

Extension: People with Learning Disabilities

People with Learning Disabilities

Overview

People with learning disabilities face specific barriers when accessing services. Information is often not presented clearly, and there is a strong emphasis on digital services rather than in-person support. They also experience barriers concerning decision-making, as well as difficulties with housing, care and support, community inclusion, crime, and medical services.



Recommendations from the report

The report turned up two areas of recommendations which are specific to the experiences of people with learning disabilities:

- Working with people with learning disabilities to improve access to the Lewisham Council website, and websites belonging to other key partners. This will involve making sure people with learning disabilities are able to access information online.
- Improving access to information about, and to, services.

The recommendation of developing a Deaf and disabled-led single point of access service drew heavily on the experiences reported by people with learning disabilities. Respondents reported not having the support they need to navigate services in Lewisham, and falling through the gaps between different services, both within a single body (e.g., navigating primary and secondary healthcare, housing and social care, etc.), and between bodies..

These responses reflect the digital divide faced by people with learning disabilities, and the challenges which emerge with online-first and telephone-first access to services. For people with learning disabilities (and other disabilities too), there is often a need to engage with people face-to-face, in order to facilitate communication.

The proposed service would respond to these challenges by supporting people throughout their journey whilst accessing services, ensuring that correct referrals are made and follow-ups occur.

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Explain things in simple terms, there is too much jargon!

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Evidence and Reflections

Influencing decision-making

Our report shows that people want the Council to be more involved in working with people with learning disabilities.

The Council also need to provide information in accessible formats.

Community Inclusion and Support

They felt involved in specific places, but not in others, and that it was important that there were more services and spaces for people with learning disabilities. They especially wanted more face-to-face support, finding online and telephone support less accessible.

They reported struggling with tasks like online job applications and engaging with Council services.

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The Council should come to groups like Lewisham Speaking Up, and listen and act on what people say

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When I first moved back to Lewisham, I thought I would find it difficult to fit in, but I find it easy to fit in because I've got Lewisham Speaking Up as my lifeline.

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There should be help and support groups - the help facilities in Lewisham are not enough.

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People with learning disabilities are left out in churches, colleges, loads of places. We are swept under the carpet.

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There is nothing in Lewisham for people with disabilities. All services closed down in Lewisham. Nothing has been replaced. This has meant people have really struggled much more in the last few years of the pandemic, and continue to do so

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Lewisham Council by their actions need to show us they are serious about supporting people with disabilities - 'talk the talk and walk the walk' - which means show in action what you say

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Housing, Care and Support

Several respondents reported being happy with their housing. However, where problems were mentioned, the following issues were discussed:

- People wanting to live independently, and not having the choice to live in the way they want to.
- A lack of appropriate housing.
- A lack of information about housing options.
- Slow repairs to housing. This included difficulty contacting the repair team, or the repair team not coming when expected.
- . Difficulty communicating with the housing team, including inaccessible letters.

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..lots of people with learning disabilities get left living with their parents, as this is easy for the Council. Those people may want to be independent

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We need more individual houses, not 'care homes

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If you call the housing, there is always the problem of trying to get through to someone. It can be a real difficulty as you have to keep calling and calling and calling.

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I've been told it can take 3-5 years for people with learning disabilities to find somewhere to live

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..lots of people with learning disabilities get left living with their parents, as this is easy for the Council. Those people may want to be independent

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There needs to be more affordable housing - it shouldn't be all about profit for Councils.

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I would move to supported living or something, but there's nowhere to go as far as my family knows. They might say I'm too able, so I can't do anything but stay at home for now. If there was some supported living place that was good I wouldn't mind (moving out), but you can't go anywhere. I don't know enough about what's out there. I would like to know more.

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They should give you choices about where you want to live. I would like to have my own home with a live-in carer, but because I don't get the hours, I won't get that support. We should have that choice.

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Health Services

People discussed challenges in accessing health services. These include difficulties being referred for mental health services, and difficulties getting a face-to-face appointment where the service provision was primarily by telephone. For many people with learning disabilities, having face-to-face contact with medical professionals rather than virtual appointments was very important.

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Some support staff people like receptionists aren't trained to deal with people who are neurodivergent,

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You can't really get face-to-face appointments at the GP anymore.

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Crime

Crime was a significant concern for people with learning disabilities. Respondents reported frequent harassment and felt that they were targeted specifically as disabled people.

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People take the mickey out of people with disabilities. I am asked for money and pestered on the street.

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People with a disability are more vulnerable and are targeted for money. No one helps out on the street.

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