



# Speaking out

A guide to campaigning



# Welcome to *Speaking out* – Mencap's guide to campaigning



Hi. We are the campaigns team in England. We help Mencap and its members to campaign about issues that affect the lives of people with a learning disability and their families and carers.

Campaigning is a really important part of what we do at Mencap.

We want to change things so that people with a learning disability can use all the services they need, get the respect they deserve and the support they need.

This guide contains useful ideas that can help you to run a good campaign about issues that matter to people with a learning disability and their families.

Everything in this guide has been written for people who are campaigning for the first time.

Even if you have campaigned before, you will still find this guide useful as it contains lots of information and things to help you.

We hope that this guide helps you to think about what you want to change and how you can make this happen.

Thank you for your support and enjoy campaigning.

**Mencap campaigns team**

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# How to campaign for change



Campaigning is about getting people to change things for the better. Campaigns are about finding out about a problem and telling the people who can fix it what they need to do.

There are 5 important rules to follow if your campaign is to be a success.

## Aims



Decide what your aims are at the beginning of the campaign.

This means deciding what you want to change and how things might be different because of your campaign.

As well as being able to say what is bad, you need to say what you want to happen to make things better. Tell everybody involved what your aims are.



## Information

Get the information you need to tell people about why things need to change.

You need to know your facts about how things are at the moment and why they do not work as well as they could.

The people you talk to through your campaign will need to see examples if they are going to understand why you are trying to change things.



## **Audience**

Find out who can help you to change things.

Think about the best way of letting them know that you need their help.

## **Timing**

Make sure you know when important decisions are going to be taken about the thing you want to change.

You need to think about how much time you need to get your message to the people who will make the decision.



## **Partnerships**

Work with other people and groups.

Find out who else is affected by the thing you are trying to change.

Find out who might be sympathetic to what you are trying to do.





## Section 1

### What you can campaign about



Before you start a campaign ask yourself

- do I need to have a campaign?
- do a lot of people feel really strongly about what is happening?

Do not start a campaign as soon as there is a decision you do not like. Think about the decision. Is it as bad as you think, or are there some good points?

Sometimes you do not need a campaign. You might be able to talk to the people who made the decisions and find an answer quite easily.

There are many things you might want to campaign about. Here are some of the things that Mencap are campaigning about to give you some ideas:

- **Bullying – Don't stick it, stop it**
- **Death by indifference**
- **Cuts and closures**
- **Changing places**
- **Employment**



## Section 2

# Deciding who you want to get involved in your campaign



Now that you know what you want to campaign about, you need to find out who has the power to make the changes you want.

- The important people to talk to are usually the people making the decisions.
- Find out who could make the changes you want.
- Let them know about what you want to change and why.



A lot of decisions are made by the people who work for your local council, education or health service provider.

To find out who you need to talk to, you can ring or write to your local council, education or health service provider. Your local library or Citizens Advice centre might also have this information, or your local Mencap group.

Talk to people who can support your campaign.

This might include any of these people:



- people with a learning disability
- advocacy groups
- people who write for newspapers
- celebrities
- Mencap local societies
- Mencap Gateway clubs
- learning disability partnership board members
- service user groups
- friends
- neighbours
- local councillors
- your MP
- government ministers.



## Section 3

### Things to help your campaign go well



Now you have decided what you are going to campaign about and the people you need to talk to. The next step is to decide how to convince those people to make the changes you want.

There are lots of different things you can do in a campaign.

In this section you will find guides to show you how to do some of the things that are usually part of a campaign.

There are guides about how to



- write letters
- write petitions
- use postcards
- make information leaflets about your campaign
- work with Members of Parliament (MPs).



Not all campaign activities are right for every campaign. You need to think about

- how much money you have to spend



- how much time you have



- how many people are willing to work on the campaign.

## How to... write a letter or postcard



Writing letters is one of the best ways to campaign.

- You can write to the people who make decisions.
- Make sure you write to the people who can really help you.
- Make your letter short and clear.
- Make sure your letter says what you want the person to do.
- You can also write to people and organisations who might support your campaign. Tell them about your campaign and ask for their support.



## A good example of a campaign letter

**INSERT YOUR HOME ADDRESS**

**INSERT NAME OF YOUR MP**

**[You can find out who your is MP  
on the following website: [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)]**

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

**INSERT DATE**

Dear **INSERT NAME OF YOUR MP**,

Only 1 in 10 people with a learning disability known to social services are in paid work.

Many people with a learning disability want to work. Research has shown that about 65% of people with a learning disability would like to work.

People with a learning disability can and do make a great contribution to the workplace, but they often do not get the chance to work.

They are often not given training or support to look for work because people have low expectations about what people with a learning disability can achieve. Many employers are reluctant to take on someone with a learning disability.

The government should be encouraging employers to give work to more people with a learning disability. Employers should also be made aware of the help and support available to them.

Please also write to the Minister for Disabled People at the Department for Work and Pensions to ask what is being done to encourage employers in both the private and public sector to give work to more people with a learning disability.

Yours sincerely,

**INSERT YOUR NAME**



If you are writing to the people who make decisions, it is good if a lot of people write letters about the same thing. This shows that what you are campaigning about is important to people.

It is a good idea to give people a sample letter that they can use. This also helps to make sure that every letter that is sent has all the most important points about your campaign.

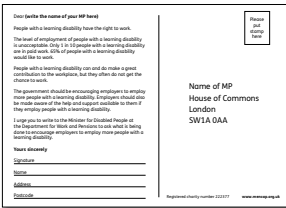
You can provide printed sample letters for people to use or if you have a website you can put the sample letter there for people to send by email or post.



Postcards can also be a very good way to get people to understand your message. If you have some money for your campaign you could pay for the postage.

You should make sure your postcard does these things

- Use all the space on the card. If you cannot afford to have your postcards printed, you could write the information yourself. On the front of your postcard you could write the main issues you are campaigning about, or use a picture that represents your campaign.



- On the back, leave space for the
  - address of the person sending the card (at the bottom)
  - address of the person you are sending it to (on the right side)
  - greeting like Dear sir or madam (see example).

*You should also leave space for*

- the issues you are campaigning about – make sure these are short and easy to understand
- what you want to happen – this also needs to be short.

To make it easy for people to use the postcards, you can fill in the name and address of the person the postcard is for.

It is important to leave space for the person who is sending the postcard to leave their name and address. It will show the person who receives the postcard who to send a reply to.

## A good example of a campaign postcard



- A picture helps to show what the problem is
- Say what the problem is
- Say what you want to happen
- Show who is running the campaign
- Explain the problem in more detail

Dear **(write the name of your MP here)**

People with a learning disability have the right to work.

The level of employment of people with a learning disability is unacceptable. Only 1 in 10 people with a learning disability are in paid work. 65% of people with a learning disability would like to work.

People with a learning disability can and do make a great contribution to the workplace, but they often do not get the chance to work.

The government should be encouraging employers to employ more people with a learning disability. Employers should also be made aware of the help and support available to them if they employ people with a learning disability.

I urge you to write to the Minister for Disabled People at the Department for Work and Pensions to ask what is being done to encourage employers to employ more people with a learning disability.

**Yours sincerely**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Please put stamp here

Name of MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Registered charity number 222377      www.mencap.org.uk

- Put the address you want people to send the card to
- Leave space for the person sending the card to add their name and address

# How to... use posters and leaflets



Posters and leaflets are a good way to get important information to a lot of people. They are also useful if you are trying to get people to sign a petition and if you want to give people some information about your campaign.

A good poster has a small amount of information

It tells people

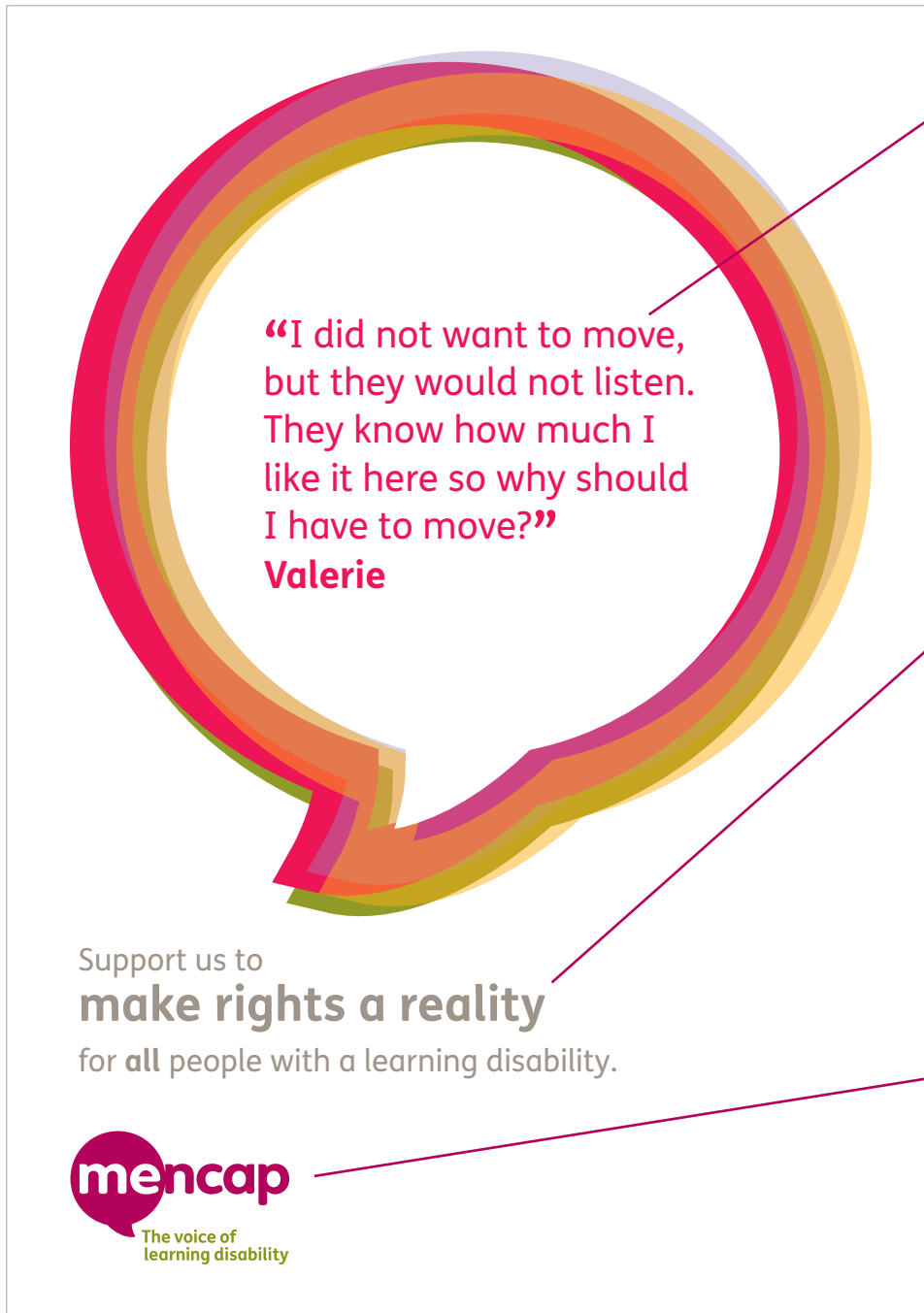
- what you are campaigning about
- how it affects people
- how they can get more information and get involved.



A leaflet should

- be short and easy to read
- tell people about your campaign
- tell people how they can get involved
- tell people who produced the information.

## A good example of a campaign leaflet



- A personal story or quote is a good way to show what the problem is and to make people think
- A good campaign name or headline on your flyer grabs people's attention
- Show who is running the campaign

## “Support us to make rights a reality for all people with a learning disability”

### Key facts

- Over 6 in 10 people with a learning disability living in residential care or supported living have no choice about where they live and with whom.
- 9 out of 10 people with a learning disability have been bullied.
- Only 1 in 10 people with a severe learning disability work, but most want to.



People with a learning disability deserve to be equal citizens with control over their own lives. But too many do not have that control. This is not acceptable – we must make rights a reality for all people with a learning disability.

Show that you believe people with a learning disability deserve the same rights as other members of society by signing up to Be Mencap at [www.mencap.org.uk/be](http://www.mencap.org.uk/be) or read our full manifesto at [www.mencap.org.uk/manifesto](http://www.mencap.org.uk/manifesto)

Registered charity number 222377 2007.360-03/08

- Say what the problem is
- A picture helps to show what the problem is
- Say what you want to happen and how you want it to happen
- Tell people how you want them to get involved
- Give contact details so people can get more information or get involved

## A good example of a campaign poster



- A personal story or quote is a good way to show what the problem is and to make people think
- A picture helps to show what the problem is
- A good campaign name or headline on your poster grabs people's attention
- Give contact details so people can get more information or get involved
- Show who is running the campaign



## How to... hold a meeting

It can be a good idea to have a meeting to get together with everyone who is interested in your campaign. It is easier and quicker to speak to everyone at the same time.



This can be useful if

- you do not have much money to spend on things like websites, flyers and leaflets
- you do not have much time before the decisions will be made
- you know that lots of people will be interested in what you want to campaign about.



### Making the most of your meeting



- Make sure that everyone knows about the meeting and that people with a learning disability can take part. You could make a poster to tell people about the meeting. Write on it what the meeting is about, where it will happen and the date and time.
- Hold the meeting in a place that everybody can get to.



- Choose someone to be in charge of the meeting. The person in charge is usually called the chair. This can be someone who knows a lot about the campaign or someone who is good at keeping things to time and making sure everyone gets their say. To make sure everyone has their say, here are some examples of cards you could use.



- You need someone else to write notes about what happens to help everyone remember what was said and decided.
- You could invite someone to speak at the meeting. It is best to ask somebody who knows a lot about the problem you are going to campaign about. People from Mencap's campaigns teams may be able to come and speak at a meeting, or give you a presentation or some ideas that you could use.



### **Mencap's campaigns teams**

**Contact us on 020 7696 6952 in England,  
028 9069 1351 in Northern Ireland or  
029 2074 7588 in Wales.**

**Or email [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk) and tell us  
where you live.**



- If you would like decision makers like MPs or councillors to speak at your meeting, make sure you invite them and give them all the details of your campaign.
- If you want to use newspapers, radio and TV to tell people about your campaign, invite them to your meeting. Ask them well before the meeting date, especially if you want them to bring a photographer.
- If you think another meeting would be a good idea, set a date before the meeting ends.
- During the meeting, decide exactly what you are asking for. Does everybody agree? It is important that everybody gets to say what they think and that you all agree about what should happen next.
- If you have a petition, or you would like people to write postcards or letters, bring them along. If you have a website, this is also a good time to let people know about it.

## How to... work with the media



Using the media, like newspapers, TV and radio is an important part of campaigning. Lots of people will get to hear what you are campaigning about.

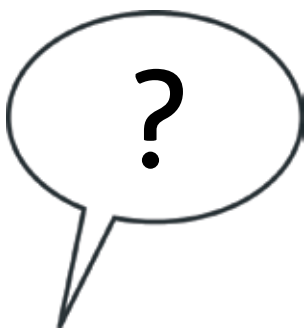


Here is some advice about how to get the media interested in your campaign.

### Get prepared



- Decide what you want to tell the media. What are the most important things you want to say about your campaign?
- Find out who works for your local media. Introduce yourself to them on the phone and find out what kind of news stories they cover. Tell them that you are interested in the articles they write! Find out their deadline for articles or reports (when they have to finish writing them).



- There are some questions you need to be able to answer before you talk to the media
  - What is happening?
  - Why is it happening?
  - When is it happening?
  - Where is it happening?
  - Who is involved?



- Write a media plan. This should include what stories you tell them and when. It should also have a mixture of things that you can say about the campaign.



- Find out if there is anyone in your group who has experience of dealing with the media or who knows people who work in the media. They may be able to help.

- Remember there are lots of different types of local media, like radio stations, county magazines, local associations' newsletters and internet sites.

- If you have a petition or a good story about your campaign, your local media might like this. These can be a very good example of how many people support your campaign or how people are affected.



Mencap's press team will be able to help you if you need some advice.

**Mencap press team**

**Contact us on 020 7696 5414**

**Email: [press.office@mencap.org.uk](mailto:press.office@mencap.org.uk)**

## Celebrities



- It can be good to get a local celebrity involved in your campaign as it might make people more interested. Good examples would be the mayor, a sports personality, a radio DJ or the local MP.
- Try to choose local celebrities carefully. Choose someone who you know is interested in your campaign and agrees with what you are trying to do.
- Think of celebrities that most people will know and like or respect.
- Be clear about what you want them to do. Make sure you keep in contact with them during your campaign and think about how you can keep them involved.



## How to... organise a petition

A petition is a list of people's signatures. It is a way of getting the public's support and showing how many people support the campaign. Anyone can sign a petition.

By signing a petition, people who want to help can show their support for your campaign.

A petition starts with a statement that says what you want. This must be clear and short and easy to understand. Under the statement you need to allow space for people to write or type their names and addresses. In a website petition you can leave space for people to add their email address. People do not have to give their address but if they do, you will be able to contact them in the future about your campaign.



You can print off petitions or have them available on a website. Website petitions are becoming very useful now that lots of people use the internet. You can also send your petition out by email.

Email petitions have all the facts about the campaign and what you want to happen. People read this information and then add their names to the end and return them to you. When the petition is finished you can email it to people who you want to see it.

## Getting people to sign your petition



- It is a good idea to think how many people you want to get to sign your petition. Having a target is a good way of getting people involved and enthusiastic about your campaign.
- You may want to stand in a public place where you can let lots of people know about your campaign and have the petition ready for signatures. Good places to do this include shopping centres, bus and railway stations. It is a good idea to get permission from the local police or the people in charge of the public place before you start. Be careful not to drop litter where you stand as this can give people a bad impression of your campaign.
- You might also want to go from door-to-door in your local area collecting signatures. If you do decide to do this, remember to stay safe. It is a good idea to go with someone if it is an area you do not know very well or if it is dark. Plan what you are going to say when someone answers the door so that they can find out about your campaign and decide if they want to sign the petition.
- If you are producing information, use it to tell people how they can support the campaign and sign the petition.



- If you are having a public meeting, remember to bring the petition with you and ask people to sign it.
- Thank people who sign the petition and tell them how to get more information if they are interested.
- You can send a petition to anybody, including your local authority and your MP. If you want to send a petition to someone in the government, there are special rules about how you can do this. If you want more information about this, please contact the parliamentary officer at Mencap. Or you can go to <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk> to find out about how to send your petition directly to the prime minister.
- Campaigns team contact details  
Mencap's campaigns team/parliamentary team  
0207 696 6952



## How to... work with your MP



Your **Member of Parliament** (MP) represents everyone in your local area.

They may be able to help you with your campaign. You do not have to vote for them to get their help. And they can help no matter which political group or party they belong to.

MPs are useful people. They can help to find out information from your local authority, ask the government questions and get publicity for your campaign.



Whatever your campaign is about, it is also very important that they understand what is important for people with a learning disability and their families and carers.

### Writing a letter to your MP



You can write to your MP about any issue, but make sure that you write to the one who represents your local area.

If you do not know who your MP is, you can find out by typing your postcode into **[www.locata.co.uk/commons](http://www.locata.co.uk/commons)** or you can call **020 7219 3000** and ask someone to find out for you.

All MPs have the same address:  
**House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA**



Your local MP may also be on a House of Commons select committee or a minister, which means they might have more influence about what decisions are made by the government. You can find this information out by visiting **[www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)**

### **What to put in your letter**



Introduce yourself and explain why you are interested in the issue you are writing about. Does it affect you, your friend or a member of your family?

Tell your MP

- what is happening
- where it is happening
- when it will happen
- who will be affected
- why it matters
- what you want your MP to do.

Remember, keep your letter short and about the most important things. MPs get lots of letters everyday and they do not spend a lot of time on each one.



MPs are supposed to reply to every letter they get. If you do not get a reply, write again and remind them that you have already written.

### **Meeting your MP**

It might be useful to meet your MP and see if they will support your campaign. It can be good for MPs when people hear about them helping people, so a meeting could be a good chance for you to get your campaign into the local paper.

Most MPs have a regular time when people can visit them. This is called a surgery. You can go along and talk about your campaign. If you do this, make sure you write to them first so that they already know a bit about the campaign.

You could also ask your MP to come and visit you. For example, if your campaign is about a local service, ask them to come and see it so that they understand why your campaign is so important.



You can also visit your MP at the House of Commons.

Whenever you organise a meeting with your MP, make sure you know exactly what you want to ask them for and what you want them to do.



Always write to them again afterwards, to thank them for taking the time to meet you and to remind them what they said they would do for you.

## How to... work with your local council



Your local council makes most of the decisions that affect the daily lives of people with a learning disability and their families. Remember that you can have a say in the decisions your local council makes.

There are lots of different decision makers in your local council and most of them will be helpful to your campaign.

### Local councillors



Councillors run the local council in your area. They represent local people in the area and are elected by them.

They make important decisions about what services the local council should provide and how much money each department should spend.

Local councillors also make sure that other people in the local authority are doing their job well.

You can talk to your councillor about your campaign. Tell them about the parts of it that the local authority has an effect on.



Your councillor can be useful as they can tell the rest of the council about what you want to change, including staff in the department that runs the service you are trying to change.

### **How to contact them**

Your local councillor can be contacted through your local council. They should keep a list of councillors with contact details.

### **The chief executive**

The chief executive is the head of the local authority. They make sure that all the departments in the council do the work that the councillors have decided should be done.

It can be useful to talk to the chief executive if you are not getting helpful answers from the chief officer of a particular department. It may also be helpful if your campaign needs to work with lots of different departments and you want to make sure that the chief executive understands what you are trying to do.

### **How to contact them**



If you call the main telephone number for your local authority they should be able to tell you how to contact the senior officers and chief executive.

Most local authorities have directories that give details of how to contact each department. Most authorities have websites with sections for each department.

### **Local learning disability partnership board**

Every local council has a learning disability partnership board. Their job is to make sure that the local council does what Valuing People says.

Partnership boards look after planning services for people with a learning disability. They represent the views of people with a learning disability in your area – if you have an issue you can take it up with the Learning Disability Partnership Boards.



They also make sure that people with a learning disability get the right support when they leave school so they can go to college or work.

### **How to contact them**

Each partnership board has at least 2 members who have a learning disability. They also have 2 parents and carers and 1 person who works for a voluntary organisation like Mencap.

The chair of the partnership board is usually a senior council officer or a councillor.

The local authority will have contact details for the partnership board.

# How to... hold demonstrations, stunts and direct action



## Holding a demonstration or a lobby of your local council

A demonstration can be a good way to show how many people support your campaign. Demonstrations can sometimes cause problems. Decide if a demonstration will help your campaign.

You will need a lot of people to join in. Make sure everybody knows when and where the demonstration will be. Talk to the media before the demonstration so that they can send people to write about it and take photographs.

## Publicity stunts

A publicity stunt is when you do something that gets people's attention, like releasing lots of balloons. It will probably mean you get into the newspapers or on television. Talk to the media before the event so that they send people to write about it and take photographs.



## Direct action

Direct action is when you do something that has a direct effect on a situation. For example, people might chain themselves to the gates of a building to stop people getting in, or they might refuse to buy something if the company that makes it is doing something wrong.

Direct action can mean breaking the law, so you must get advice before you start. You might want to contact your local police station before you hold a demonstration to make sure it is OK to do it. Think very carefully about whether direct action will help you get what you want. You will probably get a lot of publicity, but you might lose support from some people.



## For more information or advice



To get more information about the national campaigns that Mencap is running and how you can get involved, please go to our website at [www.mencap.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.mencap.org.uk/campaigns)

You can also read our reports about campaigning for things that affect people with a learning disability and their families and carers. To print off copies of these reports go to our website at [www.mencap.org.uk/publications](http://www.mencap.org.uk/publications)



If you live in England

**0207 696 6952**



**campaigns@mencap.org.uk**



**Mencap, 123 Golden Lane, London EC1Y 0RT**



If you live in Northern Ireland

**028 9069 1351**



**mencapni@mencap.org.uk**



**Mencap, Segal House, 4 Annadale Avenue  
Belfast BT7 3JH**



If you live in Wales

**029 2074 7588**



**information.wales@mencap.org.uk**



**Mencap Cymru, 31 Lambourne Crescent, Cardiff  
Business Park, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5GF**



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[www.photosymbols.com](http://www.photosymbols.com)