

Scottish Youth Parliament



By-Election Guidance Updated August 2025

In the event of a vacancy in a Local Authority or National Voluntary Organisation constituency, a by-election must be held. It is in the interests of both SYP and National Voluntary Organisations / Local Authorities to work together closely to ensure a successful by-election culminating in the maximum turnout.

This document provides guidance for National Voluntary Organisations / Local Authorities in relation to by-elections for the Scottish Youth Parliament. It includes:

- specific guidance adapted from the national elections guidance¹.
- good practice examples.
- information on resources available.

For further information or support, please contact elections@syp.org.uk.

¹ This guidance is extracted from the SYP 2023 Elections Rules and Procedures document. This document can be found at <https://bit.ly/3LVnowS>.

By-Elections

In the event of a vacancy due to an MSYP failing to complete their term in office, or in the event of no candidate presenting themselves for election, a by-election should be held at the earliest practicable opportunity.

National Voluntary Organisations / Local Authorities **must** do their best to inform SYP as soon as possible if this situation arises. This is to ensure SYP staff can support you and the candidates with voting (offline or online), promotion, and local engagement activity, while ensuring our records of current MSYPs are up-to-date.

National Voluntary Organisations / Local Authorities should work with SYP staff team to ensure the timely planning and implementation of the by-election strategy. This includes co-ordinating outreach and communications activity. **A checklist outlining the key phases during the by-election process is shown page 3 of this document.**

There are a number of options available to a National Voluntary Organisation / Local Authority in terms of filling a vacant position. **Regardless of the option chosen, it is important that all MSYPs carry some form of democratic mandate.**

These options include:

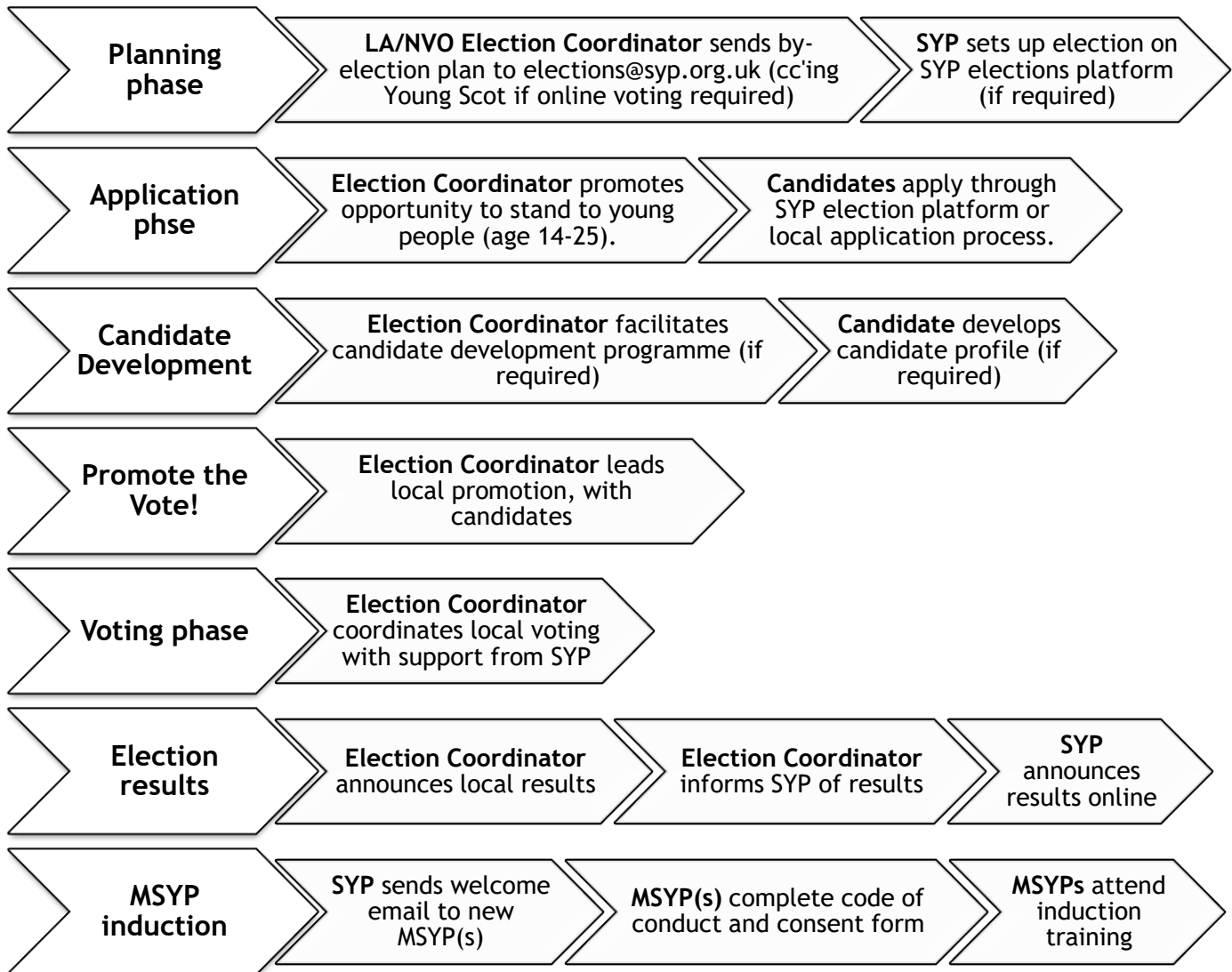
- Where the by-election takes place within the first year of a membership, offering the position to the next unsuccessful candidate from the National Elections.
- Co-option (selection without a vote) of a successor through existing youth structures where the local youth structure is elected.
- Election through existing youth structures, such as an internal vote at a local youth council or forum.
- A full by-election akin to that of the National Elections.

The Single Transferable Vote (STV) voting system should be used in SYP by-elections.

Organisations can use either paper ballots or an online system, and Election Coordinators should review SYP's National Election rules and procedures (available at <https://bit.ly/3LVnowS>) for detailed guidance on the process for voting.

MSYPs elected in a by-election shall serve for the remainder of the two-year term of the membership into which they are elected, until the next national SYP election, or until they resign or are removed by SYP as a result of disciplinary proceedings.

By-Elections process



Candidate applications

Unlike the national SYP elections, Local Authorities / National Voluntary Organisations do not have to gather candidates' information through the SYP elections platform. However, this platform is available if you do want to use it - **please indicate this in your by-elections plan.**

If you are not using the SYP elections platform, please ensure you have gathered candidates' name, date of birth, home address, email address, at least one emergency contact, and any consent required within your organisation for each candidate.

Candidate profiles

The candidate profile is hosted on the SYP elections platform, and will be used to help candidates promote their candidacy in the by-election.

See appendix D for candidate profile rules and a template document candidates can fill in to create their profile.

Candidate profile template forms, a candidate headshot (photo) and link to the candidate video / powerpoint should be sent to elections@syp.org.uk no later than one week before voting opens so these can be added to the SYP elections platform.

Candidate development programme

This is an optional programme for candidates, based on the candidate development programme carried out during the 2023 SYP Elections. The aim of this programme is to help candidates develop skills and knowledge to help their overall personal development.

There are resources available on four topics:

- **Topic 1: Developing a candidate profile.** This includes training on developing your candidate profile on the SYP elections platform; timeline for elections; resources and trainings available to candidates.
- **Topic 2: Campaigning for election.** This includes training on how to develop an effective campaign; using social media and creating promotional content; political impartiality and expectations of candidates.
- **Topic 3: Your voice.** This includes training on developing an argument for change; writing a speech; public speaking; preparing for candidate hustings.
- **Topic 4: Your rights.** This includes training on UNCRC & Article 12; the rights-based approach; fundamentals of policy.

If you would like to deliver the candidate development programme with candidates, SYP can provide a session plan and powerpoint, handouts, and a short video summarising the content for each session. Please contact SYP at elections@syp.org.uk for copies of these resources.

Voting options

In August 2025, Young Scot indicated they will no longer be offering the use of their e-voting platform for future SYP elections and by-elections. For local authorities and voluntary organisations planning to carry out a by-election, we have collated a list of alternative voting methods you can

consider during the planning process. Please contact SYP at elections@syp.org.uk if you would like to discuss voting options.

Platform / option	Web link	SYP Notes
SYP elections platform	Via https://elections.syp.org.uk/elections/	<p>There is no cost for using this platform. This is the platform we use for running the NVO elections during the national SYP elections. It has not been used since early 2024, and has not been used for votes with large number of voters (although it should have the capacity to be able to do this).</p> <p>SYP can provide a list of temporary numbers for voters, or we can upload a list provided by the LA/NVO (eg, if the LA is able to provide a list of NEC numbers, these can be uploaded to be used as Voter ID numbers). LA/NVO would need to ensure young people are not allocated more than one temporary number.</p>
MS Forms	<i>Via your own Microsoft Account</i>	<p>This is a bit clunky, but you could collect votes through MS forms - these would then need to be manually entered into a separate count engine, or a manual STV count would need to be carried out. Some LA's may have existing systems for carrying out a manual count in this way.</p>
OpaVote	https://opavote.com/	<p>This is the platform SYP uses for internal elections (eg, Board positions, UKYP elections etc).</p> <p>This system allows the election coordinator to enter voter email addresses and the system automatically emails a unique vote link to each voter. Alternatively, you can upload or generate a list of temporary voter codes, and manually allocate voter codes to individual voters when they come to vote. (For internal SYP elections, we do this, and then mailmerge an email to voters with their unique voter code).</p> <p>LA/NVO would need to ensure young people are not allocated more than one temporary number.</p> <p>There is a cost for large elections- https://opavote.com/pricing)</p> <p>US-based platform. Privacy policy available here: https://opavote.com/privacy. If temp voter codes are uploaded to the system and manually allocated when voters come to vote, the platform will not have access to voter email addresses.</p>

Choice Voting	https://choicevoting.co.uk/	<p>SYP hasn't used this platform, but Stirling Council used this to carry out their SYP elections after issues with Young Scot Platform in 2023 elections. They had access to all young people's school email addresses, so were able to send automated emails with unique vote links directly from the site.</p> <p>Pricing info available at: https://choicevoting.co.uk/pricing/</p> <p>Set-up allows to create one-off elections, multiple independent elections, group elections; gives voters a single login; allows to add candidates on one-by-one basis or via importing the client's data - photos, manifestos, videos, etc. can be included; allows setting eligibility measures</p> <p>Voting: the URL can be shared or emailed automatically to all voters - portal works on any device with an internet connection; elections can be monitored in real-time</p> <p>Results: can be downloaded instantly after the elections are finished; full results audit trail included.</p>
Mi-Voice	https://www.mi-voice.com/	<p>SYP hasn't used this platform, but it was previously used by the British Youth Council for UKYP Elections, and is used by the National Youth Agency for UKYP elections in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>No pricing information available on the website.</p>

By-Elections results and induction process

Please email elections@syp.org.uk to let SYP know the result of your by-election as soon as possible to allow SYP to begin the induction process with the new MSYP.

Information required to register the new MSYP:	The induction process includes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full Name• Address• Date of birth• Email address• Constituency• Turn Out/Number of Votes Cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MSYP Consent Form and Code of Conduct - these are online forms that will be emailed to the young person once we have received their email from the Support Worker.• MSYP induction training.• Subject committee sign-up.• Profile on SYP website.• Access to MSYP email account.

After the election results have been confirmed and all candidates have been informed, SYP staff will email the successful candidates to welcome them to SYP and inform them of the next steps in their induction. The new MSYP's Support Worker will be copied into this email.

Appendix A: GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

BY-ELECTION: GALLOWAY AND WEST DUMFRIES (MAY - OCTOBER 2013)

PLANNING:

May - June	<p>Raise the profile Make contact with schools to advise of by-election timeline and to seek support for the election.</p>
June - Mid August	<p>Preparation of publicity materials Posters, sign-up sheets & information for school daily notices and electronic notice boards to be sent to schools by 19th August</p>
19 th August - 6 th September (3 weeks)	<p>PHASE 1 Nominations Open (Nominations Close at 2pm on Friday 6th September) Focus will be on encouraging nominations and raising the profile of the elections through schools assemblies, posters and fliers.</p>
9 th - 20 th September (2 weeks)	<p>PHASE 2 Candidate Training & Support Briefing/training session to be held for all candidates on 10th Sept on producing a manifesto and campaigning tips and support. (Deadline for manifestos 16th September, 2pm)</p>
23 rd Sept - 4 th October (2 weeks)	<p>PHASE 3 Campaigning, Election Promotion and Publicity Candidates to campaign for votes. Support for design and printing of campaign materials to be provided to all candidates. Manifestos to go online on 23rd September!! Publicity materials to promote the elections to go to all schools, colleges, youth groups etc to encourage voters.</p>
7 th - 11 th October 2013 (1 week)	<p>PHASE 4 Election Election will be online through the Young Scot website (www.youngscot.org/local/dumfries-galloway). Young people to vote using Young Scot card. Temporary numbers to be made available for non-card holders through election co-ordinator. (Election to open 9am on 7th October and close 4pm on Friday 11th!)</p>
Friday 11 th October	<p>Election Announcement Elections close 4pm on the 11th. Results event at approx 6pm that evening (venue & time tbc). Contact SYP with election result and contact information for new MSYP.</p>
11 th October onwards	<p>Support Newly elected MSYP to be offered support/induction to new role in preparation for October sitting. Training will be required (SYP induction training). * Next National SYP sitting - end October 2013</p>

PLANNING - VOTING ARRANGEMENTS:

School	Date & Time	Who	School voting arrangements
Kirkcudbright Academy	Monday 7 th Oct, 12.50pm - 1.45pm	Rhona & Kim	* School making computer suite in library available on Mon & Tues at break & lunchtime
Stranraer Academy	Monday 7 th October, 1pm - 1.40pm	Linda & ?	* School organising a polling day all day Monday & pupils voting through Social Subjects * Library open all week
Dalry High School	Tuesday 8 th October, 12.50pm - 1.35pm	Rhona	* School will have netbooks & internet access available in foyer for CLD visit
Dalbeattie High School	Wednesday 9 th October, 1pm - 1.45pm)	Rhona & Kim	* School arranging for ALL pupils to vote through PSE or Computing over the 5 days * Computer suite open for CLD visit at lunchtime
Douglas Ewart High School	Thursday 10 th October (time??)	Rhona, Laura (?), Lisa & Sean	* Pupils to vote using computers in canteen. * Computer suite to be made available?
Castle Douglas High School	CLD support note required		ALL pupils voting over 5 days through the school.
Stranraer College	Wednesday 9 th October	Linda & ?	Computer suite to be made available

VOTING GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS AND YOUTH WORKERS:

Scottish Youth Parliament

By-election

7th - 11th October 2013

Voting guidance for teachers & youth work staff



Step 1.

Get the young people to go to www.youngscot.org/local/dumfries-galloway (or go to www.youngscot.org and enter 'Dumfries & Galloway' using search box (top right hand side))

Step 2.

Get the young people to click on 'vote' & select constituency (Galloway & West Dumfries)

Step 3.

Get the young people to enter their Young Scot card number

* If they don't have a Young Scot card distribute a temporary number using the sheet provided and make sure their name & age is allocated against it

Step 4.

The young people will then select who they wish to vote for (as this is STV voting they can vote for more than one person with 1 being their preference, then 2, 3 etc but they can also just choose one or two people to vote for.)

For more info contact:

ENTER CONTACT DETAILS HERE

Appendix B: NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

BY-ELECTION: GIRLGUIDING SCOTLAND (DECEMBER 2017 - MARCH 2018)

Girlguiding Scotland created a by-election pack which could be shared with Girlguiding units across Scotland representing their members aged 12-25. Each unit received a copy of the pack electronically, inviting them to take part in the election. The pack included:

- An activity to encourage Girlguiding members to think about why their voice matters!
- Information about the Scottish Youth Parliament.
- Guidelines for the election.
- A profile for each candidate.
- A voting slip for every member in the unit.



Appendix C: YOUR GUIDE TO SYP'S BY-ELECTION RESOURCES

If you have any questions about the resources contained within this pack, please contact SYP elections@syp.org.uk.

LOCAL PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

The press release template can be easily edited to contain quotes from candidates, background of what SYP is and how the charity represents the views of Scotland's young people, and details of how young people can place their vote in this by-election.

The press release is *not* exhaustive, as there will undoubtedly be local issues or NVO-specific matters which may be important to highlight, but the release should act as a good starting point. If sending to local newspapers, also consider including photographs of the candidates standing in the by-election.

SOCIAL MEDIA ASSETS

There are two sets of social media assets which SYP has created for use in the by-election.

The first set are the general by-election graphics; these can be used on social media to announce that the by-election is about to take place, or for any general by-election communications.

The second set are for candidates' use; they can post these on social media when talking about the candidacy, promoting the by-election, etc.

For support with communications relating to a by-election, please contact SYP's Communications Officer.

SYP LOGO AND BRAND GUIDELINES

If you or the standing candidates would like to create your own promotional materials for the by-election, you are more than welcome to.

- The SYP logo is its own complete and unique piece of artwork, and should not be altered or distorted in anyway.
- When resizing the logo, the proportions must be maintained to ensure the logo is not stretched or distorted.
- The logo should always be oriented so the text reads from left to right.
- Do not change the colours or line qualities of the SYP logo.
- When applying the logo, some padding (a minimum of five millimetres) should be left on all four sides of the logo. This ensures the logo doesn't overlap other elements of the document or image that you are constructing.
- Be particularly careful to give adequate padding at the foot of the logo to avoid cutting off the bottom of the speech bubble.



The full SYP Brand Guidelines document, outlining our colour palette and copy-writing tips, is available on SYP's website at <https://syp.org.uk/media-room/>.

If you are unsure about any aspect of the use of SYP's logo, please contact SYP's Communications Officer.

Appendix D: CANDIDATE PROFILE GUIDANCE

The rules for your candidate profile:

- Your profile must follow the rules for the elections outlined in the candidate code of conduct, which is available on the SYP website at <https://syp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/SYP-Elections-2023-Candidate-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>
There is a large print version at: <https://syp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/SYP-Elections-2023-Candidate-Code-of-Conduct-large-print.docx>.
- Photographs:
 - Must only include the candidate and cannot include other people.
 - Must be a square photograph of the candidate's head and shoulders.
 - Should not include any filters.
 - Must not include any political imagery (eg, party logos or other reference to political parties or campaigning groups).
 - Do not have to be passport photo style - candidates can smile and have a different background.
 - Should include alt text to ensure they are accessible to everyone.
- Campaign videos:
 - Should be uploaded to YouTube.
 - Must not include any other people.
 - Should be appropriate for the 12 - 25 age group.
 - Should not use any music, images, video content, or other content which is under copyright and/or does not belong to the young person.
 - Must give appropriate credit to the original source of any music, images, video content, or other content *if* the license allows it. There is information about licenses and how to credit sources at <https://www.gov.uk/using-somebody-elses-intellectual-property/copyright>.
 - Should be subtitled to ensure they are accessible to everyone. There are lots of apps to help with this, but could include YouTube captions, TikTok, or Zubtitle.
- Campaign PowerPoints:
 - Should include a maximum of three slides.
 - Must not include any videos.
 - Use a clear font which is easy to read.
 - Should meet the photograph guidance above.

You can use sites such as Canva to help you design your campaign materials.

To help you prepare your candidate profile, have a go at filling in this table:

<p>The three issues I want to focus on as an MSYP are:</p> <p><i>Select up to three from this list</i></p>	
<p>Why do you want to be an MSYP?</p>	
<p>How will you consult with the young people in your area or organisation to ensure that they are represented well and their voices are heard?</p>	
<p>Why should someone vote for you?</p>	