

What if I don't believe voting is important?

We hope we can show that voting is very important.

Even if you do not see the importance of voting, the person you support may want to vote. Therefore, you should support them to vote.

It is important you understand how to talk about what voting means and how it can affect the issues people care about.

If you are asked about why you vote and who you vote for, you do not have to disclose any information.

If you are comfortable talking about why you do or do not vote, you should feel free to discuss this with the person you support.

What happens if the person I support does not know if they are registered or not?

If you and the person you support are unsure if they are already registered they can check with their local electoral registration officer. To contact your local electoral services, go to **www.aboutmyvote.co.uk**

Reregistering a person who is already registered will not cause a problem. If in doubt, register online at **www.mencap.org.uk/register tovot e** or fill out the registration form at the back of this pack.

What happens if the person I support doesn't want to register or vote?

Please explain how important it is to vote and how it can help people to have their views heard.

You can use our **What is voting?** and **The importance of voting** guides to help explain this.

It is important to point out that most people (including people with a learning disability) have the right to vote and voting impacts on who runs the country.

How can I support someone at a polling station?

You can visit a polling station with the person you support.

You are allowed to help the person you support complete their ballot paper. This includes reading out and explaining the choices available and marking the ballot paper on behalf of the person you support.

There should be a Presiding Officer on duty. They can answer any further questions you might have. You should talk to them first – they will ask you to sign a form saying that you will be supporting someone to vote.

I'm a Mencap member of staff. How do I talk about political parties without showing a bias?

Mencap is apolitical, meaning we do not, and we cannot support any political party. We want to improve the lives of people with a learning disability with the help of whoever is in Government.

Mencap staff must not tell the person they support how they should vote.

Mencap staff can present them with the choice of parties by referring to page six of our **What Is Voting** document and information about who is standing in their area.

We recommend you mention the leader of each political party and help the person you support to find out more information on the parties' websites.

You can find the websites for the five biggest political parties here:

The Conservative Party
www.conservatives.com

The Green Party
www.greenparty.org.uk

The Labour Party
www.labour.co.uk

The Liberal Democrats
www.libdems.org.uk

The UK Independence Party
www.ukip.org

It's important to note that **there are more political parties**. There are also candidates **independent** of political parties. You can find out more information about which parties have candidates in your area by visiting your Local Authority's website close to elections.

We will post links to the parties' easy-read manifestos as they become available on the Mencap website. We will also post the links via our email alerts.

How do I make sure the person I support has the ability to make a meaningful democratic decision?

We do not want to make assumptions about individuals' ability. We have tried to make voting, democracy and politics as accessible as possible with the information in these guides.

It is best to address voting by explaining the various political parties and politics in general as you would explain any other complex decision.

It is best to involve anyone else who is usually involved in supporting the individual to make complex decisions. This will ensure that everyone who offers support understands how the issue of voting has been explained.

If the person you support wants to vote, you should support them to do so.

It is important to remember that it may take some time to develop a good understanding of the political process and how registering to vote is relevant. It's important to carry on a conversation around politics when relevant (when the Prime Minister is on TV, when someone complains about a particular service, etc).

Where can I find the forms I need?

Your local electoral services team at your Local Authority should be able to send you all the forms you need to register to vote, to vote via post and to vote via proxy.

You can find out the details for your local electoral services team by searching on the internet. Your local electoral services team will work for your local council.

You can also visit **www.aboutmyvote.co.uk** to find the forms you might need. You can use the search function to find postal, proxy and large print registration forms.

You can also register to vote online at **www.mencap.org.uk/register tovot e**

What if I get stuck at any point?

If you get stuck at any point, you can call Mencap Direct on **0808 808 1111**

You can also email Mencap at **help@mencap.org.uk**

Who can register?**You can register to vote in the UK if you are:**

- resident (usually live in the UK), and
- aged 16 or over (but you will not be able to vote until you are 18).

You must also be either:

- a British, Irish or European Union citizen, or
- a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK.

What happens next?

The next General Election will be on the 7 May 2015. To vote in this election you must be registered by 20th April 2015.