



## Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

[www.craigwhittakermp.co.uk](http://www.craigwhittakermp.co.uk)

### **Votes at 16**

Thank you for contacting me about the voting age.

By convention, Government whips, of whom I am one, do not sign Early Day Motions.

I welcome the ongoing discussions and debates on this issue.

Most polls show that a majority of those over 18 oppose a reduction of the voting age to 16. Among 16 -18 year olds, a modest majority of 16 year olds are in favour, 17 year olds are evenly balanced, and 18 year olds are against.

In the UK, we do not expect people to move from adolescence to full adulthood all at once; instead, the responsibilities that citizens may legally take on and the obligations imposed upon them by law build up over time. For example, a person must be 17 before they can leave home without parents' consent or hold a licence to drive and 18 before they can buy alcohol or be asked to sit on a jury. Generally speaking, as a society, we have viewed attaining adulthood as a process of learning and reflection upon experience rather than as a single event.

It is worth noting that most democracies consider 18 the right age to enfranchise young people. For example, within the EU, only Austria and Scotland have lowered the voting age to 16 for national elections.

Of course, it is good that young people are involved in politics and vital that more become involved. Engaging young people in the nation's political system is not only and not primarily a matter of the voting age. Interestingly, a 2009 report by the Youth Citizenship Commission stated that the voting age is not the principal factor in encouraging young people's interest and involvement in politics and citizenship.

I hope that this helps you to understand the Government's position.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP