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Update on the Be Safer projects for people with learning disabilities

- Being Safe identified as a national priority for people with learning disabilities, outlined in Valuing People Now.
- People with learning disabilities being encouraged towards greater independence, with accompanying increase in the need to help them manage their own risks.
- Essex People's Parliament (peer elected people with learning disabilities) identified Being Safe as their joint top priority.
- Research commissioned alongside the project has demonstrated that there are hot-spots for hate crime spread across Essex
- Particular issues identified around anxieties on public transport, and around school children and young people.

- “Think Safe” materials produced for people with learning disabilities to help them understand and deal with personal safety.
- Be Safer groups formed in the four adult social care localities to provide focus for local work
- Castle Point Association of Voluntary Services engaged to coordinate Be Safer Groups, research project, and subsequent projects funded through the Be Safer grants.
- Be Safer groups invited local bids for grant money to fund projects focussed on local needs
- Examples of projects include:
 - “Bloomin Green” project in Tendring, bringing together school children and people with learning disabilities to work on community garden projects (and increase familiarity and exposure to each other)
 - Keep Safe project in Braintree, providing easily identifiable points within businesses and public spaces in the town centre where people who feel threatened will be assisted to make phone calls for assistance or advice

- A Train the Trainer scheme to create a pool of people who deliver safeguards awareness sessions to people with a learning disability
- A selection of drama groups working with identified schools to increase awareness of learning disability.

Points of Note

Whilst initiated by Essex County Council, the project fits with the aims of a wide range of organisations from across the county including Essex Police, a variety of third sector groups including Mencap, and district councils. Many of the projects have been able to call upon material and financial contributions from all these groups.

The desire for action in this area has led to a number of spontaneous projects following the Be Safer project's lead – for example, residential care homes and special schools have begun using information from the Think Safe materials in their work.

Next Steps

We will be reviewing the success of each of the projects run under the local Be Safer Groups. Those which are particularly successful will be considered for wider commissioning.

We will continue to work with Essex Police to look at how they record and report on Hate Crime.

We are looking at the possibility of following a similar model for working with other groups who feel threatened or who are at risk, for example people with mental health issues, older people, people with a sensory impairment. The learning disability project has proved to be a useful pilot.

We are in discussion with other areas of Essex County Council about links to their work, and will be working with them through the meeting of the Corporate Safeguarding Leads.