

Supporting Organisations and People with a Learning Disability



1

Build the capacity of supporting organisations to engage in networking processes to develop and maintain alliances with other key organisations and stakeholders. Use these alliances to facilitate a collective voice on issues of importance and invest in Research and Policy Officer posts within supporting organisations. These posts should be supported by ring-fenced funding and staff in these positions should be adequately trained and supported to lead on networking, consultation, advocacy, and research activities linked to supporting the involvement of people with a learning disability in policy development.



2

Develop outreach programmes for people with a learning disability across each jurisdiction and make specific efforts to involve those who are harder to reach (for example, due to rural location, complexity of need or non-engagement in formal services) by engaging in face-to-face discussion, collaborating with carers and developing smaller sub-groups within larger supporting organisations.



3

Provide opportunities for people with a learning disability to experience participation and advocacy in their own lives from an early stage so they can develop skills to engage in influencing policy. Schools, families and community groups play a key role in helping children and young people with a learning disability to learn how to share their voice and influence policy from an early age.



4

Co-produce workshops and accessible guides with people with a learning disability to help educate people with a learning disability about policy making processes, how best to influence policy and the impact of safeguarding policies and processes on the lives of people with a learning disability.



5

Allow time to influence policy and different stakeholders, and use easy read reports from policy makers on how influencing efforts have led to specific changes or developments in safeguarding policy to **maintain the interest** of people with a learning disability in policy engagement.



6

Supporting organisations can **empower people with a learning disability to share their stories** and develop ways for these individual stories to be collated with other forms of evidence (such as statistics and research findings) to present clear arguments on policy issues. Collaborations with academics and Research and Policy Officers can help facilitate the collation of these forms of evidence.



7

Engage in collaborative and participatory research in partnership with academics and other relevant stakeholders to develop the evidence base and promote research informed policy and practice.



8

When communicating key messages to different audiences, know their job role and **tailor information** to link with their policy making role whilst still using plain English and accessible forms of communication.



9

Get involved in campaigns on safeguarding issues to promote attention on core policy issues and raise awareness more generally. Alliances and networks established by Research and Policy Officers in supporting organisations could help to start such campaigns in response to the priorities or concerns of the people with a learning disability they support.



10

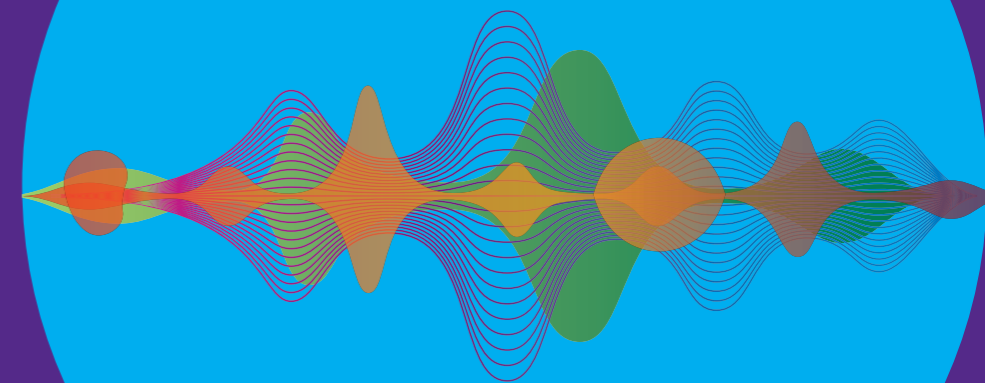
Provide training and support to develop the influencing skills and expertise of people with a learning disability to become members of policy advisory groups and to take part in formal policy meetings so their right to attend and participate in a range of policy forums is clear for all. This training and support should be embedded in services provided for children and young people with a learning disability in their schools and communities and in services for adults with a learning disability (for example, day centres and community based organisations) to develop the overall capacity of people with a learning disability to play a meaningful role in influencing policy.



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GETTING OUR VOICES HEARD



ACTION PLAN

FOR INVOLVING PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY IN SAFEGUARDING POLICY



In order to exercise equal citizenship, people with a learning disability should have choice, control, dignity and freedom in the same way as any other citizen.

We have developed a 10 point action plan for:
(A) Policymakers
(B) Supporting Organisations and People with a learning disability listed on the pages opposite.

Policymakers



1 Appoint a **Commissioner for People with Disabilities** in each jurisdiction who has responsibility to promote awareness of the rights of people with a disability (including learning disability) and encourage policy makers to actively promote the involvement of people with disabilities in all aspects of policy making.



2 Establish an **Advisory Group on Safeguarding People with Disabilities** with key responsibility to support the design, implementation and evaluation of effective safeguarding policies in partnership with people with a disability. Each jurisdiction will need to designate a Department with lead responsibility for this Advisory Group, however all Departments should work jointly with the Advisory Group. Membership of this Advisory Group should include people with a learning disability and relevant supporting organisations to facilitate their involvement from the outset of the policy making processes and throughout. The Advisory Group should be adequately resourced and supported and should be co-facilitated by people with a disability, including a person with a learning disability, to ensure people with a learning disability participate meaningfully in this process and have full opportunity to advise on, and influence, safeguarding policy. This Advisory group would play an integral role in ongoing policy processes and advise on the best approach to facilitate the influence of a wide range of people with a disability on policy development.



3 Establish **Policy Outreach Teams** to provide accessible training workshops for people with a learning disability on Government structures, policy processes and how to have an influence on laws and policies being made. Staff working in these policy outreach teams should be trained and experienced in working with people with a learning disability, and work in partnership with the Advisory Group to ensure their approach is accessible and meaningful.



4 Provide **learning disability awareness and equality training** for all political representatives to build their awareness so they are able to draw public attention to the policy priorities relevant to safeguarding people with a learning disability. Such training should be co-produced with people with a learning disability.



5 **Review and evaluate existing safeguarding policies** by gathering evidence from service providers, practitioners and people with a learning disability.



6 **Be proactive in further developing safeguarding policies** in partnership with people with a learning disability rather than responding only after concerns are identified.



7 Develop and deliver a **nationwide marketing strategy** to promote the engagement of people with a learning disability in society and in policy development. This strategy could include a media campaign using television, social media and the wide dissemination of marketing leaflets to raise awareness of how people with a learning disability can get involved and have their say. This strategy must also make specific efforts to involve harder to reach groups (for example, people with a learning disability who have complex needs, who live in rural areas and/or are not engaged in formal community services, and children and young people with a learning disability) through face-to-face discussion and direct contact, facilitated in collaboration with relevant supporting organisations and carers.



8 All policy related documents should be provided concurrently in both full text and an **easy read version** which is accessibly designed, covering all important information and clearly explaining the key points. People with a learning disability should be involved in writing and reviewing these easy read versions. In addition, any policy documents for the general public containing images of people should also include visuals of people with a learning disability to reinforce the expectation that they will be involved.



9 Policy consultation processes should allow **realistic timeframes** (preferably 12 weeks) for people with a learning disability to access easy read information and be supported to prepare an individual/collective response. Supporting organisations should be provided with financial support to facilitate effective consultation processes.



10 Build into policy making processes a stage for **reporting on impact** where policy makers must specify how they have accessed and considered the views of people with a learning disability and how these views have influenced policy. This report should be publicly available and available in an easy read version that is accessible for people with a learning disability so they can be updated on how their views have been heard and how they have influenced policy. A range of mechanisms could be used to disseminate information and updates on how people with a learning disability can and have influenced safeguarding policy, with support from the Commissioner and Advisory Group outlined above, including an accessible website that can be routinely updated and easy read leaflets that can be shared widely.