

# LSU Report on Digital Exclusion: people with learning disabilities in Lewisham



# Purpose of the report



We wanted to find out:

- How people with learning disabilities locally are digitally excluded
- What barriers they face
- What support they need to get online
- And what we can do to address the barriers



# How was the report conducted?



27 Zoom, Teams and phone interviews during November and December 2020 with:

- people with learning disabilities the staff team at LSU
- support provider organisations in Lewisham and beyond
- national and regional organisations

# Benefits of digital inclusion



People with learning disabilities said:  
They feel a new confidence in being able to join meetings and events, which they might have found difficult to attend before because of problems travelling, or fear of going out.



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.



# More Benefits



- New people joining meetings
- Costs and difficulties of supporting people to get to meetings are gone
- Greater participation as people with learning disabilities can join meetings UK wide, not just Lewisham



- 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



- 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
- Being able to join in more meetings and activities than before





- ensures economic inclusion -increased in on-line services such as Department Health & Social Care, Local Authorities and the Department of Work & Pensions
- Look for work opportunities
- Manage money on-line
- Check benefits
- Getting better deals on line, eg household bills

# Key findings



- Many people with learning disabilities in Lewisham do not have access to suitable devices, reliable broadband or support to use digital technology
- We need to know **‘how many’**



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

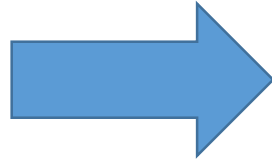




Day services and support providers in Lewisham do not have sufficient hardware, fast broadband, paid-for contracts and trained support staff with enough capacity to offer adequate IT support to people with learning disabilities



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



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





- 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.



# Where we are at now?



There have been successes, but we are concerned about the many people with learning disabilities who have not been able to get online since March 2020

We want all people with learning disabilities who 'want' to be digitally included to be digitally included



# Other Considerations



- Not **ALL** people with learning disabilities **want** to use digital technology
- Many people with learning disabilities **cannot** use digital technology without assistance, because of their learning disability
- People with learning disabilities who don't want to or cannot use technology still need to be supported

# What is needed? (our wish list)

- Need to find out how many pwld are digitally excluded – HOW?
- A borough wide initiative to get as many people with learning disabilities connected as possible
- Tie in digital inclusion with financial assessment to ensure extra monthly payment is affordable to people
- Paid workers or volunteers to give people devices, set up with data and aps they need like Zoom
- If possible, find affordable Broadband deals; if not, use affordable pay as you go Top up, such as SMARTY. Some may need a routers too

# What is needed?

- A community chest to help with purchasing data for pwld to make it free or affordable
- Training to nurture independence with digital inclusion
- Training for support staff so they can help more people be digitally included and/or digitally independent
- Training in digital safety to prevent safeguarding incidents
- Lobbying the big internet providers to give Lewisham a special deal to get cheaper and more accessible broadband to vulnerable residents

# For a copy of the report

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