

How to host a hustings

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There's an election going on in my area. How can I have my voice heard?

All children and young people have a right to have their voice heard on matters that affect them, including the environment. Almost half of young people aged 18-24 in the UK think the environment is one of the top issues facing the country (YouGov, 2019).

Young people in Scotland and Wales can now vote from age 16 in local council and Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly elections, and age 18 for UK-wide elections. In England and Northern Ireland, young people can vote from age 18.



What is a hustings?

A hustings is a type of event usually **run in the lead up to an election**, whether that is **local or national**. It is an opportunity for members of the public to speak directly to people who might end up being decision makers for their area, like a local councillor or Member of Parliament (MP), and ask them questions about what they would do if elected. It is **good practice to invite all candidates running in your area** so that audience members can hear a variety of perspectives and opinions.

Hustings can have a **broad scope** or they can be **more focused**, for example focusing on only environmental or educational issues. They can also have a **specific audience** like young people, people from a specific organisation or religion.

A hustings is a great way for young people to hear directly from politicians and for politicians to hear directly from young people.

1. GET A TEAM TOGETHER

It's a good idea to have some people to help you out when organising the hustings event. Social media and organising skills would be particularly helpful.



2. DECIDE THE FORMAT OF YOUR EVENT AND A DATE/TIME/LOCATION

This could be online or in-person. In-person hustings may involve venue costs.

Something to consider for both online and in-person events is **accessibility**. **Can everyone take part** or are there barriers to participation (physical barriers like stairs or other barriers like not being able to understand what candidates are saying)?

There's different things to consider when planning your hustings event – will you set the **questions** in advance or only take questions from the audience? How long will your event be? This will depend on your event type, audience and candidate availability but around an hour to an hour and a half generally works well.

Why not include a voter registration drive as part of your event? This could be as simple as having one person at the venue with **paper copies of voter registration forms** or sending all attendees a **link to the online voter registration page**.

Thinking about the practicalities early on will help your planning process.

[Welcome to Your Vote – Electoral Commission](#)



3. FIND OUT YOUR LOCAL CANDIDATES AND INVITE THEM

Check the websites or social media for the different parties running in your area. If you still can't find the information, you could address your invitation to the local branch of the political party and ask them to forward it on to the correct person.

In the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, there are both constituency candidates (candidates for your specific area) and list candidates (candidates for your larger region). It depends on the focus for your hustings event who you might invite but the constituency candidates are a good place to start.

4. DECIDE ON A MODERATOR AND HELP THEM PREPARE

Anyone can take on this role but they should be fair and make sure all candidates are treated equally. You could also have a [panel of moderators](#) to share the workload. They also need to be able to keep the event to time. Preparation for the moderator should include:

- Knowing all the candidate names and parties
- Some back-up questions for the candidates
- A [basic script to keep to time](#) and know any important information to give the audience

5. PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

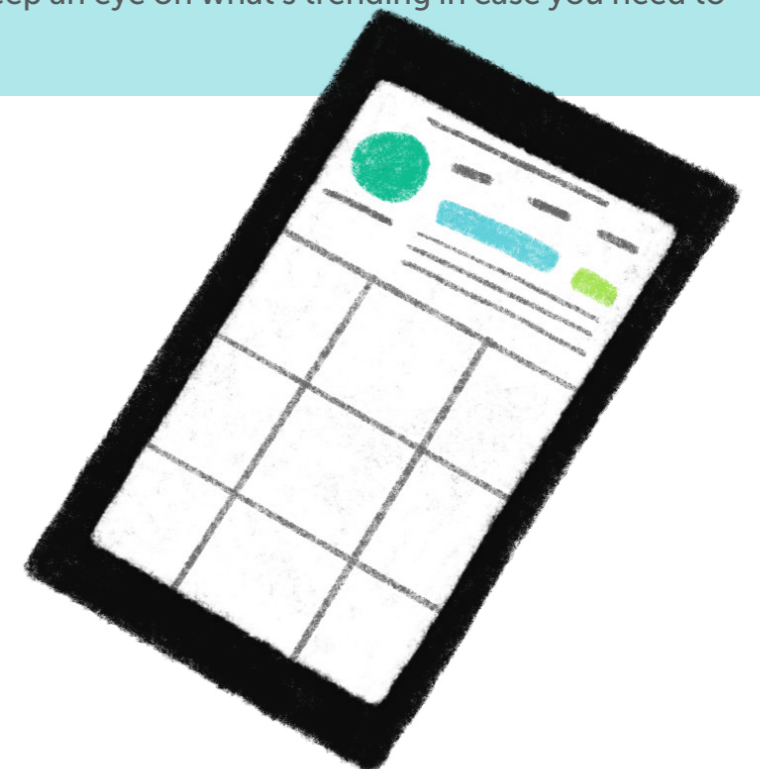
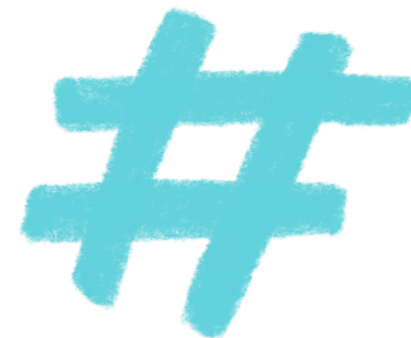
[Promotion](#) will depend on who your event is aimed at and where it is going to be held. For example, if you are holding it at your school or local community centre, [posters](#) might get the attention of other young people. If your event is happening online, perhaps focusing on [social media](#) is the best method.

Remember to [involve local media](#) to report on your event. If you do this, make sure you tell the candidates speaking at your event.



5 SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS FROM YOUNG ACTIVISTS

1. Keep your message simple, clear and succinct.
2. Create a list of relevant social media accounts (political representatives, community voices, local press, charities campaigning on relevant issues etc). Tag them regularly when appropriate.
3. Use real voices. Ask people in your group if they have a relevant experience or an opinion they would like to share.
4. Do not engage in online spats. If there are negative comments or trolling, address po-litely with a factual comment then leave the conversation. Always make a point of thanking those who supported you.
5. Plan your social media campaign and content as much as possible, however be flexible and react, or adapt to, any last-minute changes or breaking news. If you decide to schedule posts, keep an eye on what's trending in case you need to edit your content.



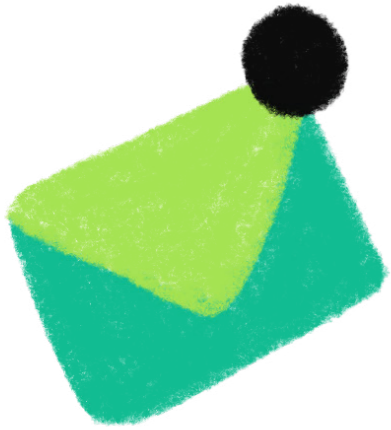
6. HOLD YOUR EVENT

Good luck! You've worked really hard to get to this stage – well done to you and your team! **Social media** during the event is a great way to spread the message from the different candidates for those who can't be there.



7. AFTER YOUR EVENT

Don't lose the momentum after all your great work! **Follow up** from your event by emailing or writing to the candidates who participated to thank them for their participation and to remind them about your key messages and asks. After the election, you could even invite those elected to visit your project or organisation, or to engage further in your campaign.



CONGRATULATIONS!

You now know how to host your own hustings event. Good luck with your planning and we hope your event is a success.



Thank
you
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Our Bright Future is an ambitious and innovative partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts which brings together the youth and environmental sectors. This £33 million programme, funded by the [National Lottery Community Fund](#), is formed of 31 [projects](#) across the UK. Each project is helping young people aged 11-24 gain vital skills and experience and improve their wellbeing. At the same time, they act as catalysts for delivering change for their local environment and community; whilst contributing to a greener economy.

