loneliness

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CRUELTY

People with learning disabilities and their experience of
harassment, abuse and related crime in the community

Carwyn Gravell

Lemos&**Crane**

"Cruelty, like every other vice,
requires no motive outside of itself;
it only requires opportunity."

George Eliot

"I just wanted to say thank you to everyone at Lemos&Crane for giving me the opportunity to take part in this project. The action research sessions provided me with the chance to get involved in a really exciting piece of work and to be part of shaping the questionnaire which was used to gather evidence that had been so sadly lacking in the past. Through conducting the surveys I met such brilliant, strong and outspoken people who were brave enough to share their stories about harassment, bullying and abuse. The end result is this excellent report which provides real insight into the experiences of people with learning disabilities and offers a challenge to us all to learn from what they have told us and find new ways of tackling hate and harassment more effectively, together."

Sarah Roy, Chesterfield Law Centre

"Michael Batt Foundation feels privileged and fortunate to have been part of the action research group involved in Lemos&Crane's study, *Loneliness and Cruelty*. Members of the group (facilitated by Lemos&Crane and the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities) comprised a variety of professionals, practitioners, and support providers, statutory and voluntary agencies, from across the country. Together they have helped Lemos&Crane produce a piece of research that truly encapsulates the real life experiences of individuals with learning disabilities living in the community. The report sends a disturbing, yet powerful message: that the abuse and harassment of people with a learning disability is far more entrenched in our communities than we may wish to accept."

Robin Vacquier, Senior Manager, Michael Batt Foundation

"There has been much publicity about disability hate crime recently and it is difficult not to be horrified by the news stories. *Loneliness and Cruelty* is an extremely readable report that draws attention to the typical experiences that precede the headlines. These sort of incidents can sometimes form the pattern of everyday life for many people with learning disabilities."

Jacki Tinning, Diversity Manager, Cheshire Constabulary

"As a practitioner it has been invaluable to be involved in the project and the action research sessions. Not only has it given us as practitioners an insight into the scale of the problem and the impact on the people we support, it has given the people we support an influential role in challenging legislation and driving policy forward. The people I interviewed are very proactive in raising awareness about hate crime and were very pleased to be part of this research. The opportunity to network with other practitioners, Lemos&Crane and the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities and to share information and best practice has been worthwhile and thoroughly enjoyable. I really enjoyed reading the report. It is very accessible and insightful. A report with real stories about real people in their own words."

Leanne Cretney, Service Manager, Community Integrated Care

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The society in which people with learning disabilities have found themselves has also changed significantly over the same period of time. It has become in many ways a selfish society whose citizens are increasingly self-absorbed and have little time for others outside their closed circle of friends; a society where people have retreated from the public space and which has lost its collective ethical confidence. It is also a profoundly unequal society in material terms. Society's most deprived neighbourhoods and communities – the very areas where many people with learning disabilities live in social and supported housing – are places where many residents' self-esteem is chronically low, where they look on neighbours as competitors for social status not as comrades in adversity, and where the vulnerable and lonely have become easy prey for cruel hearts and criminals.

The experiences of people with learning disabilities

For the first phase of the research project, 67 people with learning disabilities were interviewed about their lives and their experience of harassment, abuse and related crime in the community. The main findings from these interviews are summarised below.

Lifestyles

- People with learning disabilities who live in the community value their independence and, above all, enjoy being able to express themselves in their own space. Most people also greatly value regular contact with their family.

- Most people have good friends and enjoy going out for meals, drinks and entertainment – but a lot of people feel lonely and want friends. One in four people interviewed didn't have a best friend. Some identified 'company' as a support need.

- 62 out of the 67 people interviewed have experienced some form of harassment, abuse or related crime in the community.

Location of incidents

- People experience abuse, harassment and related crime when they spend time 'out and about' – in parks, shopping areas, on the street and on public transport.

- People also experience incidents in and around their own homes.

Perpetrators

- Neighbours and local residents are among the most common types of perpetrator.

- Schoolchildren and young people in groups are also common types of perpetrator.

- 'Predatory' groups and individuals who pretend to be friends but who are really taking advantage of people are frequently encountered.

- Strangers in the street, family members, shopkeepers, work colleagues and care and support workers are also perpetrators.

Types of incident

- Verbal attacks on people's identity – name-calling, taunting, making cruel fun – are the most common type of incident experienced by people. 'Paedophile' is a common term of abuse.

- Physical attacks, abuse and threats feature frequently in people's experiences.

- 'Financial abuse' is also common – stealing money, intercepting benefits, making people buy things, borrowing money and then never paying it back – as is theft from people's homes and attacks on their property.

- Other types of incident include being taken advantage of emotionally, sexual abuse and rape. Perpetrators also try to 'frame' people, get them into trouble – persuading them to do something wrong and then putting the blame on them.

Reactions and feelings

- When incidents happen, many people do nothing, stay quiet, or walk away because they don't want to make things worse. Others get angry and feel like fighting back. Some speak to family members, support workers or the police.

- People feel afraid when incidents happen. They feel angry and upset. When they've been taken advantage of by 'false friends' they feel ashamed and humiliated. They can also feel disappointed and lonely when they lose these friendships.

Reflections and wishes for the future

- When it comes to action in response to incidents, some people want the perpetrator to be caught and punished, but many want reparation: for the cruelty to stop and for perpetrators to understand the impact of their behaviour and to apologise for the hurt caused.

- Where people do report incidents to police or authorities, they want to be taken seriously, to be believed and they want to be kept informed of what's happening in the case.

Priorities for action

The following areas of practice will be explored in phase 2 of the project with the overarching aim of building social capital within the community to combat cruelty and loneliness, working with practitioners from housing, police, local authorities, care and support, community and self-advocacy groups to identify existing good practice and to test out new approaches and ideas.

Enhanced social networks for people with learning disabilities

- Developing friendships and relationships within the community that make people with learning disabilities less vulnerable to harassment, abuse and related crime.

- Promoting self-esteem and confidence through advice and guidance on staying safe and through positive self-image.

- Encouraging person-centred interests and activities that enhance lives while also making links with the wider community.

Stronger prevention and support services from mainstream organisations

- Training for practitioners on advice and support for service users and clients, based on a higher awareness of the day-to-day experiences faced by people with learning disabilities.

- Developing good practice in encouraging victims to report incidents and in eliciting their experience of harassment, abuse and related crime.

- Identifying good practice models of multi-agency working, record-keeping systems, and information sharing protocols.

Creating civic mindedness and safer public spaces

- Engaging with schools to raise awareness among school children of the impact of harassment on the lives of people with learning disability living in the community.

- Restorative approaches in responding to incidents, particularly involving young people.

- Working with local authorities and the police to target the 'hot spot' areas of parks, public transport and shopping areas.

Conclusion

People with learning disabilities living independently in the community experience a disturbing range of crime, abuse and harassment with alarming frequency. These incidents above all else can be characterised by their cruelty. The perpetrators in the main are local people, neighbours, often young people and schoolchildren. Incidents happen when people are out and about, but also in and around their homes. There is little that is subtle about these acts. They are often opportunistic, crass and vulgar. They can also be targeted and cynical. It is the loneliness of some people with learning disabilities – their search for friendship within a selfish society and within deeply fragmented communities – that is putting them at particular risk, leading them to frequent alone hostile and permissive public spaces, and bringing them to the attentions of the cruel-hearted and criminal few.

In addressing this fundamental and underlying social problem of loneliness and cruelty, there are limits to what the criminal justice system and equal rights can achieve. New approaches are needed that enhance social capital, in particular in helping people with learning disabilities to create relationships, ties and bonds within their communities. Practitioners working in housing, police, care and support, local authorities, schools and voluntary organisations have a key role in developing and delivering these community-based approaches, while at the same time working together to ensure that crime against people with learning disabilities is properly and sensitively dealt with.

There is also a wider social responsibility. As people are challenged by today's self-actualising culture to stretch their professional and emotional boundaries, so they must also be challenged to step out of their social comfort zones, to reach out to and stand up for their fellow citizens – people with learning disabilities who need friendship, kindness and respect not just the well-meaning support of professionals, important though this is. In doing so, people will be tending a very modern and private yearning: for authentic connection to something and to someone other than themselves.

1. Introduction

Context

In the spring of 2010 when Lemos&Crane and the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities first started talking to Esmée Fairbairn Foundation about the need for the research that has led to this report, a number of serious cases involving the harassment, victimisation and in some cases the death of people with learning disabilities had come to light. The story of Fiona Pilkington, the mother who killed her disabled daughter and then herself after suffering years of harassment from local youths, is one harrowing example. There are many others, equally chilling. Since then, serious cases of abuse involving people with learning disabilities at Winterbourne View, a care home run by Castlebeck, have also made shocking headlines.

The issue of 'disability hate crime' as it is most commonly described has grown to receive considerable attention, albeit belated. The Crown Prosecution Service and many police services have publicly acknowledged that they have neglected the problem, failed to give it the same status and attention as they have to racial, religious, or homophobic hate crime[1]. The research and campaigning work of organisations such as Scope and Mencap among many others has greatly helped in this respect. Public bodies have also played their part. The Independent Police Complaints Commission published its review into the Pilkington case in May 2011, and in September 2011 the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published its inquiry into disability-related harassment, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, which included many detailed recommendations for a range of agencies.

Purpose

This research builds on this important work, while pursuing the following distinct objectives:

- Firstly, it explores a wider range of experiences than could be described as 'hate crime', and concentrates specifically on the experiences of people with mild or moderate learning disabilities who live independently in the community.

- Secondly, it focuses on prevention and support and will develop and disseminate models and examples of good practice that can be delivered by organisations working in the community (social landlords, the police, local authorities, care and support providers and voluntary organisations).

In discussions with Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and organisations working in the field, practitioners felt that the tragic cases of Fiona Pilkington and others were just the 'tip of the iceberg'. Many people with learning disabilities routinely experience harassment such as verbal abuse, bullying or financial exploitation. People with mild or moderate learning disabilities, who live in the community in supported housing (with a few hours' support per week) or in general

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1. See interviews with Sir Ken Macdonald (Crown Prosecution Service), Alf Hitchcock (Metropolitan Police Service), Steve Otter (Association of Chief Police Officers) and others in *Scapegoat: Why We are Failing Disabled People*

needs social housing with no support as they have not been recognised as having a disability, were felt to be particularly at risk. A survey by Lemos&Crane of social landlords' casework in tackling anti-social behaviour revealed many seemingly routine cases of anti-social behaviour[2] that turned out upon investigation to involve people with learning disabilities as victims (and perpetrators), caught up in noise-related disputes or out-of-control parties. There were also cases of coercion and exploitation, such as the tenant with learning disabilities whose kitchen was taken over by a local kebab-shop owner. He installed a freezer for keeping his supply of frozen meat, letting himself in as and when demand for his doners dictated. This grotesque and greasy set-piece, worthy of Gogol or Dostoevsky at their darkest and bleakest, illustrates an experience which is not a crime, nor could it be said to motivated by hate – but it is manipulative in the extreme, and corroding of personal liberty and dignity.

Loneliness and Cruelty is a report on this first phase of the project. The second phase of the project – identifying and developing examples and models of good practice - has began and will report on findings in 2014.

Methodology

To conduct the first stage of the research, a group of 19 practitioners from 17 organisations was recruited who had regular professional contact with people with learning disabilities living in the community (see Appendix 1). These participants were selected from 120 responses to a survey of practitioners from a range of organisations (sent to a database of several thousand contacts from police, local authority, social and supported housing, care providers, and community groups). The group met during 2011 and early 2012 to devise and pilot a template for interviewing their clients and residents, and to report on findings for discussion as a group once the interviews had been completed and carefully transcribed.

With the expertise of the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, a reference group comprising people with learning disabilities (see Appendix B) was also established who also met three times to provide feedback on and test the interview template, share their own experiences, and comment on the key messages and recommendations set out in this report. Their involvement has been invaluable and will continue to be so as the project develops.

Guidance for the practitioners on using structured interviews was developed by Lemos&Crane based on Home Office good practice guidelines. The use of co-researchers (people with learning disabilities themselves conducting interviews) was also suggested and some organisations used this approach to good effect (see Appendix C for the interview template and guidance notes). Sixty-seven interviews were completed in total – producing a wealth of material for qualitative analysis. The research was not seeking a representative, quantitative sample and analysis. That the clients and residents who took part were interviewed in the main by practitioners themselves – that is, by people who they knew and trusted – was essential in eliciting the depth of experiences recounted.

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2. *ASBActionNet* Awards 2010 (see www.lemosandcrane.co.uk)

Structure of the report

Chapter 2 briefly considers key social trends as context for understanding the day-to-day experiences of people with learning disabilities described in the report. Chapter 3 sets out a thematic analysis of people's responses to interview questions, talking about how they saw themselves and their lives, and about things that had happened to them. Chapter 4 consists of abbreviated versions of a selection of interview transcripts that bring together into single narratives some of the typical experiences and situations set out in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 sets out the areas for action that will be explored in the second phase of the project, working with practitioners from community-based organisations and with people with learning disabilities themselves.

2. Social context: trends and challenges

Introduction

There has been a significant shift over the last 30 years away from placing people with learning disabilities in institutions, hospitals and care homes and towards independent living, supported housing and other community-based accommodation. This change in policy is to be celebrated. It has given people the promise of independence, free from the cabin fever of regimented days, confined horizons, and all too frequently from institutional abuse, free to pursue more integrated and fulfilling lives. But the society and the communities in which they have found themselves have also changed significantly over the same period of time, becoming in many ways selfish and unwelcoming, and failing to live up to the promise of independence.

In this first part of the report I set out key trends that typify this overarching social change and that ultimately explain the 'weather system' of communities where cruelty towards people with learning disabilities has been given an opportunity to rain down. The trends described are not, however, wholly or inherently malign; challenges, counter-trends and undercurrents that promise more positive social influence are also evident.

The permissive public space

Many of the experiences described by people with learning disabilities in this report happen in public spaces, in the absence of authority figures or of challenge and intervention from citizen by-standers, perpetrated by people (often young people) who seem to feel untouchable, immune from repercussions for their actions. One should always be wary of saying that an aspect of social life is new and extraordinary (particularly where young people and anti-social behaviour are concerned) and the parable of the Good Samaritan reminds us that blindly passing by the suffering of others on the other side of the street is not a failing particular to today's society. However, it seems in modern life that people are less inclined to intervene in cases of civil disturbance. Risk aversion, caution, self-preservation are regarded as sensible outlooks; they have lost their shame factor. Honour, courage and civic action are for the foolhardy few, the 'have-a-go heroes', to be sampled vicariously by everyone else.

In an increasingly automated world, physical or verbal contact with strangers can easily be avoided. Technology has facilitated that. MP3 players and smart phones create private soundtracks, shutting out the noise of others and of the world. Bus drivers hardly ever need to speak to customers – the swipe of the oyster card in London replacing the cash transaction, for example, and requests to 'please move down the bus' to make way for new passengers triggered by a touch of the button and a pre-recorded voice. People are engaging in what the sociologist Richard Sennett describes in *Together: the rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation* as "voluntary withdrawal", a state of mind brought about by "the desire to reduce the anxiety of addressing needs other than one's own."

This report contains some instances of members of the public doing the opposite of this, reaching out and standing up for people with learning disabilities who are on the receiving end of harassment and abuse, a much appreciated response, but these would seem to be isolated examples. How can civic mindedness and fellow-feeling return to being a social norm rather than the actions of those perceived to be either foolish, on one extreme, or heroic, on the other?

The power of peer influence

Harriet Ann Jacobs, born into slavery but escaping her captors to become a writer and abolitionist, famously observed that "cruelty is contagious in uncivilised communities". Groups of school-age children and young people are among the most common types of perpetrator identified in the interviews, no doubt egging each other on to ever more sickening expressions and taunts. Associated with the notion of the permissive public space is the feeling that young people are less influenced by authority figures, adults and parents, than in previous generations; young people's attitudes and opinions are far more influenced by their peers (this shift from 'vertical' to 'horizontal' influence has been described elsewhere by my colleague Gerard Lemos – see *Different World: How young people can work together on human rights, equality and creating a better society*.) The rise and significance of peer influence across all age groups, not just young people, can also be traced in the field of sales and marketing. What peers say is far more influential in making people want or buy something, it turns out, than what manufacturers say about their products and services.

David Riesman in his classic study of modern conformity, *The Lonely Crowd*, describes contemporary Western societies as being 'other-directed', where people constantly seek their peers' approval and fear being outcast from their social community. (Riesman contrasts modern Western 'outer-directed' society with 'inner-directed' cultures that preceded them historically and which are characterized by inner drive, personal sacrifice and achievement, and before that with 'tradition-directed' societies held together by ritual, custom and loyalty.)

Peer influence needn't always be negative. Citizens can be positive role models. Behavioural economics and 'nudge theory' is influencing government thinking on how to change people's behaviour for the better, and a central tenet is that messages carry more weight if the person delivering them is known and respected by the recipient.

The litigious society

Taking its cue from the USA, influencer-in-chief when it comes to social trends, Britain is increasingly becoming a litigious society. People are turning to the law for authority and judgment where once they relied on common sense and wisdom; exaggerating slights and blows to strengthen their case when in dispute, instead of resolving differences and conflict by talking things through and empathising. The growing influence of the law permeates all aspects of life at every level of society. The super-rich when morally-wayward seek super-injunctions to protect their reputations. Every schoolchild knows and asserts his or her rights. Workplaces are in thrall to health and safety. The law protects, but it also precludes responsibility. For fear of falling foul of its repercussions, people play it safe or pass the buck.

In *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* the philosopher Bernard Williams drew a distinction between 'thick' ethical concepts (such as treachery, courage and cruelty) and 'thin' ethical concepts (such as good, right or equal).[3] Williams argued that traditional communities, defined hypothetically as being "maximally homogeneous and minimally given to reflection", are confident in using thick ethical concepts. In other words, members of traditional communities instinctively recognise bad behaviour when they see it and act to condemn it without needing to appeal to external authorities such as the police or courts of law. In modern life, characterised by a high degree of self-reflection and where populations are more transient and more diverse, people are less ethically confident and feel the need to appeal to these external authorities and to thin ethical concepts to decide on matters of justice on their behalf.

The law has extended its reach in the world of social policy as well as public life. By the end if its time in charge, the last Government had introduced 18 separate legal tools for tackling anti-social behaviour in social housing with the aim of making victims and communities on housing estates feel safer. But the policy had an unintended consequence: because social landlords had to publish their anti-social behaviour policy and procedures (a regulatory requirement) tenants caught wind of the powers that could be wielded and demanded evictions and punitive measures, often for the pettiest of complaints. Many social landlords have since changed tack. One of the largest in the country, Places for People, has downed the legal tools in all but the most severe of cases and instead pursues community conferencing and restorative approaches where tenants in dispute are brought together and helped to understand the impact of their behaviour on each other and on the wider community, and encouraged to apologise, move on and find common ground.[4]

The friendship premium

Loneliness is a haunting feature of the lives of many of those interviewed in the research. That people need friends is hardly a revelation, though the importance of friendship is often ignored in the planning and delivery of support offered to vulnerable people (see *Steadying the Ladder: social and emotional aspirations of homeless and vulnerable people* by my colleague Gerard Lemos for a more in-depth consideration and highly-influential analysis of this point). Science writers such as Richard Dawkins over the last 30 years have popularised the notion that people are, in essence, atomized automata hopelessly determined by selfish genes; a set of reductionist beliefs that has helped to establish and entrench the 'medical model' of mainstream approaches to care and support – seeing vulnerable people as distinct organisms with physical needs and problems that need to be cleaned up and cured without reference to their social, private and emotional selves. But people are innately social animals. In a counterblast to the work of Dawkins and others, Adam Philips and Barbara Taylor write in *On Kindness* that "The self without sympathetic attachments is a fiction". In the fragmented society here described – characterised by voluntary withdrawal from contact with strangers and retreat from public space – everybody needs friends more than ever.

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3. Thick ethical concepts have both a prescriptive and a descriptive element. When behaviour is labelled as, for example, 'cruel', judgement and action to counter this behaviour is immediately and inherently implied; thin ethical concepts are more abstract in that they are exclusively prescriptive and need to be applied to a description of fact, which introduces the need for definition and therefore for dispute.

4. Only 137 out of over 3,500 cases dealt with in 2010/11 by Places for People involved litigation. Since the changed approach, satisfaction ratings with the outcome of anti-social behaviour cases have risen to 85.3 per cent up from 67 per cent, based on 42 per cent returns on feedback forms, a highly significant sample. Thanks to John Stevenson, former Head of Community Safety at Places for People, for these figures.

In traditional communities, people spent most of their time and made friends with those who lived nearby. In modern life where many people, the upwardly mobile, have moved from traditional communities to towns and cities, geographical proximity counts for less when it comes to friendship. Instead, people pick and choose their friends, at university or at work. The process is highly controlled. On Facebook users can reject (or ignore) friendship requests – part of the website's function is to keep strangers out, creating friendship bubbles that are highly excluding. Social networking sites such as FaceBook have almost turned friendship into a commodity. The goal is acquisition, building up a 'portfolio' of friends – who mostly share similar backgrounds, interests and beliefs. If people are professionally performing at full capacity then they only have a little friendship or 'face time' left to go round. So why bother with neighbours if people have lots of friends across the country or indeed the world?

People with learning disabilities face a double disadvantage – living in a society where friendship is prized but among people who pick and choose their friends and do not necessarily feel any need or compulsion to be friendly towards people whom they see day to day. The predatory perpetrators who make an appearance in this report are cashing in on this friendship premium, cynically and cruelly.

The pursuit of beauty, fashion and status

People with learning disabilities are all too often the butt of cruel ridicule and much worse. It is clear from the vile comments reported that, through cruel eyes, some people with learning difficulties look devoid of power and status – their unusual appearance is the cause of unwanted attention. Today's society venerates beauty as have societies from time immemorial. Images of beauty and of beautiful people have always been sought after, traded and created by artists; with the advent of modern media and advertising these images have proliferated and in the case of fashion, made not only alluring and aspirational but also and at the same time supposedly within everyone's reach. Looking good or the part is closely aligned to social status. The advertiser's art has been to convey the message that status and self-worth can be obtained from what are essentially mass-produced clothing and consumer goods. And because the art of looking good has been commoditised in this way – as friendship has – it creates the opportunity for what Richard Sennett describes as "invidious comparison[5]". People, young people in particular, look down on others because they're not wearing the right clothes. Having something of perceived value that others don't have is an opportunity to assert power and superiority. In a society with a growing gap between rich and poor and where material inequality has been shown to dramatically influence health, well-being and community cohesion (see Richard Wilkinson in *The Impact of Inequality: how to make sick societies healthier*) any opportunity to feel superior to someone else is to be taken advantage of, especially in poorer communities whose residents looking up dizzily at spiraling heights of wealth, success and status above them, find some consolation and satisfaction from looking down on others even less fortunate than themselves.

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5. *Together: the rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation*

Self-actualisation and self-administration

As well as the duty to look good, people also feel the need to take responsibility for looking after themselves, physically, emotionally and financially. They seek out the information they need to make important life decisions (about health or money issues) before or instead of consulting with professionals. The notion of self-help and self-improvement has grown, books on the subject are best-sellers. Professionally, people are expected to be career-conscious, driven and goal-orientated. This attitude to work has coincided with the fragmentation of the labour market. There are few jobs for life, the trend instead towards contracts and portfolio work. People have also unwittingly been given the task of doing their own administration – banks being the trailblazers in getting their customers to do their own job for them through online banking. In this way, relationships with organisations and service providers are increasingly transactional, and not relationships at all.

There are of course advantages to this trend towards self-agency: feelings of autonomy and control. People can claim their successes in life, however minor or trivial, as being theirs alone; equally though, failures are their fault. Triumph and adversity are treated as familiar friends and foes of their own making, and not as Kipling advised in his famous poem *If*, as impostors both. Being thus judgmental on themselves, people are quick to judge others. One of the people interviewed for this report spoke of an incident where she explained to someone in public that she had a learning disability only to be told to "try harder then".

The privatisation of leisure

The privatisation of leisure also exacerbates the social fragmentation that has already been adumbrated. The prevalence of watching television, DVDs, and video gaming alone among the leisure interests described by people in their interviews will come as no surprise. They are features of many lives. Their rise coincides with the decline of more communal leisure interests which had social as well as entertainment value. Going to a crowded, noisy cinema, or concerts and plays put on by amateur enthusiasts were opportunities to meet and to mix with members of the local community, different people from different backgrounds.

There are suggestions of a reversal in this trend: the rise of book clubs, membership of choirs, walking groups to name a few examples. Another is the rise in popularity of going to festivals. This appeal of a communal experience that is in stark contrast to the control and measure of daily lives and to the private consumption of music has been described by the musician Brian Eno as the yearning for 'surrender'[6]. People not only hanker after shared experiences but also want to create things themselves. In making and doing things together people better learn to understand and respect each other. As Plato says in *The Republic*, craftsmen make good citizens.

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6. http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/apr/28/brian-eno-brighton-festival

Conclusion

To summarise how society has changed. People are living increasingly private lives. They feel a greater sense of personal responsibility. People look less to the state and to traditional sources of authority for instruction on how to live, looking instead to themselves and to the opinions of trusted peers. With all this responsibility (and self-absorption) the role of other people unlike themselves becomes problematic. People make friends on their own terms with those with similar interests and backgrounds, but when strangers enter the picture, especially when they are needy or unsettlingly different, the shutters are closed. People engage in voluntary withdrawal. A society comprising such individualism has lost its collective ethical confidence.

Heightened personal responsibility and greater autonomy and control have generated feelings of freedom and self-agency. There is pride for people when things are going their way but disappointment when they don't. This ultimate sense of agency is projected onto others, leading to invidious comparison. People are more critical of others, quicker to judge, less likely to feel compassion and to empathise. To counterbalance the pressures, in effect, of being their own CEO, and the constant feeling of needing to have control, people are yearning in their cultural preferences for emotional surrender and self-less abandon, a sense of togetherness, and a reaching out to others. They yearn also for authenticity, for the pleasure of making things of lasting value themselves, including relationships.

Society has also become profoundly unequal in material terms. Its most deprived neighbourhoods and communities - the very areas where many people with learning disabilities live in social and supported housing - are places where residents' self-esteem is often chronically low because of their relative poverty, where they look on neighbours as competitors for social status not as comrades in the face of hardship, and where the vulnerable and lonely, have become easy prey for cruel hearts and criminals. Hardly a level playing field therefore for people with learning disabilities to find their feet on a journey where freedom was the promised destination – distinctly unforgiving terrain in fact, as will become clear in Chapters 3 and 4.

3. The landscape of experience

The interviews with people with learning disabilities were conducted in two parts. The first part asked people about their lives in general – where they went to school, where they live, about their family, friends, and interests. The second part asked about things that might have happened to them by way of harassment or abuse. The quotations are taken directly from transcripts of the interviews; some are from reference group participants, talking about their own experiences in response to discussion about the interview findings. The commentary, though representing my view alone, is informed by comments and observations from the reference group and from the action research participants.

'About you and your life...'

The 67 people who took part in the interviews ranged in age from 16 to 60, the median range being 40 to 50. Most attended special schools as children. Most now live independently on their own with varying degrees of support. Some live with their parents or with other people with learning difficulties in a supported setting. A few people live with partners and with their children. All but a few people said they were happy at home (those who weren't happy were currently experiencing harassment from neighbours).

When asked what they liked most about their home, people valued above all their independence and ability to express themselves.

> "The best bit about living in a place that's your own is if it's your own flat you decide what you do, you're the person that tells you what to do, you can do whatever, you can go out whenever you want, eat whatever you want..."

> "Being able to do my own cooking, being able to do what I want I never thought I'd have the confidence or money to live on my own."

> "I like my garden, flowers and birds."

People were asked to describe themselves, prompting a mischievous response from one participant.

> "I'm gorgeous, charming and sexy."

Most described themselves as happy and cheerful; 'bubbly' was a popular adjective.

> "I would say bubbly. Funny. A big bear."

For some, however, this sunny outlook on life was clouded from time to time by sadness.

> "Happy – although sometimes can feel a bit down."

> "Loud, lovely, sad sometimes, frustrated."

A few said they felt miserable most or all of the time, and some pinpointed loneliness as the cause of this unhappiness.

> "Sometimes sad because I don't have many friends."

People were asked about their family. Regular contact with family members was central to many people's lives and most enjoyed good relationships.

> "Oh yeah, you can't do without family."

Some reported the occasional falling out – the case, of course, for all families. But some people described abusive relationships and incidents far beyond rifts and tiffs.

> "I get on with my middle sister, my other sisters and my Mum are horrible to me."

> "I feel left out. Sometimes ignored or not treated the same. Never been bought a present in my life."

When asked whether they felt they had a learning disability, 88 per cent of people said Yes. Some people qualified this response by saying that they didn't want their disability to define their identity.

> "I know I've got a mild disability, but I don't describe myself as one. I just describe myself 'normal', like you."

When asked about their support needs, people mostly mentioned routine and practical things, such as help with budgeting, form-filling, advocacy, safety, cooking, and shopping – a number of people also specifically mentioned the need for company.

> "The support. I'm not good on my own. I hate being on my own."

> "To talk to people when I am feeling sad."

> "Keeping me company (I get lonely)."

One in four people said they didn't have any close friends. No one to talk to when they have a problem, or anyone to share a meal or have a drink with; no one to stand up for them, give them advice, compliment them, no one to make them laugh. No one, in other words, with whom to share the stuff of life. When asked about their interests, people with few or no friends spoke about solitary pursuits such as watching TV and DVDs, playing computer games, gardening, and looking after pets.

> "My two hamsters are my friends."

People who do have good friends spoke warmly of them, and described a busy social life, going to the cinema, clubs, cafes, and restaurants.

> "All my mates are kind and caring…I go to clubs with them – drama club and nightclub for people with special needs."

> "My friends are kind and funny…I see them at my dancing club."

People were asked about work. Only 26 per cent of people had a paid job. People were asked about the Internet. Forty-one per cent had access to the web and many wanted to explore the possibilities it offered, in particular for creating or sustaining relationships.

> "I'd like to get it (the Internet) when I move into my new flat. If I can I could speak to my brother in America on…is it Facebook?"

'About things that have happened to you…'

People were asked if anyone had ever been nasty or cruel or unfair to them because of who they were, or ever made them do something that they didn't want to do, or had anything stolen from them. Sixty two out of the 67 interviewed said Yes.

Where incidents happen

The incidents described happen everywhere, wherever people spend time – at home, the most private of spaces, out and about in public spaces, and everywhere in between, as shown in Figure 1, below.

Fig. 1 Locations of incidents by proportion of all incidents.

Location of incidents	Percentage
Within the home	29%
'Out and about' (e.g. parks, shopping area, on the street)	28%
Around the home	27%
At work	5%
Public transport	4%
Pub or restaurant	4%
Supported housing	3%
Total	100%

It is not surprising when people feel bored and lonely that they end up spending time in parks, shopping precincts and fast food restaurants. Here they come within the orbit of those who are also in need of entertainment, albeit of a cruel and callous kind, and of those with an eye for opportunistic crime.

> "Lads in the park call me names like 'weirdo' and 'paedo'…"

> "I did hear strange things said about me near Macdonalds."

> "I was walking by the canal, and this man said he knew me from school. We went to the cafe and he took my phone and money."

People experience abuse and harassment on public transport.

> "Boys being mean and hitting me with a paper on the bus when I was going fishing…"

A visit to the local shops can also occasion abuse, from staff as well as other customers.

> "Shop worker … made fun, said there was a spider on me and it was poisonous."

The same is true of a trip to bingo.

> "A woman at bingo is always nasty to me. I have told her I have Learning Difficulties and she says I should think harder then."

Returning home offers no guarantee of security. In fact, most incidents described happened in and around the home. People's homes are targets for thrill-seeking attacks.

> "They threw eggs and water at the door and smashed the back window of the house…"

Worst of all, and more invasive still, people have their homes and flats broken into, and intruders and uninvited guests making themselves at home and helping themselves to whatever people had. Where people's homes are completely taken over, the experience is increasingly being referred to as 'cuckooing'.

> "Someone used to come into my flat and steal my food…"

People spoke about abuse, harassment and cruelty at work. The relatively few incidents described were shocking in and of themselves but particularly so given that they took place in a supposedly professional environment.

> "…when I used to work at Woolworths and I got picked on. Some of the lads in there were nasty. They closed the door on my fingers they said it was for a joke…"

> "At a workplace… they mocked me, they called me names, said things like 'are you brain dead?'"

Even managers collude, or worse.

> "I told the boss but he used to laugh about it. He was in with them"

> "My boss tried to punch me."

People talked about incidents from school-days. It seems to have been an unhappy time for most. For those that started off going to mainstream school, bullying of various kinds was commonplace. This quite often led to retaliation, behaviour that was deemed to be disruptive, and to being moved on to a special school.

> "I went to four schools, had to leave each time because of my behaviour."

> "I was bullied in one and got moved on."

> "[when I left the school] they gave me a signed photo and card but I heard them cheer loudly as I walked out of the classroom."

Experience at special school, often a boarding school, was no better. People described some horrific experiences.

> "At boarding school…The nuns shaved my hair off to punish me for growing my hair. They left bits and I didn't like it."

These incidents described at school happened a long time ago for most of the people interviewed (so they have not been included in the table and diagram above) and children with learning disabilities may not face similar experiences at school today. Nevertheless the incidents described left a lasting impression on the respondents; they were hugely damaging formative experiences that did little to prepare people with confidence for adult life, the very opposite.

Types of incident

Many, though far from all, of the incidents described are clearly criminal acts. They range in their focus of attack from psychological assaults on people's identity right through to theft and damage to their property and possessions. This disturbing breadth of forms of cruelty is shown in figure 2, below.

Fig. 2. Types of incidents by proportion of all incidents.

Type of incident	Percentage
Name calling, ridiculing, verbal abuse	27%
Attacks on property, uninvited entry, burglary, destroying possessions	23%
Borrowing/stealing money, being made to buy things	20%
Physical abuse, assaults, threats	18%
Taking emotional advantage of people	6%
Sexual abuse, assault, rape	4%
Accusations of abuse, trying to get interviewers in trouble	2%
Totals	100%

Assault on personhood – name calling, ridiculing, apeing behaviour – was the most common type of incident described.

> "When I used to travel on the free bus to the leisure centre, the school children used to call me names and be nasty to me."

> "…they tend to look at you [pulls face]…They look at you in bus shelters and all sorts…"

> "People whisper about me… I feel like Frankenstein's wife…it happens all the time…it hurts me inside."

> "…calling me 'spastic', 'paedophile' things like that."

Being called a 'paedo' is a common term of abuse for people – presumably prompted by an association in the perpetrator's mind between a dishevelled, untidy appearance and the tabloid caricature of the 'monster among us' sex pest, complete with a comb-over hairstyle, out of date clothes, and a plastic carrier bag.[7] In her book *Scapegoat: why we are failing disabled people*, Katharine Quarmby observes that many of the victims of torture and murder who she describes in her book were labelled 'paedophiles' by their killers. It should also be noted that 'paedo' is increasingly becoming the insult of choice among the nation's schoolchildren.

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7. There is of course no such thing as 'looking like a paedophile'; convicted offenders come from all walks of life; my point is to do with the tabloid stereotype

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Some people talked about being taken advantage of emotionally, befriended with the promise of a relationship and of romantic engagement - relief from the loneliness that many people feel so acutely - only to be rejected and left feeling 'used' when they find out their supposed soul mate is really only after their money or a place to hang out. (This type of experience is increasingly being referred to as 'mate crime'.)

> "I think people go in to relationships with me to use me because I am vulnerable and they think they can get away with things."

> "I used to fancy her and she used to lead me on."

> "She said once it was like we were engaged and I could set her up in a flat and give her money like I was her girlfriend. But I wasn't and she said we would go out on Fridays but we didn't."

Taunting and pestering with sexual overtones was also described. Clearly, perpetrators experience a perverse and sadistic pleasure from their acts of cruelty – from seeing others hurt, humiliated, embarrassed, demonstrated as weak and helpless. Getting a 'rise', a reaction from people, is part of the fun. Add a sexual twist to this, and the cruel heart beats even quicker.

> "I was shown some nude photos…"

> "They taunted her (my housemate) and suggested she was playing with herself."

> "I've had things shouted at me… [suggesting particular sexual practices – bestiality and incestuous]"

With remarkable courage, some people talked about their experiences of rape and sexual abuse. Though these incidents had happened in the past, they were deeply traumatic events that have had devastating repercussions, the first cause of enduring feelings of mistrust, exclusion and distance from family (where members were the perpetrator) and from society. One person interviewed was raped, age 7, by a family friend; then abused, aged 10, by her foster brother who had Downs Syndrome; and then, at age 14, sexually abused by her cousin.

Perpetrators also get a thrill from 'framing' people, trying to get people into trouble, a more manipulative category of cruelty.

> "There were these people who I met a few times and they asked me to sleep with someone, but I didn't want to do it but they made me and they told me she was 16, but she was only 15 …"

> "I made a mistake of befriending someone who was bad. He got me to write something about someone else and put it on the college notice board."

> "At the shop…I was threatened with a punch, saying I made up lies about her son who was going to be out of prison…"

People talked about physical violence and threats with disturbing frequency.

> "Being threatened by kids with knuckle dusters in the street."

> "There is one person who talks about me if I pass while they're out on their mobile phone, I can hear them saying things to the person on the other end of the phone like 'there he is, the one I want to smack.'"

Financial abuse was also repeatedly mentioned. This takes many forms including, intercepting and appropriating benefits money, making people buy things, borrowing money and not giving it back, and theft, plain and simple.

> "Before I met my husband a man named Julian used to take my money from me. I was not strong then. Julian took £900 from me and I never got it back. This happened over a long time in small amounts. I did not know him until he first knocked on my door. He came round a few times."

> "She (step-mum) used to take all my money off me.
> I didn't used to get a penny."

> "They used to make me buy them cigarettes and alcohol …"

> "I let people stay with me and they stole from me."

And people spoke about attacks on their property and possessions.

> "They shot a pellet gun through my pantry window."

> "She didn't care, one time she came into my room and broke my stereo, my TV."

Perpetrators seem to feel free to help themselves, regarding their victim as weak and powerless. 'Looting' is perhaps a useful analogy to describe the motivation behind some of the incidents: acts of opportunism and 'daylight robbery', people gratifying themselves in base and ugly ways without fear of repercussion.

> "A woman came up to me in the street and offered me sex. I said no but she pulled my trousers down and took my Freedom Pass…"

Who the perpetrators are

Those responsible for incidents include everyone from partners and family members through to strangers in the street, and most others with whom people have contact in their day-to-day lives, as shown in figure 3, below.

Fig. 3. Types of perpetrators by proportion of all incidents.

Perpetrators of incidents	Percentage
Neighbours/known people living locally	25%
School children or young people	17%
Predatory 'friends'	13%
Strangers in the street	11%
Family members (siblings, children, uncles, aunts)	7%
Unknown	6%
Work colleagues	5%
Care or support worker	4%
Fellow residents (support and care)	3%
Father/ Mother	3%
Partner	3%
Step Father/Step Mother	2%
Shopkeepers	1%
Total	100%

One person talked about her own partner's cruelty.

> "My ex-husband, he made fun of me like having epilepsy and learning disability… "

Another person interviewed had been sexually abused by her father when she was 10 years-old.

The family members of other people interviewed were guilty of perhaps less extreme exploitation and cruelty that is nonetheless shocking given the emotional closeness of their relationship with the victim and the betrayal of trust involved.

> "My father stole some tools and a lawn mower about 5 years ago."

> "I was living with them [aunt and cousin] for a while and they were supposed to be caring for me but they was walking over me like rubbish basically."

> "My son got my bank details and emptied my bank account."

Befriending with the promise of emotional closeness and a romantic relationship has already been described in this report. People are also befriended by groups, often of young people, with the promise of the simpler pleasures of fun and friendship. People need mates as well as lovers. But the parties arranged by these kinds of friends may turn into nightmares.

> "They made out they were friends, came back here, had food and that, slept here sometimes, watched TV here, did their drugs here. I thought they was friends but...they would only turn up here when I had my benefits, you know my money."

People can also be taken in by hard-luck stories, opening their door to pleading knocks, and offering help and shelter only to be made to feel like a guest in their own home, not to mention a ready source of cash.

> "I put up 3 young girls who were on the street then found out one day that £500 was missing from my bank account. They made me sleep on the couch and they slept in my bed."

Neighbours and local residents were frequently mentioned as perpetrators (though many also described good and supportive relationships with their neighbours). The heer physical proximity of neighbours who are abusive, and the constant threat of grief pervading from this proximity, must make the experience all the more distressing.

> "It was outside the flats...they would harass me, used to throw stones and spit at me"

> "Another family in the village make fun of me and call me names like spastic"

> "I have autism and like humming. He [neighbour] didn't like it. He threw dog muck over the fence"

Fellow residents in supported housing or group living arrangements can be perpetrators.

> "[About fellow resident] She was abusive... she smacked me a few times."

Children of school age and young people were among the most frequently mentioned perpetrator types, hanging around, safely in numbers, at bus shelters and shopping precincts.

> "It still scares me when gangs of people hang around the shops."

> "Every so often you get gangs of people after you in town."

Sometimes strangers in the street (granted the holidaymaker-abroad-anonymity that so often begets bad behaviour) can't resist a 'drive-by' volley.

> "People in the street sometimes call out to me."

> "I was walking with my mother in the street and she drove passed in car and shouted that I was a dirty man."

Professionals, people with power and authority, were also identified as perpetrators. Abusive shopkeepers, work colleagues and managers have already featured. People also talked about being bullied by teachers. Most disheartening of all, care workers and support workers were perpetrators. They are in frequent, sometimes daily, contact with people and should be unconditional sources of trust and confidence. Professional values should be embedded in their relationship with their clients and representative of wider social responsibility and guardianship. The vast majority live up to this role but a few, alas, are villains in its betrayal, often with the most pathetic of motivations.

> "One support worker was right cruel...she spent money out of our tin to go to a Little Chef."

See also Appendix D for additional types of experience identified in the course of the research but which were not mentioned in the course of the interviews.

What people do, feel and want in response to incidents

Actions

People were asked to describe how they reacted and responded at the time of the incident and shortly after; what they did and said. Doing nothing, feigning indifference, bravely moving on, was common.

> "I just walk on."

> "I didn't repeat owt to anyone because I didn't want to make the situation any worse."

> "...held my feelings in."

But as everyone knows who, even as a child, tries to turn the other cheek, names hurt and equanimity is hard to sustain.

> "A lot of them said ignore it but it's easier said than done."

When people are under attack, primordial responses of 'flight or fight' are triggered.

People go to great lengths to avoid situations and locations where incidents are experienced.

> "I used to try to go to the shops very early in the morning or very late
> at night so they would not be there."

Others feeling the overbearing urge to fight back, retaliate with the spirit of cornered quarry.

> "Staff where I lived before would wind me up so I kicked off… they then
> injected me to calm me down."

Some nobly keep their anger in check.

> "I got so angry I nearly hit that person, but I never. I knew the person"

> "On the edge of stabbing someone, but I'm good at controlling my anger.
> I'm not a coward."

But some feel able to reach out to others and to speak up, those perhaps with the closest connections to family and the strongest networks of friends.

> "…went and told my grandad"

> "Told Ed (who became my husband)… he started to protect me."

Others reported incidents to authority figures, whether bus drivers, support workers or the police.

> "I told the bus driver."

> "I told Micky the janitor – he said to ignore them."

> "I told my support worker who then contacted the Community
> Police Officer."

Feelings

The interviews asked people about their feelings at the time of the incident and after. Upset and fear were commonly expressed. For others, rage and anger were overwhelming and understandable emotions.

> "It upset me. It's made me feel really pissed off and angry."

> "I'm raging inside. I feel really sad – why be ignorant, we're all
> human beings?"

More surprising perhaps were the feelings of humiliation and shame described by people who had been taken advantage of and used.

> "I felt disappointed in my self and felt as though I was led on."

> "They were using me. I felt ashamed and hurt."

The loss of a supposed friend – who turned out in fact to be no friend at all – was also keenly felt.

> "I didn't want to admit it 'cos it was painful losing a friend."

At the extreme, some people described a complete detachment and numbness.

> "I feel like a non-person…"

> "I just don't care, I don't have any attachments to people."

This sense of disillusion with and disconnect from the outside world was movingly and eloquently described by one of the people from the reference group.

> "When you report things and nothing happens, you lose trust. You keep yourself to yourself. Then friends let you down and you lose trust with everyone in life. The less people you trust, the more excluded you get."

Reflections and resolutions

As a final stage to the interview, people were asked to reflect on what had happened and to think how they'd want to be supported if something similar were to happen again.

People said that they wanted those in authority, professionals – whether this was a support worker, the police or a bus driver – to do their job and to behave like responsible adults. When in need people want to be looked after, to be protected.

> "People said they would look after me, that's what I wanted,
> to be
> looked after, but they never did."

> "Bus drivers should help people more…"

> "Make me feel safer."

People were grateful when a fellow citizen stood up for them, no doubt wishing others would do the same more often.

> "But when this bloke said something to them they went running down
> the street like a load of bloody cowards."

Above all people wanted to have their experiences taken seriously. As one interviewer commented on in their notes about an incident that their client had experienced, "He wasn't listened to – that affected his life."

> "I need reassurance. It's just about being believed…"

Reference group members also strongly felt that telling someone, whoever this was, about an incident, re-living what happened, was vital – as a way of sharing the burden of the experience and of making sense of the episode.

> "It takes the pressure off when you speak to someone."

Where incidents are reported that lead to action on the part of authorities, people want to be kept informed of developments with the case.

> "They're always keeping it to themselves, like the police haven't told me about my Dad. It's pissing me off waiting."

Some people expressed a desire for perpetrators to be caught and punished.

> "I would like to see him arrested and would be happy to give evidence. I would not want to see him face to face. I would not like to be in the same room with him. I would be happy to give evidence through video…"

More common was a sense of simply wanting justice to be done in terms of giving back what had been stolen, or for the harassing or abusive behaviour to stop, and for there to be an apology (that said, such a 'restorative' approach would not be appropriate or welcomed by people in every case).

> "I'd want them to give me my money back what they nicked."

> "The police should have made the kids clean up the mess on my house and they should have said sorry to me."

Some also felt that with the benefit of hindsight, they themselves would act and behave differently if the same were to happen again.

> "No one will treat me like that again I am too aware of it now."

> "I would probably be able to stick up for myself a bit more instead of holding my feelings in."

> "I might report it now, with a bit of support."

> "I would report them to the police. That's hate crime and it's against the law."

People had thoughts on how their experiences might be prevented in the future and put forward suggestions and advice for the wider community, particularly in addressing the behaviour of young people.

> "Get kids in on time, not hanging around the shops."

> "Bring back bus conductors."

> "Kids pick on who's different. Don't think they really understand. You have to spread the word. It's our responsibility to challenge people when they say things to us If we go into the schools and talk. Do drama, things like that and things might change."

Reference group members were also asked what makes them feel safe. Some people had very practical suggestions: avoiding alleyways after dark, for example, or taking up self-defence – but the most common response centred on being around people whom they know.

> "Stay with groups of friends."

> "If you're in a community, it can help."

4. Six lives close up

The six narratives that follow are abbreviated versions of transcripts from completed interviews. All names have been changed to protect the identity of the people involved. They string together into single stories some of the typical experiences and situations that have been encountered.

The stories could be used as training material with practitioners (see Chapter 5), or as material for discussion with people with learning disabilities to raise awareness of the experiences faced by others in the community, and of situations that they might need to be watchful over, which is what happened with members of the reference group and that helpfully elicited experiences and observations that feature in this report.

• Keith is 62 and his story deals with 'befriending' and financial exploitation.

• Christine is 27 and her story deals with anti-social behaviour by neighbours and from a problem family on a social housing estate.

• Joe is 46 and Cynthia is 39 and their story deals with verbal abuse in the community and attacks on their property by a local gang.

• Charles is 60 and his story deals with harassment from a support worker and from local youths on a bus.

• Gillian is 30 and her story deals with abuse from her step-mother and circle of predatory friends.

• David is 53 and his story deals with being harassed and called a paedophile.

'Befriending' and financial exploitation: Keith's story

"I'm 62. I'm happy, helpful though sometimes sad because I don't have many friends. I like to look after people. I always help people and am very friendly. I have a mild learning disability. I have some problems with my feet, walking can be difficult.

I have lived alone for many years, cooking and cleaning and looking after myself. I had 3 hours a week support. I now live in supported living with other people in a shared house and get 24 hour support, but I go out by myself and I do a lot of things for myself. It is good, staff are good, they help me. But I can still do a lot of things for myself. Last night I cooked burgers and mashed potato. Today I did my own washing and my own breakfast, porridge and toast and jam.

I don't see family any more. I only see my aunt and cousin Ronnie at funerals. They don't want to see me.

I am an office cleaner. I've done it for 10 years. It's really good. I really like my job. The people there are really nice to me. We talk and they are friends.

On a typical day I get up, wash and dress by myself and make breakfast. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday I go to the office to work. I work 9am to 11am. I go home by about 2pm. Sometimes I go on bus rides. I relax at home and watch the TV in the afternoon, the same in the evening. I cook my dinner and watch TV.

I met a girl called Lori. I met her when I was out. She asked me for money. I think she was homeless. She put pressure on me to give her money. She talked to me and I thought she was nice. I liked her at the time. I used to spend time with her sitting about by the station. She sometimes promised me we would do sexual things together but we didn't. Sometimes we would kiss and cuddle but that is all. She moved herself into my flat and only came round when I was about to get my money. She knew when the staff were there and didn't come round when they were there.

She started to bring other people round to the house, like her 'cousin' Trevor. She started to bring men round to the flat and have sex with them. They were punters, that's what they are called. They bought drugs into my flat – and sometimes hid them in my wardrobe – or asked me to take them to places. They took money from me and they took over my flat. I wandered around because I didn't want to go home. I did not like Trevor I felt afraid. I tried to get Lori to help me and tell her how I felt but she was scared of him too.

I didn't tell my staff for a while because I thought Lori was my friend and I didn't want to get into trouble. When I did tell them, the staff were really good. They helped me get an injunction for 6 months and then it ran out. The staff went round and talked to Lori. I moved to a respite unit and I felt safer there. I was happy with what my carers did. They helped me to get rid of her and for her to stay away from me.

But I was not very happy with what they did at the respite unit. They took 2 ½ months to talk to me about it. I never got a social worker to talk to. They said I had to be in by 10pm and I hardly ever got to go out. We did what staff wanted to do.

I haven't told Lori where I live now I have a new flat. I feel safer 'cos staff are there all the time. If I see her when I am on my way home, I go a different way into my road so I don't have to see her. I thought they were my friends. I wanted to have friends."

Anti-social neighbours: Christine's story

"I'm 27. I went to a normal school. I live on my own in a council house that I moved into 5 months ago.

It's all right but I'm not dead keen on the area as there are a lot of gangs hanging about. I've got a support worker who helps with budgeting and paying bills, and another agency to helps me with the flat.

I suppose I'm shy and quiet, most people think that, but I can be a laugh when you get to know me.

My mum and dad both live locally and I've got two sisters and a brother. I see them every couple of days, and we get on fine.

I haven't got a job so my typical day would be to get up, either go and see my family, or stay in watching TV, and sometimes go out with my friend in the afternoon. I've known her for 2 years. She's a laugh. We listen to music, or go shopping and sometimes we go to her mum's house.

Most of my money goes on paying bills, buying food and cigarettes, paying for mobile phone top-ups, and buying new mobile phones. I used to be on Facebook all the time but I don't bother anymore.

From about the age of 14 I was bullied at school by people I didn't know, names and stuff. They were in a different class to me. I didn't report this to a teacher as I didn't want to make things worse. Just ignored them. But it carried on until I left school at 16. I can't remember how I felt at the time as it was many years ago.

Since moving in to my flat 5 months ago, I've had loads of hassle. Groups of kids knocking on my door, kicking it, asking for cigarettes. I told them to go away or I'd call the police. Eventually I did. They told me to ring them back if it happened again. So I called them again but nothing happened. My support worker contacted the local Community Police Officer, and told them I was having these problems. They called in to see me a few times to see if I was OK. This was good but it also looks like it's put people off from banging on my door. I've had no problems recently.

Then there was another incident where someone went into my garden and went to the toilet in my garden shed, and also in some shoes that I had left outside her back door. They then rubbed it over the back door. I knew who did it and so I reported it to the police, but I was really afraid what else they might do.

Then there was this family who I knew a bit, everyone knows about them round here. They got chucked out of their own home, and said could they move into mine. I said no but they did anyway and I was scared to tell them to leave. Eventually, I told the support worker and we told the police who came and told them to leave, marched them off. Again, I was really worried they'd be back but they've got a new house and I've not had any more trouble.

All this makes me angry and scared. "

Gang harassment: Joe and Cynthia's story

"I'm 39 and my partner Joe is 46. I'm happy and caring. So is Joe but sometimes he can be sad, and nasty though he says he doesn't mean to be. We have home-based support every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and advocacy support as and when we need it. People who know us well say we are happy people but people who don't know us call us names and laugh and swear at us. We've got a daughter, Samantha, who is 10. She's got ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder]. We've got a niece and nephew who we see every week. We get on well with the niece and nephew but it's harder to get on with other family.

I don't work but Joe has a voluntary job 2 days a week. He loves it and has got lots of friends there. I don't have any really but I had a friend Linda I'm not allowed to see her anymore.

On a normal day I take my daughter to school then I go home. I do my housework and ironing for my daughter. I collect her from school then I cook the dinner. I help her with her homework then we play games before she has her bath and goes to bed. Then I watch TV before I go to bed. I go to bingo on a Thursday. Joe loves taking Sam to the park at the weekend. Sometimes we go to Christine's for dinner.

Where we live now we were hounded by about 7 people male and female, not sure how old. They used to stand outside the shop by the school where we collect our daughter from. They would call us and our daughter names. They followed us home so they know where we lived. They started to put bricks and rubbish through our letterbox. They called us names like 'fat tramp' and swore at us. They put wheelie bins in front of our front door and traffic cones in front of the house. It also came from a woman at the school pretending to be a friend and being unkind behind our backs sharing our business with other people. They would knock our door at night with masks on and swear and shout at us. They were trying to get Joe to chase them but he wouldn't. It reached a real high point when it was daily they even stole all the balloons and birthday banners we put up for our daughter's birthday. It lasted for 6 weeks I'd say at its peak. We kept the door shut and locked. It was horrible. We wanted to move out and keep our daughter safe.

We phoned the police over 5 times and my brother phoned them as well we also phoned our family because we didn't know what to do and talked to our advocate. We stayed in more, phoned family and police. Our advocate supported us to meet with our housing association. Our family phoned police on our behalf they were worried and angry and stressed. Police didn't come out straight away they came the next day and asked us questions then the community safety team came out to tell us how to stay safe but we already had everything they suggested.

We were really upset, scared, not fair we felt safe when the police were around but they weren't around enough. They didn't take it seriously. They tried to help but there was nothing they could do. They were understanding but nothing came of it. No one was ever prosecuted. After the police presence and PSOs [Police Support Officers] were around they came to the door less and less. We have a community police office near our house and we have got to know the PSOs and they know us. This has really helped. It became less and less. Now it doesn't happen at all. The PSOs got to know us well and we trust them. We were happy with the PSOs but still think the gang are still being horrible to other people. If the police did more, and were around more. They need to come to the estate undercover because when they come in police cars everyone scarpers.

We don't mix with anyone anymore on the estate we only talk to our next door neighbours now. We just want for it to stop. Remove the Yobbos from the estate and to be taken seriously."

Theft by a support worker; verbal abuse from local youths: Charles' story

"I've only got two more years before I'm 60. I don't want to end up on the knackers yard! I went to Fernhill Croft and then Tashworth Wood. They were both special schools. If I could have got the support at the time I would have made it in the normal school which was a shame cos you miss all your mates. I got moved from that. They said I was too slow. I was registered under the disablement officers when they used to have them. I went for 16 or 17 jobs and it had to be pub work or labourer.

I live in a 2 bedroom bungalow with a friend. He has a learning difficulty as well. We help each other. I do a little bit of stuff for my friend. I try and do his ironing. One of his hands is paralysed. I'm an unpaid support worker! He's in the same age bracket as me and we both know about each other. I get on with it. I like being independent and stuff like that. Doing my greenhouse, gardening, except at the moment it's a mess. I get help with prompts and having

my meds and if I've done something in writing I need it checking before I send it. I can do addresses, it's just other things. We have people to do shopping with us and sometimes when I go places I don't know, I need more help. I get Disability Living. I share a car with my friend.

In my family there's Elizabeth, Tricia, my sisters. Jane, Anne they're my sisters. Peter, Andrew, myself and that's it. My mum and dad died. When they went, all the family drifted. I see one or two of them. I keep in contact with the phone. They are my trustees if anything happened to me. We do get on. Me and one of my sisters are doing the family tree.

Me and my friend we go out together shopping. We do gardening: we both share the planting. We both go to football and church. He has to go up in the lift and we can't sit together. He has to go up in a wheelchair and I have to sit downstairs. So we go together but he sits with the people who go in the lift.

People have been really really cruel to me over the years. One support worker, she went right for the car. She said I should have paid her my Motability. She started being really nasty. I didn't like her. She was a bully. Like a formal bully. Half the things she said I wouldn't have done them to a child never mind an adult. I had enough and I went and told someone. She spent money from my housekeeping. She ended up with all my direct payments 'cos she spent it on 2 trips out. She was going to be investigated and then she left 'cos she would have been sacked, or put in another home.

Every so often you get gangs of people after you in town. It was near Macdonalds. They were shooting peas at me and they were just being horrible. Tony's shoe shop is at the bottom. I had some friends there. Gavin there used to be very good and he said if you don't leave him I'll do something to you. Then another time I was coming back from Sheffield on the bus and a gang was saying nasty things, tormenting me all the way back. A man got off the bus and told them to leave me alone, called them cowards. They were saying come and give us a kiss, mucky things you wouldn't think of. It's groups, gangs and things. I just stood there and let them say what they wanted, you know.

It was good that other people stuck up for me and made them run off. Yes I was really happy. I'd like to see somebody who could help me and make a formal complaint. I need reassurance – it's just about being believed. Making people think you're telling the truth."

Abusive relatives and predatory 'friends': Gillian's story

"I'm 30. I went to a boarding school. I can be kind. Not violent. I do bottle up things a lot. Sometimes I'm a bit sad and that; that's to do with the baby, but I am happy sometimes. I don't like where I'm living at the moment, it's a bit far out, but the good thing is Allan (my boyfriend) comes down every day because his mum and dad live close. We're going out tonight to his mates, they are very nice. His mate is Andy, he's very nice. So, we're going over there for a little bit tonight. I think we're catching a taxi back then he'll probably stay at mine. I get help with writing and reading. I'm crap at money, there you go. I can do cooking, I can do cleaning. Sometimes help about staying safe, I'm getting one of those panic alarms so if anyone…like, say I'm walking Allan up halfway up to park and ride and anyone comes behind I can just pull it and then everyone will hear that and they'll all be around. Sometimes I need a bit of support around my emotions as well.

I used to live in a residential home with another lady, she was fun. But it's better living by myself. Who's in my family? My mum. My step-dad. My son, Will. Angie, Natasha, Louise, Emma, Joan, Megan, Joyce and Charlie my brother. I don't see them much. I find it difficult to go over there at the moment.

I haven't got a job. But I've heard from the CFE [College of Further Education] for next year about the catering course, but that's next year. I haven't got in, but I've just gotta ring them to say that I still want to carry on with it and I should start next September. I used to do dog walking for a cats and dogs home. That was just voluntary work, I never got paid for that. I think I would like a job one day, maybe working in a café or something like that.

My best friend is Andy's sister. (Andy is Allan's mate). Her name is Geri but I don't know her last name. She says she really likes me, and thinks I am funny. She's not very old and she's at college.

Most of my days are the same. Sometimes I like to have a lie-in other days I get up more early. But usually, sorting out my flat, cooking meals, going out, seeing Allan, you know that sort of thing. I'm gonna start going to gym, I want to lose over a stone. Hoping to get into college or get part-time work if I can. I don't really have any hobbies. I do like watching the Soaps, listening to my music, sometimes going out.

When I left the residential home I moved in with my step-mum for a bit, then it went a bit wrong and everything. Her boyfriend kicked off at me, hit me, and hit her. She used to take all my money off me. I didn't used to get a penny. She wanted me to move in with her so she could have my money. Bullying and loads of drugs there. Her son tried to have sex with me. Her bloke was beating her up, smacking me about. People were doing drugs there. They used to make me go out and buy the drugs. It was not a good time. She made me leave my support and go and live with her. She said it would be alright and that she would look after me because she was my step-mum, but then when I moved in, well that's when it all started.

I moved in with her, but I wasn't a good place for me, you know, they were treating me like rubbish, so that's when I came back to ask for support again. I wasn't very well, wasn't looking after myself, so I knew I needed to get away. They spoke to social services, then I got my support back and a new place to live. That's the time I felt safe again and since then things got better.

In the past, when I told the police, when I said stuff to them I was always thinking it was my fault. They didn't do things to sort it out. I think if things happen the police should be there to sort it out and believe me. That would be the best things for me.

I don't think I would let people take advantage like when I was younger. People said they would look after me, that's what I wanted, to be looked after, but they never did. I am more safer now, I would speak to people if things weren't going positive for me. I would tell my support."

Harassment and false accusations of being a paedophile: David's story

"I am an autistic man. I'm a calm man, a bit bubbly, happy playing on my game console. Staff help me Monday, (1½ hrs.) Tuesday, (3 hrs.) Wednesday (1½ hrs.) Thursday (1½ hrs.) Friday (1½ hrs.) Saturday (1 ½ hrs.) I have Sunday off. I need help with shaving, washing my hair. I don't need help with bathing. I work hard with staff. I am good at talking and being good.

I live in a block of flats, 1st floor, my own flat. I go in the front door and up the stairs to my own front door and go inside. I leave the door open to my rooms. I don't leave the front door open. It's nice and cosy, lots of nice things on my coffee table.

I see my mum, Jean, once every 2 weeks. I sometimes see her every week. I get on with her very well, she's 76.

I do car washing. I like to do it. I don't do heavy work. I am 53 now and I don't do heavy work, not lifting. I get £20 for a van. Sometimes I do 3 cars in a row. I do it part time on a Sunday and sometimes on a Saturday. I like it, it's a bit of money. It is not on a rota or anything. I wait for them to come round.

I have a friend called Kevin. He's very nice and we spend some time together. I buy him things sometimes, not too much though. He swore at me once but he's ok now. We went for lunch in Subway. We had egg and chips, black pudding, bread and butter and tea. I like him and I want him to be in my family. Then Dave, he's naughty like cream cakes. He had some bad language too. But he is OK too.

I like to watch Sky TV. I sometimes go to the library but not too often. I go on the computers. I play on my games consoles, PlayStation2. I play chess and '4 in a row'. I used to do heavy gambling not any more. I sometimes do some little gambling, slot machines with 10ps. I do my diary: it is good over a cup of tea, writing things down. I like to go to cafes. I like chips on a plate and tea. I go to Ilford and go shopping for food and I hold the money myself. I like to make things on paintbox on the computer. You can do a drawing and colour it in and make pictures with it and print them off. I use the Internet a lot, I like Facebook and Twitter. I can look up people I know and print their pictures off. Is that ok to do? I am being good. I like the pictures of people I know. I like to Google things too, games and things and people and stories.

I went down to meet my support worker. I was waiting for him. I like him, he tickles my brain. I was waiting for him and I needed to go to the loo. I went to the loo and I was doing a wee. Some young boys heard me and started to accuse me. I had just had a little wee, I didn't do anything. They said they would call the police on me. They said they would tell the police I was a paedophile. They pushed me and were trouble making. I felt embarrassed because they said I did things that I didn't do. There were 7 boys pushing. When I tried to get away I pushed them to the side.

A woman came by while I tried to get away. They accused me. They said I was a paedophile. She took their side and blamed me. One of the boys stuck up for me and said it was not me, I was innocent. It was the other boys being naughty to me. I told her it was not me I was innocent, it was the others. I went to Brendan and then they all went away. I did not call the police. I did not want their word against mine. I worry. I will not use a urinal again. I'll go into the cubical.

I told Brendan, my support worker, what had happened and he was very angry with the naughty boys. Brendan said to me I am not a paedophile and I didn't do anything wrong. The boys were wicked, just wicked.

Maybe I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Maybe they saw a man on his own. Maybe they think I was a silly college boy. Maybe they think I am different from them because I am an autistic man. Do you think they can see that when I walk by?"

5. Priorities for action

This final part of the report sets out the areas for action that will be explored during the second phase of the research project, working with practitioners from community-based organisations and with people with learning disabilities themselves.

As acknowledged in the Introduction, much has been achieved, albeit belatedly, in acknowledging, describing and in beginning to tackle the specific issue of disability hate crime.[8] Most of this work to date can be classified under two distinct but related paradigms: the equal rights paradigm and the criminal justice paradigm. It is axiomatic for a civilised society to treat people with learning disabilities fairly and equally, and crime against them motivated by hate where it can be proved should be prosecuted.

While being an important part of the answer to the problem, for reasons that I will shortly set out, the equal rights and criminal justice paradigms are not sufficient to respond adequately to the frequency, breadth and depth of people's experiences of cruelty, and to take account of the powerful social trends at work described in Chapter 2. I therefore propose a third paradigm, the social capital paradigm, that supports these existing paradigms while also aiming to address their limitations. These are all represented together in figure 4, below.

Fig. 4. Three paradigms for tackling the problem

Criminal Justice

Support for victims and witnesses
More effective investigation and prosection

Equal Rights

Fairer access to services
Elimination of discrimination

Social Capital

Enhanced social networks for people with learning disabilities
Stronger prevention and support from mainstream services
Creating safer public and civic mindedness

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8. At the time of writing, for example, 30 police forces out of 42 in England and Wales have signed up to Mencap's 'Stand By Me' campaign and its 10 pledges to improve police practice in tackling disability hate crime

Criminal justice paradigm

The criminal justice paradigm is founded on the importance of formally recognising criminal acts motivated by hatred of people with learning disability and of ensuring robust responses from criminal justice agencies. The job of the police is to investigate disability-related incidents thoroughly with a high priority and to collect evidence of the perpetrator's motivation. The Crown Prosecution Service should charge and prosecute cases effectively where the evidence is convincing, and courts should sentence cases appropriately, taking account of the disability-related motivation of offenders. Doing all this in cases of disability hate crime, the argument goes, will not only provide justice for the victim but will also send a powerful deterrent message to the rest of society: that disability-related crime will not be tolerated and that perpetrators will face the full force of the law.

The failings of criminal justice agencies in responding to disability-related incidents has been well documented in some of the high-profile cases referred to in the Introduction. A poor response from the police to reports is also a recurring theme in many of the interviews. There is clearly much to work on, in improving the experience of reporting, in making people feel listened to and believed, and in communicating with people the progress of cases where action is being pursued.

There are limits to what the criminal justice system can achieve in isolation. Firstly, not every experience that has been described in this report is a criminal offence, though they are all criminal in the figurative sense. Many incidents, such as verbal abuse perpetrated by young people happen far 'upstream' from where criminal justice agencies can realisitically intervene. Secondly, not everyone interviewed who experienced harassment and abuse wanted criminal justice to take its full course, particularly in those cases involving young people as perpetrators. Some wanted perpetrators to be caught, charged and punished but many others simply wanted the behaviour to stop and for there to be reparation. The significance of an apology in its fullest 'restorative' sense, where the perpetrator sees and understands first-hand the impact of their behaviour on the victim and the wider community is not to be dismissed as a soft option.
It can be a powerful and transformative experience for all those involved. Thirdly, being involved in criminal justice proceedings can be a deeply upsetting experience for victims and witnesses, indeed for anyone, not just people with learning disabilities. In cases where people do not want to proceed with legal action, their wishes need to be acknowledged. Finally, even if every incident were a crime and treated as such, the sheer volume of cases involved would present a significant challenge to the already-stretched resources of the police, Crown Prosecution Service and the courts.[9] This is not to apologise for inaction, merely to point out practical challenges.

Equal rights paradigm

The equal rights paradigm is founded on the importance of establishing equality for people with a learning disability in terms of access to public services (including criminal justice) and fair treatment by authorities and public service providers and employers (legal requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010). Without equal rights and fair treatment, the argument goes, people with learning disabilities will always be perceived by the general public as second-class citizens

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9. According to a 1999 Mencap survey 90 per cent of people with learning disabilities experience harassment and bullying; 32 per cent said bullying was taking place on weekly or daily. A Home Office report published in 2007 reported that 20 per cent of respondents had experienced harassment 'at least once a week'. On this basis, the Home Office extrapolated to estimate that 32,000 people experienced these kinds of incidents on a weekly basis.

and will always be preyed upon by those who seek to take advantage of their less powerful status.

Once equality and fairness have been established by law and are visibly enforced, and once people with learning disabilities are made aware of and can confidently assert their rights, public service providers will step into line and the discriminatory attitudes of the public will change. This change will not happen overnight, of course, and advocates of the equality paradigm suggest that there is a transitional phase where people's assertion of their rights (even in modest ways such as claiming benefits or driving a Mobility car) can attract resentment from the public, is part of the motivation behind the behaviour of perpetrators of disability hate crime, a situation made worse in tougher economic times with a perceived shortage of resources.

Equality in legal terms, however, does not necessarily translate into social equality, parity at the level of day-to-day interaction, on the bus or at the pub. Whenever people interact, power imbalances are instinctively recognised. Body language is assessed and physical appearance checked out as an indicator of social status. Everyone at their most primitive level is on the lookout for someone to lord it over. An instinct given acute motivation within the fundamentally unequal society described in Chapter 2. When people come off second best in these exchanges, or, more generally, feel under threat from people more powerful than themselves, they appeal to various strategies. Individually, people learn to assert themselves, project a different image, broadcast stronger messages. They call on friends or family to help them out, to advise, or to provide safety in numbers. And people form wider social allegiances, affinities and group identity to assert collective power: knowing others and being known in the community makes people less vulnerable. Propinquity and familiarity generate mutual responsibility and fellow feeling. As identified in Chapter 2, the idea of law as ultimate protector and arbitrator is featuring increasingly in people's lives, but it remains a distant and theoretical concept, and still a last resort for most when they are in trouble. As blood is to water, so custom is to contract in what truly binds people.

Social capital paradigm

The 'social capital' paradigm is presented as a necessary third component of an overall approach to the problem. It emphasises the importance of strengthening the relationships of people with learning disabilities with others in the community, relationships of mutuality and inter-dependence, and of making the wider community feel responsible and accountable for what happens to people with learning disabilities who live within that community.[10]

Practitioners in housing, care and support, local authorities and the police also have a key role to play in enhancing social capital, as members of the community themselves, but also as first ports-of-call when incidents occur and as link-makers between services. As illustrated in Figure 4 below, enhanced social capital provides a stronger foundation for people with learning disabilities to access criminal justice services and to better assert their rights as equal citizens from the basis of enhanced self-esteem and confidence. It is clear from responses to the interview questions that people with learning disabilities feel more comfortable in telling

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10. Echoing this analysis, the need for 'a strong sense of our mutual commitments and obligations, which brings personal and social responsibility' has been set out in the Government's recent publication, *Creating the conditions for integration*

a family member, a friend, or a support worker when something happens than in making a report directly to the police. Police Community Safety Officers can also play this 'bridging' role particularly effectively between the community and the main police services.

Further objectives of the social capital model are to counter the loneliness of many people with learning disabilities, a social ill in itself but also a contributory factor in making people vulnerable to harassment and abuse. As Clare Wightman argues in *Connecting People: the steps to making it happen*, "relationships – their depth and variety – are what keep us genuinely safe and independent". Also located within this paradigm are ways of addressing more upstream types of incident where restorative approaches provide an alternative to criminal justice interventions, as well as approaches that aim to make the wider community more responsible and pro-active in standing up for people with learning disabilities living in the community.

Phase 2 of the project

The following section sets out the areas of action that will be the focus of the second phase of the project, where Lemos&Crane and the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities will work in collaboration with organisations and agencies across the UK, and seek to populate in particular the 'social capital' model described above with actual projects. The approach will combine review of existing practice (see Appendix E for examples of good practice) with exploration and development of new approaches, ideas and resources.

Figure 5. Areas of action to be explored

Overarching objectives	Specific projects to explore	Lead agencies
Enhanced social networks for people with learning disabilities	Developing friendship and relationships Promoting self-esteem and confidence Encouraging person-centred interests and activities	Self-advocacy groups Care and support providers
Stronger prevention and support from mainstream services	Training for practitioners on advice and support for service users / clients Encouraging victims to report incidents Multi-agency working, record-keeping, information sharing	Social landlords Local authorities Care and support providers Police
Creating civic mindedness and safer public spaces	Fostering positive attitudes among school-children and young people Restorative approaches to incidents Safer parks, shopping areas and public transport	Schools Self-advocacy groups Local authorities Care and support providers Social landlords Police

Enhanced social networks for people with learning disabilities

The first set of actions will be developed and tested by agencies with close, day-to-day contact with people, including self-advocacy groups.

1. Developing friendships and relationships:

Though people are innately social they only acquire and hone the skills needed to relate effectively with others over time. A constant loop of interaction, feedback and reflection helps people grow as social operators. School-days and adolescence are crucial stages for this development but it carries on throughout adult life. Many people with learning disabilities have been denied these opportunities for social feedback and learning, especially those who are older and have spent long periods of time in institutions. While care and support providers have placed a big emphasis on working with people with learning disabilities to develop life and social skills, there is no substitute for real life friendships and situations. There are examples of good practice[11] with a strong track record of helping people with learning disabilities to develop such real friendships in the community – based on 'circles of support' methodologies, for example – which can be built upon in this regard. The research will also explore and develop good practice in creating opportunities for people with learning disabilities to develop loving relationships – dating agencies and match-making services are increasingly popular, and some of which offer dating tips and advice. Finally, it will explore how befriending schemes could be further developed where people with learning disabilities are matched with members of the local community, based on shared interests.

2. Promoting self-esteem and confidence:

Poor self-esteem and confidence born of repeated exposure to abuse and harassment – is a significant barrier that prevents people from engaging positively with the community. Feeling safe when out and about is an essential first step in developing this confidence. The research will explore examples of practice, and the resources and methodologies that are used by practitioners, that give people with learning disabilities advice on staying safe. For instance, on locations where they might be at risk (eg on public transport) and on the danger signs of 'mate crime', and on what to do when people do experience incidents – for example, how to respond when being verbally abused in the street. The research will be particularly interested in how practitioners and session leaders encourage people to face the outside world with confidence, to take positive risks and not to frighten people into even greater exclusion and isolation. Confidence and self-esteem can also be gained from developing a positive self-image. Physical appearance plays a significant part in this, though it could also be argued that pride in one's appearance follows from increased self-confidence. The research will therefore explore how advice on clothes, appearance and personal hygiene could be offered in a positive, affirming way to enhance people's self-esteem. The issue of clothing is by no means trivial in the context of this report. One of the reference group members who has a job at a leading charity told me that he'd never been harassed while wearing a suit though he experiences harassment frequently when out and about and wearing his everyday clothes.

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11. See *Building Community through Circles of Friends* by Christine Burke and *Connecting People: the steps to making it happen* by Clare Wightman

3. Encouraging person-centred interests and activities:

People with learning disabilities need to be involved in interests and activities that develop their sense of positive identity – beyond being a person with learning disabilities, or a victim of hate crime – and that have universal appeal (things like cooking, gardening, reading, painting, fishing, football, walking, dancing, singing, etc). There is good practice in terms of person-centred planning that can be built on here. As well as contributing to more fulfilling lives, actively pursuing an interest would also provide opportunities for making new friends in the community. Crucially, these friendships need to be with people from the wider community and not just other people with learning disabilities. The research will therefore explore participatory projects for people with learning disabilities that are open to the wider community, to evaluate their impact on people's self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of safety.

Stronger prevention and support from mainstream services

The second set of actions centre on mainstream organisations that provide services in the community – housing, local authorities, police, community safety, as well as providers of care and support.

4. Training for practitioners on advice and support for service users and clients:

Frontline support workers, care workers, housing officers and others who have regular professional contact with people with learning disabilities as service users and clients need to be fully aware of the range of abuse and harassment that they might experience in the community. The research will develop and test training materials that can raise this awareness, and will also give practitioners the knowledge to take appropriate action when they become aware of incidents, including knowledge of law and good practice on areas such as duty of care, mental capacity and adult safeguarding. Mainstream practitioners also need knowledge to provide advice for people with learning disabilities on how to stay safe. As identifiedabove, there are many resources and approaches that have been developed and tested in collaboration with people with learning disabilities that need to be more widely known and disseminated. A single resource and checklist will be developed for this purpose for use by mainstream practitioners.

5. Encouraging victims to report incidents:

The research will seek to identify good practice in encouraging and facilitating reporting, including third-party reporting sites where police provide training on set-up to agencies including those led by people with learning disabilities. It will also explore ways of improving and facilitating the experience of people who come forward to report incidents – EasyRead reporting formats for example, and how staff are trained to take reports from people with learning disabilities, with a particular emphasis on making sure that people feel listened to and believed. The research will also explore examples of practice and approaches that help in encouraging people to 'speak up' about their experiences. In helping them understand that the cruelty, harassment and abuse that they encounter does not need to be tolerated, and that they need to tell someone when something happens to them – whether this is a friend, care or support worker, a community support officer, or the police. The research will also explore new ways of eliciting people's experiences – using case studies and stories for example to prompt people to talk about their
own lives, which they might not have done had they been asked directly.

6. Multi-agency working, information sharing and record-keeping:

The research will identify good-practice models of multi-agency working in responding to incidents of anti-social behaviour or crime involving people with learning disabilities, including case conferences. Of particular interest will be the key success factors of effective partnership working including information sharing protocols. The research will also seek to identify good practice on record-keeping for the police, local authorities and housing organisations and on referral processes between agencies. Providers of housing-related support services in one of the action research sessions felt that they could be helping more people than they currently do, as people with learning disabilities are living in general needs housing and supported housing but have not been recognised as having a disability and are not being referred to them. One housing provider taking part in the action research has conducted a tenancy audit to identify tenants who might have a learning disability, and the research will explore the extent of this practice across the sector.

Creating civic mindedness and safer public spaces

The third set of actions centre on the role of local agencies and organisations in the wider community.

7. Fostering positive attitudes among school-children and young people:

The research will seek to explore how schools can be engaged in challenging and changing the attitudes and behaviour of pupils towards people with learning disabilities who live in the community. Many organisations (including self-advocacy groups) have ready-made presentations and lesson plans (suitable for citizenship education classes, for example) but often struggle to gain access. The Crown Prosecution Service has also developed a set of resources that teachers can use to explore the issue of disability hate crime. In care homes and sheltered housing for older people it is becoming increasingly common[12] to run inter-generational projects (school children visit to teach older people how to text or use the web, for example) which helps to combat residents' loneliness and isolation but also challenges stereotypes and creates empathy and mutual understanding. A similar approach could be adopted with people with learning disabilities.

8. Restorative approaches to incidents:

The research will explore the role of restorative approaches in working with young people in particular who have been involved in harassment and abuse targeted at people with learning disabilities. Restorative justice is increasingly being recognised as an effective means of challenging and changing the behaviour of perpetrators as well as providing reparation for victims and communities. In the UK, Thames Valley Police under the leadership of now-retired chief constable Sir Charles Pollard pioneered the use of restorative approaches in policing particularly in community settings, and the practice still continues for dealing with neighbour disputes, minor crimes, community issues, and many other incidents they encountered on a

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12. See Lemos&Crane's Bloom Awards (www.lemosandcrane.co.uk)

daily basis. Restorative approaches have since spread to being used in schools and in housing and has support from the current government.[13] One of the participants involved in the action research group, Community Integrated Care, has used this approach in dealing with anti-social behaviour at a shared living property for people with learning disabilities where local children (of primary school age) were responsible for on-going acts of vandalism, arson, rubbish-dumping and abuse (see ASB*ActionNet* Awards 2009). The scheme manager contacted the head master who identified the young perpetrators and got them to visit the scheme and meet the residents and to understand the impact of their abuse on people's lives. The children continue to visit the scheme, as friends.

9. Safer parks, shopping areas and public transport:

The research will explore how providers of park management and public transport services can be engaged in prevention and response strategies. It will also explore how 'safe places' initiatives can be further developed where shops, cafes and other public areas act and promote themselves as places of refuge for people with learning disabilities who experience harassment. Some local authority areas have also developed safe shopping initiatives to improve the shopping experience for people with learning disabilities that could be further explored. The research will also seek to explore how local shops and services can be involved in local campaigns that make the public aware of the abuse and harassment experienced by people with learning disabilities, and that encourage public responsibility for responding to incidents when they are witnessed.

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13. See Keynote address by The Rt Hon Nick Herbert MP Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice at the ACPO/RJC Joint Conference on Restorative Justice, Policing and the Big Society- 16th February 2011 Published at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre speeches/Herbert-Restorative-Justice 22.02.11

6. Conclusion

People with learning disabilities living independently in the community experience a disturbing range of crime, abuse and harassment with alarming frequency. These incidents above all else can be characterised by their cruelty. The perpetrators in the main are local people, neighbours, often young people and schoolchildren. Incidents happen when people are out and about, but also in and around their homes. There is little that is subtle about these acts. They are often opportunistic, crass and vulgar. They can also be targeted and cynical. It is the loneliness of some people with learning disabilities – their search for friendship within a selfish society and within deeply fragmented communities – that is putting them at particular risk, leading them to frequent alone hostile and permissive public spaces, and bringing them to the attentions of the cruel-hearted and criminal few.

In addressing this fundamental and underlying social problem of loneliness and cruelty, there are limits to what the criminal justice system and equal rights can achieve. New approaches are needed that enhance social capital, in particular in helping people with learning disabilities to create relationships, ties and bonds within their communities. Practitioners working in housing, police, care and support, local authorities, schools and voluntary organisations have a key role in developing and delivering these community-based approaches, while at the same time working together to ensure that crime against people with learning disabilities is properly and sensitively dealt with.

There is also a wider social responsibility. As people are challenged by today's self-actualising culture to stretch their professional and emotional boundaries, so they must also be challenged to step out of their social comfort zones, to reach out to and stand up for their fellow citizens – people with learning disabilities who need friendship, kindness and respect not just the well-meaning support of professionals, important though this is. In doing so, people will be tending a very modern and private yearning: for authentic connection to something and to someone other than themselves.

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Appendix A. Action research participants

Participants	Organisation	Description of service for people with learning disabilities
Caroline Bairstow Leanne Cretney	Community Integrated Care (CIC)	CIC provides support for people with learning disabilities across Scotland and England, supporting over 200 services with independent living.
Jacki Tinning	Cheshire Constabulary	Contact with all members of the public including the provision of advice and information.
Sarah Roy	Chesterfield Law Centre	Provides advice and support to all protected groups and advises people with disabilities of all kinds about their rights regarding harassment and hate crime.
Pippa Gascoigne	Choice Support	Provides support to people with learning disabilities living in their own homes either in residential care or supported living.
Nicola Burston	Essex Police	Contact with all members of the public with processes to ensure people with learning disabilities have their specific needs catered for.
Helen MacDonald	Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire	Helps people with learning disabilities to get the life they want – to make their own choices and be part of the community.
Sue Grant	KeyRing – Living Support Networks	Works with people with learning disabilities through a highly developed peer support regime that helps service users know their rights, keep safe and get support when experiencing harassment.
Claire Hogan	Liverpool Mutual Homes	Housing services to tenants, many of whom suffer mental health problems and have varying disabilities.
Sandra Cowper Liz Swinswood	Metropolitan Support Trust	Provides a housing-related support service to adults with learning disabilities and difficulties, Autism or Asperger's Syndrome.

Participants	Organisation	Description of service for people with learning disabilities
Robin Vacquier	Michael Batt Foundation	Provides individualised and person centred packages of support to individuals with a learning disability and complex histories.
Maria Hewitt Fiona Routledge	Norfolk County Council (Adult Care)	Provides social care support to people with learning disabilities among other groups, and their carers.
Elizabeth McLeary	Outward	Provides specialised services to a range of client groups including people with learning disabilities.
Shelley Carter	Salvation Army	Operates a number of specific services aimed exclusively at people with learning disabilities, while also having contact with people as part of general support services.
Carol Harwood	Southampton City Council (Communities Team)	The Communities Team is Southampton City Council's led for diversity, equalities and hate crime issues.
Mark Meredith	Southern Housing Group	Owns and manages 25,000 properties across SE of England and provides specialist support and care for adults with mental health, substance issues and learning disabilities .
Julie Shaw	Waverley Borough Council (Housing)	Provides social housing to 3,5000 council tenants, many of whom have complex needs and learning disabilities.

Appendix B. User reference group participants

Reference group participants (in alphabetical order)

Katie Bessent
Pat Charlesworth
Neal Crowley
Warren Day
John Elliffe
Ciara Evans
Robin Hill
Richard Lawrence
Michelle McDermot
Tom McDonough
Richard Walker
Scott Watkins
Richard West

Appendix C. Guidance Notes for Interviewers and Interview template

Guidance for Interviewers

Introduction

A good interview is one in which the person being interviewed feels supported and enabled to talk about their experiences in full, recalling all the important things that happen in as much detail as possible without being misled or shut down or becoming upset. There have been some good studies by experienced psychologists on interviewing people with learning disabilities, particularly those who have experienced or witnessed crimes,[14] and their conclusions about best practice are summarised below.[15]

The studies note that historically, the criminal justice system has believed that the memory systems of people with learning disabilities are "inherently defective and therefore it has been assumed that they are susceptible to suggestion and lack the skills accurately to report events." The research tends to suggest "recalling information…can often be difficult for people with learning disabilities because they tend to take longer to encode, understand and store information than their peers in the general population. As a consequence their free recall is often incomplete, however the information that is reported is not necessarily less accurate."

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14. Milne, R. And Bull, R, Interviewing witnesses with learning disabilities for legal purposes, British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 2001; Milne, R, Clare, CH, Bull, R, Using the cognitive interview with adults with mild learning disabilities, Psychology, Crime and Law, 1999

15. Margo Boye, who is High Court judge and has dealt with many cases involving the harassment and abuse of people with learning disabilities, helped me with the background information for these guidance notnotes. I want to acknowledge her help with great gratitude.

There is no evidence that people with learning disabilities distort or fabricate information if they are interviewed appropriately. "Forgetting may be often more caused by having problems retrieving information, as opposed to information being lost altogether. These difficulties may be also exacerbated by limited communication skills."

In short, the main concerns in interviewing people with learning disabilities are that the interviewee will make errors of omission, i.e. not provide a full account of their experiences, not that the information they give is false. Home Office guidance[16] suggests structured interviews, the approach set out below.

Working with a co-researcher with learning disabilities in these kinds of interview involving memory and recall has not been tested or recommended by research, though it is a method used, for example, in consultations about service design.

For this study, we do not regard a co-researcher with learning disabilities as essential. We do, however, regard a structured approach to the interview as set out below as essential. The questionnaire that has been drafted and piloted reflects this approach to structured interviewing.

Information needed from the interview

For specific incidents of harassment or abuse experienced by a person with learning disabilities, we need to find about the following in as much detail as possible:

• What happened?

• Who was involved?

• How did it make them feel?

• What did they say?

• What did the other people involved (the perpetrators) do?

• What did the other people involved say?

• Was anyone else around when it happened?

• How did the other people around feel?

• What did the other people around say?

• What did the other people around do?

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16. Memorandum of Good Practice, Home Office, 1992

Stages of the structured interview

1. Rapport

2. Free narrative – this is the most important and reliable when interviewing people with learning disabilities

3. Questioning – this is less reliable, but important for filling in gaps and getting more detailed information

4. Second retrieval – which confirms what has happened and elicits more details

5. Closure

Rapport

- Spend time on building rapport; 30-40 minutes to build rapport would not be unusual or unacceptable.

- People with learning disabilities 'differ extensively from one another in their level of social, emotional and cognitive development, communication skills, degree of understanding and particular needs. The interviewer is responsible for making sure that they have matched their approach to the interview to the individual's needs.

- Since people with learning disabilities often suffer high social anxiety, low self-esteem and a lack of assertiveness, it is even more important to put the interviewee at ease.

- To equalise the power balance, the interviewee should be allowed some control over the interview, for example deciding on breaks. Some control should be transferred from the interviewer to the interviewee.

- A psychologically comfortable environment without distractions will also help with rapport. A strange environment is not conducive to good recall. Intimidating environments are obviously entirely unhelpful to recall.

- Interviewers should slow down and lengthen the duration of the interview as necessary.

- Explain the interview fully and make sure that the interviewee has understood the purpose of the interview. They may have had bad experiences before, and believe that interviews mean something bad is going to happen.

- Make it clear that they don't have to say things which they think will please you. You just want to hear about their experiences in their own words.

- The interviewee bringing a trusted confidant with them can help them to feel at ease and open up.

Free narrative

- Seek to elicit descriptions and personal testimonies – encourage people to 'report everything'

- Don't worry at this stage about missing bits.

- Don't worry about the order in which events are described. This can be clarified later.

- Prompts should be confined to experiences and moving the narrative 'did anything else happen?', not make judgements or ask for more in-depth information

- Don't interrupt

- Check that the interviewee has told you everything they want to tell you before asking any follow up questions.

- Don't be frightened of silence. Reflection and thinking time is helpful.

- Maintain and communicate a posture of active listening, through non-verbal encouragement, like nodding or smiling.

Questioning

- Questions should be kept as simple and concrete as possible

- Open questions are best such as, Can you tell me about? Could you describe?

- Closed questions can be used for confirmation. Such as, Did you say it was your neighbours?

- Leading questions are not appropriate such as, Would you agree that?

- Avoid abstract concepts

- Avoid double negatives

- Tailor the length of your sentences to those of the interviewee

- Use plain English

- Make sure the person being interviewed has understood the question

- Choose your words with care; the particular wording of questions can affect the recall in the answer

- Avoid yes/no questions, because the interviewee may feel that they need to agree even if it is not true

- Avoid repeating the question too many times, because the interviewee may feel that their first answer was wrong and so change it.

- Avoid questions with options or choices listed out. People with learning disabilities, like everyone, tend to opt for the later options because they have trouble remembering the earlier ones.

- Either/or questions can be helpful

- Remind respondents regularly that it is OK to say 'don't know', without putting the words into their mouth

Second retrieval

- Once the interviewer has finished asking follow up questions, it is usually helpful to go over the incident(s) again.

- Ask them to tell you again what happened, and explain that it will help you to understand and remember what they are telling you. You are not trying to check up on them.

- Often, in the second retrieval, more information will emerge spontaneously about the incidents.

- This new information can be a prompt for follow up questions.

- Don't worry if the information comes out in a different order the second time, so long as it doesn't contradict what you were told the first time.

Closure

- Thank them for doing the interview

- Check again they have told you everything they want to tell you.

- Tell them if they remember anything else or want to tell you anything more, you would be pleased to hear from them again.

- Ask them if there is anything else they want to know about the interview or the project

- Tell them where they can contact you, if they don't know

- Thank them again for doing the interview!

Using the questionnaire

The questionnaire contains a script and suggested questions and prompts that relate to the key stages of the structured interview as set out above:

- The Introduction and Part 1 establishes rapport as well as providing biographical information about the person being interviewed

- Part 2 develops an understanding and a description of specific incidents of harassment through free narrative, questioning and second retrieval techniques

- Part 3 closes the interview.

Interview template

We are helping with a national research project to look at the experiences of people with learning disabilities. And we would like to interview you. We would like to ask you some questions about your life – where you live, about your friends, how you like to spend your time, things like that.

We would also like to ask you about times when people have been nasty, cruel or unfair to you. To talk about what happened, where it happened, how it made you feel, things like that.

Lots of people with learning disabilities across the country are also being asked these questions. All the answers will be given to the researchers who are running the project and they will write a report saying what should happen to make the lives of people with learning disabilities safer and happier.

How does that sound? You don't have to answer all the questions. You can answer just some of them – if you feel some questions are too personal you can choose not to answer. Or you don't have to take part at all. That's up to you. If you do take part, everything that you say is completely confidential and anonymous. Your name won't be known to anyone. No one who reads the report will know that it was you that gave the answers. However, if you do say something that makes me think you or someone you know is at risk of harm or in danger, then I have to pass on that information to people whose job it is to make sure that you're safe. This is because of 'professional confidentiality'. Are you ok with that?

Shall we start? There are two parts to the interview and you can take as long as you want to think about and to answer the questions. If you want to take a break at any time that's fine, just ask. I may use some words you don't understand. If that happens, please let me know and I'll try to explain in a different way.

Part 1: About you and your life		
Structured Interview Stage: establishing rapport		
Topics	Types of questions / prompts	Person's responses
Age and background	How old are you? 16-20 20-25 25-30 30-35 35-40 40-45 45-50 50-55 55-60 Where did you go to school?	
Identity	How would you describe yourself? Would you describe yourself as having a disability? What support needs do you have? How do other people describe you?	
Home	Where do you live? (What area?) Do you live on your own or with other people? What do you like most about your home?	
Family	Who's in your family? How often do you see them? How do you get on with everyone? Do you provide care for anyone in your family?	
Work	Do you have a job? What do you do? What's it like at work?	
Friends	Do you have a best friend? What are they like? What other friends have you got? What are they like? How do you spend time with them?	
Activities	Describe your typical day. What do you normally do? Are there some days where you do something different?	

PART 2: About things that might have happened to you Structured Interview Stage: Free narrative	
Types of questions / prompts	
In this next part of the interview, we're going to talk about any bad things that might have happened to you. For example, Have people ever been nasty or cruel or horrible or unfair to you because of who you are? Has anyone ever made you do something that you didn't want to do? Has anyone ever stolen anything from you? Tell me what happened in your own words – remember to tell me everything…	
Is there anything else you'd like to say about what happened?	

PART 2: About things that might have happened to you Structured Interview Stage: Questioning (only ask questions needed to fill gaps in free narrative above)		
Place and type of incidents	What exactly happened to you? Where did it happen?	
Perpetrators	Who was the person or the people that did this to you? Did you know them?	
Responses and Impact part 1	When this happened to you, how did you react? What did you say to the person or people that did this to you? What did you do? How did they react? How did you feel?	
Responses and Impact Part 2	What happened afterwards? Did you tell anyone about what happened? What did they do? Were you happy with what they did?	
The future	If something like that happened again to you, what would you want to happen? What would make you feel better?	

PART 2: About things that might have happened to you Interview Stage: Second retrieval	
Types of questions / prompts	Person's responses
Can you tell me one more time what happened – just to be sure I've understood everything	

PART 3: Other comments Interview Stage: Closure	
Types of questions / prompts	Person's responses
Finally, is there anything else you'd like to say? Do you have any questions about the research?	

Appendix D. Additional experiences identified

Not mentioned in the interviews but figuring among the survey responses and in discussion with reference group members and action research participants were the following types of experience:

• Cyberbullying through social networking sites

• Hoax telephone calls

• Targeting by known criminals for drug running

• Being coerced into involvement in sex working

• Targeting by rogue traders in the high street (selling stolen or faulty goods)

• Hostile opposition by local communities to the development of residential schemes for people with learning disabilities

• Littering the garden

• Flashing lights into windows.

Appendix E. Good practice examples

The following examples were identified during the course of the first phase of the research, in response to survey questions.

Enhanced social networking for people with learning disabilities

Connect in the North runs 'Streetwise' training for people with learning difficulties. The training is based on "Protective Behaviours" and supports people to develop their own strategies for keeping safe, while avoiding being trapped at home for fear of what might happen.

Chesterfield Law Centre has worked closely with a self-advocacy group who have developed a PowerPoint presentation with sound clips that can be used to encourage learning disabled people to complain about the incidents. Members have also appeared on BBC Radio Sheffield to talk about their experiences of harassment.

People First Havering holds a monthly Advocacy Drop In for its members where the local police 'drop in' too – enabling people to meet, get to know and to trust the local bobbies on the beat.

The Reader Organisation's Get Into Reading project runs read aloud groups which bring people with learning disabilities together, helping them get to know each other through the stories and poetry they share. The subject of bullying and harassment comes up in response to the literature they share where they might not talk about it if they were asked directly. Sharing experiences in a group makes people feel supported and the response of others confirms that it's to be taken seriously and not suffered in silence.

In Derbyshire **Our Vision Our Future** work with **Peaks & Dales Advocacy** to deliver a project called 'Friendship First', which helps people with learning difficulties meet each other and make new friends. The project has recently been extended to also support people who want to meet partners. They meet for coffee, go to the pub, cinema, theatre, for meals out and walking.

East Kent Mencap runs a project where members take photographs and monitor bird activity at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust. The photos are used for the Trust's records and are viewed by visitors to the Trust's centre. Eight out of 10 members taking part in the project had previously experienced bullying or harassment, and involvement in the project and exposure to members of the community has succeeding in developing their confidence and sense of purpose.

Heavy Load are a punk band made up of service users and staff from **Southdown Housing Association**. The band are also the creators of the Stay Up Late campaign, which seeks to 'promote full and active social lives for people with learning difficulties'. One of Stay Up Late's latest initiatives is called 'gig buddies' where members of the local community who are going to a concert are matched up with a buddy with a learning disability who has the passion for the same kind of music. With characteristic good humour, they describe it as their vision for 'The Gig Society'.

Southern Housing Group use customers' meetings and 1-to-1 support plan reviews to underline the importance of reporting any incidents of harassment and encourage them to take responsibility for their actions. It advises customers not to let anybody into their flat or scheme they do not know or persons who may have harassed them for money in the past. They explain to customers that they that should not carry or keep large amounts of cash either with them or in their home or tell people in a public place that they have money on them.

Stronger prevention and support from mainstream services

Southampton City Council's Communities Team supports a Hate Crime and Harassment Task Group, part of the Southampton Safe City Partnership. The Hate Crime and Harassment Task Group has worked with the Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB) for the last few years on a range of projects including the development of hate crime packs, with words and images selected by service users. Changes have been made to the way that incidents of hate crime and harassment are recorded so that learning disability issues are recorded separately to other disabilities. Training has been given on learning disabilities to all staff who answer a phone line which is dedicated to hate crime and harassment reports and enquiries.

Essex Police has developed a 3-hour police specific awareness session with the local Safeguarding Adults Board based on the case of Fiona Pilkington.

Cheshire Constabulary delivers hate crime training to a number of organisations including those for people with learning disabilities in order to allow them to fulfill the role of third party reporting centres.

Metropolitan Police (Barking and Dagenham) has developed an easy read document so that people can feel confident when reporting crime. It also uses mystery shoppers from the learning disability community.

Waverley Borough Council provides social housing to around 3,500 council tenants and leaseholders of the Borough. The council is currently conducting tenancy reviews in all properties to see if there are any tenants with unmet support needs and to identify those with a learning disability and who may be experiencing problems with budgeting, benefits, maintaining their property, neighbour problems, health problems, cleanliness and hygiene matters. The review will also investigate whether tenants have others living at the property that the council does not know about and who the tenant does not want living there.

Plymouth City Council's Safeguarding Unit has various examples of good practice, including the establishment of a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for all safeguarding alerts, and the formation of Plymouth Users Safeguarding Hub (PUSH). The forum provides service users lead participation in Safeguarding in Plymouth. It also has a dedicated Safeguarding Adults Police Investigation Team. Plymouth's Safeguarding LOG is made up of senior members of staff from all the statutory agencies across Plymouth. Many Lead Officers have specific responsibilities for safeguarding adults written into their job descriptions. The Lead Officers also manage safeguarding adults alerts and provide safeguarding adults guidance within each discipline and jointly enable consistency of practice. There is also the VARM (Vulnerable Adults Risk Management) process which works with individuals who fall between services and who are considered vulnerable.

Creating civic mindedness and safer public spaces

Headway Arts, a participatory arts organisation, developed The Multi Coloured Adventures of Giles Postbox, an anti-bullying performance and workshop for schools, devised working with a group of 25 learning disabled people in response to bullying they'd experienced on public transport by school pupils. It has also produced a drama, Lives Worth Living, about a couple with learning disabilities and is accompanied by a teachers guide and ideas for Key Stage 3 follow up work in areas such as Citizenship.

Merseytravel is working with Merseyside Police among other agencies to put together a film about the effects of disability hate crime on people with learning disabilities on public transport. This will be used to provide training to transport providers including bus drivers and taxi drivers.

PIP Pack in Action based in Hertfordshire has worked with local police to develop a Keep Safe scheme where shops, pubs, libraries and other public places can display a sticker in their window to show they are a place of refuge where someone with a learning disability can seek help in an emergency.

Portsmouth City Council's Trading Standards department has set up a Protect and Respect Project in partnership with Portsmouth Self Advocacy Group to let people with learning disabilities know about their shoppers' right and ensure that they enjoy the same shopping experience as everyone else. Polite Request cards have been created to help them with their daily shopping tasks and tailor-made 'shoppers rights' leaflet. They are also in the process of creating a 'safe shopping area', where people can shop safely without fear of being 'ripped off' or experience abuse.

Southampton City Council's Communities Team is leading on a multi-agency pilot project to establish Safe Places in Southampton. The project is also being supported by the Police and Southampton Mencap and is being run in partnership with a Hampshire County Council project to share best practice, imagery and costs.

"I welcome Lemos&Crane's report *Loneliness and Cruelty*. It is a lucid, jargon-free account of ordinary lives disrupted by heartless exploitation and cruelty. It reminds us of the importance of ensuring that people with learning disabilities have informal as well as professional support within neighbourhoods and communities – and how important friends, families and neighbours are in keeping people safe. We shall certainly reflect the report's findings in our approach to CQC's inspections going forward."

Dame Jo Williams, Chair of the Care Quality Commission

Lemos&Crane's report *Loneliness and Cruelty* is a groundbreaking study based on in-depth interviews by frontline practitioners across the country conducted in partnership with the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities and with support from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The report shows that people with learning disabilities living independently in the community experience a disturbing range of harassment, abuse and related crime with alarming frequency.

The perpetrators in the main are local people, neighbours, often young people and schoolchildren. Incidents happen when people are out and about in the community, but also in and around their homes. Above all, these incidents are straightforward cruelty.

The loneliness of some people with learning disabilities – one in four people interviewed for the research said they didn't have any friends – is putting them at particular risk, leaving them with little choice but to visit hostile public spaces and spend time with exploitative and cruel people.

Loneliness and Cruelty is required reading for all practitioners working in social and supported housing, adult social care, police and criminal justice, and other community-based services that have contact with people with learning disabilities.