

Getting Involved

KEY:

N: Narrator

N: The word Democracy means 'government for the people, by the people'. In Northern Ireland we elect 90 Members of the Legislative Assembly to pass laws and make decisions on our behalf. Even if you're too young to vote, here are ten ways you can get involved in learning more and making your voice heard about issues that concern you.

First, you could: Go to the Northern Ireland Assembly website to watch a live stream there. This might be a meeting of MLAs in the Assembly Chamber in what's called a plenary session, or it could be a committee meeting on an issue like health, education or the environment. You can also read Official Reports to find out what people said.

Or, you might: Visit Parliament Buildings. Normally, plenary sessions and committee meetings are open to the public. Check online for up-to-date information on this.

You could: Meet your MLA – MLAs normally work in their constituency office on Fridays, so this could be an opportunity to raise issues that matter to you.

Or, you could: Write to your MLA: send them an email, write a letter or contact them on social media. MLAs can suggest topics for debate in the Assembly or ask a Minister questions on your behalf. You can find all MLAs' contact details on the Assembly website.

Your school could arrange for you to: Take part in the Assembly's Education Service programme. These sessions help thousands of students each year to learn about the work of the Assembly.

You can also: Follow the Assembly on social media. The work of the Assembly often features on the local news, and you always see journalists around the Great Hall looking for their next big story.

Another way of making your voice heard is to: Organise a petition. Once you've gathered signatures, send it on to one of your MLAs.

You could: Set up a pressure group, maybe using social media. People organise pressure groups to campaign about specific issues, like the environment, poverty or road safety. Everyone has the right to protest, as long as it's done in a lawful way. Peaceful protests show the government that many people really care about an issue.

While you can't vote until you're 18, you can still: Join a political party or Get involved in the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly. Information about the Youth Assembly is on our website. So, it's pretty easy to keep up to date with the decisions made by the Assembly – and YOU can keep the Assembly up to date on the issues that matter to you, too.