

Real Change Challenges



The Real Change Challenge:

Mate Crime: A Challenge for Providers

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Foreword

I am pleased to be able to contribute to the Real Change Challenge, by the Association for Real Change. It is a mark of how much things have changed since I first started investigating disability hate and mate crime, in 2007, that such a guide can be written. It's thanks to ARC and many other organisations that the profile of this terrible crime has been raised – and that it is being challenged so effectively.

In June 2007, when I was news editor at the magazine, Disability Now, on our press day, we reported on the sentence being handed down on three people responsible for holding captive, and torturing a young man with epilepsy, Kevin Davies. The prosecutor told the court that Kevin had been “kept like a dog in a locked garden shed at night”ⁱ. Kevin had been burned, bruised and starved. His case was not treated as a disability hate crime, nor were the other cases I collected over the next few months, involving robbery, grooming, torture, rape and murder. Such crimes sickened me to the core and convinced me that there was a depth of hatred towards some disabled people in society that was largely unmarked by the judicial system.

As I started to look more deeply into the cases, I found that the motivation of the offenders was underpinned by our common history, and the fears and prejudices that have fuelled violence against disabled people for over 2000 years. Commonly held beliefs – that disabled people are a scourge on humanity, a freakish spectacle only good for amusement and mockery, that they deserve to be treated as slaves, that they are appropriate scapegoats for society's ills – even that they should not exist at all and should be destroyed – live on and thrive today. Other unpleasant attitudes, such as that of some politicians hinting, strongly, that many people on disability benefits are cheats and frauds, have added to a toxic mix. Our history, too, has bequeathed us a powerful legacy of hatred, fear, contempt. Without marking and recognising our history, and what it has bequeathed us, we have no chance of confronting disability hate crime and those who commit it.

Mate crime is a very pernicious form of hate crime, which seems to affect people with learning difficulties in particular and is long-lasting and very disturbing.

Indeed, when I analysed the deaths of 18 disabled victims of hate crime for my 2008 report for the charity Scope, *Getting Away with Murder*, 11 were killed by people they considered to be good friends. Only two out of the 18 were killed by strangers and the rest were killed by acquaintances. Two were even killed by self-styled carersⁱⁱ.

Mate crime is an aspect of hate crime, not separate from it. However anecdotal evidence (and my report, *Getting Away with Murder*) shows that many people with a learning disability are befriended, and then exploited by others. Often they do not see it happening to them until it is too late. If they do not have good family/social networks to support them the risks are greater. The Safety Net projects, run by ARC, understands these risks and tries to reduce the incidents by working with people around ‘friend or foe?’ issues and raising awareness for families, supporters and front line staff.

And, having looked at the social isolation in which so many of the victims were living, I believe that the lack of true friendship is a key risk factor in disability hate crime, exposing victims to exploitation of the worst kind. I very much welcome the focus in this guide in promoting friendship as a key protective factor in keeping people safe from harassment.

In conclusion, so much valuable work has been done in the last few years to challenge disability hate and mate crime. But more needs to be done. This guide is a very welcome step along the way.

Katharine Quarmby

ⁱ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/gloucestershire/6284184.stm>

ⁱⁱ Katharine Quarmby, *Getting Away with Murder*, (Scope, 2008), 39

Background: People with learning disabilities and mate crime

Mate crimes happen when people with learning disabilities are befriended by someone who uses the relationship to exploit or abuse the person.

In July 2006 Steven Hoskin was brutally tortured and murdered in St Austell by a group of people who he took to be his friends. Steven's mother said at the time:

“ He was generous...he knew he had a learning disability...he tried to do as others do...he wanted friendships...”

The ARC Safety Net project (www.arcuk.org.uk/safetynet) was set up in 2009 to research the issue of mate crime, raise awareness, deliver training, and develop resources and local protocols.

The project swiftly became aware of the extent of mate crime, with many Association for Real Change members sharing anecdotal evidence. We realised that for any kind of crime you could name, someone, somewhere, had turned it into a mate crime.

We have had stories of women with learning disabilities being pimped out by their 'boyfriends', people whose accommodation has been turned into crack dens, and others who have been 'befriended' online and then financially and sexually abused.

A typical story was of a young man with Asperger's who had, what he called, his 'Tuesday Friends'. Tuesday, the day his benefits arrived, saw a particular group of people turn up at his flat, 'help' him to the cashpoint and then on to the pub where they 'helped' him spend his money.

There are serious implications for service providers, not only to address the everyday, 'petty' examples of mate crime that so impact on people's independence and confidence, but because there is evidence that unaddressed minor mate crimes are often repeated and escalate.

Steven Hoskin's principal killer lived with him for a year before murdering him, and his Serious Case Review lists more than 40 missed opportunities for intervention.

The British Crime Survey estimates suggest that up to 98% of learning disability hate crime is unreported.

Anecdotal evidence from the Safety Net project indicates that the figure for mate crime is even higher. This places an even greater responsibility on services. If people cannot, or will not, see the crimes to which they are subjected it is up to the people around them to do so and to take decisive action.

Our Definition of Mate Crime

Mate Crime happens when someone 'makes friends' with a person and goes on to abuse or exploit that relationship. The founding intention of the relationship, from the point of view of the perpetrator, is likely to be criminal. The relationship is likely to be of some duration and, if unchecked, may lead to a pattern of repeat and worsening abuse.

Mate Crime, Hate Crime and Safeguarding

There is no legal definition of mate crime. In many situations mate crime will be an example of disability hate crime. The Safety Net project has always told people with learning disabilities and their supporters to report mate crime to the Police as a hate crime as this tends to lead to a swifter and more effective response.



However, a mate crime is not always a hate crime. If you are in any doubt report it as a hate crime and let the Police and CPS make a decision.

If it is *not* a hate crime it is a Safeguarding issue, and must be passed to the Adult Safeguarding Team. It is up to your service to ensure this happens, whether the report comes from the victim, the Police or social care staff.

There are arguments about whether crimes of exploitation and abuse involving

family members or care staff, etc. constitute mate crime. We have chosen to exclude these here, as we take the view that mate crime is an intentional relationship, and that abuse by family or staff are dealt with by other means. However, we welcome the enhanced sentences given to the staff who were found guilty at Winterbourne View, as these were treated as disability hate crimes.

The Invisible Crime

Mate crime is an often ‘invisible hate crime’, with invisible acts being carried out by invisible perpetrators on invisible victims in invisible circumstances.. For example:

a) Mate crimes might have been invited, or appear to have been invited, by the person with a learning disability, raising issues of mental capacity, consent and informed choice. There may even be positive pay-offs for the victim (attention, excitement, ‘friendship’, etc.), so the typical outcomes of hate crime – physical injury, distress, complaint – may not be manifest.

b) Mate crimes are sometimes not criminal. A typical mate crime might involve someone living on their own who has a group of friends they meet up with on Friday nights. Whilst this relationship may be genuinely one of friendship it is still exploitative if the person with a learning disability always supplies the venue, the beer, has their fridge raided, their phone used, and is consistently left with the clearing up.

c) Mate crimes are likely to occur in private, for example in people’s own homes, rather than the more public sphere of much hate crime. Increasingly this includes cyber crime.

d) Mate crimes are likely to occur (though not exclusively) within long-term relationships. These relationships may have started as, or may actually still be, genuine friendships. Even if they are not so they may appear to be to many observers. It is difficult for many people to conceive of these relationships containing an element of hate. However, even hate crimes do not need to be motivated by hate to reach a conviction.

e) Mate Crimes are unlikely to be disclosed by someone with a learning disability. During the Safety Net project, we spoke to more than 300 service providers about Mate Crime and each was able to supply half a dozen different stories about mate crimes affecting people known to them. During the same period we failed to meet more than a handful of people with learning disabilities who told us it had happened to them. This may be for a number of reasons including not recognising the abuse for what it is, considering the relationship more important than the abuse that takes place within it, embarrassment/shame, and fear of retribution.

f) Until recently mate crime has been unrecognised in hate crime materials, educational resources, safeguarding procedures, etc.



Challenges for Social Care Providers: Why people with learning disabilities are particularly vulnerable to mate crime

- Given the right circumstances, we are all ‘vulnerable’.
- We all need friends.
- People are often living very isolated lives.
- Learned compliance.
- People still live sheltered lives.
- Most people with learning disabilities are outside the system.
- Social exclusion and poverty.
- Historical social attitudes towards disability.
- Warped notions of what is ‘normal.’

The first thing to say is that, given the right circumstances, we are all ‘vulnerable’. Disability Rights activists rightly fight shy of having themselves labelled as vulnerable. They prefer to use the phrase ‘situationally vulnerable’, which promotes the idea that we are all vulnerable in certain contexts. As Stephen Brookes (Disability Hate Crime Network) has stated, even a 6’ 6”, 20-stone rugby player is vulnerable if he is standing in front of a cashpoint, drunk on a Saturday night. They argue that by calling people vulnerable we switch the emphasis to blaming the victim rather than the perpetrator.

That said, it is arguable that many people with learning disabilities find themselves situationally vulnerable more frequently than most of the population. The experience of the Safety Net Project suggests that people with learning disabilities are prone to mate crimes for a number of reasons. They are an obvious ‘soft touch’, highly visible and vulnerable in the community, and often have few support mechanisms. Like everyone else, people with learning disabilities need friendship, engagement and excitement. A number of environmental and social features combine to leave people with learning disabilities in very vulnerable situations and these are discussed below.

We all need friends and to find a place in a neighbourhood or other communities. Friendships are a basic human need, but

making good friendships is never easy. This can be especially true for people with learning disabilities who may have less control and fewer opportunities to create, maintain and develop friendships. Often people have little contact with others outside their living situation, and may well not have chosen their living companions. Most people who have a learning disability do not have the opportunities, experience or economic power to make friends the way that most people do - through work, extended education or a rich social life.

Research for the Valuing People Support Team¹ found that only 30% of people with learning disabilities have any friends at all. Other research² suggests that even when people have friends, one third have no contact with them. This may mean that four out of five people with learning disabilities are, to all intents and purposes, friendless. Given so few opportunities for relationships that bring warmth, mutual support and validation, then any connection is often viewed to be better than none.

People are desperate for friendships, and such desperation is easily exploited. This makes it more likely that any offer of ‘friendship’ will be accepted – “better to have horrible friends than no friends at all”.³ It also means that people will be far less likely to end a friendship, even when it has become dysfunctional.

¹ Department of Health (2001): 20

² Emerson and Hatton (2008): 11

³ Wallis (2010): 10

Michael Gilbert (who did not have a recognised learning disability, but was described in Court as ‘vulnerable’) was brutally tortured over a period of months, and finally murdered in 2009 by people whom he had once considered to be friends or even quasi-family. When one brother, Richard (found guilty of familial homicide), asked him why he put up with it, Michael had replied: “I love you lot. You are my family.”⁴

People are often living very isolated lives, increasingly without organised activities. This increases the risk of boredom, making an offer of engagement and excitement more likely to be accepted, regardless of the consequences. They are also less likely to have the experience and capacity for determining these consequences.

Learned compliance. Historically, people with learning disabilities learn what is expected of them and respond accordingly, so as to avoid punishing alternatives. Many people with learning disabilities are, as a result, highly suggestible and acquiescent. A story was related to the Safety Net project by a care worker about a quite able man with learning disabilities who felt he had become friends with a local junkie simply because he had been called “mate” by her. He was discovered trying to find the money that the woman had asked him for.

People still live sheltered lives. People with learning disabilities have often been very sheltered from normal

community life and are, therefore, lacking in experience and are often naïve. For example, Steven Hoskin climbed the viaduct in St Austell to his death without struggle as he believed his murderers’ assertion that there were snipers in the undergrowth who would shoot him if he did not comply.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights (2008) found that people with learning disabilities may not know about their human rights, about what is criminal, or what constitutes abuse. An advocacy worker reported that in a discussion on the Human Rights Act, the people with learning disabilities she was working with told her that the HRA applies to ‘normal people’, i.e. not people with learning disabilities.

This lack of knowledge can extend to a limited understanding of what real friendship is, and what it involves (for example reciprocity). This is likely to have been compounded by a lifetime of being taught that danger only comes from strangers, not ‘friends’.

In an age of social networking where the words ‘friend’ and ‘like’ are used in a flippant way the dangers are clear.

Most people with learning disabilities are outside the system

Increasingly people with learning disabilities are living independently in the community with reduced support from services. This can lead to isolation and make people more vulnerable to offers

of ‘counterfeit friendship’. Additionally, perhaps only 15% of people with a learning disability are in receipt of any social care services. The remaining 85%, who may never have received a diagnosis, and who may be unaware that they have a learning disability, or unwilling to own the label, are arguably far more prone to mate crimes.

Social exclusion and poverty

Disability Rights Commission (2005) research points out that people with learning disabilities are, “*likely to live in poverty . . . and are exceptionally socially excluded.*” These are both factors in an increased exposure to hate crime⁵, and mate crime.

Historical social attitudes towards disability

have meant that people with learning disabilities have been seen as less than human. This has a twofold effect:

- i) it makes it easier for perpetrators to justify what they do, to themselves and others, as their victim ‘doesn’t really matter’;
- ii) the legacy of the historical attitude has left a subconscious attitude with some carers, and people with learning disabilities themselves, that such treatment of disabled people is inevitable, perhaps even deserved.

For example, the 17-year-old convicted of contributing to the death by beating of Brent Martin in Sunderland in 2007 said in Court, “*I am not going down for a muppet*”

(BBC 2008). These attitudes often mean that no action is taken or the victim themselves are blamed if they complain of abuse to their care workers, families, etc. (people being told to ‘ignore it’ or led to believe that they ‘asked for it’ or ‘had it coming’).

Warped notions of what is ‘normal’

Bullying, harassment and abuse are so common for people with learning disabilities that it simply starts to be seen as part of what it means to have a learning disability. As Mencap⁶ reported, “it becomes seen as ‘part of everyday life’.” A Social Worker said that people with learning disabilities known to her did not regard being spat at as abusive as it was an everyday occurrence.

None of this is an argument against living in the community or ordinary life principles. Nor is this an argument against people forming relationships and trusting others. Where people play a contributory part in their communities, and form genuine friendships, incidents of mate crime are likely to diminish.

However, Safety Net’s findings are that social care services must be watchful on behalf of people who are potential targets, and support them in developing the necessary street wisdom and resources they will need. We also need to ensure that such crimes and abuses are identified, taken seriously, reported and ended.

⁴ Sturdy (2010)

⁵ Sin et al (2009): 14 & 82

⁶ Mencap (1999): 12

Detailed Challenge Statements

1



Real Change Challenge:
Outcome statement

I can make and keep good relationships

The cure for bad ‘friends’ is good friends. This works in two ways. If people have a good range of genuine friends already, they have no need for the proffered ‘friendships’ from people who would exploit them. Secondly, good friends are people who have the individual’s best interests at heart, who know them best, and communicate well with them.

All these are assets in identifying and exposing mate crime. If the people you support only have ‘friends’ that are paid to be there then you are not offering them a good enough service.



Prevention

“The cure for bad friendships is good friendships.”

If you do nothing else, support and enable people to develop and maintain friendships.

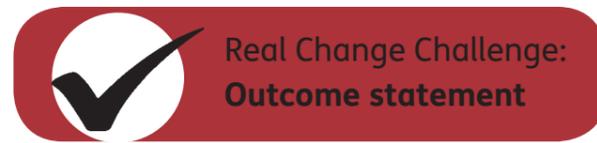
- 1) Organisations such as **Luv 2 Meet U** (www.luv2meetu.com) or **Stars in the Sky** (www.starsinthesky.co.uk) can help people with friendships and relationships.
- 2) **‘Check the Map’** is a good place to search for local groups: www.checkthemap.org
- 3) Use **DotComUnity** to find out what is going on in your area: www.dotcommunity.co.uk/
- 4) Read *‘Members of Each Other. Building community in company with people with developmental disabilities’* (John O’Brien & Connie Lyle: www.inclusive-solutions.com/bvfullistBO.asp and *‘Building Communities from the Inside Out’* (John P. Kretzman & John McKnight)
- 5) Know your neighbourhood and help the person you support be visible within it – get to know people at the local church, pub, etc; read the local paper; find out what’s going on and get involved.
- 6) Support the individual to be proactive in your neighbourhood. – maybe host a BBQ, join the Neighbourhood Watch.
- 7) Help the individual to get a job or go on a course. Most people meet their life partners through work or education.
- 8) Recruit the right staff to do the right things. Appoint people who have the right values, and make it part of their job description to support and enable relationships.
- 9) Encourage the individual to join local clubs and societies, help run the fete or carnival or charity coffee morning, shop for a neighbour, get involved in a road safety campaign – be visible and make a contribution.
- 10) Know the individual really well – what and who do they like? What can they offer?

2

I have good self-esteem and assertiveness skills

If people care about themselves, and see themselves in a positive light, they are less likely to fall into the trap of ‘any attention is better than no attention’. They are also less likely to think of themselves as ‘deserving’ of poor treatment. If good self-esteem is supported by assertiveness skills they find it easier to say ‘no’, and to make themselves heard when they are disclosing abuse. People with good self-esteem and assertiveness skills also find it easier to make genuine friendships, so providers must do all they can to help those they support to develop good self-esteem.

Many self-advocacy groups will offer assertiveness training for people with learning disabilities, so find out what is available locally and encourage those you support to get involved.



3

I am a contributing part of my community. People look out for my safety even when I am not their immediate ‘responsibility’

Community presence is not enough. People need to be involved in their communities, and to be making a positive contribution. People care about other people if they are highly visible, have everyday ordinary contact with them, and they are seen as assets to that community.

If people are valued by their communities there are many eyes watching out for their well-being. Serious Case Reviews following mate crime murders and other abuses often point to the shortcomings of statutory authorities in putting the bigger picture together and recognising that ‘everyone knew something’. The people who would be aware of a developing crisis are people’s neighbours, or even the shopkeeper who sees them every day.

People’s communities will include their specific physical neighbourhood, but will not be restricted to that and, increasingly, may include on-line communities, so providers have an important role in facilitating opportunities for people to get involved in community life, outside of their home environment.





Real Change Challenge:
Outcome statement

4 I have staff who think of me as an individual with rights



Unpublished research by North Devon Police indicated that when people with learning disabilities do recognise that a crime has taken place they are most likely to tell a carer. In the majority of cases it goes no further. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from such limited research, but this could point to a belief, probably unconscious, on the part of the carer (and perhaps the person with a learning disability) that nothing will be done and/or that the person with a learning disability should expect nothing more and may even ‘deserve’ it

Added to this can be a culture of dealing with abuse and crime ‘in house’. People are not supported to report abuse to the Police, instead they are told to “walk a different way” or “catch a different bus” to avoid abusers.

The Safety Net project found people with a learning disability who had to leave their homes due to the behaviour of others, rather than those causing the problems being dealt with. People do need to be kept safe but by not dealing with those causing the trouble they are left to abuse others. By the same notion, this abuse is not just ‘anti social behaviour’, it’s Hate Crime, and providers should treat it as such.

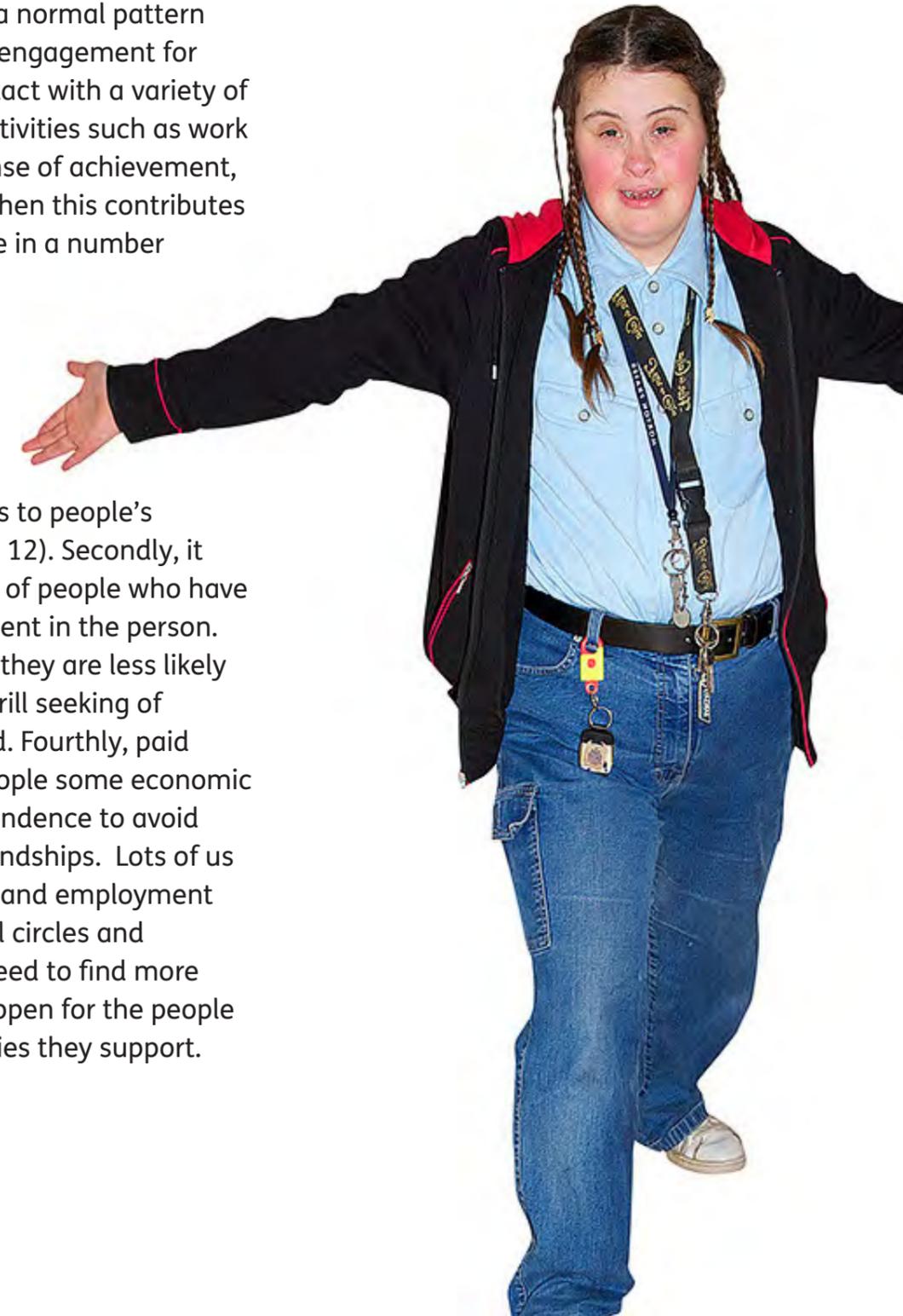


Real Change Challenge:
Outcome statement

5 I have a life that is fulfilling and ambitious

If people’s lives have a normal pattern that involves positive engagement for much of the day, contact with a variety of people, and ideally activities such as work that give people a sense of achievement, worth and meaning, then this contributes to fighting mate crime in a number of ways.

Firstly, this contributes to people’s self esteem (see page 12). Secondly, it increases the number of people who have an emotional investment in the person. Thirdly, it means that they are less likely to fall victim to the thrill seeking of the endemically bored. Fourthly, paid employment gives people some economic power and the independence to avoid having to ‘pay’ for friendships. Lots of us meet friends at work, and employment widens people’s social circles and networks. Providers need to find more ways to make this happen for the people with learning disabilities they support.





6 I am able to report crimes when they happen to me



The Safety Net project has received many reports of mate crimes, but few of these come from people with learning disabilities themselves. The core issues could be summarised as:

- **Victims may not wish to report.**
- **If they do report they are not believed, or are deemed to not be 'credible' witnesses.**
- **If they are believed, nothing is done.**
- **If anything is done it only makes matters worse.**

Capacity

Providers need to ensure that the people they support:

- a) know what a mate crime is, and could recognise that one had taken place,
- b) have knowledge of the range of actions they could take,
- c) have the capacity (in all senses) to take action.

Retribution from the perpetrator(s)

For example, Police knew about the alleged abduction and beating by the people who would eventually kill and dismember him, but Michael Gilbert refused to press charges, telling detectives "it would make it worse for me in the long run". Additionally people with learning disabilities often have unrealistic ideas about the punishment that perpetrators will receive and anticipate lengthy jail sentences for what are quite minor offences in the eyes of the law.

Need for acceptance and validation

For some people with learning disabilities, their desperation for acceptance and validation compounds the issue. In a 2010 Channel 4 documentary ['Sticks & Stones'] a man with learning disabilities being harassed by local youths refused to complain to the Police, saying, "I don't want them to get criminal records. I want them to make something positive of their lives. Perhaps in time we could become friends."

Emotional impact

Wallis (2010) talks about people's experiences being, "too painful to talk about" or people feeling ashamed and "reluctant to see themselves as weak or victims". Providers must support people to challenge these views and perceptions.

Poor reporting mechanisms

People with learning disabilities are often reluctant to engage with the Police for a number of reasons, including poor previous experience, and 'fear of the

uniform' (in common with many people they have a subconscious fear that they have done something wrong). Current alternative reporting mechanisms (alternative reporting centres, and third party reporting) are under-developed and patchy. Many existing reporting forms are inaccessible to people with learning disabilities, either due to their language, format or location.

Poor experience of the criminal justice system

Louise Wallis, who has considerable experience of working with people with learning disabilities who are the victims of sexual crime, sums up the experience of her clients as being, "At the police station they are frequently not believed or not considered credible. If they get to court, they will not understand the process, or much of the language used. Victims may be cross-examined by a hostile barrister who will do their best to confuse them, make much of their disability, and question their credibility, which can be incredibly humiliating and upsetting. Judges, Juries and Barristers often have a prejudiced view of people with learning disabilities. At a [recent] rape case . . . involving a victim with learning disabilities, the defendant was found not guilty because the jury said the victim's learning disability meant they didn't know whether to believe her. Sentences are too low."⁷

Language

The language itself undermines the seriousness of offences. Using terms such

⁷ Presentation to the Westminster Briefing 'Learning the right lessons: progress and next steps for disability hate crime' conference. (October 2010).

as ‘bullying’ and ‘harassment’ even the term abuse rather than assault, torture and rape, for example, plays down the seriousness of such crimes, and marks them out as somehow different from the assaults that people without disabilities experience, even making them ‘not crimes’⁸. This carries the twin danger of making them less likely to be reported, and more likely to be treated as a private matter. Sherry⁹ says that we need to, “encourage more people to see ‘abuse’ as ‘hate crime’.” For mate crime it would be an advance for many people with learning disabilities to even see what they are experiencing as abuse.

Organisations need to ensure that their Safeguarding procedures include Hate and Mate Crime and the need to report these to the police when required. Keeping people safe is sometimes not sufficient, reports of the people committing these acts need to be shared with the authorities.

Reporting is the key to unlocking the whole issue. With so few reports the Police will not regard mate crime as a high priority, which in turn means it remains unlikely to be recognised and reported. A vicious circle.



Reaction

“If it’s not reported it’s like it doesn’t exist.”

If you do nothing else, report it!

If mate crime is not reported it can never be stopped, either for the individual, or for the community at large. We need widescale recognition that this is happening so that the necessary resources can be put in place to stop mate crime.

We say, “Tell someone - tell lots of people.”

Evidence shows that very often mate crimes are ignored or dealt with ‘in house’ rather than being reported to the Police. The more people you tell the more likely something will be done.

You should:

- Tell the Police.
- Tell Your Local Adult Safeguarding Team.

You may have local third party reporting centres (such as a self advocacy or ‘People First’ group) or you can use:

- **Stop Hate UK** (only operate in certain areas)
Tel: 0800 138 1625
Email: talk@stophateuk.org
- **Voice UK** (operates a helpline: Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm)
Tel: 080 880 28686
Email: helpline@voiceuk.org.uk
- **True Vision** (you can report a Hate Crime through their website)
Website: www.report-it.org.uk

When you report a mate crime, tell people that what happened is a **Disability Hate Crime. You will get a better response.**

⁸ Sherry (2010): 75

⁹ Sherry (2010): 119

7 I am supported by people who are trained and skilled in identifying abuse and exploitation

Providers have an important role in encouraging and supporting people with a learning disability to understand their rights, in term of the Human Rights Act and how people should operate within the framework of the Mental Capacity Act. Training delivered to people with a learning disability is more powerful if shared jointly with the staff supporting them, and even more so if it is delivered by people with learning disabilities (see ARC’s project ‘My Life Your Job’).

Anyone who supports people with a learning disability should be trained to recognise, and act on, signs of abuse. People are very unlikely to disclose mate crime even when they do realise it is happening to them. It is up to their peers, family, friends, neighbours, carers and the community to watch for it and to take action, or support the person to do so.

Many reviews and inquiries concerning the abuse of people with learning disabilities have concluded that people around them strongly suspected that abuse was taking place, but were waiting for the last incontrovertible piece of evidence, which never comes.

Any of these indicators could suggest that someone is experiencing a mate crime or other form of abuse:

- Changes in routine, behaviour, appearance, finances or household (e.g. new people visiting or staying over, lots of new ‘friends’, lots more noise or rubbish than normal).
- Unexplained injuries.
- Involvement in sexual acts which they have not agreed to.
- Loss of weight.
- Not taking care of themselves and looking dirty or scruffy.
- Bills not being paid.
- A ‘friend’ who does not respect, and bullies or undermines the person.
- A sudden lack of money, losing possessions or the changing of their will.
- The person ‘doing what they are told to’ by a ‘friend’.
- Showing signs of mental ill health.
- Not being with usual networks of friends/family or missing weekly activities. Cutting themselves off from established networks and support.
- Goods or packages arriving at the person’s house (and then being collected by someone else).



- The house is a mess after lots of parties.
- Secretive internet or mobile phone use.

Local Adult Safeguarding Team contact numbers, procedures and policies should be clear and accessible to everyone.

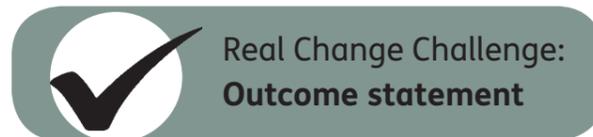


8 I am supported by an organisation that seeks to work in partnership with, and influence, other organisations responsible for my safety, including the Police and Adult Safeguarding

Any service responsible for supporting people with a learning disability needs to think how they can support and influence other key agencies whose job it is to tackle mate crime.

Your service can lobby for the following:

- Improved links between Safeguarding, the Police, and other agencies at a local level.
 - Local protocols.
 - Third party and supported reporting.
 - The introduction of **Safe Place Schemes** in local areas helps to keep people safe and feel valued within their communities. The Safe Places should be in areas that other members of the community also use, and available as close to 24/7 as possible. Whilst the local library might be a good place, they tend not to be open at 8pm on the Friday of a Bank Holiday weekend, which is when people may need the support.
- It's a two way process with the Police. The Police do need to get better at working with people with learning disabilities. However, people with learning disabilities need to help them by (for example) attending Police surgeries, and inviting neighbourhood officers in for a coffee, and reporting crimes. People should let the Police know they cannot get on a particular bus without suffering verbal abuse.



Other Agencies

Mate crime prevention and intervention can only be effective by working in partnership with the Police, Local Authorities (Safeguarding, Housing, Learning Disability Partnership Boards, consumer services), and criminal justice agencies.

Each of these organisations needs to think how they can play their part. The Association for Real Change (ARC) will be writing appendices for each of these agencies and presenting them as part of the final version of this ‘Real Change Challenge’ in Autumn 2013.

What the Association for Real Change can do to help

The ARC Safety Net website has lots more information on mate crime and hate crime, useful links and a host of free resources to download. Go to:

www.arcuk.org.uk/safetynet

Our resources include the **‘Friend or Fake?’** booklet aimed at people with learning disabilities and those who support them:

<http://arcuk.org.uk/safetynet/files/2012/08/Friend-or-Fake-Booklet.pdf>

We have also produced a CD that contains many of the Safety Net resources, presentations, etc. This can be purchased from ARC for £5.00, to cover p&p.

Training

ARC Training Services offer a range of courses to help with work in this area. All can be tailored to fit the needs of your service. Courses include:

‘Friend or Fake?’

The Safety Net team has delivered a range of courses on mate crime to people with learning disabilities, social care staff and managers, families, police, local authority and further education staff, etc.

Course content varies but would typically cover:

- What is mate crime?
- What makes people vulnerable?
- How can we identify mate crime?
- What can we do about it?

‘Friends & Neighbours’

A workshop designed to support and encourage people with learning disabilities to become valued members of their local communities.

The workshop was designed to be delivered to people with learning disabilities, accompanied by staff and/or families.

The workshop covers:

- the policy background for social inclusion
- what communities are and where they are
- what makes it easier to join communities, and what makes it harder
- practical ideas about how to join in with community life

‘Carer to Enabler’

This workshop is aimed at social care staff and covers how to modernise the workforce to make it more in tune with what people with learning disabilities expect from their staff in the 21st century.

The course covers:

- Understanding the difference between caring and enabling
- Explaining why it is important to enable people with disabilities to live independent and inclusive lives
- The government initiatives that call for an enabling approach to service provision
- Knowing the attitudes and approaches that support the role of the enabler
- Knowing how to apply an enabling approach to your own work with the individual(s) you support

<http://arcuk.org.uk/publications/moving-from-carer-to-enabler/>

LD Trainers Inc.

As part of the Safety Net project, the Association for Real Change supported a group of people with learning disabilities to gain a professional training award (City & Guilds 7300: Introduction to Training Skills). A team of these trainers in North Devon now operate as ‘Learning Disability Trainers Inc.’, and are available to co-tutor most of the above training anywhere in the country.

Contact Us

If you want to know more about mate crime or get involved in the Safety Net project contact:

Rod Landman

Tel: 01237 441 786

Email: rod.landman@arcuk.org.uk



Real Change Challenges

www.arcuk.org.uk/realchangechallenges

#RCCmatecrime



The Association for Real Change, Marsden Street, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 1JY

Tel: 01246 555043 • www.arcuk.org.uk

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