



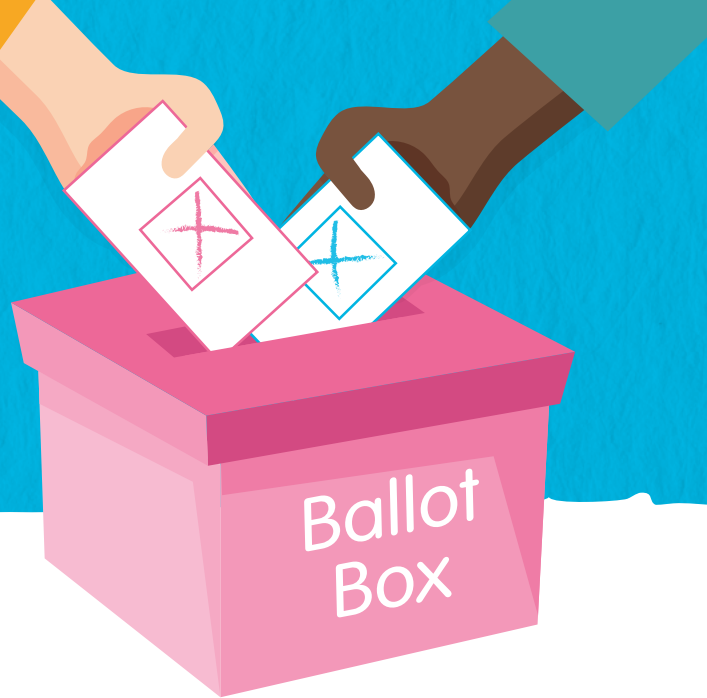
Promoting Our Voting

A guide to supporting
people to vote

Produced alongside our Quality Advisors



Welcome to our guide!



At Community Integrated Care our mission is to empower people to live the best lives possible.

A big part of this comes in ensuring the people we support understand their rights, are able to express their views and are supported to play an active role in their local communities.

That's why we encourage our colleagues to promote voting in Local and National Elections. We want our people to make informed decisions on whether or not they want to vote - and who they want to vote for.

To help our people understand the importance of voting, we worked closely with some of our Quality Advisors to develop this guide. Quality Advisors are people we support who are trained and employed by Community Integrated Care as 'experts by experience.' They give us valuable insights into our services from the perspectives of people who use them.

To help with developing this guide, some of our Quality Advisors got together during a fun and creative workshop to consider how politics affects their lives and how people can be better supported to vote. We hope this guide provides some useful insights for Support Workers, Carers and family members in empowering people to take part in elections.

Can everyone vote?

Supporting people who access care and support to vote can be complex. Voting requires people to make an independent choice about which party they think should lead in a local area or nationally. This means people need to understand what voting means, what the different parties and representatives stand for and the effects of casting their vote.

Voting is a more complex choice than other day-to-day decisions, and some people might not have the capacity to make this type of decision independently.

If you're unsure, a meeting with a person's family and friends may help you understand whether or not this is the case for the person you support.

Other people we support can make independent choices and have the capacity to understand the election, if they are given support, advice and encouragement. This guide focusses on supporting people who are able to take part, and offers some tips on how they can be encouraged and enabled to vote if they choose to.

Why does politics matter?

Politics really does matter! During the workshop our Quality Advisors came up with a really long list of political issues that are important to them and other people in the country. It covered everything from funding for care and support to affordable housing; public transport to benefits; training and education to NHS waiting times.

Everyone had different views on which issues were most important. This reminded us that we all have our own perspectives on how our country should be run and why it is important to vote.

In many ways, we felt that the lives of people who access care and support are affected more by political decisions, because people with support needs often access public services regularly.



Why do people have the right to vote?

According to our Quality Advisors, voting is a very important right because:

- The views and experiences of people who live with disabilities matter.
- It is an important part of contributing to our local and national community.
- As individuals, we all have issues that we think are important. Voting allows us to pick the political party that we think will best address them.
- It is exciting and means that we are joining with millions of other people in a national event.

Our Quality Advisors felt strongly that if people aren't supported to know about the election and how they can take part in it, they are being deprived of an important right.



"We began our workshop by asking ourselves what we would change if we were Prime Minister for the day. I said that I would want more accessible transport, because there often isn't space on buses for me in my wheelchair. We realised that there are lots of things that we would like to see change in our country and local community and that's why it matters that we vote."

Jamie



"We learned that people who access care and support are much less likely to vote than the rest of the country. We think that this might mean that their views aren't represented and that politicians won't respond to the things that matter to them."

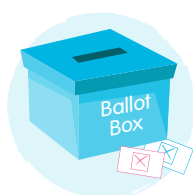
Sushma

How can people be supported to vote?

The first step to supporting someone to vote is simple - they need to be registered to vote first. If they are voting in person, they will also need to ensure they have a valid photo ID or a free Voter Authority Certificate. You can find out more information on registration deadlines by [clicking here](#).



Informing people about voting and politics



Let the person know that they can vote

Before supporting people to vote, we first need to ensure they understand their rights and know when the election is happening.

You can explain voting to the person in whatever way is most accessible to them and suitable to their communication style. It's a good idea to let people know in good time, and explain that they don't need to make a decision right away. You want to ensure people don't feel under pressure to make a decision.



Make politics an everyday conversation

It takes time for everyone to understand politics and what the different political parties and representatives stand for. Find ways to make the election relevant and interesting. A good idea might be to talk about voting in relation to what's happening on the news or when you're using a public service - like taking a bus or visiting the GP.



Involve loved ones

Often the people who know and love a person the most, their family and friends, know what is important to them and how best to communicate with them. Think about how you can involve them in discussions and planning about voting.



Supporting people to make a decision



Make voting person-centred

To help people make decisions about voting you must understand them first. Using someone's care and support plan or one page profile is a really good starting point. They tell us what is important to a person, which may help you identify the issues that matter to them most. They also describe how a person likes to be supported, so can offer really clear guidance on ways to make voting accessible to them.

Also think about talking to the people who have the closest relationship to the person being supported – they'll likely know which issues and public services are important to them, and have the skills to support the person to decide if they want to get involved in the election.



Get to know the local candidates

Before the election, many candidates contact local people – perhaps by posting leaflets explaining their policies or by knocking door-to-door and meeting them (this is sometimes called canvassing).

If a leaflet arrives from a local party, don't just throw it in the bin – share it like you would do any other piece of mail for that person. If required, spend some time explaining the content of that leaflet in a way that is most understandable to the individual.

People who access support should always be included in meetings that are about them – a visit from a local candidate is no different. If a candidate visits the home of someone you support when canvassing local people, enable the person you support to meet them, if they wish to.

There are other ways to meet local MPs too – like at local surgeries or public meetings they might hold in the build up to the election. Local newspapers and the websites of candidates can also give you a good sense of what they plan to offer to your local community.



Stay neutral

Person-centred support is about helping people to make their own informed choices – this is naturally the same when it comes to voting too!

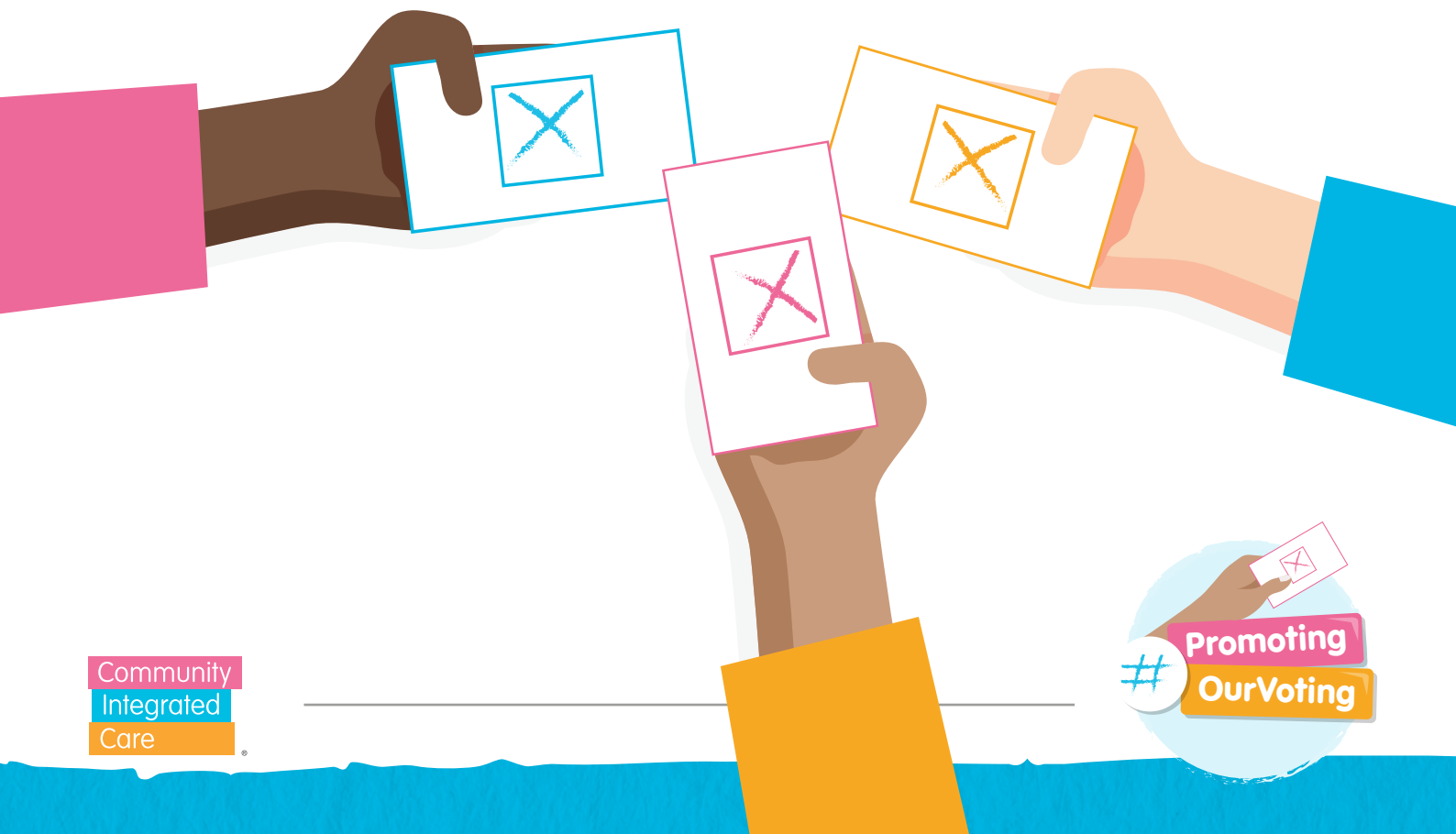
It can be really difficult to talk about politics, especially issues we are very passionate about, without sharing our own opinions. Try to give people a balanced sense of what the different parties stand for, rather than sharing your own personal views.

Discussing politics in groups might be a good way to ensure that the people we support receive balanced advice and understand different perspectives.



Don't influence others

You might not personally be interested in politics - that's fine! Whether it's of interest to you or not, what's key is that people are aware of it and have the information they need to make their own decisions. Voting is a right and it is important that the people we support make up their own minds about whether they want to take part.





Supporting people to vote



Plan with the person

The people we support should plan their own lives around the things they want to do. If a person you support wants to vote, work with them to consider how this can be planned into their day best - what time they would like to vote, how they would like to vote and who they would like to support them.



Decide the best way to vote

There are different ways that people can cast their ballot: in person, by post, or through a nominated person (known as a 'proxy'). To find out more about these and registration deadlines **click here**.

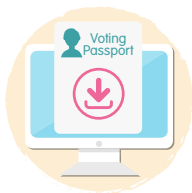
Some people will enjoy the excitement of visiting a polling station, meeting people and putting their 'X' next to the name of the person they want to vote for. Others will enjoy the convenience and simplicity of voting by post. For some people a proxy vote might be best, for instance if they aren't being supported on the day of the election – if they choose this method, make sure that someone they really trust has this responsibility.



Practice voting

The thought of going to the polling office and casting a vote might make people feel anxious.

It might be a good idea to walk people through the process before you go and explain what they will need to do in steps. You can even download a **practice voting card** that people can do a trial run on before the real election!



Download a voting passport

The voting experience can feel alienating for people with support needs. For example, they might feel nervous about social interactions or being in an enclosed space to vote.

If this is the case, it might be a good idea to download a **voting passport** for the person. This is something you can fill out together before going to the polling office, that tells people a bit more about them - their personal preferences and specific needs. This can be presented to staff at the polling station to ensure staff understand any additional support they might prefer - such as someone accompanying them or marking the paper for them.





Thank you!

Voting is a fundamental right for everyone in the UK, so it's important that we take every step to enable the people we support to have their say in the local and general elections. Of course, like all of us, the people we support can choose not to vote – and that's their right too! What's most important is that they can make an informed choice about whether they want to take part.

Remember, the Local Election takes place on **Thursday 4th May 2023**.

Registration closes on **Monday 17th April**.

To vote in person, a valid photo ID is required.

The deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate is Tuesday 25th April.

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