

TDI 25 YEARS EVENT

Friends and supporters of the charity TDI met recently to celebrate a quarter of a century of its work. Founded in 1993 following the Cleveland child abuse enquiry, TDI has a strong track record of research, training and project work engaging lay people in making public spaces safer.

The event was kindly hosted by Muckle's LLP at their offices in central Newcastle. Senior partner of Muckle's, Hugh Welch welcomed guests and explained that his firm had supported TDI for many years as an organisation making a difference to work-place safety. The current context of concern about sexual harassment in the work-place makes TDI's work particularly relevant to many employers and he was keen to promote TDI's training to his clients and contacts.

Sue Winfield, Lord Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, and a founding Trustee of TDI, spoke about the influence of TDI in developing collaborative approaches to extremely sensitive issues, and highlighted examples of the benefit to statutory agencies. She spoke in particular of the Sexual Behaviour Unit which was initiated as a partnership between health, criminal justice, and the voluntary sector, and of the impact of TDI's work on housing sex offenders released from prison, research into young offenders, and into the care needs of elderly perpetrators.

TDI CEO Deborah Jenkins presented a short history of TDI, picking out core themes of particular note through its quarter century. These included TDI's work on multi-agency partnership, which contributed to the development of MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) which are now the norm across the UK. She spoke about Leisurewatch, TDI's membership programme for public spaces, and reminded guests that it had now been running for 15 years and more than 14,000 people had been trained to prevent sexual offending in leisure centres, shopping centres, libraries, bus stations, and many other venues. Another strand was the development of a comprehensive portfolio of specialist training which enabled TDI to tailor programmes for a wide range of organisations, ranging from those delivering universal services such as housing or care, through to highly specialised providers including prisons, hostels, and voluntary organisations working with high risk offenders. TDI's ability to respond to issues as they arise and to develop creative approaches through partnership was in Deborah's view one of the main reasons why it had survived through 25 years in a difficult field despite the pressures on all small charities.

The keynote presentation was given by Professor Hazel Kemshall, the UK's leading expert on prevention of violence. (Text available on the TDI website) A supporter of TDI for most of its history, having written about its work in a number of academic publications, she led the audience through a thought-provoking series of facts and figures.

- About 473,000 adults in the UK are victims of sexual offences
- 1 in 20 children in the UK have been sexually abused
- A third of those were abused by an adult and did not tell
- 90% are abused by someone they know
- Up to 1.3 million children living in England will be a victim of sexual abuse by the time they turn 18

She praised TDI's approach to this very challenging arena through the Leisurewatch programme.

"They (TDI) have made it possible for ordinary people to talk about the 'unspeakable', and to make the invisible visible. Importantly they are able to make everyone feel that they are capable of making a positive contribution to risk reduction. TDI gives practical and effective expression to prevention....."

So, what is unique and important about TDI? Well, it was amongst the first charities to take the environmental management of sexual offence risk seriously through the Leisurewatch initiative. In effect, Leisurewatch highlighted the importance and effectiveness of managing space and environments in order to manage the risk; they work with organisations to create and enhance natural vigilance, and to improve the confidence and competence of those watching; and importantly Leisurewatch turns bystanders into interveners. Organisations become risk aware and effective in their broader risk management responsibilities.

In essence, Leisurewatch and other aspects of TDI, creates environments within which violence cannot thrive.....

In addition, Leisurewatch has a proven track record, and is transferable across contexts and environments, such as shopping malls, care homes etc; and is applicable to a wide range of violence prevention scenarios including workplace violence and the PREVENT agenda..... It seems to me that TDI provide an enormous public good at a very good price."

Professor Kemshall concluded by proposing a policy shift towards greater emphasis on prevention, and hoped that TDI might receive wider acknowledgement for its ground-breaking work.

Guests toasted the success of TDI and wished it well as it embarks on its next quarter century.

For more information about TDI, Leisurewatch, and the tailored training programmes, look on www.tdi.org.uk