

Becoming a councillor

Welcome to our next Be a Councillor newsletter, a chance for you to learn more about what a councillor is, what a councillor does, and how to become a candidate.

This newsletter explores some of the initial questions you might have when considering becoming a councillor. From wondering what political party you may wish to represent to just wanting to know if you're eligible, we hope this email will provide what you need to know on the next step of your journey.

How do I begin?

You can find out when your next local government elections are by checking your local council website or contacting the Democratic Services team. You can check which council you come under [on the gov.uk 'Find My Council' page](#). Make sure you are registered on the electoral roll by contacting the Electoral Services team at your council.

Don't be discouraged if the next elections are a long way away – there is plenty to do and learn on the journey to becoming a councillor. If a by-election arises, you may be able to run sooner than you think. It's best to be prepared in advance for any circumstances.

Political party or independent candidate

To stand for a political party, you'll need to be a member of the party, get involved locally and go through their selection process to be put forward as their candidate for election. Depending on which party you are interested in, this can take up to about a year, so please [contact your political party](#) as soon as you can to start getting involved.

If you are interested in becoming an independent candidate (not in a political party), you can get resources and advice from the Local Government Association's [Independent Office](#).

Nomination

To become nominated as a candidate you usually need to submit a completed set of nomination papers to your council by 4pm on the 19th working day before the election. However, please contact the Democratic Services team at your council to get the necessary paperwork, confirm the deadlines, and find out what help they can give you to submit your papers correctly.

Who can be a councillor?

You don't need any specific qualifications or experience to become a councillor. We need people from all backgrounds and communities to put themselves forward for election. However to be a councillor, you do need to be:

- A British citizen, or an eligible Commonwealth citizen. You may also be eligible as a citizen of the European Union, however the criteria has now changed. You can find [advice on the Gov.uk website](#).
- At least 18 years old.
- Registered to vote in the area, or you have lived, worked or owned property there for at least 12 months before an election.

You can't be a councillor if you:

- Work in the council you want to be a councillor for – you can work for another local authority as long as you are not in a politically restricted post.
- Are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order.
- Have been sentenced to prison for three months or more (including suspended sentences) during the five years before election day.
- Have been convicted of any corrupt or illegal practice by an election court.
- Are subject to any relevant notification requirements, or a relevant order, in respect of a sexual offence.

If you are in any doubt over your eligibility as a councillor, you can contact the Electoral Commission for advice.

Where can I find further help?

There are a number of organisations that can be of help to you when considering becoming a councillor.

Electoral Commission – [The Electoral Commission](#) is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. You can find out what elections are happening in your area, guidance on becoming a candidate, and more.

Elect Her – [Elect Her](#) is an organisation looking to motivate, support and equip women in all their diversity to stand for political office. They provide free workshops and training programmes, online resources and community spaces for women to learn and connect in their political ambitions.

My Life My Say – [My Life My Say](#) is a youth-led, non-partisan movement on a mission to change the culture of democracy and get every single young person voting.

Shout Out UK (SOUK) – [SOUK](#) is a multi-award winning creative social enterprise aiming to defend and amplify democracy by ensuring all

citizens understand how their government functions. They run some of the largest city-wide voter registration and voter awareness campaigns in the democratic world.

Operation Black Vote – [Operation Black Vote](#) exists to ensure we have greater racial justice and equality throughout the UK. Their work spans a number of areas including voter registration, lobbying politicians, mentoring schemes and political leadership programmes.

What comes next

We hope we've helped clear up some questions you might have as you progress along the road to becoming a councillor. Make sure to keep an eye out for our next newsletter, where we aim to cover topics such as compensation, time commitment and more.

If you'd like to find out more in the meantime, you can always [visit our Be a Councillor website](#).

Everyone has the right to make a difference in their community, and we need people who reflect their local area. Let us know a bit about yourself and how you found us [through filling out our survey](#). This helps us to monitor our impact and ensure our messaging is relevant to all.



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