



Lewisham Speaking Up

Research on Digital Exclusion since the Covid-19 pandemic 2020

"Believe, that with the right support, people with learning disabilities have the capacity to learn to use technology...andthe right to both access technology and the support to enable them to access that technology".

Open University Report 2020, by Jane Seale, Professor of Education "Keeping well and staying connected: The role of technology in supporting people with learning disability during the coronavirus pandemic".

February 2021
Helen Ramsbottom, Independent Consultant

Commissioned by William Davies, Director, Lewisham
Speaking Up
William.davies@lsup.org.uk

Contents

1. Executive summary & Key Findings	Page 2
2. Introduction	4
3. Benefits of digital inclusion	5
4. Lewisham Speaking Up & local activities	7
5. Barriers for people with learning disabilities	8
6. Barriers for services/support organisations	10
7. Unforeseen benefits	13
8. What can Lewisham Speaking Up do? + Priority recommendations for Action	14
9. Conclusion	16
10. Appendices	17
• Case Studies & Quotations	17
• Brief list of resources	20
• List of research participants	22

Executive summary

"It was an ordeal initially, I felt confined, staying with my mum, everything went on line, all my meetings, there was a lack of information about Covid, the Government failed."

The audience

The main audience for this report is the Lewisham Speaking Up (LSU) Board of Trustees and Director who wish to address the digital exclusion of people with learning disabilities.

The secondary audience is the organisations in Lewisham who provide support to people with learning disabilities and who contributed their experience to this report. The recommendations here could be a useful focus for promoting practical and joint digital inclusion work across the learning disability sector in Lewisham.

The findings and recommendations go further however than the borough of Lewisham, and can be used as a valuable addition to regional and national activities and influencing work to radically improve access to digital technology for people with learning disabilities.

The brief

LSU commissioned this report as a guide to their work with recommendations for action. They wanted to find out how people with learning disabilities locally are digitally excluded; what barriers they face and what support they need to get online. The report includes evidence of these issues, recommendations about what LSU can do to address them, and areas in which they can influence change.

Methodology

27 Zoom, Teams and phone interviews were conducted during November and December 2020 with people with learning disabilities, the staff team at LSU, support provider organisations in Lewisham and beyond, and national and regional organisations.

Interviewees were asked what they felt the barriers were to digital inclusion at an organisational level, what they have been doing to mitigate this, and what barriers they felt people with learning disabilities face. People with learning disabilities were asked what they found difficult at the start of the first lockdown, why they thought some people with

learning disabilities were not on line, and what they gain from being online.

Key Findings & Recommendations

1. Many¹ people with learning disabilities in Lewisham do not have access to suitable devices, reliable broadband or support to use digital technology
2. People with learning disabilities say they need to use digital technology for a wide range of reasons and that they gain many benefits when using it
3. Several day services and support providers in Lewisham do not have sufficient hardware, fast broadband, paid-for contracts and trained support staff with enough capacity to offer adequate IT support to people with learning disabilities
4. There are serious cost implications for organisations needing to upgrade hard/software, install faster broadband, supply devices and train support staff/carers to support people with learning disabilities
5. Many carers, family members and support workers in Lewisham are not adequately trained or paid for their time to support people with learning disabilities to access digital technology
6. Support providers in Lewisham would like LSU to offer help in training their support staff, or in accessing funds to do so
7. Support providers would like LSU to research, co-ordinate and publicise existing and new models/opportunities for promoting digital inclusion
8. All organisations working in support for people with learning disabilities should continue to offer digital/online services in the future as one of a range of ways of accessing support

¹ It is difficult to find out information about people who are not receiving statutory services, or who are not on a GP register. People may also be excluded from statistics who may not have adequate support from a carer or family, or those who have no support at all.

Introduction

"Parents went into shock at first, and couldn't access any help. Families felt overwhelmed with Covid, they just couldn't be proactive."

At the time of writing, as we enter a third lockdown in January 2021 under Covid, the issue of digital exclusion of people with a learning disability becomes increasingly urgent, raising challenges which must be addressed if we are to make access to digital technology an equal right for people with learning disabilities.

Many people with learning disabilities have been locked out of all kinds of opportunity since Covid-19, unable to access opportunities to participate, to work, to apply for jobs, to connect with others, to stay in touch with families or friends, and to carry out simple tasks such as checking train times, ordering shopping, making appointments, or using the internet for leisure and interest. Services are closed, libraries and cafes are closed removing a source of free Wi-Fi, and meetings and activities have all gone on-line.

Parents are not getting respite. For those who are unable to socially distance not being able to leave home for exercise is affecting their mental well-being too.

For those people with learning disabilities who were digitally connected, some reported experiencing exhaustion with Zoom and Teams meetings, finding them noisy and chaotic and often too long, with people speaking over one another, but a necessary way to connect and find out what was going on.

London Borough of Lewisham's services and Strategy for Adulthood have been severely affected by Covid. Day opportunities continue to be under constant review, with digital inclusion a priority for young people who need to be able to access services which are all on line, including their social worker.

Day services will be much reduced when they are able to re-open; transport will need to be reduced for social distancing and is also under review.

Organisations are coming together in the form of a Digital Forum co-ordinated by Lewisham, looking at the need to subsidise or buy broadband for those people who cannot afford it. Various new initiatives such as "Rix" multi media is being trialled and evaluated for the provision of a safe space on line, requiring training for carers and those in

supported living. All staff in services are finding that their time to attend new meetings such as these is severely under pressure.

Many thanks to everyone who agreed to be interviewed at such a busy and unrelenting time, and who all spoke powerfully and honestly about their experiences of digital exclusion whether personal or organisational, and of the ways in which they are tackling it, with creativity and thought for the future.

Benefits of digital inclusion

"It can be tricky...but you get round it. I got round it."

Since both lockdowns in 2020, many people with learning disabilities said that they feel a new confidence in being able to join meetings and events which they might have found difficult to attend before because of travel time or difficulties they may have in using public transport, or indeed fear of going out.

Organisations reported that the sometimes previously exclusive costs of supporting people to attend meetings – both staff and people with learning disabilities - are now gone or reduced, as well as travel time. New people have been joining meetings, for example in Greenwich, Black and Ethnic Minority people with learning disabilities were able to join a Black Lives Matter meeting last year.

This also means that people with learning disabilities and staff in Lewisham and across the country are joining in regional networks and national meetings in a way which previously did not happen, leading in turn to greater participation and involvement of people with learning disabilities in influencing work around policy which affects them, and greater collaboration between a wider spectrum of organisations who can work in partnership.

Key benefits

The key benefits of digital inclusion and the transformation of how we all live and work with digital technology are well documented. Less well understood or acknowledged is the importance of digital technology in the lives of people with learning disabilities.

A small but valuable example came from one organisation in the north where a young woman with a learning disability was living some distance away from her family. During the first lockdown, the family would phone her, but their daughter was unable to say very much. The family began to send their daughter short video films, saying what they were doing, how they were, and asking after her whilst they could not visit and see her. Very slowly, the young woman's relationship with the screen was changed, and eventually she said that she would like to send a short video back of herself. The family hope that this might lead eventually to being able to have a Zoom meeting together.

People with learning disabilities interviewed all reported a strong need and desire to get on line, and if they could do so, pleasure in being there as well as a clear sense of their right to be there.

In brief:

People with a learning disability reported that the benefits of digital inclusion during the pandemic include:

- Countering social isolation
- Keeping in touch with friends and family
- Enjoying contact with friends on Facebook, YouTube, House Party, Zoom, WhatsApp etc
- Feeling less stressed if you know friends are ok
- Being able to continue working using Zoom, Teams
- Being able to join in more meetings and activities than before

They also said that being on-line also builds confidence and motivation:

- Learning how to use tech and social media
- Keeping abreast of what's going on, local events, updates from The Albany, LSUP & others
- Look for interests, hobbies on line

We know that digital inclusion ensures economic inclusion, and with the increased prevalence of on-line services such as Department Health & Social Care, Local Authorities and the Department of Work & Pensions, being able to use digital technology enables people with learning disabilities to:

- Look for work opportunities
- Manage money on-line

- Check benefits
- Getting better deals on line, eg household bills

Being connected digitally is important given that Covid may be with us for some time to come. 'Future proofing' services and support is vital :

- Being confident about shopping on line for food and clothes
- Researching your own health condition
- Continuing to stay connected, working, in touch

Lewisham Speaking Up & local activities

"I can use Zoom to continue to attend my meetings as People's Parliament rep, so I still get paid."

LSU has been trying to get as many people on line as possible since the start of Covid-19. They offer a zoom Men's Group, a Women's Group, and a Big Weekly zoom, plus People's Parliament also on zoom. They rely on the skill and willingness of support staff to help get people on line and to attend events and activities.

Like other organisations, LSU have experienced the loss of some previous clients since the shift to digital activities and meetings, but they have also experienced – in common with others - gaining new attendees who have been able to participate through digital means, mostly in zoom meetings.

LSUP's weekly online self advocacy group has seen 25 people attending. Enabling Representatives and Ambassadors who work on Hate Crime Training, People's Parliament and Health projects to get online has been more challenging, with people having problems getting and using devices, and learning how to use Zoom. Time to prepare for meetings has increased as it takes longer to support someone on line than face to face. Family members who support Reps have to prepare too, to help people with phone calls or Zoom meetings.

LSU's People's Parliament in September 2020 via zoom was on 'Using Technology during the Coronavirus'. Speakers from various organisations included the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, Seeability and Lewisham Council.

An Easy Read questionnaire on Staying Safe Online was circulated by LSU in autumn 2020, which had a low take up, perhaps reflecting people's busyness and feelings of being overwhelmed.

LSU is about to start training for support workers, offering Youtube videos on learning digital skills, such as Zoom, following by a surgery with a Digital Supporter funded to work with LSUP until March 21. It is too early at this stage to measure the success and take up from support workers. It is also difficult to gather information about participants' levels of digital experience whether as absolute beginners or having some prior digital knowledge.

A Zoom group held in January 2021 asked if people felt Home broadband should be free to people with learning disabilities, with 93% in agreement. LSU will work with others to lobby the bigger internet companies and politicians about this, aiming to get subsidised or at least cheaper deals for people on low incomes.

Other local activity

Many organisations interviewed felt that they did not know what new opportunities were available for digital connection for their clients and wanted to know more, but felt time was too short to research themselves.

Mencap's popular Gateway Club went on line, and is being promoted to supported living houses, who are slowly joining as people feel that it is a safe space.

Even so, working out how to access it using the right technology has been challenging for staff and residents.

Barriers for people with learning disabilities

"I wanted to know whether mobile or tablet – I couldn't find the information."

Since Covid began, people with learning disabilities reported their need for contact, they were missing seeing their friends, going out to work and to meetings, and not seeing their families. One person with a learning disability was ringing a staff member several times a day; he was missing going to the pub which was a place for him to socialise.

Some people with learning disabilities live alone and do not have family nearby. One person with a learning disability reported that he did not like being on line all the time but recognised that to stay connected he had to continue.

Organisations reported clients struggling with concentration, finding using programmes and screens difficult. Clients were asking for devices, knowing that they needed to connect in this way, but then being unable to use them because they were too complicated.

Barriers to digital inclusion for people with learning disabilities are complex, multiple and overlapping. They range from the costs of connection, Wi-Fi and devices, to the functionality of different programmes such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, and from literacy, sight and cognitive skills and capacities to product design. The negative impacts of social media which affect everyone are also an issue.

LSU has identified that portable routers and pay as you go SIM cards could be a useful option, but the barriers to using these are too complicated to set up without help. For example, topping up SIM cards without a debit card, and under strict lockdown rules, being unable to go to someone's home to set up the technology.

Although schemes to donate old devices which can be tested and recycled were mentioned by several organisations, one staff member felt that receiving a second hand device could feel of less value to someone with a learning disability. Similarly, there could also be a perception that free training sessions to use IT are not as valuable as a paid-for course.

Key barriers cited were:

Cost and poverty:

- Parents on a pension who cannot afford WiFi
- Data use with video too expensive
- Devices too expensive
- Using hardware that is (quickly) out of date e.g. no camera or microphone on lap top
- Unstable WiFi connections
- Lack of anti-virus protection

Learning disability:

- Having a visual impairment
- Having reading and writing issues
- Poor sound quality

- Remembering – and retaining - information is a key issue, eg how to join a zoom meeting

Lack of IT skills:

- Unable to get good deals
- Needing to remember passwords
- Knowing how to keep safe, manage viruses
- If aged over 35 will not have had full digital education
- If younger, ICT was not an compulsory GCSE subject
- Job IT training of low quality
- Some college training low quality with low level qualification (pre SATS)

Lack of adequate support:

- Lack of confidence
- Finding and using the Mute button properly on Zoom calls
- Devices being too complex, too touch sensitive, too tricky to hold and use the screen
- Having older parents or carers who could not use technology
- Having carers who do not think IT important
- Having parents with learning disabilities
- Relying/depending on others for help, eg a boyfriend who might not be in a Covid bubble at present
- Having support workers who did not have the skills to help them use technology
- Having to learn etiquette for zoom meetings which is hard to learn and to manage
- Needing to be able to repeat what has to be done regularly
- Assumptions being made about what access/support people need and assumptions about capabilities

The 'fatigue' of having to constantly ask for help with technology for people with a learning disability is a burden too.

Barriers for service/support providers

"Someone with a learning disability was involved in an online consultation meeting, she needed support to access the pc. At one point, the support worker got up and left the meeting without saying anything. This would not have happened in a non-virtual meeting. We need to understand the etiquette of on-line meetings. It's whole different perception of support."

Attitudes

Many interviewees felt that there is still an 'institutionalised' approach to accessing the internet for people with a learning disability: the assumption that people with a learning disability do not want to use technology, or only want/need to use it for entertainment and speaking to family. This means that digital inclusion can be a low and sometimes non-existent priority in hard pressed services, organisations and families.

One interviewee described three people sharing a lap top in a house, attending a meeting. This meant that only one of them was near enough the microphone to be heard properly, and they could not all be seen properly.

Anxieties about internet fraud, scams and other dangers which can affect vulnerable groups of people on line – also a concern for families and carers - can add to the reluctance in some services to doing anything other than provide basic support to use an Ipad for watching videos or help with a Skype call to family.

Support staff training

Support providers reported having to work differently and evolve new ways of working and processes, at speed, with staff adjusting to working remotely and under intense pressure because of Covid. This has presented them with key challenges, often with cost implications.

Support staff are under intense pressure at work, having to clean surfaces, check people's health needs, carry out infection control in shifts, and arrange PPE. This also reduces the time and capacity they have to support residents with digital technology, with a 15 minute slot being too short to check food, medications, post and anything else needing attention, before looking at support to use IT.

All support providers felt that staff are the key to providing support for residents and people using day services, but this is often dependant on staff willingness and confidence. Some organisations provided some staff training in helping people with a learning disability access IT, but this was very patchy.

Office managers in two organisations were helping train staff in basic IT support for clients, and converting documents to Easy Read. This had fallen by the wayside since the pandemic. One organisation was finding it difficult to source appropriate staff training in IT support which was in itself time consuming, and had concerns about the costs of paying staff

for extra time for training along with concerns about ensuring that any training stayed current.

Many organisations said they would like to access staff training, or suggested co-training with staff and people with learning disabilities learning together, and wondered if LSU could provide this, or help with finding funding.

Hardware & software, contracts & costs

Hardware, Wi-Fi and Broadband connections, staff training and remote working were all raised as key issues for support providers, with some needing to upgrade equipment and WiFi, where provided as part of the package.

Some providers do have contracts for their residents to provide WiFi, whereas others do not. One organisation was already upgrading its IT systems, investing in broadband and lap tops in registered care homes when the pandemic hit, so were able to accelerate plans and bring them forward to enable staff to work remotely.

Other key organisational issues were:

- Strategic planning - IT support not being a strategic priority or written into organisational plans
- IT not being an integral part of the assessment process as standard
- Inconsistency between organisations of one laptop/device per person and the acceptability of having two or more people sharing lap tops or devices

Carers & parents

For carers, with Colleges and Day services closed, the unaccustomed time now being spent with people with learning disabilities and the need to help them access all activities and services on line is challenging.

Those who have other care responsibilities are not used to having someone at home all day, perhaps having childcare or other caring responsibilities, and having unpaid extra hours of support. Parents have reported in the borough being under intense pressure since Covid, needing to prioritise buying food as a major extra expense, lacking IT and tech skills, and feeling exhausted and unable to help.

Other concerns

Informal contact with some people with learning disabilities has been lost. Many people use the Albany centre and café, and staff at LSU are not able at present to have the opportunity to see how people are.

In LSU's one to one advocacy service, people would normally arrange to meet every few weeks. There are now fewer meetings, and the council does more by video call, telling the social worker what is needed. This process is so different to getting an idea of seeing how well someone is doing in person, and if the social worker is not there, important points may get missed.

Unforeseen benefits

Several support services reported 'unintended consequences' which are benefits of the lockdown restrictions, such as reduced travel time for staff, and working more flexibly to suit clients' different timetables.

One interviewee reported that in a women's advocacy group one member had found it easier to join a zoom group, rather than the group in person which she had felt too nervous to attend.

Some services being conducted by phone such as advocacy and the new ability to make three-way phone calls has been a positive for some. Interviewees felt that this should add to the 'offer' from an organisation rather than be a default or used as a cost saving exercise.

The experience of meetings going on line has had impacts on organisations and staff, locally and nationally, some perhaps unexpected. One staff member reported feeling that meetings between organisations now felt 'stifled' and less dynamic. On the other hand, others reported a sense of excitement about new alliances being forged on a national scale, of being able to 'send' people with learning disabilities and staff to meetings which would once have been prohibitively expensive, and are enjoying the new found collaboration and support.

On line meetings have resulted for some organisations in new people with learning disabilities joining in initiatives who might have found meetings too intimidating before.

Interestingly several people felt that the first lock down had had an 'equalising' effect on everyone. Suddenly people providing services previously from offices were sitting at home, just like everyone else, perhaps just as vulnerable as everyone else. Zoom meetings had at least initially the effect of reducing or subverting the more familiar power

imbalance between people with learning disabilities and those people supporting them.

What can Lewisham Speaking Up do ?

"People should be able to loan equipment and try it out before they buy it. They don't want to buy stuff that is wrong for their access needs".

Interviewees made many suggestions about the support that LSU could offer. These are grouped below as priority recommendations for the Board to consider and use to create an Action Plan:

1. Information sharing

- Recruit a short term role to research local & national resources/opportunities on digital inclusion
- Produce & disseminate a regularly updated borough-wide brochure/short video of opportunities for digital inclusion²
- Set up an Online Forum to share constantly evolving ideas about how to access tech

2. Training

- Design & deliver on-line Support Staff training with input/co-training from people with learning disabilities
- Design & deliver regular peer to peer IT support for people with learning disabilities

² Produce a 2 min video from Will or Marsh as recognised, trusted faces, on what new zoom groups are doing each month, rather than sending out information

3. Campaigning/influencing

- Lobby for companies to make websites more accessible & for firms to produce easier, user-friendly hardware
- Lobby larger internet providers to alter policy for affordable Wi-Fi³ and Home Broadband⁴
- Build alliances with broader coalition/other groups affected to reinvigorate National Digital Inclusion Strategy

4. Become a local digital hub

- Coordinate collection and restoration of spare devices & unused data donation schemes
- Join with other digital inclusion networks
- Encourage organisations to pool scarce funding & share work on tech

5. Fundraising

- Fundraise for tech/hardware to enable people to join Zoom meetings, activities etc
- Promote and purchase technology which can be navigated by people who cannot read or write eg Alexa

³ Virgin is offering Essential Broadband and packages to people using Universal Credit - not just for people with a learning disability, but also for older people and people with visual impairments.

⁴ <https://www.bt.com/help/landline/getting-set-up/help-people-with-impairments-or-with-particular-needs/how-do-i-find-out-more-about-bt-basic->
BT Basic is a low cost telephone service for people on specific means-tested benefits

Conclusion

"I really like it! (Zoom) I can interact with my family in Australia...it's better than the phone."

There have been many positive outcomes as a result of the pandemic for people with a learning disability in terms of digital inclusion. Not least has been the opportunity to engage with digital technology which was not previously on offer or available.

However, the welcome inclusion of more people with learning disabilities digitally does not remove concern about replacing face to face services in the borough and opportunities for people to participate in their communities in person.

Interviewees were clear that new options which have arisen to help people get on line must continue, but not at the cost of face to face services : digital technology should be available, but as one element of a range of options for people to choose from.

People with learning disabilities interviewed reported that they are attempting and achieving greater digital inclusion since the pandemic, but that devices, popular Meeting apps such as Zoom and Teams all present a range of challenges not least the need to remember and retain how to access sites and navigate through them as active participants; something that can be very difficult for people with learning disabilities.

The fact that there are still many people with learning disabilities in Lewisham who do not yet have adequate access and support to digital technology raises key challenges for those organisations supporting them.

In Lewisham, as elsewhere, organisations providing services and support are stretched and they can struggle to provide the resources needed for support staff to be able to support people with learning disabilities to become digitally included. There is a lack of strategic approach too, to including the cost of digital inclusion support in organisational plans and budgets for support staff, and for people with learning disabilities supported.

Many interviewees spoke about the need for sustained campaigning locally and nationally to ensure that politicians and internet companies create more affordable and accessible Broadband. Allied to this, data poverty is currently locking people out of WiFi and home broadband, and also needs to be tackled systemically as well as on a local basis.

In Lewisham, a coalition of support provider organisations and the voluntary sector need to come together now to pool existing resources and help those people with learning disabilities who continue to be digitally excluded.

Demonstrating that digital connection can improve health is a task that the learning disability sector still need to evidence better and explain by finding stories which show the impact for funders and commissioners.

These can be simple but powerful stories : for example, one organisation spoke about a young Muslim woman living in a very traditional family which had concerns about her going out, meaning that she had to stay indoors. The organisation supporting the young woman enabled and encouraged her join an online forum last year, and now she reports feeling included and revitalised as a result of being connected.

Appendices

Case studies & quotations from people with learning disabilities speaking about their experiences during the pandemic.

Becky

Two members of staff at LSU have been working with Becky to enable her to access IT.

She has a tablet she cannot use, as her motor skills make it difficult for her to use a touch screen. She has eye hand co-ordination issues as well as some sight issues. The tablet button sensitivity is too high, and Becky needs to access IT using a desk top computer. Becky can find spelling difficult, and she also worries about buttons being pressed wrongly on her smart phone, which makes her text messages difficult to interpret, but her supporters know her and understand her messages.

Google voice recognition doesn't work on Becky's phone.

LSU staff may be able to go to Becky's house to set up a lap top and phone line. Her brother will help sort out a BT landline. Becky needs to

cover the cost of a lap top, and she needs a better keyboard that she can use with confidence.

Becky gets very frustrated and stressed, recognises that this is the case, and knows that she wants to get back to work, to earn income, and that this means being able to get on line. She is continuing to ask for help and is continuing to receive help to get on line.

Men's Group

*Most agreed that it has been hard having to use new technology during the crisis. Experiences varied with some people relying heavily on staff who aren't that great at using things themselves. **Tony** did join the men's group today in the end, but only because a staff member let him use their personal phone. Same story for **Mark** too.*

***Robert** probably found it easiest to get on Zoom but he said 'I consider myself quite good with technology, but it still took me a while to learn how to use Zoom properly. Like how to turn the camera on and off and how to mute yourself.'*

Mark asked if the devices would be 'on loan' and that raised the issue of what happens if a device is damaged. Will they be insured? How will that work? What if they are lost or stolen?

We talked about people needing different levels of support, as they have done so far. Robert suggested that support will need to be 'tailored' to each person. Lloyd said tailored is an inaccessible term. We agreed 'different for each individual'.

Robert suggested sending out a questionnaire in advance asking people what help they think they might need to use technology. We also discussed how this could be difficult to face to face with social distancing. Some people will need face to face support.

Oliver

"My dad can look things up for me so I have help to get started.

"Zoom was easier for me to set up, it can be used on more devices, will work on Apple products and is much easier to use, although people do have problems with the mute button. It took me a while to work out what Gallery meant and what its function was, it wasn't obvious and I worried about clicking on it in case it messed something up. Once I was interviewing for LSUP on zooms and it just wouldn't let someone in,

whatever he tried. Some people get fed up and give up, it's hard to get started.

"I liked it when meetings finished on time, when I could get out of the house and walk to a meeting; when we could chat, in the big group and then smaller break out groups; now there might be someone's noise in the background, radios or other house mates, or TVs. People talk over each other! People walk in and out of rooms. People have to share pcs in houses, there's only one per household. I'd prefer going back to the Albany. I miss the library, I can't go swimming, just walking gets boring in lockdown."

Sarah

We talked for a while and it transpired Sarah has an old laptop her sister (deceased) gave her, but she doesn't know how to get it working and it is locked with a password she doesn't know. Sarah said "I find it hard to remember passwords and that. I can't remember the steps of what to do."

I asked how she would like someone to help her learn. She said "I need someone to show me and help remember bit by bit. If I can learn it, it would make me proud."

Sarah reminisced about when she had a type writer a long time ago and enjoyed typing on it "I liked using it to copy out of books." She also has a phone "I think it can do YouTube and that" but she doesn't know how to use it. She wants to get onto Facebook so she can talk to her friends.

She also said she doesn't have the internet in her house. She has it before but said "it was too much money and I can't afford it."

Peter

"I would be lost without my phone. It keeps me in touch with family and friends. I would normally rely on the staff, or other people, and they are not always around to help you".

"I'd love to go on Facebook, talk to my friends at the Gateway Club, they come to the club on smart phones; I'd love to talk to friends. We need a bit of help with reading my girlfriend and me; I've got a tablet and my girlfriend got a lap top as an early Christmas present but we've got no mobile data in our flat."

"Making me feel proud if I can learn it."

" Going to College is great. We can learn tips, get help with Word, spelling, how to use a lap top and so on."

"It can be hard, but it gets easier if you can practice."

"I'd like a training buddy to help me with technology."

"I told Marsh, zoom is needed as a back up, if this (pandemic) happens again. We need not to lose it, now we've learned it!"

Robert

"You can have an app installed to assist with accessibility, it can read out emails, texts, face book, WhatsApp messages – but it can't read attachments. I use it quite a lot if I have something long winded to read. It helps with my Dyslexia, it's a good strategy, also altering the background colour as black and white can be harder to read.

Easy Read is easier on your eyes on phone or pc. For example, I go to church sometimes and they change the background colour of the large print service sheet for me. Talk Talk will look at special requirements if you ask them, such as providing large font type etc."

Resources

These are organisations mentioned by interviewees with resources easily available for download.

YouTube - numerous resources in Easy Read for support to go on line, access Zoom, Whatsapp, Facebook etc.

Good Things Foundation - many resources, including managing the donation of old devices and getting them checked for re-use, wiping and testing. They offer a package of SIM only with 15g data.

<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/areas-of-work/digital-inclusion>

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation – a range of resources for people with severe learning disabilities.

<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/>

Go Anywhere, Do Anything – “We want to inspire people to have big dreams about adventure. We'd like to encourage people to try new things, from rollercoasters to rollerdiscos. We are interested in finding out what makes people happy, and then making it happen”. Trips and activities on line at present.

<https://www.sharecommunity.org.uk/independent-living/go-anywhere-do-anything>

Seeability – Specialist support for people with learning disabilities, sight loss and autism.

<https://www.seeability.org/>

Learning Disability England – “exists to make life better for and with people with learning disabilities and their families”. National campaigning and umbrella organisation able to bring members together around a range of projects and issues.

<https://www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk/>

Recent research

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities – working on rights, voice and inclusion for people with learning disabilities. Statistics, surveys, reports and action across a range of issues.

Recent research on using digital technology during the pandemic.

<https://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/>

Open University Report – ‘Keeping Connected and staying well’

<http://www.open.ac.uk/health-and-social-care/research/shld/sites/www.open.ac.uk.health-and-social-care.research.shld/files/files/Keeping%20Well%20and%20Staying%20Connected%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

Shared Lives, Mencap and others also have good web resources on digital inclusion which are available for download.

List of participants interviewed

Lewisham Speaking Up

Martin Stitchman – Self Advocacy Coordinator

Colin Finch – 1 to 1 Advocacy Co-ordinator

Simon Goldsmith – Health Ambassadors Co-ordinator

Gabriella Smoczynski – Hate Crime Training Co-ord

Philippa Bradnock – Advocate

Joe Fitton – Sessional Self advocacy supporter

Paul Clayton – IT digital inclusion support

Paid staff/people with learning disabilities:

Kali – Health Ambassador

Pino – Health Ambassador

Peter – People’s Parliament Rep

Aisha – People’s Parliament Rep

Roseanna – Hate Crime Trainer

Oliver – Hate Crime Trainer

Robert – LSU Director/Board Member

Support Providers

Nexus - Andrea Wiggins, CEO

Three C’s - Angela Woodley, Director of Services

Plus Services - Rob Agrawal, Head of Service

Aurora Options - Gail Nicholls, Director of Development

Access for Living - James Whatley, Acting Service & Development Manager

Other Organisations

Lewisham Council - Andrea Benson, Programme Improvement Manager

with

Lewisham Parent & Carers Forum - Sue Stocks, Parent Participation Officer & Lisa Ellis, Young People's Transition Manager

Shared Lives - Sean Connor

Foundation for People With Learning Disabilities - Christine Burke, CEO & Dave Mahon

Sunderland People First - Lisa Clark, CEO

Learning Disability England - Samantha Clark, CEO

Advocacy In Greenwich – Anita Rickard, CEO & Vicky, Manager