

Creating Access



Speaking up for social change



Speaking up for social change

As a young person, there are situations where you may feel there is injustice or lack of action, and you would like to create change on a larger scale for issues that are affecting you, other young people, or our society more broadly.

This factsheet focuses on issues that might specifically affect young people with disability, and gives you some examples of things you may choose to advocate about, skills that can help you feel confident when speaking up for social change, ways you can advocate about issues young people with disability are experiencing, and what to do if you are not seeing change.

Things to advocate for

There are several different things in society that can affect young people with disability that you might choose to advocate for. Some examples may be:

- A lack of accessible public transport in your local community. For example, no elevators at train stations or accessible buses in your area
- Buildings that are not physically accessible. For example, no ramp access, accessible bathroom facilities, or accessible parking spaces available
- Community spaces and buildings that do not have assistive listening technology such as a hearing loop set up for young people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Information, forms and flyers provided by government agencies that are not available in alternative formats, for example: Braille, Easy Read, Auslan, large print, word version etc
- Government websites that are inaccessible, hard to navigate and unable to be used with assistive technology devices
- A lack of representation of young people with disability in youth advisory groups, leadership councils or governance positions in council and government
- Specific areas that involve advocating to government on behalf of young people with disability, such as access to: equal employment opportunities, affordable housing, education, access to disability rights and awareness in the community, services such as Medicare, Centrelink and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Skills for speaking up for social change

Here are some things that can help you feel confident when advocating for social change:

Prepare: Think about how you want to raise awareness to this issue and what approach you will take. For example, you may be thinking of starting an online campaign, planning a fundraiser or event, organising a petition to change a law or policy etc. Consider the prompts under the 'Ways you can do it' section below to create your own plan to get started.

Your rights: learn more about your rights as a young person with disability so you feel confident speaking out for larger scale change if you believe that your rights have been disrespected or violated.

Learn: find out more about who the decision-makers (such as Ministers, Members of Parliament, Councillors etc.) are that you need to influence to resolve this problem/issue and work towards the solution you are wanting to see.

Connect: Link in with other people, organisations or groups who are committed to seeing the same change you are advocating to bring about and see how you can support each other.

Communicating: Practice how you will talk about the issues you want to raise with a range of stakeholders in different formal or informal environments. Think about how to use language that best suits the person or group you are speaking with.

For more information about building your skills to create social change, click on the link below:

- [Building Skills: How to be an effective activist](#)

Ways to do it

When you advocate for larger scale change, it's good to think about the issue and create a plan outlining steps moving forward. Consider the following questions to help you identify your next steps.

1) Define your issue

- What do you want to **change**?
- What is the **issue**?
- What part of this issue is most **important** to you?
- **Who else** is trying to make change for this issue?

2) Define the solution

- What do you want the **solution** to be?
- How do we **achieve** this? If you don't know, do some research
- How will you have an **impact**?
- **Who else** is doing stuff in this space?

3) Doing something:

- **Fundraise:** raise money to make the change happen
- **Political action:** talk to politicians, your local council or government departments
- **Support:** find people to help you

4) Create a plan:

- **What** do you want to do next?
- **How** will you do it?
- **How** will you afford it?
- **Who** will you talk to?
- **Who** can help you?

For more information on ways you can advocate for social change, visit the [Take Action](#) website.

If you are not seeing change

If you're advocating for social change and still not seeing change, here are a few things you can do:

- Keep going! Remember to celebrate the small achievements you are seeing along your journey. Creating larger scale change can take time.
- Try a different approach. If you are not seeing much movement you may try a different avenue to get your message across, such as: creating a petition or poster to raise awareness, using social media as a platform to get others who believe in your cause involved, talking to your local council or a member of Parliament about the change you are trying to make.
- Connect with other systemic advocacy or human rights organisations who are campaigning for the same social change you are to see if there is a way to work together.
- Reach out to other relevant organisations that may be able to assist you, for example:
 - To find out more about the Australian Human Rights Commission and how they may be able to help, [click here](#)
 - To find out more about the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) and how they may be able to help, [click here](#)
 - To find out more about the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People and how they may be able to help, [click here](#)

Keep in mind

Advocacy can take time. Sometimes your first plan might not work and that's okay. Take time to reflect on what you've done and what else you could do. This might mean creating a new plan, talking to different people or organising meetings with other important people.

Each organisation, council or government department you are advocating to might have their own process for change, so it's important to adapt your approach where needed, but not give up.

Gidon's Story

Sydney teenager Gidon Goodman at 14, started a petition to cut the cost of car parking at public hospitals by about \$200 a week because he was concerned family members would stop visiting their sick relatives due to high hospital parking costs.

Gidon created a petition on change.org and got over 70,500 supporters. This petition led to Ministers listening. After campaigning for change, the NSW Government committed to reducing the cost of parking at hospitals.

To summarise, Gidon:

- **Defined the issue:** cost of car parking at public hospitals was too expensive for family members to visit young people in hospital.
- **Defined the solution:** identified that it's important for people to visit friends and family in hospital.
- **Decided to do something:** created a petition and got attention to the issue. 70,500 supporters signed and got behind the petition.
- **Change that occurred:** The NSW Government reduced the cost of parking at NSW hospitals

[Click here](#) to read more about Gidon's story.

For more information

For more information about advocacy and speaking up, please see our other factsheets:

- What is advocacy
- Speaking up for yourself

These factsheets and other resources are available on the Creating Access website at:

<http://www.creatingaccess.org.au>

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