

Welcome Key Stage 2

KEY:

N: Narrator

(MUSIC)

N: We live in a democracy. This means we can express our views about how Northern Ireland is run.

We can't all give an opinion about everything the Government decides, though – that would take too long. Instead, we vote for people to represent us and make decisions on our behalf. These people are called Members of the Legislative Assembly, or 'MLAs' for short.

They work in Parliament Buildings, home to the Northern Ireland Assembly. At election time each of Northern Ireland's 18 voting areas, or constituencies, elects five MLAs – so there are 90 in total.

Some MLAs get the important job of being Ministers in charge of Government Departments. They make decisions about schools, hospitals, farming, transport, and lots more. The Ministers work together in a group called the Executive, also known as the Northern Ireland Government.

The Executive, which meets nearby in Stormont Castle, is made up of Ministers from different parties. On Mondays and Tuesdays, MLAs meet in the Assembly Chamber to debate issues and vote on laws. Meetings are chaired by the Speaker, who is a bit like a referee. The Speaker makes sure that everybody obeys the rules and takes turns to speak.

On Wednesdays and Thursdays, MLAs meet in small groups called Committees. They study ideas for new laws and find out people's views. Committees also check Ministers' work and help them make decisions.

On Fridays, MLAs work in their constituency office. They hear what people think and help them with their problems.

Remember, the Assembly and Executive make laws and decisions that affect us all. Even when you're too young to vote, you can still get involved.

Why not let MLAs know if you have an idea that could make Northern Ireland a better place to live?