



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

What we decided about how we can make it easier to get involved with the Scottish Parliament



Easy read booklet

Who we are



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

We are the **Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee** of the **Scottish Parliament**.



A **committee** is a small group of people who are **Members of the Scottish Parliament** also called MSPs.



The Scottish people decide who is a **Member of the Scottish Parliament** by voting for them in elections.



The **Scottish Parliament** makes **laws** in Scotland.



Laws are rules that tell people what they can or cannot do.



The Scottish Parliament talks about things that matter to the people of Scotland.



It also checks what the **Scottish Government** is doing.



© The Scottish Government

The **Scottish Government** decides how to run the country.



The Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament are separate organisations.

What this booklet is about



In spring 2022 we started an **inquiry** to find out how we can make it easier for people to **get involved** with the work the Scottish Parliament does.



An **inquiry** is when we find out information about something.



Get involved means join in and be part of something.



As part of our inquiry, we

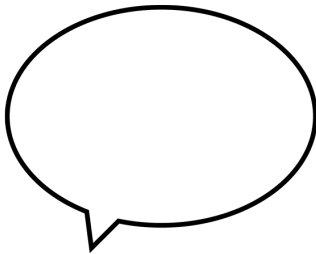
- listened to experts.
- talked to people who are part of the Scottish Parliament.
- talked to people who are not part of the Scottish Parliament.
- started a **Citizens' Panel**.



A **panel** is a small group of people who are chosen to learn, talk together and make suggestions about something.



Our **Citizens' Panel** was a group of 19 people from different parts of Scotland.



A Citizens' Panel is sometimes called a **Citizens' Assembly** or a **People's Panel**.



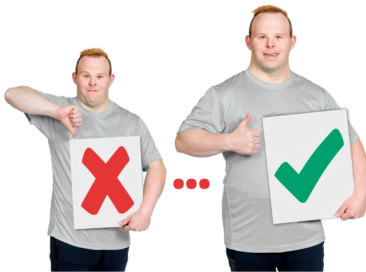
Our Citizens' Panel met for 2 weekends in October and November 2022.



We asked our Citizens' Panel to tell us their ideas about how we can make it easier for people to get involved with the work the Scottish Parliament does.

17

They made 17 **recommendations**.



Recommendations are ideas about the best things to do.



We found out more about the things our Citizens' Panel recommended before making our decisions.



We also found out about other Citizens' Panels. We looked at Citizens' Panels

- at the Scottish Government.
- in other places, like Ireland, Paris and Brussels.



This booklet tells you what we found out and what we decided about how we can make it easier to get involved with the Scottish Parliament.

What we think about ways to get involved with the Scottish Parliament

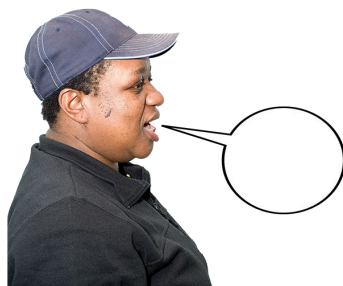
What we think about Citizens' Panels



We think there should be more Citizens' Panels to help Scottish Parliament committees with their work.



We know Citizens' Panels cannot help with every issue and that it costs money to run them, but we think they are important.



Citizens' Panels give ordinary people a chance to tell us what they think about issues that affect their lives.



Their views can help committees make decisions.



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2026

We want the Scottish Parliament to run 2 more Citizens' Panels before the next election in 2026.



We want

- 1 panel to look at a law that is a few years old to find out how well it is working.
- 1 panel to look at a current issue.



We want to be involved in starting the panels and checking how well they work.



2026

By the year 2026, we want the Scottish Parliament to know how to run a Citizens' Panel in a good way.



What we think about **deliberative democracy**

Deliberative democracy is when people talk about an issue together until they agree about it and can make group decisions.



Citizens' Panels are part of deliberative democracy.



We want to make sure the right type of deliberative democracy is used for each issue.



We want the Scottish Parliament to be **transparent** about what it does.



Transparent means clear and easy to understand.



We want people who take part in deliberative democracy to

- get good support.
- get the right information.
- feel in control of what they are asked to do.
- get feedback about how their ideas are used.
- get paid.



We think there should be a different Citizens' Panel for each issue.



We think each Citizens' Panel should have between 20 and 30 people in it.



We think people who are asked to join Citizens' Panels should be chosen **at random**. **At random** means everyone has the same chance of being chosen.



We think Citizens' Panels should include lots of different types of people because there are lots of different types of people in Scotland.



This includes having

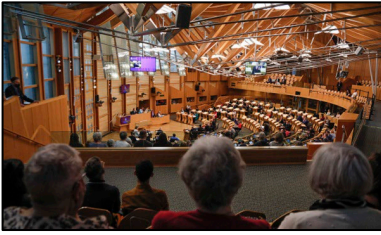
- the same number of women as men.
- people who are different ages.
- people with different types of education.



We do not think MSPs should be members of Citizens' Panels, but they could be asked to be part of some discussions.



We think MSPs should talk about the recommendations a Citizens' Panel makes in the **Debating Chamber**.



The **Debating Chamber** is the place where MSPs meet to talk and make decisions about important issues.

**You are
invited...**



People from the Citizens' Panel should be invited to watch when this happens.

What we think about **community engagement**

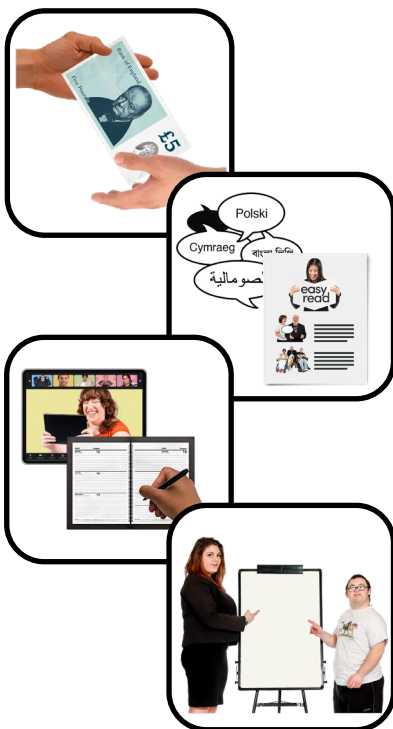


Community engagement means how we involve lots of different people in the work the Scottish Parliament does.



The Scottish Parliament already does some community engagement, but there are other things we think should be done, including

- paying people back what it costs them to get involved. For example, childcare costs or money they lose because they miss work.
- making our information more **accessible**.
- making it easier for people to take part in the evenings, at weekends and online.
- checking there is good **citizenship education** in schools.





Accessible is when something can be used or understood by everyone.



Citizenship education is when children are taught about how **society** works. For example

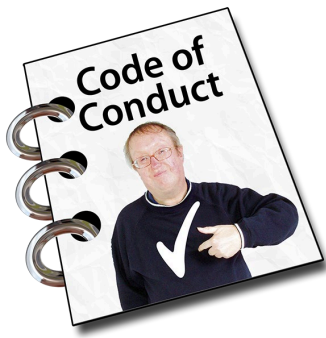
- what **rights** you have.
- how to vote.
- how to get involved with issues you care about.



Society means the places and the communities we live in.



Rights are rules about things every person should have in life.



What we think about the Citizens' Panel's recommendations about **how the Scottish Parliament works**

The Citizens' Panel said the rules about how MSPs behave should be checked.



We think the **Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee** should do this because it is part of their job to think about how MSPs behave.



The Citizens' Panel said there should be time for people who are not MSPs to ask questions at Scottish Parliament meetings in the Debating Chamber.



We do not agree with this idea, but if all the **political parties** in the Scottish Parliament support it, we agree it should be thought about.

Political parties are groups of people who share ideas about what should happen in a country.



The Citizens' Panel said the **Presiding Officer** should be able to make **Scottish Government Ministers** answer questions properly.



The **Presiding Officer** is the person in charge of who can speak at Scottish Parliament meetings. They make sure the rules are followed.



Scottish Government Ministers are MSPs who are members of the Scottish Government.



We think this idea will make the Presiding Officer's job harder, but we agree it is not good when Scottish Government Ministers do not answer questions properly.



We think the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee should look at this idea.

What happens next



We will check what the Scottish Parliament does to help people get involved in the work it does.



We will write another report before the next election in 2026.

More information



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If you want information in other languages or in British Sign Language (BSL) please just ask us.