Can brief training have an impact on police attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities?

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Our Vision:  
To lead out-of-hospital community healthcare
Overview of Presentation

• People with learning disabilities as victims of crime

• Overview of Disability Hate Crime

• People with learning disabilities as suspects

• Background to the Brief Training Programme

• Analysis of the Results

• Recommendations for future training and support to Police Forces
What is Disability Hate Crime

• The monitored hate crime definition of Disability Hate Crime (DHC) is:

‘any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person’s disability or perceived disability (any disability including physical disability, learning disability and mental health)’

• Hostility towards the victim, whether this is before or after the actual offence is also a disability hate crime and this is covered by section 146 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.
Hate Crime Statistics 2011/2012

- There were 43,748 hate crimes recorded by the police in 2011 to 2012.
- 35,816 (82%) were race hate crimes
- 1,621 (4%) were religion hate crimes
- 4,252 (10%) were sexual orientation hate crimes
- 1,744 (4%) were disability hate crimes
- 315 (1%) were transgender hate crimes

- Of the 1,744 disability hate crimes, little variation in the proportion recorded by forces with the exception of Norfolk and Suffolk whose disability hate crimes accounted for 22% of the hate crimes those forces recorded.

- 63% of disability hate crimes involved violence against the person; of these offences, 1 in 5 (20%) involved injury

(Home Office Crime Statistics 2012)
Fact about Disability Hate Crime

- 90% of those with learning difficulties in the UK say they have been bullied or harassed in the previous year.
- 47% of those with learning difficulties have been frightened or attacked due to their disability.
- Of that 47%, 35% were assaulted, 18% were robbed, and 15% spat on.
- 20% of people with learning disabilities have experienced being attacked every week or more regularly.
- 47% of people with learning disabilities do not feel safe in their own homes, or if they leave home and venture into the local area, or decide to use public transport.
- Nacro discovered that people who were disabled were 4 times more likely to be violently attacked in comparison to the non-disabled.

(DisabilityHateCrime.org.uk)
Living in Fear (2013)
Survey in Medway towns (Kent)
• 38% reported experiences of victimisation/hate incidents
Of these:
• 75% experienced verbal abuse
• 40% reported being physically hurt in the incident

Reporting
• 17% told no-one about the incident
• 38% reported to the police

Satisfaction
• Of those reporting to the police, 25% were ‘not happy’ or ‘very unhappy’ with their contact with the police.
No One Knows report (2008)
• 20% and 30% of offenders have learning difficulties or learning disabilities that interfere with their ability to cope within the criminal justice system;
• of this group 7% have a learning disability

Bradley Report (2009)
• Prison Reform Trust estimated that between 5 and 10% of adults who offend have learning disabilities.

This means that a significant proportion of people with learning disabilities or difficulties potentially pass through police custody.
Contact with the Police: Suspects

- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and its accompanying Codes of Practice, particularly Code C (Code of Practice for the Detention, Treatment and Questioning of Persons by Police Officers) (Home Office, 2006) states that:

  ‘A custody officer has a duty to seek clinical attention for a detainee who appears to be suffering from a mental disorder – whether or not the detainee requests this. Any medical examination is likely to include consideration of the suspect’s fitness to be detained and fitness to be Interviewed’.

However…. 
Custody sergeants perceptions of alleged offenders

Hellenbach (2011) conducted a series of unstructured interviews with custody sergeants from North West of England exploring:

• The process by which the suspects capacity of understanding is established
• Sergeants experiences of suspected offenders with learning disabilities

Findings included:

• Great confusion as to what characterises a person with learning disabilities
• Provision of support including Appropriate Adults was highly dependent on the sergeants’ perceptions

(Hellenbach (2011) Learning disabilities and criminal justice: custody sergeants perceptions of alleged offenders with learning disabilities)
This study aimed to assess the impact of a brief intervention, consisting of both awareness-raising teaching and indirect contact via video, on attitudes of police officers to people with intellectual disabilities.

- A 45-minute training session was delivered to London Metropolitan Police officers in the inner London borough of Hammersmith & Fulham.
- To all ranks from cadet to Chief Superintendent including Police Community Support Officers and civilian station officers.
- The sessions consisted of:
  - 30 minutes of formal PowerPoint presentation by two clinical psychologists
  - 10 minute video film featuring interviews of people with intellectual disabilities
  - 5 minutes question-time.
- Evaluated using anonymous pre and post questionnaires
- Training offered over four separate sessions to approximately 125 different police officers in each session
Training Outline

Outline of the brief intensive training Session:

• Introductions
• Definition of Learning Disability
• Current context and Hate Crime
• Main features of Autism Spectrum Condition
• Communicating with People with a Learning Disability
• Support from the local H&F Learning Disability team

There was also:
• A short film of 4 people from the service user participation group Safety Net People First (part of H&F Mencap) talking about their experiences of contact with the police

In addition to the presentations, the participants were given a number of handouts/posters including:

• What is a learning disability poster
• Communicating with people with learning disabilities – ‘Dos and Don’ts’
• Disability Hate Crime and the Mencap ‘Stand by Me’ promise
• Autism at a glance guide for Criminal Justice Professionals
Evaluation of training - Anonymous pre and post questionnaire

Qualitative feedback (6 point scale)
• Rate your knowledge of LD
• Rate your confidence in interacting with a person with LD
• Rate your confidence in interacting with a person with ASD
• How useful did you find the training session?

Social Distance Attitude measure
• Adapted from the Social distance sub-scale of the Mental Retardation Attitude Inventory-Revised (MRAI-R; Antounak & Harth, 1994)
• 8 questions on 4 point scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree
  – I would allow my child to accept an invitation to a birthday party given for a child with a learning disability
  – I would rather not have people with learning disabilities as dinner guests with my friends who do not have a learning disability
  – I would rather not have a person who has a learning disability swim in the same pool I swim in

Additional Questions: Crime reporting attitudes
  – I think that people with learning disabilities are able to report a crime
  – I would take the word of a person with learning disabilities above their carer
Number of respondents

- 500 police officers and civilian staff attended the training

- A total of 291 attendees completed the form:
  - 19 were removed from the analysis as they had not filled in all the questions,
  - leaving 272 for analysis
  - 54% response rate
Results: Was the training useful?

- The overall mean rating score of usefulness was 4.2: the majority of the attendees found the training useful.
Results: Self reported pre- and post- training level of knowledge of LD

- A significant shift in self-rated knowledge of LD as a result of the training session was found (t(268) = 10.24p < .001):
  - pre-training mean knowledge score was 3.5
  - post-training mean score was 4.1.
Results: Self reported pre and post training level of confidence interacting with a person with LD

- A significant increase in confidence interacting with person with LD was found ($t(269)=6.29$, $p<.001$):
  - Pre-training average confidence level was 4.04
  - Post-training average confidence level was 4.37 (an increase of 0.33).
Results: Self reported pre and post training confidence in interacting with adults with ASD

- A significant increase in confidence interacting with person with ASD was found ($t(267)=8.30$, $p<.001$):
  - Pre-training average confidence level was 3.73
  - Post-training average confidence level was 4.21 (an increase of 0.48).
The change in knowledge of LD and confidence interacting with a person with LD and with a person with autism pre and post training was calculated and correlated with the usefulness rating.

All three were positively, significantly correlated with usefulness, although the correlations were weak.

- Usefulness x Difference in knowledge of LD: \( r(268)=.24, p<.001 \)
- Usefulness x Difference in confidence interacting with a person with LD: \( r(268)=.21, p<.001 \)
- Usefulness x Difference in confidence interacting with a person with autism: \( r(268)=.25, p<.001 \)
Results: Attitude measures

MRAI-R

- **No significant difference** in participants’ total MRAI score pre and post training ($t(255)=.91$, $p>.05$)
- **No significant differences** pre and post training at the individual question level (all $p>.05$)

Crime reporting attitudes

- **Significant difference** in the sum of the two additional crime reporting attitudes questions pre and post training ($t(221)=3.25$, $p<.001$)
  - I think that people with learning disabilities are able to report a crime
  - I would take the word of a person with learning disabilities above their carer

- Driven by responses to the statement ($t(219)=2.88$, $p<.01$):
  “I would take the word of a person with a learning disability above their carer”
Conclusions

Overall brief intensive training resulted in significant changes including:
- Significant improvements in self-rated knowledge of LD
- Significant increase in confidence interacting with person with LD and ASD
- Significant correlation between usefulness of the session and change in knowledge as well as confidence in interacting with person with LD and ASD
- Significant difference in crime reporting attitudes
- No significant difference in attitudes using the MRAI

Training extremely well received by police at all levels
Further requests for training staff unable to attend across ranks including civilian staff
Positive working relationship developed between LD team and local police
Request for similar training delivered more widely across London Met.
Implications

• A system should be introduced across all police forces for screening suspects for vulnerability in understanding and communication
• Training for custody officers on how to undertake the screening
• All forces should provide training for all officers, and particularly custody officers, on methods of presenting the caution and legal rights with maximum clarity
• Officers should also be encouraged to test suspects’ understanding of the caution and legal rights routinely
• Forces should strengthen liaison arrangements with local health and social care agencies and services
References

• For more information:

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