#ImWithSam: tackling learning disability and autism hate crime

Mark Brookes, Campaign Advisor, Dimensions
Andie Gbedemah, Public Affairs Manager, Dimensions
Dimensions and #ImWithSam

Dimensions supports around 4,000 adults with learning disabilities and autism.

We are a not-for-profit organisation that works with local authorities to deliver social care, including:

- Residential care homes
- Supported living
- Outreach
Aims and objectives

1. Learn about the #ImWithSam campaign to tackle learning disability and autism hate crime

2. Understand the history of how people with learning disabilities and autism have been responded to in the past and why it is relevant today

3. Think about the role safeguarding can play in tackling hate crime
The #ImWithSam Campaign
#ImWithSam

• #ImWithSam is a national campaign to tackle learning disability and autism hate crime

• We launched the campaign after our research showed over 70% of people with a learning disability or autism has been a victim of a hate crime

• #ImWithSam has several goals:
  – To raise awareness of the problem of learning disability and autism hate crime
  – To empower people with learning disabilities and autism to stand up to hate crime
  – To work with government, the criminal justice system and others to deliver our blueprint for change
Hostility and vulnerability
Vulnerability vs. hostility

Because there is no single piece of law on hate crime there is an agreed definition of hate crime within the criminal justice system:

- ‘Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender’

- This definition is used:
  - In Home Office Counting Rules
  - By the Crown Prosecution Service
Vulnerability vs. hostility

• In disability hate crime, a focus vulnerability can often make it harder to think about the hostility of the person committing the crime.

• This means crime against people with a learning disability or autism aren’t recognised as hate crimes, even when the perpetrator is hostile.

• There is also a tendency to focus on safeguarding the victim, which means reducing risk to them rather than dealing with the perpetrator’s hostility.

• Hate crime is the result of stigma and prejudice and this will have a role in lots of safeguarding issues.
A history of learning disability and autism
1845
Lunacy Act
'Lunatic shall mean insane person or any person being idiot or lunatic or of unsound mind.'

1847
Charity for the asylum of idiots
Support to set up 4 large regional asylums for 'Idiots'

1886
Idiots Act
Made a clear distinction between lunatics on one hand and 'idiots' and 'imbeciles' on the other.

1902
Mary Dendy's Sandlebridge Colony
Opened for the permanent care of 'feeble minded'.

1913
Mental Deficiency Act
Use of terms 'idiot', 'imbecile', 'feeble-minded' and 'moral imbecile'

1920s-1940s
Major local authority hospital building

1940s
Eugenics movement at its height
Argued for the isolation and sterilisation of people with learning disabilities

1945-1950
Eugenics discredited
NHS and Mental welfare officers created
Education and employment acts

1945-1950
Mental Health Act
Talked about community care but little funding
What words do you think of when you hear the term lunatic?

What words do you associate with hospital?
What words do you think of when you hear the term lunatic?

Unstable  Unsafe  Sick
Mad        Crazy   Scary
Disturbed  Dangerous

What words do you associate with hospital?
What words do you think of when you hear the term lunatic?

- Unstable
- Mad
- Disturbed
- Unsafe
- Crazy
- Dangerous
- Sick
- Scary

What words do you associate with hospital?

- Care
- Health
- Sickness
- Cure
- Treatment
- Schedule
- Doctors
- Nurses
- Wards
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1959
Mental Health Act
Talked about community care but little funding
1950s
Terms ‘backward’ and ‘subnormal’ became the norm

1960’s
Hospital scandals
Critique of asylums
Introduction of hostels

1971
Better services for mentally handicapped
white paper

1980s
Group home era
Closing hospitals
Self advocacy established

1981
Education Act
People to be educated in mainstream schools

1972
Wolf Wolfensberger
The principle of normalisation in services published

1990-1995
Community Care Act
Disability Discrimination Act

2000’s
Valuing people
Putting ‘People First’
Valuing People Now

2011 Winterbourne View - Reveals widespread abuse
2014 Care Act - Focus on Personalisation
What do you think the challenges were of moving people out of long stay hospitals?
What do you think the challenges were of moving people out of long stay hospitals?

People with learning disabilities and autism were stigmatised

Other didn’t want to live near them

People didn’t understand certain behaviours of someone with a learning disability or autism

Many people didn’t recognise that people can have ‘hidden’ or ‘invisible’ disabilities

There were very few ways for people with learning disabilities and autism to contribute to their communities
Vulnerability vs. hostility

• Lots of this prejudice still exists today
  – People are targeted because they are seen as weird or different
  – People are targeted for being drains on society
  – People are targeted because their behaviour has not been understood

• Some of the most serious crimes against people with learning disabilities have included these elements, as well as targeting the victim’s vulnerability
  – Brent Martin
  – Lee Irving
  – Steven Hoskin

All of these murders involved repeated failures in other services to safeguard them and join up work with the police.
The impact of hate crime on people with learning disabilities and autism
Mark’s story
The impact of hate crime on people with learning disabilities and autism

• Our survey found that hate crime had a very negative impact on people:
  – 43% felt scared of other people
  – 56% felt less confident
  – 62% felt angry

• Fear of hate crime prompts people to change the way that they lead their lives:
  – Not travelling alone
  – Not going out at night
  – Not going to certain areas of the community
  – 45% felt less comfortable leaving the house
The impact of hate crime on people with learning disabilities and autism

- We also know services and agencies will advise people to stay safe – which can make them change the way they live.

- This is helpful to keep people safe, but doesn’t always promote people’s rights and inclusion.

- If services and agencies are advising people to keep safe they also have to make sure they are working to deal with the source of the hostility.
Questions

mark.brookes@dimensions-uk.org
alexandra.gbedemah@dimensions-uk.org