Supporting someone to vote

It is a basic human right to vote.

Autistic people, people with learning and physical disabilities and people who do not have mental capacity all have the right to vote. **Lack of mental capacity is not a legal incapacity to vote.**

In order to vote people we support must be on the Electoral Register. They must register by 18th June 2024.

Staff should encourage people they support to take an interest in the voting system and the main parties. Party political broadcasts or leaflets can be used to generate discussion about what the party stands for and what they say they will do, if they are elected. This is particularly important when the person supported has an interest in a particular issue – if they have an understanding of what the various political parties say on the subject, they can make an informed decision.

The decision as to how to vote at an election **must be made by the person themselves** and not by someone else on their behalf. Someone who might ordinarily make other decisions on the person's behalf may not make decisions regarding who the person votes for.

However, in order to vote for someone it is not necessary to have an understanding of what the parties stand for - it is fine for someone to vote for a personality rather than their party policies.

A person with a learning disability can ask someone to help them cast their vote. The person helping the voter with a learning disability must be either a "qualified elector" that is someone able to vote at that election or be a close relative who is at least 18 years old. Qualified electors are not allowed to assist more than two voters with disabilities at the same election.

The presiding officer at the polling station can also offer assistance.

How a person casts their vote will be very individual to them. As a supporter you should use the person's communication and decision making profile to help the person to cast their vote.

One example of how this could work is the supporter telling the person supported what the parties and politicians are, and asking them who they want to vote for, then supporting them to make their mark if necessary.

If the person has no understanding of the process or political parties they can still vote. For example, the supporter could show the person the page where they have to cast their vote and ask them to put a cross wherever they want to.

People we support can find out where to go to vote, and about disabled access by asking Electoral Services at their local council. If they are registered to vote, they should also receive a polling card with their local polling station address on it.