

How to campaign

A guide for people with learning disabilities



Disability, Rights and Politics group

Supported by Brent Mencap

The story of our group



In 2010 we heard stories in the news about cuts to our housing, cuts to our services, and cuts to our benefits.

We were very worried about this.

We started to find out the facts behind the headlines.

Then we found out how to speak up against these cuts.



We did a lot of campaigning since then.

We went to Parliament.

We went to our Council.

We spoke to our MP.

We went on marches.

Now people come and ask for our opinions.

We wanted to let you know what you can do to have your say.

This booklet and our DVD let you know how you can have a voice.



Your voice makes a difference.

One issue or many?

With so many changes going on it is hard to know where to start.

We decided to take on many different worries.

Some other groups choose to take on one single issue.



	Good things	Not so good things
		
One issue 	<p>It brings the group together.</p> <p>You can make a big effort and make a real difference.</p>	<p>Sometimes there is nothing you can do so the group gets bored.</p> <p>Not everyone is so interested in the one thing.</p>
Many issues 	<p>There are lots of campaigns to keep the group busy.</p> <p>You learn lots of new things.</p> <p>You meet new people.</p>	<p>It is hard to find the time to follow through on any one issue.</p> <p>There is never enough time to do everything.</p>



Decide what you want to do. What is the purpose of YOUR group?

How to run a campaign group



We meet at the same time every week.

We meet at the same place every week.

We have ground rules.

We share ideas with each other. We listen to each other.



We have a list of our worries and ideas.

The helper lets us know what campaigns are going on.

We choose what we will do.

We write up what we will do and when we will do it.



When we go to meet someone like our MP, we write our questions down, we practice asking our questions, we take our questions with us.



We learn as we go along.

We found some guides about how to campaign - like the Mencap guide 'Don't cut us out'.

We spend time planning in the group.

We invite people to talk to us.

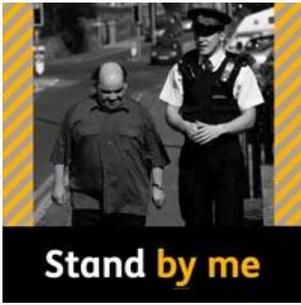
We go out campaigning.

There is no point just talking to ourselves.



Plan what to do - Go out and do it

One of our campaigns



We heard about the **Stand By Me** campaign to stop Disability Hate Crime

We got help to organise an event at the Town Hall.



Then we all went to ASDA and collected signatures on the petition. Our helper phoned the police Borough Commander to ask him to come to accept the petition. We also sent an e-mail. The police did not seem very keen, but we kept on asking him until they came.



We let the local newspaper know he was coming so we got the news into the paper.



The Borough Commander agreed to put a police promise up in all the police stations. Then we asked if we could come and speak to his police officers. He agreed to let us come into Wembley police station to let them all know about the campaign.

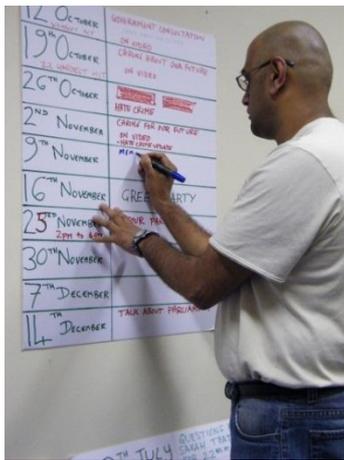
The police have become much more helpful.

We need to plan our next step so more people know about Disability Hate Crime.

When you start a campaign don't give up.



Get support for your group



We need help to get organised.

We use a room at Brent Mencap, but you could meet anywhere, like a community centre.

Someone at Brent Mencap gives us help every week so that we can meet regularly.



The helper could be paid or could be a volunteer.

Your helper does not need to be an expert in politics.

The helper used websites and sent e-mails.

The helper helped us to write letters.

The helper listened to what we had to say.

We found out who to speak to about our worries.

The helper showed us how to campaign

Now we can do more things on our own.



Ask for help to keep the group going.

Some ideas for your helper

- Don't worry if you have never done this before – you will learn as you go along.
- Find out what the group members are concerned about and start campaigning from there.
- This could be about what people have heard in the news, or a service that has been cut.
- Keep the agenda live and active - always have actions researched – things to do.
- Having regular meetings and events helps the group to gel and have a clear identity.
- Help the group to focus on their chosen campaigns – it is easy to drift onto other things.
- Having food as part of the meetings makes it a nice experience to keep coming back to.
- Having clear group rules helps with any difficult situations.
- Patience, tolerance and empathy are helpful qualities for the group helper.
- This group meets for 2 ½ hours but you also need time to research, set up meetings, send e-mails, support people to get to places. So you might need 7 hours a week.
- Have a back up if you can't make it – maybe a volunteer.
- Contact other like-minded issue groups who will welcome your campaign or project.
- Think local as well as national - think what difference a campaign can make.
- As this group says - Don't give up – just being heard and seen can make a difference.
- Check who is already working on the group's issue and think what they can add to their work.
- Social media can advertise events, link with other groups and share related news – but can the group access it?
- Personal stories are very powerful so use them whenever possible – but make sure it is safe for the person.
- Always get consent before using photos and stories.
- The campaign group will only be effective if the members 'own' the issues – it is not about the helper's agenda.
- Make a start somewhere, and you will soon get the idea of what campaigns are going on.
- You could start with the Mencap campaign website <http://www.mencap.org.uk/campaigns>
- Contact your nearest Mencap Regional Campaigns Officer for support. They might give materials, ideas or time.
- Allow the group to learn, grow and develop. This group started with their worries and no real idea what could be done, so they needed a lot of teaching and support. Tools like writing their questions down allowed them to focus their questioning when meeting decision makers. As they gained practical experience their confidence grew. This group has evolved into setting up their own events and inviting people, going to their MPs on their own, and supporting group members who cannot travel independently to get to outside events. The support the helper offers needs to change as their abilities increase.
- It is all about the group and its individual members finding their own voice.



Show this to people when you ask for help.

What we did



We kept asking the police to help stop Disability Hate Crime.



We went to the Town Hall to find out how the Council works. We met the Mayor.



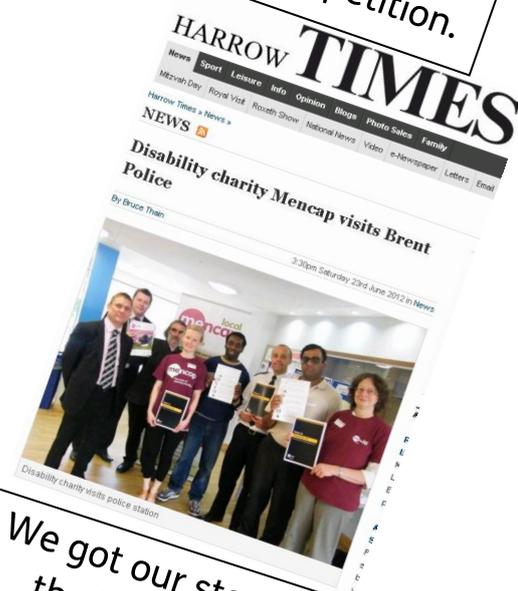
We got out on the streets and collected over 1000 signatures on our petition.



We went to our MP's office. And we met our councillors.



We joined others on the Hardest Hit march to Parliament.



We got our stories in the local paper.

There are lots of ways to have your voice heard.

What we did



At first we were scared to go on marches. The news showed lots of violence.

But it is not like that. We have been on lots of marches. They are very well organised and very safe.

It gives you a louder voice along with thousands of other people.



My name is Jential. I am a member of the Disability, Rights and Politics group. I lobbied at the Houses of Parliament. I wanted to see Sarah Teather. Sarah Teather is the Liberal Democrat MP for Brent. She is my Member of Parliament.

I wanted to say hello to her. I wanted to talk to her about signing up to support people with learning disabilities – the 'Agreeing Together' campaign.

I also wanted to talk about Disability Hate Crime – the 'Stand By Me' campaign.

She was not there, but one of her colleagues was there. I had to ring up Sarah Teather's office and make an appointment. I also sent an e-mail to Omar who is the case worker for Sarah Teather. It is my right to speak to my MP and tell them what I am worried about.

So I got an appointment in June. I went on my own. I wrote down the questions I wanted to ask. I also gave her information booklets. She said that she will think about signing up to 'Agreeing Together'. I will send her another e-mail to ask what she decided to do about this.

She wrote an article in the local paper to let people know about our campaign against Hate Crime. She said she contacted Government Ministers to make sure that as many police forces as possible sign up in support.

I had never spoken to my MP before. It was worth doing because she took some action to support us.



It is important that people know what you are worried about.

What makes our group work?



We meet lots of different people, like MPs and councillors.

We enjoy meeting as a group.

We enjoy learning new things.

We go out to new places.

We choose the campaigns that we want to join.

We do things well.

We all have the right to speak up.

We have something to eat.



We talk about what we will do.

We don't always agree, so we vote to decide.

We join other campaigns and groups.

We organise big meetings and invite other groups.

We are stronger together.



It feels good when your MP listens to you – so go and speak to them.

The problems we faced



Sometimes people did not get back to us to answer our questions.
Keep asking the same question until you get an answer.



Sometimes not many people came to the group.
Send out leaflets. Put up posters. Tell your friends about the group.



We were not sure if our voice makes a difference.

If you speak up then people know what you are worried about.



We might not be taken seriously because we have learning disabilities.

Show that you are capable. Make a good impression.



KEEP GOING!

DON'T GIVE UP!

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Thanks to Photosymbols
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**You can have
a voice
too!**

