

Wandsworth Borough Council Voting and Learning Disability

This evaluation report provides information about the Voting and Learning Disability project, run by Electoral Registration at the London Borough of Wandsworth Council and funded by the New Initiatives Fund. In the report we highlight the aims, objectives and achievements of the project, and lessons learnt by Wandsworth Borough Council Electoral Registration.

Introduction

The project involved the development of the 'Voting at the Polling Station' booklet in partnership with the Makaton Vocabulary Development Project (MVDP), to provide people with learning disabilities with information about casting their vote at a polling station. The booklet was piloted in Wandsworth borough during the 2005 UK Parliamentary general election¹ alongside the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) 'Right to vote' information pack and was distributed within Wandsworth borough and nationally.

Aims and objectives

The project aimed to make the voting process accessible to people with learning disabilities and to develop and produce further literature on the registration and voting process.

Funding

A grant of £5,000 was awarded in April 2005 of which £5,000 was paid out. The project ran for 11 months from September 2004 to August 2005.

Target outcomes

The target outcomes of the project were to:

- measure the impact of the booklet in Wandsworth and satisfaction levels of recipients
- measure the usefulness of the booklet as a resource for carers and organisations working with people with learning disabilities

How successful was the project?

Overall the project appears to have achieved all its key objectives and targets. Evaluation was undertaken by John Boyle, a policy coordinator at the council. The main method for measuring success was a questionnaire completed by polling station staff, people who received the booklet, and organisations which distributed it, including other Electoral Services teams in the UK.

Most people responded positively. The majority of feedback indicated that the booklet was very useful to people with learning disabilities and those providing services to people with learning disabilities.

National distribution

- The booklet was placed on the MVDP website and 1,200 copies were downloaded in

the run-up to the general election.

- A PDF was sent to the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) to forward to Electoral Services teams in other local councils.

[Wandsworth distribution](#)

- The booklet was sent to over 600 adults on Wandsworth's Social Services Department's learning disability register.
- A stock of copies was sent to 122 local organisations, including doctors' surgeries, local libraries and service providers.
- The booklet was published on a dedicated web page on Wandsworth's electoral registration website, which was linked to the DRC website.
- A pre-election training session for Presiding Officers and polling staff included a session on the booklet. Copies were also placed in all 166 of the borough's polling stations.

[Good practice](#)

A number of areas of good practice were identified.

- Distribution of the booklet prior to the election meant people with learning disabilities and their carers were clear about the process before they arrived at polling stations.
- Pre-election training for Presiding Officers and polling staff meant that staff were aware of how to assist people with learning disabilities, using the booklet.

- Organisations providing services to people with learning disabilities, which trained their staff on the booklet as well as making it available on display, were able to assist more people with learning disabilities than those which did not train their staff.
- Making the booklet available on the Wandsworth Council and MVDP websites increased access to the booklet by carers and schools working with people with learning disabilities.
- Educational establishments, service providers, carers and social workers were identified as key to introducing the booklet to people with learning disabilities.

[Lessons learnt](#)

Projects of a similar nature can learn from the following lessons:

- Feedback forms should be distributed alongside booklets to ensure a greater response from individuals who used the booklet.
- Where booklets are made available on websites, feedback should be requested from people who download the booklet at the same time.
- The Social Services register includes service users with a range of needs, so mass mail-out of the booklet was less successful.
- The hierarchical distribution system to Electoral Services proved problematic. Future distribution should consider

sending the booklet direct to Electoral Services.

- Future distribution schedules should consider pre-election time pressures on Electoral Services staff. In addition a guide on how to train staff on the booklet should be provided along with Makaton posters for polling stations.
- For future distributions, inclusion of County Councils, educational establishments, Social Services and MVDP tutors should be considered. The MVDP and council websites should be linked to national Social Services and education websites.

¹ Hereafter referred to as 'the general election'.

[Further information](#)

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For further information about the New Initiatives Fund and the wider work of the Electoral Commission, see our website: www.electoralcommission.org.uk