

# Supporting Each Other Equals Power!

Supporting Each Other Equals Power! has helped people with learning difficulties to have more power over their own lives. Evaluation means looking at what is working well and what is not and how to make things better.



Supporting Each Other Equals Power! is the name of our project. The project ran for four years.

It aimed to make sure people with learning difficulties had the power to help other people with learning difficulties.

The project was carried out using a **co-production** way of working.

**Co-production:** here, this means that organisations are working together in an active way. They do this to make sure people with learning difficulties have the power to support each other.

These organisations worked together on the project:



social care  
institute for excellence

- **The Social Care Institute for Excellence**

**The Social Care Institute for Excellence:** this is an organisation that aims to make people's lives better. They aim to do this by sharing information and evidence about what works in social care and social work.



- **People First Self Advocacy**

**People First Self Advocacy:** this is an organisation run by and for people with learning difficulties. The organisation aims to speak up and push for the rights of people with learning difficulties. They also aim to support self-advocacy groups across the country.

**Self-advocacy:** in this document, this means when people with learning difficulties stand up for and talk about their rights and the barriers they face.



- **Breaking Out Of The Bubble**

**Breaking Out Of The Bubble:** this is an organisation controlled by people with learning difficulties. They support clients with learning difficulties to mix with the rest of society, take control of their lives, be healthy and happy, and speak up for themselves.



The project was led by people with learning difficulties.

People First Self Advocacy and Breaking Out of the Bubble are organisations that are run by people with learning difficulties.

Staff with learning difficulties from these organisations led and carried out the project. In this document, these people are called **peer supporters**.

**Peer support:** in this document, this means when people with learning difficulties use their own experiences to help each other.

**Peer supporters:** in this document, this means our staff members who have learning difficulties. They used their experiences to support other people with learning difficulties.



The peer supporters gave support to other people with learning difficulties. They gave them social, emotional, and practical support.



The project supported people with issues such as:

- Housing.
- Accessing support with things like living conditions and benefits.
- Getting a job or volunteering.
- Making complaints.
- Reporting **hate crime**.

**Hate crime:** this means when somebody commits a crime against a person because of a reason that makes them seem different such as their sex, gender, disability or race.



Some people had really complicated problems. These problems took a lot of work and time.

Some people were very upset and stressed out by their experiences.

The project gave people a lot of emotional support.



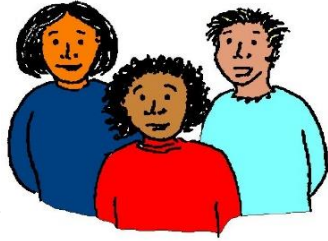
This made us realise that there needs to be better access to emotional support for people with learning difficulties.

People need access to services which give special support with this.



As part of the project, we ran lots of social activities such as:

- A disco in the centre of Brixton for anyone who wanted to come. This disco happened during the day.
- Coffee mornings and lunch in a local café.
- A radio show where peer supporters talked about important issues for people with learning difficulties.
- An art and chat group for people with learning difficulties. This happened every week.

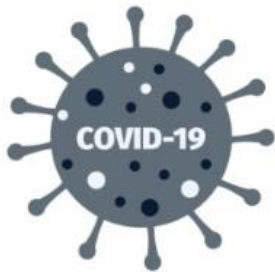


- Trips to the pub, ballet, football and other places.



These social activities helped people with learning difficulties to:

- Meet other people.
- Feel part of a community.
- Mix with people who do not have learning difficulties.



When **COVID-19** started lots of the people with learning difficulties were on their own. They didn't have anywhere else to get help.

**COVID-19:** this is the virus that has spread all over the world since 2020. It has changed the way that people live and work. It has affected Disabled people in particular because often, they are in danger of getting very ill if they catch the virus.



The people we worked with were often worried and upset by COVID-19.



As part of our project, we called lots of people and talked to them to make sure they were ok.

We did group calls where lots of people could speak to each other on one phone call. They did not need to use Zoom or a computer.



We spent lots of time talking to people and explaining about COVID-19. We told people what they needed to do to keep safe.



**Wenda was one of the peer supporters. She said:**

It was so difficult for them, the people with learning difficulties. They didn't understand what Covid was all about.

And there was me and Gina and Jennifer wanted to say don't go out. You have to stay in. You have to wait a while. If you want to go out, go for a walk. All these different things. It was so hard for them.



Supporting Each Other Equals Power! organised food, medicine and other important things for people.

We carried on helping people with issues like their housing and benefits. However, it got a lot harder because we couldn't meet face to face.



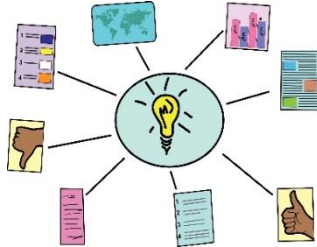
It was really important to do social activities as well as give emotional and practical support.



The social activities meant that people with learning difficulties got to know and trust the people working on our project.

When they knew they could trust us, they were happier to ask for help with some of the problems in their lives.





People who had problems in their lives, found out that the social activities made them feel better and more part of a community.

Because the peer supporters had learning difficulties, they could understand other people's experiences.

It helped people to trust our team. Advice and support was coming from other people with learning difficulties.



The peer supporters thought that it was important to spread this way of working.

More people with learning difficulties should get support from other people with learning difficulties.



They should get social, emotional, and practical support.

**Neil was one of the peer supporters. He said:**

“I think if we can get a lot of people in this type of work who have learning difficulties it will make it so simple and easier for people with learning difficulties, our clients, to understand what we're doing and what we're trying to do to help them.”

**Find out more about the project by reading our evaluation report or project top tips.**