



# Scope's Guide to Engaging Disabled People

Scope wants to make our society the first where disabled people achieve full equality. To achieve this goal, disabled people need to be represented at all levels including local councils.

**You** can play a vital role in helping to remove the barriers and obstacles that prevent many disabled people becoming actively involved in political life and encourage more disabled people to stand as candidates in 2010.

Time to get equal

scope

About cerebral palsy.  
For disabled people achieving equality.

- **Disabled people make up approximately 1 in 5 of London's population. However, the number of Councillors in London who describe themselves as disabled people is in decline.**
- **Only 8.6% of Councillors in London describe themselves as disabled people. This compares with a national average of 10.9% and is almost half the number of disabled Councillors in the North East of England, where the figure is 16.1%.**

It is essential that disabled people play a full part in public and political life. There are simple and practical things that everyone can do to encourage disabled people to be more involved in community leadership.

This is vital, in order to dispel the perception which many disabled people have, that such roles are 'not for people like me.'

## **How to engage more disabled people in public and political life**

■ **Engage and involve:** In order to comply with the Disability Equality Duty, please ensure that your local authority informs disabled people about the full range of opportunities to get involved in public and political life at all levels. Disabled people should be given the opportunity to influence local policy decisions.

■ **Target your information:** It is crucial that local disabled people get information about becoming a local councillor and how to become involved in other community decision-making roles. Please ensure information is available to disabled people in easy-to-access formats. As a rule, all correspondence should be in a minimum of 12 points in a clear typeface like Arial. Your correspondence also needs to be available, upon request, in alternative formats like audio, large print, Braille or electronic text.

■ **Provide opportunities:** We believe that it is important to reserve places for disabled people on local decision-making bodies, so that disabled people can gain skills and experience. A good way to increase the skills of local disabled people is by Councils offering mentoring and shadowing opportunities, as well as training in public speaking and committee skills.

■ **Welcome disabled people:** Please encourage your political party to have guidance on selecting disabled candidates, and on making reasonable adjustments. Your party's selection mechanisms need to welcome disabled members. Events need to be held in easy-to-access locations. Party literature needs to be accessible and needs to include positive images of disabled people.

■ **Disability awareness:** Why not encourage your authority to run a programme of Disability Equality Training for members and officers, which will provide them with guidance on effective communication with disabled people. You can find out more about Disability Equality Training from our Business Development team on 020 7619 7725 or by email: [employmentservices@scope.org.uk](mailto:employmentservices@scope.org.uk)

■ **Access for all:** When you engage with local people, please make it easy to access by disabled residents. This includes making sure that your surgeries and other council meetings are held in accessible locations. You can find out more about access audits from our Business Development team on 020 7619 7725 or by email: [employmentservices@scope.org.uk](mailto:employmentservices@scope.org.uk)

■ **Going to the polls:** It is crucial to engaging disabled people in the democratic process, that all polling stations in your ward are fully accessible.

At the 2005 General Election, 66% of polling stations in London had one or more serious access barriers that could prevent a disabled voter from voting independently. (Nationally, the figure was 68%.)

All local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of their polling stations on a regular basis. Ask your electoral administration officer for the results of the polling station access review for your ward and why not ask them what is being done to improve accessibility.

For a polling station access checklist go to:  
[www.polls Apart.org.uk/docs/access\\_check.doc](http://www.polls Apart.org.uk/docs/access_check.doc)



## Like to know more?

To find out more or to get this document in other formats, please contact:

Scope  
Policy and Government Affairs  
6 Market Road  
London N7 9PW  
Telephone: 020 7619 7253  
Email: [policy@scope.org.uk](mailto:policy@scope.org.uk)

Scope's Time to get Equal campaign is raising awareness of the barriers of access and attitude faced by disabled people in everyday life.

To find out more about Scope's work, go to [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

For information and advice on cerebral palsy, disability issues and Scope's services, please contact Scope Response:

Tel: 0808 800 3333  
Email: [response@scope.org.uk](mailto:response@scope.org.uk)  
Text SCOPE followed by your message to 80039

You can support Scope's work in a number of ways by going to [www.scope.org.uk/support](http://www.scope.org.uk/support)

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