

Summary of the Lewisham People's Parliament on Health

The inequalities in health treatment for people with learning disability are well documented and have been getting increasing media press coverage in recent months. The closure of assessment and treatment units remains a serious issue that still needs addressing. The fact that many deaths of people with a learning disability are considered 'avoidable' and are happening early is and should be, truly shocking. However, our workshops looking at people's day to day experiences of using health care services such as GPs and hospitals show that some simple steps can make a big difference.

The experience of people with learning disability using health services varies, with some people reporting a good experience. Often, people's experience is mixed and largely depends on three areas. These are good communication, good staff attitudes and the right reasonable adjustments. Looking at what people said in the workshops we would recommend;

- Much wider use of hospital passports, health action plans and annual health checks. This includes promoting these things with people with learning disability living on their own or with family, not just among professionals.
- Inaccessible language and jargon can be a real barrier. More training for staff in how to communicate well with people with learning disability and treat them equally.
- More reasonable adjustments for people with learning disability, which often means adjusting attitudes or the ways of communicating. A reasonable adjustment should not be seen as a 'burden' by health staff but seen as a necessity to enable equal treatment to be given.
- Shorter waiting times and longer appointments would make using GP and hospital services much easier for people with learning disability and autism.
- A better understanding from health professionals that people with learning disability have the right to make their own decisions about health care. People with learning disability want health professionals to talk directly to them in a way they understand, but they also want to be able to have the support of family, friends or support staff when they choose to do so.

As a result of the Lewisham people's parliament on health, the parliament reps will be asking to meet with health and social care managers and decision makers. They will ask what can be done differently as a result of what people with a learning disability have said they want to happen. Since the health parliament in June 2017 we have also taken the following actions:

- Parliament reps attended a meeting with the Nursing and Midwifery council and National Mencap and passed on the recommendations in the health parliament report.
- Parliament reps met with the manager of the community learning disability health team in Lewisham. Based on feedback from the health parliament, reps made some suggested changes to the Trust's learning disability strategy. The manager agreed with the reps suggestions and said he would recommend that the changes be made.
- Parliament reps attended a learning disability champion's day at Lewisham University Hospital and gave five recommendations about what the hospital could do differently to support people with learning disability in relation to healthcare.
- The people's parliament report on health was sent to the health policy officer at National Mencap to be shared with health decision makers and Mencap local groups.

The Lewisham people's parliament will continue to campaign on important health issues and highlight those inequalities experienced by people with learning disability.

Marsh Stitchman, July 2017.

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