



'Race Equality'
**Report of the Lewisham People's
Parliament October 2023**

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 currently funded in various ways, including from the South East London Integrated Care System.

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



Background to this report on Race Equality

This Lewisham People's Parliament was held to find out what people with learning disabilities think about race equality, especially in relation to health.

We have known for a long time that people with learning disabilities often have worse health than other people. This is especially true for people with learning disabilities from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Lewisham Speaking Up has been working on race with the Race Equality Foundation and Learning Disability England for a number of years.

At first we found that many people with learning disabilities found it difficult to talk about race and racism. Our People's Parliament reps have done a lot of work on race equality and find it easier to talk about now.

We have wanted to hold a People's Parliament on race equality for a while. The launch of the 'We Deserve Better' report gave us a good opportunity to talk about this subject.

The report looks at health inequalities for people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. It was launched in July 2023.

You can read the report here:

<https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/press-release/we-deserve-better-ethnic-minorities-with-a-learning-disability-and-access-to-healthcare/>

We tried to get some guest speakers to come and speak on the subject of race. Unfortunately, we couldn't find anyone that was able to come and join us.

For this meeting we talked about two areas:

- What do people with learning disabilities think about the 'We Deserve Better' report
- How to stand up to racism and be a good ally

The Parliament meeting



Ifeoma chairing the meeting

The meeting was held in the Lewisham Council Chamber.

We would like to thank Lewisham Council for letting us have the rooms for our meeting.

We invited people to join us on 19th October and **36** people with learning disabilities came in person.

The meeting was chaired by People's Parliament rep Ifeoma Orjiekwe.

Ifeoma welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through some ground rules. She then made a speech to open the Parliament.

Ifeoma said that October was Black History month, so this was a good time to talk about race and racism.

Ifeoma asked people if they knew what equality means. She said that equality means everyone deserves the same rights, respect and treatment.

Ifeoma said racism can be a difficult thing to talk about. She said that it's important to provide a place for us to talk about racism, so we can reduce fear and isolation.

Ifeoma asked everyone if they knew what racism means.

She said that racism is when people treat you differently, sometimes in a bad way, because of the colour of your skin. Sometimes people hurt other people because of the colour of their skin.

Ifeoma said that it's against the law to be racist and discriminate against someone because of the colour of their skin. If people target you, call you names or hurt you, it's called a hate crime.

Ifeoma also said that being a victim of hate crime can affect your health. It can affect the way you think and make you anxious, fearful, and depressed. You might feel bad about yourself and vulnerable. This can affect your independence.

Ifeoma said that by having this people's parliament, we are hoping that people can talk, be enlightened, and learn how to make a better place for us all. Racism is a big thing. Everyone should feel safe and be treated fairly.

Finally, Ifeoma said that the law and health systems are not good enough at the moment. They need to be better.

She said that we are all human and deserve to be treated with respect, live safely, be well and healthy. It's important we all feel safe and comfortable in our community and live without fear.

Everybody clapped a lot when Ifeoma finished her opening speech.

Ifeoma then invited everyone to join one of two workshops:

- A workshop on the 'We Deserve Better' report
- A workshop on how to stand up to racism and be a good ally

Workshop 1 - the 'We Deserve Better' report. Ethnicity and health

This workshop was led by People's Parliament rep Aisha and the Lewisham Speaking Up director Marsh.

Aisha spoke about working with the Race Equality Foundation and Learning Disability England on the 'We Deserve Better' report. Aisha was a co-chair of the working group of people with lived experience of learning disabilities. They talked about their experiences of health care.

Aisha appears in a short video made to launch the report which you can watch on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fipBiUZG-rs&t=5s>

In the workshop we looked at the easy read version of the report and what it says.

We also looked at what the report says should happen. These are the things that came out of the workshop:

What we say about the 'We Deserve Better' report

- We do deserve better!
- Equal rights should be for everyone
- We must make things better for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Racism is still happening right now
- We need more work to find out what people think about this subject. Start from the bottom up

- We shouldn't stereotype people or make generalisations
- We should share this information with more people in creative ways and make it more accessible
- Physical and mental health are both important
- Some doctors are good
- People feel differently about sharing information about their ethnicity
- Is ethnicity important to share with the NHS?

What we want to happen about the 'We Deserve Better' report

- Awareness courses for health staff about learning disability and ethnicity
- Include work around ethnicity to the Oliver McGowan training
- More money for charities working on ethnicity in people with learning disabilities and how it affects your health
- More individualised and person centred treatment that takes account of the ethnicity of people with learning disabilities
- More hospital passports for people with learning disabilities
- A learning disability nurse in every hospital
- More accessible forms about ethnicity and learning disability
- The health care system and government to learn from past mistakes
- There should be more policies in the NHS and other places about ethnicity and learning disability
- Accessible complaints procedures so people can complain if they don't get the right treatment
- More trust building by the NHS in relation to ethnicity

Workshop 2 – Standing up to racism and being a good ally

This workshop was led by Michelle and Jan, Lewisham Speaking Up's 121 advocates. This was a difficult subject to get everyone to talk about. Some people got mixed up about being discriminated against because of their learning disability, rather than race.

We found that some white people with learning disabilities found it hard to understand the idea of being an ally. Some white people felt that they also experienced racism from black people.

However, everyone agreed that it was important to stand up to racism. The idea of being an ally against racism needs more discussion.

This is what people with learning disabilities said in the workshop:

What we say about standing up to racism

- It does not matter what culture you are from, we are all the same
- If someone is a victim of a hate crime we should say it won't be tolerated.
- Respect fair treatment and don't judge. Equal rights
- Everyone should be accepted in their community regardless of race
- If people cannot tolerate diversity then they should keep their distance
- We should empower victims of racism to challenge the culprit
- People who go on holidays who are of a different race should be treated fairly and with mutual respect
- Immigrants contribute loads towards the NHS
- People make assumptions
- The media does not help
- Some people are confused about what is racism and what is prejudice

What we want to happen about standing up to racism

- Treat people the way they want to be treated with kindness and care
- Change the law
- We should have more campaigns about racism
- We need stronger laws to prevent racism and violence
- Racism needs to be challenged frequently
- People should be encouraged to show their support against racism as opposed to being silent

- The police need more re-training
- More unity and love!



Feeding back what was said in the workshops

At the end of the meeting the chairperson Ifeoma said it was 'important that everyone should have voice - they should have a very serious chance to talk about it. And if you are feeling alone or isolated, if you are living in pain with racism or heard any racist views, try and talk to someone about it. Fight for your rights and be strong, keep well and look after yourself.'

Summary

People with learning disabilities found race inequality a difficult subject to talk about at first.

We also found it difficult to find guests to come and talk to people with learning disabilities about race inequality.

Overall, everyone agreed that racism was wrong and that people should stand up against it.

The idea of being an ally against racism was a difficult idea for some people to understand.

People also spoke a lot about being discriminated against because of their learning disability. It seemed that for some people it was hard to separate that from race discrimination.

We think that this tells us that this is a subject we need to talk about again. We hope to hold more self-advocacy events to talk about race inequality in the future.





What did people say about the Parliament?

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

A couple of people also wrote comments:

- It was worthwhile coming today
- Thank you for supporting us all here today, we wouldn't have done it without your support
- You kept us all safe here and provide good support for us

We asked people with learning disabilities to rate the Parliament by choosing a face sticker. 31 out of 36 people (86%) 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)  =	1
Total of all stickers  +  =	31



What Next?

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

- Send this report to the Race Equality Foundation and Learning Disability England
- Send this report to Local Members of Parliament, Lewisham Council, service providers in Lewisham and other people who may be interested
- We will continue to work with the Lewisham Learning Disability health stakeholder group. We will support people with learning disabilities to be a part of the forum. We will help them to understand what is going on in Lewisham
- We will join with other self-advocacy groups that are already campaigning about health inequalities for people with learning disabilities

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

Email info@lsup.org.uk

Web lsup.org.uk

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