

Minority Ethnic Matters Overview

MEMO+ is an occasional series of briefing papers on topics of interest to minority ethnic communities in Scotland. It is produced by the [Scottish Council of Jewish Communities](#) in partnership with [BEMIS - empowering Scotland's ethnic and cultural minority communities](#), and is supported by the [Scottish Government](#).

Scottish Parliament Elections 2016

Registering to Vote

The Scottish Parliament

Scottish Parliament elections will take place on 5 May 2016.

It is important that as many people as possible vote so that the Scottish Parliament and Government will reflect the views of people in Scotland.

If your name is on the Electoral Register you will automatically receive a polling card and be able to vote in the Scottish Parliament election. So if you have not yet received a polling card, your name may not be on the Register, and you should either complete the online application form or else contact the local Electoral Registration Officer in your area as soon as possible.

NB: This is the first Scottish Parliament election in which people aged 16 and 17 will be able to vote, so if you are nearly 16 you should make sure your name is on the Register.

If you are unable to go to the polling station on 5 May you can either vote by post or name another person to vote on your behalf at the polling station (voting by proxy). See below for details of how to register for either of these options.

You can find contact details for your local Electoral Registration Office in the phone book, or by typing your postcode into the relevant page of the [Electoral Commission](#) website.

Important dates for these elections

18 April 2016 Deadline to register to vote

19 April 2016 Deadline to apply for a postal vote

26 April 2016 Deadline to apply for a proxy vote

Note: *if you are prevented from voting by a medical emergency you may apply for a proxy vote any time until 5pm on polling day.*

5 May 2016 Polling day – vote between 7am and 10pm

Who can vote?

In order to vote in the elections you must be:

aged 16 or over on the day of the election,

and

a UK or European Union citizen, or a Commonwealth citizen who has,
or does not need, leave to remain in the UK,

and

resident at an address in Scotland,

and

listed on the electoral register.

Why vote?

Most every-day matters that affect people in Scotland are decided by the Scottish Parliament. These include:

- Education
- Health
- Social Services
- Housing
- Sport and the arts
- Environment
- Some aspects of taxation
- Economic development
- Local government
- Police and Fire services
- Law (criminal and civil courts)
- Equal Opportunities implementation

Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) represent people living in the area for which they were elected. As well as passing new laws they can raise awareness of local issues by proposing or supporting Motions that highlight particular initiatives or areas of concern, asking the Scottish Government questions, and helping individual people to get answers from organisations such as local councils, housing associations, and health boards.

How to register to vote

If you are not already registered to vote, you can register online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

or telephone to ask for a paper form:

0800 3280 280

**In order to be able to vote in this Scottish parliament elections,
your application must have been received by 18 April 2016.**

If you are not able to get to the polling station, for example, because you will be on holiday or away from home on business, or because you do not have transport, or are unwell, you can vote by post or proxy.

If you choose to vote by post, you will be sent a ballot form around ten days before the date of the election. In order for your vote to be counted, the completed form must be received by your local electoral registration office by 10pm on the day of the election.

In order to vote by proxy, you will need to ask someone you trust to go to the polling station to vote for you, and tell him or her whom you want to vote for. That person must also be registered to vote in their own right.

In order to vote by post or proxy you must be registered to vote and also fill in separate application forms.

How to register for a postal vote

To apply for a postal vote, download and complete the form at:

<http://tinyurl.com/q8zvr8w>

or telephone to ask for a paper form:

0800 3280 280

and then post the completed form to your [local Electoral Registration Office](#).

In order to be able to vote by post in these Scottish parliament elections, your application must have been received by 19 April 2016.

How to register for a proxy vote

To apply for a proxy vote, download and complete the relevant online form at:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-vote-proxy>

and then post the completed form to your [local Electoral Registration Office](#).

or telephone to ask for a paper form:

0800 3280 280

In order to be able to vote by proxy in these Scottish parliament elections, your application must have been received by 26 April 2016.

However, in case of emergency, for example, if you unexpectedly become ill, you can apply for a proxy vote any time until 5pm on polling day.

Useful Links

- **The Scottish Parliament**
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/index.aspx>
- **Electoral Commission Voting Guide**
http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/197193/May_Election-2016_leaflet-6pp_SCOTTISH_Final_WEB.PDF
- **About my vote**
<http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/upcoming-elections-and-referendums/scottish-parliament>
- **Video: Why vote in the Scottish Parliament election**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DWBDJ788Do>
- **Video: How to vote in the Scottish Parliament election**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYmtDPDvpfE&nohtml5=False>
- **Video: Sign Language Scottish Parliament 2016 election voting guide**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHunosPA2QA>

Please circulate this issue of MEMO+ among your membership and encourage people to register and to vote in the elections on 5 May!



The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438) <http://www.scojec.org/>



BEMIS is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels. <http://www.bemis.org.uk/index.html>



The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism. <http://www.scotlandagainstracism.com/>