

Access to Politics Toolkit

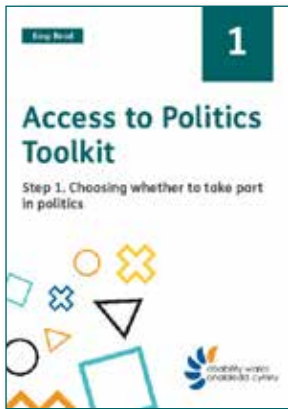
Step 1. Choosing whether to take part in politics



About this booklet



This is an Easy Read version of: **Access to Politics Toolkit – Stage 1. Deciding Whether to Get Involved in Politics.**



This part of the toolkit is about:

- The different ways to take part.
- Why your experiences and skills matter.
- Barriers and the support you can get.
- Building confidence and doing things in your own time.



You might need help to read it. You can ask someone you know to help you.

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Choosing whether to take part in politics



This part of the toolkit is about helping you decide if politics is right for you.



Getting involved in politics can feel exciting and empowering.



It can also feel scary and overwhelming – there is lots to understand.



This step will help you understand what you need to know. And help you make your own choice.

Different roles in politics



There are lots of ways to get involved in politics.



Different roles need different amounts of time and energy.



Some roles come with lots of responsibility.



You do not need to aim for the highest or most senior roles.



Aim for a role that feel comfortable and right for you.



Many disabled people start with smaller, local roles.



And focus on the issues most important to them.

Community or Town Councillor



A councillor is someone chosen - or elected, by local people.



This is often the first step into working in politics.



Councillors are volunteers. This means they do not usually get paid.



Meetings usually happen once a month.



Changes or **reasonable adjustments** can be made to meet your needs.

County Councillor



County councillors help make decisions about local services and **budgets**.



A **budget** is a plan showing how money is spent.



It is a bigger job role than a town or community councillor.



Councillors deal with issues brought to them by local people.

Senedd Member or Member of Parliament



Members of the Senedd and Members of Parliament are politicians who make up **Parliament**.



Parliament oversees the work of the government, makes laws, and agrees how money and taxes are spent.



These roles are usually full-time. These roles have a lot of responsibility.



Disabled people should get **reasonable adjustments** to support them in these roles. **Reasonable adjustments** are changes that help disabled people to take part.

Other ways to get involved



- You could volunteer for a political party.



- You could help organise events and campaigns.



- You could volunteer as a disability officer – standing up for disabled people's issues.



- You can stand up for local issues and speak up for people.



These roles will give you lots of experience without the pressure of being in an official role.

Your skills and experience matter



Disabled people bring important skills and knowledge into politics, like:



- Understanding how **policies** affect people's everyday lives.



A **policy** is a plan guiding decisions and actions.



- Strong problem-solving skills, after years of overcoming **barriers**.



- Understanding unfair treatment and **inequality** very well.



Inequality means people are not treated fairly or equally.



- Experience speaking up for yourself and others.



Many people worry they are not good enough or experienced enough at first.



This can be worse for disabled people, because they face a lot of barriers.



This is not your fault. Having doubts does not mean politics is not right for you.



Politics is not good at including disabled people.



There is support for you. You do not need to do it alone.

Barriers



Politics does not fully include disabled people. Many disabled people face barriers like:



- Meetings or information that you cannot easily understand.



- No support from your political party.



- Tiredness, pain or mental health problems.



- Worries about money and benefits.



- Not knowing who to ask for help.



These **barriers** are not your fault. You can ask for **reasonable adjustments** – changes that help you take part.

Choosing what is right for you

Think about:



- Your health.



- Your energy.



- What support you need.



- Your other responsibilities, like work and family.

You could start to get involved in politics by:



- Watching meetings and learning quietly.



- Answering **consultations** and sharing your **views online**.

A **consultation** asks people for opinions before decisions are made.



- Volunteering on a **campaign**.

A **campaign** is the work you do to win votes and share your ideas.



- Following someone who does a role you want. Watching and learning from how they do it.



You can do more or less, depending on how you feel.



Take time to think before you get involved in politics.



Ask yourself:

- Why you want to take part.
- What barriers worry you the most.
- What support would you need.
- Who could support you if the work became too hard.



It can help to talk to:

- Other disabled politicians.

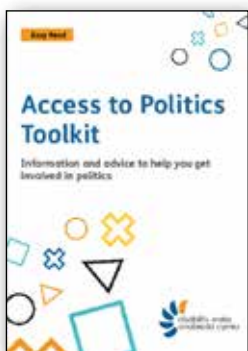


- Disabled party members.

- People with similar experiences.



- People who support disabled people.



Check our **Useful Contacts** section in **booklet 1**, for where you can get advice and support.

Benefits and money



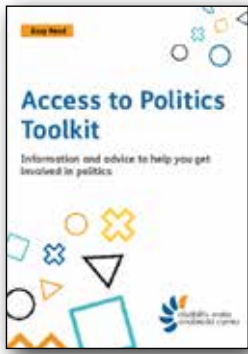
Many disabled people worry that getting involved in politics will impact their benefits.



PIP is not affected by working or volunteering. It is based on your support needs.



Community Councillor roles are volunteer roles. So, they may not affect benefits. But it is good to get advice first.



Check our **Useful Contacts** section in **booklet 1**, for where you can get advice.



You should not feel ashamed or guilty for having support. Your experience is really important in politics.

Your first steps



- Write down the reasons why you want to take part in politics.



- Think about what changes you want to see, and what issues you care about.



- Read through this toolkit in your own time.



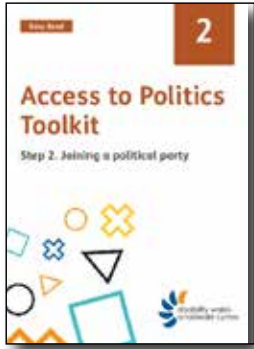
- Look at different ways to get involved and different roles online.



- Go to a meeting to watch what happens.



You do not need to be sure before doing these things.



When you are ready, **Step 2** will help you choose and join a political party. And think about different options.

More information



To find out more contact **Kat Watkins**, the Access to Politics Project Officer:



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