

Time to get equal

scope

About cerebral palsy.  
For disabled people achieving equality.

# Whose vote are you missing?

Making sure your message reaches disabled people





## **Small change, big differences** [page 3](#)

Given that elections can be won or lost on a handful of votes, make sure you don't miss out on Britain's 10.6 million disabled people. In this section get the facts and figures on disability and find out how a few small changes can make a big difference.

## **Local talk, accessible communication** [page 10](#)

Encourage active citizenship and reach out to disabled people in Britain through your campaign literature, website and by hosting accessible Party meetings and events in your constituency. In this section, read our tips and suggestions on how to make this happen.



## **Local views, accessible opinions** [page 21](#)

Draw on the talents of the whole community and involve disabled people in your campaign, no matter what the issue. Also in this section, find a campaign template that you can use to make sure your local polling stations are accessible to disabled people.

## **Would you like to know more?** [page 28](#)

This section provides contact details that you may find useful if you wish to find out more about disability, specific impairments or how to provide information in alternative formats.



# Small change, big differences


Disabled people in your constituency make up a significant and important proportion of the electorate.

By meeting disabled people in your area and taking the time to find out what really matters to them you can make sure that the voice of disabled people is reflected in all aspects of your campaigning.

This booklet is designed to highlight what you can do locally to ensure that disabled people in your community have the same access to your message as non-disabled people.

Elections can be won or lost on just a handful of votes so make sure you're not missing out on the support of disabled voters!

## Disability – the facts

- There are currently 10.6 million disabled people in Britain.
  - The average constituency has approximately 15,000 disabled voters.
  - One in six people in the UK is disabled.
  - At the last General Election 68% of polling stations had one or more serious access barriers.
  - Only 6% of disabled people are wheelchair users.
  - 13% of councillors identify as disabled people.
  - Of the 10.6 million disabled people in Britain, only three million are currently claiming disability related benefits.
  - The income of disabled people is, on average, less than half that of non-disabled people.
  - 29% of families with a disabled child live in poverty.
  - One in four disabled people have experienced hate crime or harassment.
  - The average annual cost of bringing up a disabled child is three times greater than a non-disabled child.
  - 60% of disabled people are unable to access community activities.
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## Did you know?

It's a common myth that disabled people only care about disability. Disabled people, like all other voters in your constituency, are concerned by a wide range of issues.

**Crime** – 53% of disabled people fear being a victim of crime.

**Housing** – each constituency has, on average, over 1,000 wheelchair users, of whom only 20% are satisfied with their current accommodation.

**Employment** – 60% of disabled adults want to work, but only 40% are currently working.

**Transport** – while 90% of buses in London are accessible to disabled people, the national average is only 30%.



## Changing words, changing attitudes

The language that we use when talking about disability changes over time and there are no set rules about what we should and shouldn't say. The box below outlines current best practise.

<b>Use</b>	<b>Avoid</b>
<b>Disabled people</b>	The disabled People with disabilities The handicapped
<b>Non-disabled person</b>	Normal Able-bodied Healthy
<b>Impairments</b>	Disabilities
<b>Has Cerebral Palsy</b> <b>Person with Cerebral Palsy</b>	Suffers from Cerebral Palsy Spastic
<b>Person with learning difficulties / disabilities</b>	Mentally handicapped Retarded
<b>Blind person</b> <b>Partially sighted person</b> <b>Visually impaired person</b>	The blind
<b>Deaf person</b> <b>The Deaf community</b> <b>Hearing impaired</b>	The deaf Deaf and dumb
<b>Wheelchair user</b>	Wheelchair bound
<b>Accessible toilets</b>	Disabled toilets
<b>Accessible parking</b> <b>Blue badge parking</b>	Disabled parking
<b>Support worker</b> <b>Personal assistant</b> <b>Enabler</b>	Carer (unless a family member / unpaid)

## The Disability Discrimination Act

When meeting local disabled people and campaigning in your constituency it's useful to be aware of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), the duties it places on public bodies and the rights it affords to disabled people.

The DDA aims to prevent discrimination against disabled people and provides protection in relation to employment, access to goods, services and facilities, education, buying or renting property and transport. The Act became law in 1995 and was amended in 2005.

The DDA makes it clear that disability is not the same as other equality strands. To ensure that a disabled person is not discriminated against does not just mean treating them in the same way as a non-disabled person; instead it can often mean providing more favourable treatment to ensure a level playing field.



The DDA 2005 places a duty on all public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. As part of this duty, public bodies are obligated to consider the needs of disabled people when producing their policies, practices and procedures. They must also work towards:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination and disability-related harassment
- promoting equality of opportunity and positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encouraging disabled people to participate in public life.

Many public bodies, including local councils, are also subject to specific duties, such as a requirement to produce a Disability Equality Scheme explaining how they intend to meet the duty to promote equality. They must also be able to demonstrate that disabled people have been involved in the planning of their policies.

Locally you may find that, despite disabled people's rights under the DDA, ignorance, thoughtlessness and prejudice can still result in discrimination which adversely affects disabled people's lives. Also, it is not uncommon for those with duties under the DDA to do only the minimum that is required of them.

The Equality Bill is currently passing through Parliament. It aims to streamline existing equality legislation into one Act and will replace the DDA. If the Bill passes into law then discrimination on the grounds of race, religion or belief, gender, sexuality, age or disability will all be covered by one single piece of legislation.



# Local talk, accessible communication

## Letters and leaflets

When printing letters or campaign literature there are some simple common sense rules which can ensure that your message will reach a wider audience.

Here are our top ten tips for ensuring that your letters and leaflets are accessible to disabled people. If they don't know your policies, why would they vote for you?



1. Do use a clear and easy to read font, such as Arial, and always use type that is at least 12 point.
2. Do include positive images of disabled people in your campaign material.
3. Do offer to provide information in alternative formats such as large print, easy read, audio tape or Braille.
4. Don't lay text across photographs or images as this can make it difficult for people to read. It is also advisable to avoid laying text out vertically or at different angles.
5. Do use plain English and avoid acronyms and jargon.
6. Don't use italics, large blocks of capital letters or underlined text.
7. Don't print on glossy paper as the glare can make it difficult for some people to read. It's preferable to use matt paper which is thick enough to ensure that the print does not show through on the other side.
8. Do use black text on a white background where possible as this works best for legibility. If you need to use coloured text or backgrounds always check that that there is suitable contrast.
9. Don't split up words over two lines. It also helps to always align text to the left.
10. Don't rely solely on images or diagrams to convey information. Always include explanatory text as well.

## Making the most of your website

Your local Party website will be the first port of call for many disabled people who want to find out more about what the Party is doing locally and how they can get involved.

Not everyone has access to the internet at home so if you're asking people to visit your website in letters or leaflets you might want to consider publicising where the internet can be used for free locally.

### **Why not use the checklist below to make sure that your website is easy for disabled people to use?**

- Is it easy for people to change the colour settings without it damaging the website's layout?
- Can users easily change the size of the text to suit their needs?
- Is the website's design as clear and simple as possible?
- Is the navigation logical?
- Have you offered an alternative for any PDFs, such as a rich text or word format?
- Are people able to provide feedback on the website and is this clearly signposted?
- Is the only text that is underlined active hyperlinks?
- Do all links open in the same window (not as a pop-up) unless the user is warned this will happen?
- Is all the text on a plain and solid coloured background?
- Have you ensured the site has no blinking, flashing or flickering objects?

## Location, location, location

When budgets are tight, or even non-existent, it's not always easy to have choice over the venue you use for your Party meetings, surgeries and receptions.

Why not photocopy the check list overleaf to help you make the most of your venue and ensure that disabled people can participate fully in your event? There's space to make notes on any potential problems so that you can discuss them with the venue in advance.



## Venue checklist

Have you identified all participants' access requirements?

Yes  No

Notes

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Is there sufficient car parking close to the main entrance which can be designated for disabled people?

Yes  No

Notes

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Is the building fully accessible through the main entrance?

Yes  No

Notes

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Is there level or ramped access throughout the building?

Yes  No

Notes

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Are there accessible toilet facilities?

Yes  No

Notes

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Are there tables and seating available so people can sit down for refreshments?

Yes  No

Notes

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Are meeting rooms step free, with moveable seating?

Yes  No

Notes

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If there is a stage, is it ramped?

Yes  No

Notes

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Is the room large enough to accommodate everyone comfortably?

Yes  No

Notes

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Is there good natural or overhead lighting?

Yes  No

Notes

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Is there an induction loop installed?

Yes  No

Notes

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Are the following available?

Large handled mugs

Yes  No

A dog walking area

Yes  No

Drinking straws

Yes  No

Dog bowls

Yes  No

Notes

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## Meeting disabled people

Meeting with disabled people in your constituency is a great way to find out more about the concerns that disabled people have locally. You may even find new supporters and volunteers.

When meeting disabled people there are no set rules. You'll find that most of the following tips are common sense but they should help you to feel more confident if meeting a disabled person for the first time.

- It is important to remember that most impairments, such as epilepsy or dyslexia, will not be readily apparent to you when you first meet the person.
- Some disabled people may need assistance but everyone is an individual so always ask before you assume someone wants help. Be aware that an offer of assistance will not always be accepted. If it is, then always ask the person how they would like you to provide assistance as it will differ from person to person.
- Don't make assumptions about an individual's ability to do certain things.
- Don't forget that some disabled people may be accompanied by support workers and / or assistance dogs.
- If a disabled person has a support worker with them always talk directly to the individual and not to their support worker or British Sign Language interpreter.

## People who use a wheelchair

- When talking to someone using a wheelchair pull up a chair if possible so that you are both on the same level.
- Don't lean or put your hand on a person's wheelchair; it is part of their personal body space.
- Do not presume that a wheelchair user has no use of their legs. Some people may want to transfer to another chair. If they do, always ask if they'd like some assistance but don't move their wheelchair away from them.
- When meeting a wheelchair user away from his or her own environment always check that the meeting place is fully accessible with accessible toilet facilities, level access and wide doorways and lifts.

## People with speech impairments

- If you are finding it difficult to understand what a person has said to you don't be embarrassed to ask them to repeat it.
- Always make eye contact and listen quietly while the person talks to you.
- Never pretend you have understood when you have not and do not attempt to finish a person's sentences for them.
- It may be helpful to say what you have understood and ask the person to clarify anything that you have not.

## **People who are visually impaired**

- Always start by introducing yourself and anyone else who is present. If in a group, you should try to indicate where each person is located in the room and always say a person's name before talking to them.
- When offering a handshake you should always say something to indicate that you wish to shake hands.
- If you think someone may need assistance always ask them first and then find out how they would like you to guide them.
- Guide dogs and assistance dogs are not pets, they are working dogs. You should only give your attention to a visually impaired person's guide dog if you have prior permission.

## **People with learning difficulties / disabilities**

- People with learning difficulties may require you to repeat information several times or in different ways to aid understanding.
- Always be patient, use plain English and avoid jargon.
- Some people with learning difficulties find it helpful to take away notes from a conversation as it allows them time to think and reflect on the conversation.
- Don't forget that people with learning difficulties can also vote, so remember not to overlook them in your campaigns!

## People who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Only a small proportion of deaf people use British Sign Language (BSL), but it's important to be aware that BSL is a language in its own right and not a direct translation from English. When meeting someone who uses BSL, ask if they'd like you to arrange for a qualified, registered interpreter to be present.
- Always speak to a deaf person directly, not to their interpreter.
- Not everyone who is deaf can lip read. If meeting with someone who can lip read you should speak normally without exaggerating your speech, covering your mouth or turning away from them.
- Lip reading requires intense concentration and can be very tiring so make sure you allow plenty of time for breaks.
- If you need to attract someone's attention this can be done with a light touch on the shoulder or a wave of the hand.

## People with mental health conditions

- Always arrange to meet in a location where the person feels at ease and comfortable.
- People with mental health conditions may become anxious if they do not understand you or are unsure of what you want from them. They may want to bring a support worker or advocate with them to a meeting.
- You should always try to be clear about what you are saying and allow plenty of time when decisions need to be made.



# Local views, accessible opinions

## Building links within the community

The views of disabled people can add an extra dimension to your local campaigning and will help to ensure that you run inclusive campaigns that really resonate with the electorate.

Why not consider running a campaign about access to a local community focal point such as a library or hospital? You'll be surprised by how many public buildings and services in your constituency do not fully take into account the needs of disabled people.

A few small changes can make the world of difference and are not always expensive to make. Campaigns around accessibility have a strong impact and are highly visible. They're also a fantastic opportunity to engage with new volunteers and to gain support from across the whole community.

If you meet disabled people in the constituency who are supportive of the Party why not ask them to help out with the campaign? Each disabled person is an individual and will be able to tell you what sort of campaign activities they'd prefer to help with. Also, don't forget to consider local disabled people when looking for potential new council candidates.

A good way to build links with disabled people within your community is to contact local Disabled People's Organisations. They will be able to let you know the most pressing issues that disabled people face in the constituency and they may even be prepared to make your literature available to their members and help you to translate it into alternative formats such as Braille or easy read.

## Going to the polls – a campaign template

At the 2005 General Election 68% of polling stations had one or more serious access barriers that could prevent a disabled voter from voting independently.

Here's a simple and effective campaign that you can run in your constituency to ensure that disabled people have access to their nearest polling station.

Polling stations are housed in public buildings such as schools, libraries, Town Halls and community centres; as such the campaign for accessible polling stations extends beyond access once every four years. While postal voting offers a useful alternative for some, many disabled people prefer to vote in person and should not be denied this opportunity.

To ensure that disabled people can take an active and equal role in the life of their community, polling stations, and thus the community buildings they are housed in, must be accessible to disabled people, not just on election day but every day.

## The issue

There are 10.6 million disabled people in the UK; that's an average of 15,000 disabled voters per constituency.

Despite disabled people making up a considerable proportion of the electorate, some still find it more difficult to vote than non-disabled people.

At the last General Election there were reports of numerous problems which stopped disabled people from voting. These included:

- steps with no ramp or alternative entrance
- narrow and obstructed corridors
- a lack of nearby designated parking for disabled people
- high kerbs and pathways in bad condition
- inadequate lighting
- slippery floors
- unhelpful or rude staff
- the ballot box, polling booths and information all placed too high for wheelchair users to access.

Making it difficult or impossible for such a large group of people to vote is not only undemocratic; it doesn't make sense. At a time when voter apathy is of serious concern, thought should be given to the large number of disabled people who want to vote but who don't have equal access to the voting process.

Taking part in an election is one of the most fundamental expressions of citizenship within a democracy. While so many disabled people continue to be denied equal access to the democratic system our democracy is failing disabled people.

# The campaign plan

## 1. Scoping the situation

All local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of their polling stations on a regular basis.

Why not start by asking your local electoral administration officer for the results of the polling station access review in your constituency? You can also ask what is currently being done to improve accessibility.

## 2. Finding your campaigners

Once you've found out how things stand locally, the next step is to find out who can help you.

Start by contacting your local Disabled People's Organisation; not only will they be able to help you find local disabled people who'd like to get involved, they may even already have an Access Officer who can help you with your campaign.

Improving access to the public buildings used as polling stations not only benefits disabled people but also makes it better for everyone in the community, such as parents with pushchairs. You may want to think about approaching other local groups who could be interested in the campaign.

### **3. Reviewing access to polling stations**

Improving access to polling stations is not as difficult as it might seem. In many cases a few small changes can make a world of difference.

Once you've got your team in place you can use our polling station access review checklist to ensure that your local polling stations are accessible to disabled voters. You can then take your results and compare them to the local authority's data.

### **4. Pressing the issue**

When you've conducted your access reviews it's a good idea to write to the council and let them know your results. Where possible try to suggest simple solutions to the access problems that your reviews have highlighted.

Don't forget to write a press release for the local papers to make sure that the whole community is aware of what you're doing. The campaign also lends itself to strong photos.

## Polling station access review

Name of polling station:

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Is there designated parking for disabled voters close to the polling station?

Yes  No

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Is there level access into the polling station?

Yes  No

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If there is a ramp to improve access is it designed appropriately?

Yes  No

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Is there level access inside the polling station and can a disabled person move around easily and safely?

Yes  No

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Is there a large print version of the ballot paper on display?

Yes  No

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Is there a tactile voting device to help visually impaired voters vote independently?

Yes  No

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Is there a polling booth that is low and wide enough so a wheelchair user can vote unaided and in secret?

Yes  No

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Is the polling station well lit?

Yes  No

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Are polling station staff helpful and friendly?

Yes  No

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Are there seats available for people to rest if they need to?

Yes  No



# Would you like to know more?

The organisations listed below are also useful contacts for any of your disabled constituents who wish to be put in touch with people who can offer them free, impartial, advice, support and information.

## **DIAL UK**

DIAL information and advice services are based throughout the UK and provide information and advice to disabled people.

**Address** St Catherine's  
Tickhill Road  
Doncaster  
South Yorkshire  
DN4 8QN

**Call** 01302 310 123

**Email** [informationenquiries@dialuk.org.uk](mailto:informationenquiries@dialuk.org.uk)

**Visit** [www.dialuk.info](http://www.dialuk.info)

## **Scope Response**

Scope Response provides free, impartial advice and expert information and support to disabled people and their families.

**Address** PO Box 833  
Milton Keynes  
MK12 5NY

**Call** 0808 800 3333

**Email** [response@scope.org.uk](mailto:response@scope.org.uk)

If you would like further information or have any queries about the information provided in this booklet then please contact us.

**Lucinda Roberts**, Parliamentary Campaigns Officer

Call 020 7619 7245

Email [lucinda.roberts@scope.org.uk](mailto:lucinda.roberts@scope.org.uk)

**Abigail Lock**, Head of Advocacy and Campaigns

Call 020 7619 7253

Email [abigail.lock@scope.org.uk](mailto:abigail.lock@scope.org.uk)

**Scope**, Policy and Campaigns

Address 6 Market Road  
London  
N7 9PW

Call 020 7619 7256

Email [campaigns@scope.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@scope.org.uk)

You can get a copy of this document in different formats such as large print, electronic or audio by calling 0808 800 3333.

Scope is a national disability charity, whose vision is a world where disabled people have the same opportunities to fulfil their life ambitions as non-disabled people.

Our purpose is to drive the changes that will make our society the first in which disabled people are able to realise their full civil liberties and human rights.

Call 0808 800 3333

Visit [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)



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