

2. Summary of application

In no more than 400 words please use this space to describe your project. Include details of the problem that was addressed a description of the initiative, the main intervention principles and what they were designed to achieve, the main outcomes of project particularly in relation to the problem, evidence was used in designing the programme and how the project is evaluated.

William J. Gallagher. ©

Randall Close Day Centre Service Manager.

I originally came to England to specialize in the care of the dying and work in palliative care. Having spent 10 years working in this field, I began to question why there was such strong focus and effort exercised in the quality and dignity of life in its final stages. Why is it that this philosophy, which is so important, should be reserved for the care of the dying, when dignity and quality of life should apply to all life equally?

For eight years now I have worked with Leonard Cheshire with this philosophy in mind. I originally worked in a day service in Westminster providing services for people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments. I progressed to a day service in Hackney that I managed for 4 years and now am the service manager of a day centre in Battersea, Wandsworth. I provide support in two independent living units within the borough and also provide an enabling service for disabled people within the local community to access community services.

A common factor within each of the boroughs is that disabled and vulnerable people rarely liaise one-on-one with community services such as the police. It can be acknowledged and assumed that this can be attributed to poor accessibility at community police stations. I recognize that the disability discrimination act will address these issues. But I would argue that the explanation for this lack of communication runs much deeper. It is a real problem that subtly affects the lives of many disabled people. A solution is crucial to how effective community services such as the police are or will be perceived in the future by this particular minority group. The root to this problem is that for whatever reason communication between police authorities and disabled people has broken down.

One of my major concerns, having worked within three boroughs in London is that if we are not careful in the manner in which we interact with disabled people, we run the risk that we manage people's lives to such an extent that it becomes a control mechanism. The outcome being that decision making can become no longer the individual's. All service providers within local communities have a responsibility to disabled people to ensure that their needs are met in a way that quality and dignity of life is fundamental and this should not just be the responsibility of charities such as Leonard Cheshire and the local authorities who provide services for disabled people within the community and in this case the Borough of Wandsworth.

Many disabled people within our local communities have lost the will or ability to make choices and take responsibility because of 'well-intentioned' people like us. A frequent comment made by wheelchair users is "Why do people direct questions to the person pushing me and not to myself"? The misconception being; 'if I cannot care or speak for myself the assumption is that I cannot think for myself; so why bother'. This mindset is very dangerous because the outcome is silence.

Crime affects everybody, but some figures suggest that some may be more vulnerable than others. 'In 2001/2002 8% of disabled people were victims of violent crime compared to 4% of non-disabled people'. 'www.csreurope.org/csinfo/csrdisability/DisabilityFactsandfigures/' and remember this only a statistic of reported crime. It is terrifying to imagine the possibility that some crimes towards disabled people may go unreported because of fears, prejudice or ignorance.

We provide services within Wandsworth borough for up to 200 people, living with disabilities. Our services reflect the diversity of culture living within its community. One of the core values of the organisation in which I work is to enable and empower disabled people in making choices and taking responsibility for their lives.

I have on many occasions over the last number of years liaised with community police on behalf of vulnerable people and consequently by this process have taken accessibility issues out of the equation. It has been extremely difficult and frustrating to explain to a station receptionist officer in a public arena the purpose and reason to why I was reporting a crime on behalf of another person who was vulnerable whilst endeavoring to be respectful of their dignity.

3. Description of project

Describe the project following the guidance given in no more than 4000 words
Three examples where I feel the system failed the victim to crime.

Case study 1: (2004)

Whilst working in Hackney, a disabled gentleman with a head injury in his early 30's was mugged on his way home from our day service. Because of his physical condition he suffers from muscle spasms and has slurred speech. He made his way to the local police station and endeavoured to report the crime. Due to the lack of awareness of disability, the receptionist repeatedly asked him if he had been drinking, making assumptions based on what they saw. The young gentleman became frustrated and upset which resulted in further spasms. This resulted in him being arrested.

Case study 2: (2005)

Philip is in his late forties and lives in Wandsworth. He is a political refugee from Yugoslavia; he is a survivor of a land mine explosion and lost both arms along with extensive burns. Philip lives independently with support and spends time visiting friends in the community. Once you know and understand Philip's life experience and start to look at Philip, then it becomes clear to why he feels threatened around uniformed authority. He was a victim of crime and was scared to personally report it. I went with his consent to the police station to report the crime and to attempt to re-establish his faith. I made several attempts to inform the receptionist that this was 3rd party reporting and being careful not to breach confidentiality in a public area, I tried to describe the sensitive nature and the vulnerability of this gentleman and his fear of attending. Despite all my efforts, I was met with an unmoveable barrier and informed, he would have to attend personally. We are talking about a survivor of genocide who had become a victim of robbery, and then a further victim of policy. Clearly '*Disabled People and the Police, a new relationship*' a paper published for the MPA to which I will refer later, had failed Philip.

Case study 3: (2005)

A young man in his late twenties with a cognitive impairment due to a head injury mobilises with the use of a wheelchair and lives within the borough of Wandsworth. He alleged that he had been abused. Leonard Cheshire policy on reporting abuse, either physical or sexual states that it must be reported to the police. I went to the local police station and as above experienced the same difficulties in trying to enable the receptionist to recognise the sensitive nature of this 3rd party report. I explained this young man's disability in the hope that prompt action would have been seen as necessary. From this point on, knowing that time was of vital importance my line manager and I were in frequent contact with the police to ascertain what steps or progress was being made. With our crime reference number, we spoke to so many different people at different levels of authority that it distinctly felt as if no one was aware of the urgency in collating a statement. Despite offering support in acquiring a statement, the whole process went on for over 3 months by which time no evidence could be found. No evidence would be found if a prompt statement is not taken from a person with a cognitive impairment within hours of the report.

In identifying problems such as these examples, I am not pointing a finger of blame at the door of the police services but am trying to highlight the existence of barriers between two sections of the community through the lack of communication. Over the last 8 years of working with disabled people within this city, I have been faced with exactly these same barriers when I endeavored to establish a relationship with local community police services. Furthermore my offers of support to the police in meeting the needs of disabled people in these communities were rejected. The report commissioned for the MPS '*Disabled People and the Police, a new relationship*' acknowledges that the needs of disabled people in our community are not being met and until it is put into practise it just remains an academic piece of work. It is now time to act on this information. The examples above are too many. In conclusion, I have worked at the Leonard Cheshire Randall Close Day Centre for people with physical disabilities for the last 5 years. We have Battersea police station 50 yards away from our doorstep. Despite the amount of officers that come and go from that station, it was only in June of 2005 that they became aware of our existence through our two day Community Safety event organised in conjunction with 'Wandsworth Community Safety Team'.

According to a recent article *'Tackling crime against disabled people'* by Ian Cook for the BBC on 8 December 2005, *'exact figures about offences against disabled people are difficult to come by'*. In December 2006, part of the 2005 Disability Discrimination Act will become law. This in effect means that *'public bodies – including councils, police authorities and chief police officers – will soon have a duty to promote disability equality, and this can include areas such as tackling harassment of disabled people'*. Ian Cook. In 2007 through the Equality bill, the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) will take over from the Disability Rights Commission. They will have the power to ensure that agencies have systems in place to monitor disability hate crime. It is encouraging to see in the same article that the MPS in London already seems to have such a system at least.

But before you can tackle any issues in relation to promoting the rights of disabled people you must have some understanding of disabled issues but more importantly as I have made reference to before, if you cannot talk to disabled people, *ref: all case studies*, on an equal level then there is no point in advocating their rights. Ghandi once said 'If you want to change the world, be that change'; it begins with each one of us and our attitudes towards people with disabilities. After all, these people we're providing services for in this borough today are your mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. Talk to them and not the people around them.

As part of my research on how the police can solve this problem, I discovered on the MPA website a paper *'Disabled People and the Police – a new relationship'* (2 December 2004. Report: 5), commissioned by the Metropolitan Police Authority. Unless I had not accessed the web site, I would still be unaware of its existence. There certainly has not been very much physical evidence seen in practice. I am fortunate to be able to access a web site; many disabled people are not. I wonder how many police officers in this city are aware of this document? Some that I have spoken to were not. According to statistics done at the time, of 7.2 million people living in London, 1.7 million are described as disabled and it is assumed that these statistics are under-estimated. When making reference to 1.7 million people described as disabled people, I would challenge that there are 1.7 million people living in London with disabilities. People first, disabilities secondary. It is crucial that we look at the individual in provision of services.

This report was conducted for the MPA and disabled people. It mentions that the intentions of the report 'are to help influence MPA policy towards policing, and to help disabled people campaign for changes in the way the police service meet disabled people's needs'.

I am quite sure that many of the people with disabilities we provide a service for have no knowledge of its existence either. It is an excellent report but how can disabled people campaign and tell the MPS what kind of service they want if they are not aware of the report? If disabled people are at the heart of London's community and if they are fully represented in London's diverse ethnic communities, who is listening to the individual?

In June of 2005 we celebrated Leonard Cheshire week. I used this opportunity to make contact with Wandsworth Community Safety Team to organise a 2-day event so that all these community services could be brought face to face with disabled people in order to re-establish their relationship.

I was concerned that our service users were very isolated from the police and community safety services. They ascertained that there appeared to be no clear lines/methods of communication and no literature on personal safety and crime prevention for people with disabilities.

The Council and the Council's Community Safety Team have a long-standing excellent working partnership with Wandsworth Police and therefore were best placed to assist. Their partners were brought together at meetings at Randal Close to gain an understanding of their concerns and discuss the issues and the best ways forward to break down existing barriers and introduce long-term improvements, beginning with communication.

It was quickly identified that this was an area of crime prevention and community safety that had been neglected, albeit unintentionally. It was agreed that one of the first major steps would be to hold two Community Safety days at Randall Close. These events would bring together the Police, Fire Brigade, Victim Support and the Community Safety Team. It would not be about just crime and dealing with the results of it but also quality of life issues and would aim to give disabled people confidence and ownership (as much as possible) for their safety at home and out on the street. Fear of crime is often far greater than the actual level of crime. For most disabled people this fear is heightened even more and often traps them in their own homes too afraid to go out. They lose their self-confidence

and self esteem and life becomes a challenge.

One of the main aims of the initiative was to break down the “visual barriers” sometimes caused by uniformed figures and to reassure the service users that the emergency services were actually not just for emergencies and could provide vital support and assistance in prevention and safety. This would include introducing them to and setting up regular contact with the Safer Neighbourhood Policing.

The Community Safety Events were held on the eighth and tenth of June 2005. Experienced practitioners were on hand to give advice on distraction burglary, protecting your home from crime and fire, looking after your safety when out and about and a whole host of other crime prevention and community safety tips. All those users taking part were offered an enormous amount of support.

A questionnaire was devised to ascertain what type of home the service users lived in, its security (or lack of) what fire safety measures were (or were not) in place. How safe did they feel out and about and were there particular areas in the borough of Wandsworth that made them feel particularly unsafe. Had they been victims of crime and if so, what type, when where and were the incidents reported? Assistance was given to fill in the questionnaires and the results were analysed and collated.

In brief, the analysis showed that almost 50% lived alone. 69% did not have a door bar or door chain, 60% did not have a door viewer and 36% only had one lock on the front door. 57% felt unsafe in their own home and only 55% felt unsafe out and about. 50% felt unsafe in specific areas of the borough. 51% had been a victim of crime – mostly burglary. 40% had not reported it to the police. 66% requested a home security visit.

It was recognised that this opportunity should be offered to all disabled people in the borough and funding was sought to pay a part-time person to be seconded to the Community Safety Team in conjunction with Leonard Cheshire for two days a week to extend this work across the borough. Joe Royle, Borough Commander responded to this problem in paying for this role for a period of 6 months to establish more accurate statistics. This was for me a huge breakthrough and a clear example of the police services within the borough acknowledging and taking responsibility for the quality and dignity of the lives of disabled people within the borough of Wandsworth. For me this was the start of a beautiful relationship between police services and disabled people and a partnership with Leonard Cheshire services in conjunction with Wandsworth Community Safety Team. The role includes making contact with all disabled people in the borough, supporting them with questionnaires and assisting them with obtaining advice and contacts on crime reporting. Furthermore it was acknowledged by the Borough Commander that facilities such as Leonard Cheshire’s services in Wandsworth would be ideal locations for officers to see disabled people in an appropriate dignified way, if they so wished.

Another action acknowledged through the support of the Community Safety Team on issues regarding safety on the streets secured support from the Acquisitive Crime Team at the Home Office who are looking at the design of wheelchairs with regard to having safe places to keep money built into the design. They are also looking at producing a crime prevention DVD for disabled people using disabled people from Leonard Cheshire Day service at Randall Close to assist in the production.

I commend the commitment and support from the Wandsworth Community Safety Team, Wandsworth Council, the Mayor and counsellors without whose support this problem would not have been responded to in acknowledging the quality and dignity of disabled people within our community.

The Council believe it is extremely important that this work should continue but further funding is required.

During this two-day event we were introduced to the Community Ward Sergeant and his team. At his suggestion it was decided that this was a long-term commitment and further discussions on how to move forward were diarized.

It became clear to the Sergeant that not only was his uniform a barrier, but that he didn’t have any previous experience to reflect on how to communicate with physically disabled people living within the community. Knowing that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) though good at training officers to investigate crimes, he was not aware of the opportunity for police staff to engage with this vast minority group. Not only were there historical & cultural barriers stopping interaction between police and physically disabled people, he was aware of physical barriers such as accessing Battersea Police Station.

Having met with myself and some of our service users and understanding the problem the issues as he saw them were.

- Access to Battersea Police Station.
- Under reporting of crime from disabled people.
- Police interaction with this minority group.

Access to Battersea Police Station was looked at, as part of the MPS Disability programme, due to the layout and angle of stairs a ramp could not be installed enabling access to the station.

He acknowledged that the under reporting of crime was supported by research from the survey conducted by Wandsworth Borough Council. during the Leonard Cheshire Community Safety Event. It showed that 51% of the persons surveyed were victims of crime and 50% of those were repeat victims. 40% had not reported the crimes against them to police.

His research identified that the Home Office on Line Offence Notification (HOLON) system, which enables crimes to be reported by a 3rd party using the Internet. This is a valuable tool as it enables details of crimes to be reported by trained staff either at the vulnerable person's home if they have internet access or alternatively at the Leonard Cheshire Day Centre. The information within the report also assists police as to whom to contact should there be communication issues that would require specialist skills beyond that offered by the police

He therefore arranged a training package for the staff at Randall Close in the use of HOLON. This included visiting the Borough Crime Management Unit at Battersea Police Station to enable them an insight as to what happens to the reports once they press the send button and are given a reference number.

To tackle police interaction with disabled people at Leonard Cheshire, there is now a notice board in the centre's hallway with a map and photographs of each ward team within the borough of Wandsworth. This has now brought police, community service right into the lives of disabled people, so that visually the disabled people that access our service from the entire borough can see who their ward officer is. And it has been acknowledged that if any of our service users with a visual impairment who would like to meet their ward, that this could also be arranged. This has been a huge success and is something that should within every service such as ours within the country, because what it does is personalises a service, it brings the humanity behind the uniform. He has requested that the Safer Neighbourhood Team members should attend the Leonard Cheshire service as part of their commitment and induction and for this to become best practise. The purpose for this is to establish effective communication between these two groups of people. Breaking down barriers such as fear, uniforms and authority. Creating the opportunity for officers to acknowledge the person and not the chair and in return the person and not the uniform.

This will be incorporated into the probationary officers 10 week Street Duties Course.

Currently the Safer Neighbourhood Teams are been trained there, this training will be rolled out to response teams across the Borough.

The actions according to the ward will concentrate and achieve a number of key areas.

- Staff development – being Police, Wandsworth Borough Council and Leonard Cheshire.
- The acquisition of a building designed for people with disabilities.
- To ease interaction between police and people with disabilities.
- A strategy to build partnerships with those who have a disability.

An information programme to explain to the disabled people within the community, their carers and the broader community, what police are doing and why.

Change the belief that disabled people do not feel they receive fair policing, which is deeper than accessibility to police stations. It is about challenging prejudice and openly engaging on equal terms with London's disabled communities.

I am extremely grateful to the senior officers within this borough and especially Sergeant John O'Daly and his entire team for putting into practice recommendations made by the ***'Disabled People and the Police, a new relationship'***.

On a daily basis our service users here interact with the police services and there is no doubt that disabled people who attend Leonard Cheshire Day Service at Randall Close feel safer in their homes and in their communities and have started to recognize and acknowledge that the police uniform represents safety.

As a direct result of this 2-day event with the backing of the above agencies and more on the 31st of January there will be the Launch of what is called 'The Pot in The Fridge'; **appendix 1**.

My name is William J. Gallagher and I am the service manager of the Randall Close Day Centre. I am putting forward this presentation for this award with the support of the Leonard Cheshire Services of London & Kent, Wandsworth Borough Council, Wandsworth Community Safety Team, and our new partners the Commander and his team of police within the borough of Wandsworth, the commander Jo royal and his team of police in the borough of wandsworth