
KeyRing Living Support Network

Equal and Fair Project
Evaluation Report
March 2018

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Ensuring Equality for People with Learning Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System

I am proud to be part of the WfJ group. We have stayed together as a group.... I can say 'we did that' and 'we changed that'." Member of the Working for Justice Group

"We are proud of the awards we have received and the places we have been invited to, the Houses of Parliament, the House of Lords and when Lord Bradley comes to speak to us and thanks us for our work" Member of the Working for Justice Group

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Executive Summary

Background Information

“Really useful training. Should be mandatory for all Criminal Justice Agencies” Quote from training course participant

In 2015, a three-year grant was awarded by Comic Relief under its Fair Society Programme to KeyRing for a project called the Equal and Fair Project.

This evaluation examines:-

- What aspect of the Criminal Justice Learning Disability Awareness training was most valued?
- How could this be improved?
- What information or what small changes could bring about change in different parts of the criminal justice system?
- What are the barriers to good practice and what needs to happen in locally, regionally and nationally policy to remove these barriers?

KeyRing wants to examine how it can ensure its service users' experiences (co-trainers in the Equal and Fair Project), play a stronger influence within the project and within the wider sector.

KeyRing uses a supported living network to assist people with learning disabilities (LD) to feel safe and sound in their own homes, able to do what they want each day, when they want to do it. A percentage of KeyRing members are people with learning disabilities who have, at sometime during their lives, been involved in the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Since its establishment in 1990, KeyRing has listened to its members' voices and used their experiences to influence service delivery, and the policy and practice of KeyRing's activities.

In 2006, the Working for Justice Group (WfJ), a KeyRing reference group, was set up initially with funding from the Prison Reform Trust. For over ten years an increasing number of people with learning disabilities who have gone through the criminal justice system have shared their views with service deliverers, practitioners, policy makers and politicians. They have influenced a series of research papers including some mentioned in this report, but overall it appears that many people with learning disabilities are still not treated either equally or fairly when they are confronted by the law.

The Equal and Fair Project sets out to address this and make a difference to both those working in the CJS and those with learning disabilities who come face to face with CJS professionals including the police, lawyers, Appropriate Adults, probation etc.

The grant from Comic Relief gave KeyRing the opportunity to offer extensive training in England and Wales, raising awareness of learning disabilities and learning difficulties, communication, and a bespoke module that is adapted to fit the specific audience being trained.

The grant helped to fund the work and training of the WfJ Group, enabling the group members to play a vital role as co-trainers, and attend local and national conferences, where they were often asked to share their personal experiences. The funding from Comic Relief helped to set up and fund a Helpline.

KeyRing's Outcomes under the Comic Relief Fairer Society Programme

Outcome 1	The needs of people with learning disabilities are better represented in Criminal Justice policy
Outcome 2	Front line Criminal Justice professionals have an increased awareness of the needs of people with learning disabilities
Outcome 3	We have a better understanding of, and are better able to offer advice to, and campaign for, the rights of people with learning disabilities in the Criminal Justice System

Output Measures of the Equal and Fair Project

Activity	2015	2016	2017
Outcome 1			
Membership of the Working for Justice Group	15	18	18
Number of Working for Justice Group Meetings and consultations with policy makers	4	4	4
Outcome 2			
Learning Disability Training courses delivered	32	43	35
Number of people with learning disabilities trained as Co-trainers	7	12	10
Number of Training the Trainer courses delivered	0	5	0
Number of people attending Training the Trainer courses	-	104	-
Number of professional people trained on above courses	392	656	460
Number in conferences audiences attended by Project Manager and Working for Justice Group promoting the Equal and Fair Project	>1,000	>1,000	>1,000

Outcome 3			
Number of people using the Helpline and visiting the KeyRing Equal and Fair Project website & FAQ	15	601	400

Main Findings

Throughout the three-year funding period the Equal and Fair Project staff team monitored all three elements of the Project - the training courses, the role of the WfJ Group and the Helpline. They ensured that as many training course participants as possible completed an end of course evaluation form and requested contact details so that the Project staff could contact them three months later to assess the changes they have made to their service delivery, policy and practice. The individuals on the WfJ Group strongly influenced the training, service delivery and the development of the Helpline. They played a major role in producing the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) posted on the Helpline website and promoted the use of Easy Read publications and the KeyRing website, offering a number of links to valuable CJS sources at training courses and conferences.

The training was delivered 113 times across England and Wales including a number of prisons. At the end of 2017, the actual number of course participants was 1,641 - a third more than expected. The size of the groups varied at any one time from groups of eight to ten, to more than 40. The training attracted professionals from across the CJS including the police, members of the Parole Board, probation and offender managers, prison staff, Appropriate Adults, custody visitors, clinical psychologists, custodial managers, nursing specialist, magistrates etc. In one notable case most of the practitioners working in Liaison and Diversion departments across England and Wales were trained over an 18-month period.

Summary of Equal and Fair Project Training Course Feedback

- 96.7% of participants felt the course was everything they hoped
- 59.8% felt very confident after the training about what a learning disability involves and
- 36.6% felt slightly more confident about what a learning disability involves
- 83.6% found the communication tips, skills and strategies mentioned on the course very useful and relevant and practical to their role
- 86.5% were satisfied with the level of interaction with the course leaders; valued contact with the co-trainers and felt this was integral to the course.

According to the feedback reviewed, the training courses were delivered to a very high standard, very educational, in depth, well presented and extremely informative. The courses were seen as thought provoking and reflective. It

gave participants the opportunity to think about their daily service delivery and how often small changes could ensure that people with learning disabilities, coming into the Criminal Justice System, could be treated more fairly.

People appreciated the in-depth knowledge of the trainers on the subject of learning disabilities and learning difficulties. Mention was made of the open and honest approach of the co-trainers (people with learning disabilities), who, through sharing their personal experiences, were able to illustrate that with better understanding of people with learning disabilities their treatment could be very different and more responsive.

Perhaps one of the most positive and reassuring comments about the training came from a National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Commissioner. Emailing the Project Manager, she wanted to know how long the project was funded for and whether she could commission KeyRing to deliver the training to more of her staff.

“Many of my services have received your training and they have had nothing but positive comments about it” Quote from NOMS Commissioner

Working for Justice Group

The Working for Justice Group (WfJ) continued to meet on a regular quarterly basis throughout the funding period. This unique reference group established in 2006, is highly respected across the CJS and any number of CJS and NHS policy departments seek Members’ opinions, as people with learning disabilities who are ‘Experts by Experience’. The WfJ Group receives a great deal of ‘back-office’ support both at their meetings and before and after such meetings. This investment of time and resources pays off as individual members are well briefed and because of this can fully participate in meetings, training and conferences as they understand the purpose and outcomes to be achieved.

Members of the WfJ Group received training in presentation skills and assistance and support in working with the Project Manager to raise awareness of learning disabilities and learning difficulties. The feedback from course and conference participants has been overwhelmingly positive. WfJ members have developed their confidence, and self-esteem. They have had the opportunity to tell their stories and real-life experiences of having a learning disability or Autism/Asperger’s to CJS staff and policy makers.

When the consultants met with two representatives from WfJ, their enthusiasm for their role was infectious. They were proud of what they had achieved as co-trainers; the number of conferences they had been invited to attend; the letters and awards they had received from senior managers within the Criminal Justice System; and their contribution to the significant number of Easy Read publications and FAQs that have been produced and adopted by various CJS departments - in particular the Criminal Cases Review

Commission (CCRC) application form that has now been adopted across England and Wales.

Helpline

Of all the varying aspects of the Equal and Fair Project it was the Helpline that had a delayed start (August 2015). A number of contributing factors meant that the phone-line could not be continuously manned and be as responsive as had been hoped. However, the Equal and Fair Project looked at imaginative ways of responding to enquiries by providing email support instead of the online support mentioned as part of the funding application. A meeting of the WfJ Group considered a series of questions that service users and professionals continuously asked and an FAQ section was developed and posted on the Equal and Fair Project and KeyRing websites. Signposting to other useful sites and Easy Read publications obviously proved useful, as by the end of the funding period over a thousand hits have been recorded. The majority of these (70%) were from people from a wide number of agencies or were individuals and some have found it such a useful website that they return time and again.

Conclusion

The three-year grant from Comic Relief to the Equal and Fair Project has successfully enabled the following:-

- The Project exceeded its training outcomes and outputs of the grant remit
- Received overwhelming positive feedback from course participants
- Ensured that the WfJ Group membership remained consistent and manageable and received the necessary support to ensure it maintained its reputation as a much valued reference group by the CJS
- Through its regular WfJ Group meetings and attendance at conferences it continued to influence policy makers, practitioners and politicians
- Improved the confidence and self-esteem of the WfJ Group members; given them a feeling of been listened to by people within the CJS and this in turn has helped them to raise greater awareness of learning disabilities and difficulties
- Enabled the Project Manager and WfJ Group to look at ways of delivering a Helpline service by providing information, advice on accessible communications and Easy to Read materials
- Offered all those involved in the Equal and Fair Project the opportunity to reflect on “where next” and identify marginalised groups such as women and Black Minority Ethnic Groups with learning difficulties, Autism /Asperger’s whose needs within prison are being overlooked
- The challenge for the future – to lobby and campaign for the training to be compulsory within the Criminal Justice System.

Introduction

KeyRing Living Support Networks

KeyRing was established in 1990 in response to people with learning disabilities wanting homes of their own. It uses a supported living network to assist people to feel safe and sound in their own homes, able to do what they want each day, when they want to do it. KeyRing uses supported living networks made up of a mixture of flats and houses based in the local community. A Community Living Volunteer employed by KeyRing lives close to the network. KeyRing Members are helped with building friendships with each other and their neighbours. They learn how to run a home, pay bills and learn what's available in their neighbourhood. They also receive mutual support, community connections and assistance in volunteering.

If KeyRing members require additional support, paid workers help them to cope at home. KeyRing members meet each other on a regular basis to discuss any issues, concerns or ideas they have to enable them to retain their independence. People with learning disabilities are encouraged to get involved with KeyRing itself and assist the organisation to be responsive to the diverse range of needs and concerns of its Members. KeyRing helps people with learning disabilities to become more independent and less reliant on costly, inflexible and often inappropriate forms of support.¹

In 2006, the Prison Reform Trust (PRT) approached KeyRing to develop the WfJ - a reference group 'to allow decision makers, initially the Prison Reform Trust (PRT), to test out ideas and check how accessible information is... The aim of the group is to inform the CJS about the views and experiences of offenders, suspects and defendants with a learning disability, with a view to help with reforming systems.'² The work of the WfJ Group was initially funded by the PRT to inform its work, and strongly influenced the "No One Knows" research which looked at the "prevalence and associated needs of offenders with learning difficulties and learning disabilities"^{2a} The Offender Health - a joint Department of Health/Ministry of Justice Unit has also funded it and now a proportion of the Comic Relief grant covers administration, travel expenses, room hire, refreshments, resources and training for members (co-trainers).

Comic Relief Funding Theme – Fairer Society

'The Fairer Society - ensuring people overcome inequality,' offered KeyRing a grant after an application was submitted in 2014. The Comic Relief outcomes were:-

- People from marginalised groups engaged with and influence decision makers and hold them to account
- People from marginalised groups are subject to less discrimination from public attitudes, laws, policies and services

The Comic Relief website www.comic-relief-uk-grant-programme for the Fairer Society programme states:-

“People in more equal societies live longer, have better mental health and better chances for a good education, regardless of their background. Community life is stronger where there is greater equality ... There are strong links between equality and building trust, there is also less violence, less crime and greater cohesion... Funding is available to support marginalised groups of people to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives as well as groups tackling some of the root causes of injustice by working together towards a fairer society...Comic Relief is interested in working with groups that are campaigning and/or delivering collective advocacy towards the overall outcomes.”³

Evaluation and Methodology

The methodology used in this evaluation is designed to focus on the intended outcomes and outputs of KeyRing’s Equal and Fair Project, agreed with the funder and the Project Manager

The evaluation used all the information provided by the Project Manager, the type of services delivered, the scope and remit of the study and the timescales for completion. The review used a variety of methods:-

- Desk top examination of appropriate reports and documents relating to the organisation and the specific project, submitted to Comic Relief
- Review of the internal outputs and outcomes data collected by the Equal and Fair Project
- Review of papers and documents that partially influenced the Equal and Fair Project
- Spread-sheets collected and analysed by KeyRing personnel after training courses over a period of three years
- Face-to-face interviews with Project Manager and two members of the Working for Justice Group
- Telephone interview with Project Manager - Learning Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System

The Equal and Fair Project regularly monitored outputs, outcomes and milestones throughout the three-year period funded by Comic Relief, collecting a significant amount of data from all those who participated in its training.

Limitations of the evaluation

The findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation are based on the information received and represent an accurate and honest interpretation of these findings. The data has been analysed by specific service delivery areas and the responses from training participants and beneficiaries.

Local and National Context

Twenty years ago (1998), the Department of Health in England and Wales estimated that '2% of people in the general population have a learning disability, researchers disagree whether this rate is any higher in populations of offenders. Estimates of prevalence amongst offenders range from 0% to 85%, depending on the tools used ... Average estimates of prevalence of learning disability among offenders in the UK range from 1 – 10%.'⁴

A literature review of 2006, carried out by Dr. Nancy Loucks, independent criminologist and Prison Reform Trust (PRT) research associate, noted that '20-30% of offenders have learning difficulties and learning disabilities that interfere with their ability to cope within the criminal justice system... This group of offenders, she says 'present numerous difficulties for the staff who work with them, especially when these staff often lack specialist training or are unfamiliar with the challenges of working with this group of people.'⁵

There are numerous references to research papers, included in the No One Knows briefing paper, which speak about the differing estimates of people with learning difficulties, learning disabilities, people with dyslexia and deficits in literacy and numeracy etc. within the criminal justice system. 'One of the most prevalent vulnerable groups amongst offenders comprises those who do not have an intellectual disability as formally defined but who do have much lower cognitive and adaptive abilities than do either the general population or the offending population.'⁶ The conclusion of Loucks paper is that 'many offenders have learning difficulties and disabilities that interfere with their ability to cope within the criminal justice system. They are at risk of continued offending because of unidentified needs and consequent lack of support and services ... and present numerous difficulties for staff who work with them, especially when those staff often lack specialist training or are unfamiliar with the challenges of working with this group of people.' One of a number of recommendations arising from this review suggests 'staff training and joint training for people in different areas of criminal justice.'⁷

The Bradley Review, commissioned by the Ministry of Justice and published in April 2009, made 82 recommendations for change. Those relevant to this evaluation include 'Lord Bradley's recommendations calling for more training for those working in and around the criminal justice system, as well as more mental health awareness generally (e.g. GPs and schools), are very important... It seems logical that this training should cover awareness about drug and alcohol issues and learning disabilities and their links with mental health.'⁸

A number of publications written in 2011 including 'Sentence Trouble' a joint production by the Communication Trust and NACRO Speech and Language and Communication guidance and a booklet 'Positive Practice, Positive Outcomes – A handbook for Professionals in the Criminal Justice System working with Offenders with Learning Disabilities - Department of Health

2011) went some way to inform those working in the criminal justice system to support people with learning disabilities.

In 2012, a PRT Briefing Paper entitled Fair Access to Justice stated that '7% of adult prisoners have an IQ of less than 70 and a further 25% have an IQ between 70-79; it is generally acknowledged that between 5 and 10% of the adult offender population has a learning disability.' Two of the recommendations suggested that '(1) Information on how particular impairments and disabilities can manifest themselves during court proceedings, and ways in which special measures and other reasonable adjustments can help ensure the defendant is able to participate effectively in court proceedings, should be routinely available for members of the judiciary, court staff and defence and prosecution lawyers. (2) Legal professionals and practitioners who undertake criminal work, members of the judiciary and liaison and diversion staff should be required to participate in awareness training in mental health problems, learning disabilities and other learning, developmental and behavioural disorders such as autism, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, communication difficulties and dyslexia.'⁹

In the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection Report January 2014, part of the conclusion states 'A balance needs to be struck between the support needs of those with learning disabilities and the need to hold them to account, where appropriate, for their offending. At all points in the criminal justice process, up to and including the point of sentence the treatment of people with learning difficulties could be significantly improved.'¹⁰

During the Inspection it was noted that 'Custody staff told us that, in the majority of cases they relied on their judgement and experience in identifying learning disabilities, with one custody police inspector stating that identification can be "subjective and contextual",¹¹ and elsewhere 'It is a matter of serious concern that in two-thirds of cases the CPS lawyer was not provided with information about a learning disability;' This extensive report recommends training for criminal justice personnel and better access to 'Easy Read' leaflets for people with learning disabilities in court waiting rooms.'¹²

Since the Bradley Report 2009, there have been a number of multi-agency collaborations producing a series of resources available to all those working in the criminal justice system including some specifically for NHS staff such as Equal Access, Equal Care.¹³

The Prison Reform Trust Prison: The Facts 2017, makes for interesting reading:

- 7% of people in contact with the criminal justice system have a learning disability – this compares with only 2% of the general population¹⁴
- Four-fifth of prisoners with learning disabilities or difficulties report having problems reading prison information. They also had difficulties expressing themselves and understanding certain words.¹⁵

- Independent inspectors found that “little thought was given to the need to adapt regimes to meet the needs of prisoners with learning disabilities who may find understanding and following prison routines very difficult”¹⁶
- Prisoners with learning disabilities or difficulties are more likely than other prisoners to have broken a prison rule; they are five times more likely to be subject to control and constraint, and around three times as likely to report having spent time in segregation.¹⁷

Equal and Fair Project 2015 – 2018

KeyRing’s Outcomes under the Comic Relief Fairer Society Programme

Outcome 1	The needs of people with learning disabilities are better represented in Criminal Justice policy
Outcome 2	Front line Criminal Justice professionals have an increased awareness of the needs of people with learning disabilities
Outcome 3	We have a better understanding of, and are better able to offer advice to, and campaign for, the rights of people with learning disabilities in the Criminal Justice System

The main achievements over the lifetime of the Equal and Fair Project have been;

1: To ensure the needs of people with learning disabilities are better represented in Criminal Justice policy by;

- The Working for Justice Group (WfJ) expanding its membership during the project funding period to 18
- WfJ has been actively involved in meeting with representatives from decision making bodies for example: The Criminal Case Review Commission, Independent Police Complaints Commission, Department of Health and Bristol University and was involved in the Department of Health’s Learning Disability Action Plan. Senior members of staff attended quarterly WfJ meetings to discuss group members’ previous experiences and their suggestions for future plans and strategies.
- WfJ collaborated with the Criminal Case Review Commission resulting in the piloting of a new ‘Easy Read Appeal Form’ to make the process easier for people to appeal against Magistrate’s Court convictions receiving the support of Lord Leveson. This appeal form is the accepted form across the Criminal Justice System.
- WfJ was involved in the Prisoner Learning Alliance, feeding into the Coates Review looking at how to ensure that prison education and training meets the needs and interests of all potential prisoners.

- Additionally, the Equal and Fair Project agreed to cooperate with the Department of Health, and the Learning Disability and Autism awareness training of the new 'Liaison and Diversion' scheme pilots, involving police officers, medical practitioners' mental health, substance misuse and learning disability practitioners working in police custody.

2: To ensure that frontline Criminal Justice professionals share an increased awareness of the needs of people with learning disabilities

The WfJ Group spoke to over 3,000 delegates at a range of conferences throughout the life of the grant including;

- The National Autism Society Conference
- The Centre for Crime and Justice Study's 'Alternatives to Custody' Seminar
- Delivered a plenary on 'Vulnerable Voices' at the Advocate's Gateway International Conference at the Law Society.
- The North West and North Wales Independent Custody Visitors Annual Conference
- A National Offender Management Service Conference and workshop at Prison Service College, Newbold Revel on 'Offenders with Learning Disabilities and Personality Disorders'.
- Spoke on the needs of prisoners with learning disabilities at the National Parole Board Conference, resulting in further collaboration with the Prison Reform Trust and other legal experts to ensure the needs of prisoners with learning disabilities are met during parole board hearings
- The WfJ group member gave a talk with the Project Manager on the needs of women with learning disabilities in the criminal justice system at The Advocate's Gateway 2nd International Conference on Vulnerability at the Law Society in London.

3: To offer advice to, and campaign for the rights of people with learning disabilities in the CJS through a Helpline;

To address this issue a Helpline was established, originally open for three days per week, it responded to email enquiries, but received fewer queries than expected. Its initial reach was not as wide as expected with the facility being used predominately by professionals. A strategy was implemented to help increase wider use resulting in an on-line helpline portal on the KeyRing website with the aim of increasing wider access. The Equal and Fair Project promoted the Helpline during training sessions and at conferences.

The project created a web based 'Frequently Asked Questions' section on the project web site, based on suggestions from WfJ. From the establishment of the FAQ's, the Helpline has had 587 page views and an additional 491 people have accessed information on how to make documents more accessible or 'Easy Read'. Leaflets have been printed to help to publicise the web site. The

project is proactively disseminating information using social media platforms and Twitter. It has produced a news bulletin and compiled a distribution list of interested parties.

Evaluation Findings

KeyRing seized the opportunity to obtain funding through Comic Relief's Fairer Society theme and developed the Equal and Fair Project. The organisation recognised that unless there was a greater understanding of the needs of people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties within the CJS, learning disabled people would continue to be sent to prison, suffer from unequal and unfair treatment while in the system and go on to re-offend due to a lack of understanding on the part of Criminal Justice personnel.

Over the past 20 years there have been a significant number of in-depth papers, which strongly recommended and highlighted the importance of training for criminal justice personnel. Much of this research has been based on conversations and input from people with learning disabilities - people, who have at some time in their lives been involved in the criminal justice system. The input by members of the KeyRing's Working for Justice Group (WfJ) greatly influenced and informed the application to Comic Relief.

The Equal and Fair Project was divided into three different delivery areas:-

- The Learning Disabilities and Learning Difficulties Training
- The Working for Justice Group
- The Helpline

The Equal and Fair Project Evaluation Remit

This evaluation examines the following:-

- What aspect of the Criminal Justice Learning Disability Awareness training was most valued?
- How could this be improved?
- What information or what small changes could bring about change in different parts of the criminal justice system?
- What are the barriers to good practice and what needs to happen in locally, regionally and nationally policy to remove these barriers?

Analysis of Information Provided

What aspect of the Criminal Justice Learning Disability Awareness training was most valued?

"I have fed back to my Team in a Team Meeting and stressed that they should attend any future, similar training as I thoroughly recommend it." Quote from training course participant

Training

At the end of 2017, the actual number of course participants were 1,641 - a third more than expected. The training was delivered 113 times in different venues across England and Wales including a number of prisons. During the lifetime of the Equal and Fair Project, a substantial amount of learning disability awareness raising and changes to perceptions were highlighted, as were the needs of people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties going through the Criminal Justice System.

“The training event highlighted the complex needs that are linked to learning disabilities, and the challenges that such service users face. Some simple ideas were shared that could have a real impact, in terms of how we look to work with this group of individuals in probation.” Quote from training course participant

A high percentage (96%) of those attending the training felt that the course was everything they hoped for. A number of people commented particularly on the learning environment, which was “relaxed and aided sharing, learning and development, to the best possible outcome.” Some commented on the delivery and teaching style, which was “excellent, knowledgeable, and eloquent”.

The training was well thought through, and based on a successful, series of learning disability awareness training events (January 2008 – July 2009), specifically designed for prisons and run by the Project Manager - Valuing People Now/Offender Health (Dept. of Health).¹⁸ The Equal and Fair training was divided into three modules and each had quite specific messages.

- Module 1 – What is meant by Learning Disabilities and Learning Difficulties and implications for involvement in the Criminal Justice System?
- Module 2 – Communication – speaking to or interviewing people and communication problems and solutions
- Module 3 – Learning Disabilities and Police Custody/ Courts /Prisons/ Probation and Parole Boards (Module 3 is adapted to fit the specific audience being trained)

Module 1 of the training dealt with the difference between people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties, and their potential care needs within the Criminal Justice System. It covered Autism, Asperger’s Syndrome and other learning difficulties such as dyslexia. It encouraged training participants to reflect on the implications of someone with such difficulties being involved in the Criminal Justice System.

Module 2 concentrated on communication issues and the complexity of language and understanding for people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties.

Module 3 was bespoke to the target audience and the issues that may need to address when a person with learning disabilities comes into their care. Each group would discuss the barriers within their own agency that may occur when faced with a person with learning disabilities.

Each module signposted participants to valuable information, useful Easy Read materials etc. Training was spread over a full day and run by the Project Manager and a co-trainer from the WfJ Group – a person with learning disabilities who had some experience of the criminal justice system - Experts by Experience.

All co-trainers received training to assist them in using their skills and experience in an effective way. Each co-trainer completed a one-page profile identifying what they particularly liked to do when training and how other people could work with them. They also discussed how best they could tell ‘their story’ and learnt how to manage group work. This in-house training has meant that the Experts by Experience are more confident, have greater self-esteem and are not too daunted by the size of their audience or whether the audience comprises police, prison officers magistrates or judges! The co-trainers have a message to deliver and they deliver it.

"I found the training really useful. Extremely good use of facilitators, including D, (co-trainer) who was able to give real life examples - very powerful. Thank you both" Quote from training course participant

Summary of Results from Course Feedback

- 96.7% of participants felt the course was everything they hoped
- 59.8% felt very confident about what a learning disability involves and
- 36.6% felt slightly more confident about what a learning disability involves and
- 83.6% found the communication tips, skills and strategies mentioned on the course very useful and relevant and practical to their role
- 86.5% were satisfied with the level of interaction with the course leaders and valued contact with the co-trainers and felt this was integral to the course.

"The trainers clearly have an in-depth knowledge of the topic and are eager to share this with others in a helpful and engaging way. Also, it is excellent hearing from people with first-hand experience of learning disabilities to give us a real insight into what it is like, so we can improve our practice" Quote from training course participant

"Best course I have been on. Extremely informative. I feel I have learnt so much today, which will really help me in my role. I really enjoyed the course and thought D (co-trainer) was fantastic" Quote from training course participant

The project delivered training to a wide range of Criminal Justice audiences including prisons, probation, police, people who work in police custody and courts including Appropriate Adults, Independent Police Custody Visitors and Liaison and Diversion Practitioners; as well as court training to Magistrates. Additionally, 104 police officers from several different constabularies, were trained in five 'train the trainer' style sessions designed to cascade down the training and awareness more widely through their forces.

Staff from third sector agencies were also trained, organisations whose wider function encompasses people with learning disabilities and autism who are involved in the Criminal Justice System. The opportunity to attend this training has resulted in one Police Constabulary requesting training for all custody staff over a two-year period although this request could not be met within the grant).

The training has addressed learning disability awareness training for a range of personnel in the CJS. The feedback indicated that the courses were invaluable. It has increased awareness of front line staff, some agencies had taken advantage of the Training the Trainer courses and were cascading this training to others within their agencies.

Evaluation forms were distributed at the end of each training course and participants who completed the forms provided excellent feedback and suggestions for possible improvements. All were asked if they would be prepared to be contacted three months after attending the course so that any agency changes to policy and practice could be identified.

"I undertook the training to enhance the skills I already had. The training was invaluable and I think that there should be more training after this one, this will help the information gained to become more embedded. Fantastic, inspirational and enjoyable. More training should be delivered like this to staff." Quote from training participant

The Working for Justice Group

One of the main aspects of the training that was most valued was the work of the co-trainers who came from the WfJ Group. While the WfJ Group has been a part of KeyRing since 2006, its work throughout the funding period has been the backbone to the Equal and Fair Project.

The Group's core membership is made up of people with learning disabilities, Autism or Asperger's Syndrome. All have been involved in crime and been through the criminal justice system at some time in their lives. Their personal

experiences inform and influence policy and practice; their comments and suggestions have had an impact on a number of the publications, briefing papers and Easy Read documents mentioned above. Some Members have been in contact with KeyRing for a number of years and as a result of its support have not been involved with crime for sometime. Some Members of WfJ have no connection with KeyRing, but have a learning disabilities, and have been involved in the CJS and share their personal experiences with the Group. A number have changed their behaviour, drinking less and seeking help from other community organisations in order that they can live independently within the community.

The WfJ reference group has gained a great deal of respect from professionals working in the police, probation, lawyers, judges and court personnel and those working in prisons and the health service. There are regular requests made to KeyRing for WfJ Members - Experts by Experience, to share their 'stories'.

At least four Working for Justice Group meetings are held each year, with additional meetings (extra-ordinary meetings) being funded by external organisations. Such meetings consider specific issues and concerns raised by policy makers, criminal justice personnel and politicians. KeyRing ensures that the role of the WfJ is acknowledged when partner organisations are producing resources, documentation etc. with the following wording:-

"members of the Working for Justice Group, supported by KeyRing Living Support Networks and the Prison Reform Trust".¹⁹

Helpline and Information Sharing

As part of the funding received from Comic Relief, KeyRing wanted to set up a Helpline for people with learning disabilities or Autism in the Criminal Justice System. Using Easy Read (pictures and text), the promotional poster offered a number of communication opportunities including face-to-face meetings, emails and letters. Of all the varying aspects of the Equal and Fair Project it was the Helpline that had a delayed start (August 2015).

Reporting to Comic Relief at the end of the first year of funding, KeyRing stated that it had "developed a strategy to address the shortfall through promoting the Helpline at conference presentations, increased social media and wider promotion through the charity's core activities."²⁰

An increase in use of the Helpline was mainly by professionals when enquiries were about the individual needs of offenders under their care. The project created a web based 'Frequently Asked Questions' section on the project's web site, based on suggestions from the WfJ Group. From the establishment of the FAQ's, the Helpline website has had 587 page views and an additional 491 people have accessed information on how to make documents more accessible or 'Easy Read'.

Leaflets have been printed to help to publicise the web site and these have been circulated during training sessions and at conference attended by WfJ Group. The project is proactively disseminating information using social media platforms and Twitter. It has produced a news bulletin and compiled a distribution list of interested parties to send a more in-depth newsletter to.

How this (training) could be improved?

Course participants suggested a few improvements to the contents of the course. Primarily they wanted additional information about other learning disabilities not covered on the day and more about mental health issues.

- More information would be useful about KeyRing as an organisation
- More discussion about Autism, Asperger's and ADHD would be useful
- More in-depth information on identifying Autistic traits
- More information about personality disorders
- The crossover between mental health problems and learning disabilities

Presentation and the Participant's Pack

A few training participants commented on the difference between the slides used by the Trainers and the Participants Pack. Over 60 slides were used by the trainer and co-trainer throughout the day-long course. These were extensive and comprehensive, signposting those present to useful resources including books and websites, as well as 'Easy Read' materials that could act as a "tool kit" for dealing with people with complex needs.

The Participant's Pack comprises 19 pages. On many of the pages of this pack there was a single question such as 'How might you know that someone has a learning disability or difficulty?'; What could you do in your role to ensure equal and fair treatment of people with learning disabilities? and How might you recognise someone with EXPRESSIVE language difficulties? A small number of people would have appreciated having the presentation slides as there was so much valuable information contained in each slide. This would also have acted as a reference or 'tool kit' to be passed on to others perhaps unable to attend the Equal and Fair training course.

Recommendations from Training Course Participants

- More information about how people with learning disabilities could be supported in court and custody
- More information on where to find local (community) support services for people with learning disabilities
- Could there be a (training) toolkit?
- Some people found the course very intense and heavy going at times, is there a way to diffuse this?

- More in depth case studies or role play examples
- Some people were dissatisfied with the Participant's Pack and would have preferred that the Pack coincided with the slides used by the trainer (as the overheads were very informative and would provide a valuable resource)

Recommendations from Equal and Fair Project and Working for Justice Group personnel

The consultants either met with or phoned some of those involved with the Project. All were extremely proud of what had been achieved over the past three years and the difference they have made. However, they are not complacent and have already identified a number of areas that could either be improved or built upon.

- There is recognition that while the Project Manager and co-trainers have trained a significant number of people (1,641), they query whether they have been 'preaching to the converted', rather than targeting the 'hard core' – 'the hard nuts to crack', those on the front-line. So promoting the training more widely has to be a priority.
- It is felt very strongly that if all police officers and custody personnel had the training then things might not go any further. "If we could get it right at the Police Station things would not escalate and result in a criminal record."
- There is an acknowledgement that the WfJ Group requires a level of administration support. This support has been funded by a number of funders since 2006, however this is vital if people with learning disabilities are to be provided with Easy Read papers prior to the meeting and receive understandable notes after the meetings – New funders need to be identified in order to provide continuation.
- The WfJ Group is proud of the influence and impact they have had on producing and getting other agencies to produce, Easy Read forms, literature and information packs and want to promote this aspect further on the KeyRing and Equal and Fair Project's websites. Obtaining permission to link with valuable resource prepared by other agencies needs to be sought e.g. Fair Access to Justice or Your Rights and Entitlements.

Recommendations from the Consultants

The Equal and Fair Project has far exceeded expectations. Those involved are really proud of what has been achieved but recognise that there is still much to do. The recommendations of the consultants arise from reading the information provided and listening to some of the Equal and Fair Project personnel.

- A promotion and communication strategy needs to be considered in order to extend the reach of the courses
- This report begins with a quote about 'making the course mandatory'

while this might prove a challenging task, encouraging the inclusion of disability awareness training to front line staff, at Police Training Colleges, and during Magistrates, Judges and Solicitor training would go some way to ensure disabled people are listened to and their needs met

- The training remit should be extended to include a wider definition of learning disabilities and mental health, as well as addressing the needs of women with learning disabilities and those from the Black Minority Ethnic community with learning disabilities
- Promoting Prison Mentoring training – training prisoners to act as a bridge between prison staff and prisoners might help to ease someone with a learning disability into the prison routine and improve communication between other prison personnel
- The geographic area for the Project has been confined to England and Wales only. The Project might look to gain funding to extend the training to Scotland, taking into account the differences in the legal systems
- The work of the WfJ Group is greatly appreciated and well respected within the CJS, but requires a certain amount of funding, to ensure the necessary administrative support is provided. Setting up WfJ as a Community Interest Company (CIC) or a Charitable Incorporated Organisation would perhaps ensure that funding applications could be made independently of KeyRing
- A number of team leaders and commissioners have attended the training and have been greatly impressed at the professional standard of delivery. Equal and Fair Project should endeavour to encourage such personnel to promote the awareness training courses in professional journals by writing articles about the impact the training has had on their services
- The diversity of membership of the WfJ Group should reflect the prison estate and women and BME groups should be asked to recommend possible WfJ Group Members
- In order to ensure continuation of the Equal and Fair Project, research should be undertaken to identify appropriate funding to increase the number of funding bids based on the wider remit of the project
- The Participant's Pack should be refined and be a document that participants can share with others and might also encourage such people to attend the next available course in their area
- The audiences for some of the courses should be a mixture of CJS personnel and people from the voluntary and community sector, so that a greater understanding of sectors could in the longer term improve mutual understanding and knowledge of services in the community
- As government policies and practice change the impact on people with learning disabilities should be highlighted in future courses and as a way of embedding the courses in those who might have already attended training

What information or what small changes could bring about change in different parts of the criminal justice system?

A cross section of personnel working within the CJS received the training and/or attended conferences where Equal and Fair staff and members of the WfJ Group have attended. While training participants were asked to fill in an evaluation form and provide an email address, not all of them completed this form. Equal and Fair Project staff tried to make contact by email, with training participants, three months after they had attended the course to find out what changes they had made to their working practice. Unfortunately, there is limited information from this particular source, however the feedback returns that were reviewed make for interesting reading.

I have fed back to my Team in a Team Meeting and stressed that they should attend any future similar training as I thoroughly recommend it. H and G were very knowledgeable and have certainly made me review how we disseminate information to people who may have a learning disability or difficulty. Quote from training course participant

Training participants stated that their personal attitude towards people with learning disabilities had significantly changed for the better. They have felt more confident in asking people with learning disabilities if they needed assistance, when in the past they might not have spoken to the person. The networking at the training sessions resulted in new initiatives such a Criminal Justice subgroup being set up in a Local Authority Autism Panel and people have been proactive in improving intervention and outcomes from pre-arrest to charge – court sentence – post sentence. “It is early stages but we have managed to get key representatives from learning and disability teams to attend.”

A number of participants have reflected on cases they have dealt with in the past where there have been difficulties, and considered how they could use their training to get the best out of people. Some are using less words and more visual tools to get their message across. More are using Easy Read and promoting this to their colleagues and clients. People’s interviewing techniques have changes and they have been able to look for signs or indicators as to whether a client needs additional help.

The training courses have given participants a range of tools and resources to call upon in their daily work. Many have passed this information to others in their teams and suggested they attend the course. Ensuring that the training course, the WfJ Groups’ experiences, the Helpline and Easy Reads are available across all Criminal Justice Departments is crucial. This report began with a quotation - **“Really useful training. Should be mandatory for all Criminal Justice Agencies.”** This one-day course has made a significant difference to a large number of people and their work, however many more need to receive the training. Promoting the Training the Trainer courses more

pro-actively and utilising other colleges and universities as venues for future courses, more CJS personnel could be trained.

What are the barriers to good practice and what needs to happen in locally, regionally and nationally policy to remove these barriers?

The Equal and Fair Project and the WfJ Group have worked with some of the most influential people and organisations including the Judiciary of England and Wales, the Magistrates Association, the Prison Reform Trust and Lord Bradley. They need to use these organisations and personalities to best effect. They need to encourage as many people (in particular front-line personnel) to attend the training. Promoting more actively the Training the Trainers course across all Departments might be a way forward. The Criminal Justice Joint Inspection Reports clearly recommend training as a means of ensuring that people with learning disabilities are treated equally and fairly as they proceed through the Criminal Justice System. Individual course participants should be encouraged to share their success stories and the changes they have made to daily practice with their colleagues as a means of promoting the courses more widely.

Conclusion

The three-year grant from Comic Relief to the Equal and Fair Project has successfully enabled the following:-

- The Project exceeded its training outcomes and outputs of the grant remit
- Received overwhelming positive feedback from course participants
- Ensured that the WfJ Group membership remained consistent and manageable and received the necessary support to ensure it maintained its reputation as a much valued reference group by the CJS
- Through its regular WfJ Group meetings and attendance at conferences it continued to influence policy makers, practitioners and politicians
- Improved the confidence and self-esteem of the WfJ Group members; given them a feeling of been listened to by people within the CJS and this in turn has help them to raise greater awareness of learning disabilities and difficulties
- Enabled the Project Manager and WfJ Group to look at ways of delivering a Helpline service by providing information, advice on accessible communications and Easy to Read materials
- Offered all those involved in the Equal and Fair Project the opportunity to reflect on “where next” and identify marginalised groups such as women and Black Minority Ethnic Groups with learning difficulties, Autism /Asperger’s whose needs within prison are being overlooked
- The challenge for the future – to lobby and campaign for the training to be compulsory within the Criminal Justice System

Appendix 1 - Case Studies

A

A is a founder member of the Working for Justice group, now in its eleventh year in part due to financial support received from the current grant. He has been interviewed and spoken about his experiences on a DVD produced by Skillnet Group and the Department of Health. He has also spoken widely to influential audiences including the Law Society, the Magistrates Association and the House of Lords and is a very active co-trainer on the current project.

A grew up in care and reports that whilst he was in a main-stream school, he found it very difficult and left with few qualifications. He was diagnosed as having a borderline learning disability when he was 18. Whilst he has had a few jobs since he left school, he has recently been employed as a healthcare assistant in a nursing home. He is very proud of this and feels that being a member of the WfJ group and being given the opportunity to talk in front of such a range of influential people and organisations has vastly increased his confidence and self-esteem and working as a co-trainer has given him the additional knowledge about vulnerability and special needs that he needed to secure this employment.²⁰

G

Before G joined KeyRing and the WfJ group he says that he was often in trouble with the police for low key offences such as public order offences and being drunk and disorderly. He always felt that he was in some ways different to other people, but it was not until he was in his mid-thirties that he was diagnosed as having autism.

Shortly after he received his autism diagnosis and started getting support from KeyRing his offending stopped. He believes that all his offending was alcohol-related and that he drank excessively in an attempt to fit in with other people and to reduce his feelings of anxiety that were a consequence of his autism. Once he got his diagnosis he better understood himself and why he was the way that he was, and also the diagnosis meant that he then got the support that he needed.

At the time of his diagnosis, he was living in bed and breakfast accommodation and he was offered support from his local KeyRing network co-ordinator. He joined the Working for Justice Group (WfJ) in 2006, shortly after it started, when he spoke to another KeyRing member who was a founder member of the WfJ group who suggested that he attend the group and see if he liked it. He says that being a member of the WfJ group has increased his confidence and his speaking and presentation skills and given him a better awareness that the problems that he experienced in police custody, in court and in prison were not unique to him. He believes that being a part of the group has given better insight into his own mental health issues, and to become a better person.

Being a group member has given him lots of opportunities to talk to people, to tell his story and to make a difference to other people in the Criminal Justice System. It has given him the opportunity to become involved in something that has changed policies and can make a real difference to other peoples' lives. He is pleased to be able to add his voice to the voices of the other people in the group.

D

Prior to joining KeyRing and subsequently becoming a member of the WfJ group, D had spent 22 years and 9 months in prison over 18 separate sentences. He feels that it was a lack of support that contributed to this, and that this lack of support started when he was at school. He started getting into trouble when he was 5 or 6 and was consistently getting into trouble until he joined KeyRing about 17 years ago. Just prior to this, he had been given a community sentence in court that stipulated that he had to live in a probation hostel for between 1 and 3 years (until the probation service felt that he was a reduced risk). During this time, he was doing some voluntary work and met someone who then went on to work for KeyRing and thought that D might benefit from the type of support that they could offer.

D became one of the founder members of the WfJ group and was involved in the interviews for the Prison Reform Trust's No-One Knows report (Talbot, 2007). He has also previously been a KeyRing Trustee. Being a member of the WfJ group has made him feel much more valued as people have listened to his life story. It has given him the opportunity and the self-confidence to talk in front of a wide range of people including Members of Parliament as well a lot of people who work in different parts of the CJS.

He feels that the work that the WfJ group do to help organisations produce 'accessible communication' or 'Easy Read' documents is very important and he would like to see them used more widely in the CJS. His proudest moment was giving a talk to judges and magistrates and also going to Buckingham Palace with Jenny Talbot when she received her OBE from the Queen. D really hopes that the work of the group continues and that in the future more people with learning disabilities can be empowered to tell their stories. He also hopes that he can influence policies to ensure that people receive the help that they need and that will reduce the chances of them becoming involved in the CJS.

Appendix 2

Feedback from course participants clearly demonstrates how much the training was valued: -

"We travelled from Doncaster to Durham and wondered if it would be worth such a long journey, but it most definitely was. An excellent course, thoroughly enjoyable, and I feel it has taught me so much and given me lots to think about too. Money well spent Comic Relief"

"Excellent training and highly relevant to the work we do. Should be compulsory"

"Very informative and really good to have a WfJ member's experiences shared".

"I found that the training really opened my mind and influenced the way I work on a day to day basis. In particular, with making material suitable to the reader. For example, when communicating with prisoners I ensure I'm not over-complicating the content and also ensure understanding where possible ... The skills that I have come away with, I feel, make me more fair and effective in my role."

"I found the course content very helpful for my role in identifying if someone has learning disabilities/difficulties. I will use this knowledge to hopefully make a difference to someone's custodial experience

"A very good course with great information and ideas for improving my work practices. Also tools which are available"

"I enjoyed the mixture of delivery styles and the dynamic between the trainers; clearly a level of understanding between the trainers which facilitated the learning of delegates. A mixture of practical examples and real life learning was invaluable to aide understanding. Accessible to all levels of knowledge about learning disabilities, difficulties, and autism, with excellent advice to improve practice"

Three months after attending the training

My caseload has widened and includes a high percentage of persons with an autistic spectrum disorder. The training provided confirmed certain ways of working with this group but also informed me of different ways of working - mainly around communication and the experiences of persons with an ASD - I found the personal experiences of both facilitators particularly interesting and useful.

I am more aware of people's difficulties and have approached several prisoners asking if they are ok and if in need of any help, I have had a lot of positive replies mostly just thanking me for being there and noticing that they may have issues. I will continue to carry this on and have also made other

Officers aware of situations that can be dealt with a little bit of compassion and understanding.

I have fed back to my Team in a Team Meeting and stressed that they should attend any future similar training as I thoroughly recommend it. H and G were very knowledgeable and have certainly made me review how we disseminate information to people who may have a learning disability or difficulty.

I am also having lots more conversations with a resident of mine who has been labelled autistic and getting his thoughts and views on how he likes to be communicated with.

I was able to network with key partners at the event as a result of which we have set up a Criminal Justice Sub group to the Local Authority Autism Panel. We are being pro-active at this and trying to look at improving interventions and outcomes from pre-arrest to charge - court - sentence - post-sentence. It is early stages, but we have managed to get key reps from L&D teams attending

It changed my perspective about working with people that may have a hidden disability. I don't have a specific case study to mention, but in general it made me more aware of things like how I write the time for appointments. I also feel it has helped me reflect on cases where there have been difficulties to consider the reason for this may be a hidden disability. This in turn has helped me to adapt my methods to get the best out of people, and to have more patience and understanding. I also found it a really helpful reminder to ask people what works best for them. Overall very valuable training, thank you.

It has been useful in reinforcing the knowledge I have gained about working with individuals and groups that have a form of learning disability. I have recently been delivering an accredited programme that works specifically with men with learning disabilities and it has helped me reflect on the ways in which we deliver certain exercises, for instance in a more visual or active way. The men have responded to this and it has assisted their learning and made it more enjoyable and memorable.

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may have issues. I will continue to carry this on and have also made other Officers aware of situations that can be dealt with a little bit of compassion and understanding.

I do not specifically work with LD or autistic individuals. I have been more mindful to use easy read in my work. This has also helped me to be more aware of the small things, which may have a big impact on someone. This training has given me a lot of information to take forward in my work in the future with individuals that i may work with in the future.

Retrospectively I have been able to look back and identify individuals who would have benefitted from work being delivered in a different manner or, additional support being put in place. Now when I complete an induction, I factor in consideration and also ask specific questions to tease out identifiers rather than asking directly in case individuals feel unable or unwilling to disclose. I utilise easy read induction process

When engaging with men with LD I have been more considerate of the communication difficulties they may experience. For example, I'm aware that they may have challenges in understanding the information given to them or verbally discussing their understanding. I therefore bare this in mind and support him with these challenges.

I have said that I have changed the way I work a little bit. I felt I already had some understanding of the difficulties/barriers people struggle with on a daily basis, which I meet and work alongside on a daily basis. But after attending the one-day course, I found it very helpful and it certainly improved my knowledge and helped me understand more of the needs of individuals. I feel the course should be mandatory and not just available to those who care about their job role & responsibilities. Thank you for the opportunity to attend.

I have had no client contact since undertaking this training. (I am in a managerial role). I found the training very useful however and have considered the training when supervising staff.

I undertook the training to enhance the skills I already had. The training was invaluable and I think that there should be more training after this one, this will help the information gained to become more embedded. Fantastic, inspirational and enjoyable. More training should be delivered like this to staff.

I have started to ask the questions: "How does your learning difficulty / disability affect you?" and "What changes can I make to your supervision to accommodate your needs?"

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