



Don't cut us out!

Information about Mencap's **Don't cut us out!** campaign
and what you can do to stop cuts

Easy
read

What is in this booklet?



This booklet will give you information about

- how services for people with a learning disability are being cut
- how you can campaign against services being cut near where you live.



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What are cuts?



Cuts are when **local authorities** close services or spend less on them to save money.



Local authorities are things like councils. They decide what services people get.



Local authorities must ask people how they feel when their services are cut. This is called a **consultation**.

If the local authority cuts a service they should replace the service with something else.

What cuts are happening?

There are cuts happening to **social care** services at the moment.



Social care is helping people do everyday things, including

- getting out of bed
- cooking a meal
- shopping
- caring for their families
- having a shower
- getting around.



Cuts to social care services have happened in lots of ways.



Local authorities have

- closed day care centres and left people with nowhere else to go
- closed residential homes so people have to move
- asked people to pay for care
- made it harder for people to get a service.



When social care is cut people with a learning disability lose their services, independence and control over their lives.

What is the **Don't cut us out!** campaign?



Don't cut us out! is Mencap's **campaign** against cuts.

When you **campaign** it means you try to change things that are not working well at the moment or you try to stop bad things from happening.



Mencap is campaigning against cuts to social care services for people with a learning disability.

Mencap started the **Don't cut us out!** campaign because people are losing services that are important in their lives.



People with a learning disability have the right to live their lives the way they want to.



But many people in the UK are losing their services because of the cuts. For example day centres are closing because there is not enough money to pay for staff.



Services being cut include

- day centres
- transport
- short breaks from being a carer
- support to live independently.



Mencap wants the government to stop cutting social care services for people with a learning disability.



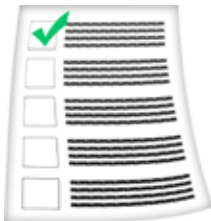
This guide will help you **campaign** near where you live to stop more people with a learning disability from losing their services.

How you can campaign against service cuts



Do you think people with a learning disability have the right to live their lives the way they want to?

If you have said yes to this question, you can support our campaign.



There are lots of different things you can do to help the campaign. These are called **campaigning tips**.

Campaigning tips



Tell your local authority what you think

Local authorities decide who can get social care and what services they can get.

Local authorities have the power to cut or stop services.



If your local authority is cutting a service and you do not want them to you should

- write them a letter to tell them what you think
- ask for a meeting with the person who runs the service.



To help you, we have written a letter to show you what to say. You can find the letter online at

<http://www.mencap.org.uk/campaigns/take-action/dont-cut-us-out/campaigns-your-area>

Contact your MP



Ask your **MP** to help your campaign.

Your **MP** is your member of parliament for where you live.

If you want to contact your MP you can



1. send a letter to your MP about your campaign

Tell them who you are and why you are campaigning.



2. ask for a meeting with your MP

To set up a meeting with your MP write to them or phone their office.

All MPs use this address

Write your MP's name here

House of Commons

Westminster

London SW1A 0AA



You can find out who your MP is online by going to **www.parliament.uk**

Before you have a meeting with your MP make sure you know what you want them to do for you.



You can also invite your MP to meetings or events where they can learn more about your campaign.

Have a public meeting



Get everyone together to talk about your campaign.

It is useful to have a public meeting about your campaign if

- you do not have much money to spend
- you do not have much time before services are being cut
- you know lots of people want to know more.



What to do if you want to have a meeting

Make sure people know about the meeting. You could make a poster to tell people

- what it is about
- where it will happen
- the date
- the time.



Hold the meeting in a place that everyone can get to. Make sure the building is **accessible**.



Accessible means it is ok for everyone. For example people who use a wheelchair.



Choose someone to be in charge of the meeting.

Ask someone to speak at the meeting. Make sure they know a lot about the problem.



Bring useful information about your campaign to the meeting.

You can invite your local MP.

Get the media involved

If you want lots of people to know about your campaign tell the **media**.



When we talk about the **media** it includes newspapers, TV and radio.



You can tell the media about your campaign by writing a **press release**.

A **press release** is a story you send to the media to tell them about your campaign.

Some things to remember when writing a press release



- Think about what you want to say
- Give as much information as you can
- Keep it short
- Put the most important information first
- Include quotes from important people like your MP
- Make sure you are allowed to use quotes
- Put your contact details on the press release

Send your press release to your local media.



You can find out where to send your press release by

- visiting **www.mysociety.org.uk** for names of local newspapers
- calling the newspaper and asking to speak to the newsdesk.



Call the person you sent the press release to and ask them if they would like more information.



Have a public event

One of the best ways to show how many people support your campaign is to hold a public event. There are 4 main things you can do.



1. Hold a demonstration

A **demonstration** is when a group of people get together in public to show people how they feel about something.

You could have a demonstration about the cuts.

They are hard to organise so you must make sure it will help your campaign.



You need a lot of people to join if you want to make a difference.



Make sure everyone knows where and when the demonstration will be taking place.

You could make signs to hold up so people know what you want.

2. Set up a stall on the street

A stall is a great way to tell people about your campaign.

It must be in a place where lots of people will see you like



- shopping centres
- railway stations
- local football stadiums.



3. Organise a publicity stunt

A **publicity stunt** is when you do something that gets people's attention, like letting go of hundreds of balloons.



Talk to your local newspaper so that they can send people to write about it and take photos.

Ask your Mencap regional campaigns officer to help you plan your event.

4. Make a petition

A petition is a list of people who support your campaign. They write their name and sign the petition.

Anybody can sign your petition.





Try to get as many people as possible to sign your petition.



Here are some ways to get lots of people to sign your petition.

- Put the petition on a website or email it to people



- Go to public places like shopping centres where you can ask lots of people to sign your petition

- Take your petition everywhere with you and ask people to sign it



- Tell your local newspaper about your petition so they can write a story about it and tell people about it



If you have lots of signatures you can send it to your local authority because they have the power to stop the cut.

Always keep a copy of your petition.



To help you, we have written an example of a petition you could follow. You can find the petition online at

<http://www.mencap.org.uk/campaigns/take-action/dont-cut-us-out/campaigns-your-area>

Make posters and leaflets



Tell other people what you think by handing out leaflets or posters.



Posters and leaflets are a good way of telling people about a meeting or petition.

Make sure you include details of how people can contact you and join the campaign.



A good poster tells people

- what your campaign is about
- what is happening to the people you are campaigning for
- how to join the campaign
- how to get more information.

Use pictures in your poster to tell a story. You can also use colours to get attention.



A good leaflet tells people

- about your campaign
- what you want to do
- how they can join your campaign
- who wrote the leaflet.

Leaflets should be short and easy to read.

Campaigning by using the internet

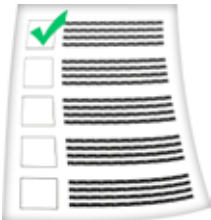


You can use the internet to tell people about your campaign. This is called **e-campaigning**.



E-campaigning can work really well if you do not have a lot of money to spend.

If you want to make sure people know about your campaign there are 3 things you can do.



1. Send emails about your campaign

With emails you can tell people about your campaign, meetings and petitions quickly without spending money on postage.

You must check your email every day.



2. Get a website for your campaign

A website is a great way to give more information about your campaign.

But websites can cost a lot of money and can be difficult to run.

Before you set up a website

- speak to other local groups who have websites
- talk to your regional campaigns officer
- find websites you like.





Go to **www.mencap.org.uk** to see how a website could look.



3. Join a social networking site

Facebook, Bebo, Myspace and Twitter are **social networking sites**.

Social networking sites are websites you can use to do things like send messages to people, show your pictures and tell everyone what you are doing. They are free to join.

On some social networking sites you can set up your own webpage to tell people about your campaign.



A webpage will help you to

- find people who want to join your campaign
- tell people about a meeting
- ask people to write to their local MP
- raise money for your campaign.



Go to **www.twitter.com/mencap_charity** to see how social networking sites can be used for campaigns.

Remember

Not everyone can use the internet. So you should only use e-campaigning with the other things we have told you about to make sure everyone can take part in your campaign.



Speak to us



Please tell us about the things you are doing to campaign against cuts in your local area.



Your regional campaigns officer and Mencap's campaigns team are happy to help.



Email us at **campaigns@mencap.org.uk**



Or phone us on **020 7696 6925**



Or write to us at

Mencap campaigns team

123 Golden Lane

London EC1Y 0RT