Evaluation of the CHANGE Project Living Our Lives in Safety (LOLIS)

2009 - 2012

A project funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to combat bullying and hate crime in Leeds

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Evaluation of the CHANGE Project Living Our Lives in Safety (LOLIS)

Summary

This is a report of a small evaluation about the Living Our Lives in Safety project that was funded for three years, from 2009 – 2012, by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The project has finished and this report is about the work that they did. For the evaluation some people who worked with the project were interviewed to see what they thought.

There is a problem with bullying and hate crime against people with learning disabilities. Bullying can be things like people being rude or stealing things, or very serious crimes such as people being hurt or even killed. LOLIS has been working on the problems. They have been:

- Doing training for people with learning disabilities about bullying and hate crime
- Doing training for professionals, like social workers and the police
- Helping people with learning disabilities to feel more confident about reporting bullies and criminals to the police or to other people.
- Making sure everyone knows about these problems so that bullies and criminals are stopped.

Bullying and hate crime happens to lots of disabled people from many groups. It happens to black and minority ethnic people, to women, to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, people who have different religions and other groups. LOLIS was concerned about all of these people. It is important that information about how to deal with bullying and crimes is accessible to all people with learning disabilities.

The LOLIS project employed two staff to do the work. They got a group of people with learning disabilities together to develop courses and to help to do training. They were called the Power Changers. The Power Changers took a lead in the training, helping people to feel Disability Pride and to be more confident about tackling bullying. The group made sure that women and black
and minority ethnic people with learning disabilities got to be part of the group. They also set up a group that was just for women.

People with learning disabilities who came on the training courses talked about people being nasty to them. This had also happened to people in the Power Changers group and the volunteers at CHANGE. These things were very upsetting and difficult. Sometimes what happened afterwards was that people with learning disabilities did not have as much freedom as they had before because other people who cared about them wanted to protect them from the bullies. But this was a problem.

Training for people with learning disabilities helped people to find out about how to report bullying to the police and at other places, called Hate Crime Reporting Centres (HIRCs). Some police officers were very keen to help and they set up opportunities for people with learning disabilities to practice reporting crimes. They did this by coming along to the training courses so that people with learning disabilities who were there could report bullying if they wanted to. Some people did this and the police were able to stop the bullying. Two LOLIS trainers joined police scrutiny panels in Leeds, which means that they make sure that these crimes are being dealt with properly by the police. A police officer also helped people with learning disabilities to practice reporting a crime at a police station. These things were very helpful.

The Power Changers also did training for professionals, such as social workers and the police. The professionals interviewed for the evaluation were very keen on the training and got a lot from it. They said it was important that training was done by people with learning disabilities and that it was very well done. But some professionals did not take part and some did not show up to the training when they said that they would.

Some of the police officers did a lot of work with LOLIS and were very important in making sure the work got done. These were police who worked in the local area or who had jobs that were to do with hate crime. But there were still problems with some other police officers. For example, sometimes they
stopped people with learning disabilities on the streets because they thought they looked suspicious.

LOLIS also worked with other organisations in Leeds because they were trying to do something about bullying and hate crimes as well. These people thought it was important for the work to carry on if it is possible. Because the funding is finished the project is ending. But it has made a difference because more people are reporting bullying and crimes, which means that more can be done to stop the problems.
Evaluation of the CHANGE Project Living Our Lives in Safety (LOLIS)

Introduction

This report provides a small scale and fairly informal evaluation of the Living Our Lives in Safety (LOLIS) project run by CHANGE between 2009 and 2012. Leeds University was invited to review the work of the project in October and November 2012 and the work was completed in January 2013. The evaluation was carried out in collaboration with staff and volunteers of CHANGE and individuals from a range of statutory and voluntary agencies in Leeds, including West Yorkshire Police, Victim Support and Leeds City Council.

The work that LOLIS was able to do in tackling hate crime in the Leeds area is considered from the point of view of the aims of the project and participants’ views about its impact. A larger impact assessment of all the work on hate crime on overall levels of hate crime in the whole of the Leeds area was not possible due to the time and financial resources available. Over the time that LOLIS was funded as a project, there were also other important initiatives taking place to tackle the problems of hate crime, by the police, statutory and voluntary agencies and their work is discussed to the extent that it relates to the LOLIS project. This review highlights what was achieved as a result of the three years work and what remains to be done in the future, from the various perspectives of the participants.

Background on Hate Crime

There has been an increased recognition of the problem of violence, bullying and hate crime against disabled people, including people with learning disabilities, in recent years. In many respects this has been the result of campaigning efforts of organisations of and for disabled people as well as publicity surrounding very serious cases such as that of Fiona Pilkington and
her daughter\(^1\). A definition of monitored hate crime was agreed in 2007 by the Home Office, Crown Prosecution service and prison service (National Offender Management Service). This states that hate crime is:

\[\text{...any criminal offence committed against a person or property that is motivated by hostility towards someone based on their disability, race, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation.}^2\]

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has reported that the number of hate crimes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland fell from 51,920 crimes in 2009 to 48,127 in 2010. Total recorded hate crimes for England and Wales in 2011-12 were 43,748.\(^3\) The majority of hate crimes concern race, with a much smaller number, 1,744 (4\%) attributed to disability. Although the total number of these crimes has been decreasing, the rates of crimes attributed to disability and sexual orientation has been rising. Recorded disability hate crimes in West Yorkshire rose from 25 in 2009, to 55 in 2010\(^4\) and 137 in 2011-12\(^5\). The numbers are small but this represents a steep increase.

Participants in this study all agreed that the increase was due to greater reporting of incidents rather than an increase in instances of bullying, and other research backs this up. There is consistent evidence of widespread and regular harassment, bullying and crime against people with learning disabilities, indicating very high levels of non-reporting (EHRC, 2011; Quarmby, 2011; Roulstone and Mason – Bish, 2013; Thiara et al., 2012). There are many

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reasons why criminal behaviour is not reported. These include victims not being aware that behaviour was illegal or realising there was recourse to help, fear of the police and thinking they would not be believed by them, thinking that the police would not be able to do anything and fear of reprisals from perpetrators for reporting (EHRC, 2011; Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2008). It is against this background that the LOLIS project was initiated.

Overview of the Project

CHANGE successfully applied to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in 2009 for a three year project, to tackle aspects of the problem of bullying\textsuperscript{6} and hate crime in Leeds. The original application asked for 36 months of funding. This was rejected in favour of 24 months, although in fact the funding period was extended at a later date to cover a total of three years.

Tasks to be completed were set out in a work plan with milestones at various dates from March 2010 onwards. A steering group was set up to guide project development with representatives from a range of agencies, including the police, council and voluntary organisations. Training for trainers was to follow an ambitious schedule. Between seven and ten people with a learning disability were to be “recruited and trained to a stage where they are fully conversant around HC and can offer training for trainers in this area.” (CHANGE, 2010:1)

Finance was requested for:\textsuperscript{7}

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\begin{tabular}{|l|}
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\textbf{1. Building Awareness and Skills of PWLD} \\
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\hspace{1cm} a) Delivering training to individuals and groups of PWLD to: build awareness of \\
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\textsuperscript{6} The term bullying is used by CHANGE to refer to all instances of violence against people with learning disabilities, from ‘low level’ harassment to very serious crimes such as murder and rape. LOLIS staff felt that the term was more understandable to people with learning disabilities involved with the project.

\textsuperscript{7} The text in the box is a selection of paragraphs that have been reproduced verbatim from the original bid for funding from the EHRC in 2010.
their fundamental human rights; enable them to identify instances where DHC is occurring, what they can do about hate crime and showing people how to report a crime safely. Because PWLD from BME communities are likely to face additional issues where hate crime is involved, we will work in partnership with People in Action, training Black and Asian PWLD as trainers.

b) Producing accessible resources and materials as part of the training. It can be particularly hard for PWLD to raise their concerns if they lack literacy skills or cannot read and information is not made accessible and is appropriate.

2. Building Awareness and Skills of Support Agencies and Professionals
Trainers with learning disabilities from CHANGE will deliver training to equip key agencies (i.e. Victim Support, Third Party Reporting Centres, women’s aid refuges, advocacy schemes, Stop Hate UK) with the skills to appropriately support and address communication and other needs of PWLD.

3. Tackling Institutional Barriers
a) Providing training for frontline police officers on assisting vulnerable and intimidated witness in reporting a crime and on communicating with PWLD
b) Training social workers so that they can more effectively help victims and ensure that their rights are safeguarded.
c) Training the Crime Prosecution Service so that cases are pursued.

During the initial stages of the project a scoping exercise (resulting in an internal report) was carried out by Ana Laura Aiello, a PhD student from Leeds University, through a part-time secondment to CHANGE. This exercise involved an identification of the main issues regarding hate crime and reporting as well as the development of links with a wide range of judicial and support agencies in the Leeds area and beyond.

LOLIS identified three main outcomes: awareness, recording and empowerment. Several means of achieving these ends were also clarified, in particular the importance of peer to peer support (people with and without learning disabilities working together on an equal basis), an integrated approach to equality strands and disability pride. Achieving the aims involved the recruitment and development of a team of trainers. The final operating plan for LOLIS is summarised in the following chart:
**Summary of Work by LOLIS 2009 – 2012 (Chart provided by CHANGE)**

**LOLIS Flow Chart:**

Start of work from project proposal. Early outcomes - To provide comprehensive training for PWLD on hate crime (HC) and how this should be dealt by criminal justice and other agencies, ensuring they become fully versed on this subject - to deliver a peer training programme for PWLD across Leeds - to deliver a staff training programme for agency workers - to produce illustrations and design of training pack.

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<tr>
<th>Peer-to-Peer</th>
<th>Integrated Approach</th>
<th>Disability Pride</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivery of training and consultancies for voluntary &amp; public sector agencies</td>
<td>Reporting Initiative (Roadshow)</td>
<td>Delivery of training (peer) to Disabled People.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Power Changers Training team established.</strong></td>
<td>Additional outcomes - To train BME people with learning disabilities (PWLD) as peer trainers to build skills of other PWLD in recognising &amp; reporting HC incidents.</td>
<td>Additional outcomes. To train women people with learning disabilities (PWLD) as peer trainers to build skills of other PWLD in recognising &amp; reporting HC incidents.</td>
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<td>Additional outcomes – members of Power Changers on Scrutiny Panels.</td>
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<th>Awareness</th>
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**CHANGE**

**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**
CHANGE places the highest priority on the involvement and leadership of people with learning disabilities and on a peer support model of working. This means that people with learning disabilities take a leadership position in all projects, working with non-disabled people on an equal basis. This way of working characterised the LOLIS project. Two staff members, one woman who has a learning disability and one disabled woman who does not, were employed to lead the project in conjunction with the management team and a steering group. They recruited and trained another group of people with learning disabilities who took forward the work of the project as a whole.

An initial plan was that composition of the steering group would reflect community diversity and stipulated that the group would meet every quarter. Although active at the start of the project, the steering group gradually became less central as a management mechanism; however, several group members took a more active collaborative role with the project instead.

The inaccessibility of much information made available to the general public was a barrier to working quickly. It was pointed out that the need to explain and understand complex issues took time, but was vital if people with learning disabilities were not to be excluded from important debates about contemporary social issues. Translation of material into easy read literature was supported by several staff members of CHANGE.

Since 2010, LOLIS has delivered 21 presentations, 8 full day courses and 18 workshops of varying length, reaching over 300 disabled people and approximately 250 professionals. A resource pack with easy read information about hate crime and how to report it, as well as sources of support, was also produced during the course of the project, with the intention of selling the pack in the future. Other work included the development of training materials in easy read formats, a DVD and a regular web blog written by LOLIS staff.
How this Evaluation was Carried Out

Semi-structured interviews took place with several groups of people. Project staff were interviewed first, followed by trainers and volunteers and then people more distantly associated, such as professionals and people working for other organisations. People recruited to provide training on hate crime, called the Power Changers (see below), were interviewed as a focus group, with support and direction from staff members. Staff directly employed on the project took part in individual interviews as did one volunteer and one member of the Power Changers team who also requested an individual interview (this possibility was available to all focus group participants). Seven people working for voluntary and statutory organisations in the Leeds area were contacted at the suggestion of LOLIS staff. Representatives of five organisations opted to take part, including two members of the West Yorkshire Police force, one Leeds City Council member connected with Safeguarding services, and a victim support organisation. Another person, an elected counsellor, expressed interest in taking part but was not available within the time scale of the evaluation. One person from a voluntary organisation did not reply. Names have not been used in this report, but it is understood that in a small project of this kind it is often difficult to maintain anonymity. This issue was discussed with all the participants, who freely agreed to take part on that understanding.

Promotional literature and other documents from the project, including plans and the original bid were made available for this evaluation. Feedback from training courses was also reviewed and this is available in Appendix 1 at the end of this report.

Experiences of Bullying and Hate Crime

It was not an explicit part of this evaluation to look into all the sorts of bullying and violence experienced by people with learning disabilities associated with
this project. Nevertheless, a wide range of types of violence was described, including the following:

- Being called names and being insulted
- Harassment
- Assaults, including verbal, physical and sexual attacks
- Cyberbullying via mobile phones, Facebook and email
- Robbery: stealing money and possessions
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Attacks on houses

Some statements and descriptions of bullying included:

They will harass you about different kinds of things, such as your religion, your colour; they might harass you about where you live and what you do. Those harassments are not nice harassments; they are horrible harassments. (Woman, Power Changers group)

They say things like you’re fat; you’re ugly, things like that (Woman, Power Changers group)

They said they wanted me to commit suicide. (Woman, Power Changers group)

A wide range of situations and people were involved. Perpetrators included neighbours, acquaintances, young people on the streets, those who befriended people with learning disabilities (termed ‘tricky friends’ by the LOLIS project), family members, staff in residential services where people lived, support workers and fellow students and colleagues. Bullying took place almost anywhere – where people lived, on the streets, and in colleges and work places, including at CHANGE, where it was swiftly tackled. LOLIS staff members

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8 What has sometimes been termed ‘mate crime’ (e.g. Thomas, 2011) refers to specific criminal acts, often involving cruelty, humiliation, servitude, exploitation or theft committed by people that are considered by the disabled person to be friends. ‘Befriending’ of people with learning disabilities by perpetrators, with the intention of doing harm, has been identified as a particular problem.
described how two people with learning disabilities who had been members of the Power Changers group had been asked to leave following incidents of bullying other members of the group.

There were some serious consequences of bullying and violence on people with learning disabilities. Firstly, there were psychological and physical impacts on well being:

*Some older people go on the bus and they say you should give up your seat for them. But you need it as well. Then I feel guilty and confused.* (Woman, Power Changers group)

*People with autism, because of their nerves they can have an anxious time. Yes and they can have trouble sleeping.* (Man, Power Changers group)

A common consequence of bullying and hate crime was the curtailment of freedom, whether this was by others who wanted to protect the person involved or where people with learning disabilities felt obliged to take someone with them for protection when they went out. In both instances the result was a loss of independence and freedom of movement.

*Sometimes if I’m with [a friend] on a Saturday, and going with her on bus rides with her I’m OK. Or if I go out with [another friend] I’m all right with him. I’d like to be more independent and go on the busses by myself. I don’t want to rely on my mum all the time.* (Man, Power Changers group)

One person whose home was subject to repeated attacks (a form of violence often reported in other research) moved from her home following lack of action from the perpetrators’ landlord or the police.

*At Halloween they put petrol in the letter box. We had the letterbox sealed up so no post could go through the letterbox – it’s that scary. It was this lad I know who was doing it. We talked to the council and they didn’t move him – they didn’t do nothing! Kept him in the same house. I thought ‘it’s not right that’. (Woman, Volunteer)*

This volunteer had spoken to workers at CHANGE about her experiences of being attacked and it was this discussion that had led to the application for
funding for the LOLIS project. A consequence of financial abuse, where a woman had money cajoled from her, was the removal of her credit card by her family. Another man stated that he left college due to bullying. All of these are serious restrictions on the rights and freedoms that most people take for granted.

Suggestions about what could be done varied but there was common agreement that people being bullied needed help from others to tackle it. Some thought that social workers were a potential source of help for people living in residential care homes although it was acknowledged that people living in Winterbourne View Hospital\(^9\) had not been listened to when they raised the alarm about violence with social workers and families. Another member of the Power Changers group also felt poorly treated by a social worker in that they related more to her family than to her: ‘going behind my back’ to talk to family members. Good friends (as opposed to ‘tricky’ friends) were seen as an important source of support and several people spoke of the strength that these relationships had given them. All members of the Power Changers group stated that help to develop more friendships and good relationships was essential for tackling hate crime. Good friends were an important source of advice and personal support in the face of undermining attacks, and group members talked of the importance also of the good relationships formed within the Power Changers group. Despite this support and being aware of what to do when faced with bullying and violence, it should be noted that members of the group were still experiencing bullying and violence on a regular basis and not all instances had been resolved.

Obviously reporting to the police is a key strategy, although it is known that reporting levels are extremely low in relation to the amount of incidents. Relationships with the Police are discussed below.

This then was the situation that LOLIS was funded to challenge and three main strategies were adopted to change the situation: training of people with learning disabilities, training of professionals and a reporting initiative. Each of these is discussed in turn after a brief account of the development of the group that carried out the work.

The Power Changers Group

A number of people with learning disabilities were recruited to a group that took on the task of developing their understanding of hate crime and teaching others about it. Recruitment was carried out through existing networks, day centres and community organisations. Although a few people contacted LOLIS via the web site or from other publicity, the most effective way was through meeting people. Staff members went to day centres and other places that people with learning disabilities were known to be and invited applications to the training group. In this way they were able to put information across in straightforward ways that were accessible and to answer questions.

The group was not static. Members joined and left the group over the three year period: a number of people left due to other commitments or because family members or other significant people were not keen on their attending, for a range of reasons not always connected with the work being done. In particular, during the second and third years adjustments were made to re-balance in the group because more men than women had volunteered to take part and BME representation was less than for white people. Recruitment of women and people from BME backgrounds was prioritised and another group specifically for women was established.

The name Power Changers was chosen for the group, based on a popular television show, the Power Rangers. Identities based on the characters were also developed, used to convey the ideas involved in combating hate crime and publicised on the CHANGE web site. Throughout the three year period there was considerable investment in developing the awareness and understanding of the group members about what hate crime was and in developing an appreciation of how it affected many other groups besides disabled people.

There were a number of basic premises to this work and these are described in the rest of this section (see also the chart on p.10)

Integrated Approach
The project adopted what was termed an integrated approach, meaning that all equality strands were addressed as part of the project.

*An Integrated Approach to Hate Crime includes attention to all the Hate Crime Strands and all forms of violence. An Integrated Approach is underpinned by an understanding that hate crime is an abuse of power, that it is linked to all forms of discrimination and that effective interventions should be survivor focused, evidence based and multi agency.* (CHANGE internal document)

Therefore the project was not simply concerned with disability hate crime; it also was concerned about ‘race’, religion, homophobic, gender and other forms of discrimination. For many people with learning disabilities these wider problems of discrimination were also new:

........ It was very obvious people had just never had a conversation about race....and that could be true of some of the issues around hate crime. (CHANGE staff member)

Awareness also took some time to develop because some group members had strong feelings against certain other groups and did not immediately recognise them as discriminated against in the way that they were. However, changed attitudes and greater understanding did result for some group members:

*When we were watching [a DVD] there was a man who had been walking down the road and saw that someone had graffitied ‘kill all gays.’ So I was really touched. It made a real connection between me and me wanting to prevent it.* (Man, Power Changer group)

**Disability Pride**

The Power Changers group tackled negative self perceptions that resulted from bad treatment through asserting Disability Pride:

*There’s a whole issue there about the concept that people have of themselves, of being abnormal. We started doing work in the group on that. And it’s great to see people saying to each other ‘where’s your disability pride?!’. So it’s been successful but I’d like to see that really*
rolled out. So many disabled people with and without disabilities are not disclosing [instances of bullying] because of this. (Staff member, LOLIS)

When we do the Power Changers pledge, we talk about power, rights, respect - disability pride. Because we say people with disabilities are strong people: handsome and strong and have a lot to offer our communities. We are saying we are not ugly and stupid. (Power Changers trainer)

Disability Pride was essential to people with learning disabilities developing confidence that they had important things to say:

At first some of them were a bit shy not to speak up.....a young lad when he first came he was so shy, he didn’t say anything. He used to spend time looking in our library. Now he doesn’t look in the library .......in the end he just talks non-stop with us now. (LOLIS staff member)

The development of confidence was commented on by several people from other agencies as well as members of the group themselves. Many people interviewed mentioned spontaneously the confidence and enthusiasm of the group, especially in relation to participation in the group and in training events.

There was this confidence – I just think they’re really confident individuals and they’ve got something to say. And they’ve got feelings and they’ve got a voice. (Manager, Voluntary organisation)

Peer – to Peer Training

The peer training course\(^\text{10}\) was primarily developed and established during the first year of the project. A twelve session course was devised for the Power Changers group, with learning outcomes set for each session (called ‘what you will learns’ by LOLIS staff, for ease of understanding). Evaluation of each of the sessions formed the basis for developing a course for people with learning disabilities and another course for professionals.

It was emphasised that involvement must not be token.

A lot of people are not involved in conversations; they are not involved in discussions (LOLIS staff member)

\(^{10}\)\(^{10}\) Power Changers hate crime training: [http://www.changepeople.co.uk/showPage2.php?id=31](http://www.changepeople.co.uk/showPage2.php?id=31)
Some considerable time was taken to teach people with learning disabilities so they could then act as a resource to others.

*Our experience has been you go to one group of people with learning disabilities and thy will say ‘it’s accessible’ and you’ll go to another group and they’ll say ‘it’s not.’ And the reason being that they’re obviously working on their own needs basis. Some people read and others don’t read at all. And so you need a team of SKILLED experts by experience, not simply experts by experience.* (CHANGE staff member)

LOLIS staff then developed training materials and formats, with the Power Changers group. Formats for teaching included the use of pictures for easy read materials and jargon – free simple written information, including an information pack that gave details of local sources of assistance and support and written and pictorial information about common scenarios related to bullying and hate crime. Training also used quizzes, films and games. Visitors were invited in to the training sessions as well. Important content included a simplified version of the social model of disability and information about hate crimes, although designed not to be too frightening for participants. The course developed as a series of smaller modules that could be put together to form shorter or longer presentations, depending on the time available. Most training took place in day centres, with particularly with Swarthmore Education Centre and the Hamara Centre in Leeds. Training was also carried out at Osmanthorpe, Mariners, Potternewton and Hillside Day Centres.

Material that was easy to understand was felt to be essential:

*We can speak at the same level in easy language. When we train professionals, some of the words they used were jargon, weren’t they?* (Power Changers trainer)

The support of people who did not have learning disabilities was appreciated and considered important during this project as well as during the training itself. Some difficulties did arise and knowing how to handle complex issues and interactions presented problems for trainers with learning disabilities on occasions. In one incident a comment from a participant with speech impairment was dismissed by a trainer because he could not understand it, and in another incident a trainer mistakenly did not intervene when a
participant abused a volunteer. A staff member who did not have learning disabilities spoke of:

*Letting them be in a leadership role but being ready to step in and support if things do go wrong.*

In supporting people with learning disabilities to report bullying and hate crime, participants were encouraged to be realistic about their situation and to think carefully about what they could do to change it.

*We ask people do you think a superhero will come in and save you if you are being bullied? And some of them say yes but we say no. Actually in real life a superhero will not come and save us from being bullied. Because that’s in the Power presentation: the pledge, seeing if a superhero will come and save you. My favourite superhero is superman but I know that he won’t come and save me. Zap all the bullies away with his lasers but - you can dream about it but not in real life.* (Power Changers trainer)

Although it was not possible to arrange to interview learning disabled course participants, members of the community police force attended many sessions (this is discussed further below) and commented favourably on the training sessions:

*I’ve seen it in action. Where people with learning difficulties who weren’t aware have had this information given to them and actually could assimilate it and digest it and the way it’s done is very professionally done. And I’ve also seen it done in relation to not just hate crime but also general neglect issues.* (Hate Crime Officer)

The degree to which participants were able to put what they learned into practice is a question that might be considered in the future, as would further investigation of the help they need to do so.

**Training Professionals**

As mentioned above, during the course of the three years, LOLIS provided training for about 250 professionals in events of varying length. A wide range of professionals took part, including the Police, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) teams, Victim Support, Social Care professionals and staff of other agencies.
The training aimed to sensitise professionals to the sometimes severe violence, as well as the pervasiveness, of bullying and hate crime against people with learning disabilities. It therefore contained an account of some of the worst atrocities committed against people with learning disabilities. This presentation was experienced as particularly hard hitting:

I do a presentation to the professionals about all the different people with learning disabilities that have been killed. And I also talk to them about the Stephen Lawrence case, the Pilkington case, the North London nail bomber case. Gradually as I got used to doing the presentation I was OK but the first time I was trying not to cry. Because it’s just reading about how he died as well. (Woman, Power Changers trainer)

Opportunities were made available to interview professionals during the course of the evaluation and there were enthusiastic testimonials about the training LOLIS had carried out. For example, several professionals described how their perceptions about people with learning disabilities had been challenged, as well as praising the skill with which the training was delivered. It was thought that the training was stronger for the fact that people delivering it spoke from experience:

I was really, really impressed. And they challenged my perceptions of people with a disability, especially with learning disability, and just how eloquently [the trainer] actually spoke and she has a learning disability. So it does open your eyes..... and it really made me think.....these people are bright people. (Woman, Professional)

I found the event that I went to was really enlightening in terms of showing that people with disabilities have got much more that they can contribute and offer than people might think. And the one bit that came to mind as a really shining example was a discussion about values for people with learning disabilities........I thought it was brilliant. It was humour, it was the people who have that experience and it communicated really effectively. I don’t want to come across as patronising or anything like that, but the skills with which they did that ...... I think quite often there’s a view that ‘people with learning disabilities, we’ll give them things that they can cope with’ and it limits. It was very powerful stuff. (Man, Professional)
LOLIS staff also identified areas they would have liked to develop further. There was disappointment that carers’ organisations had not really participated in the training and it was felt that including discussions of how some people with learning disabilities are sometimes abused by family members may have contributed to this reluctance. Some professionals who were enthusiastic about the training also felt that other professional groups could have shown more commitment because involvement had sometimes been patchy. One interviewee noted that at a course he attended a large number of professionals had not turned up despite having booked places.

Despite this, as evident from the statements above, the training did have an impact. However it was argued that this should not be taken for granted. One service manager pointed out that this sort of work is a long term project and needed time to embed in the culture of an area: ‘If you don’t carry on doing what you’re doing, people will forget.’ There was a concern therefore that a lot of work had gone into developing the expertise and materials, only for the project to end.

**Reporting Initiative**

There was consensus from all who took part in this evaluation that lack of reporting of hate crime is the main reason for its low level of officially recorded incidence by the police. Other research backs this up, while noting the complex processes that are involved in an incident becoming seen as and recorded as a hate crime (Sin, 2011). The complexities were also recognised by LOLIS staff members:

*I think sometimes they say ‘the victims don’t come forward’ - we need to recognise sometimes they don’t come forward but sometimes they do and it’s failed reporting, not because they’ve failed but because the response is a failure* (LOLIS staff member)

As one Power Changer trainer pointed out: ‘Disabled people get quite scared when they walk into a police station.’ LOLIS aimed to increase the level of reporting as a major objective of the project and adopted several strategies to this end. The following strategies are discussed below: reporting at training
events, third party reporting, developing training materials and attendance at scrutiny panels.

**Reporting at training events**

Raising awareness was an important outcome, together with increasing the opportunities to report. Several other organisations were also actively prioritising disability hate crime in the Leeds area during the time the project ran. The Police and the Access Committee, an organisation of disabled people in Leeds based at the Mariners Centre, were leading an initiative to increase reporting. When running training sessions for people with learning disabilities, Power Changer trainers reserved an hour for describing hate crime and how to report it. During that hour police officers were invited to be present so that participants could report an incident there and then if they wished to do so. The intention was also that participants would talk to the local police officers so they would know who they were for the future, hopefully reducing fear about reporting if the need arose. Two incidents were reported to police at these training events and the police were able to intervene in one of these, to prevent theft of money by a support worker. As the police officer concerned stated:

*Within the first few minutes I had one person straight away who reported to me. It was an issue where he was suffering neglect in his own home. ... we could take action there and then. Without that it would never have happened. And acting upon it.* (Hate Crime Police Officer)

This police officer considered the approach worked better than simply giving out information packs; no incidents had been reported where this was the only means of communication. For people with learning disabilities in particular, written procedures were found to be too complicated.

*A lot of the time the way it’s been done is by directly approaching people. It’s got a better reaction. The pack hasn’t worked. A lot of it ticks boxes and describes victimisation but ultimately for what it was it was also quite cumbersome and was also quite intensive to a certain extent and it hasn’t particularly worked.* (Hate Crime Police Officer)

Although large number of people with learning disabilities did not report incidents, that they did at some events was felt to be a start.
Third Party Reporting

Regarding the police, one Power Changer trainer stated: ‘some might be scared that they don’t know what to say’, while another participant felt that ‘they might be scared of the uniform’. It was felt that police stations were intimidating places and there was no guarantee of getting help from a sympathetic officer.

Several locations in the Leeds area are Hate Crime Reporting Centres (HIRCs): places where crimes may be reported that are different from police stations and that may feel more user-friendly for victims. Workers at HIRCs should give people reporting help to complete a form, which is then forwarded to the police. This evaluation did not cover the work of the HiRCs specifically. However beyond the Power Changer group there was uncertainty regarding how well they were used.

Certainly my experience of being a hate crime reporting centre is that they are well underused. Because we went through all this training and filled out these big forms and hardly anybody used them. (Manager, Voluntary Organisation)

Several of the organisations that the Power Changers group was familiar with, such as Stop Hate UK, the Hamara Centre and Connect in the North were reporting centres and team members stated they would feel more at ease reporting at these places. The need for assistance from other people when reporting was emphasised. The decisive issue concerning if and where people with learning disabilities reported crimes was whether they knew the people they reported to and felt they could trust them.

This issue has been clearly recognised in other research. As Sin (2011) has pointed out, most people with learning disabilities do report incidents to someone but usually it is someone that they know well and that they trust. Formal reporting systems are often underused. A barrier may arise when the trusted person does not recognise an incident to be abuse or does not do anything more about it. Therefore wider awareness - raising is essential for strengthening the reporting process.
This being said, a large number of intermediaries between a person with a learning disability and the reporting of an incident to the police can be a barrier as an incident may be not be passed on if reporting is not made at a designated HIRC. Therefore improving the direct connections between people with learning disabilities with members of the police force is also vital for increased crime reporting.

**Developing Training Materials: George and the Hat**

LOLIS, the Power Changers group and West Yorkshire police officers were very aware that reporting problems were due in many respects to lack of confidence in police procedures. As one member of the Power Changers group stated:

> People with learning disabilities are frightened of calling the police because they don’t get enough support. And it’s like the member of the family or the person they’re living with don’t believe them. ......Also, when the police are talking to the victim the victim will clam up. And there’s no support for them as well. (Power Changers trainer)

Development of the training programme involved the devising of many smaller units that aimed to increase the comprehension and insight of participants; both learning disabled and professional. One example is discussed next, by way of illustration and because it involved close collaboration between the LOLIS project and the police.

An activity was devised whereby people with learning disabilities would run through the process of reporting a hate crime in a role play exercise by going to the police station. The activity was planned by the Power Changers group with a Police Officer who was then a member of the LOLIS steering group and involved several police officers from a local station. As part of the process a series of pictures was taken to produce an easy read storyboard of a bullying incident, where local youths stole a hat from a man with a learning disability. Although some of the pictures were set up later to illustrate what had been done, the role play actually took place in real time as an exercise to find out more about the barriers and issues in reporting.

> [The] procedure went really, really well – not just for the people reporting the hate crime but for the police officers as well. Some of the
language they were using – just simple things; we ask ‘what’s your date of birth?’ [The person reporting] didn’t know what that meant so ...... it was learning involved for both the members of the group and the officers. (Police Officer)

The exercise was judged by all involved to have been helpful for identifying problems and issues involved. It was also the basis (with other work) for an award given by West Yorkshire Police to the officer who had worked with LOLIS on this and other initiatives, a recognition of the value of this work to all concerned and as an example of good practice.

**Scrutiny Panels**

West Yorkshire Police policy is that all hate crimes that are committed in the area must remain open for 28 days to allow proper investigation and support for the victim and cases may not be finalised until they go to a scrutiny panel. A sample of hate crimes is reviewed by the scrutiny committee, which considers whether correct procedures have been followed. In the third year of the project arrangements were made for two members of the Power Changers team – a staff member and a volunteer – to join as lay members of the panel following an invitation from a police officer:

> I was trying to encourage some of the people from CHANGE to sit on the scrutiny panel. So I did a hate crime in easy read and we scrutinised that if you like and said ‘what do you think?’ Well, we just went through it, like you would with a scrutiny panel, so there was the awareness around the scrutiny process. (Police Officer)

The process of being involved in scrutiny panels was enlightening for the LOLIS participants. The balance of hate crimes was commented on, in terms of the small number of reported crimes.

> I think the police need more training on hate crime. Because the scrutiny panel is all just racially motivated crime. I don’t think they look at it for people with learning disabilities. I’ve been on the panel a year now but there’s only been the one with a disability and BME background. And I haven’t had any homophobic crimes yet neither. (LOLIS scrutiny panel member)
Being on the panel also informed participants about some of the complexities, such as deciding whether there was sufficient evidence to proceed with a prosecution or indeed at times distinguishing what was going on in unclear circumstances:

_I was reading one of them and the victim was stood at the door completely naked – full frontal nudity – and I was thinking, it’s his home but was he the victim or the perpetrator?_ (LOLIS scrutiny panel member)

Being on the panels was valued highly by the LOLIS members and unlike other work, is due to continue after the funding for the project ends.

### Work with Other Agencies

#### The Police

Some of the very positive relationships that were developed with individual police officers, and the work on hate crime that was carried out, have been described above. Collaboration resulted in strong ties and important joint initiatives that impacted on the experiences of people with learning disabilities in the area. The expertise of all the hate crime officers across the region was also an important resource to CHANGE and there was clear support for LOLIS work, as evidenced by the active participation of hate crime officers in the final conference held by CHANGE in December 2012. However, police officers could be moved to different posts and frequently were, making it important that new relationships were built with incoming community and hate crime police officers in the area.

Victim Support personnel noted that the police do not routinely record whether a person is disabled and they were not able to give figures for numbers of disabled people involved (referrals for this service come from the police). While this had changed following the Pilkington enquiry report, the police officers interviewed noted that there had not been sufficient action in the past and incidents had been thought of as reflecting ASB rather than disability hate crime:

_What came out of Pilkington was that what was thought of as ASB should have been identified as hate crime. It was mainly about that and_
making sure it was correctly identified as *disability hate crime*. (Police Officer)

Police officers pointed out that the Pilkington enquiry had made a big difference to their work. In particular, multi-agency collaboration was much more in evidence, including collaboration with safeguarding, ASB teams and other services.

While there was no doubting the enthusiasm and commitment of the police officers who participated in this evaluation, other interviewees wondered about the interest of the force more generally. A Leeds City Council trainer pointed to several reasons why the police might not be as engaged as they might be. Issues identified were that police were not always as aware of the law and of issues concerning people with learning disabilities and with mental health conditions. It was acknowledged that the police have multiple priorities and may not appreciate that what they see as ‘challenging behaviour’ or ‘aggression’ is an attempt by a disabled person to communicate. The problem of resources was mentioned – as with other public services the police force was experiencing cuts to services. And finally, the complexity of some cases meant that the police did not always feel empowered to act, especially because some incidents of bullying and hate crime involve personal relationships between the people involved.

Commenting on a training event, a Leeds City Council representative remarked:

[I was] standing up in front of perhaps forty - odd uniformed officers, some of them sitting there with their arms folded, some of them with a very neutral expression on their face, as if to say ‘come on then, teach us something’. ..... And I think out of the three or four sessions I did at that scale, just one police officer came up to me afterwards and shook my hand and said ‘thank you that’s been very useful’. So you really are down to individuals. (Leeds City Council trainer)

It is not surprising therefore that the experiences of wider contacts with police officers reported by LOLIS were less predictable. In line with the above, understanding about hate crime was considered less strong and attitudes were far from certain. A LOLIS staff member described how she was approached by suspicious police on two occasions:
I was there and a police officer came and asked me ‘are you all right? I said ‘yes’. They said ‘what are you waiting for’ I said ‘I’m waiting for a friend’. He thought I looked a bit out of sorts or looked a bit suspicious with a big bag.........But I did get stopped by the police outside my mum and dad’s house. I was on a bicycle. They said ‘your bag looks heavy; what’s in it?’ I said I’d been staying at my parents’ house and there was my shopping in there as well. Literally I’d just got outside the driveway. He said ‘I’m sorry’ – he did apologise. (LOLIS staff member)

LOLIS advised people with learning disabilities to identify themselves as such when stopped by the police:

When the police catch [stop] someone who has a learning disability it’s best if you mention that you have a learning disability and then they can take it seriously. But if you don’t mention it they won’t take it seriously. That’s what we tell our group – mention that you have a learning disability. (LOLIS staff member)

In summary then, important, very constructive and enduring good relationships were formed with certain police officers, especially those who were local and who had responsibility for hate crime. These relationships were crucial to the success of the project and in many respects this was due to hate crime being a high priority for both parties at the same time. These police officers were aware of mistakes that had been made in the past and pointed to gradual improvements overall. On the other hand, there was a tendency for some police officers who had less opportunities to find out about hate crime to view people with learning disabilities as ‘vulnerable’ (rather than victims of perpetrators) or as suspicious because they looked different. Although the Power Changers group was actively teaching people with learning disabilities some strategies for dealing with suspicion, clearly a considerable amount of work remains to be done in this area in support of police officers working on hate crime issues.

Statutory and Voluntary Agencies

Constructive relationships were formed with several other organisations in the Leeds area, including but not limited to HIRCs, various day centres where
training was carried out, Victim Support services, Adult Safeguarding, services for women who have been abused and Leeds City Council. In turn these agencies had developed links with other statutory and voluntary agencies, such as housing and specialist support services. Evaluating all of these links was beyond the remit of this evaluation but clearly the importance of multi-agency collaboration was very much to the fore in the local area.

An issue that arose from the safeguarding agenda was the contested notion of ‘vulnerability’. As a Leeds City Council professional from the Safeguarding Team pointed out, this is a problematic concept and the term ‘adults at risk’ was preferred:

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\text{The reason we talk about vulnerable adults and adults at risk is that nationally we’re getting away from vulnerable adult, which implied that they are being abused because they are a vulnerable person. ‘You’re being abused; it’s your fault.’ So we’re saying it’s adults at risk. The definition hasn’t changed and the definition has actually got a number of things in it to think about. (Member of Safeguarding Team)}
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The Government report *No Secrets*\(^\text{11}\) clearly refers to ‘vulnerable adults’ and this was seen to be problematic by some participants (although not all). In practice there appeared to be a pragmatic balance between keeping an eye on some people who it was felt might be targeted and acknowledgement that the focus ought to be on perpetrators rather than victims.

The LOLIS project was operating at a time when large scale cuts to public services were being implemented. In this process, voluntary sector organisations (such as CHANGE) have been particularly negatively affected by increased competition for funding. This situation put strain on the potential for building close collaborative relationships in the sector. This being said, individual members of the Power Changers group and people working in the project did have continuing good relationships, especially with certain individuals from other voluntary agencies. It was also stated that other organisations had taken it on themselves to make their materials more accessible to people with learning disabilities as a result of LOLIS:

\(^{11}\) Department of Health (2000) *No Secrets: guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse*.  
[Other organisations] came to recognise that they hadn’t been focussed on the needs of people with learning disability. Making leaflets more accessible, ways of working and signposting. People have said it made a real difference having people with learning disabilities telling them things. – Big impact. It’s a bit simplistic but it does work you know. (Staff member, CHANGE)

The Future: Priorities and Issues

From the point of view of CHANGE as an organisation, there is a major issue about funding. There was universal praise for LOLIS and the work of CHANGE more generally among people nominated for interview, but this is not a guarantee for continued existence. Other well respected voluntary organisations had recently closed through lack of funding and clearly CHANGE does not have resources for continuing the work in the absence of additional funds. Work commissioned from CHANGE at the time of this report was said to be for small pieces of training and consultancy rather than the larger projects that could support the work of the organisation as a whole.

Participants in this evaluation were asked about what they thought remained to be done in relation to bullying and hate crime in the Leeds area and also about work that they thought CHANGE should prioritise. All agreed on the importance and value of the work and that it needed to continue. In terms of priorities, their responses to this question may be thought of in terms of three main strategies: continuing with the present programme of work, a strengthening of the local work in terms of depth and scope and extension of the work to other areas of the country.

Priorities and suggestions from staff included:

- Doing training in schools, with a focus on getting relevant programmes written into the curriculum and better understanding/reporting/responses by schools around disability hate crime
- Doing training courses in other parts of the country;
- Doing training in other areas of the country to develop capacity of people with learning disabilities as trainers in those areas;
• Development of other initiatives in Leeds, such as the *Safe Places* scheme, where people with learning disabilities are offered a place of safety on a temporary basis if needed;
• The development of further understanding of transgender issues; policy on mental capacity, which was felt to be poorly understood by professionals as well as Power Changer group members; gender violence;
• Developing the links between domestic violence and hate crime and *Disability Pride*;
• Taking a strategic approach to multi-agency collaboration.

People from other agencies felt that the following were important:

• Carrying on with the current programme, because otherwise people will forget (the kind of changes that are needed take a long time to get in place);
• Developing personal support and counselling services for victims;
• Further development of accessible, promotional materials accessible to people with learning disabilities;
• Involvement of CHANGE trainers in the training programmes of other organisations;
• Extending an invitation to people from CHANGE to sit on the boards of other decision – making and monitoring bodies, e.g. the Safeguarding Board;
• Further investigation and reporting of crimes committed against people with learning disabilities living in institutions;
• Doing training courses in other parts of the country;
• Doing training in other areas of the country to develop capacity of people with learning disabilities as trainers in those areas.

**Conclusion**

This brief evaluation has attempted to sum up the main work carried out by the LOLIS project from 2009 – 2012. It is not comprehensive in scope or ‘scientific’ in the sense of being able to measure precise impacts. Nevertheless, it is clear that there have been impacts and that these have successfully
targeted the issues and problems. What became clear during the course of this study was the commitment of the team and local agencies in tackling a protracted and difficult problem that is essential to the well being and independence of people with learning disabilities. Significant expertise had been built up over the three year period, to the point where a core group of people with learning disabilities had become experts in this field.

Where hate crime is not tackled effectively, the consequence is restriction of the lives of people with learning disabilities, sometimes by well-meaning people who want to protect the victim. In other instances hate crime represents a dangerous threat to well being, safety and life. Personal safety and freedom are some of the most basic of human rights and they are rights that the UK is legally committed to uphold through its ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability\(^\text{12}\) and its Optional Protocol.

The contribution that CHANGE and the LOLIS project have made by challenging this situation in a local area has been discussed above. Clearly a considerable amount of further work remains to be done.

\(^\text{12}\) UN Enable Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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