



2 August 2021

Dear Resident,

You could be one of 75 people selected to take part in the **Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK**, answering the important question:

How should the UK's democracy work?

Recently we've seen big debates such as: How much power should leaders, or judges have? Who should have a say on lockdown rules? Should ordinary people have more of a say in politics, and if so, how?

The Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK is being commissioned by University College London's Constitution Unit, and will bring together 75 people from every part of the UK to investigate questions like these. Participants will look in detail at what kind of democracy they want in the UK. They will examine how politicians and citizens ought to behave. And they will explore what roles should be played by the basic building blocks of the system: parliaments, governments, courts, and the general public.

You don't need any prior knowledge of these issues to take part in the Assembly. All we ask is that you are willing to listen to the information presented and share your opinions with us and your fellow Assembly members. Participants will have time to learn about and discuss the issues among themselves, and then make recommendations, which will be presented in a report to policy-makers in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and Belfast, next year.

The Citizens' Assembly will be held online, over six weekends later this year, from mid-September to mid-December. You need to be able to attend all the meetings, and if you take part in all the meetings you will receive £600 to thank you for your time. **We especially welcome and will support people with little or no digital experience, including helping you get online for the first time if needed.**

Anyone currently living or staying at this address who is above the age of 18 and eligible to vote in general elections in the UK can register their interest by visiting www.sortitionfoundation.org/uk or by calling **Freephone 0800 009 6486** (7am–11pm Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm on Saturday & Sunday). The deadline to register is **Monday 23rd August**. More details can be found overleaf.

This is a fantastic opportunity for you to shape how democracy will be done in the UK in the future. We hope that you will be interested in joining the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Alan Renwick,
Deputy Director of the Constitution Unit and Associate Professor of British Politics at University College London

Frequently asked questions

Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK

Assembly dates:

- Weekend 1: 18/19 September
- Weekend 2: 9/10 October
- Weekend 3: 23/24 October
- Weekend 4: 13/14 November
- Weekend 5: 27/28 November
- Weekend 6: 11/12 December

Each weekend has the following times:

- Saturday AM: 10:00 – 12:30
- Saturday PM: 14:00 – 16:30
- Sunday AM: 10:00 – 12:30

What is a Citizens' Assembly?

A Citizens' Assembly is an innovative democratic tool that is increasingly being used around the world. It aims to bring together a randomly selected group of people who broadly represent the whole community, in this case, the entire United Kingdom. The people who attend learn about issues, discuss them with one another, and then make recommendations about what should happen and how things should change.

Who is running the Assembly?

The Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK is being run jointly by a team of researchers at the Constitution Unit at University College London (UCL) and by a public participation charity called

Involve. The UCL team is responsible for a research project investigating people's attitudes to democracy in the UK. The Involve team is running the Citizens' Assembly itself.

The Constitution Unit is an independent and non-partisan academic research centre based in the Department of Political Science at University College London (UCL). It conducts timely, rigorous, independent research into constitutional change and the reform of political institutions. Its work has significant impact, informing policy-makers throughout the United Kingdom and around the world. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit>

Involve is the UK's leading public participation charity. They develop, support and campaign for new ways to involve people in decisions that affect their lives. www.involve.org.uk

The Constitution Unit and Involve have engaged the expertise of the Sortition Foundation to recruit Assembly members. The Sortition Foundation promotes the use of stratified, random selection in decision-making. It is responsible for recruiting and randomly selecting people to take part in this Assembly, in a way that is broadly representative of the nation's population. www.sortitionfoundation.org

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By Monday 23rd August

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How was I selected to receive this invitation?

Your household was one of 20,000 addresses in the United Kingdom that were randomly selected from the Royal Mail's postal address database.

What will registering and taking part involve?

When registering your interest, you will be asked to consent to providing information about yourself, such as your age, gender, and ethnic background, and also about your political opinions. This information will allow us to bring together a group of people who are similar to the UK population at large.

If you are then randomly selected to take part you will have the opportunity to work with individuals from all walks of life across the United Kingdom. You will hear from engaging speakers, discuss the issues in small groups, and come to conclusions. You will also be asked to fill in short questionnaires from time to time. Facilitators will ensure that everyone has their voice heard in the discussions. You do not need to have any prior knowledge of any of the topics – all the information you need will be provided as part of the process.

How will you ensure that the event is accessible?

If you are selected and take part in all of the sessions, you will receive £600 as a thank you for your time (£100 for each weekend).

The Citizens' Assembly will take place online, using a tool called Zoom. We know that everyone has different levels of online access, skills and confidence, and it is important to us that this is not an obstacle to taking part. If you are selected to take part in the Citizens' Assembly we will ask you about your internet access, the type of device you use and how confident you are about participating in an online video conference. If you don't have a suitable device or internet connection, we can provide these for you during the Assembly. Support is available to learn the skills needed to take part in the Assembly, including one-to-one phone calls and online introductory sessions. Technical support during the Assembly sessions is also available.

If you have any other support needs, such as issues with hearing or vision or you need to arrange childcare, please just let us know about your specific requirements when we contact you. Where appropriate, we will be able to help towards any arrangements including costs you may incur as a result of taking part.

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Who can apply?

You can apply to take part if:

- you are aged 18 and over on 18 September this year
- you are eligible to vote in general elections in the UK (you don't have to be actually registered – just able to do so)
- you live full- or part-time at an address that has received this invitation, or you are staying at such an address.

Please note that a maximum of one person from any single household will be selected to participate.

There are just a few exceptions. The following people cannot apply: elected representatives from any level of government; paid employees of any political party; employees working in any politically restricted post; or members of the House of Lords.

After I register my interest, what happens next?

After registration has closed, 75 people will be randomly selected from those who registered their interest to take part in the Assembly. This random selection will be weighted to make sure that the participants reflect the diversity of the UK's population and political opinions.

If you are selected, we will contact you by phone and email on or around Tuesday 24th August to let you know. We will then arrange a call with you to confirm that you can attend, explain the arrangements for meeting online, discuss any requirements you may have to make it possible for you to attend, and explain what happens next.

What will happen after the event?

The research team at the UCL Constitution Unit will write a report about the Assembly and present it to policy-makers in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and Belfast, in mid-2022. The Assembly's work will also be publicised in blog posts, academic articles and public seminars. At the end of the Assembly, we will ask you whether you want to be kept updated with news regarding the Assembly's impact.

Where can I get more information?

If you would like to talk to someone about the Assembly before registering, please call the Freephone number at the bottom of this page. More information about this event is also available at:
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/citizens-assembly-democracy-uk>

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