Dear all,

As you know, the government has called a general election for December 12th. It is important that we begin to think about how the people we work with can be supported to cast their vote. In the 2014 local elections, despite 70% of people with learning disabilities surveyed saying they were interested and wished to vote, [60% did not vote because it was “too hard”.](https://www.learningdisabilitytoday.co.uk/many-people-with-a-learning-disability-excluded-from-political-process-survey-finds)

It is of course vital that you do not tell the person who you work with who to vote for or seek to influence their vote in anyway. But there are a wide variety of ways you can support a person with learning disabilities to vote. Someone may need to be supported to:

* **Register** to vote in their local area (this must be done before 26th November and can be done by visiting [www.gov.uk/registertovote](http://www.gov.uk/registertovote))
* **Learn** more about the different parties. In the last election most parties published easy-read manifestos; these should be available online soon.
* **Find out**which candidates are standing in their constituency and what they stand for
* **Understand** what sort of decisions the government makes, and how these decisions might impact their lives. As you are working closely with the individual, you might be able to give examples based on their day-to-day lives. It is important to remember that it may take some time to develop an understanding of the political process, so carry on the conversation when it seems relevant (if a politician is on the TV, or someone is complaining about a particular public service etc.)
* **Vote** in the polling station. You are allowed to help the person you support by reading out the ballot paper, and explaining the choices available. You should speak to the Presiding Officer on duty, and fill in a form to say that you will be supporting someone to vote.

You might think that the person you support would prefer to use a postal vote, so that they can make their decision at home. The deadline for this is 26th November. More information can be found here: <https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/how-do-i-vote/voting-by-post>

To help with all of this, we have attached:

* [The Mencap And Electoral Commission guide to voting](https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/2019.119%20Guide%20to%20voting%202019_2.pdf) which includes easy read information on the voting process and important dates for registration
* An additional guide [for people who support someone with a learning disability](https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/2019.119%20Guide%20to%20voting%202019_2.pdf), including flashcards and reminder cards to help prepare for voting

Nearly everyone who is of voting age is entitled to vote in the UK General Election. **But without your support, it is unlikely that all those people will be able to take up their right to vote.**If you are uncertain about how to go about this, the staff in your local NHS or council learning disability team will be happy to think with you about how best to support your client to engage in this important part of being in our society.

Yours sincerely,