

# 2017

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## Supporter Guide to the General Election

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# 1

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## Guidance for use

How to get the most out of this guide

These resources are designed to help those supporting people with a learning disability in the lead up to the General Election on 8th June 2017.

Whether you're a family carer, support worker or friend, these resources will help you start a conversation about why it's important to vote, talk about the process as well as cover the big issues.

It has a section on why it is important to vote, FAQs as well as flash cards to help talk through how Parliament works and the voting process itself. Don't worry you don't have to be political yourself or know anything about Parliament!

We have also produced an easy read guide for people with a learning disability themselves. This uses jargon free language and images and works together with these resources. It has been produced in partnership with the Electoral Commission and is available to download on the Mencap website.

**We hope you find the guide useful and remember people with a learning disability have as much right to vote as anyone else, don't let anyone tell you differently!**

Should you have any questions in the lead up to the election or on the day please contact the Mencap Election helpline on 0207 696 6009.

# 2

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## The importance of voting

This section explains why voting is important

# The importance of voting

People with a learning disability have as much right to vote as anyone else. Elections are your chance to have a say in who runs our country.

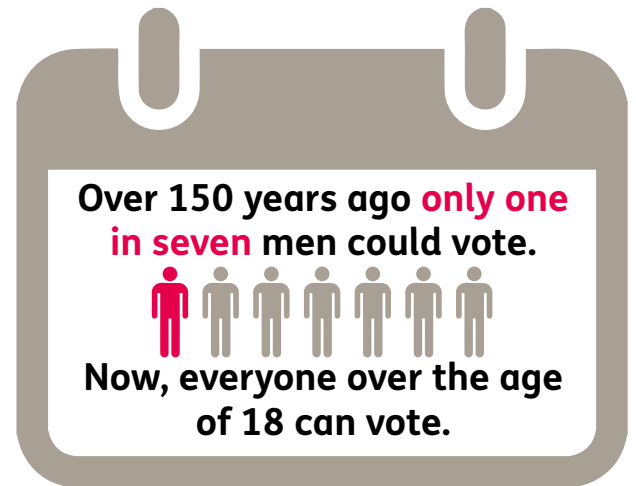
Every day in Parliament the issues affecting people with a learning disability such as health, care, employment and benefits are debated by MPs.

**1995**

The **Disability Discrimination Act** of 1995 made it illegal to discriminate in respect to employment, services, education and transport based on someone's disability.

**2010**

In 2010, the Act was brought into the **Equality Act**, making it illegal to discriminate based on someone's age, gender, partnership, belief, sexual orientation or disability.

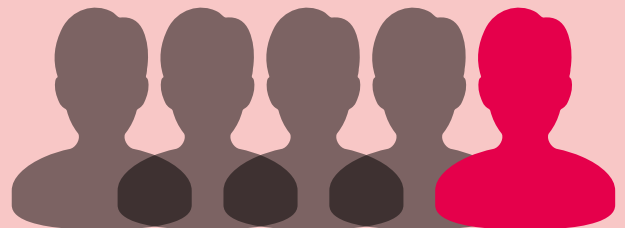


**Over half** the UK voted during the last General Election.

The last General Election was also the first time that **all of the main parties** produced easy read manifestos.



In 2005, **fewer than 1 in 5** people with a learning disability voted in the General Election.<sup>1</sup>



In 2010, **almost 1 in 3** people with a learning disability voted.<sup>1</sup>



1. <http://www.mencap.org.uk/campaigns/take-action/get-my-vote>  
2. <http://www.getwestlondon.co.uk/news/local-news/learning-disability-charity-run-voting-6988132>

# 3

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## Flash cards

These flash cards are to help explain politics to anyone who learns best through pictures and visual displays.

These cards can be used to fit each person's abilities and the situation. There is no right or wrong way to use the flash cards.

For example, the card showing the Houses of Parliament could be used to remind someone where MPs debate issues.

Alternatively, the card showing Parliament could be used to see if an individual knows the name of the building. This could be used as a way to gauge their general understanding of politics.

We have provided some prompt questions on the back of each card to suggest how each card could be used to relay more information about politics.





# Flash cards

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Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

## Questions you could ask:

- 1. Who is the leader of the Conservative Party?**
- 2. Who is the leader of the Liberal Democrat Party?**
- 3. Who is the leader of the Labour Party?**
- 4. Who is the leader of the Scottish National Party?**
- 5. Who is the leader of UK Independence Party?**
- 6. Who are the leaders of the Green Party?**

# Flash cards

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Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

## Questions you could ask:

**What do MPs do in Parliament?**

**Answer: Debate and discuss things in Parliament such as health, education etc.**

# Flash cards

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email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: 0207 696 6009

## Questions you could ask:

**Where are laws made?**

**Answer: Parliament makes laws.**

# Flash cards

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Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

## Questions you could ask:

**What do MPs do?**

**Answer: Represent the views of their constituents, including you.**



# Flash cards

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Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

## Questions you could ask:

**What do MPs do?**

**Answer: Speak up for their local area.**

# Flash cards

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Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

## Questions you could ask:

**What do MPs do?**

**Answer: Talk to local people.**

# Flash cards

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Contact information  
email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**

## Questions you could ask:

**Where do MPs debate things?**

**Answer: The House of Commons, part of the Houses of Parliament**

# 4

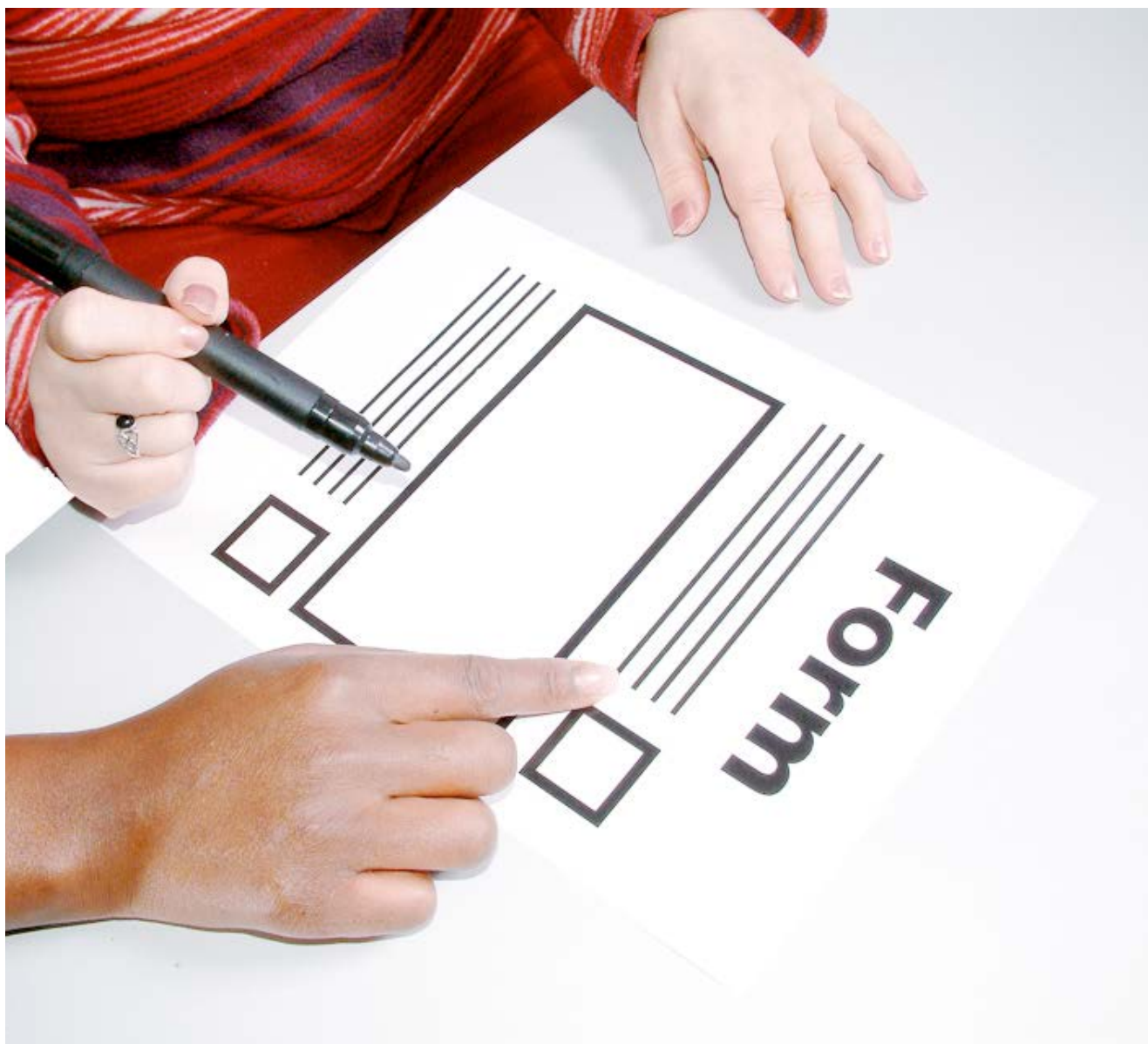
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## Reminder cards

Cards to put on an individual's front door to remind them about key dates (when to register to vote, when to register by for a postal vote and attending a polling station if voting in person)







**Don't forget to  
register to vote. You need  
to do this by...  
22 May**





**Don't forget to apply for a postal vote if you are voting by post. You need to do this by...  
23 May**





**Don't forget to **vote!****  
**You need to visit a polling  
station on...**  
**8 June**



# 5

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## Terms we use in this guide

This guide explains specific useful words, like polling station and snap election etc. which you will come across in this guide

## **Election**

This is when anyone who is registered to vote and is 18 years old or older gets to **vote**. Elections decide who should speak for us and make choices for us. There are **General Elections and local elections**.

## **Electoral Register**

The electoral register is the list of everyone that is allowed to **vote** in **elections**. You need to be on the electoral register to be able to vote.

## **Government**

The **Government** is usually the **political party** that gets the most amount of **MPs** at the **General Election**. Sometimes political parties form a Coalition Government. This is when political parties work together to form a Government.

## **Member of Parliament**

Members of Parliament (**MPs**) are **politicians** who are elected to represent your area at the Houses of Parliament. They help make decisions that affect the whole country.

## **Snap Election**

A snap election is when MPs agree that an election should take place earlier than planned.

## **Parliament**

**Parliament** is the name for the House of Commons and House of Lords. **Parliament** meets at the Palace of Westminster where Big Ben is.



# Terms we use in this guide

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## Political Parties

A **political party** is a group of people who think the country should be run in a certain way.

**Politicians** are usually in political parties. There are also candidates that are independent from political parties.

## Politician

Politicians are **elected** by people **voting** for them. They make important decisions that can impact on most people's life. Different politicians have different ideas about the best ways to run the country.

## Polling station

A **polling station** is a place where you go to **vote**. Polling stations are often at churches, community centres and schools however they can be in all sorts of places. You will be told where your nearest polling station is on your polling card.

## UK General Election

A **General Election** decides which **political party or parties** will govern the country. The political party that has the most **MPs** elected usually wins the election. They will usually become the **government**.

## Voting

**Voting** means that you and other people choose who represents you on a **council** or in **parliament**. In politics, voting happens during an **election**. Voting is very important. It is one of the best ways to get your voice heard by some of the most important people in the country.

# 6

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## Frequently asked questions

This gives answers to some questions that may come up as someone goes through this guide

## **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](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)**.

If in doubt, you can check with your local electoral registration officer. To contact your local electoral services, go to **[www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)**.

## **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 **The Easy Read Guide to Voting in the General Election** 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.

# Frequently asked questions

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## **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 the The Easy Read Guide to Voting in the General Election.

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.

# Frequently asked questions

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**You can find the websites for the six biggest political parties here:**



The Conservative Party  
[www.conservatives.com](http://www.conservatives.com)



The Green Party  
[www.greenparty.org.uk](http://www.greenparty.org.uk)



The Labour Party  
[www.labour.co.uk](http://www.labour.co.uk)



The Liberal Democrats  
[www.libdems.org.uk](http://www.libdems.org.uk)



The UK Independence Party  
[www.ukip.org](http://www.ukip.org)



Scottish National Party  
[www.snp.org](http://www.snp.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 at **[www.gov.uk/get-on-electoral-register](http://www.gov.uk/get-on-electoral-register)** will work for your local council.

You can also visit **[www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://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.

## What if I get stuck at any point?

If you get stuck at any point, you can call Mencap Election hotline on **0207 696 6009**

You can also email Mencap at **[campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@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 8 June 2017. To vote in this election you must be registered by 22 May 2017.**

# Notes

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email: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)  
telephone: **0207 696 6009**