

Access to Politics Toolkit

Step 6. If you win the election



About this booklet



This is an Easy Read version of: **Access to Politics Toolkit – Stage 6. If You Are Elected.**



This part of the toolkit is about:

- Your induction.
- Getting your reasonable adjustments.
- Managing your work.
- Working with people.
- Money and benefits.



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

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Your 1st week in office



Being elected is a big achievement.



The first few weeks can feel overwhelming, exciting, and confusing.

Your induction

Most councils or parliaments will give new members:



- An induction programme – a written plan of what to do and training for your new role.



- An introduction to officers and teams.



- Training.



- Information about how the party is run and what you are responsible for.



- Equipment like a laptop and phone, and an office.



Induction programmes can be difficult for disabled people. You can ask:



- How training is done – for example, is it online, will there be breaks.



- How much time you can have to get through the induction.



- When it will happen, for example in the daytime or evening.



- How long sessions will be.



- To get documents in different formats, like Easy Read.



You should not be expected to understand everything straight away.

Reasonable adjustments



You have the right to **reasonable adjustments** – changes to make taking part easier for you.

Reasonable adjustments can include things like:

Meetings



- Taking part online instead of in person.



- Extra speaking time.



- Seats that are easy to get to, and close to the door.



- Printed papers or online copies.



- Breaks during long meetings.



- Easily accessible toilets.



- Quiet rooms or changes to lighting and sound.

Workplace



- Assistants or support workers.



- Different working hours.



- Accessible travel.



- Taking part in different ways.



- Working from home days.

Work



- Signing documents online.



- Voting on things from home.



- Different ways to suggest ideas or ask questions.



- Support with communication when you are working in the community.



You are not asking for favours. You have the right to be included.

Working with staff



Getting on well with staff will help.

Clerks



Clerks work in the office and deal with paperwork and admin.



Some clerks:

- Have a lot of knowledge and are supportive.
- Understand the Equality Act.
- Know how to make reasonable adjustments.



Others:

- Do not have much experience.
- Do not have much confidence working with disabled people.
- Give wrong information.
- Have never worked with disabled councillors or members before.

Setting out best ways of working



- Share your reasonable adjustments – you can use the **Personal Development Form** in this toolkit.



- Ask for a meeting to talk about reasonable adjustments.



- Ask for the plan for your reasonable adjustments to be written down.



- Make sure everyone's roles and responsibilities are clear from the start.



- Ask who to contact if there are problems.

If there are any problems getting reasonable adjustments, you can:



- Write down the issues so you have a record.



- Explain the issues to the **monitoring officer** – they work for the council and make sure the council follows the law.



- Take it further if the issue is not dealt with. Talk to group leaders or senior staff.



- Speak with other disabled politicians for advice.



You do not have to face these issues alone.

Managing your work and energy

Choose what to focus on



You do not have to go to every meeting and event.
You do not have to reply to every email straight away.

Focus on:



- Your specific duties and tasks. And things you must do by law.



- Committee meetings that match your strengths.



- Issues where your life experience can make a difference.



- Work you can keep doing without affecting your health.

Rules you can set for yourself



- Only go to meetings where you can join online if needed.



- Block out rest days.



- Do not reply to emails after officer hours.



- Limit how many evening events you do.



- Give tasks to other staff when possible.



- Plan extra rest when work is very busy.

Dealing with unfair treatment



Unfortunately, many disabled politicians face unfair treatment.

Common issues



- Being underestimated – people thinking you do not have the skills to do your job.



- Being left out of **informal networking** – chances to build useful relationships with people during things like coffee breaks or events.



- Being told “This is how we have always done it”.



- The people you work with ignoring your support needs.



- Pressure to work too much.



- Comments by the public or media about your impairment.



- People assuming you cannot do the role.

Dealing with issues



- Write down any issues and what happened. So you have a record.



- Let your group leader know about any issues.



- Get support from supportive co-workers.



- Make a formal complaint where needed.



- Get advice and guidance from peer networks.



- Make sure people know the rules you set yourself. For example, not replying to emails out of office hours.



You are not the problem. The way things work does not always include disabled people.

Working in your community



When you are elected, people choose you to represent them.

Your community may expect you to:



- Give advice and guidance.



- Support casework – helping people with issues they are having with public services.



- Go to events.



- Reply to them quickly.



- Be out and about in the community.



You are allowed to do this in a way that fits you as a disabled person.

You can do things like:



- Hold online surgeries – time where you meet local people and listen to their issues.



- Work on people's issues over email.



- Set times for phone calls.



- Go to events in the daytime instead of evenings.



- Record videos to give updates.



- Use social media like Facebook, to talk to people.



- Give tasks to staff or volunteers.



You do not need to be everywhere all the time.

It is more important that you think carefully about:



- What you do to make the biggest difference.



- What is right for you.



- What really matters.



- How you communicate with people.

Benefits and money



If you are in a paid role, it may impact some of your benefits.

Remember:



- PIP is not affected by paid work or elected office.



- Community council roles are voluntary. They may not affect benefits.



- Get specialist benefit advice for paid elected roles.



You deserve support while representing your community.

Support from other disabled politicians



Peer support is really important.



Peer support is support from people in similar situations to you.



Peers support can offer ideas and advice. And it can be a safe space to be honest and share experiences.

You can:



- Join informal peer groups.



- Join messaging groups for disabled councillors or candidates.



- Connect with other disabled people in politics across Wales.



You are not alone.

Planning for the future

You can have a long-lasting political career by:



- Checking your support needs often.



- Changing how much work you do to take care of your health.



- Getting ongoing training.



- Giving work to others.



- Using technology to make things easier.



- Taking breaks between elections.



- Looking after your health and wellbeing first.



There is no 1 way to “be a politician”.



You are helping to change what leadership looks like.



Being elected is not the end, it is the start of your impact.



Disabled people need to be in political office to share their experiences and make life better for everyone.



Your voice is powerful, needed, and important.

More information



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



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