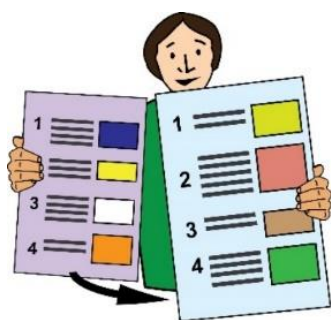


Supporting Each Other Equals Power!

Ten Top Tips: Tips 1 to 5

Supporting Each Other Equals Power!: this was a project that ran for four years. The aim of the project was to make sure people with learning difficulties have the power to support each other. Three organisations worked in **partnership** on the project.

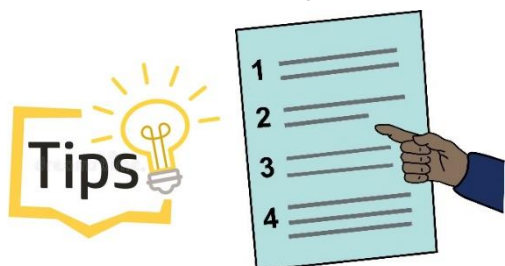
Partnership: this means when two or more groups work together to push for the same aims.



These are tips 1 to 5 of our Ten Top Tips. Please make sure you read tips 6 to 10 when you have finished reading this document.



The Supporting Each Other Equals Power! project has written these Top Tips.



These tips will help you to run projects like ours. You can run projects using the Supporting Each Other Equals Power! model.

Here are our first five Top Tips:

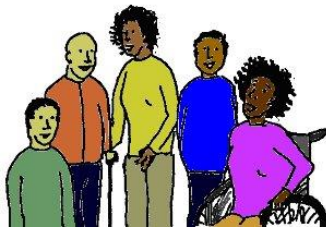
1. Put people with learning difficulties in the lead



It is very important for the project to be led by people with learning difficulties. People with learning difficulties must lead events and meetings.



This shows the project is led by people with learning difficulties. This helps to build up trust with other people with learning difficulties.



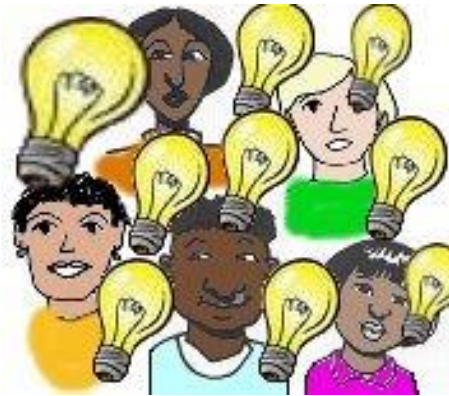
This will make people with learning difficulties want to take part in the project.



Samantha one of our peer supporters. She said: “They had people with learning difficulties helping them as well. And they could talk to us, as we've been through the problems they've had.”

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

Peer supporters: this means our staff members who have learning difficulties. In this project, they used their experiences to support other people with learning difficulties.



In our project, all of our work was led by people with learning difficulties. Our team had six people with learning difficulties. Four of these people lived in the London Borough of Lambeth. This was the local borough.



Our project was run by three different organisations.



Two of these organisations are run for and by people with learning difficulties. These two organisations are **Breaking out of the Bubble** and **People First Self Advocacy**.



Breaking Out the Bubble: Breaking Out of the Bubble 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.

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.



Now we will look at some examples of how our peer supporters ran and took part in activities.



Gina, one of our peer supporters. She said:

“We started a big dance. We set it up for them in Pop Brixton.



“It wasn’t just for people with learning difficulties and high support needs. Anybody could come, even outsiders that we didn’t know. I enjoyed taking part in organising it.



“It was great fun organising it and it something that the students with high support needs wanted to do. If they asked us to do it again I would do it again.”



**Sam, one of our peer supporters.
She said:**

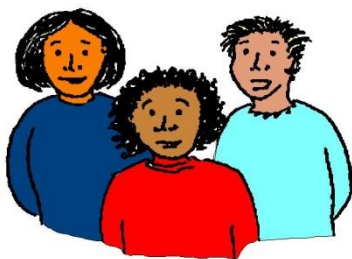
“Well, what I've liked is being part of a team, and being able to put my experiences of what I've been through and helping people with learning difficulties.”



**Neil, one of our peer supporters.
He said:**

“We had the pub nights at The Hootenanny. We took it slowly as I remember. And after a while everyone seemed to be very comfortable talking to the bar staff, ordering drinks or food.”

“Some of our guys were not used to talking to the bar staff so we had to help them.”



**Ray, one of our peer supporters.
He said:**

“The best thing is being able to see what's out there for people in Lambeth. And to know other places that people in Lambeth can go to, to get to know how they can have support. And being with people their own age, and other things like that.”

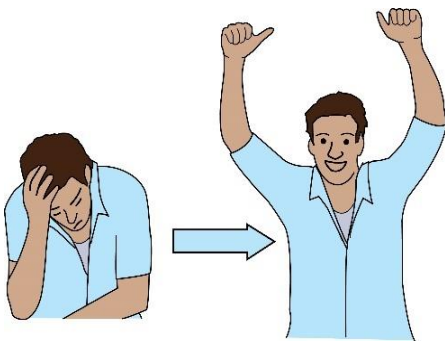
2. Give emotional, social and practical support.



The main idea of the Supporting Each Other Equals Power! model is to give social, emotional, and practical support.

Running social activities is a great way to get to know **clients**. It's a great way for them to get to know you.

Clients: in this document, this means the people with learning difficulties that the project supported.



The social activities and emotional support help to build trust. These activities are a great way to support people with learning difficulties to lead healthier and happier lives.



When people get to know you and trust you, then they will tell you about their problems. Then you can give the right **advocacy** and other support.

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



If you can't help, you must try to find someone else who can. This might be a person or an organisation.

As the project gets going, you will build up relationships with other organisations who can help. It's good to make a list of these organisations.

Ray, one of our peer supporters. He said:



“Yeah, it's really important so you've got both sides. So, if they want to be social, they can go and do the social side. If they need practical support, they can come to us and we will support them.”

Jennifer, one of our peer supporters. She said:



“I used to look after the Art and Chat Group. I used to open up for them and make sure they had their tea and coffee. And get the art things out on the table and that.”



“I supported them to talk to each other, if they had any problems with things at home and stuff. If they had any problems to come and talk to me and then I would listen to them.”

3. Be organised



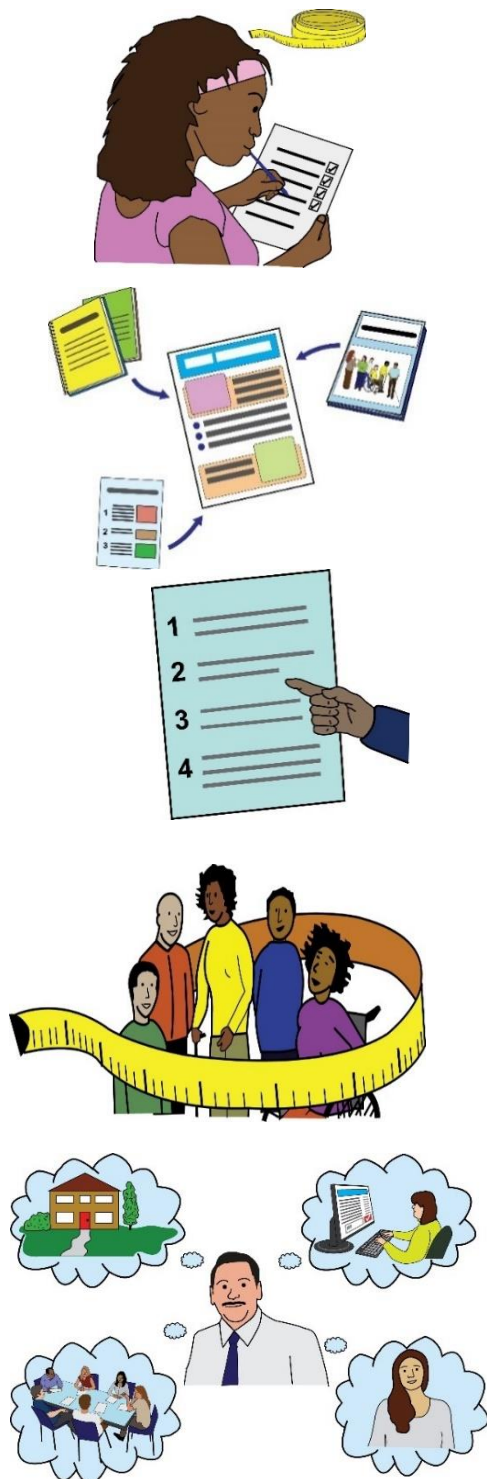
Having the right documents is important to make sure things go well. The project wrote some different forms for our clients to fill in. These were to help us to support clients. Here are the forms that we asked our clients to fill in:



- Equality and diversity, this means looking at our clients' different backgrounds to make sure we are treating everybody in an equal and fair way.



- Client information sheets, this means getting important information about our clients' needs.
- Feedback surveys, this means asking our clients about what they like and don't like about our project. This way, we can make changes to our project so we can support clients in the best ways.
- Action plan and assessment forms.
- Consent forms, this means checking with our clients to make sure that they are happy to take part. It means checking that certain steps are OK with them.
- Client progress charts, this means looking at how our



project is helping the client.

The different forms helped us to make sure we were supporting the clients in the best ways we could. These forms will help you to:

- Set goals and reach them.
- Keep a note of the client's journey and look at how the support has helped them.
- Find out what the client's needs are.
- Find out what the client is interested in.
- Find out the areas of their life which they need support in.

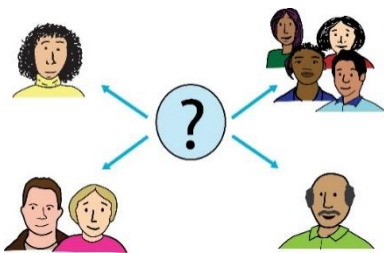


Planning is really important if you want to run a project like

Supporting Each Other Equals Power!

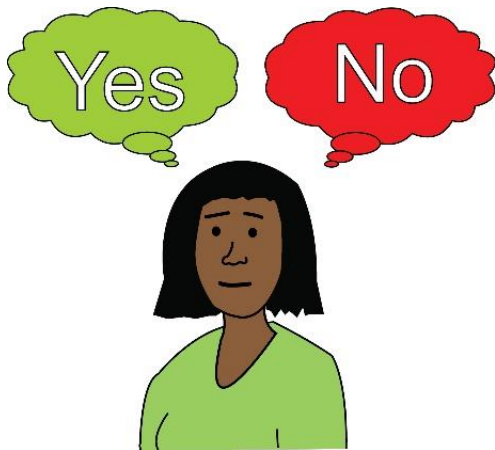
Set a time and date to have meetings. You should hold meetings often. These meetings should be used to:

- Deal with any issues that staff members are having.
- Keep everyone on track.
- Make sure everyone is being responsible and taking responsibility for their work.



Planning also helps you to look at how much money you have for the project. It will help you to decide how you want to use your money.

It will help you look at what is going well and what changes you need to make to your way of working.



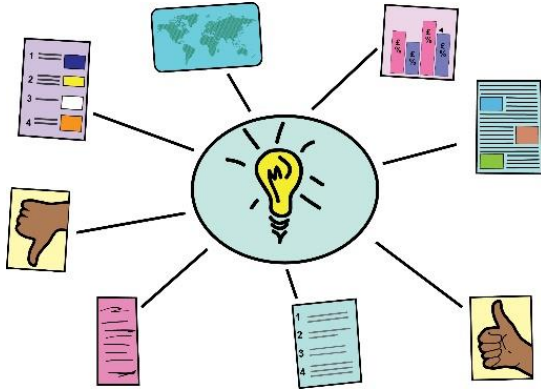
Don't just plan with your staff. Plan with your clients too. Make sure your clients feel like you are listening to them. Make sure they feel like they can take part.

Talk to clients about the next steps you will support them to take. By doing this, clients can tell you whether or not they are uncomfortable with this next step.

They can tell you whether or not to go ahead with this step.

This is important. You might think you know the best steps to take for your client. However, these steps might not work for them.

4. Make sure people and other organisations know about the project



You will need to let people and organisations know about the project.

Staff from other projects and organisations need time to get to know about the project and understand what the project can do.

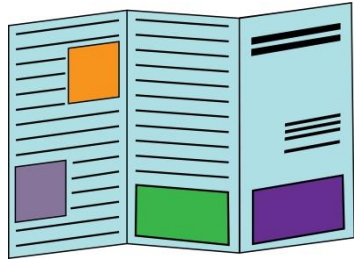


There are lots of different ways to do this. For example:



- Going to meetings about learning difficulties.
- Giving talks about the project to staff and people with learning difficulties.
- Having a website or webpage to tell people about project.
- Using social media like Facebook and





Twitter to tell people about the project.

- Making a leaflet about the project that you can give to people.

Neil, one of our peer supporters. He said:



“I did the posters, flyers and leaflets for the individual activities, and I worked on the website. We had to create the new website from scratch.”

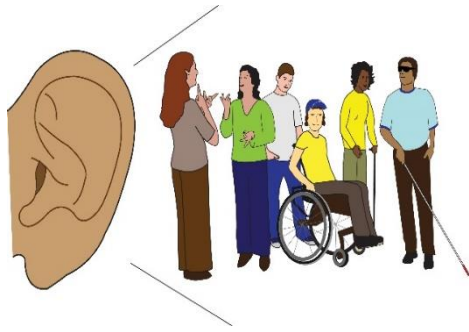
5. Build up strong relationships with people with learning difficulties



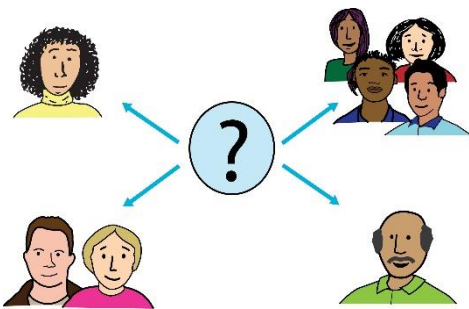
For the project to work well, you must build good relationships with people with learning difficulties. This is all about building trust. It's about getting to know people.



You must be friendly and patient. People with learning difficulties need time to build up trust. Be ready to build up long-term relationships with people.



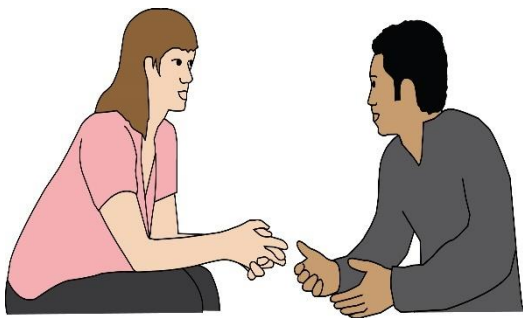
Talk to people about what they need. Listen to what they have to say and then make it happen. Think of new ways to support them. Try to help people become independent.



Do not expect clients to come to you and ask to join your project. You must build up trust with clients. You should keep checking in with them.



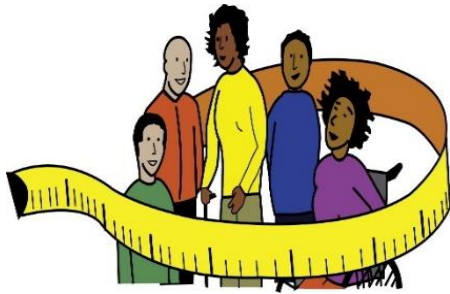
This is a great way to build partnerships and keep up good relationships with them.



It takes time for clients to open up to you and talk about their problems. When they do this, it is really important that they don't feel like they will be judged.



Always put your clients' needs first! Your clients should be treated as individual people that have different needs. It's



important to ask your clients questions.

You should find out about your clients' needs. You must make sure your clients understand the support that you are offering them.

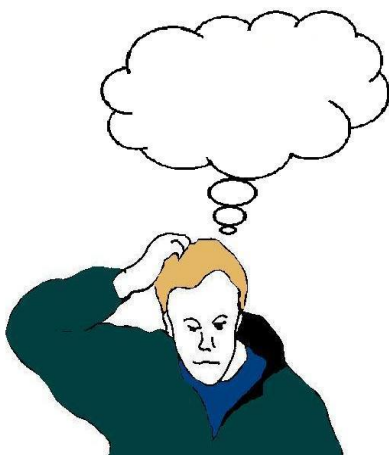


Asking clients about their needs is a great way to find out about the areas of their life where they need the most support.



Ray, one of our peer supporters. He said:

“It's their space you know, to tell us about the sort of stuff that happens to them, depending on their circumstances.”



Here is a story about one of our clients. He is called Paul:

Paul has Asperger's Syndrome. This is a condition that makes it difficult for people to know how to act in social

situations. He also has learning difficulties.



At first, Paul came to spend some time in the Art and Chat group. Soon after joining the group, he told us that he had been a prisoner in a religious group for some years in the 1990s.



Here, he was locked up naked in a dirty and dark room.



He was raped for lots of days. Other people were raped too and one person died.



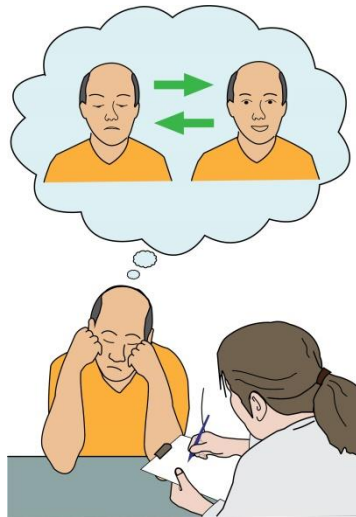
He also faced abuse and they started to control his money.



Supporting Each Other Equals Power! were the first people he had told. We supported him to tell the police.



They gave him a special officer who came and interviewed him in lots of



detail. The project supported him with these interviews.

Paul doesn't have much confidence and doesn't believe in himself. He thinks that he is offending and hurting other people when he isn't.

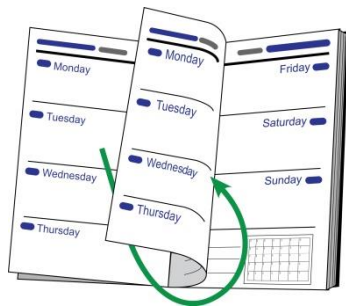
He gets depressed and has trouble looking after his own health.



He also knows that he finds it hard to keep his money safe. He doesn't have a way of stopping people from using him for his money. He told us that even now he will give his money away.



Our project supported him to start swimming and visiting us often. We worked with Mind, which is a charity for mental health. We asked them to put Paul at the top of the list for therapy. He got some therapy every month.



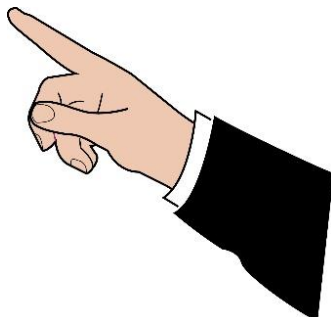
Paul started to phone us lots of times a day because he was feeling lonely and depressed. We couldn't spend as much time with him on the phone as he would have liked to.

This was because of the other people who needed support. We had to ask him to only call once a day.



Here is a story about another one of our clients. His name is Ben:

Our project helped Ben with police investigations. He had been blamed for lots of different crimes.



He told us that the person who was blaming was actually the one doing the crimes. There were lots of crimes that Ben was being blamed for such as:

- Breaking non-molestation orders.



This is an order from the court which aims to stop your partner from using violence against you.



- Making false allegations. This means saying that someone is doing something wrong, when they're not doing anything wrong.



- Assault, this means harming somebody in a physical way such as hitting or kicking them.



- Stalking, this means when a person keeps following another person and making them feel unsafe.



- Assault with a weapon. This means harming someone

with a weapon such as a knife.



Supporting Each Other Equals Power! gave Ben support to understand what was happening.

We also agreed to be Ben's appropriate adult for all his police interviews. This means being the person that supports you if you have been arrested.

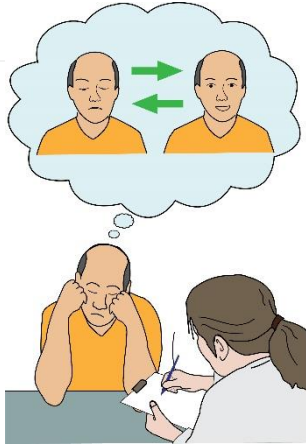


We made sure that Ben understood what was being said. We made sure he understood the questions he was being asked.

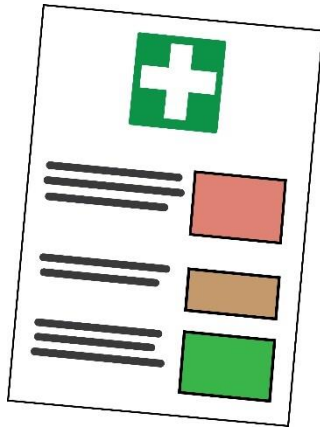


Our project also supported him to talk about how he felt about the situation. We supported him to explain what he thought had happened.

We got in touch with all the groups that were working with him. We



asked him if it was OK to do this before we did it. He said it was OK so we got in touch with the mental health team and social services.



Then, we could get some background information about him. We could also get information about his health and his medical records. Then, we sent this to the police officer who was dealing with his case.



This information was used as mitigations. This means it was used as a reason to give Ben a less serious sentence.



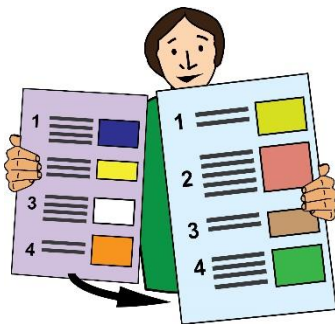
Because of this, he was not charged with the crime. This means he didn't have to go to prison or pay a fine. Instead, he got a caution, which is more like a warning for a crime that is less serious.



Because of this, the police found out about some of the issues he had faced. He had faced issues because the person who was blaming him had actually abused and controlled him.



He is now waiting for the police to finish their investigation into this person. This person might get charged with a crime. This means they might have to pay a fine or go to prison.



Please read the rest of our Ten Top Tips (tips six to ten).