



How are Decisions made for and about Scotland?

People living in Scotland have four governments making decisions on their behalf: the Scottish Government, the UK Government, local government and the European Union.

The Scottish Government...

Makes decisions for Scotland in areas that are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, including **health, education, housing, transport, justice, agriculture & the environment.**

Is led by the First Minister, who appoints ministers (Cabinet Secretaries) with responsibility for particular policy areas.

Is formed by the party who won the most seats in Scottish Parliament elections. The voting system used in these elections makes it difficult for any one party to get more than half of the seats in parliament and governments are sometimes made up of more than one party.

Is answerable to the Scottish Parliament for the decisions it takes. Its actions are scrutinized by Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and by smaller parliamentary committees on which these MSPs serve.

The UK Government...

Makes decisions for Scotland mainly in those areas that are reserved to the UK Parliament by the Scotland Act 1998, including **defence, foreign affairs, immigration, the constitution, pensions and benefits, taxes, the economy and employment.**

Is led by the Prime Minister, with Cabinet ministers (Secretaries of State) leading departments in particular policy areas.

Is made up of the party that gains most seats following a UK election. Because of the voting system used in these elections, it is usual for one party to win more than half of the seats and to be the only party in government.

Is accountable to the UK Parliament (MPs and Lords) for the decisions it takes, and its actions are scrutinized by MPs and committees in the House of Commons, and by Lords in the House of Lords.

Local Government...

Is responsible for providing **local services**, including schools, social housing, social care, planning, waste management, roads and transport.

Is made up of 32 local governments (sometimes called local authorities or 'councils') across Scotland (for example, East Renfrewshire Council, Highland Council, and so on).

Is funded by the Scottish Government and from local taxes (including the council tax).

Is made up of locally elected councillors. In each council, the party or parties in power depends on the outcome of the local election in each area and any agreements struck between the local political parties and councillors.

The European Union...

Is a set of institutions that make decisions on behalf of EU citizens in areas where its member states (the countries that are members of the EU) have agreed to abide by the same rules.

Has four main institutions: the European Council, the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the EU Court of Justice. The Council is made up of the governments of EU member countries. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected by voters in each EU member country. The Commission is the EU's civil service. The Court ensures that the EU's rules are followed.

Makes laws in a wide range of policy areas, including: the free movement of goods, services, money and people (together these are known as 'the single market'), fishing, agriculture, the environment, energy, employment rights, equality, economic development, social cohesion and consumer protection. The EU is also responsible for negotiating trade agreements on behalf of the countries that are EU members.

These rules would no longer apply to Scotland after the UK leaves the EU (if the UK leaves without an exit deal) or after the transition period (if the UK leaves with an exit deal), unless there is agreement to continue to apply them.