

What is the Council and what does it do?

You've probably heard of the Council. But do you know what it does? The Council has a big influence on the lives of everyone living in the Falkirk area. It is responsible for providing **services**. Services are things run by the Council that help everyone living in our local area, for example:

- Schools and nurseries;
- Housing;
- Bin collections;
- Roads and parking; and
- Care for elderly people

You probably use at least one Council service every day. The Council provides the school you go to, looks after the roads and pavements you use to get around, and collects all the paper and plastics you recycle at home.

The Council has to make a lot of big decisions about how services are run and how they can make them better for everyone who uses them. These decisions are made by people called Councillors. Councillors are locally elected representatives. Locally elected means that everyone over 16 gets to vote for the person they want to represent them and their community. Representative means a leader, like a class captain or a head boy or girl. Falkirk Council has 30 Councillors. The area is divided into nine areas called wards. Each ward has 3 or 4 Councillors who represent the people who live there.

Councillors have an important job. They make big decisions, like what the Council should spend money on. The biggest part of their job is to find out about the things that are important to the people living in the area they represent and to make sure people's views are listened to when decisions are being made.

There are lots of ways to tell your local Councillors about what matters to you. You can call or email them, you can see them in person, or sometimes you can even send them a message on Facebook or Twitter. You might have even met your local Councillor at school or on a school trip to the Council.

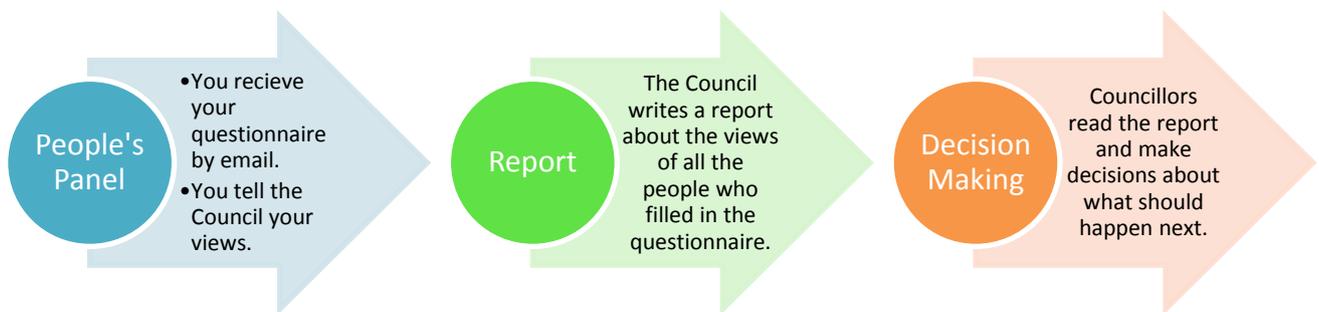
Why do your views matter?

Children and young people under the age of 16 can't vote for who they want to represent them at the Council, but this doesn't mean that their views don't matter. 18% of people living in the Falkirk area (that's 28,329 people) are under the age of 16 – that's a lot of people! They care about their communities just as much as adults but are not always asked for their views on how their area can be improved or better used.

In 2019, the Council asked children and young people how they would like to have their views heard. 70% said they would like to be sent online questionnaires that ask them questions about the things that are important to them.

The Council decided to ask children and young people to join something called a **People's Panel**. The People's Panel is made up of local people of all ages who have volunteered to be emailed online questionnaires about the things that are important to them and their local area. If you join the People's Panel you will be asked about your views on lots of different things, like what the Council should spend money on, what can be done to improve our town centres, and what needs to be done to make our local areas better places to visit and live.

As you can see below, your views and ideas are then used to help Councillors make decisions about the future of the Falkirk area.



You can join the People's Panel by signing up at www.falkirk.gov.uk/peoplespanel