

# People with learning disabilities in prison

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# What I will cover

- Film clip: Danny and Graham
- Research programme, *No One Knows*
  - Main findings from *Prisoners' Voices*
- Prevalence
- Progress...
  - Liaison and diversion services
  - Screening
  - Whole prison approach
  - Offending Behaviour Programmes for people with learning disabilities
  - Accessible information
  - Awareness training.

# Film clip: Danny and Graham

- Danny and Graham are both members of the Working for Justice Group. Members of the group have learning disabilities and direct experience of the criminal justice system. In this clip, Danny and Graham talk about their experiences of prison
- The Working for Justice Group was set up in 2006 to help the Prison Reform Trust undertake research about people with learning disabilities and difficulties in the criminal justice system. The research was called 'No One Knows'
- The group continued after the research ended. Members work as co-trainers for learning disability awareness training, as consultants – for example, for easy read documents in the criminal justice system, and speak at events
- The group is supported by KeyRing Living Support Networks, the Prison Reform Trust, and Comic Relief (funding ends 2017).

# Danny and Graham

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- Film clip:  
<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/ProjectsResearch/Learningdisabilitiesanddifficulties>



# *No One Knows*

- Three year research programme: police, criminal courts and prison
- *Prisoners Voices:*
  - 173 interviews in 14 prisons (England & Wales, and Scotland)
  - 154 with prisoners staff had identified as having a learning disability or difficulty
  - 19 with prisoners who did not have a learning disability or difficulty (comparison group)
  - Screening tools used by researchers:
    - LIPS learning disability screening tool
    - Glasgow Anxiety Scale for people with an intellectual disability
    - Glasgow Depression Scale for people with an intellectual disability.

# Main findings

- Around two-thirds of prisoners with LDD had problems reading prison information, which rose to four-fifths for those with learning disabilities
  - *If I can't read it I just get angry.*
  - *I can read some things, but not others. I skim over the words that I don't know, but then it doesn't make sense. I thought this interview was about learning to read.*
- Around two-thirds had problems filling in prison forms, which rose to three-quarters for those with learning disabilities
  - *I don't fill in any apps, I don't get anything. Nobody helps me. I get embarrassed asking for help, so I don't ask. There's no point.*
  - *That's my sort of hell, filling in forms. It sends my temper through the roof. If I cant fill it in it does my head in.*

# Main findings

- Around two-thirds experienced problems with verbal comprehension skills (LIPS screening tool)
  - *I would just act like I know what they are talking about, but then I would walk away wondering what they were talking about.*
  - *I wouldn't do anything really. I'd be too scared to ask so I'd do nothing.*
- More than half said they had difficulties making themselves understood
  - *That happens to me all the time. I muddle up words and that causes problems.*
  - *That happens most of the time. I get depressed when people don't understand me so I leave them alone – but then it doesn't get done. They say I don't explain properly. Well, if they gave me more time, I would.*

# Main findings

- Prisoners with learning disabilities or difficulties were three times more likely than other prisoners to have clinically significant anxiety or depression
- Five times more likely to have been subject to control and restraint techniques
- Three times more likely to have spent time in segregation
- Less likely than other prisoners to be in touch with family and friends
- More likely than other prisoners to spend time on their own and have fewer things to do
- Over half said they had been scared in prison, and almost half said they had been bullied.

# More quotes...

- Feeling unwell:
  - *I know you have to fill in a form, but I wouldn't know what to put.*
- Bullying:
  - *I have had lots of bullying done to me... the others make fun of me and some of the officers laugh.*
  - *I would get out of prison and wait for them, and then I would bang them when they're not expecting it.*
- Prison rules:
  - *You get beat up if you break a rule, and get taken to segregation.*
  - *Sometimes people will tip you off, but they don't tell you much. You're constantly guessing what the rules are and trying not to break them.*
- What would help?
  - *I would like someone to have a sit down and talk with, to tell me what's happening and how to do things.*
  - *There should be officers on the wings who don't open doors who can help you. There are two who are really good... like when I split up with my girlfriend, I had a talk with one of them.*

# Learning disability: prevalence

- General population: around 2.2%
- Prison population: it depends... different methodologies have returned differing results, over time:
  - 1% or less in the 1990s (Murphy et al, 1995); (Birmingham et al, 1996); (Brooke et al, 1996)
  - 23% of prisoners under 18 years have an IQ below 70 (Harrington and Bailey et al, 2005)
  - 7% of adult prisoners have an IQ below 70, and a further 25% have an IQ between 70-79 (Mottram, 2007)
  - 7% of prisoners have 'learning disabilities and difficulties' (NHS England, 2016).
- 20% of prisoners have a 'hidden disability' that will 'affect and undermine their performance in both education and work settings' (Rack, 2005)
- 20-30% of offenders have learning disabilities or difficulties that interfere with their ability to cope within the criminal justice system (Loucks, 2007).

# Progress...

- **Liaison and diversion services**
  - Screening and, where appropriate, assessment in police custody/criminal courts
  - Information into prisons
  - Referrals from prisons (some services), such as: Greater Manchester integrated healthcare in custody and wider liaison and diversion service
    - Contact: Keeley Smith, Shingai Musuka, Kirsty Simpson, North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- **Screening**
  - Liaison and diversion services, dependant on effective information flow
  - LDSQ, and other tools used in some prisons
  - OASys LD Screening Tool (contact: [Helen.wakeling@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.wakeling@noms.gsi.gov.uk))
    - 7-item tool
    - IQ cut off at 80
    - Tested and validated on men convicted of sexual crimes; further validation supports the predictive ability of the tool with a further sample.

# Progress...

- **Whole prison approach**
  - HMP Whatton (contact: [lynn.saunders@hmpps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lynn.saunders@hmpps.gsi.gov.uk))
    - LDD working group: established in 2012 and dissolved 2016 – business as usual
    - Multi-disciplinary cross prison team to look at how people with intellectual disabilities can be better supported
    - Offending Behaviour Programmes: Becoming New Me; Living as New Me; New Me Strengths
    - One to one Healthy Sex programme
    - Safer Living Foundation/Circles of Support.
  - Other examples: HMP/YOI Parc; and, later today, HMP/YOI Feltham and Greenwich prisons
- **Offending Behaviour Programmes for people with learning disabilities**
  - New Me Strengths
  - Becoming New Me Plus
  - Living as New Me
  - New Me MOT.

# Progress...

- **Accessible information**

- *Am I making myself clear?* Mencap's guidelines for accessible writing: <http://www.accessibleinfo.co.uk/pdfs/Making-Myself-Clear.pdf>
- KeyRing: easy read in the criminal justice system: <http://www.keyring.org/cjs/easy-read>
- Books Beyond Words: <https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/>

- **Awareness training**

- KeyRing Living Support Networks: contact [hugh.asher@keyring.org](mailto:hugh.asher@keyring.org) and [neisha.betts@keyring.org](mailto:neisha.betts@keyring.org)
- Local liaison and diversion services
- Community learning disability services
- NHS England prison learning disability nurses.

# Thank you

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