**Local Elections 2018**

**Information for Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations**

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**Introduction**

The 2018 Local Government Elections will take place on **Thursday 3 May 2018.**

This is an important opportunity for Deaf and Disabled people to get our voices heard in the areas where we live.

This is especially the case given today’s economic and political climate where political decisions are having a direct and dramatic impact on the day to day lives of Deaf and Disabled people:

* In 2016 the United Nations disability committee found evidence of grave and systematic violations of Disabled people’s rights by the UK Government, then in August 2017 they told government representatives that never in the history of the committee have they been as worried about a country as they are about the UK today.
* Though less than 20% of the population Disabled people, or families with a Disabled member, now make up half of all people in poverty.
* Huge cuts to social care and independent living support are undermining Disabled people’s human rights, dignity, well-being and ability to participate in and contribute to society.

Even in times of recession and with huge cuts in central government funding Local Councils can still make a choice about how and where they spend money and where cuts are made.

Some of the issues examined by the UN disability committee are the responsibility of national government but others, for example independent living and social care support, are within the remit of local authorities. Councils can also lobby national government to change policy that is negatively impacting on their residents.

Local elections provide a good opportunity to raise awareness of priority issues for Deaf and Disabled people. They can also be used to achieve real change.

In the 2014 Local Elections, the Disabled people’s campaign group Hammersmith and Fulham Coalition Against Cuts secured commitments from the Labour party who were then in opposition. They pledged to abolish all home care charging and to ring-fence support for former recipients of the Independent Living Fund. Since winning the local election, the new Labour Council went on to honour all these pledges. Hammersmith and Fulham is now the only borough in London not to charge for social care support.

Polls – which can be wrong of course – are suggesting that there could be some major changes in which parties are controlling Councils in London. With more hotly contested elections there is more chance to get key election pledges from parties.

London Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations have a key role to play in:

* Making sure that Deaf and Disabled people in their area know about the elections, are registered to vote and use their vote on May 3.
* Bringing together local Deaf and Disabled people to use the elections to lobby for real change and improvements.

**How the local elections work**

In London, ‘all out’ elections take place every four years. This means that in 32 of the 33 London boroughs, every council seat is up for election on the same day. (The City of London operates different arrangements and its last local elections were in March 2017).

Boroughs are divided up into areas called wards. In each ward, local residents can cast votes for as many council seats as there are being contested. You can vote for candidates all from one party, a mix of parties, or independent councillors who are not joined to any political party.

In 28 of the 32 boroughs, the leader of the council is normally decided by the political party group with the most council seats. In the other four, Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, and Tower Hamlets, there is a directly elected Mayor. This means in addition to voting for their local wards Councillors, local residents also vote directly for who leads the council.

**Registering to Vote**

To vote in the local and Mayoral elections [you must be registered to vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote) by midnight on Tuesday 17 April and be:

* aged 18 or over
* a resident in the London borough
* a British, Commonwealth, Irish or EU citizen.

To register to vote, go to: <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

You can also register by post. There are voter register forms you can print out in different formats including easy read and large print here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voter-registration-forms-paper-versions>

Anyone can apply for a postal vote – you don’t need a special reason for wanting one. To apply for a postal vote go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-postal-vote>

If you are unable to vote in person you can get someone to vote for you, and tell them who to vote for. This is called a proxy vote. To apply for a proxy vote go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proxy-voting-application-forms>

**Key Dates**

9 April (4pm) – publication of the names of who is standing for election

17 April (midnight) - Deadline for voter registration.

18 April (5pm) - Deadline for receipt of postal vote applications.

25 April - Deadline for receipt of proxy vote applications. (A proxy vote is where someone else votes on your behalf in the polling station).

3 May - **Polling day (polling stations open 7am–10pm)**

3 May (5pm) - Deadline to receive emergency proxy vote applications. (This is where a person applies for someone else to vote on their behalf due to an emergency occurring whereby they cannot go to the polling station in person).

3 May (5pm) - Deadline for reissuing replacement postal votes (in person).

4 May (from 9am) - Election count.

4 May - Publication of election results.

**How DDPOs can engage in the local elections**

Deaf and Disabled people face barriers to finding out about, and taking part in, elections. Engaging in democracy is an important part of citizenship as well as giving Deaf and disabled people a voice in society.

DDPOs therefore have an important role to play in ensuring that local Deaf and Disabled people:

* Know that elections taking are place, what those elections are for and how to vote
* Have access to information about the different political parties and candidates that are standing for election
* Are able to ask candidates and political parties about where they stand on the issues that are important to Deaf and Disabled people

Examples of how DDPOS can do this:

* Information about the election in newsletters and on websites
* Supporting members to register to vote
* Asking each of the parties standing locally for accessible versions of their manifestos
* Writing to each of the parties to ask about their policies on issues that are important to local Deaf and Disabled people and disseminating the responses to members
* Asking local parties to sign up to pledges and make election promises on the issues most important to members
* Holding hustings events where members can ask questions and raise issues with candidates from all the main political parties

It is not appropriate for DDPOs to advise anyone on how to vote or to show a preference for or against a particular political party – for more information on Charity Commission rules on this see: <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/media/94387/cc9text.pdf>

It is however important to give Deaf and disabled people the information and support they need to play an equal role in society including engagement in the democratic process.

Elections are also a chance for DDPOs to raise awareness among politicians of the key issues that are important to Deaf and Disabled people locally. If you have the capacity to hold hustings events, these are a good way to do this. If not, or in addition, you can write to all the parties who are standing candidates to ask what their position is on different issues that are important to your members. You can then make the responses available to your members so they have more information on which to decide how to use their vote.

In the next section we have drafted some suggested questions you could use.

For more information about inclusive education and accessible transport in the local elections please contact:

* The Alliance for Inclusive Education: <https://www.allfie.org.uk/>
* Transport for All: <http://www.transportforall.org.uk/>

**Suggested Questions for Parties standing in the Local Elections**

**Key Question:**

**Will you commit to carrying out a cumulative impact assessment of welfare and tax changes and public spending cuts implemented since 2010 on residents of this borough?** The Equality and Human Rights Commissions promotes CIAs as good practice. Without assessing the cumulative picture, equality impact assessments of individual policy measures are limited in accuracy.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Additional suggested questions:**

* What will you do to increase the volume of genuinely affordable and accessible social housing in this Borough and will you ensure the Disabled Facilities Grant is increased to reflect rise costs since 2008?
* How will you support Disabled residents left with no income as a result of benefit changes, delays, and sanctions?
* What measures will you put in place to ensure that there is enough local advice and information available for benefit claimants impacted by the roll out of Universal credit and that this is accessible to Deaf and Disabled people with a range of communication support needs?
* Charging for social care is a tax on Disabled people that is forcing more and more Disabled people to go without essential support. Hammersmith &Fulham Council has stopped this unfair charge – will you do the same?
* Cuts to social care funding are undermining Disabled people’s dignity, independence, choice and control. How will you ensure social care support needs of local Disabled people are met?
* What will you do to increase the provision of Changing Places toilets to increase Disabled people’s access to the community?[[2]](#footnote-2)
* How will you tackle hate crime and harassment experienced by Deaf and Disabled people in this borough?
* How will you ensure all mainstream schools within the LA area are fully inclusive and do not discriminate against Disabled pupils and students?
* How will you ensure that local transport planning takes into account the needs and views of local Deaf and Disabled people?
* How will you improve Council engagement with Deaf and Disabled people, ensuring that consultations and council meetings are accessible to us?
* How will you work with and support the work of local Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations (DDPOs)? DDPOs are organisations that are fully run and controlled by Deaf and Disabled people.

For more information, contact:

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**2014 London Council Election Results**

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| **Council** | **2014 Result** |
| Barking and Dagenham | Labour |
| Barnet | Conservative |
| Bexley | Conservative |
| Brent | Labour |
| Bromley | Conservative |
| Camden | Labour |
| Croydon | Labour |
| Ealing | Labour |
| Enfield | Labour |
| Greenwich | Labour |
| Hackney | Labour |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | Labour |
| Haringey | Labour |
| Harrow | Labour |
| Havering | No overall control |
| Hillingdon | Conservative |
| Hounslow | Labour |
| Islington | Labour |
| Kensington and Chelsea | Conservative |
| Kingston upon Thames | Conservative |
| Lambeth | Labour |
| Lewisham | Labour |
| Merton | Labour |
| Newham | Labour |
| Redbridge | Labour |
| Richmond upon Thames | Conservative |
| Southwark | Labour |
| Sutton | Liberal Democrat |
| Tower Hamlets | Labour |
| Waltham Forest | Labour |
| Wandsworth | Conservative |
| Westminster | Conservative |

1. Liverpool City Council published interim findings of the CIA they are undertaking: <http://liverpool.gov.uk/media/1356086/liverpool-welfare-reform-cumulative-impact-analysis_interim-report_final-versionweb.pdf>

   The Equality and Human Rights Commission published their cumulative impact assessment of welfare and tax reforms in March 2018: <http://liverpool.gov.uk/media/1356086/liverpool-welfare-reform-cumulative-impact-analysis_interim-report_final-versionweb.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more information about Changing Places toilets, see: <http://www.changing-places.org/the_campaign/what_are_changing_places_toilets_.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)