

Mate Crime

Friend or Fake?

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Safety Net

What is a friend?

This session

- Beginnings
- Safety Net Project
- What is 'mate crime'?
- What makes people 'vulnerable' to mate crime?
- What makes it different to 'hate crime' and 'abuse'?
- Reporting issues
- Project findings
- What to do about it

Background



‘Steven wanted friends. He did not see that the friendship he had so prized was starkly exploitative, devoid of reciprocity and instrumental in obstructing his relationships with those who would have safeguarded him.’

- Steven Hoskin Serious Care Review

Background 2



- Pattern of murders.
- Local anecdotes.
- We called this 'Mate Crime'
- *'The term 'disability hate crime' fails to recognise the duration of Steven's contact with his persecutors; the counterfeit friendship'*

Safety Net



- Funded by the Department of Health (2009)
- 3 years
- National Project. Two pilots – Calderdale, North Devon.
- Awareness; protocols; training; toolkit.

What is 'mate crime' ?



- Many people with situational vulnerabilities have 'friends' who go on to abuse the trust placed in them.
- This has led to people losing their independence, financial, physical and sexual abuse . . . even murder.
- Involves 'grooming' .
- Includes people being used to commit crimes.
- Includes cyber crime

What makes some people particularly vulnerable?



- We are all 'vulnerable'
- We all need friends
- Easily manipulated - learned compliance.
- Poverty & Social Exclusion
- Community presence
- Historical attitudes
- What is 'normal'?

'Historical' attitudes?

The victim comes from North Devon but was on a day out to the seaside with her mother, who travelled separately to give her the chance to manage on her own.

Fitzhugh pulled the girl off the platform by her wrists and kissed her on the lips before groping her breasts and trying to take her behind a bus station.

She was terrified and managed to escape and run off. She met her mother and the police were called.

Fitzhugh was identified from CCTV from the train but denied the offence, claiming the girl was too ugly to interest him and telling police “you know what mental people are like, they twist things around and make up stories and lies about other people”.

What makes it different? (1)



- Duration of contact
- May appear consensual
- It takes place in private
- It doesn't seem to involve hate
- Perpetrators are known and trusted
- Not recognised by victim

What makes it different? (2)



- There are ‘pay offs’ for the victim
 - May not be illegal
 - Largely affects people not in the system
- . . . it is an invisible crime, with invisible perpetrators and victims, taking place in invisible situations.

How to spot mate crime 1



- Changes
- Unexplained injuries
- Not looking after yourself
- Bills not paid
- 'Friends' who don't behave like friends

How to spot mate crime 2



- Money problems
- Mental ill health
- Losing usual friends and family
- Missing usual activities
- Mail order
- Party mess

“I don’t want them to get criminal records. I want them to make something positive of their lives. Perhaps in time we could become *friends.*”

Findings



- Huge under-reporting
- MCA issues/Informed decisions
- Not recognised by victims
- Similarities to Domestic Abuse
- Some apparent links in extreme cases
- 'Safeguarding' is often failing

What can we do about it?

What we are telling people to do

- Work on self esteem, relationships.
- Be a part of your community. Enable and support social opportunities.
- Risk Assessment (Risk Enabling Forums)
- Act on beliefs, not evidence
- “Be a detective.”
- Tenancy Support Packages/Cocoon Watch
- Use complaints procedures

What we are telling people to do 2

- Share information
- Go to Police Surgeries, lobby for PACT priorities
- Lobby PCCs
- Use the Police 10-point plan
- REPORT IT . . . and report it often
- Report it as a Hate Crime
- Alert Safeguarding

What we are asking for

- Improved links between Safeguarding, the Police, and other agencies at a local level.
- Local protocols.
- Third party and supported reporting.
- Better recording.
- Joint approach to MCA issues, e.g. how are initial capacity assessments being made?
- 'Victimless' prosecutions
- More research (esp. cyber exploitation; front line Police response)

Two new projects

- 'Helping Each Other'
(Peer Education/Sexual Exploitation)
- SaferNet (Social Media Hate & Mate Crime) –
safernet.org.uk



Safety Net



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