

How I helped to prevent Mate Crime (Tracey Seymour - Day Services Manager)

Many years ago I became involved with Keeping Safe group.

This was partnership group whose members included People with Learning Disabilities, Advocacy groups, Employment Services, Emergency Services, and Providers. The group devised the Devon Keeping Safe books, and also instigated the Devon wide Safe Place scheme

I talked about this with manager, who in turn sought DCC funding for the schemes to be rolled out across Devon. This resulted in 6 Keeping Safe champions being nominated to promote both schemes. These were all from our DCC day service provision. We were tasked with distributing the books-which DCC had purchased, each book contained 10 booklets in easy read format to help people to learn about Keeping Safe and who can help you. We were also tasked with raising awareness of the schemes.

My professional experience re Mate Crime started when I was working with a gentleman who had a learning disability. He had recently moved to the area - he is very sociable and was pleased when he was befriended at the pub by several people. They met regularly- around town, in the pub and at each others houses. They phoned each other- played darts and pool together and went out for meals. He really valued their friendship and the time they spent together.

After a while the 'friends' asked to store sealed boxes in his house. Of course he willingly did this out of kindness. He didn't think that anyone might ask him to store illegal items- for example stolen goods or drugs. When it was suggested to him that perhaps his friends might be taking advantage, of him he decided to tell his family what had happened. He then told his friends to remove their stuff from his house which they did, before the Police could check what they contained. He was most upset to think perhaps his friends had used him in this way and weren't actually true friends.

Another situation started with someone again being befriended by people who he thought of as friends. After a while he was asked by one of them to 'help them out' financially. This resulted in him drawing out a large amount of money from his bank. He gave this to his friend, but he never saw either the money or the friend again

This was raised this with the police and although the incident was caught on CCTV, because he willingly withdrew and gave the money to his friend the police couldn't proceed. He has now had a MCA assessment re his finances and I understand a best interest decision has been agreed – to say he needs support to manage financial decisions re large amounts of money- i.e. Direct Debits etc.

What advice would you give to workers who suspects Mate Crime?

If you have any concerns raise it - and it will be investigated. Better to raise it even if it is unfounded rather than ignore it, and take no action.