Scottish Parliament election on Thursday 7 May 2026.

**SCOTTISH  
AUTISM**

Embracing difference,  
leading change

**Centre for  
Practice  
Policy and  
Research**

On Thursday 7 May 2026, people in Scotland will vote to choose 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament.

It is important that everyone who is eligible to vote and of voting age can get clear and accessible information. This helps people understand their voting rights and take part in this year's and future elections.

## Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is for autistic people and anyone who supports them. This could be family, Autism Practitioners, or any other person who an autistic person trusts.

## Why have we made this toolkit?

Scottish Autism recognises that while autistic adults have the right to vote, many who are eligible or interested may not yet be registered or have previously voted.

As a rights-based organisation, we believe it is essential that autistic people can fully participate in elections, make informed choices, and have their voices heard.

We worked with three Autistic People's Organisations (National Autistic Taskforce, Autistic Mutual Aid Society Edinburgh and Autistic Rights Group Highland) as part of an [Inclusive Governance Project](#), who recommended a focus on active citizenship and supporting autistic people to access their right to make and inform decisions that impact their lives. While Scottish Autism developed this toolkit, we are grateful for the valuable influence these organisations have had on shaping our approach.

Elections are an important time for influencing changes in politics that can shape how the country runs. Autistic people should be supported to access their right to vote to actively participate in deciding who is elected and will represent them.

We know that it can be challenging to find accessible information, so we created this toolkit to help autistic person, and those supporting them, find the information they need to vote.

## How to use the toolkit?

This toolkit has links to online resources about the different stages of being involved in the election, including:

- Information about what Scottish Autism's *Seize the Moment* manifesto asks are and a template email to send to local candidates
- How to talk about elections
- How to register (or support someone to register) to vote
- Places you can find information about the election and who/ what you may wish to vote for (e.g. political party manifestos)
- How to get involved in politics (e.g. attending a hustings)
- How to vote
- How to support someone with voting

You may be aware of other resources that we do not know. If there is anything that you have found helpful either for yourself or someone you support, please share this with Aimee Fletcher ([Aimee.Fletcher@scottishautism.org](mailto:Aimee.Fletcher@scottishautism.org)) or Mark McDonald ([Mark.McDonald@scottishautism.org](mailto:Mark.McDonald@scottishautism.org)) who can update this toolkit.

# Scottish Autism's Manifesto and template for contacting your local candidate(s)

[Seizing the Moment - Scottish Autism](#) - Check out our Manifesto Asks for all the political parties running in the election.

[Easy Read - Scottish Autism's Manifesto for Change 2026](#) - An Easy Read version of our Manifesto Asks.

## 1. Talking about elections

[How government works - My Vote My Voice](#) - This is an Easy Read resource on how the government works.

[What your vote does - My Vote My Voice](#) - This is an Easy Read resource that explains what your vote does and why it is important.

[Quick guide to voting - My Vote My Voice](#) - This resource webpage explains the 4 stages of voting.

## 2. Registering to vote

[MVMV-About-registering-to-vote-1.pdf](#) - This short Easy Read resource explains how to register to vote, and the different ways to vote that you can register for (e.g. in-person, postal or by proxy voting).

[Easy\\_Read\\_Guide\\_Mencap\\_July\\_2015.pdf2.pdf](#) - This is an older (2015) Easy Read resource on registering to vote. It has a guide on political terms used and flash cards that could be adapted for individuals to use.

[Supporting someone to register to vote](#) - This is a helpful guide for anyone assisting someone to register to vote.

[Video: Registering to vote by MacIntyre's Shout Out TV group - My Vote My Voice](#) - This video was created by adults with learning disabilities explaining how to register to vote.

[Quick guide to voting: Registering to vote in Scotland](#) - This two minute video explains how to register to vote.

## 3. Finding out about your local candidates and preparing to vote

[How to find out who is standing for election and what they think - My Voice, My Vote](#) - This guide explains how to find out who is standing for election in your area. It includes step-by-step advice on how to search online for local candidates.

[Autism Hustings - Wednesday 15th April at 5-7pm | Eventbrite](#) - This is an in-person event happening in Glasgow, and organised jointly by NAS Scotland and Scottish Autism. It will be chaired by journalist and broadcaster Stuart Cosgrove, and individual party candidates will be confirmed. Questions should be submitted in advance on key themes.

[Voting Counts: Your UK election questions answered](#) - This webpage provides accessible information and tools about voting to enable citizens to access their right to vote and participate in democratic processes.

## 4. Getting involved in Politics

[Guidance on Accessing Politics - Inclusion Scotland](#) - Inclusion Scotland have a resource for any disabled person interested in becoming involved in politics.

[The Election Section – The Scottish Assembly](#) - The Scottish Assembly believe that autistic people and people with learning disabilities should be able to access politics and be active, informed citizens. They plan to update their Election webpage in the run up to the election.

## 5. Going to vote

[My rights at the polling station - My Vote My Voice](#) - You have the right to vote and to your needs being met, this is a downloadable template for writing your reasonable adjustments, who is supporting you to vote and the laws that protect your right to vote?

[Practice Ballot Papers](#) - We prepared this resource with practice ballot papers to help you prepare for voting in person.

[How to Vote in Person](#) - This is a step-by-step guide to what to expect when voting in a polling station. Please note, you do not need to show your photo ID at a Scottish parliament election.

[Welcome to Your Vote - Ways to Vote in Scotland - Full Video](#) - This animated video by the Electoral Commission shows the different ways you can vote in an election.

[How to vote in the Scottish Parliament election: The Scottish Parliament](#) - This animated video shows how to vote in the Scottish Parliament election.

## Guidance for supporting someone to vote

[I am a carer or support worker - My Vote My Voice](#) - This is a tool that an individual can use to communicate their access needs at polling stations with evidence of the laws that give them the right to adjustments.

[My-Vote-My-Voice-definition-sheet.pdf](#) - This is a helpful one page document with terminology that you often hear in the lead up to and during elections, and when there is a conversation about politics.

[My Voting Passport - My Voice My Vote](#) - This is another example of a voting passport resource that individuals can complete with their own information.

[Voter ID - Guide to Elections - evergreen generic.pdf](#) - This guidance resource explains Voter ID, what counts as Voter ID and how to register for a Voter Authority Certificate if you do not have photographic ID that can be taken to the polling station. **Please note: Voter ID is not required for a Scottish Parliament election.**

## 2026 Election timeline (via Electoral Commission)

Event	Deadline	Action
<p><b>Deadline to register to vote</b></p>	<p>Monday 20 April</p>	<p>You must be registered to vote. You can <a href="#">register online</a>.</p>
<p><b>Deadline to submit your application for a postal vote or a postal-proxy vote</b></p>	<p>5pm on Tuesday 21 April</p>	<p><a href="#">Apply to vote by post.</a></p> <p><a href="#">Find out where to send your postal or postal-proxy vote application.</a></p>
<p><b>Deadline to submit your application to vote by proxy</b></p>	<p>5pm on Tuesday 21 April</p>	<p><a href="#">Apply to vote by proxy.</a></p> <p><a href="#">Find out where to send your application to vote by proxy.</a></p>
<p><b>Polling day</b></p>	<p>Thursday 7 May</p>	<p>Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm. As long as you are in the queue by 10pm, you will be able to vote.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out where your polling station is.</a></p>

# Frequently asked questions

## Who can vote?

In Scotland, if you are registered to vote and aged 16 or over, you can vote in the Scottish Elections.

To register to vote in Scotland, you must be aged 14 or over. You must also be one of the following:

- a UK or Irish citizen
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in Scotland
- a 'qualifying foreign national' – a citizen of another country who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need such permission, including EU citizens

Once registered, you can vote in the following elections, unless otherwise stated:

- UK Parliament general elections, by-elections and recall petitions, from the age of 18 (unless you are a 'qualifying foreign national')
- Scottish Parliament elections and by-elections, from the age of 16
- Local council elections, from the age of 16

## Why should I vote?

You have the right to vote and have your say in how the parliament is run. The election is an opportunity to have your voice heard and to influence change.

If you want to vote in the election and have your voice heard, you need to register to vote so that your ballot is counted. Our parliament is elected as it is a democratic system, and democracy works best when everyone who can take part exercises their right to vote.

## How do I register to vote? Can I register online?

Yes, you can [apply to register online on the UK Government website](#).

If you would prefer, you can print out a [paper form](#) and send your completed form to your local Electoral Registration Office.

If you are unsure if you have registered to vote already, or you would rather register with assistance over the phone, you can contact your local Electoral Registration Office.

You can find out how to contact your electoral registration office using this Government webpage - [Contact your electoral registration office - GOV.UK](#)



## **Where do I find my National Insurance number?**

When registering to vote, you may be asked to include your National Insurance Number. This is a unique code (usually starting with two letters, followed by six numbers and a final letter) that is used to track your tax contributions, National Insurance payments and eligibility for state benefits in the UK. It is a way that the government can identify that you are a citizen that is eligible to vote.

You can find your National Insurance number:

- on a document you already have, for example a P60, payslip or letters about benefits
- in your personal tax account if you already have one
- in the HMRC app if you live in the UK
- in your Apple or Google Wallet if you've previously saved it there

If you do not have any documents with your National Insurance number on it – do not worry, you can use the [UK Gov website](#) to find your National Insurance number.

## **What are the options to vote?**

- At a polling station
- By post
- By appointing a proxy to vote on your behalf – a “proxy” vote is when you ask someone you trust to cast your vote at the polling station on your behalf.

## **I'm on holiday when voting takes place – Can I still vote?**

We know that holidays, work schedules or plans made in advance may mean that you cannot vote in person on Thursday 7th May. The good news is that you can register to vote by postal vote or by proxy. This means that you can send your postal vote in advance, by 21st April 2026 and your vote will still count.

You need to register for postal vote in advance to receive your postal voting ballot. The Electoral Commission have shared a [step-by-step guide](#) on how to submit your postal vote.

## **Do I need photo ID to vote in the Scottish Parliament elections on 7th May 2026?**

No, Scottish Parliament elections do not require you to have photo ID to vote. If you have a photo ID and it would make you feel more comfortable to have it with you, you can bring it.

## **Can I bring someone from my family or a team member to help me vote?**

Yes, you can go to the polling station with an Autism Practitioner or someone else to vote with you. Whoever goes with you cannot vote on your behalf – **your vote is for who you want to vote for.**

## ***What support is available at polling stations?***

The staff at the polling stations are trained and have equipment to support electors (people going to vote) to access the polling station. If you have any specific questions about what assistance may be available, you can contact your local Council Election Office.

## ***How do I find out where I vote?***

When you receive your polling card, it will have the address of your local polling station. You need to go to your registered polling station to vote.

## ***What time can I vote in person at my polling station?***

The polling station will be open from 7am until 10pm.

## ***I don't like entering busy, noisy environments - what is the best time to vote or can I vote another way?***

We know that busy, noisy environments can be overwhelming. If you would like to vote at the polling station, we recommend that you avoid busier times like:

- Before work – between 8 am and 9:30 am
- Lunchtime – between 12 pm and 2 pm
- After work – between 4:30 pm and 6:30 pm

If you do not think you can go to the polling station during a quieter time, you may want to register to vote by post or by proxy to make sure your voice is still heard.

## ***I have lost my polling card, does this mean I cannot vote?***

You do not need to have your polling card to vote at the election. As long as you are on the register you will be able to vote. Just tell the polling staff your name and address and they will find your name on the register and issue your ballot paper.

## ***What happens after voting?***

The votes in the Scottish Parliament election are being counted on Friday 8th May.

Results for each constituency will be announced once the votes in that constituency have been counted. Votes are counted by hand, and this can take a number of hours to make sure all the ballots are counted. Results will be declared throughout the day on Friday. Once all the constituencies in a region have announced their results, the regional list results will be announced. The regional list results come from the second ballot, where you are asked to vote for a political party instead of a specific candidate, and additional MSPs are elected from regional lists made by each party. Scotland is divided into eight regions (Highlands & Islands, North East, Mid Scotland and Fife, West Scotland, South Scotland, Glasgow, Edinburgh & Lothians East, Central Scotland & Lothians West. Each region elects seven MSPs. The full results should be known by Friday evening.



The results will be published online, and the BBC and other news channels will broadcast the results as they are announced.

Once the election result is known, the Scottish Parliament will take time to go through formal procedures before the First Minister is chosen by MSPs. Once they have been chosen, they have five years to deliver the things they promised in their manifesto.

### ***What happens if the person I vote for is not elected?***

In a democracy, where the people vote for who governs them, there are winners and losers at every election. There are 129 seats in the Scottish Parliament so not everyone who stands for election can get a seat. Sometimes we cast our vote for a candidate and they are not successful. This can be disappointing and it is okay to feel this way.

The regional list can also mean that, sometimes, a candidate who is not successful in the constituency election can still be elected to parliament. [BBC Bitesize](#) have a helpful video that explains how MSPs are elected.

The regional list helps smaller parties get seats in parliament. Even if the party you vote for doesn't win in your local area, they might still get enough votes across the whole region to have an MSP representing you.

### ***How can I share Scottish Autism's Manifesto for Change with local candidates to me?***

It is great to hear that you want to spread the word about Scottish Autism's Manifesto for Change. You might want to send your local candidates an email to share our Manifesto for Change and ask them to commit to the Manifesto Asks.

You can find your local candidates and their contact details by looking up your local constituency. [Electoral Commission](#) will update their webpage to include a list of regional candidates that you can find using your postcode after 2nd April 2026.

### ***Is there a template email I can use when contacting local candidates to make them aware of Scottish Autism's Manifesto for Change and to ask them to commit to it?***

Thank you for reaching out to your local candidates about Scottish Autism's Manifesto for Change. You can find out your local candidates via [this website](#), which is updated when candidates are selected by political parties.

We have created a template email that you can use when emailing your local candidates. This can be found on the next page. You can add additional information and any other issues which are important to you before sending it.

Dear [INSERT NAME],

I am a local constituent in [YOUR CONSTITUENCY] and I am writing to make you aware of Seizing The Moment: Scottish Autism's Manifesto for Change.

Scottish Autism are Scotland's largest autism charity providing support to autistic people and their families.

Scottish Autism are working to make the world more inclusive and accessible for autistic people. To do this, they need the support of the Scottish Government.

Scottish Autism's Manifesto (accessible on their [website](#)) has five asks for the next Scottish Government, these are:

1. Commit to delivering the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill
2. Introduce a National Neurodevelopmental Pathway Guarantee
3. Improve support for autistic learners and an end to informal exclusions in education
4. Deliver a reformed social care sector where specialism is recognised, third sector providers are valued; and the workforce is appropriately rewarded
5. End the categorisation of autism as a mental disorder within the Mental Health (Scotland) Act.

I am asking you to pledge to support Scottish Autism's Manifesto for Change and to seize the moment with the upcoming election because [INDIVIDUAL REASON: can be a sentence or two].

Yours sincerely  
[YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON SEPARATE LINES]



## How to stay involved after the election

There are many ways that people can remain involved in influencing politics and being an active citizen in your community after an election.

Being an active citizen and taking part in politics isn't just about voting. There are many other everyday ways to get involved, have a say, and help shape decisions in your community.

You can:

- **Stay informed** – keep up with reliable news and understand the issues that affect your area.
- **Talk about issues that matter to you** – discuss ideas and concerns with family, friends, neighbours, or join [The Scottish Assembly mailing list](#) to find out about their events. The Scottish Assembly organise weekly Friday meetings, where they often have guest speakers from political parties or the Scottish Parliament.
- **Join local community groups** – work with others who want to improve things in your area.
- **Take part in consultations or surveys** – many councils and organisations ask for public opinions before making decisions.
- **Attend public meetings** – such as council meetings, town halls, or community forums.
- **Contact your elected councillors, MSPs and MPs about issues that matter to you** – write, email, or call them to share what matters to you, your views or ask questions.
- **Volunteer in your community** – support local projects, charities, or events that make a positive difference.
- **Support peaceful campaigns or petitions** – add your voice to causes you care about.
- **Join a civic or interest-based organisation** – groups focused on issues like the environment, housing, or public health often work with decision-makers.
- **Help others get informed** – share trustworthy information or help someone understand an issue.

You may be interested in running your own campaign. Inclusion Scotland have a helpful [Campaign Toolkit \(available in Easy Read and Plain English\)](#) that offers advice, tips and tools for disabled people and organisations wishing to start a campaign.



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