



‘Our Impact (and the impact of Covid)’

**Report of the Lewisham People’s
Parliament June 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 Impact

This Lewisham People's Parliament report is planned to be the last under our current Big Lottery funding. Our grant started in July 2019 and finished in June 2022.

Normally we would hold an Impact Parliament once a year, but that all changed under the Covid pandemic. This report looks back over the last three years or so and what we have achieved in very difficult times.

The Parliament meeting



Colin ready to chair the meeting

This was the second face to face Lewisham People's Parliament since December 2019. It was the first time we had sent out an open invite for anyone to attend. Unfortunately, our meeting was at the same time as a train strike!

We invited people to the St Laurence Centre in Catford on June 23rd and **33** people with learning disabilities came in person. The meeting was chaired by People's Parliament rep Colin Smith.

Colin gave a presentation about what the Lewisham People's Parliament had done over the last three years since 2019.

He explained how he and five other People's Parliament reps were elected in September 2019. Colin said that we only had the chance to have one face to face Parliament meeting after the elections in 2019.

Colin said that Covid has been hard for the Lewisham People's Parliament and that we have had to do most of our meetings online. This meant that not as many people could come.

It was also harder for us to meet with bosses and the Council, especially in the Covid Lockdowns.

Colin reminded everyone about all the different subjects we had talked about in People's Parliaments since 2019:

- **Electing your reps**
- **Social Care**
- **Young People**
- **Technology and Covid**
- **Your Rights to Health Care**
- **Hate Crime Laws**
- **Council Cuts**
- **Mental Health**
- **The Environment**
- **Scams**
- **Our Impact**

He said that including the elections Parliament and today's Impact Parliament, we have had **11** People's Parliament meetings.

Colin said that people with learning disabilities had come to our Parliament meetings **355** times.

Although Covid has been hard, Colin said that the People's Parliament has still had some good results. Colin handed over to Marsh, who supports the People's Parliament Reps, to explain how we measured our success.

Marsh said that the People's Parliament used a 'traffic light' way of measuring if they had gotten a good result. A good result could be lots of different things, like getting something changed, getting a meeting with someone, or helping to change attitudes.

If the People's Parliament get a good result they say it gets a green light. In between gets an amber light and if we don't get anywhere it is a red light.

Marsh showed everyone how many of each we had got since September 2019.



Red Traffic Lights = 4



Amber Traffic Lights = 6



Green Traffic Lights = 46

Marsh gave an example of one of the green lights, where we had influenced someone. After the People's Parliament on the Environment, we were asked to write a blog for a charity called Ashden.

They were so impressed with our work, that they wanted to show other Councils across the UK how people with learning disabilities can be involved in talking about the Environment. The blog was published on their website, so other people can learn from what was done in Lewisham.

Marsh handed back to Colin who said that it was great to be back meeting face to face again.

Colin explained to everyone that we have applied for another grant from the Big Lottery Fund and that we are hoping to continue with the Lewisham People's Parliament meetings in September or October 2022.

The workshops

For the second part of the Parliament meeting we had some workshops. The workshops were about friendships and re-connecting with people after Covid.

This was the theme of Learning Disability Week 2022, which was the same week as the Parliament meeting. It also fitted in nicely with us returning to face to face meetings.

At this particular Parliament we saw some people who had not been able to get online and that we hadn't seen for a long time. We also met some people in person for the first time. There were people who had joined us online during Covid that we have never seen face to face.

This what people with learning disabilities said about friendships during Covid and what they would like to see change.

What we say about friends during Covid

- I was isolated
- I felt anxious
- I missed all my friends
- I felt like I had no friends
- I missed seeing my family and friends
- I felt upset not being able to see friends
- I missed going to church
- I felt alone, I was calling people
- It was strange. There wasn't much to go to or take part in
- Some days were good, some were horrible
- I felt stuck, especially when living on my own
- I was treated differently, there was so much stress
- My neighbours were hostile

- There was more discrimination
- It was hard for mental health
- I don't use zoom
- I had no laptop for zoom
- It's hard to keep in contact on zoom if you don't have a computer
- I needed support to use zoom
- I didn't see any friends until I worked out zoom
- It was a scary time
- I lost friends and family to Covid and it was difficult as we couldn't get together
- I lost friends through not keeping in touch
- I lost friends, I don't know why
- It was too long. I lost my routine, like going to clubs
- It was a frightening time
- It was scary travelling on public transport in Covid to see friends
- I spoke to people on the phone
- You could keep in touch with people over the phone
- I spoke to my friends on the phone
- We met on zoom, but it's not the same as seeing people in person
- It was hard not to see people during Covid, especially after having a child or if there are vulnerable people at home
- It was hard having a new baby because you couldn't meet other parents
- Some people could see some friends in bubbles
- I felt bored stiff at home
- Covid stopped my independence
- It was sad only being able to see family through a window

What we say about how things are now

- People feel that they are now part of the community again
- I feel happy seeing friends now and coming to Lewisham Speaking Up in person
- I feel better about Covid after the vaccine
- It is very exciting to see friends again

- It is good going back to the Tuesday Club
- Covid made you appreciate friends and the little things that make you happy
- I'm feeling better and getting back out to clubs now
- We are still living with it. It's still there, though not as bad now
- I'm still worried about contact and keeping distance
- Some people are still wearing masks
- People's behaviour has changed, they are anxious about coughing
- Some people still want to social distance and wear masks
- It is easier to travel now
- You don't need to worry so much now
- There are still different sets of rules in different countries
- Day services and centres have made cuts
- I visit my mum in person
- We can go on holiday now!
- I'm going to see my friends that I made during Covid
- I'm seeing more of my family in person
- I can now go to activities on my own again and do things with my family and friends
- There is hope now to get away from a difficult situation

What we would like to change in the future

- We would like to see more people in person
- I want to go out and about more by myself
- There should be more parties and get-togethers
- I'd like to make more friends and do activities
- I want to see my friends more often and go to the pub
- I want a relationship
- I would like to get a date
- Don't make cuts to services and day centres
- Think about safety when making new friends, like mate crime
- There should be more meeting up
- We should make contact with other groups
- We want to organise events to meet people and not rely on social media
- We can meet online to share hobbies and interests

- There should be a community website for information about what's on in the area and leaflets too
- There should be social clubs during the day. It can be difficult in the evening for parents and carers
- We should challenge organisations when they say that people still can't do things because of Covid. Like not seeing GPs in person or not seeing friends and getting about if you live in supported living







Giving feedback from the workshops

What did people say about the Parliament?

To evaluate the success of the People's Parliament on Impact we use an accessible method with facial expression stickers.

We asked people with learning disabilities to rate the Parliament by choosing a face sticker. 33 out of 33 people (100%) put up a sticker.

This is what they thought about the Parliament meeting:

Stickers	Number of stickers
Yellow smiley face (good)  =	30
Red sad face (bad)  =	3
Total of all stickers  +  =	33

What Next?

We are waiting to hear about the future funding of the Lewisham People's Parliament. We are hoping that we can have our next meeting in September or October 2022.

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

- Send this report to the Big Lottery Fund
- Send this report to Lewisham Council, service providers in Lewisham and other people who may be interested

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

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