



**'Scams'**

**Report of the Lewisham People's  
Parliament April 2022**

**This report is written in plain English**

## The Lewisham People's Parliament

The People's Parliament is here to represent the views of people with learning disabilities who live in Lewisham. It is a project run by Lewisham Speaking Up and it is funded by the Big Lottery Community Fund.

There are six Lewisham People's Parliament reps who are elected by other people with learning disabilities. They are paid the London Living Wage for their work with Lewisham Speaking Up.

## Background to this report on Scams

Scams are a subject that people with learning disabilities talk about a lot with Lewisham Speaking Up. People are worried about being scammed.

Sometimes our 1-2-1 advocates help people who have been the victims of scams or fraud. We know that there has also been a big increase in scams during the Covid Pandemic.

There are more and more scams being done online. The People's Parliament reps decided that having a Parliament on this subject would be helpful.

## The Parliament meeting



Mary ready to chair the meeting

This was the first face to face Lewisham People's Parliament since December 2019!

We invited people to our base at the Albany in Deptford and 25 people with learning disabilities came in person. Another 5 people joined us online, so there were **30** people with learning disabilities attending the meeting. The meeting was chaired by People's Parliament rep Mary Hamilton.

Mary started by telling everyone how she had been the victim of identity theft. She only found out because parcels she had not ordered starting turning up at her home. Mary then introduced the guest for the day, Detective Inspector Dan Parkinson.



Dan is from the City of London Police and works in the national coordinators office on fraud and scams.

Dan gave a great presentation on scams. He talked about the different types of scams that can happen. He talked about things to look out for that can help people spot a scam. An area that people found especially interesting was online fraud, where someone pretends to be your friend. It could be a pretend romance or someone saying they want to be friends.

#### **DI Dan Parkinson presenting**

Dan talked about how to report a scam if it happens to you. People asked lots of questions during the presentation. Some people shared things that had happened to them.

After Dan's presentation we also heard from the Lewisham Speaking Up money management advocate Michelle. She reminded everyone that she can help people if they have been a victim of a scam. She also runs money management workshops where you can learn about how to look after your money safely.

#### **The workshops**

After the presentations, we had some smaller workshops to talk about scams. There were three workshops, two in person and one on zoom.

We asked people to share their experiences and thoughts about scams. As usual for our People's Parliament meetings, we divided people's comments into two areas 'what we say' and 'what we want to change'. These are the things that people with learning disabilities said about scams.

### **What we say about scams**

- Have had experience with in person scams. Felt scared and upset but felt better after telling Police and action fraud and Michelle (LSU financial advocate)
- It's not easy avoiding scams
- Someone had money stolen by a support worker
- Can be embarrassing to be scammed and hard to talk about it
- Support workers can be helpful
- You can talk to people at LSU
- Scammers can be scary especially if you know them e.g. neighbours who ask you for things
- It can be hard to know if it's ok to give your card details for things like the postcode lottery in case it's a scam. But you can check first with Michelle (LSU financial advocate)
- It's really hard when people pressure you to give them money. It's good to tell the police if this happens
- It's horrible when people scam or target vulnerable people
- It's important to keep your PIN number private
- I've had a scam text from someone pretending to be the HMRC
- I'm scared of being scammed
- You should talk to someone you trust, friends, family, Lewisham Speaking Up or a support worker
- You have to be careful when you go on holiday. Take your bank's phone number with you
- Some scams say that you have won a prize, but then they want money from you
- I shred my letters with my address on once I've read them
- Sometimes you get a message saying you have a parcel to pick up, but it's really a scam

- Don't answer unusual numbers
- If someone comes to your door ask for their ID and phone up the company to check
- Someone who pretends to be your friend can be a scammer
- If you haven't ordered a parcel, don't accept it
- Some crimes are going down, but scams are increasing

### **What we would like to change about scams**

- Knowing who to go to for help
- More help for people with learning disabilities or other vulnerable people
- More awareness about specific departments at banks and phone companies that are there to support people with learning disabilities
- Help knowing what organisations can help you
- More police to help
- More police talking to people about scams like a monthly drop in
- Workshops about keeping your money safe
- A talk from someone who works in a bank
- Information leaflets
- More easy read information from banks
- Making banking more accessible like audio guides
- Put information about protecting ourselves from scams on the Lewisham Speaking Up website
- Knowing how to get your money back if you are scammed
- Having easy read and plain English information
- Knowing more about how to stay safe
- We should talk to MPs and Councillors about scams
- Don't feel ashamed, scams can affect anyone

### **Summary**

People with learning disabilities were keen to talk about scams and felt happy in most cases to talk about their experiences. This was great because it can be embarrassing to talk about being the victim of a scam.

There were a few obvious points that came out of the People's Parliament meeting:

- Many of the people with learning disabilities present at the meeting had experienced a scam or fraud of one kind or another
- People see scams as quite wide ranging, including aggressive begging. It can be hard for people to tell the difference between a scam and a mate/hate crime
- People with learning disabilities feel targeted because they are seen as more vulnerable
- People with learning disabilities would like more information about scams
- People with learning disabilities would like more help with scams

### **What Next?**

These are the things that the People's Parliament will do next:

- Send this report to the Lewisham Adults Safeguarding Board and meet with them to talk about it
- Send this report to local MPs
- Send this report to Lewisham Council
- Send this report to the National Coordinators office for fraud at the City of London police
- Find some easy read information about scams that we can put out on our website

For more information or to discuss anything to do with this report contact Lewisham Speaking Up.

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