

Votes at 16 Timelines

Parliaments/Assembly Legislation (UK)

Note: In addition to initiating legislation, or in the case of the NI Assembly, submitting a motion calling for devolved powers to do so, members also submitted early day motions of make reference to campaigns in their speeches.

Year	What	Who	Purpose	Outcome	
1999	Amendment to Representation of the People Bill	Simon Hughes MP (LD)	Reduce voting age to 16	Defeated 36/434	
2005	Representation of the People (Reduction of Voting Age)	Stephen Williams MP (LD)	Lower voting age in all UK and European elections	Defeated 136/128	
2008	Voting Age (Reduction) Bill	Julie Morgan MP (Lab)	Reduce the voting age for Parlt and other elections, to 16.	Timed out	
2012–13	Voting Age (Reduction to 16) Bill	Stephen Williams MP (LD)	Allow 16+ to vote in parliamentary, local elections, and referendums	Timed out	
2013	Representation of the People (Young People’s Enfranchisement) Bill [HL]	Lord Tyler (LD)	To reduce the voting age to 16 across all UK elections	Timed out	
2013/14	The Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Act 2013	Nicola Sturgeon Dep First Min (SNP)	Scottish Independence Referendum	Passed	✓
2015	Scottish Elections (Reduction of Voting Age) Act 2015	John Swinney Dep First Min (SNP)	Enable voting in Scotland’s devolved and local elections	Passed	✓
2015	Brexit referendum legislation	Lord Tyler (LD)	Attempt to allow 16/17 to vote on Brexit	Passed Lords Defeated HoC	
2017–19	Representation of the People (Young People’s Enfranchisement) Bill	Peter Kyle MP (Lab)	Lower voting age and auto-enrol young voters	Timed out	
2017–19	Representation of the People (Young People’s Enfranchisement and Education) Bill	Jim McMahon MP (Lab)	Lower voting age and improve citizenship education	Debate Timed out	
2020	Representation of the People (Young People’s Enfranchisement) Bill [HL]	Lord Lucas (Cons)	Lower the voting age and amend voter registration	Timed out	

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2019-21	Local Govt and Elections (Wales) Act 21 Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020	Assembly Commission Julie James MS	Enabling voting in Wales Senedd (Assembly) and local elections	Passed Passed	✓ ✓
2021-22	Representation of the People (Young People's Enfranchisement) Bill [HL]	Lord Adonis (Lab)	Lower voting age to 16 for UK parliamentary and local elections	Timed out	
2022	Private members business motion	DK	Calling UK Govt to empower the Assembly (or pass UK legislation) for local/assembly elections	Both 'passed', but not binding	
2024	NI Assembly 'cross-community' motion	Naomi Long (Alliance)			



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Campaigns/Lobbying/Activism

Note: Individuals and organisations were possibly active before these dates e.g. BYC, Save the Children, Children's Rights Alliance England..and we are still sourcing information and checking dates - so please get in touch with any amends/update.

- 1998 -2024 British Youth Council advocating for votes at 16
- 1999 Scottish Youth Parlt launched and started advocating for votes at 16
- 2000 Children's Rights Alliance (England) publish 'The Real Democratic Deficit – why 16 &17 should be allowed vote
- 2000 UK Youth Parliament holds first elections (*checking when first backed votes at 16*)
- 2001 Funky Dragon (national youth council/forum in Wales) backs votes at 16
- 2001 Lib Dems and Green parties adopt votes at 16 as party policy
- 2003-2024 Votes at 16 Coalition launched (70 members inc. youth voice orgs - BYC, CRAE, SYP, Funky Dragon NUS, UKYP)
- 2003 Plaid Cymru (Wales) back votes at 16
- 2004 Electoral Commission Review (public consultation – concluded that the voting age stay at 18 “ for the time being” but review again in five years
- 2006 Petition delivered to No 10 by V16 Coalition/BYC young campaigners
- 2006 European Youth Forum pass motion to adopt Votesat16 as policy
- 2008 Labour party vote to endorse Votes at 16 as a policy
- 2009 Youth Citizenship Commission “did not find significant evidence on which to base a recommendation either to lower or to retain the voting age”
- 2009/10 UK Youth Parliament debates Votes at 16 in HoC for the first time/ 2010 UK wide priority campaign
- UK Youth Parliament Make Your Mark Votes consistently feature Votes at 16, making it a national campaign in 2025

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- 2010 British Youth Council makes Votes at 16 one of its pre-General Election campaigns/manifesto, with rally and launch at Parliament
- 2012 Scottish Youth Parlt makes Votes at 16 a priority campaign
- 2012 Northern Ireland Youth Forum members pass a motion with 86% in favour
- 2013 UKYP wide campaign
- 2014 Westminster conference, march and mass lobby of MPs (BYC members/V16 consortium members eg SYP, UKYP, Funky Dragon etc)
- 2014 ✓ Scotland is the first nation of the UK were 16 and 17 yr-olds vote - in the Scottish independence referendum
- 2014 Youth Select Committee (youth councillors, mayors, MYPs) “Lowering the Voting age to 16” report makes the case for a Votes at 16, programme of engagement and political/democracy education
- 2015 Lords vote in favour of Votes 16 in Brexit referendum bill – but rejected by the Commons
- 2015 ✓ European Parliament vote in favour of Votes at 16, by 326 votes for, 276 against.
- 2015 ✓ Scottish legislation passed to include local and devolved parliamentary election
- 2015 British Youth Council includes Votes 16 in pre-General Election campaign, march and launch, in Parliament
- 2016 ✓ First devolved election in Scotland (Scottish Parlt)
- 2016 Conservatives Reform Group publish supportive pamphlet “Votes at 16, the Tory Case”
- 2017/18/19 UKYP UK wide campaign for three years running
- 2017 McAllister Report (commissioned by Welsh Assembly) published backing Votes at 16 in Wales laying foundations for reform
- 2018-2024 All Parlt Party Group on Votes at 16 set up with cross party support (published report)
- 2019-2023 Lowering the Vote Age (Leverhulme Trust funder) research initiative, consultations and research to provide evidence base/context
- 2019 - 2025 Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust launched UK Democracy Fund, to widen democratic participation/extend franchise to 16/17 yr-olds, with support for research/campaigns including Wales and England

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- 2019/21 ✓ Wales consults and introduces legislation for both local govt and Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru
- 2021 ✓ First election in Wales
- 2021 Welsh Youth Parliament back extension of V16 to all of UK , with political education and equal rights across all of UK
- 2020 Votes at 16 conference (Peoples History Museum, Manchester, attended by 72 yp from across UK and 46 stakeholders and youth workers. (Organised by Lowering the Voting Age Research team/Leverhulme)
- 2022-2024 BYC launch 'Be Seen Be Heard' campaign with Votes at 16 coalition and Body Shop
- 2023 Dr Helen Pankhurst (great granddaughter of Emmeline Pankhurst (suffragette) backs the 'Be Seen Be Heard' v@16 (BYC/Body Shop)
- 2024 Votes at 16 coalition stops meeting when BYC closed (Mar 24)
- 2024 Labour Government elected with Votes at 16 in its manifesto
- 2024 Politics in Action (NI) launch campaign in Northern Ireland
- 2024 UK Youth Parliament choose Votes at 16 plus Education their priority campaign for 2025
- 2025 Northern Ireland Youth Assembly vote in favour 37 / 14
- 2025 ✓ Northern Ireland Children's Commissioner backs votes at 16 in NI.
- 2025 New campaigns launched (Politics Project/Democracy Classroom) and MyLifeMySay #V16, both emphasising political/democracy education

International

1976	Cuba, 16
1984	Nicaragua, 16
1988	Brazil – optional for 16 and 17 yr-olds and compulsory for 18+
1995	Lower Saxony in Germany became the first of 11 out of 16 states to allow votes at 16 in local elections. Six states allow votes at 16 at state level. In 2022 all of Germany's 16 and 17 can vote in European Parliament elections.
2000	In Austria several regions lowered the voting age in regional and local elections from 2000. In 2007 the voting age for national elections was lowered to 16.
2006	Isle of Mann, 16
2007	Switzerland, the regional state (canton) of Glarus was the first of several to allow V16 in some local elections.
2008	Jersey and Guernsey (Channel Islands)
2008	Ecuador, optional for 16 and 17 yr-olds and compulsory 18-65
2009	Ireland - campaign launched (National Youth Council of Ireland)
2012	Argentina, 16
2013	USA - Takoma, Maryland is the first of a number of local municipalities/cities to introduce votes at 16.
2014	Malta lowered the voting age to 16 for local elections in 2014 and voted for first time in 2015. The voting age for general elections was lowered after legislation was passed in March 2018.
2015	Estonia, 16 in local elections
2015	USA: youth-led campaign launched
2015	Canada: youth-led campaign launched

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2016	Greece, 17
2019	New Zealand: youth-led campaign launched
2022	Alderney and Sark (Channel Islands)
2022	Belgium, agreed to allow 16 & 17 yr-olds to vote in European elections
2022	Australia: youth led campaign launched
2024	Cyprus, 17
Ongoing	The European Youth Forum is supporting a number of national youth organisations in campaigns, notably in Lithuania, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, and Czechia, joining others mentioned already including: USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Ireland.

