

Hertfordshire Adult Disability Service

Promote the Vote Webinar

11am-12pm Friday 09th April



The
Electoral
Commission



This booklet tells you how to vote
and why it is important to vote



Herts ADS Promote The Vote Campaign

Herts ADS as part of its ongoing commitment to citizenship, true community and personalisation is relaunching a project to support people to understand voting processes and principles. In turn this should enable those people we support, that wish to vote, a greater understanding of and ability to be involved in the general election.



Aims

Our aim is to ensure that both people with a learning disability, service providers and electoral officials have an understanding of the principles and reasonable adjustments that may be required. We want to dispel some myths and support providers in carrying out one of their most important functions of enabling people to have a say and be a true part of community.

The following guide will advise on the role that we as the ADS will be taking as well as providing frequently asked questions (FAQ) factsheet. This will advise details as to the rules that impact on us as public sector employees and what we can and cannot do as part of this process.

So as individual teams start to plan and engage with individuals, providers and each other to make the best use of the training and resources we are able to provide.



People with learning disabilities remain marginalised and can still experience a distinct disadvantage in relation to exercising these rights, especially in relation to voting or being involved in the wider political process. We expect a just and decent democracy, but people with learning disabilities don't always have the choice to participate. Stigma and assumptions about people with learning disabilities continue to happen. There have been reports of people being turned away from polling stations.

Adult learning disability social work has a responsibility to challenge society's current oppression of people with learning disabilities. This must be done with them and not for them, through real investment and co-production into people's lives. This requires good advocacy and available and accessible material to enable those with learning disabilities to have their voices heard and acted upon.

This work is often invisible to wider society because social workers usually only work with people with learning disabilities on an individual basis, while campaigning is left to sectors outside of the local authority.





The Herts Map

Current Electoral Boundaries

There are 11 Members of Parliament (MP) in Hertfordshire. Each MP represents an area known as a Parliamentary Constituency. Each Parliamentary Constituency is made up of multiple District / Borough Electoral Wards, a number of which are not co-terminus with those of the ADTs. In addition, there are 78 County Councilors in Herts. County Councilors are also elected and each represents the different areas of Herts. Below is a breakdown of the parliamentary constituencies. As a result of this, some of you may wish to work with other ADTs when coordinating with providers etc. As county wide teams the Transition teams may wish to link with the teams in their office bases to ensure that younger adults are not forgotten.



National Campaigns

A number of organisations are running national campaigns and activities to support individuals with learning disabilities and their carers to exercise their right to vote. The following campaigns may be useful to people we support or indeed service providers. It is important to note that we are able to advise that such campaigns and activities are taking place but need to be clear we are not endorsing the campaigns or the content of them.

United Response has previously run a campaign to enable people to vote. The campaign titled “every vote counts”, again highlights the main issues and provides resources for organisations and providers to support the principles of voting. United response also provide a monthly newspaper that reports on the main issues both nationally and internationally and looks at the political issues of the day. There are a number of resources available on their website which can support people in understanding what politics is and how voting affects them.



National Campaigns

[Every Vote Counts resources - United Response](#)

The Parliamentary Outreach Commission has also taken steps to try and improve the numbers of people with a learning disability that have the opportunity and understanding to exercise their vote. Dimensions were commissioned to carry out this work and a number of you will have taken part in their previous workshops. This joint project is called “love your vote”.

[Love Your Vote – making politics accessible - Dimensions \(dimensions-uk.org\)](#)

Dimensions have also produced a Voting Passport to support people when they vote to access the support that they would like to vote.

[Your free Voting Passport \(dimensions-uk.org\)](#)



Role of ADTs and Commissioned Providers

The next County Council elections are due to take place on 6th May 2021.

In addition, the Police and Crime Commissioner will also be elected on the same date. Police and crime commissioners are elected by the public to ensure the policing needs of communities are met as effectively as possible and to oversee how crime is tackled in your police force area.

The Police and Crime Commissioner elections cover police forces in England and Wales, except for the Metropolitan Police Service, Greater Manchester Police, West Yorkshire Police and City of London Police areas. The role of the ADTs within this relaunch project is to ensure that people if they wish to exercise their vote have the knowledge and support to be able to do so.

It is also important that the ADTs have discussions with service providers to ensure that they are ready to support and facilitate voting. Simple questions such as “has the provider made sure that everyone has been able to register to vote?” are a good start.

Conversations with local forums and providers will help people to plan for local election day. Are service providers aware of how many people will want to vote? Has postal voting been considered? How many staff will be needed on the day and do those staff even know where the polling station is? These are all questions that could be missed but that could have a negative impact on the day.

Each team should be nominating a voting lead who can help coordinate and share information within the teams. These leads will also meet with the other leads and help design an election day audit tool. This will allow the service to have some partial understanding on how many people voted and how services facilitated this. It will also give us an insight into what did not work and how we can mitigate for this at future elections.



Further Sources of Information

Hertfordshire County Council have produced two easyread videos to help support people to understand their rights to vote:

[Advice on how to vote in the May 6 elections \(easyread\) - YouTube](#)

[An introduction to voting in the May 6 elections \(easyread\) - YouTube](#)



Further Sources of information

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity.

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>

[New easy read guide helps people with learning disabilities to vote | Electoral Commission](#)

Mencap produced a number of easyread resources for the 2019 General Election, which help to explain the process of voting, some of which can be adapted for local election purposes.

[Elections | Mencap](#)

This is a great opportunity for our teams to support people to understand and exercise a right that has historically not been available to them. Our drive towards ensuring that social care is inclusive, personalized and citizen focused must include work like this. There can be no greater right to being a citizen than the ability to vote for those that you wish to run your country on your behalf.



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Q. The law and voting for people with a learning disability

It is important to emphasise that there is the need to register to vote and this cannot be over emphasized. The www.aboutmyvote.co.uk (Electoral Commission) site explains the process and has some resources for assisting people with learning disabilities to vote.

Q. The General Voting Procedure

Generally, the standard procedure for voting in the UK is that after registration has taken place, names and addresses of those registered will appear on the electoral register and they will then be able to vote in a local or general election in one of three ways; by attending in person at a polling station, (or if unable to go to a polling station in person on election day) by post or by 'Proxy'

Key dates for the next local elections:

- Register to vote deadline: 19/04/21
- Postal vote application deadline: 20/04/21
- New proxy application deadline: 27/04/21
- Postal votes issued: 30/04/21
- Postal votes returned: by 10pm 06/05/21



What is the impact of capacity in relation to registration?

A lack of mental capacity is not a legal incapacity to register to vote. Section 73 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (“EEA”) abolished any legal rules regarding the incapacity of a person to vote because of their mental state . People who meet the registration criteria are eligible to vote regardless of their mental capacity or lack thereof.

Whilst individuals with any level or no level of mental capacity may be registered to vote, the decision as to whether and how to vote at an election must be made where possible by the individual themselves and not by any other person on their behalf. Those who may care for such people or who may make decisions on behalf of such people may not make decisions on voting. It should be noted that even voting by proxy is classified by the Electoral Commission as a decision made by someone with a degree of mental capacity

“Don't ever tell people with learning disabilities they can't vote as they will tell you they absolutely can & will”



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Promote the Vote

- UN CRPD Article 29 - Right to Participate in Political and Public Life
- Representation of the People Acts 1983 and 2000 Right to register participate in UK elections
- Section 73 of the Electoral Administration Act (2006) abolished mental incapacity as being a legitimate reason to prevent a person being able to register to vote or cast their vote

General Election 2015 – views of support setting managers

PM1: *“Oh no love, they can’t vote, they have a brain injury”*

PM2: *“Those with capacity will be taken to vote on the day”*

PM3: *“They have no communication skills so couldn’t tell you their decision, they couldn’t hold a pen to make the cross”*

PM4: *“They’re not able to understand, they’re mentally handicapped”*

PM5: *“They’re badly brain damaged; they wouldn’t be able to vote”*

PM6: *“6 of them lack capacity. The 2 who have capacity might want to vote, if they want to they might register”*





What support can be given

- **In Polling Stations:**
 - If someone needs support to vote they can either take someone with them to vote, or can request support from the presiding officer at the polling station (e.g. to read the ballot to them)
 - Some adaptations are available at all polling stations (large print ballot papers, tactile voting devices)

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Mental Capacity and Voting – Observations from 2019

- “During my visit one tenant was clear she wants to vote. The second tenant said she would not be voting as *‘they are all the same and nothing gets done for us.’*”
- “P explained he is allowed to vote but not via the polling station, he votes by postal votes. He explained he would like to experience voting via polling station however due to the history of offending staff said he was not allowed to do so . (This is what P told us)”
- “On polling day, the social worker for the tenant who wanted to vote visited offering to take her to the polling station. However on the day the tenant who had been keen to vote said she did not want to go.”
- “A couple of the support workers made comments along the lines of *‘there’s no point in voting, they’re all liars anyway’.*”
- “Another worker said *‘what, they don’t have to understand it?’* and we said *‘they can just pick a colour if they like’* and the support worker said *‘that’s not a productive vote’*

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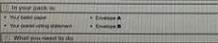
Bradford Research - 2015 General Election

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- 1019 people with learning disabilities surveyed living in 124 supported living houses
- There was an association between staff views on people's mental capacity and likelihood that they would vote
- People were significantly more likely to cast a vote if they lived in a housing unit where they had been made aware of their voting rights

Easy Read Guides 2021 Developed by Hertfordshire



	Your postal vote will come about a week before election day.
	Put a cross in the box next to the person you want to vote for on the Ballot paper . This gets put into envelope A and sealed.
	There is another form you must fill out called a Postal voting statement which you

 	
	You might see Candidates in town centres. They hold meetings where you can go and ask them questions.
	You should vote for the Candidate who you agree with most.
	Remember it is your vote and your



Thank You

Any Questions (GULP!)

(You can also find more detailed information in the pack)



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