



# **Scottish Youth Parliament Elections Standing Orders**

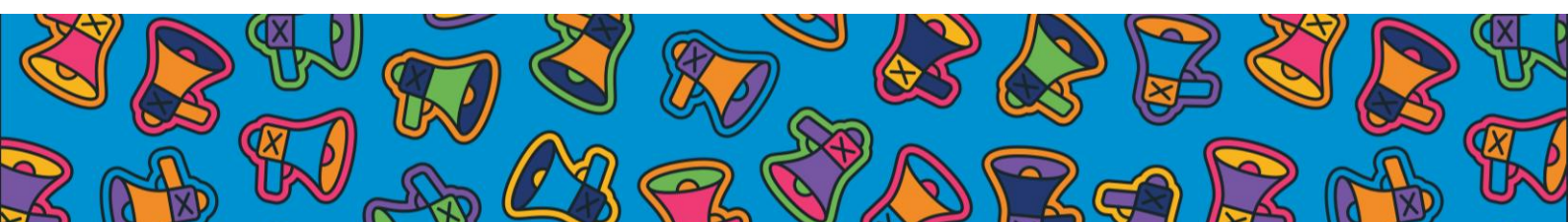
**Last updated April 2026**





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## Introduction

These Standing Orders set out the rules and procedures governing the election of Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs). They apply to national SYP elections and by-elections.

The overarching aim of the Scottish Youth Parliament elections is:

**To elect every member of the Scottish Youth Parliament in an open and democratic election using a process determined by SYP.**

The Standing Orders apply to all candidates, Election Coordinators, Local Authority and National Voluntary Organisation partners, and SYP staff involved in the election of MSYPs.

These Standing Orders have been developed around SYP's core values, which are:

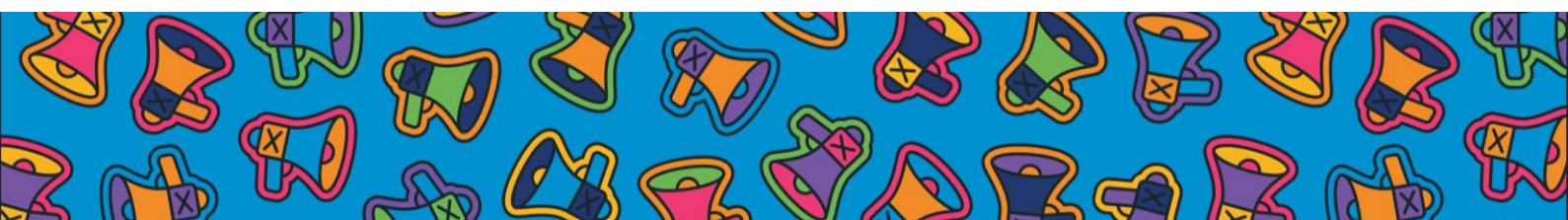
**SYP is Youth Led** – we empower young people to take the lead in all aspects of our work.

**SYP is Ambitious** – we campaign for change to create a Scotland where young people are proud to grow up.

**SYP is Bold** – we defend young people's rights and champion the issues that are most important to them.

**SYP is Inclusive** – we create brave and safe spaces where young people of all backgrounds feel able to participate.

**SYP is Politically Impartial** – this value surrounds all of our work to ensure our work is evidence-based and that the issues important to young people can be discussed and openly debated.





## Key terms and definitions

**By-election** – An election of a single or small number of MSYPs to fill a vacant seat or seats.

**Candidate** – A young person standing for election to the Scottish Youth Parliament who is no younger than 14 and no older than 25 on the day voting closes. See *section 4.3*.

**Code of Conduct** – A set of rules and expectations that outline how candidates are expected to behave during the SYP Elections. See *section 6*.

**Constituency** – A defined geographic area or national voluntary organisation, each of which is represented by two MSYPs. See *sections 4.1 and 4.2*.

**Election Coordinator** – The main point of contact for the SYP Elections in each Local Authority and National Voluntary Organisation. See *section 3.2*.

**LA** – Local Authority

**Local** – Unless otherwise specified, ‘local’ refers to activities carried out in or at local authority or national voluntary organisation levels, as opposed to ‘national’ activities carried out by SYP.

**Local working agreement** – A written contract or agreement made between the local authority / national voluntary organisation and candidates in that area or organisation, which outlines the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of candidates and Election Coordinators in that area or organisation.

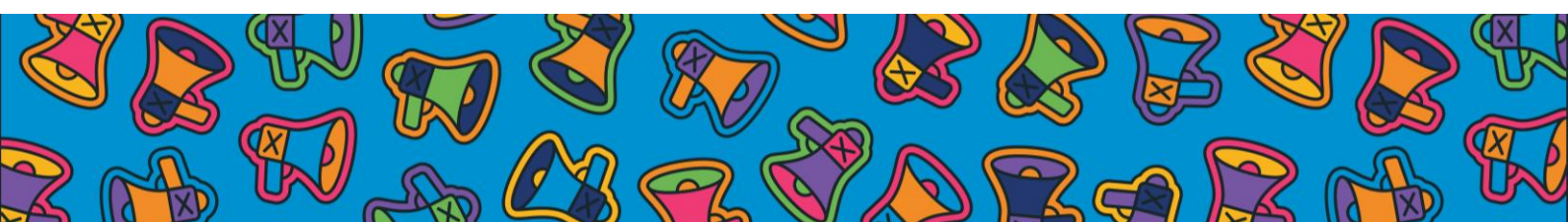
**MSYP** – Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament

**National Election** – A full election of MSYPs to all Scottish Youth Parliament constituencies.

**NVO** – National Voluntary Organisation

**Returning Officer** – The person who oversees the elections and announces the election results in each local authority or national voluntary organisation. See *section 10.1*.

**Seldom-heard groups** – Groups of young people who are marginalised and often furthest from their rights. This may include young people who are: living in or at risk of poverty, young carers, care experienced, transgender, LGBTQ+, from a minority ethnic community, home educated, in a rural or island community, living with a visible or invisible disability, etc.





**Scottish Single Transferable Vote (STV) system** – a system of preferential voting used in the election of two or more positions within a constituency. See *section 8.3*.

**Split constituency** – A constituency which sits across the boundary between two local authorities. See *section 4.1*.

**SYP** – Scottish Youth Parliament

**Voter** – A young person aged between 12 and 25 who is eligible to vote in the Scottish Youth Parliament elections. See *section 8.1*.

**Young person** – A person who is aged between 12 and 25 (unless otherwise stated in this document).





## 1. SYP Election Principles

These Standing Orders are designed to ensure elections to the Scottish Youth Parliament are:

- **Democratic:** Every eligible young person in Scotland has the right to stand for election and to vote in the SYP Elections, ensuring results that genuinely reflect young people's views and choices.
- **Inclusive:** The SYP Elections are inclusive and accessible to all young people, regardless of background, ability, identity, or location.
- **Robust:** The SYP Elections are delivered through secure, reliable, and well governed processes that uphold the highest standards of integrity.
- **Engaging:** The SYP Elections are designed and delivered with young people's rights, needs, communication styles, and lived and living experiences at the centre.
- **Compliant:** The SYP Elections are delivered in line with all required rules, policies, and procedures to ensure a fair and consistent process.
- **Transparent:** The SYP Elections information, processes, and outcomes are open, clear, and communicated effectively so young people can fully understand and trust the process.

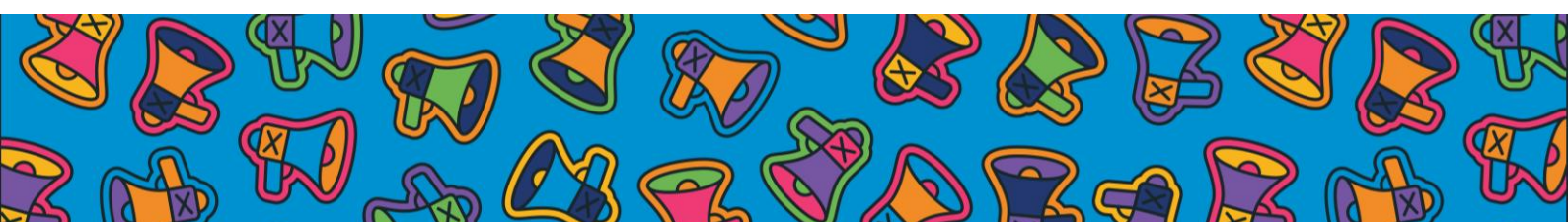
## 2. SYP Election Standards and Indicators

Each of the SYP Election Principles outlined in section 1 is supported by:

- **Standards** – clear expectations defining what high-quality delivery looks like.
- **Quality Indicators** – specific, measurable signs that show whether a standard is being met.

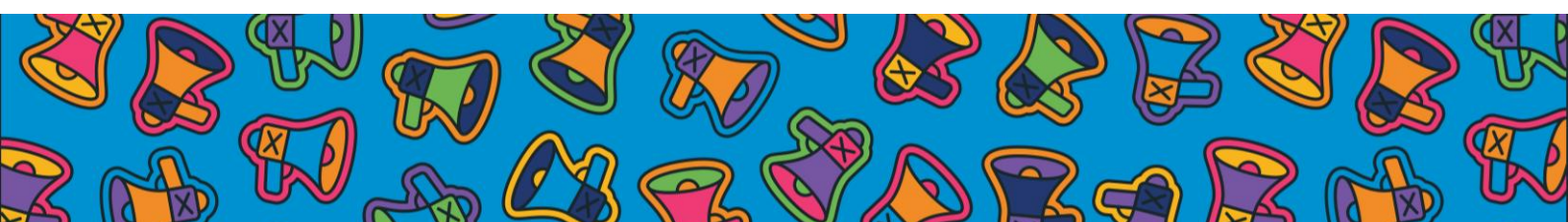
In line with SYP processes, ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be carried out through the elections programme. Feedback will be gathered in various ways as outlined in the SYP Elections Evaluation Framework.

The SYP Elections Evaluation Framework outlines how, when, and by who the indicators will be measured. SYP will provide guidance and template resources to support Election Coordinators to coordinate local monitoring, evaluation, and impact reporting.





Principle	Standard	Indicators
<p><b>Democratic:</b> Every eligible young person in Scotland has the right to stand for election and to vote in the SYP Elections, ensuring results that genuinely reflect young people's views and choices.</p>	<p>The election process must uphold young people's democratic rights, enabling free, fair, and representative participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barriers to standing as a candidate and to voting are identified and reduced.</li> <li>• All constituencies are contested.</li> <li>• Voting is conducted fairly and in line with the SYP Elections rules and procedures.</li> <li>• Results reflect genuine participation and are verified through agreed procedures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inclusive:</b> The SYP Elections are inclusive and accessible to all young people, regardless of background, ability, identity, or location.</p>	<p>The election process must be accessible to all young people, including those with additional support needs, those from marginalised communities, and those in rural or island areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and resources are available in multiple accessible formats.</li> <li>• The Elections are promoted widely across all communities in Scotland.</li> <li>• Young people report feeling welcomed, supported, and able to participate.</li> <li>• Candidates reflect the diversity of Scotland's young people.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Robust:</b> The SYP Elections are delivered through secure, reliable, and well-governed processes that uphold the highest standards of integrity.</p>	<p>The election process must be secure, reliable, and governed by clear procedures that protect the integrity of the vote.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A national risk assessment, EQIA and CRWIA is produced and reviewed every two months.</li> <li>• Voting systems are tested in advance to ensure accuracy and security.</li> <li>• Voting processes (online or paper) follow consistent and documented protocols.</li> <li>• A clear audit trail exists for all key decisions and actions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Engaging:</b> The SYP Elections are designed and delivered with young people's rights, needs, communication styles, and lived and living experiences at the centre.</p>	<p>The election process must be youth led, meaningful, and designed in ways that reflect young people's rights, interests, and communication preferences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information, resources, and promotional materials are youth friendly, visually appealing, and co designed where possible.</li> <li>• Candidates feel supported and informed.</li> <li>• Candidates have opportunities to engage locally and nationally throughout the election process.</li> <li>• Election activities and events feel relevant and exciting to young people.</li> <li>• Young people report understanding the MSYP role and the purpose of SYP.</li> </ul>





<p><b>Compliant:</b> The SYP Elections are delivered in line with all required rules, policies, and procedures to ensure a fair and consistent process.</p>	<p>The election process must meet all required rules, policies, procedures, and ethical standards, ensuring fairness and consistency across Scotland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All delivery partners follow SYP’s election guidance and timelines.</li> <li>• Election Coordinators report feeling supported and understand how to facilitate the elections in their organisation.</li> <li>• Data protection, safeguarding, and election rules are fully adhered to.</li> <li>• Documentation is completed accurately and stored appropriately.</li> <li>• Complaints and non-compliance are addressed promptly and transparently.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transparent:</b> The SYP Elections information, processes, and outcomes are open, clear, and communicated effectively so young people can fully understand and trust the process.</p>	<p>Election information, processes, and outcomes must be communicated clearly so young people can fully understand and trust the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key stages, roles, and responsibilities are explained in accessible formats.</li> <li>• Results are communicated openly, accurately, and promptly.</li> <li>• Young people and Election Coordinators understand how decisions are made throughout the process.</li> <li>• Young people and Election Coordinators understand how votes are counted.</li> <li>• Feedback mechanisms allow young people to raise questions or concerns.</li> </ul>

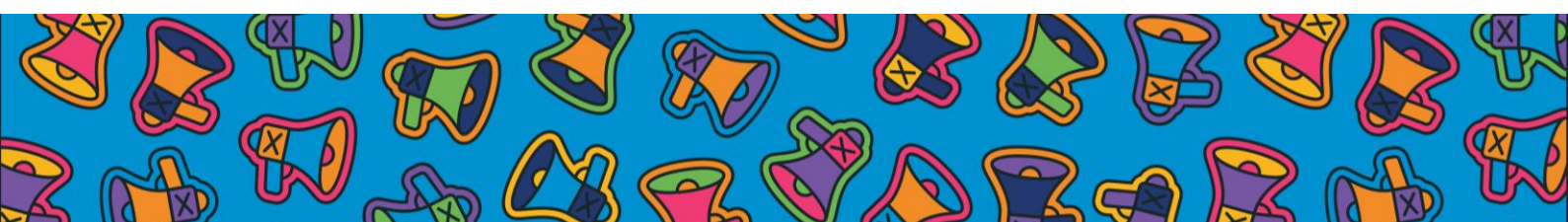
### 3. Election Administration


#### 3.1 National Election Coordinator Role and Responsibilities

The National Election Coordinator is a member of SYP staff who is responsible for planning, managing, and overseeing the delivery of MSYP elections to ensure they are carried out in line with the SYP Election Standing Orders.

The National Election Coordinator will:

- Act as the primary contact for local Election Coordinators, local authorities, national voluntary organisations, and other key stakeholders in the SYP elections.
- Lead on the coordination of national SYP elections and by-elections.
- Liaise with SYP staff to ensure consistent messaging, promotion, support, and delivery of SYP elections.
- Oversee the development, delivery, and evaluation of election timelines, policies, procedures, processes, and communications materials.



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- Ensure training, resources, and support are provided to local Election Coordinators to enable local delivery of the SYP elections in line with the Election Standing Orders.
  - Ensure clear information, accessible guidance, and a range of opportunities are available to enable all young people to engage with the SYP elections as candidates and/or as voters.
  - Oversee secure handling of election data, ensuring compliance with data protection and safeguarding policies.
  - Lead ongoing evaluation, impact monitoring, and reporting, and identification of recommendations for future improvements.

### **3.2 Local Election Coordinator Role and Responsibilities**

Each Local Authority and National Voluntary Organisation should register at least one Election Coordinator.

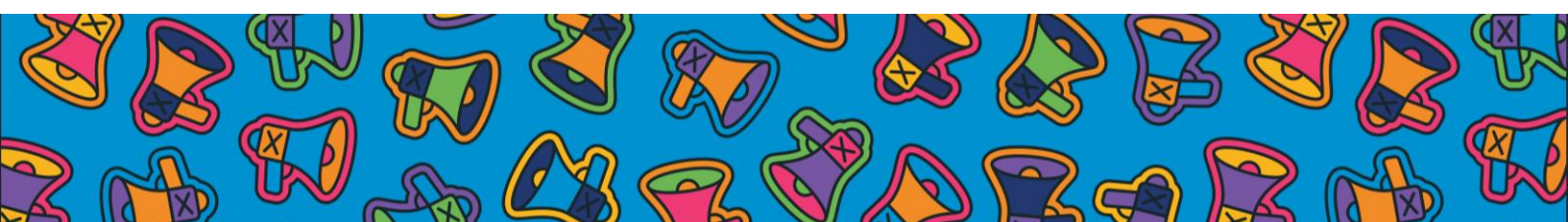
Election Coordinators are the main point of contact for the SYP Elections in each Local Authority and National Voluntary Organisation.

Election Coordinators will:

- Take part in Election Coordinator training and meetings as required.
- Liaise with SYP staff, candidates, and other local and/or national elections partners.
- Coordinate the elections within their organisation, in line with the SYP Election procedures and guidelines, including:
  - Coordinate and/or support the development of an SYP elections plan in their own organisation.
  - Promote the opportunity to stand in the SYP elections to young people aged 14 – 25.
  - Review candidate applications and candidate profiles for their organisation.
  - Support candidates to take part in the candidate experience programme.
  - Support candidates to promote their candidacy.
  - Promote the voting period and coordinate opportunities for young people aged 12 – 25 to vote during the designated voting period.
  - Work with SYP and colleagues in their own organisation to announce the election results.
  - Carry out local evaluation of the SYP Elections and contribute to any national evaluation to inform future SYP Elections planning.

### **3.3 Election Timeline**

National SYP elections will be carried out in line with a timeline as designated by the Scottish Youth Parliament.





This timeline will outline dates and deadlines for key stages during the national elections process. SYP will clearly communicate these dates and deadlines as early as possible to all Election Coordinators.

Where possible, flexibility will be embedded into the national elections timeline to ensure local authorities and national voluntary organisations can choose how and when to deliver the SYP elections programme in line with the election timeline.

By-elections will be carried out in line with a timeline agreed between SYP and the local authority or national voluntary organisation in which the by-election is taking place.

### **3.4 Elections Platform**

The Scottish Youth Parliament elections are coordinated through a secure online platform, at [elections.syp.org.uk](https://elections.syp.org.uk).

Election Coordinators will be given a unique log in to the SYP Elections Platform, which will enable them to amend and review young people's applications and progress through the election phases.

SYP will provide training and guidance to Election Coordinators on how to use the election platform ahead of the national elections.

### **3.5 Outgoing MSYPs**

The outgoing Scottish Youth Parliament membership will end on the day voting closes.

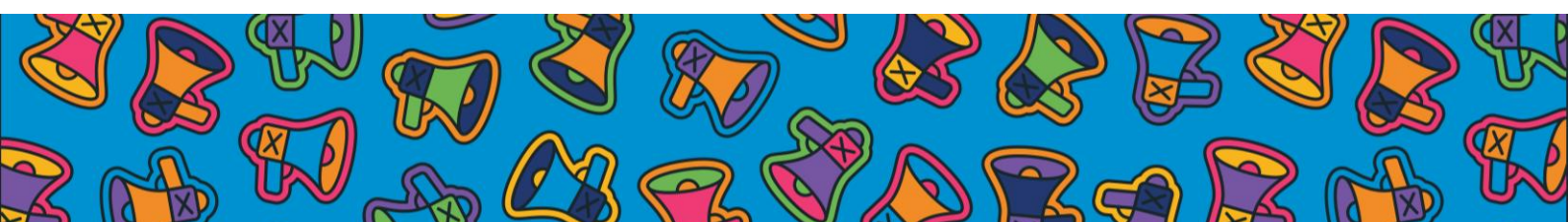
During national elections:


- No national activities will take place with the outgoing SYP membership during the designated voting period.
- During the designated voting period, only SYP Trustees and Subject Committee Conveners and Deputy Conveners will remain active in their roles.

## **4. Candidate Eligibility**

### **4.1 Local Authority Constituencies**

The Local Authority Constituency route to membership allows for the election of up to 146 MSYPs, who are supported by local authorities.





There shall be two Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) elected for each constituency. The candidates elected shall serve until the next national SYP election.

For this purpose, a local authority constituency is defined as the 73 areas used as the constituencies for the Scottish Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

Use of any other boundaries, including those previously in use for Scottish Parliament and SYP elections is not permitted.

For the purposes of organising elections and subsequent local support for MSYPs, constituencies are allocated to Local Authority areas. No Local Authority area is permitted to elect more MSYPs than its total allocation. Details of this allocation will be communicated to Election Coordinators by SYP ahead of each national election.

Where a constituency is completely situated within the boundaries of a single Local Authority, the Local Authority will be responsible for organising SYP elections and subsequent local support for both MSYPs in that constituency. Elections should be held for both MSYPs concurrently, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.

Where a constituency is located across the boundary of two Local Authorities (known as a 'split constituency'), each Local Authority will be responsible for organising SYP elections and subsequent local support for one MSYP. Separate elections should be held for each MSYP, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.

Following the election, the structure of local support of MSYPs is at the discretion of the Local Authority. MSYPs from the same constituency are permitted to be allocated to different Youth Groups, Youth Forums, Community Planning Partnerships etc. to suit local structures and circumstances. However, no variance to the constituency boundaries is permitted for electoral purposes.

## **4.2 National Voluntary Organisation Constituencies**

The National Voluntary Organisation constituency route to membership allows for up to 54 MSYPs, supported by SYPs National Voluntary Organisation Members.

There shall be two Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) elected for each SYP National Voluntary Organisation. The candidates elected shall serve until the next national SYP election.

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<sup>1</sup> The names, descriptions and maps of the constituencies are available from the Boundaries Scotland website at <https://www.boundaries.scot/blog/map/scottish-parliament-boundaries-second-periodic-review-2026-onwards/>





For this purpose, a constituency is defined as the National Voluntary Organisations that have Partner membership status (as defined in SYP's National Voluntary Organisation Framework) as approved by the SYP Board<sup>2</sup>.

For the purposes of organising elections and subsequent support for MSYPs, constituencies are allocated to National Voluntary Organisations. No National Voluntary Organisation is permitted to elect more MSYPs than its total allocation.

Following the election, the structure of support of MSYPs is at the discretion of the National Voluntary Organisation. MSYPs from the same constituency are permitted to be allocated to different Youth Groups, Youth Forums, etc to suit National Voluntary Organisation structures and circumstances. However, no variance to the National Voluntary Organisation is permitted for electoral purposes.

### **4.3 Eligibility**

Any young person habitually living, studying, or working within the constituency, or involved in a registered national voluntary organisation, may apply to be a candidate.

For this purpose, a candidate is defined as a young person who is no younger than 14 and no older than 25 on the day voting closes.

'Habitually living within the constituency' is defined as permanently or regularly resident within the constituency boundaries.

A young person who is in full time education may apply to be a candidate in the constituency where their educational establishment is located, even if they do not live in that constituency.

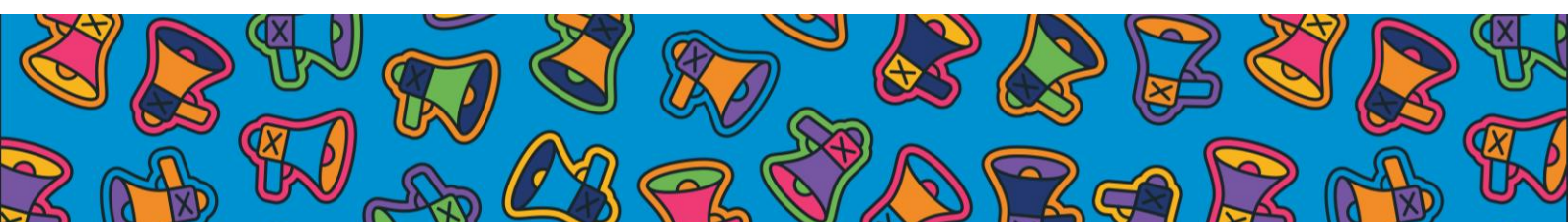
Young people who are moving to a different constituency for university or college, or for any other purpose, should be allowed to change constituency during the election application period. Candidates may only change constituency once and will not be allowed to change constituency after the candidate profile submission deadline.

In line with the Scottish Youth Parliament's rules relating to political impartiality, candidates do not represent a political party, political campaign, or a campaign in a referendum.

Applicants will only be permitted to stand as a candidate in their constituency in an election upon successful completion of the application process outlined in section 5 of this document.

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<sup>2</sup> A list of current National Voluntary Organisations can be found on SYP's website <https://syp.org.uk/get-involved/join-us/>.





## 5. Candidate Applications

The Scottish Youth Parliament runs a central application system through a secure online platform. Young people must apply by completing an application form on the SYP Elections Platform at [elections.syp.org.uk](https://elections.syp.org.uk).

The application form is a simple form which asks for contact details, emergency contact details, and some demographics information.

Candidates will also be invited to complete a more detailed demographics survey, which will enable SYP to analyse the demographics of all candidates. Election Coordinators will not be able to view individual responses to the demographics survey, but SYP may be able to provide a combined summary of all candidates within an organisation where individuals will not be identifiable. Data gathered through the demographics survey will form the basis of the new membership diversity report.

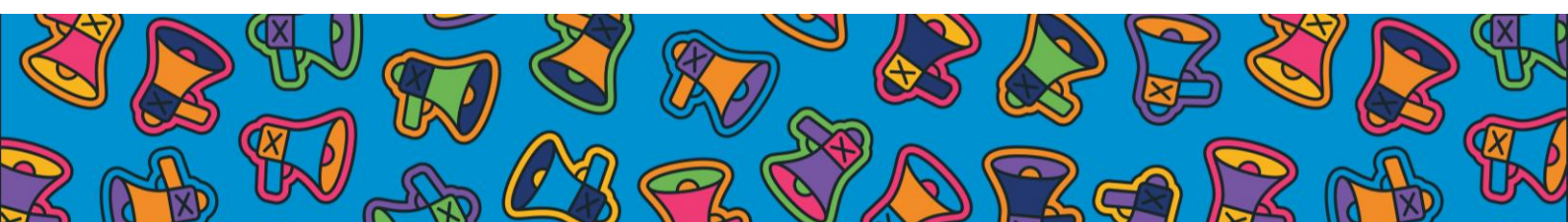
Candidates will also be invited to fill in a baseline skills survey, which is based on the YouthLink Scotland Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework. This will enable SYP and Election Coordinators to identify individual and group development needs.

After young people have submitted their application form, they will receive an automatic welcome email, which will contain:

- General information about SYP and the role of an MSYP.
- Election Coordinator contact details.
- Link to an online training module, which gives an overview about SYP, the role of an MSYP, and information about the elections process.
- Key dates and deadlines.

Election Coordinators will receive an automatic email to inform them of new candidates in constituencies within their local authority or national voluntary organisation.

Where possible, Election Coordinators should contact applicants who have been allocated to their local authority or national voluntary organisation within one week of receiving the application to:

- Introduce themselves.
  - Let the young person know what will happen next.
  - Arrange an initial meeting or information session to explain the SYP Elections process, ensure applicants understand the candidate Code of Conduct, and outline any local arrangements or expectations.
  - Share details of any training and/or meeting dates.
- 



Election Coordinators should arrange for applicants to fill in a local consent form, which gives permission for that young person to take part in the SYP elections. Receipt of this consent form should be recorded in the SYP Elections Platform.

When the applicant has returned their local consent form, completed the online training module, and met with their Election Coordinator, the Election Coordinator must approve the young person's candidacy in the SYP Elections Platform. This will confirm the young person is a candidate in the SYP election.

## **6. Candidate Support and Conduct**

### **6.1 Candidate Support**

SYP works as a partnership with Local Authorities and National Voluntary Organisations to deliver the SYP Elections.

All SYP Election candidates are supported by a Local Authority or National Voluntary Organisation ('supporting organisation') to take part in the SYP Elections programme.

All candidates should be supported by their Election Coordinator to take part in candidate development and campaigning activities, and in local and/or national opportunities during the SYP Elections process.

Election Coordinators should keep in touch with candidates regularly to make sure they know what they should be doing at each stage, and to ensure they feel supported to take part.

### **6.2 Candidate Conduct**

All candidates in the SYP elections are required to read, understand, and agree with the SYP Election Candidate Code of Conduct.

Candidates must sign and act in accordance with the Code of Conduct, on the understanding that failure to do so may result in them being removed as a candidate in the SYP elections.

The SYP Election Candidate Code of Conduct sits alongside and should be read in conjunction with any local working agreement made between the candidate and their local authority or national voluntary organisation.





### 6.3 Breaches of the Candidate Code of Conduct

Concerns about the conduct of an election candidate will be addressed by the candidate's Election Coordinator and/or local authority or national voluntary organisation.

If concerns are raised about the conduct of an election candidate, Election Coordinators will seek to use an informal route to resolve this, where appropriate. The majority of concerns can be dealt with this in this way.

In certain circumstances, local authorities and national voluntary organisations may take a formal approach to addressing the conduct of an election candidate. These circumstances may include:

- Where an informal approach to resolving the issue has been unsuccessful.
- Where conduct issues have been reported on more than one occasion.
- Where a report of a serious nature is made to SYP or the candidate's local authority or national voluntary organisation.

In such cases, the local authority or national voluntary organisation's processes will apply.

If a resolution cannot be reached, your supporting organisation or local authority may choose to remove support from a candidate. If a supporting organisation or local authority chooses to remove support from a candidate, this will result in the candidate being removed from the SYP Elections.

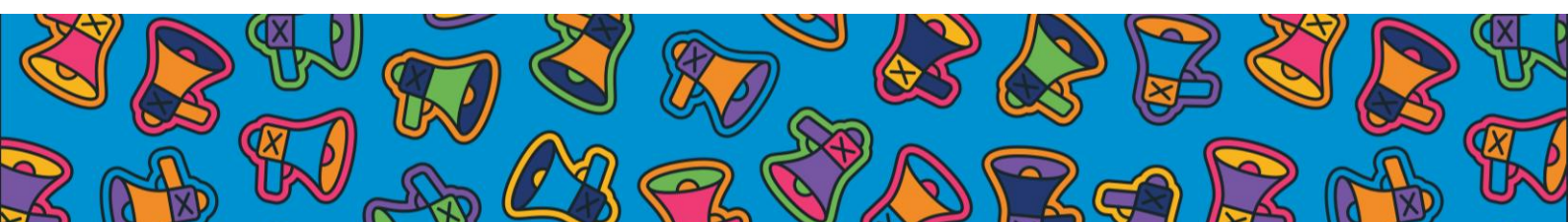
### 6.4 Removal of Candidates


National voluntary organisations or local authorities may choose to remove support from a candidate if the candidate:

- Does not follow guidance or instructions.
- Does not actively engage with their Election Coordinator, national voluntary organisation, or local authority.
- Does not act in accordance with the SYP Election Candidate Code of Conduct and/or any local agreements as outlined by their supporting organisation or local authority.

If a national voluntary organisation or local authority chooses to remove support from a candidate, this will result in the candidate being removed from the SYP Elections, as outlined in section 6.3.

The Scottish Youth Parliament may also remove candidates from the Election process if a concern of a serious nature is made about that candidate's conduct. SYP will work with the Election Coordinator and candidate to ensure support is in place for that young person in the event such action is required.





Candidates who are removed from the SYP Elections because of a breach of the Code of Conduct will not be allowed to stand in the same or another constituency during that election.

## **7. Election Communications and Campaigns**

### **7.1 Election Communications and Promotion**

SYP will manage all national publicity for the elections and will work with Local Authorities and National Voluntary Organisations to support local and other coverage.

Local Authorities and National Voluntary Organisations are asked to assist SYP in achieving publicity by enabling access to young people involved in the process for national purposes and by promoting the elections through local and national channels.

SYP will provide Local Authorities and National Voluntary Organisations with template elections materials for their use. Elections materials must reflect the branding of SYP, in line with the SYP Elections Brand Guidelines. Where the SYP or SYP elections logo and branding are to be used on non-standard communications, the permission of SYP must be sought.

Election Coordinators are responsible for local promotion of the voting period within their organisation. This should include information about how, when, and where young people can vote, and how to find out about all candidates.

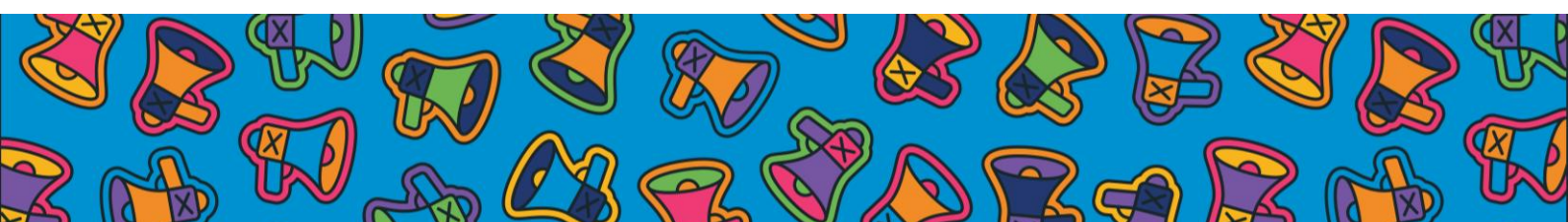
Election Coordinators must make every effort to ensure equality of access for voters across the age range defined in this document, and in facilitating the participation of all candidates in campaign activity. As part of the elections monitoring and evaluation, Election Coordinators will be asked to feedback on their progress in widening access and promotion beyond schools, particularly in relation to other institutions such as colleges, universities and workplaces.

### **7.2 Candidate campaigns**

As well as local and national promotion activities, candidates should be supported to promote their candidacy. This could include:

- Social media promotion.
- Participation in local events and promotion activities.
- Speaking with young people in their community.

No financial limit has been set nationally for the production of literature by candidates, but we ask Election Coordinators to monitor this for fairness and discourage candidates from spending money on promotional materials. Election Coordinators may wish to consider setting a limit locally.





SYP advises against public endorsement of individual candidates by elected representatives or other authority figures, as this may be in breach of SYP's rules around political impartiality.

Candidate materials such as candidate profiles, photographs, videos, presentations, social media content, or any other materials associated with their candidacy must not reference any political party, political campaign, or campaigning group.

To promote their candidacy, all candidates must develop a candidate profile. This will be hosted on the SYP elections platform.

Candidate profiles must be uploaded to the SYP elections platform and approved by their Election Coordinator no later than the deadline designated by SYP. SYP staff will review candidate profiles before they are published.

All candidate profiles will be published on the first day of the SYP election campaigning period, as designated by SYP.

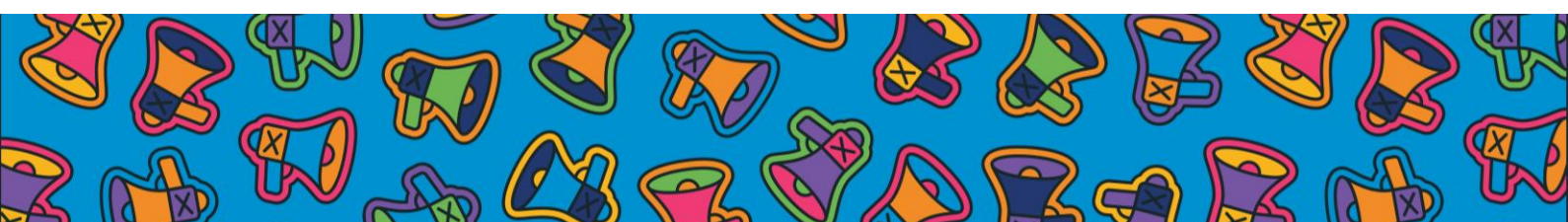
Any candidate profiles which are not in line with the candidate profile rules outlined below will not be published until they have been amended, which may delay these profiles being published.


Candidate profiles may include photographs, videos, and PowerPoint presentations, and Election Coordinators must review these to ensure they meet the following rules:

- 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 references to political parties, politicians, 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.

If a candidate does not wish to use a photograph or real image of themselves for safeguarding purposes (eg, if they are Care Experienced), they may use an avatar in place of a photograph. Any avatar or likeness of the candidate must show a human figure and the candidate must have permission to use the image.

- 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<sup>3</sup>.
  - Should be subtitled to ensure they are accessible to everyone.
- 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.

## 8. Voting Procedures

### 8.1 Voter Eligibility and Access

All young people aged between 12 and 25 during the designated voting period are eligible to vote for their MSYPs.

Young people in the first year of secondary school, regardless of their age, are permitted to vote for their MSYPs.

Attention must be paid to ensuring voting is accessible to all eligible young people, regardless of their location, background, and/or ability<sup>4</sup>. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring voting is available away from schools, and ensuring young people aged between 18 and 25 are able to participate.

Due to their age, many of the young people eligible to vote in SYP elections are not registered on the electoral roll and therefore SYP does not recommend pre-registration of voters.


All young people living within a local authority constituency should have the opportunity to vote in the election of their local authority constituency MSYPs.

All young people who are members or an elected body of a national voluntary organisation are entitled to vote for their national voluntary organisation MSYPs.

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<sup>3</sup> There is information about licenses and how to credit sources at <https://www.gov.uk/using-somebody-elses-intellectual-property/copyright>.

<sup>4</sup> The Electoral Commission has produced good practice guidelines for improving accessibility around elections, available at: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/changing-electoral-law/accessibility-elections>.





Young people who are a member of a national voluntary organisation are eligible to vote for the MSYPs who will represent them in any national voluntary organisation(s) of which they are a member, and in the local authority constituency in which they live.

## **8.2 Voting Practice**

A maximum of two MSYPs will be elected in each constituency, as defined in sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this document.

SYP elections can be held online or offline, or in a combination of the two, subject to compliance with these SYP Election Standing Orders.

Where a combination of online and offline voting is used, Election Coordinators must ensure robust measures are in place to guarantee each voter may only cast one vote.

Local authorities and national voluntary organisations must establish and clearly communicate robust plans to ensure voters can only submit one vote in each election in which they are eligible to vote.

Local Authorities and national voluntary organisations should ensure there are significant numbers of polling stations throughout constituencies. Particularly important is ensuring that voting is possible for those who are not at school. Traditionally, polling stations tend to be in buildings such as schools, village halls and community centres. However, polling stations could be located in alternative buildings or mobile units, which have good access and have a suitable space that allows voters to vote in private.

SYP does not advise voting by proxy or by postal votes, although voters with disabilities and other support needs are entitled to be accompanied by a companion when voting.

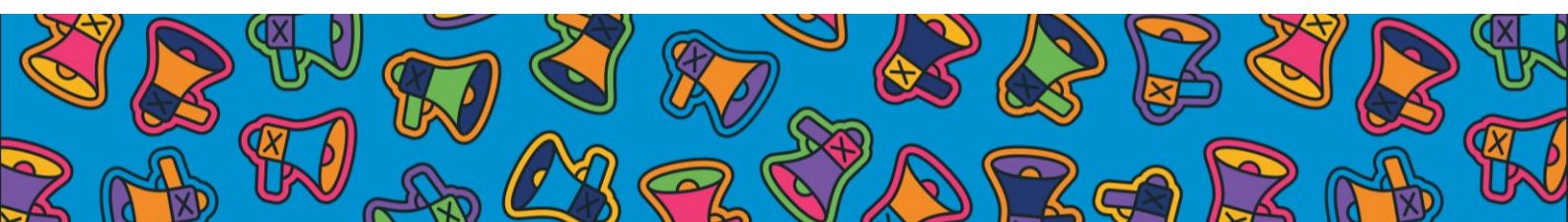
Every voter is entitled to cast their vote without being seen by anyone else, in both online and offline elections. Elections Coordinators should take appropriate measures to ensure secrecy of the ballot.

No voter should be required to state who they voted for.

## **8.3 Voting System**

Election to the Scottish Youth Parliament will be conducted using the Scottish Single Transferable Vote (STV) System.

STV uses preferential voting in multi-member constituencies. Each voter gets one vote, which can transfer from their first-preference to their second-preference and so on, as necessary. Candidates don't need a majority of votes to be elected, just a known 'quota', or share of the votes, determined by





the size of the electorate and the number of positions to be filled. If the voter's preferred candidate has no chance of being elected or has enough votes already, the vote is transferred to another candidate in accordance with their instructions<sup>5</sup>.

## **8.4 Online Voting Procedures**

SYP will liaise with a national voting platform provider to facilitate online voting in local authority constituencies. Local Authorities using online voting are encouraged to use this national voting platform to ensure all eligible voters can take part in voting for their MSYPs.

National Voluntary Organisations can use the SYP Elections Platform to host online elections.

SYP will provide separate guidance and training on how to use the national voting platform / SYP Elections Platform for online voting to Election Coordinators.

If a local authority or national voluntary organisation does not wish to use the national voting platform / SYP Elections Platform to host online voting, they may use an alternative online voting platform. However, voting using an alternative online voting platform must be carried out in line with sections 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 of this document. SYP will not be responsible for any costs associated with the use of any alternative voting platforms.

## **8.5 Offline Voting Procedures**

Offline voting must be carried out in line with sections 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 of this document.

For paper ballot elections, guidance notes should be available at each polling station and on ballot papers that explain clearly how to vote. At least one version of a ballot paper in large print should be displayed at each polling station and another one or two should be available for voters to take into the polling booth to compare with their ballot paper.

In offline elections, each voter should secretly mark their ballot paper and fold it to conceal their vote.

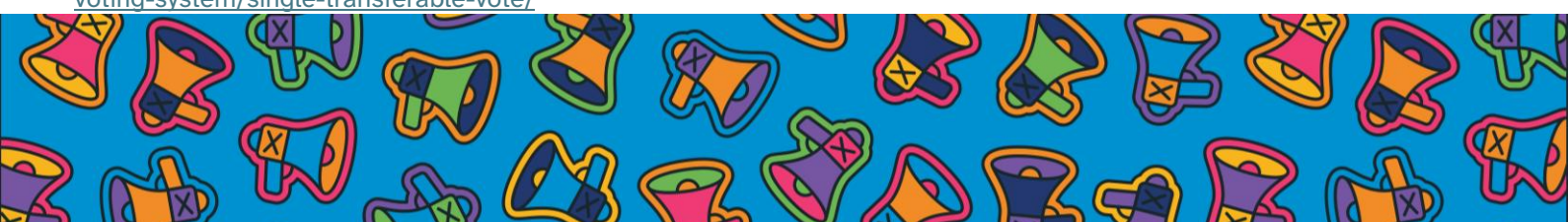
If a voter accidentally spoils their ballot paper, the polling staff can issue a replacement. The voter must not be allowed to put their spoilt paper in the ballot box as if they do, another paper cannot be issued. A new ballot paper should be issued in the normal way to the voter, and the spoilt paper should be marked cancelled and placed in the appropriate envelope.


## **8.6 Uncontested Elections**

Every effort should be made to minimise the occurrence of uncontested elections where possible.

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<sup>5</sup> Guidance on the Single Transferable Vote system is available at: <https://electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/types-of-voting-system/single-transferable-vote/>





In the event of an uncontested SYP election, the candidate(s) will be elected without a ballot.

## **9. Counting and Verification**

The counting of ballots must be fair and transparent and carried out by impartial individuals. Although candidates should be permitted to observe, they must take no part in the counting process.

Additional conditions, weighting or other criteria should not be applied to the results; to preserve the integrity of the ballot, no adjustments will be permitted.

SYP recommends the use of electronic counting software to count offline (paper) ballots or where the national voting platform / SYP Elections platform has not been used<sup>6</sup>.

After the count, all ballot papers and other election documentation should be held in a secure environment for a year. Following this, these papers can then be destroyed in a secure manner.

Documents relating to the election, which do not include ballot papers or personal information about the young people standing for election, should be open to public inspection.

## **10. Election Results**

### **10.1 Returning Officer Role and Responsibilities**

In SYP elections, the primary role of the Returning Officer is to announce the result of the election and to satisfy themselves that the election has been fair.


For reasons of objectivity, the Returning Officer is an independent person in each Local Authority or National Voluntary Organisation who does not have day-to-day contact with candidates/MSYPs and, for reasons of profile, should ideally hold a senior position, such as Head of Service or Chief Executive.

For elections using in-person voting, if the Returning Officer can attend the count, they should oversee the process. If not, this responsibility should fall to the Election Coordinator or Youth Work Manager.

For elections using the national voting platform or SYP online voting system a member of SYP staff (normally the National Election Coordinator) will take this responsibility, liaising with the relevant Election Coordinator(s) and the national voting platform provider.

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<sup>6</sup> Guidance on counting Single Transferable Vote ballots can be found at: <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/types-of-voting-system/single-transferable-vote/>





## 10.2 Announcement of Election Results

Election results should be announced during the week immediately following the day polls close. Local Authorities and National Voluntary Organisations must not announce the result prior to this time.

Election Coordinators should liaise with a designated SYP staff member to facilitate the announcement of election results. This will normally be the National Election Coordinator.

Local Authorities and National Voluntary Organisations are encouraged to host a local elections announcement event to announce the results of the elections in their area or organisation.

SYP will seek to promote each result and create an 'election night' feel as results come in across the country, utilising social media along with traditional outlets.

Once a result has been declared and public notice of the result given, the Returning Officer and Election Coordinator have no power to amend the result, even if uncounted ballots are subsequently found.

## 10.3 MSYP Induction

In a national election, the new SYP membership will start on the day after polls close.

Successful candidates will become MSYPs as soon as the election results are announced.

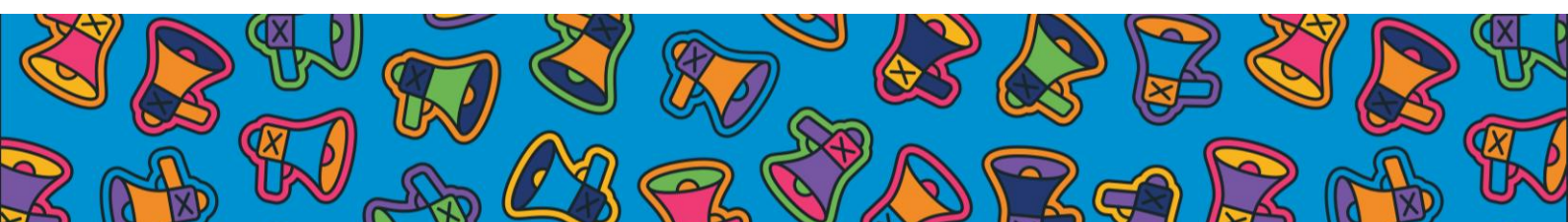
However, all MSYPs must sign the MSYP Code of Conduct and complete the MSYP consent form before carrying out any official duties. Additionally, MSYPs aged between 16 and 25 must be members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme before carrying out any official duties.

All MSYPs must complete the MSYP induction programme within the first three months after their election. The MSYP induction programme will follow a structure as designated by SYP.

## 11. By-elections

By-elections should be carried out in line with these SYP Election Standing Orders and by-election guidance documentation.

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 National Voluntary Organisations / Local Authorities and the candidates with voting (offline or online), promotion, and local engagement activity, while ensuring SYP's record of current MSYPs is up-to-date.

National Voluntary Organisations / Local Authorities should work with SYP staff to ensure the timely planning and implementation of the by-election strategy. This includes co-ordinating outreach and communications activity.

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 the current 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 participation structures where the local youth structure is elected.
- Election through existing youth participation structures, such as an internal vote at a local youth council or forum.
- A full by-election akin to that of the National Elections.

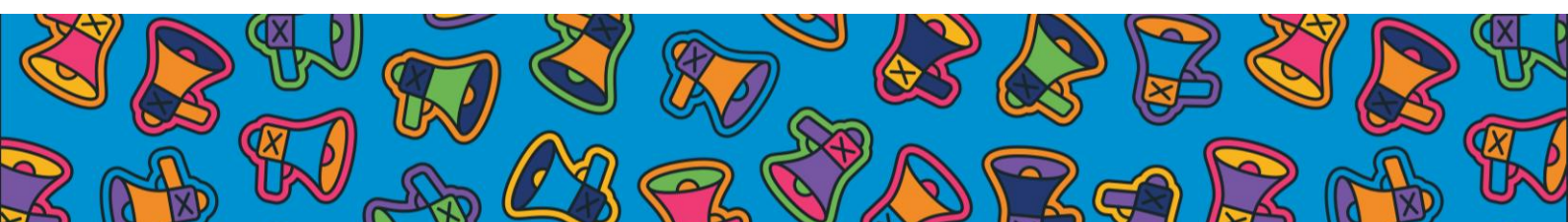
MSYPs elected in a by-election must complete the MSYP induction as outlined in section 10.3 of this document.


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 the result of disciplinary proceedings.

## **12. Safeguarding and Risk Management**

Safeguarding and risk management considerations must be central to all stages of the election.

In line with SYP processes, a detailed risk assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) will be carried out by SYP during the national elections planning process and reviewed every two months. These documents will be shared with Election Coordinators.





SYP staff and partner organisations must follow their own organisations' relevant safeguarding policies<sup>7</sup>, and should carry out their own risk assessment in line with their own organisation's processes.

Any concerns about the safeguarding of any individual young person or adult must be addressed through established procedures in line with relevant safeguarding policies.

### **13. Complaints and Concerns**

Candidates are supported by Election Coordinators in local authorities and national voluntary organisations. Candidates should discuss any matters they are concerned about with their Election Coordinator in the first instance.

Complaints and concerns relating to the conduct of a candidate should be addressed in line with sections 6.3 and 6.4 of this document.

If it is not possible to resolve issues informally, anyone who wishes to make a formal complaint about a candidate, Election Coordinator, or SYP staff member should do so by sending details to [complaints@syp.org.uk](mailto:complaints@syp.org.uk). Formal complaints will be addressed in line with the Scottish Youth Parliament Complaints Procedure<sup>8</sup>.

### **14. Review and Amendments**

SYP will review these Standing Orders after each national election cycle.

A review of these Standing Orders will be informed by the findings from the national election evaluation, including feedback from young people, Election Coordinators, SYP staff, the national Voting Platform provider, and any other stakeholders as appropriate.

Amendments to these Standing Orders must be approved by the SYP Board.


Any amendments to these Standing Orders must not disadvantage candidates during an ongoing election or by-election, unless required for safeguarding or legal purposes.

Amendments to these Standing Orders will be published clearly and communicated to all stakeholders.

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<sup>7</sup> The Scottish Youth Parliament's Safeguarding policies and processes are available at: <https://syp.org.uk/safeguarding/>

<sup>8</sup> Scottish Youth Parliament Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure: <https://syp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/SYP-Complaints-and-Disiplinary-Procedure-March-2024.pdf>





## 15. Contact

Whilst this document is intended to provide the parameters for the election of MSYPs, we understand additional questions may arise. For further information and guidance, please contact the Scottish Youth Parliament using the details below:

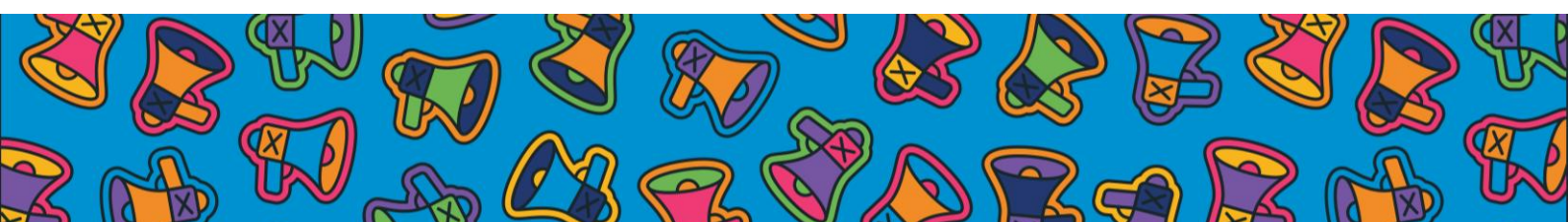
### Scottish Youth Parliament National Election Coordinator:

Rosy Burgess

Head of Participation and Programmes

T: 07539 052186

E: [elections@syp.org.uk](mailto:elections@syp.org.uk)





**For more information, please visit  
[syp.org.uk/elections](http://syp.org.uk/elections)**

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