



Our Voice Our Rights

Campaign Action Pack

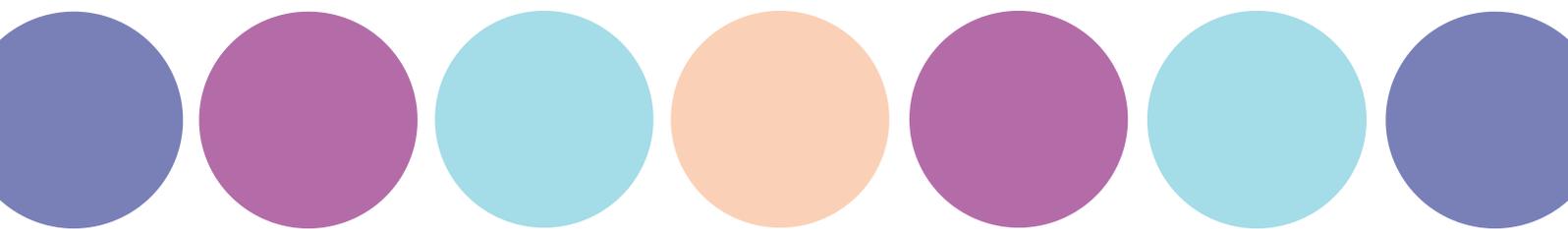


#OurVoiceOurRights

Time to make rights a reality for autistic people and people with a learning disability.



The Scottish Parliamentary Election on 6th May is our opportunity to make sure that the rights of autistic people and people with a learning disability and their families are a priority for the next Scottish Government. You can make sure that your future MSP, the main political parties, and the next Scottish Government recognise your support for the Our Voice Our Rights campaign by undertaking a series of online actions!



Candidates and political parties care about issues because they know they are important to the people they want to represent. In the weeks before the election, all sorts of different people and groups will contact candidates and parties to ask them to support their causes. In order to make sure our campaign is visible and its calls considered as priorities, we need to take the time to highlight what it is we want and why. And with the current circumstances resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic, that means asking our supporters to campaign online.

Background to the Campaign

ENABLE Scotland, National Autistic Society Scotland and Scottish Autism are three national charities working alongside autistic people and people with a learning disability and their families to campaign for much-needed change.

In the lead up to the Scottish Parliamentary Elections on [6th May 2021](#) we're calling on all the major political parties in Scotland to commit to a Commissioner for [autistic people](#) and [people with a learning disability](#) to ensure real change.

This would make Scotland the first country in the world to establish such a role. A country where [human rights](#) are respected and upheld; a country where everyone has [equal](#) access to the services and support they need; a country where autistic people and people with a learning disability are active citizens and are fully supported to fulfil their potential.

The Commissioner would be a powerful champion of change, [empowered](#) by the lived experience of people with a learning disability and autistic people, and the data available about their lives.

The Commissioner would work with public bodies to improve access to their human rights, and to help build a more [inclusive Scotland](#).

Whilst we have an extensive and well-intentioned existing policy, legislative and regulatory framework, the evidence available suggests that the system all too frequently, and persistently, fails to enable the human rights of citizens who have a learning disability [and/or](#) autism through education, health, social care and community services. Covid-19 has brought this into sharp focus. Scotland can, and must, do better.

A Commissioner, informed by **lived experience**, would help to close the accountability gap by working across public bodies and existing regulators to focus on the experiences and needs of people who have a learning disability and autistic people.

They would improve the visibility of this population, and make sure that their experiences inform better access to additional support in **education** and **employment**; to self-directed social care support to live independently in the community of their choice; to good quality housing and healthcare; and to independent advocacy to ensure that their voices are in control of their lives.

Frequently Asked Questions

There are understandably a few questions that you may be asked regarding the campaign, or that you have yourself.

You should never feel pressurised to answer someone else's questions about the campaign but, if you want to, we've listed five of the most common questions we've been asked so far below along with our answers to those questions, which you might find of use!

Q. Why a Commissioner for autistic people and people with a learning disability?

A. Autism and learning disability are very different. For autistic people and people with a learning disability and their families, a lot of the battles and barriers they face to access services, exercise their rights, and live the lives they are entitled to are also often different from one person to the next but, crucially, such barriers are usually found in the same places. Recent reviews into the Mental Health Act have already told us that autistic people and people with learning disabilities require a different approach to protect their human rights. We believe that a Commissioner would be that different approach.

In addition, two important strategies – the Scottish Strategy for Autism and the Keys to Life Strategy – which impact both autistic people and people with a learning disability, are coming to an end soon and so discussions are already underway over what comes next.

Q. Doesn't the Commissioner risk conflating autism and learning disability?

A. This is a Commissioner for autistic people and people with a learning disability. We understand concerns over conflating the two but, rather than leading to conflation, we believe the Commissioner would achieve the opposite – having it within their remit to highlight the differences, better educate service providers, and ensure that only good practice is shared. Our campaign has and will continue to stress the point that autism and learning disabilities are very different.

Q. Aren't there already a lot of Commissions and Commissioners?

A. There are! And they are all very good at what they do. But they all focus on particular groups of people, such as children and young people, or specific areas, like mental health and human rights.

Our Commissioner would be able to approach all areas throughout the lifespan, ensuring that autistic people and people with a learning disability always have an ally and a champion, regardless of their age or particular issue. And the Commissioner would work with existing Commissions and Commissioners to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Q. Will the Commissioner be an autistic person or a person with a learning disability?

A. We can't say for sure exactly who will become the Commissioner for autistic people and people with a learning disability, as there are many steps that our proposal would need to go through between the campaign being successful and a Commissioner actually being appointed. However, our campaign is fully supportive of the idea that the Commissioner could be an autistic person or person with a learning disability.

Q. Will a Commissioner solve all of the issues on its own?

A. The Commissioner is not the only solution that is required – we are not asking for a Commissioner instead of new strategies, better resources, and improved services.

We need all of those things, and more!
But a Commissioner will ensure that there is accountability in the system, guaranteeing that what the Scottish Government says should happen and what actually happens in your local area is the same.

Quick Ways to Get Involved

With any campaign, there are very quick and easy steps you can take to signal your support and begin to spread the word.

These include:

- Tell as many people as you can about the campaign!
- Share the link to our campaign website (www.OurVoiceOurRights.com) online.
- Visit our website and share what you find there.
- Follow the Twitter accounts of [@ENABLEScotland](https://twitter.com/ENABLEScotland), [@AutismScotland](https://twitter.com/AutismScotland), and [@ScottishAutism](https://twitter.com/ScottishAutism), and share any relevant tweets or retweets.
- Tweet your support for the campaign by using the [#OurVoiceOurRights](https://twitter.com/hashtag/OurVoiceOurRights) hashtag.
- Like the Facebook pages of [ENABLE Scotland](https://www.facebook.com/ENABLEScotland), [National Autistic Society Scotland](https://www.facebook.com/NationalAutisticSocietyScotland) and [Scottish Autism](https://www.facebook.com/ScottishAutism), and like and share the campaign posts you find there.
- Share stories about your own experiences and how you believe a Commissioner will make things better with friends and family, and online.

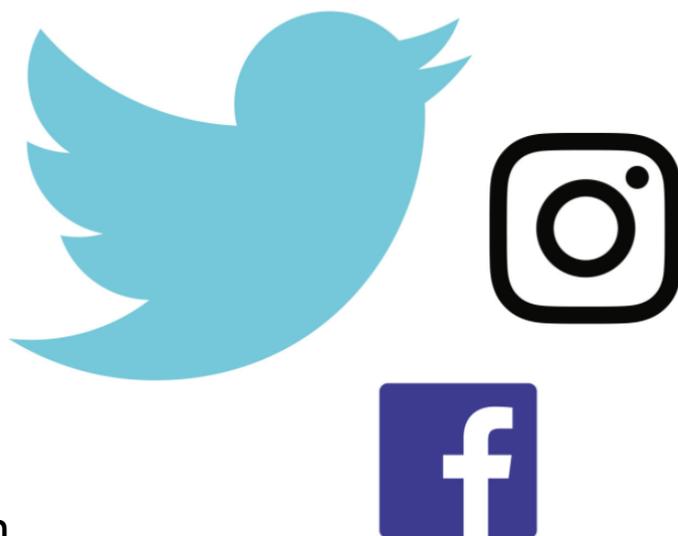
Tips for Online Campaigning

- Do get in touch if you have any questions
- Do express your own views and experiences but try to avoid being party political – our campaign is non-partisan and aims to influence all of the political parties.
- Do talk about the issues that matter to autistic people and people with a learning disability but try to avoid criticising specific candidates or political parties and their policies - it might mean they don't engage.
- Why not tag your local MSP, candidate or Party leader to draw their attention to the campaign?
- Do enjoy being part of our positive, rights-based campaign, knowing you're helping to work towards real change in Scotland.
- Remember to use #OurVoiceOurRights we will find and amplify your tweet or post where we can.



Social Media Posts

Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are the most common ways to campaign online. We have put together some social media posts which you can personalise and use as you wish



Twitter

As well as sharing and liking tweets or stories that are positive and supportive of the campaign, you may also want to tweet your own support.

By copying and pasting the template tweet below, you can ensure that your Twitter followers know about the campaign:

*#OurVoiceOurRights is calling for a Commissioner to make rights a reality for autistic people and people with a learning disability. Along with @ENABLEScotland, @AutismScotland & @scottishautism, I am supporting this campaign for much needed-change:
www.OurVoiceOurRights.org*

Facebook

You can check out the Facebook pages of ENABLE Scotland, National Autistic Society Scotland and Scottish Autism to find a number of videos, graphics and other resources you can share with your friends. Or you might want to use the following template post to signal your support for the campaign:

For too long approx. 56,000 autistic people and at least 120,000 people with a learning disability have struggled with a system that is failing to meet their rights and needs in accessing services across education, health, social care and employment.

@ENABLE Scotland, @National Autistic Society Scotland, and @Scottish Autism are calling for a Commissioner to protect and uphold the rights of autistic people and people with a learning disability and their families.

The Commissioner would be the first of its kind in the world, to be established in law to work alongside Scotland's public bodies and regulators to be an advocate for people who have a learning disability and autistic people. The Commissioner would champion their human rights, work to end the struggle people face to get support, challenge bad practice, advocate on behalf of people who cannot and importantly help autistic people and people with a learning disability to have the choice and control to live a good life, free from discrimination.

*Take action now and support Our Voice Our Rights:
www.ourvoiceourrights.org*

Our Campaign E-action to the Party Leaders

An e-action is a way for someone to actively support a campaign from the comfort of their own home, taking just a few minutes online to complete a form and click a few buttons.

[Our Voice Our Rights e-action](#)

Our e-action allows you to send an email to all five of the political party leaders in Scotland with just a few clicks. Over 1200 people have taken this action but the more who take it, the more they will need to listen!

Just click on the link above or go to the 'Take action' page on the Our Voice Our Rights website.



Arrange a Meeting or Hustings



In the run up to any election, local candidates will attend meetings with people in the constituency and participate in hustings events – panel-type discussions that allow members of the public to quiz the candidates on particular issues.

For those who want to be particularly active in the run up to May's elections, you may want to consider meeting with your local MSP/candidate(s) or organising a hustings event. You should be able to get a 15-30 minute meeting with your local MSP/candidate(s) by sending them an email. They are very keen to meet with potential voters!

If you want to do something bigger you could consider organising a hustings event. Usually, this would require a suitable venue in your constituency but, given the current circumstances, all meetings and hustings of this nature during the election campaign will need to be online. That means if you have an internet connection, access to Microsoft Teams or Zoom, and the desire to do so, you can consider organising your own event!

Here are some things to consider:

- Identifying a suitable date and time for your meeting or hustings.
- Deciding on the structure of your event, how long it will last, and who will chair it.
- Planning what software to use and how to effectively advertise your event.
- Inviting local candidates from each of the political parties. You should be able to find their email addresses online, but if you have any issues, let us know.
- Ensuring a way for local people to register for the event and access it on the day.
- Generating some attention in the local media.

These are all important points that need to be considered even before your event gets underway!

But if you still like the idea of hosting your own meeting or hustings event, please get in touch with us – we can offer support, advice and answer any additional questions you might have.



Resources

For further information on the campaign, including videos and other resources you may wish to share with friends, family or online, please visit www.OurVoiceOurRights.org.

Other Ideas

As much as we have tried to give you a number of ideas for how you can participate in our campaign, the list is not exhaustive – if you have an idea of your own that you'd like to share with us, please let us know!

Contact Us

Contacting us is easy and we're always keen to hear about your thoughts on the campaign, answer any questions you might have, and provide assistance for those who want to get right behind the campaign!

You can get in touch with us whenever you want simply by visiting www.OurVoiceOurRights.org, clicking on the [Contact Us](#) tab, and filling out the contact form.