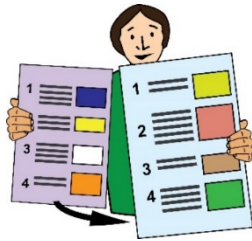


Supporting Each Other Equals Power!

What we did: Part 1



This summary explains some of the things we did on the project.

Advocacy and Case Work

Advocacy or advocating for: here, this means standing up for people with learning difficulties and talking about their rights.

Case Work: this means work that is carried out to help an individual person.

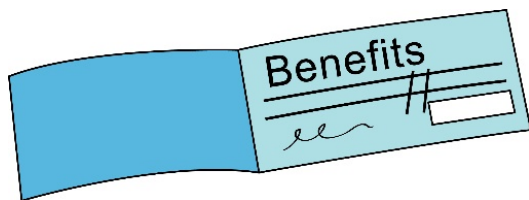


The project did advocacy and case work to help people with their problems. This work changed depending on the problems that the person had.



Each case always had at least one person with a learning difficulty who was

giving peer support. They were helped by support workers who do not have a learning difficulty.



People came to us with lots of different types of problems 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 sexuality, gender, disability, or race.



We had expected to see these kinds of problems, but lots of clients'



problems were much more difficult than expected.

Some people had been abused or used by other people. Some people had been the victims of crimes. Some people had been blamed for a crime.



Some people had lots of different problems. Some of these problems had been going on for a long time.



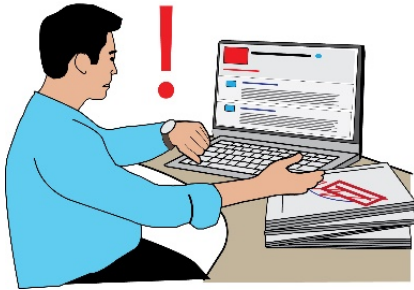
This meant that some people needed a lot of support and they stayed working with us for a long time.



Some people said that our project was the only place they could get support.



This was because some charities and organisations had closed down. Others were not offering as much support as they used to.



Clients needed a lot of help. It was sometimes hard for peer supporters and support workers to find enough time to help everyone.



Here are some examples of how our project helped clients:



- Supporting a client to move from a flat that was not right for her.
- Supporting clients to volunteer and to get jobs.



- Supporting a client who had been blamed for a crime they didn't do.



- Supporting them with arrests, police interviews, and making sure the case did not go ahead at court.



- Supporting a homeless woman to:
Get housing and fill in forms for benefits.
Get help from the community mental health team
Get a lawyer for her mental health.
- Helping a client who had an issue with their neighbour. She also had a problem with **mate crime**.

With our help, her neighbour was forced to move out. The neighbour is now going to court for **harassment**.

Mate crime: in this document, this means a type of crime where a person pretends to be friends with a person with learning difficulties. Really, they are just using or abusing them. They might be violent towards them or use them for things like sex or money.

Harassment: in this document, this means treating a person in a way that does not show them respect. This can be things like calling them names, making them feel scared or damaging things that belong to them.



Clients said that the project helped them to make their own choices.

It helped them to access services and deal with their problems.



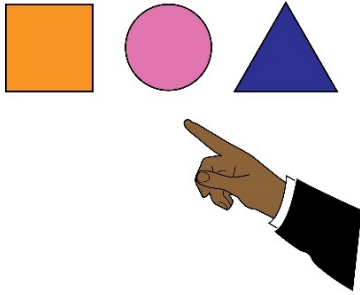
We asked people about how the support had helped them:



- 9 out of 10 people agreed that the support had helped them to find out more about accessing services that they needed.



- Around 8 out of 10 people agreed that the support had helped them to do more things for themselves.



- Around 8 out of 10 people agreed that the support had helped them to make more of their own choices.
- More than 8 out of 10 people agreed that the support had helped them find out more about how to sort out their problems.



Donna was one of the clients.

This is what she said about our project:

“The difference about you is that I’m able to talk for longer and it’s more solid, kind of stable. These other services, they come and go; they are not constant. They are just for the time being till a problem is solved.

“It’s helped me a lot because a lot of the other services are not available to me. They ignore me. A lot ignore me or they are closed.”

Giving emotional support to our clients



Some clients were upset and felt very worried by the issues they were facing.

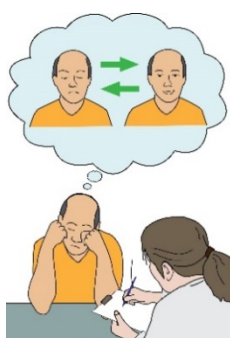


The project gave a lot of emotional support to people.



The project tried to help people to get counselling, but counselling was hard to access.

People had to wait for a long time to get counselling.



People First Self Advocacy are hoping to help more people with learning difficulties to access counselling in the future.

How did the case work and advocacy affect our peer supporters?



Some cases were very upsetting. Clients were often unhappy about their case.

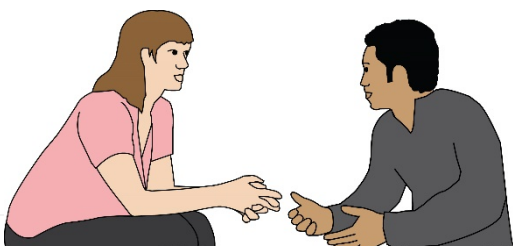


Samantha was one of the peer supporters. She said:

“They were unhappy that the problem that they came to us with wasn’t sorted out first.”



Sometimes it was hard to get people the help that they needed. This sometimes made peer supporters feel stressed.



Peer supporters found out that the best way of dealing with the stress and emotions was speaking to

each other and to other support workers.



Gina was one of the peer supporters. She said:

“I’ve learned how to deal with the situations and talk about the situations more a bit better than I used to. And I’ve also learned about dealing with stress a bit better.

“I basically talk about it and I do the yoga relaxation as well. I was stressed at one point but now I’m not stressed anymore. And I’ve learned as well that talking to other peer supporters and staff members helps me a lot as well.”



Peer supporters also said that activities like the art and chat group, and yoga classes helped them to relax and feel less stressed.



Jennifer was one of the peer supporters. She said:

“I like yoga and it makes me feel more relaxed. I feel more confident speaking with the people with learning difficulties that I work with, that we work with. So, it makes me feel more happier, more confident.”

Social Activities

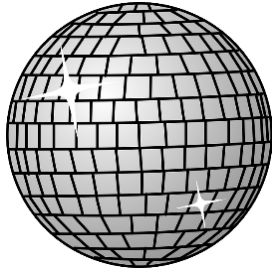


We ran lots of different social activities.

Here are some of them:

- [Coffee and Afternoon Tea](#). This was at Brixton Pound Café and Loughborough Farm Café.

People with learning difficulties brought cakes to share and had great chats in the café.



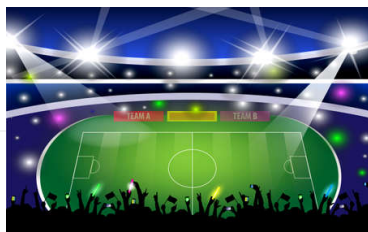
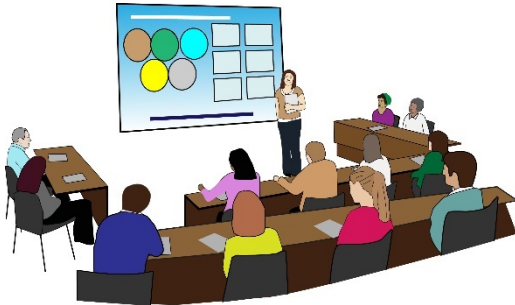
- [Let's Dance](#) was a disco held at Pop Brixton every month. It happened during the day. Between 30 and 50 people went each time.

It was a mix of people with learning difficulties, other disabled people, and people who are not disabled.

- [Smashing Records](#) is a [radio show](#) that happens every month. It happens on Resonance FM.

Peer supporters went on the show to talk about subjects that are important to people with learning difficulties.

They talked about things like [having rights and power](#) and [supporting people in lockdown](#).



- An [Art and Chat Group](#) in Brixton that was held every week. It was for people with learning difficulties, people with autism and high support needs.

- A Yoga class at the 336 centre in Brixton, for anyone who works at the centre.

- Going to local colleges to meet students with learning difficulties to talk about things like Healthy Living and Being Confident.

- Phone and computer support sessions. These were sessions to help people use text and email.

- Trips to the pub. We also played pool at the pub sessions.

We also did activities to help people take part in



their community and try a new activity. For example, going to the ballet or seeing a football match for the first time.



It was hard to get feedback on all of the different activities. Clients said the project helped them with things like making friends and joining in with other people.



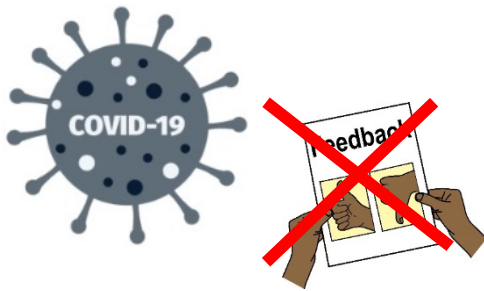
- More than 9 out of 10 people agreed that the project had helped them to find out more about joining in with other people.



- Everybody agreed that the project had helped them to make more friends and had helped them to be happier.



- More than 9 out of 10 people agreed that the project had helped them to be healthier.



We wanted to use a new way of getting feedback on each different social activity. However, because of **COVID-19** we couldn't do this.

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.



Peer supporters said that the social groups and activities were also a way for people to talk and share their problems.



Jennifer said: “The Art and Chat group is going very, very, very fantastic because we have got loads of people now coming. We chat and have a laugh. We listen to people’s problems actually in the group. People think it’s very good for them because it gets them out of the house and helps them to build up their confidence as well.”



Clients told us that Supporting Each Other Equals Power! helped them to relax and meet with people.

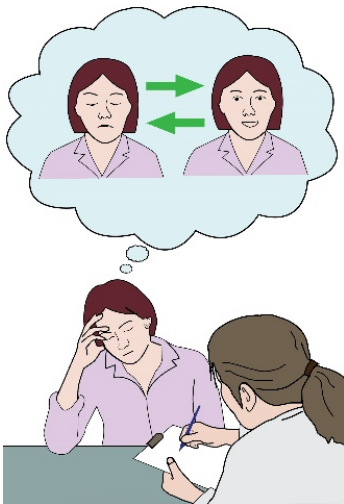


Jane was one of the clients. She said:

“Without activities I would be extremely isolated. ...I’ve got bipolar and emotionally unstable personality disorder.

“I get anxious because services are not always there. Even though there’s a wide range of services. Or they find me too demanding.

“It’s been helpful talking to you because I get on with you. It makes me feel calmer.”



Using social activities to break down barriers



The social activities helped to break down barriers between people with, and people without, learning difficulties. Let's Dance happened in a busy and accessible space in the middle of Brixton. It was open to anyone who wanted to go.



Gina, one of the peer supporters said:

“We got loads of people for Let’s Dance; people without learning difficulties, and people with learning difficulties.



“So, it was a lot of people and it was a lot of people that we didn't know at the time. And then they came and came to dancing with us. And they kept coming after that.



“They found it enjoyable because they can dance and do whatever.”



People without learning difficulties said they thought it was very inclusive.

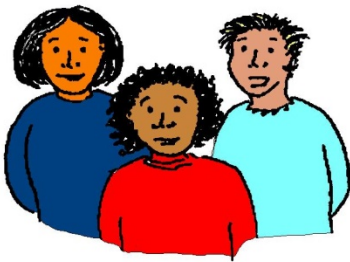
They liked the fact that people could meet in a relaxed place.





Louise from Inclusion London said:

“I think the thing that stood out for me, we were all in there. I mean, it was open to anybody, you know. It’s literally just music. Come in, have a dance, enjoy yourself.”

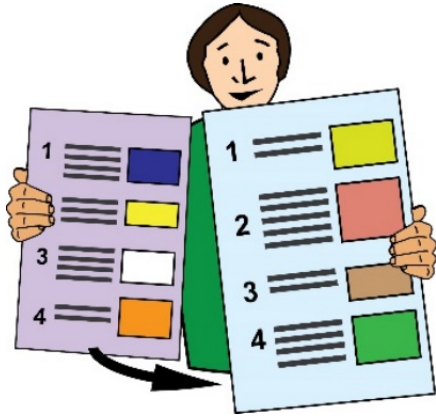


Clients said things like the disco and pub trips made them feel like their learning difficulty wasn’t the only part of who they are. They could be themselves.

Emma was one of the clients. She said:



“I really liked that because our disabilities had nothing at all to do with anything. We were just people, we accepted one another.”



Please read **Supporting Each Other Equals Power! What we did (Part 2)** to find out more about the project and what we have been doing to support people with learning difficulties.

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