



Statement from Director regarding Coronavirus

Lewisham Speaking Up wants to thank NHS staff and all others who are working hard to stop the spread of coronavirus and for the care they are providing to those who are sick. We appreciate this is an extremely difficult time for everybody and we are all having to change or adapt our behavior and the way we work.

We will do our best to continue to give advocacy support to people with learning disabilities during this time, even though it means we can only reach people by telephone or through online means. Where we cannot provide our usual services, we will do our best to stay in touch with people who might be lonely or isolated.

Our organisation understands why the Government has responded like it has to the outbreak of coronavirus and we are encouraging all the people with learning disabilities to follow the measures in place to stop the virus from spreading.

However, we are concerned about some content in the Coronavirus legislation that has been passed by Parliament. We are concerned that the legislation allows local authorities to be temporarily released from some of their duties under the Care Act 2014. A local authority would be allowed by law to prioritise whose and what type of needs it will meet, rather than being required to meet all eligible assessed needs as specified under the Care Act 2014, and will not be required to carry out assessments of individuals' needs or review care plans.

We understand that some relaxing of the Care Act's demands might be necessary to give those most in need the best possible care and support during the outbreak. Yet we are concerned that by temporarily releasing local authorities from these demands may mean some people with learning disabilities are left without support or with support that is limited or inadequate.

Therefore, we urge local authorities to do all they can to maintain existing services to people with learning disabilities and to do their best to provide support to those who get little or no support from family, friends or statutory services.

Will Davies
Director