

Democracy in Practice

DEMOCRACY is about much more than just elections. There are many ways democracy can be put into practice to enable the public to participate in how a community, city, or the state is run.

How is democracy practised in the UK?



Representative democracy - At elections the enfranchised population votes for representatives who make decisions on their behalf.



The Westminster Model - The key features of the UK's parliamentary system include: a constitutional monarch, a Prime Minister who is the head of the government, parliamentary opposition, a bicameral legislature (the House of Commons and the House of Lords) and an executive (or cabinet) drawn from that legislature.



Voting - First Past The Post is used in general elections to the UK parliament. Proportional systems, or systems with elements of proportionality, are used in elections to the devolved parliaments.



Devolution - Some power has been transferred from the UK parliament to the nations and regions. There are devolved legislatures in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Due to the constitutional principle of parliamentary sovereignty, the UK parliament in Westminster still holds ultimate authority.



Local government - Some power is also devolved to local and regional authorities and institutions, like the London Assembly, Metro Mayors in parts of England, and Combined Authorities.

Other models of democracy

DIRECT

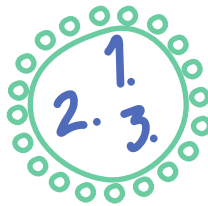
Public make decisions on policy

Tools: Referendums

Examples:

Devolution deals (1997)

The UK's membership of the EU (2016)



DELIBERATIVE

Decisions made through the building of consensus

Tools: Citizens' assemblies;
Deliberative reference panels;

Citizens' juries

Examples:

NHS Citizen (NHS England, 2015)

Citizens' Assembly of Scotland (Scottish Government, 2020)

Climate Assembly UK (UK Parliament, 2020)

PARTICIPATORY

Decisions made involving public participation

Tools: Participatory budgeting; Petitioning; Consultations

Examples:

UK Parliament E-Petitions System (2006)

You Decide! (Tower Hamlets, 2009-10)