

# **Submission for Task and Finish Group - Improving digital inclusion for Lewisham residents with a learning disability to improve quality of life**

## **Task and Finish Group Proposal**

How might greater digital inclusion be achieved, and how might this provide a better quality of life, for residents of Lewisham who have a learning disability?

### **Overview**

I propose that we explore the digital divide that exists between those who have a learning disability and those who do not share that characteristic. How has this shown itself during the Covid 19 pandemic, what has been learned about the accessibility of the digital realm to people with a learning disability and how might that be increased? What benefits (or disadvantages) might be experienced by people with a learning disability as a result of greater digital inclusion?

### **Reason For Proposal**

During the past year there has been enormous escalation in the speed of implementation of digital platforms for work and leisure activities. Many of those who believed they could not navigate the digital realm, including some people with a learning disability, have become digitally enabled however there are still those who have been left behind.

Lewisham Speaking Up, an advocacy project for people with a learning disability, has researched and produced a report on digital exclusion. I believe this is the time to build on this work, look at the factors which do digitally exclude those with a learning disability, look at how we, as an authority and community, might ameliorate those factors and how in the future the digital realm might increase and optimise the support available to those who need the help of others to lead a safe, rewarding and fulfilling life.

While in the long term this sort of support will become a mainstream part of what is offered to those who use our services, the work of a Task and Finish Group, widening the reach and maintaining the momentum of the expansion of digital use due to Covid 19 seems timely.

### **Policy Context**

The Council is reviewing services provided to people with a Learning Disability. A report has been written by Lewisham Speaking Up into digital exclusion which fits in a timely way with local and national conversation of the digital divide.

As the Council seeks ceaselessly to provide good service to residents in the time of swingeing government cuts optimising every pound spent becomes ever more important. For those who require a support package every avenue needs to be explored to ensure they have a maximised quality of life, including optimised independence for those with a need for assistance with daily living.

The general population increasingly uses digital technology for both routine life activity and enrichment. By including as many people with a learning disability in what those without that characteristic take for granted not only will their lives be enriched but they will have more independence, more choice, more control and “more bang for their support buck”. Better use of budgets is an overall aim of the Council always but especially now.

### **Criteria for the Investigation**

As outlined in the various sections above the suggestion for this Task and Finish work has come out of the increased local and national conversation about digital exclusion and local and national awareness of the disproportionate exclusion of people with a learning disability from services and experiences due to lack of access to the digital realm.

Lewisham needs to increase the use of universal services by people with extraordinary needs and as services increasingly move on line, the more enabled residents with all levels of need become, the better will they be able to use the services we make available to them.

The more universal and community resources residents with a learning disability can use the fewer targeted services they require and the greater inclusion in society as a whole they will experience.

Many of the services used by people with a learning disability are provided or commissioned and wholly or partly funded by the Council. By encouraging a thoroughgoing exploration of how digital inclusion may work towards greater engagement we may well discover improved ways of delivering support in the future. The work of Lewisham Speaking Up may well intersect and inform this exploration.

It might be hoped that this proposed work would benefit directly people with a learning disability and their family and friends who provide them with support. By enabling access to universal as well as targeted services it would broaden support available especially to those on more limited support budgets. Digital inclusion might also enable more timely and appropriate support from paid for sources.

### **Sources of Evidence**

People with a learning disability are well able to express their own opinions given the opportunity and willing communicators!

Providers of support services commissioned by Lewisham, both in and out of borough.

Adult Learning Lewisham.

Lewisham Speaking Up.

Greenvale and Drumbeat Schools.

Lewisham College

MENCAP.

Camphill Friends and Family.

Carers Lewisham.

### **Co-optees/Technical advisors**

In addition to the sources of evidence given above advice might be sought from experts in adapted digital equipment and leading edge social care research academics from Goldsmiths University of London for example.

### **Suggested Time Frame**

Because of the ongoing nature of the outcomes of this group, and the exploration of progress through the recovery period, an initial 6 month period of evidence gathering (not including holiday periods) and report production with progress studies to 12 months might be appropriate should there be any implementation studies to be made.

### **Equalities Impact**

People with a Learning Disability are a disadvantaged group in our society and their inclusion in the digital realm is being explored in this proposal.

There is also the opportunity for exploration of intersectionality with other characteristics shown by people with a learning disability in Lewisham's diverse population. Gender, racial heritage, sexual orientation and so forth.

### **Councillor Submitting this Proposal**

Cllr Jacq. Paschoud.

While I have been minded to make this proposal for some time I hesitated to put forward the idea believing there to be much competition for topics to be pursued.

However the publication of the Speaking Up report on Digital Exclusion has increased my belief that this proposal is timely hence my sole submission up against the closing date.

It might be expected that both those interested in social care and those interested in technological solutions might be interested in the work of the suggested Task and Finish group.

## Task and Finish Group Proforma - Improving Wi-Fi access and connectivity to improve educational outcomes for Lewisham's pupils, particularly those most in need

<p><b>Proposed title</b>  <i>This should be written as a question. What is the main question that you are looking to answer? Ideally use "how" I.e. "How can we improve.....XXX?"</i></p>	<p>How can we identify the lack of access to the Wi-Fi network, to improve connectivity, along with educational outcomes, for those pupils most in need?</p>
<p><b>Overview</b>  <i>Provide 2-3 sentences explaining the proposed investigation in more detail including the key areas that you are proposing to look at.</i></p>	<p>The investigation will identify failings in internet access and wifi connectivity relied upon by pupils, particularly those already identified as under achieving prior to lockdown due to the pandemic, who will need to catch-up via on line learning outside of the school environment – mainly at home.</p>
<p><b>Reason for proposal</b>  <i>Why do you think that a task and finish group is the most appropriate way to address this issue / answer this question? Where has the suggestion come from? (I.e. through resident engagement, casework, external inspection, performance information.)</i></p>	<p>The Mayor of London has launched a new taskforce to tackle the digital divide, and amongst other issues support children in need. He has allocated £1.5m over the next two years for this, part of the work will be to map out reliable connectivity across London. At a recent Webinar chaired by the Mayor of London, it was also mentioned that if there are issues with Wi-Fi hotspots in individual boroughs to let the taskforce team know. Ofcom estimates over 880,000 UK children have only a mobile internet connection at home.</p> <p>The task and finish group can work alongside schools/officers to help identify those households most in need. This will also provide detailed information for targeted pupil support and to pass on to the taskforce team, along with specific, up-to-date information for inclusion in future applications for external funding.</p>
<p><b>Policy Context</b>  <i>How does the proposal support delivery of the Lewisham Corporate Strategy; national/regional policies, initiatives; legislation etc.</i></p>	<p>I believe this proposal will help us identify and better support the educational achievements, and outcomes, for those Lewisham pupils who will be reliant on a good network connection, both now and in the future. In addition to this it will support the Level-up agenda aimed at ensuring children get guaranteed access to learning.</p>

<p><b>Criteria for the investigation</b> <i>(Essential)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Is the proposed investigation timely? Why?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is it a strategic and significant issue? How?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is it of concern to one or more sections of the population? Who?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>(Desirable)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Is the issue of concern to partners or stakeholders? How?</i></li> <li>• <i>Will the investigation add value in terms of improving the council's or partner's performance or service delivery? How?</i></li> <li>• <i>Will the investigation be duplicating any other work? What?</i></li> <li>• <i>What control or influence does the Council have in this area?</i></li> </ul>	<p>This proposal is very timely and coincides with the launch of the London Mayor's task force to tackle the digital divide. Moreover, most children have just begun returning to school after almost a year being home schooled. We will need to do all we can to support their learning outside of the school environment and access to a reliable network service will be crucial.</p> <p>This can only be good for Lewisham schools, parents and pupils.</p>
<p><b>Sources of evidence</b> <i>Do you have any thoughts/ideas on where you might gather evidence from? e.g. research or site visits. (Officers will be able to recommend suggestions and help with this.)</i></p>	<p>We can gather evidence from parents and schools. Officers have also begun a review of buildings across the borough to expand services and provide better support for families.</p> <p>We can also get technical information from local network providers. I am also open to other suggestions that would help with this work.</p>
<p><b>Co-optees / Technical advisors?</b> <i>Would the task and finish group benefit from having expert input such as an academic or local expert?</i></p>	<p>BT and Vodaphone's expert technical advice and support would be very helpful.</p>
<p><b>Suggested timeframe</b> <i>Do you estimate / suggest that the investigation take 3, 6, 9 or 12 months? Outline your suggested timetable for evidence gathering.</i></p>	<p>At this stage it is difficult to say, I would estimate 6 – 9 months.</p>

<b>Equalities Impact</b> <i>Identify any equalities issues that might be applicable.</i>	
<b>Councillor(s) submitting the proposal</b> <i>Please list the names of the submitting councillor(s)</i>	Cllr Colin Elliott

## Task and Finish Group Proforma - Retrofitting and insulating homes in Lewisham to achieve climate change targets

<p><b>Proposed title</b>  <i>This should be written as a question. What is the main question that you are looking to answer? Ideally use “how” I.e. “How can we improve.....XXX?”</i></p>	<p>How can Lewisham Council ensure that we are doing everything we can to retrofit and insulate homes, both owned and managed by Lewisham and in the private sector, in order to reach our Climate Change target by 2030?</p>
<p><b>Overview</b>  <i>Provide 2-3 sentences explaining the proposed investigation in more detail including the key areas that you are proposing to look at.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thorough investigation of what is being done to upgrade our housing stock by Lewisham Homes, Phoenix and Pinnacle.</li> <li>• Benchmarking - what we are currently doing and how this compares with other London Boroughs of a similar make-up</li> <li>• Best practice from other boroughs and Local Authority advisory bodies – what can we learn to improve and speed up?</li> <li>• Implementation of enforcement of the Minimum Energy Efficiency standards infringements by private landlords. Is there a way to make this work and pay for itself?</li> <li>• What can we do as a Local authority to help home owners to upgrade their own homes?</li> <li>• Can this work, both of private and publicly owned housing, be part of a wider economic recovery for Lewisham Post-Covid and be our own “Green New Deal” creating local jobs in this sector?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reason for proposal</b>  <i>Why do you think that a task and finish group is the most appropriate way to address this issue / answer this question? Where has the suggestion come from? (I.e. through resident engagement, casework, external inspection, performance information.)</i></p>	<p>We have discussed with officers, involved in the Climate Change work of the council, which issue they feel is the most pressing and this was clearly the most important. Currently we need to retrofit at least 80% of Lewisham’s housing stock which equates to 28 houses per day in order to reach our climate goals, and with every passing day this number increases. The cost of getting this work done will rise as the task increases in size and becomes more pressing, plus the value of the improvements for residents will be greater the earlier the work is completed.</p>

<p><b>Policy Context</b>  <i>How does the proposal support delivery of the Lewisham Corporate Strategy; national/regional policies, initiatives; legislation etc.</i></p>	<p>The Corporate Strategy states our housing aim to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone has a decent home that is secure and affordable</li> </ul> <p>This Task and Finish group will work towards making housing more affordable, particularly in terms of energy costs and will focus on those most in need.</p> <p>Although the Corporate Strategy does not explicitly set goals towards reducing our carbon emissions we passed a Climate Emergency Motion in 2019 which states the aim of Lewisham Borough to be Carbon Neutral by 2030 and to do this the Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set specific and measurable targets to reduce carbon emissions for the Council and for the borough as a whole, including costed milestones to zero-carbon.</li> <li>• Consider systematically the climate change impact of each area of the Council's activities</li> <li>• Increase local resilience to climate impacts already in the system.</li> <li>• Continue to prioritise support for vulnerable residents through the Council's fuel poverty programmes working with partners at a community, borough wide and regional level to provide advice services and access to funding for heating, insulation and ventilation.</li> <li>• Accelerate existing programmes to deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions including delivery of heat networks in the borough, low carbon development and high quality housing, an efficient and low carbon corporate estate and support for renewables and for community energy</li> <li>• Work with partner bodies across the borough and across London to ensure the climate emergency is adequately reflected in the development and implementation of all borough wide strategies and plans.</li> <li>• Draw up a communications strategy to support delivery of a Zero-Carbon Lewisham and enable Lewisham residents to make low carbon choices.</li> </ul> <p>The GLA has pledged to make London Carbon Neutral by 2050</p>
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	<p>The National target is 2050 together with a new target of 68% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the end of the decade compared to 1990 levels.</p>
<p><b>Criteria for the investigation (Essential)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Is the proposed investigation timely? Why?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is it a strategic and significant issue? How?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is it of concern to one or more sections of the population? Who?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>(Desirable)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Is the issue of concern to partners or stakeholders? How?</i></li> <li>• <i>Will the investigation add value in terms of improving the council's or partner's performance or service delivery? How?</i></li> <li>• <i>Will the investigation be duplicating any other work? What?</i></li> <li>• <i>What control or influence does the Council have in this area?</i></li> </ul>	<p>The proposal is timely because we have an extraordinarily huge task to reach our target of carbon neutrality by 2030 and unless we tackle the problem of how to control emissions from public and private housing stock we cannot reach this target. The quicker we work towards this target the easier and more efficient the journey will be.</p> <p>Post-Covid, the climate crisis will be one of the key drivers of all decisions made by the council as it will have to fulfil its responsibility to reach the targets set by both the GLA and National Government above.</p> <p>Climate Change will affect everybody, but the costs of increasing energy bills, contraction of economies, and migration of populations will hit the poorest in our community the hardest. Therefore we have a duty to do everything we can to mitigate this by acting now to reduce housing costs.</p> <p>The issue will be of interest to Lewisham Homes, Phoenix and Pinnacle, as we will need to investigate their plans for how they will be retrofitting their housing stock.</p> <p>By increasing the amount of housing that is retrofitted we will improve the living conditions of those who rent from Lewisham Homes, Phoenix and Pinnacle. Residents living in private accommodation which do not fulfil the required legislative standards will see an improvement in their living conditions.</p> <p>We have a team of highly committed officers working on our climate change policy but this work aims to support this team and we have checked with all parties to ensure that we are not duplicating their work.</p> <p>Lewisham Homes is developing a new Asset Management Strategy which is due to be presented to their board for approval soon. This document will, in part, include the work of Lewisham Homes on updating and maintaining all assets. Therefore this group would want to interrogate this document as soon as possible</p>

	<p>and possibly make recommendations as to possible amendments.</p> <p>The Council, through Lewisham Homes, is responsible for the social housing stock of the borough, which needs to be brought up to a standard that fulfils our carbon target. We also have powers of enforcement over the rented sector.</p>
<p><b>Sources of evidence</b>  <i>Do you have any thoughts/ideas on where you might gather evidence from? e.g. research or site visits. (Officers will be able to recommend suggestions and help with this.)</i></p>	<p>We would like to do the following (not exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate good practice from other boroughs who have made good inroads into retrofitting to find out how this can be done efficiently and at speed. Possibly invite a representative from a council to speak to the group.</li> <li>• Investigate good private sector practice and how home owners can take affordable action on their own homes (possibly hear from the Association of Environmentally Conscious Builders)</li> <li>• Take advice/read papers from APSE, LGA and co-operative Councils Innovation Network</li> <li>• Through APSE find examples of councils doing good work on enforcement of private landlords and take advice on how to make this cost-effective.</li> <li>• Investigate any possible grants available to help with funding.</li> <li>• Learn from other councils how they have either created a commercial body to implement this work or assisted in any way to help local companies to ensure that we create a benefit to our local economy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Co-optees / Technical advisors?</b>  <i>Would the task and finish group benefit from having expert input such as an academic or local expert?</i></p>	<p>It would be useful for the group to have an over-view of the types of retrofitting and insulation available, and the costs of this work. Therefore, an expert in this field, either from the private or public sector, would be good to hear from.</p>
<p><b>Suggested timeframe</b>  <i>Do you estimate / suggest that the investigation take 3, 6, 9 or 12 months? Outline your suggested timetable for evidence gathering.</i></p>	<p>We plan to take 9 months on this piece of work from June 2021 to February 2022. Finishing in February will avoid conflict with the run up to the May elections in 2022. We will prioritise the work so that should the scope be too large to be covered in 9 months a separate smaller project could be carried into the following administration. Advice from scrutiny officers will be sought during the initial scoping meeting as to how to</p>

	<p>structure the meetings, use of officer time and when to invite experts etc to inform members.</p>
<p><b>Equalities Impact</b>  <i>Identify any equalities issues that might be applicable.</i></p>	<p>This work will affect all residents but in particular it will have the most positive effect on the poorest members of our community.</p>
<p><b>Councillor(s) submitting the proposal</b>  <i>Please list the names of the submitting councillor(s)</i></p>	<p>This is being submitted by Cllr Louise Krupski who will be acting as chair of the group. Cllrs who have agreed to be part of the group are: Cllr Patrick Codd, Cllr Aisling Gallagher, Cllr Tauseef Anwar, Cllr Stephen Penfold.</p>