Engaging people with disabilities in the prevention of violence against women

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Stop! Don’t Cross the Line
violence is everybody’s business
— the development of a resource for young people with a disability

Those involved
Government and NGOs representatives participated in a Working Party. Agencies involved included:

- Yarredi Services – Pt Lincoln Regional DV&AG Service
- Pt Lincoln Community Health and Pt Lincoln Women’s Health
- Disability Services SA
- Bedford Industries
- Pt Lincoln Regional Victim Support Service
- West Coast Youth and Community Support
- Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation
- Centacare
- Carers and Community Members
- Focus Group Members

Aim
The aim was to increase awareness of what constitutes domestic violence and abuse; and to increase capacity to deal with abuse—ie what to do and where to go to get help amongst young people with disabilities.

Objective
Creation and distribution of a workshop resource (in form of DVD) to assist when working with young people with disabilities in the prevention and early intervention of abuse including domestic violence and/or sexual or other abuse.

Target group
Young people aged 18-25 years with a cognitive/learning, physical and/or mobility disability

Rationale
Women with disabilities experience a higher incidence of domestic violence, and both males and females with disabilities experience higher incidence of abuse.
Statistics
- Women with disabilities are 1/2 – 2 times more likely than non-disabled women to expense abuse\(^1\)
- Women with disabilities report more than twice the occurrence of unwanted sex by an intimate partner\(^2\)
- 6% of women and 8% of men who use the services of paid personal care attendants report being forced into unwanted sexual activity by these carers\(^3\)
- Adults with developmental disabilities have 4-10 times the risk of physical or sexual assault\(^4\)

Process

Working Party
A working party was formed and Grant application made to the Don’t Cross the Line Community Funding. Priority was on ensuring that people with disabilities shaped the project and that it was not worker driven. The focus group worked to ensure there was collaboration throughout the project and ensured consensus at every stage.

Maintaining the focus
There were some times when we were asked /considered and were even tempted to broaden the target group eg people with mental illness/drug addictions; but we worked through this and concluded that it was important to keep focused on the initial target group...if it became too broad there was a risk that it would become 'homogenised'; and therefore once again people with disabilities would be expected to ‘fit’ into this rather than keeping it made to ‘fit’ them, however having said this the resource can be used for different target groups also.

Artwork development
Teachers at the Port Lincoln High School and Port Lincoln Special School picked up the invitation to have their Art students develop artwork for the DVD and cover in the form of a competition. Teachers commented how useful this was in the discussion and learning that happened in developing the artwork. We ended up using most of the artwork either on the cover or in the DVD.

Focus groups
Three main focus groups—one with Bedford clients and staff supporting them, one for Community at the Early Childhood centre and one with the Aboriginal Community. Facilitator was new to town, so had no preconceived ideas or history. 8 questions were asked of each focus group and this provided the raw data for the development of the DVD. Focus groups were mixed gender groups, particularly with Bedford clients, and thought was considered re their current relationship status and possible effects of this discussion. The focus group at the Early Childhood Centre, had only one participant, therefore a survey was distributed and asked to be completed by carers, or persons with a disability, and anyone who was interested in providing information relevant to the project. The survey was conducted and we had sixty eight responses.

From the eight questions we asked through all of the focus groups the same answers were being discussed, there were very distinct patterns. This really helped to form the script.

\(^1\) www.equalrightscentre.org
\(^2\) Ibid
\(^3\) Ibid
\(^4\) Ibid
Script development
Five, two minute scenarios were brainstormed from the information provided in the focus groups. This included 2 positive examples of respectful relationships and 3 scenarios depicting some form of abuse. Each scenario comes with a couple of questions to explore what has happened, and what could be done. The questions are can be answered both on an individual level and as a facilitated group.

DVD production
The DVD was produced by a local filmmaker—who really became involved with the whole project and this added great insight to the filming. Also provided more flexibility in filming. Local venues were utilised for the ‘set’ and one of the Bedford clients was keen to act in the scenarios. This was done with lots of support from workers and consent from all participants. Local radio announcers and a community members volunteered their time as voice-overs to narrate the storyline.

Launch and Use of DVD
The DVD was launched locally in the local Theatre with all participants focus groups, working party and key stakeholders invited. DVD’s were distributed around Eyre Peninsula and to Women’s Health Services around Country SA. A follow-up workshop was held at Bedford utilising the DVD by a new worker not involved in its production, This was well received, being short, simple and to the point, with discreet sections which could be explored individually and allow discussion about thoughts and feelings.

Strengths

Collaboration
A partnership between Government and NGOs enabled a comprehensive and effective collaboration.

Planning
Initial planning was followed by ongoing evaluation and further planning—all of which featured flexibility and willingness to adapt as the project progressed.

Consultation with key stakeholders
Consultation took place with both individuals and groups. In particular the young people with disabilities themselves (both male and female), as well as carers, family members, service providers and members of the general community took part in Focus Group Consultations. These were facilitated by members of the Working Party.

Flexibility and patience (persistence)
Time frames were made flexible and were often extended to enable full consultation at all stages of the project. The Working Party showed a willingness to ensure the success of the project by making changes and adapting to emerging needs.

Utilising local talent and expertise
The combined knowledge and experience of working group members was utilised in the planning, consultation, focus groups, and collection and collation of information.

A local filmmaker was engaged to assist with the technical, artistic and practical activities related to the production of the final product.

Local children and young people from Pt Lincoln High School and Pt Lincoln Special School, and Bedford Industries provided artwork which was utilised both in the DVD and on the cover.
Key outcomes

- One of the most important outcomes was the increased understanding of what constitutes abusive behaviour, plus knowledge of how and where to get help, resulted from both the focus group consultations and the presentation of the DVD-based workshop. This was evidenced by the participant responses in evaluation forms regarding types of abuse and how they might seek help. There was also demonstrated appreciation by the target cohort for the opportunity to explore and openly discuss the issues.

- Participant organisations have also reported enhanced working relationships and increased insight have resulted.

- Production of a preventative tool in the form of a workshop resource to assist with ongoing education and awareness raising of domestic violence, sexual assault, and abuse of young people with a disability.

Funding

Don’t Cross the Line Community Education Grant, from the South Australian Attorney-General’s Department, through the SA Office For Women.

Undertaken over a two-year period: April 2011 – April 2013.