

Fair.**v**ote



Fair.Vote Campaign Toolkit



Introduction

Peter Kyle MP (Hove and Portslade, Labour) introduced a [Private Members' Bill](#) in Parliament on Wednesday 19 July 2017 to reduce the voting age to 16 in Parliamentary and other elections. The Bill it's due to have its second reading in the House of Commons on 11 May 2018. There is real appetite for change, with senior figures and backbenchers from every party supporting the lowering of the voting age.

This would create parity across the United Kingdom as Scotland already allows 16 -year olds to vote, whilst Wales is about to follow suit.

This guide from the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the National Union of Students (NUS) provides an introduction to the case for lowering the voting age, and most importantly, how students and colleges can get involved to help raise awareness of the campaign.

In coming months, AoC and NUS will be working hard to promote the campaign, with the students, staff and local communities and also through our public affairs and communications activities. We would like as many colleges as possible to get involved with this – we know that our voice is stronger when we all speak together.

This toolkit provides sample letters, social media messages and press releases to help you to spread the message.

Key dates

- Education for Democracy Day – **W/c 26 March 2018**
- Targeted Day of Action with MPs, Metro Mayors and local elected representatives – **27 April 2018**
- Photocall in Parliament with MPs – **2 May 2018**
- Engagement in local elections – **3 May 2018**
- Peter Kyle MP - Private Members' Bill second reading - **Friday 11 May 2018**
- Students visiting MPs surgeries – **18 May 2018**
- National Democracy Week - **2-6 July 2018**

Our Aim

To secure a parliamentary decision to lower the legal voting age in UK elections to 16 years old.

Our Approach

It is vital that we get as many MPs as possible to attend Peter Kyle MP second reading of the Bill on Friday 11 May. We need to show that there is strong consensus for Fair.Vote (Votes at 16), convincing undecided parliamentarians why they should support it, whilst ensuring that those who back the Bill turn up to show their support.

Our activity will focus on:

- Talking to students and colleges
- Increasing public awareness of the campaign

- Encouraging college communities to engage with representatives – MPs, Metro Mayors, and Councillors – from all sides of the political spectrum.

Core messages

There is currently a fundamental inequity of rights in this country. 16 and 17-year-olds living in Scotland are able to vote for their representatives to the devolved parliament at Holyrood and in their local authorities, but not for the Government in Westminster. For young people this age living in England or Northern Ireland, there is no opportunity to vote at all.

Voting is a basic right in a democracy.

Participation in free elections is a fundamental human right (protected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UK's Human Rights Act). The reasons for excluding people from the vote therefore have to be fair and balanced. As many 16 and 17-year-olds are contributing to the taxation system, the principle stands that they should be entitled to vote as a fundamental right.

The current system is “taxation without representation”.

16 and 17-year-olds hold many responsibilities in our society, and extending the franchise would engage them in the political affairs, current events, and the democratic processes that impact their lives. Fair.Vote (Votes at 16) would encourage young people to understand the society they live in, influence key decisions that affect them, and ensure youth issues are represented.

We believe it is impossible to justify the automatic and blanket exclusion of 16 and 17-year-olds from the right to vote because, at 16, the law allows a person to:

1. Pay income tax and National Insurance
2. Become a director of a company
3. Get married or enter a civil relationship
4. Give full consent to medical treatment
5. Obtain tax credits and welfare benefits in their own right
6. Consent to sexual relationships
7. Leave home
8. Change their name by deed poll
9. Join the armed forces
10. Become a member of a trade union or a co-operative society

Young people need to be encouraged to take part in democracy, not locked out of it.

Having learnt the principles in compulsory citizenship education 16 and 17-year-olds are ready to participate in civic life, shown by the huge numbers of young people already active in local youth councils, youth parliament, or student unions. Fair.Vote (Votes at 16) would inspire more young people to play an active role in our society.

Young people aren't apathetic.

Apathy among young people has always been a myth and the recent election has shattered that illusion for good. Students are not apathetic: they care about rising debt, diminishing access to education, and inequality in our society that makes them the first

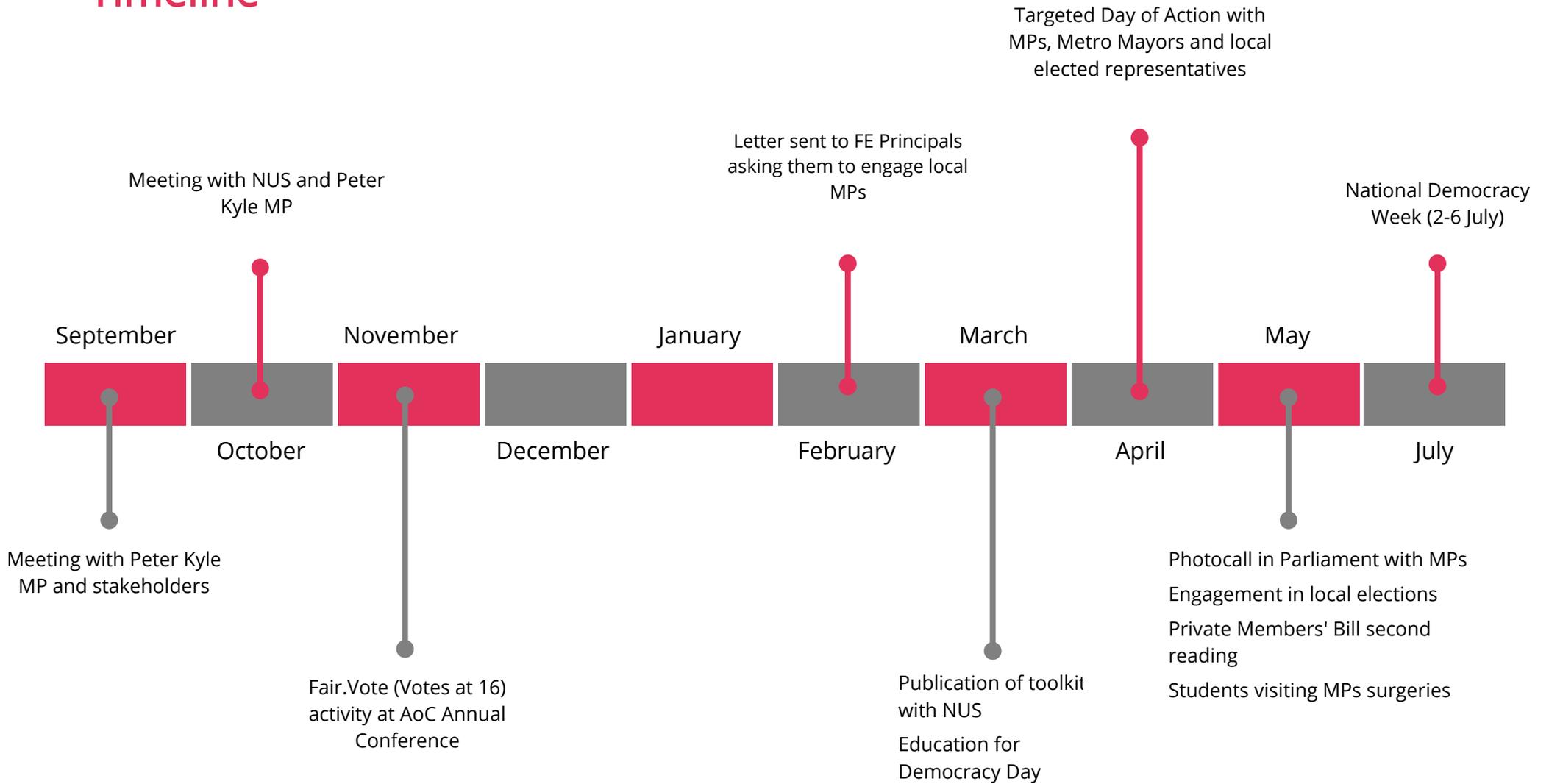
generation in years to be statistically worse off than their parents. The result of the general election in 2017 showed that thousands of

young people were willing to engage with politics, many for the very first time. There were, however, 1.5 million 16 and 17-year-olds who did not receive this opportunity.

Checklist for students and colleges

	Have you...?	
1	Visited the Fair.Vote (Votes at 16) website ?	✓
2	Planned an event or activity for Education for Democracy Day?	
3	Contacted your MP, Metro Mayors or local elected representatives?	
4	Arranged a meeting or sent a letter to your MP?	
5	Arranged a meeting between the college principal and students' union to discuss Fair.Vote (Votes at 16)?	
6	Visited your MPs surgery?	
7	Planned activity for the local elections on the 3 May 2018?	

Timeline



Website

www.fair.vote

This is the official website of the campaign. We will keep the website updated as the campaign progresses with news articles, activities and social media graphics.

Social Media

Twitter

Please follow our twitter account @fairvote16 and use hashtags #fairvote16 #votesat16

Facebook

Please like and follow our Facebook page @fairvote16

Show your support for the campaign – template social media messages

We support the Fair.Vote campaign to equalise the voting age across the UK to 16. It's time #fairvote16 #votesat16

Colleges play a key role in preparing young people for democratic life and given the number of 16 and 17-year-olds students in colleges – we support them having their say #fairvote #votesat16

Social media graphics are available on www.fair.vote

W/C 26 March 2018 Education for Democracy

We would like to run national Education for Democracy days in colleges during the week commencing 26 March.

All citizens including 16 and 17- year-olds in all nations need to fully understand their rights and responsibilities. Questions such as, “Why should I vote?”, “How can I influence my leaders?” “What can I reasonably expect from my elected officials?” or “What are my voting rights?” need to be addressed through civic institutions, in the free press and in classrooms.

Consider whether local employers and partners could play a part in the campaign. Partners can demonstrate their support by participating in the day of action.

Suggested events/activities

Monday 26 March - Starting the conversation

Encourage students to have a chat over a coffee or lunch to start the conversation “What does democracy mean to me” or “why is democracy important?”

Take a photo or record a vox pop/short clip and post to twitter or facebook and use #talkdemocracy

Tuesday 27 March – ‘If I was Prime Minister, I would’

Asking the question of students ‘If I was Prime Minister, I would.....’. We have a print out that students can use to write on, if they choose. Post a photo with your student holding up their response and include #talkdemocracy

Wednesday 28 March - Tweet your MP or Local Councillor asking what democracy means for them?"

Send messages to your local MP(s) or local councillors asking what democracy means to them. To find out their Twitter address visit: www.parliament.uk. Alternatively, visit this website and enter your postcode tweetyourmp.com

Thursday 29 March – ‘What do democracy mean to me’

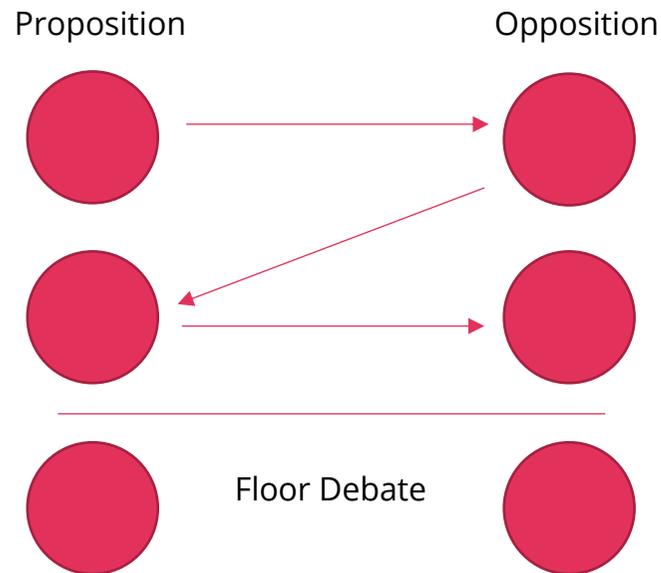
For the final day we will be posting the short clips of staff and students answering the question ‘what does democracy mean to me?’ #talkdemocracy

Hold a Debate Mate debate in your college

Debates are a great way to explore a topic, ensuring that people hear the strongest arguments from all sides in a fun and engaging manner. You can invite your local MP/elected representative to chair the debate, meaning that they hear young people talking about the very issues that affect them.

A showcase debate helps to ignite interest in the topic at hand and acts as a catalyst for further discussion. The motion to be debated is: This House Would lower the voting age to 16. Motions are in this format as it mirrors the way a bill is presented in Parliament.

Format



There are two teams in a debate: the proposition, who argue for the motion, and the opposition, who argue against. The format of the debate is outlined below - with the proposition speaking first, then opposition, back to proposition, then to opposition, next it goes to the audience to ask questions during the 'floor debate'. These questions are not responded to straight away, but will be answered by the third speaker on each team (called the summary speaker). The debate will need a chairperson to keep order, introduce the motion & speakers, keep the speakers to time and choose who from the audience will ask questions to the debaters during the floor debate. You can invite your local MP or elected representative to chair the debate.

Each speaker will have an allotted time of 3 minutes to speak, and in that time the speaker will need to put forward arguments for their side, as well as respond to arguments brought up from the opposing team.

After the first 2 speeches on each side, you can pause for the floor debate, which is an opportunity for the audience to ask questions to the debaters. At the end of the debate, the chairperson will ask the audience to vote based on who they thought was the most persuasive.

To see a Debate Mate debate in action, [check out our debate at the Edinburgh TV and Film Festival](#).

Debate Mate are helping to provide a platform for young people to discuss all sides of the debate to lower the voting age to 16. For more resources and guidance on debating in your institution, visit www.debatemate.org/fairvote

27 April 2018 Targeted Day of Action with MPs, Metro Mayors and Elected representative

Here are some suggestions of how to engage with your elected representatives

Engaging with your MP(s)

AoC and NUS will be supporting students and college leaders to engage MPs in key constituencies. It is not always easy to get a meeting with your MP, so it is a good idea to get in touch now – with an eye to booking an appointment ideally on 27 April. If you are not sure who your MP is, you can find them and the details for their office [here](#). If you are unable to book in a meeting you can also send them a letter asking for their support.

If your MP agrees to attend the debate and vote in favour of Fair.Vote (Votes at 16), then please drop us an email to guram.korkoti@aoc.co.uk and campaigns@nus.org.uk.

Engaging with your Metro Mayor

These are the newly-created ‘super’ boroughs that are overseen by a directly-elected ‘metro mayor’. Six of these mayors have already been elected – in Greater Manchester, the Liverpool City Region, Tees Valley, the West Midlands, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and the West of England. The Metro Mayors do not have the power to extend the franchise as a devolved issue. However, securing their support is a useful to put leverage on MPs in their parties and to raise the profile of the campaign. If you are in any of these areas, you could consider approaching other colleges in the area to set up a meeting or to sign a joint letter asking for their support.

Local councillors

Another tactic is to win the support of your local councillors. Get in touch with local councillors to see if they would submit a motion to the council meeting.

Template letter for college principals and chairs

Below is a model letter for you to send to your local MP(s), Metro Mayors and local elected representatives (Please amend the model letter accordingly).

Xxx April 2018

Dear xxx,

I am writing to you on behalf of xx college which educates xxx 16 and 17-year-olds in your constituency to raise the importance of young people in colleges becoming more involved in civic engagement and democracy.

As you may be aware, a Private Members' Bill has been introduced in Parliament to lower the voting age to 16, this Bill will receive its second reading in the House of Commons on 11 May 2018.

This is an issue of importance to young people studying at the college and we would be interested in hearing your views and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further.

With that in mind, we would be delighted for you to visit the college on xxx meet with students at our college and talk to them about their experience of voting and the importance of knowing about all the options which are available to young people in a democratic society.

We appreciate the constraints on your diary and can therefore be flexible with timings.

We really hope you are able to visit us, and would appreciate if you could confirm whether or not you are able to by contacting *INSERT DETAILS*.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX Principal/Chair

2 May 2018 – Photocall in Parliament with MPs

In support of the Peter Kyle MP Private Members Bill, we will be holding a drop-in photocall session on **Wednesday 2 May, from 10-12pm in Room S, Portcullis House**. The photocall is open to all MPs and we would welcome your support in encouraging your local MP(s) to take part in this photocall from next week onwards.

Send messages to your local MP(s). To find out their Twitter address visit: www.parliament.uk to find out their contact details. Alternatively, visit this website and enter your postcode <http://tweetyourmp.com/>.

- As my local MP, I'm asking you to please attend the MP photo call on **Wednesday 2 May, from 10-12pm in Room S, Portcullis House**. [@yourlocalMP] please show your support for 16 & 17- year- olds in your constituency. #fairvote16 #votesat16
- [@yourlocalMP] Please give your support for lowering the voting age to 16. It's time for the younger generation to have their say in their future. MP Photocall - **Wednesday 2 May, from 10-12pm in Room S, Portcullis House** #fairvote16 #votesat16

Template news release

****NEWS RELEASE****

[INSERT MP NAME] visits [INSERT COLLEGE NAME] to discuss Fair.Vote (Votes at 16)

Students and staff at [INSERT COLLEGE NAME] welcomed [INSERT MP NAME] to campus to talk to them about the impact of reducing the national voting age to 16.

This is part of national action organised by the Association of Colleges, of which [INSERT COLLEGE NAME] is a member, and the National Union of Students (NUS).

Peter Kyle MP (Hove, Labour) introduced a Private Members' Bill in Parliament on Wednesday 19 July 2017 to reduce the voting age to 16 in Parliamentary and other elections, the Bill has been given *second reading* in the House of Commons on 11 May 2018. The Bill has *received cross-party support* from Rt hon Nicky Morgan MP and Rt hon Norman Lamb MP which shows that the political appetite for change is there. With Scotland already having a voting age of 16, and Wales potentially about to follow suit, it would be a profound shame for UK-wide elections and votes in England to be left lagging behind.

Colleges play a key role in preparing young people for democratic life and given that two-thirds of 16 and year olds study in colleges, over the coming weeks and months, AoC will be jointly leading the Fair.Vote (Votes at 16) campaign with NUS to give 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote.

[INSERT PRINCIPAL NAME], Principal at [INSERT COLLEGE NAME], said: "[INSERT COMMENT FROM PRINCIPAL, FOR EXAMPLE, EXPLAINING WHY THEY'RE TAKING PART IN THIS ACTION ETC]."

Following the visit, [INSERT MP NAME] said: "[INSERT COMMENT FROM MP]."

David Hughes, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, said: "Apathy among young people has always been a myth and the recent election has shattered that illusion for good. Students

are not apathetic - they care about rising debt, diminishing access to education, and inequality in our society that makes us the first generation in years to be statistically worse off than our parents. The result of the snap election showed that thousands of young people were willing to engage with politics, many for the very first time."

-Ends-

Notes to editors:

For more information or to arrange interviews with the Principal, head of curriculum or students, contact
[INSERT NAME OF COLLEGE MEDIA CONTACT]

About *[INSERT COLLEGE NAME]*

[INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGE, FOR EXAMPLE, STUDENT NUMBERS, CAMPUSES, HOW MANY COURSES TAUGHT]

The Association of Colleges (AoC) is the national voice for colleges and exists to promote and support their interests. Everything AoC does is aimed at helping colleges deliver their purpose and to make an impact. AoC believe that every community should be supported by a strong and successful college, which develops students, delivers relevant skills, and supports stronger communities, social justice, employers and the economy.

AoC's membership includes 273 colleges in England, including general further education, sixth form, tertiary and land-based colleges. It supports, represents and promotes the interests of its member colleges, as well as the rest of the FE sector.

For more information about the Association of Colleges, visit www.aoc.co.uk or contact Seun Robert-Edomi, Media Manager on 020 7034 9914 or email seun.robert-edomi@aoc.co.uk.

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