

MPs urged to listen to concerns of people with learning disabilities over proposed benefits cuts

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Over 70 MPs met with people with a learning disability and their families and heard their concerns over the Government's proposed £12bn cuts to welfare at a House of Commons event hosted by the Royal Mencap Society.

The new disabilities minister, Justin Tomlinson, speaking to campaigners

MPs were encouraged to follow through on their pre-election promises they made to Mencap's Hear My Voice campaign.

Vijay Patel, who works for Mencap and has a learning disability, spoke at the event, which was attended by Justin Tomlinson, the new disabilities minister. He said: "Unfortunately I feel that many politicians don't listen to people with a learning disability. This needs to change and it was important to see MPs take time to come to this event and speak face-to-face to people with a learning disability about their hopes and concerns for the next five years.

"For me my main concern for the next five years is about welfare cuts. I get Disability Living Allowance which is really important. It's important because I am trying to save money for the future to live independently. I hope politicians can listen to people with a learning disability and involve us in their decisions, as we are sometimes the people who feel their effects first."

Mr Patel was an active campaigner in helping to convince over 800 candidates in the lead up to the general election to pledge support for Mencap's Hear My Voice Campaign. One hundred and fifty-one of them were elected as MPs – meaning over a fifth of the new Parliament pledged to listen more attentively to people with a learning disability.

MPs who attended the event, which was part of Mencap's Learning Disability Week, were paired up with someone who has a learning disability and had a chance to listen to their personal story as well as talk about the changes they want to see over the next five years.

Jan Tregelles, chief executive at Mencap said: "With over a fifth of newly elected MPs having pledged support to Hear My Voice the voice of learning disability should be louder than ever. Giving new MPs a chance to meet face-to-face and discuss the concerns of people with a learning disability so early on in their term is hugely encouraging.

"With the support of these newly elected MPs, we hope the lives of the people we support will remain firmly in their minds over the next five years."