



‘Social Care’

**Report of the Lewisham People’s
Parliament June 2026**

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.

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 Social Care

This Lewisham People's Parliament was held to find out what people with learning disabilities think about social care.

We talked about social care at a People's Parliament in 2022, where people said that they would like more support hours. People who received support said that it is not enough to support their independence. Those who don't receive any support said that they would like to – it would improve their lives but the assessment process was too complicated and limiting.

Our reps co-chair the Lewisham Learning Disability Partnership Board, and some of its subgroups, including "A Life with Opportunities". We are working with the board and groups to carry out the Learning Disability Implementation Plan. This plan will improve supported living services and care services, so that people with learning disabilities have more say in how they are run. We want people to receive support that helps them be more independent, and live the life they want to live.

We held a People's Parliament in December on relationships and sexual health. We presented the report of this People's Parliament to the Life with Opportunities subgroup. We asked the subgroup to work on including relationships and sexual health in auditing for supported living services. This would mean making sure that people with learning disabilities are being supported to have the relationships they want.

We asked People's Parliament attendees to vote on this year's People's Parliament topics, and social care received the most votes. We wanted to hear what people want to change about social care, so we can work with decision makers to make social care services better. Nationally, there is an independent review of Adult Social Care called the Casey Commission, and we want local people's voices to be heard alongside this.

The Parliament 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.



Aisha chairing the meeting

We invited people to join us on the 5th June and 49 people with learning disabilities came in person.

This included guests from Advocacy in Greenwich, One Place East and People First. We would like to thank them for joining us.

The meeting was chaired by People's Parliament rep Aisha Edwards.

Aisha welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through some ground rules. Then she made a speech to open the Parliament.

Aisha said that we would be talking about:

- What does good support look like?
- How do we make sure that people get support when they need it?
- What is “organisational abuse”, why does it still happen and what can we do about it?

Aisha said that she gets a lot of support from her family that helps her be independent. They help her to work, and look after her baby boy.

Aisha said that not everyone has this support, and they need a social care system that works for them when their family can't support them or they want to move on.

When she was 16, Aisha's mum passed away and it was a really difficult time. She had another mum who was able to support her, but not everyone has this.

Aisha also said that it has been 15 years since Winterbourne View, but we are still learning lessons from it. It is upsetting to think about, but there is still abuse that happens in social care today.

Aisha then introduced our first guest speaker, Gary Bourlet from Learning Disability England.

Gary couldn't join us in person, so he presented his speech on a video with his personal assistant Anna.

Gary works at Learning Disability England. It is a national organisation that influences or campaigns about important topics, and brings together self advocates, supporters and families. Gary told us about the Good Lives Framework. People with learning disabilities, and their families and supporters, worked together to write the framework. It recommends what people with learning disabilities need to have a good life. Learning Disability England use it to decide what work they will do.



Gary's video of his speech

The framework has 7 chapters, and one of them is “good support”.

The framework says that “social care is about life, not services”.

Relationships with support workers and services are important. They need to be consistent, so people with learning disabilities work with the same people over time. They should be based on trust and equal power.

People feel forgotten about when policies about social care focus only on support for older people, not people with disabilities.

Gary shared some “ideas for change” from the framework. This includes:

- Service providers could be judged on how well they recruit, support and keep staff
- Providers could be judged on the steps they take to make sure the support they give is person-led
- Making sure social care staff are paid fairly and have good working conditions. They should be paid fairly for all their hours, including sleepover hours
- The Association of Directors of Social Services, Local Government Association and NHS England should prioritise recruiting and keeping staff who build strong relationships with the people they support
- Support services should be properly funded so they are stable and can provide good, person-led support
- Decisions should be made with the person's wishes and preferences coming first. Success should be measured by how well the support works for the person.

Gary asked us to pause the video and discuss what we thought of what the framework said.

People said they agreed that staff should be paid fairly and supported so that they stay in their jobs. This means that people get to work with staff long enough to build trust and make their lives better.

Some people also said that they should be involved in hiring staff. This means they can have some say over who they work with.



People's Parliament members holding discussions

Then Aisha presented a video by Social Care Future from their 2025 conference

The video was about what people said about Adult Social Care for the Casey Commission. You can watch the video here:

[#socialcarefuture suggestions](#)

One quote that stood out to everyone was "stop calling us service users, we're humans at the end of the day"

Aisha then invited everyone to join one of three workshops:

- A workshop on 'what does good support look like?'
- A workshop on 'when things go wrong'
- A workshop on 'activities and the community'

Workshop 1 – What does good support look like?

This workshop was run by Lewisham Speaking Up's Community Advocate

What is a good support worker?

- They have to listen to you
- Understand how to help you
- Good communication between people and staff
- They should help you send emails
- They should take safeguarding seriously
- They should support you through the hard times

What is a good support manager?

- They take complaints seriously
- Believe what you say
- Well organised
- Motivate their staff
- Manage finances and resources fairly
- Compassionate
- They should be accessible if you're not sure about new staff.
They should answer the phone

What is a good social worker?

- Listens to you
- If you were abused as a child, they should get to know your triggers
- Have good knowledge of the person
- They should want to get you suitable support
- They review cases yearly

How can good support make you feel more independent?

- Supporters show you how to do things and then help you get the confidence to do it
- They show you how to be more independent. For example, they show you how to use apps to get around on your own
- Good support can look like baby steps, especially if you have anxiety
- Good support to do things online



Workshop 2 – When things go wrong

This workshop was led by Ben Mant, chair of the Lewisham Safeguarding Adults Board, and Lewisham Speaking Up

What experiences have you had when making a complaint?

- I didn't feel like I was listened to
- Nothing gets changed if you do complain
- I've got mould in my kitchen and they don't want to know
- Complaints get covered up – they make you write and write and they hope you give up because the complaint procedure is so hard
- Staff swore at me once and I reported it, but he still works there
- It takes them too long to reply to complaints
- People are too worried about protecting their reputation
- How far does organisational abuse have to go? We keep seeing things go wrong
- I have to rely on my family to complain on my behalf
- There are people out there that can help you and support you
- People with learning disabilities have been undervalued for years and years. We've been left behind

What do we think about organisational abuse?

- Organisations can club together and protect each other
- People with learning disabilities can be abused in hospitals and homes by people who should be looking after them
- Winterbourne View made me so angry. Why would you do that?
- It's good that people with learning disabilities have more opportunities now than they did before
- More people have jobs now which is good

- People who don't have good communication skills can't always be heard when things go wrong. They need support to say what a good life is for them

What needs to change?

- People need help with complaint procedures. It's too difficult
- The CQC don't always listen to staff who are whistleblowing
- The needs of the person should come first
- There should be more Easy Read complaints forms
- It's hard to complain without going online
- We need in-person support to make a complaint – not just over the phone
- We need more information about what help is available
- There needs to be more funding for organisations that support disabled people – it should be funded properly by the government
- The lives of people with learning disabilities should be valued more – we are fed up with words, we want action
- Care staff and support workers should get more training - some don't know how to talk to people with a learning disability
- There needs to be more support in general for people with learning disabilities



Workshop 3 – Activities and community

This workshop was led by Lewisham Speaking Up's Money Management Advocate

What activities can your support help you to do?

- Weekly workshops
- Gym
- Housekeeping
- Travel safety
- Gardening work
- Shopping and making shopping lists
- CVS in Blackheath
- Mentoring
- Cooking and washing

How can support workers allow you to do the activities you want to do?

- Support workers should respect the decisions of the person in their care
- Respect and space to allow the person to genuinely express their interests
- Respect the person in your care
- My choices are heard and respected
- I like coming to Lewisham Speaking Up because I know my voice is heard
- A riot will happen if I am not given the chance to access activities

Summary

People with learning disabilities in Lewisham want a social care system that supports their independence, listens to their voices, and treats them with dignity. Things are getting better, but not fast enough. Many people still don't get enough support hours to help them build independence, and it doesn't always feel like support services are on their side.

People described what good support looks like: having consistent, well-trained staff who listen, communicate clearly, and build trusting relationships. Good support should be person-centred, helping people develop confidence and independence at their own pace, and supporting them to take part in everyday activities and community life.

Many people feel unheard when things go wrong. Complaints can be ignored or delayed, or the procedure is too complicated. People are disappointed to hear that organisational abuse still happens, even after everyone saw how bad it can get at Winterbourne View. It shows that lessons have not been fully learned. People urgently need stronger safeguarding, better training for staff and more accessible ways to complain.

People said that we need real change, not just promises. This includes better funding for services, fair pay and support for staff, and more opportunities for people with learning disabilities to make decisions about their lives. People with learning disabilities should be involved in designing services and recruiting staff.

People with learning disabilities want their lives to be valued equally. Social care should be about living a full life, not just receiving services.

What did people say about the Parliament?

To evaluate the success of the People's Parliament on Social Care, we used an accessible method with facial expression stickers.

We asked people with learning disabilities to rate the Parliament by choosing a face sticker. 39 out of 49 people (80%) put up a sticker. This is what they thought about the Parliament meeting

Stickers	Number of stickers
Yellow smiley face (good)  =	38
Orange unsure face (in the middle)  =	1
Red sad face (bad)  =	0
Total of all stickers  +  +  =	39

What Next?

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

- Send this report to Local Members of Parliament, Lewisham Council, service providers in Lewisham and other people who may be interested
- Present this report to the Lewisham Learning Disability Partnership board and the "Life with Opportunities" subgroup
Send this report to Learning Disability England and other self-advocacy groups around the country
- Present this report to the Lewisham Safeguarding Adults Board
- Find out if we can share this report with the Casey Commission on social care

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

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