



# Working in Parliament or on local councils

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## Tell us what you think

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Easy Read Document



Easy Read

# Important

This is a big booklet, but you may not want to read all of it.

Look at the list of contents on pages 1 and 2. It shows what is in the booklet. Look down the list to find things you want to read about.

## Green writing

In this Easy Read booklet we sometimes explain what words mean.

The first time we mention any of these words, it is in **bold green** writing. We then write what the words mean in a blue box.

These words and what they mean are also in a Words list at the back of the booklet.

If any of the words are used later in the booklet, we show them in **normal green** writing. If you see words in **normal green** writing, you can look up what they mean by looking for the blue box earlier in the booklet, or by looking at the Words list.

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# Contents

The main things in this booklet.....	3
Chapter 1 – About this consultation.....	6
Chapter 2 – Why do we want to give extra help and support to disabled people?.....	9
Chapter 3 – The main points of our plans.....	11
The way other people think and act towards disabled people.....	12
The high cost of trying to become a Member of Parliament.....	14
Accessibility.....	16
Chapter 4 – Our plans.....	22
Changing the way people think and act towards disabled people.....	22
Giving disabled people training and support, and helping them to do the best they can.....	24
Making accessibility better.....	25

- Chapter 5 – What political parties have to do to follow the Equality Act when a disabled person wants to take part in an election .....27
  - Reasonable adjustments.....27
  - Discrimination .....28
  - Things that political groups and political parties can do if they want to .....33
- Chapter 6 – Consultation questions about our plans .....36
  - About this consultation .....36
  - What we do after the consultation .....38
  - Freedom of information.....38
  - General questions .....39
  - Changing the way people think and act towards disabled people .....40
  - Giving disabled people training and support, and helping them to do the best they can.....42
  - Making accessibility better – about the fund to help with the costs to do with a person’s disability .....44
  - About rules .....47
- Words list .....48

## The main things in this booklet

This government wants to get equality for disabled people. Equality means making things fair so that everyone has a fair chance to do well in life.

The government also thinks that people need to start to trust the government again.

So, all the different parts of the government must look after the people they serve.

The government wants to have more women, more disabled people and more **ethnic minority** people working in Parliament.

### Ethnic minority

This means people who, because of their race, colour, culture, language or nationality, are not the same as the majority of the population. For example, black Caribbean people, Pakistani people, Chinese people and Bangladeshi people.



Even though there are more than 10 million disabled people in this country, there are not enough disabled people working in Parliament, on local councils or in other important jobs.

This government has decided to give extra help for disabled people who want to become Members of Parliament or be chosen to work as a **councillor**.

### Councillor

In English local **elections**, people are chosen to look after the needs of a local area. These people are called **councillors**.

We will listen to what disabled people think when we are making our rules about this. We have found out some important things.

- There are only a few disabled people in Parliament. This means that most Members of Parliament can find it hard to understand disabled people's views, needs and worries.
- Disabled Members of Parliament will be able to use what they have learned in their lives to help make new rules and laws.
- If there are not many disabled Members of Parliament, disabled people may feel that they are not being looked after properly by the government.
- Many disabled people do not trust the government to look after them and deal with disability.

We want to get rid of the **barriers** that stop disabled people wanting to become a Member of Parliament or a **councillor**.

### Barriers

These are things that stop disabled people living like other people. For example, the ways other people think and act towards disabled people.

We need to find out what **barriers** stop disabled people becoming a Member of Parliament or a **councillor**.

This **consultation** is asking you about the support that can help get rid of the **barriers**.

### Consultation

This is when government asks what people think about their plans, and for ideas about the best ways of doing things.



# Chapter 1 – About this consultation

We want to know what you think about our plans to give extra help and support to disabled people who want to take part in **elections** to become a Member of Parliament or a **councillor**.

## Elections

An election is when everyone over 18 can vote to choose a person to act for them in places like Parliament and local councils.

We want to hear from

- Disabled people.
- Political parties.

## Political parties

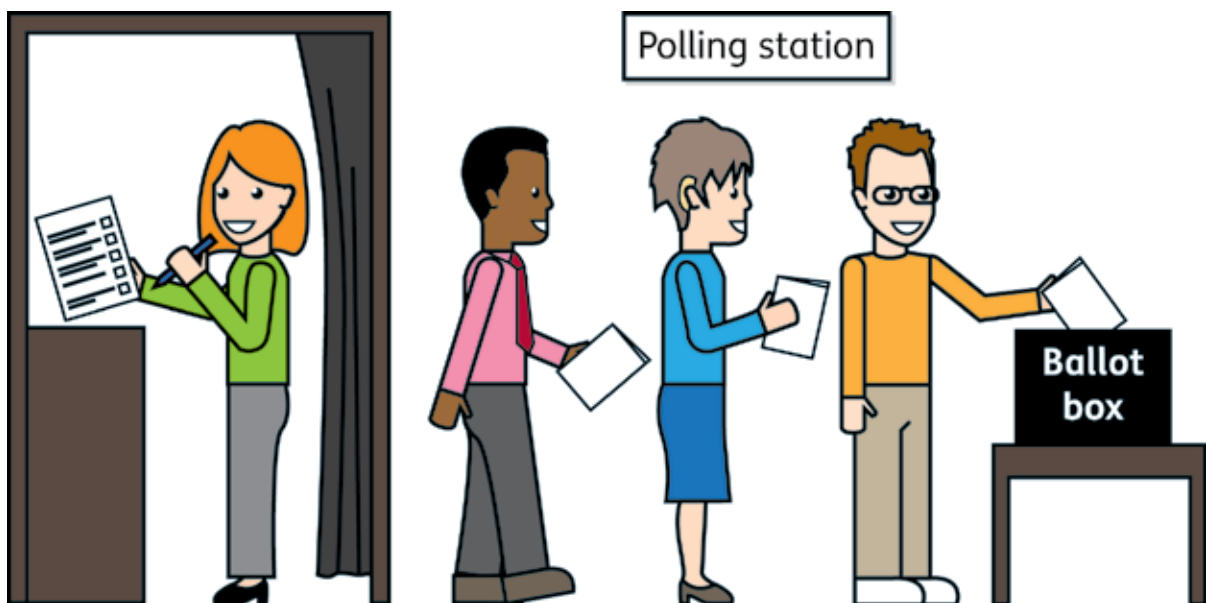
These are groups that take part in elections to local councils and Parliament. There are a lot of political parties, but the 3 main ones in this country are the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

- The people who run the Houses of Parliament.
- Disability organisations.
- Organisations and groups that look after the needs of people like **ethnic minorities**, women and disabled people.
- Local councils.

We would be happy to hear from anyone else who is interested in this consultation.

Our plans will help people who want to take part in these **elections**.

- United Kingdom Westminster **elections**, which are when people become Members of Parliament.
- English local **elections**, which are when people are chosen to become **councillors**.
- Greater London Authority **elections**, which are when people are chosen to look after the Greater London area. The Mayor of London is also chosen in these **elections**.
- English Mayoral **elections**, which are when people choose a mayor for their area.
- Police and crime commissioners, who are people chosen to look after the police forces.



We have made an **equality impact assessment** for our plans.

## Equality impact assessment

This is a way of working out if and by how much a change affects age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation equality.

We will keep talking to other groups about the effect of our plans on equality until the **consultation** is finished.

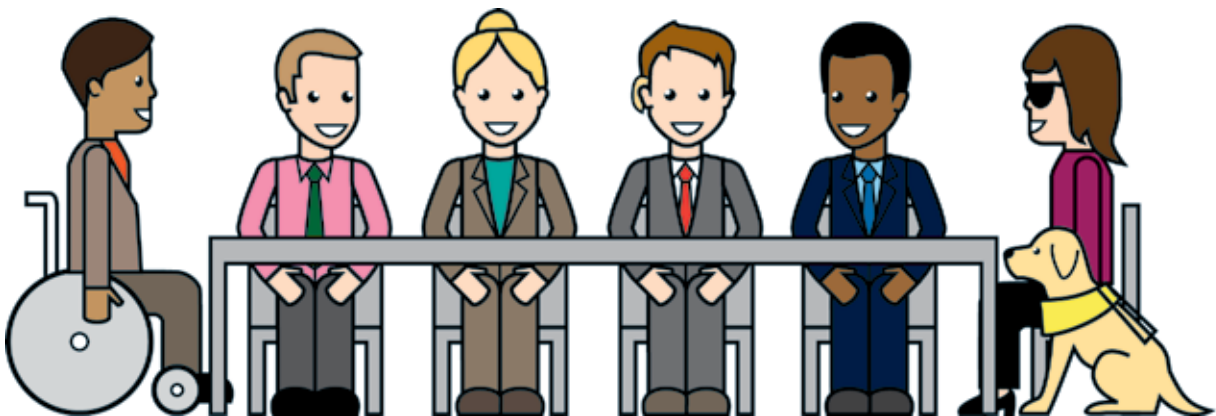
## Chapter 2 – Why do we want to give extra help and support to disabled people?

This government wants to get rid of the **barriers** that stop disabled people becoming a Member of Parliament or a **councillor**.

We want to get more disabled people **involved**. This will help Parliament and councils make better decisions about things that affect disabled people.

### Involved

Being involved is not the same as being asked. Being involved means disabled people playing a bigger part in things, not just being asked about work done by other people.



We do not know how many disabled Members of Parliament there are. But we do know that the number of Members of Parliament who say they are disabled is very low.

There are 649 Members of Parliament at the moment. With this number of people, we would expect at least 65 Members of Parliament to be disabled.

In September and October last year, the government talked to these people.

- All the **political parties** in Parliament.
- Disability groups and organisations.
- Organisations who deal with equality.

**The Equality Act** 2010 could give us more ways of helping disabled people. It could also help **political parties** have more **diverse** people working for them.

### Equality Act

This is a law to make sure that all people are treated fairly and equally.

### Diverse

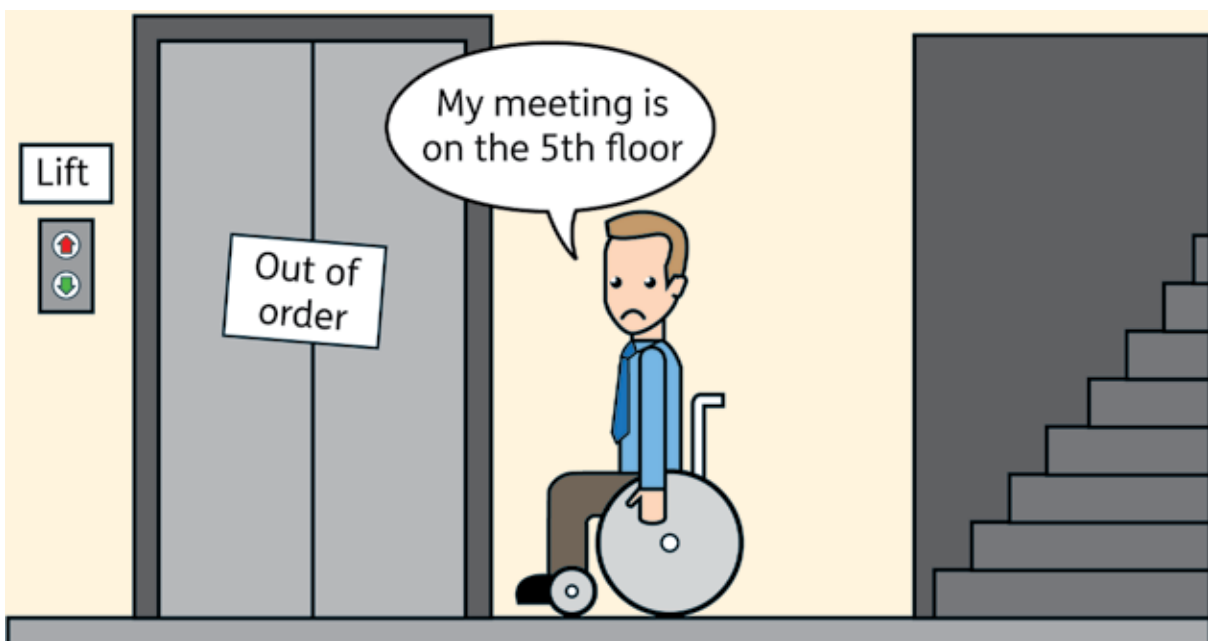
This is a mix of different kinds of people. For example, men and women, young and old people, black and white people, disabled and non-disabled people.

## Chapter 3 – The main points of our plans

We need to get rid of the **barriers** that stop disabled people, trying to get **elected**.

We think that there are 3 main issues that affect disabled people.

- The way other people think and act towards disabled people.
- The high cost of trying to become a Member of Parliament.
- Accessibility. Things, like using transport, getting into and around buildings or taking part in interviews and meetings.



## The way other people think and act towards disabled people

The way other people think and act towards disabled people can stop them getting **elected**. For example

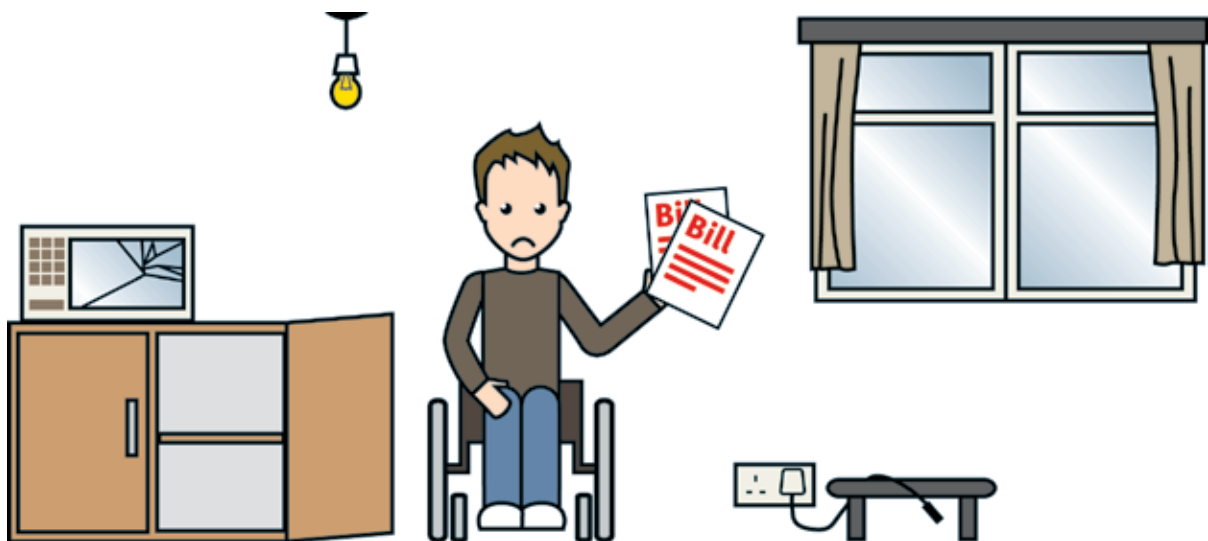
- People may worry that the disabled person may need extra money to pay for things like transport. And also booklets and notes in other **formats**.

### Format

This means a different way of showing the information. For example, in Braille or on CD.

- People may worry about having a disabled person acting on their behalf.

Disabled people are 2 times more likely to live in **poverty** than non-disabled people. They are also 2 time more likely to be out of work. Disabled people are also less likely to go to college or university.



### Poverty

This is when a person or family does not have enough money to pay for the things they need, or to take part in everyday life as much as other people.

We need to make sure that disabled people have the same chances as everyone else.

- We will do this by training them and helping them do the best they can.
- We need to find ways to make disabled people feel more confident.
- We need to show them that they do not need to have qualifications from school, college or university.
- We need to show them that they do not need to have had a job to get **elected**.

We want all the **political parties** to change the way they think about disabled people. If we can get them to do this it will change the way they choose people to try to get **elected**.

Some people who are trying to get **elected** are worried about saying that they are disabled. Some Members of Parliament also worry about this.

These people worry because they did not say they were disabled earlier. They think this means they will get into trouble.

## The high cost of trying to become a Member of Parliament

Trying to get **elected** to Parliament can cost a lot of money. This can stop a lot of people from trying to become a Member of Parliament or a **councillor**.

This includes disabled people, because they are more likely to have less money than other people.

Disabled people may have to pay more because of their **impairment**.

### Impairment

This is something about the way a person does things. It may be things like being unable to walk well, not being able to see or hear other people clearly, not being able to think hard for a long time, or not being able to remember things.

For example, a deaf person may have to pay for a **British Sign Language** signer. Or a person who cannot walk well may need to use more taxis than a non-disabled person.

### British Sign Language

This is a language for deaf people. Instead of speaking, people use their hands to make signs that deaf people see as words. People who use it are sometimes called signers.



Like everyone else, disabled people would also have to pay for their election campaign. This can last many years and can cost a lot of money.

People who are not part of a **political party** have to meet all these costs themselves.

People who are part of a **political party** also have to pay for taking part in the selection process. This is when a person is chosen to act for a **political party** out of all the people who wanted to be picked.

When the person has been chosen to act for a **political party** they will have to pay for things to do with the **election** process.

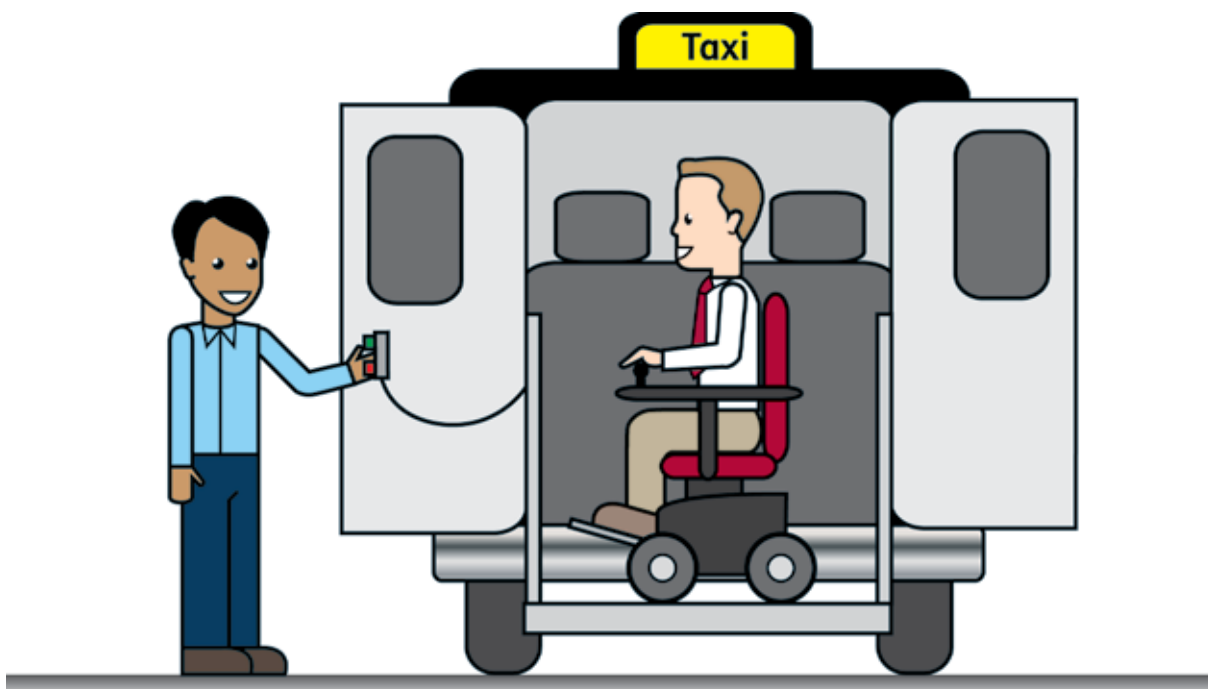
At the **election** the people who live in the area will choose who they want to act for them. They will choose from all the **political parties** taking part in the **election**.

## Accessibility

It is very important that accessibility is made better for disabled people.

Accessibility needs will change from person to person and will depend on their **impairment**.

Travel arrangements are a big issue for those people who cannot walk very well. They can cost a lot of money and be a big **barrier** to them trying to get elected.



Disabled people may need information in other **formats**, for example in Braille.

Some disabled people will need extra support in meetings and interviews, like **British Sign Language** signers.

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**Barriers** will be much worse for disabled people who are not part of a **political party**. People who are part of a **political party** may be able to get some help from their **political party**.

We have found 3 areas where more support could make a big difference.

- Changing the way people think and act towards disabled people.
- Giving the disabled person training and helping them to do the best they can.
- Making accessibility better, including helping with money.

We are thinking about setting up a fund to help disabled people who want to get **elected**. But the fund would need to have a set of rules to say when it could be used. For example

- The fund could not be used to pay for things that are covered by other benefits.
- The fund could not be used to pay for **reasonable adjustments** which the **political party** should pay for.

### Reasonable adjustment

Reasonable adjustment is when people like employers and service providers have to make changes to the way they work, and to their buildings, to make it easy for disabled people to get a job, use services or buy things.

- The fund could not be used to pay for normal costs which people are expected to pay for themselves.

### Changing the way people think and act towards disabled people, both in political parties and in the local area

Disabled people may feel more confident about trying to get **elected** if we can do these things.

- Tell them about the good things that other disabled people have done.
- Get disabled Members of Parliament or **councillors** to talk about the good things they have done.

Doing these things would also help to change the way non-disabled people and **political parties** think and act towards disabled people.

It may be a good idea to get disabled Members of Parliament to help and support disabled people who want to become a Member of Parliament.



The disabled Members of Parliament could also tell **political parties** about the disabled people who want to become Members of Parliament.

## Giving the disabled person training and helping them to do the best they can

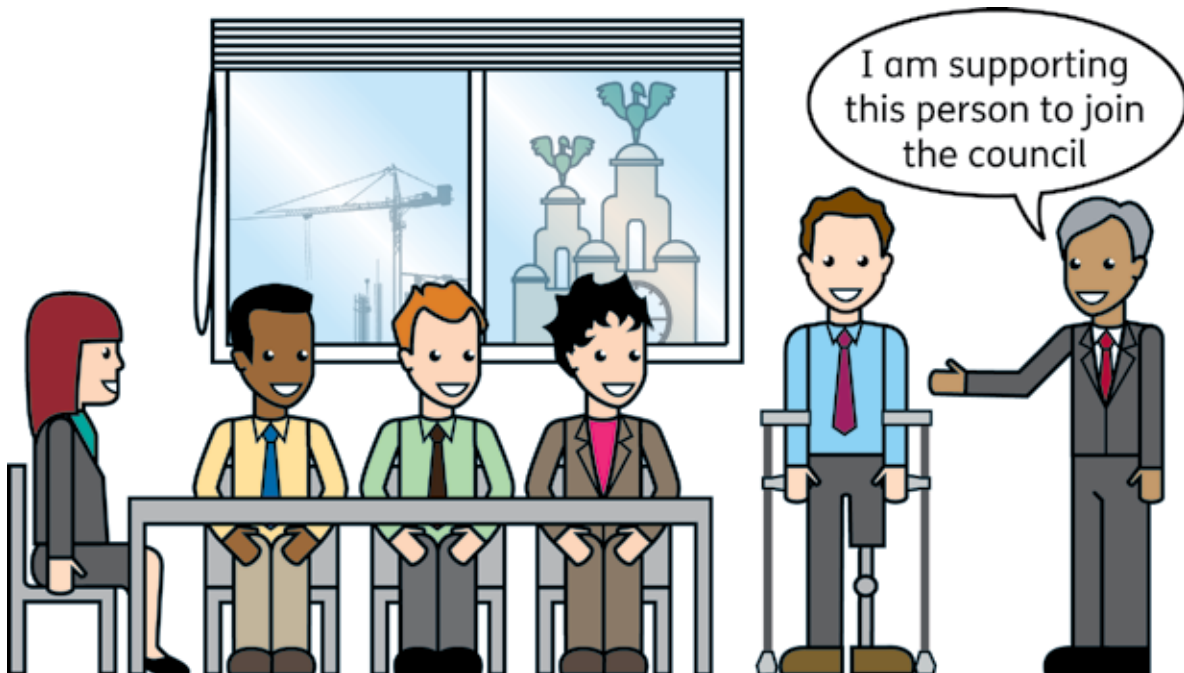
We would try to help disabled people by giving them training. This will help them try to get elected.

We could do things like **mentoring** a disabled person. We could also give them support that is aimed just at them.

### Mentoring

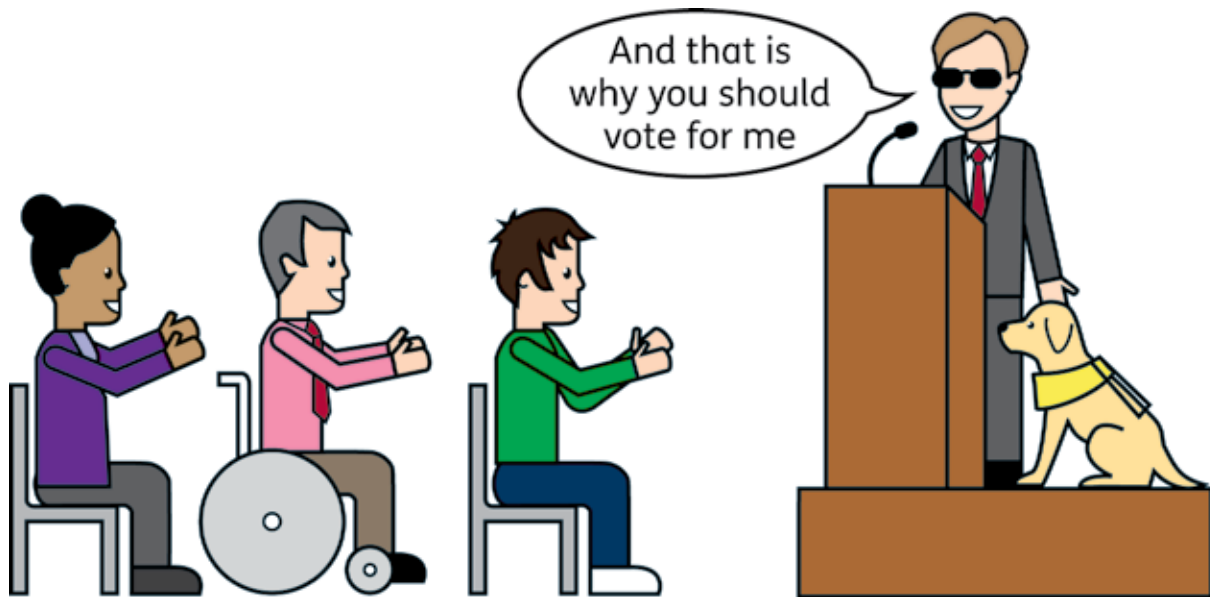
This is when an experienced person, called the mentor, works with a less experienced person to act as their guide and teacher.

Non-disabled Members of Parliament and **councillors** can also help. They could talk to the disabled people and support them.



**Political parties** and disability organisations could join together. They could look at the **barriers** disabled people have to face. They could then make training courses to help disabled people.

For example, they could train disabled people in how to talk at an interview. Or how to talk to people to try to get **elected**.



### Making accessibility better, including helping with money

The accessibility needs of disabled people will be different for each person.

Disabled people often have to pay more than other people when they are trying to get **elected**.

Also, disabled people often have less money than other non-disabled people.

## Chapter 4 – Our plans

We are now going to talk about the plans we have made. We want to know which ones would best help disabled people.

We have 6 plans. We think there will be about £1 million a year, for the next three years, to spend on these plans.

### Changing the way people think and act towards disabled people

#### Plan 1.

The government should work more closely with **political parties**, the **Local Government Association** and disability organisations. This is to help people change the way they think about disabled people

#### The Local Government Association

This is a voluntary group. Lots of local councils belong to the Local Government Association. It wants local councils to look after the needs of local people better. And it talks to the government to try to make things better.

Disabled people may feel more confident about trying to get **elected** if we can do these things.

- Tell them about the good things that other disabled people have done.
- Get other disabled people to talk about the good things they have done.

Doing these things would also help to change the way non-disabled people and **political parties** think and act towards disabled people.

We think that disability organisations and **political parties** would run this plan with help from Government.

### Plan 2

Set up a programme to find people who would help disabled people. Do this by working with **political parties**, the **Local Government Association** and disabled people's organisations.

Disabled Members of Parliament, and **councillors** would **mentor**

- Disabled people who are trying to get **elected**.
- Disabled people who have already been **elected**.

Disabled Members of Parliament and **councillors** would find people who could do a good job from the **political parties**, the local area and other organisations.



## Giving disabled people training and support, and helping them to do the best they can

### Plan 3

Support disabled people to get **elected** by giving them training and helping them do the best they can.

This plan would be run by **political parties** and disabled people's organisations. The disabled people's organisations would find disabled people who could do a good job if they were elected.

This would help disabled people who are already working in their local area. And it would help them to move to local councils or to the Houses of Parliament.

These disabled people would be given the training that they will need. Like dealing with difficult people and working with the **media**.

### Media

The media is things like newspapers, magazines, television and radio.

The training would be given to everyone who was trying to get **elected**, so they would all need to be told about it.

## Making accessibility better

### Plan 4

Set up a fund to help disabled people pay for things to do with their impairment.

The fund would be run by an independent group or by a **voluntary sector** organisation.

### Voluntary sector

These are groups outside government that do not make money out of their work. Examples are community groups, voluntary groups, charities, co-operatives and housing associations.

The fund would not pay for **political parties** to make **reasonable adjustments**. Also, it would not pay for things that a person should pay for themselves. And it would not pay for things people raise funds for.



### Plan 5

Work with political parties to look at their disability access rules and tell people about the good ways of working.

### Plan 6

Help local councils and **political parties** follow the rules in the **Equality Act**. Do things like writing a booklet to explain what the rules are.

We want to do more to help **political parties** learn about the rules in the **Equality Act**.

This will mean that **political parties** will be better able to help disabled people take part in **elections**.

## Chapter 5 – What political parties have to do to follow the Equality Act when a disabled person wants to take part in an election

When we were working out this **consultation** we had to read about the rules that **political parties** must follow when dealing with disabled people.

This was to make sure that we did not copy the rules we already have into our new plans.

### Reasonable adjustments

**Political parties** must think about making **reasonable adjustments** when a disabled person may join the **political party**.

Places like council offices, **political party** offices and Parliament must make **reasonable adjustments** before disabled people try to use their services or get into their buildings.



## Discrimination

The **Equality Act** protects disabled people from these kinds of discrimination.

- Direct discrimination.
- Indirect discrimination.
- Discrimination to do with a person's disability.
- Discrimination because someone has not made a **reasonable adjustment**.

### Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination happens when disabled people are treated worse than non-disabled people because of their disability.

Also, if a non-disabled person is treated worse because they are wrongly thought to be disabled or because they are looking after a disabled person, that is direct discrimination.

There is never a good reason for direct discrimination.

### Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination is when there are some rules that are for everyone, but the rules put disabled people in a worse position and there is no good reason for the rules.

## Discrimination to do with a person's disability

Discrimination to do with a person's disability happens when a person is treated worse than other people because of something to do with their disability. And there is no good reason for the way they were treated.

An example of this is not letting a blind person into a building because they have a guide dog, not because they are blind.

For this type of discrimination to happen the other person must know or reasonably be expected to know that the person is disabled.

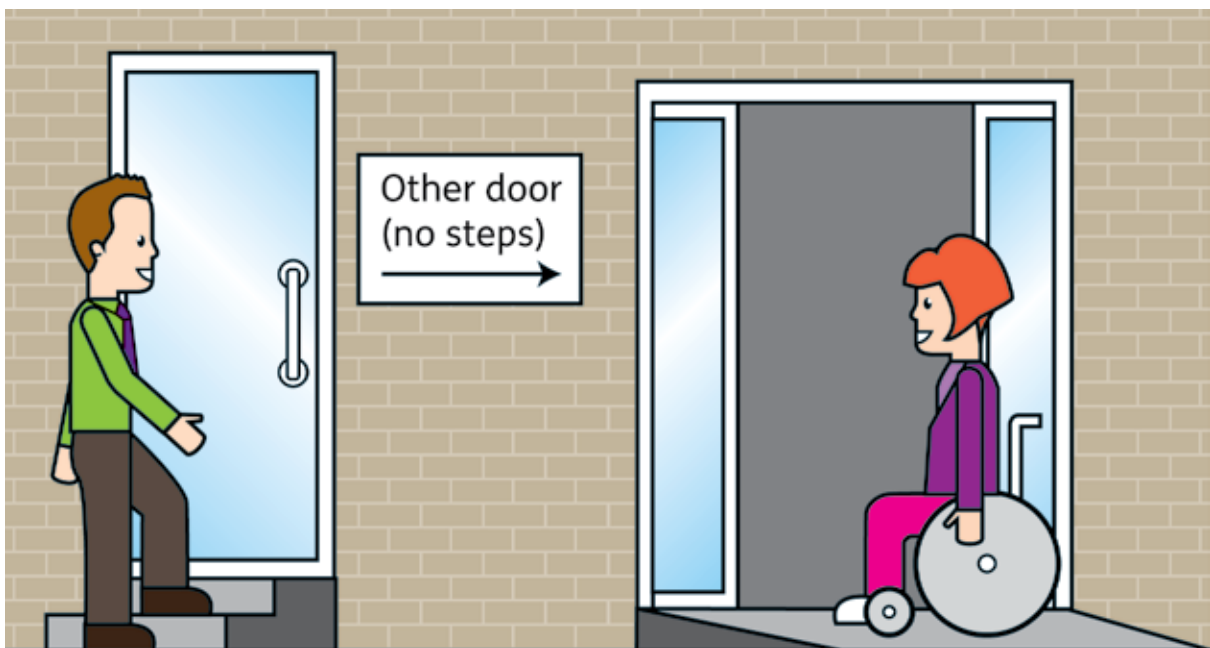


### Discrimination because someone has not made a reasonable adjustment

If a rule or a way of working means that a disabled person is put in a worse position than a non-disabled person then a **reasonable adjustment** must be made.

The **political party** must take every reasonable step to stop the disabled person being put in that position. Examples of this are

- Letting guide dogs into a building even if non-disabled people cannot take dogs in.
- Putting information into a **format** the disabled person can use, for example Braille, large print or on a CD.
- Removing, changing or giving another way of doing something that is stopping a disabled person using the building. For example making a door entrance wider, or using another door if the main doorway cannot be used by a disabled person.



### What the Equality Act says

Political groups must not discriminate in any of the ways we have talked about in this chapter against a disabled person. They must not discriminate in these ways.

- In the way they let or do not let a disabled person use the benefits of being a member of the group.
- By not letting a disabled person become a member.
- By changing the disabled person's terms of membership.

Terms of membership can include fees or charges, the right to vote, the right to stand for office or represent the group outside, the use of facilities and taking part in events.

- By putting the disabled person in a worse position than other people.

If a person must be a member of a **political party** before they can think about trying to be chosen to become a Member of Parliament, then being a member is a big advantage.

Anything that stops a disabled person becoming a member of a political group could be discrimination.

Also, if a person is not chosen because they are disabled or because of something to do with their disability then that could be discrimination.

In the same way, a **political party** could discriminate against a disabled person if these things happened.

- The rules of being a member stopped disabled people from getting on in the **political party**. Or the rules made getting on more difficult than for a non-disabled person.
- The **political party** did not make **reasonable adjustments** for a disabled person. And this meant that a non-disabled person had a better chance of getting on.



The **political party** would have to check if the rules of being a member for a disabled person was one of these things.

- Direct discrimination.
- Indirect discrimination.
- Discrimination to do with a person's disability.

The **political party** would need to make sure that **reasonable adjustments** had been made, like doing these things.

- Changing rules or the way things work, like the rules for membership or the way the rules for membership work.
- Providing an aid or a service, like doing these things.
  - Making sure forms are in the right **format** for the disabled person.
  - Changing the entrance to a meeting room so that a disabled person who cannot walk well can get into and out of the room for meetings and interviews.

## Things that political groups and political parties can do if they want to

### Positive action

There is a new provision in the **Equality Act** called positive action. This was not in the Disability Discrimination Act.

Positive action is a fair and reasonable way of making the position of disabled people better, meeting their special needs or getting them to take part in doing things which not many of them do.

## Saving places for some groups of people

A **political party** can save some places for disabled people to stand as a Member of Parliament or a **councillor** if

- There are less disabled people among the party's Members of Parliament or on local councils.
- This is a fair and reasonable way of increasing the numbers of disabled people in the **political party**.

But a **political party** cannot have lists of only disabled people from which they can choose someone to stand as a Member of Parliament or a **councillor**.



## Treating disabled people better than other people or other disabled people

It is not against the law to treat a disabled person better than a non-disabled person.

A **political party** will not need to use positive action if it is going to treat disabled people better than non-disabled people.

But, the **political party** will need to use positive action if it wants to treat some disabled people better than other disabled people. For example, by **mentoring** and training people with a learning disability, but not those people who are hard of hearing or deaf.

## Chapter 6 – Consultation questions about our plans

We want to know what you think about our plans. And if you think that one or more of these plans would give disabled people the best support.

We have written 3 extra questions about Plan 4. We would like to know if you think that a fund would help disabled people who are trying to get **elected**.

### About this consultation

This **consultation** starts on 16 February 2011 and it ends on 11 May 2011.

If we get any replies to the **consultation** after 11 May 2011 they may not be included in our report.

A list of the questions we want answers to is at the back of this booklet. They start on page 39.

You can tell us what you think by email or by letter. Or you can use the tear out pages. But you must get your replies to us by 11 May 2011.

The address to send your replies to is

Access to Elected Office for Disabled People: Consultation Responses

Government Equalities Office

Zone G9

9th Floor

Eland House

Bressenden Place

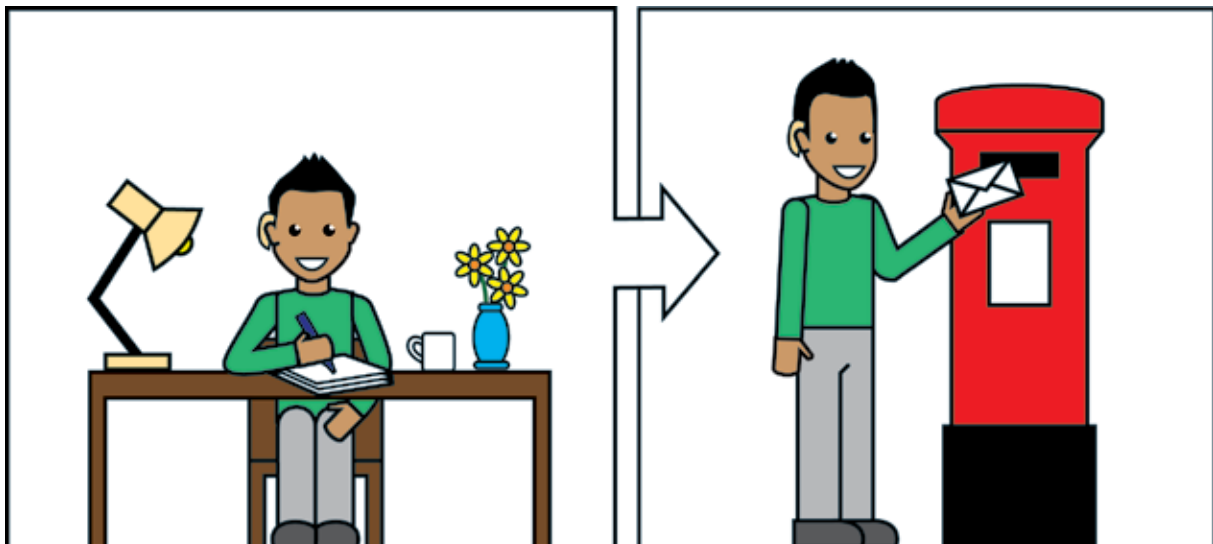
London

SW1E 5DU

Email – [accesstoelectedoffice@geo.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:accesstoelectedoffice@geo.gsi.gov.uk)

When you send your reply to us please tell us if you are answering for yourself or if you are answering for a group or organisation.

If you are replying for a group or organisation please tell us who they are. And how you got their views.



## What we do after the consultation

After the **consultation** ends we will write a report about the replies we have had.

The report will be on our website within 3 months of the end of the **consultation**. Our website address is [www.equalities.gov.uk](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)

## Freedom of information

This **consultation** is covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

This means that anyone can ask us to tell them what you and everyone else told us.

These people may use this information in things they write. This means that if you tell us things like your name, we can give this information to people who ask for it.

If you do not want us to do this, you could tell us less about yourself. For example, you might give us just your first name and the town you live in.

If you do not want us to tell other people about what you told us please tell us why. Even then, unless you have a good reason, the Freedom of Information Act may force us to tell people.

If you contact us by email to tell us what you think, we cannot be sure that other people won't see your email.

## General questions

### Question 1

Which of the plans or which group of plans do you think would give the best support?

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### Question 2

Are there any **barriers** for disabled people who want to try to get **elected** that we have not talked about?

If yes, what are they?

What would be the best way of getting rid of the **barriers**?

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Question 3

Do you know of any work that is going on at the moment that these plans could be used with?

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Changing the way people think and act towards disabled people

Question 4

What is the best way to let other people know about the good things that disabled people have done?

What is the best way of getting in touch with disabled people and disabled people’s organisations?

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## Question 5

If disabled Members of Parliament or **councillors** are helping disabled people by **mentoring** them

- What are the main things that they should be doing?
- What support should they be giving disabled people?

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## Question 6

How can we get other people and **political parties** to change the bad views they have about **electing** disabled people?

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# Giving disabled people training and support, and helping them to do the best they can

## Question 7

What are the main skills that a person needs to become a Member of Parliament or a **councillor**?

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## Question 8

What is the best way of giving training to disabled people and helping them do the best they can?

What is the best way of making the training accessible to disabled people?

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## Question 9

What other kinds of support would help disabled people who are or who want to be **elected**?

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## Question 10

What kind of training would non-disabled Members of Parliament or non-disabled **councillors** need to help and support disabled people who want to be **elected**?

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# Making accessibility better – about the fund to help with the costs to do with a person’s disability

## Question 11

What should we think about when deciding if a disabled person should get help from the fund?

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## Question 12

When should a disabled person get help from the fund?

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### Question 13

When people or groups ask for money from the fund, how should we decide which is the most important and should be paid first?

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### Question 14

How can we choose which activities should be supported by the fund? How long should we support these activities?

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Question 15

If we decide that a disabled person should get help from the fund, how should we pay the money?

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Question 16

Are there any things that the fund should not be used for?

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## About rules

### Question 17

What kind of rules should **political parties** have

- For giving help and support to disabled people.
- That disabled people can use.

Should the **political parties** have other kinds of help that disabled people can use?

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# Words list

## Barriers

These are things that stop disabled people living like other people. For example, the ways other people think and act towards disabled people.....5

## British Sign Language

This is a language for deaf people. Instead of speaking, people use their hands to make signs that deaf people see as words. People who use it are sometimes called signers ..... 15

## Consultation

This is when government asks what people think about their plans, and for ideas about the best ways of doing things .....5

## Councillor

In English local **elections**, people are chosen to look after the needs of a local area. These people are called **councillors** . . . .4

## Diverse

This is a mix of different kinds of people. For example, men and women, young and old people, black and white people, disabled and non-disabled people ..... 10

## Elections

An election is when everyone over 18 can vote to choose a person to act for them in places like Parliament and local councils.....7

## Equality Act

This is a law to make sure that all people are treated fairly and equally ..... 10

## Equality impact assessment

This is a way of working out if and by how much a change affects age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation equality.....8

## Ethnic minority

This means people who, because of their race, colour, culture, language or nationality, are not the same as the majority of the population. For example, black Caribbean people, Pakistani people, Chinese people and Bangladeshi people.....3

## Format

This means a different way of showing the information. For example, in Braille or on CD ..... 12

## Impairment

This is something about the way a person does things. It may be things like being unable to walk well, not being able to see or hear other people clearly, not being able to think hard for a long time, or not being able to remember things ..... 14

## Involved

Being involved is not the same as being asked. Being involved means disabled people playing a bigger part in things, not just being asked about work done by other people.....9

## Media

The media is things like newspapers, magazines, television and radio ..... 24

## Mentoring

This is when an experienced person, called the mentor, works with a less experienced person to act as their guide and teacher..... 20

## Political parties

These are groups that take part in elections to local councils and Parliament. There are a lot of political parties, but the 3 main ones in this country are the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats .....6

## Poverty

This is when a person or family does not have enough money to pay for the things they need, or to take part in everyday life as much as other people ..... 13

## Reasonable adjustment

Reasonable adjustment is when people like employers and service providers have to make changes to the way they work, and to their buildings, to make it easy for disabled people to get a job, use services or buy things ..... 17

## The Local Government Association

This is a voluntary group. Lots of local councils belong to the Local Government Association. It wants local councils to look after the needs of local people better. And it talks to the government to try to make things better ..... 22

## Voluntary sector

These are groups outside government that do not make money out of their work. Examples are community groups, voluntary groups, charities, co-operatives and housing associations ..... 25

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