

Devolution: Factsheet



Civil Service

What is devolution?

Devolution is about how parliaments and governments make decisions. In the UK it means that there are separate legislatures and executives in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

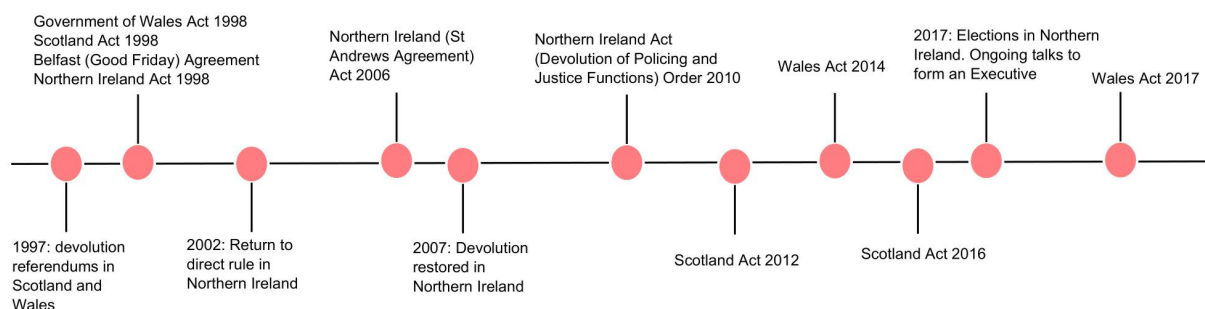
Legislature	Executive
UK Parliament	UK Government
Scottish Parliament	Scottish Government
National Assembly for Wales	Welsh Government
Northern Ireland Assembly	Northern Ireland Executive

They have many powers to make laws and deliver public services. These are often called *devolved powers*. There is also the UK Parliament and UK Government. They retain some powers across the whole of the UK. These are often called *reserved powers*.

Why do we have it?

Devolution means that decision making moves closer to the citizen and is more democratic. Devolution is not new. There have been different forms of devolution in the UK for decades and it is common in other parts of the world.

The current form of devolution in the UK goes back to the late 1990s. In 1997 voters chose to create a Scottish Parliament and a National Assembly for Wales. In Northern Ireland devolution was a key element of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and was supported in a referendum in 1998. The UK Government has also developed decentralisation in England. This is through the transfer of powers, budgets and responsibilities to mayors and through city deals.



How does it work?

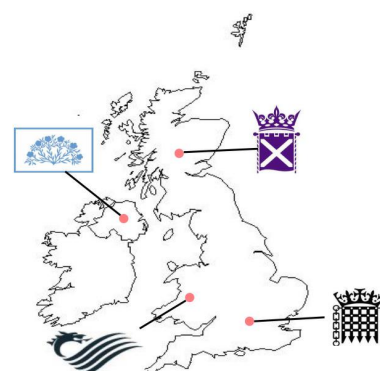
Across the UK there are four different legislatures and executives, each with a different range of powers. The four administrations speak to each other to make sure devolution is successful. This happens in lots of different ways. Ministers have formal discussions in meetings such as the Joint Ministerial Committee.

Joint Ministerial Committee

JMC (Plenary)

JMC (EU Negotiations)

JMC (Europe)



Ministers also have one on one discussions and correspondence with their counterparts. Civil servants also have regular contact across the administrations. Our relations are guided by the Memorandum of Understanding and Devolution Guidance Notes which you can find on [GOV.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Devolution and You

NIO00000202

INQ000083096_0001



There are different political parties in power in each of the administrations, each with their own Ministers supported by civil servants to deliver their priorities. Civil servants working for the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the UK Government are all part of the One Civil Service. Civil Servants in the Northern Ireland Executive work for the Northern Ireland Civil Service, a separate organisation but with similar values and structures to the One Civil Service.

Although civil servants across the UK work for different administrations we should also still work together. By working together we can:

- promote common professional standards
- develop a complementary approach to policy-making and
- ensure good lines of communication.

What do I need to know?

It is important that you know how devolution affects the policies you work on or the public services that you manage. Even if you work in an area that is completely devolved or completely reserved, you may often need to work with other administrations to make sure your policy or service is delivered successfully. It can also help you learn about what has worked elsewhere.

Policy Area	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Health and social care	D	D	D
Education and training	D	D	D
Local Government	D	D	D
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	D	D	D
Transport	D	D	D
Some taxation	D	D	D
Justice and Policing	D	R	D
Some social security elements	D	R	D
Sports and the arts	D	D	D
Defence			
Foreign Affairs			
Immigration		R	
Trade Policy			
Constitution			
Broadcasting (NI may legislate with SoS consent)			

This table is a broad summary of which powers are reserved (R) and devolved (D). The terms are a little different in Northern Ireland: 'transferred', 'reserved' and 'excepted' rather than 'reserved' and 'devolved'. You can find out more about the Northern Ireland settlement as well as the Scotland and Wales settlements at [gov.uk/topic/government/devolution](https://www.gov.uk/topic/government/devolution).

But the settlements can be complex with some areas partially reserved and partially devolved. It is important to speak to colleagues or to experts in constitution teams (if you are in a devolved administration) or in the Territorial Offices (if you are in the UK Government), to understand what exactly is devolved or reserved in your area.

Where can I find out more?

Each UK Government department has a team who specialises in devolution and each of the devolved administrations has a team who oversees engagement with other administrations. You can find contact details on your intranet pages or on [GOV.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

You can also get in touch with us if you have any questions. We are the *Devolution and You* team based in the UK Government. We promote devolution learning across the One Civil Service and run learning events throughout the year including workshops, seminars at CS Live and with CS Local, and a range of training with CS Learning.

Find out more by emailing devolution@cabinetoffice.gov.uk or at twitter.com/CSDevoTeam.