**Transcript: YDRF Disability Hate Podcast Episode 4**

**Recorded on 4 August 2022**

**SPEAKERS**

Astrid, Olivia

**Olivia**

[0:03]

Hi, I'm Olivia, and I'm a volunteer with York Disability Rights Forum. And today I'll be talking to Astrid on their experiences of disability hate to raise awareness of lived experience of disabled people. So the first question is: the definition of a hate crime by the CPS is defined as any incident/crime, which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility prejudiced based on a person's disability, or perceived disabilities. So how do you feel about this definition?

**Astrid**

[0:35]

Yeah, yeah, there were a lot of words that sort of jumped out at me which I'm, I did a lot of thinking around one, and I probably overthought a lot of them and found balancing it all - But, um, yeah, I mean, I'll tell you which words did that like the word perceived by the victim. I think whilst that is, you know, could be seen as person centred, it is your feelings and thoughts that are important here. You know, using the word something like the word *perception* or *perceived* can also take away from the realness of something also. So, if a hate crime has been perpetrated, it has been perpetrated. So, you know, I think the word perceived could sort of detract from the realness of situations, potentially just things like the word hostility, or, as well, you know - the breadth of some of the words. I'm quite interested in the use of some of the language.

You know, sometimes using words that the meaning of is open to interpretation, or perception and judgement, and things like that can, can leave a lot of room. It can be really inclusive because it can bring people in. But conversely, it can be really exclusive as well. I've seen it in so many interactions that I've had with services and stuff, and the use of language is there and perhaps this is a slightly negative lens that I'm viewing it from but in some of my experiences with conversations I've had around language and often, when there's a breadth of interpretation of a word, it's often used to sort of exclude people rather than bring people in. So you know, I guess in my mind, that's a little bit of a concern.

Yeah, but also, I mean, I know this is specific to disability, but you know, the definition of hate crime, it includes religion, race, sexuality, all that sort of thing. So I'm aware of it trying to be inclusive. And I also know there's a debate around misogyny because the first thing I thought when, you know, thinking about my own experiences of what potentially might be deemed as hate crimes, and yeah, I think very much for me, a lot of my experiences have been around specifically being female. So it felt really important. I know that there's a debate around that, currently, thankfully, that it should be brought into this. I don't quite know where it stands today.

**Olivia**

[2:53]

No, I don’t either - because I’ve also looked into that sort of term and they were trying to get it, you know, under the definition of a hate crime. So, I'm the same, I don’t know where they’ve got with it at the moment, but it would be interesting to know.

**Astrid**

[3:06]

Yeah, yeah. And, you know, it's all about subtleties as well, isn't it? It's not just about the big, defined events, it's all about the subtleties of judgement and perception as well, that can have a massive impact on people's life, which are not necessarily included in in this sort of big, broad, you know, legality, which is obviously important, because there needs to be accountability. But wow, it's much, much bigger than this. But obviously, this is, it's important to have legality around it for sure.

Yeah, so I've got many mixed feelings around the definition. I think [there’s the issue around] inclusive/exclusive, a lot of questions around some of the language that they've used. I am not questioning the need for things to be held accountable, and that there be legislation around such things. But there's so much room for more in here.

**Olivia**

[3:58]

Definitely, I think it's quite a complex definition as well. But, sort of moving on to the next one - do you think the pandemic has made any differences in disability hate crime or in the way disabled people are seen?

**Astrid**

[4:14]

From a local perspective, from just my experience of living in a relatively small community in York, what I did see, was people starting to care about people a little bit more or not necessarily that they didn't, but it was just articulated because we were in very unusual circumstances and people started to ask people how they were feeling, and if they're okay, and if they need any help.

So what I did see was a sort of a generosity of spirit, which I assume that most people have anyway, but this precipitated that actually becoming an external thing. And I think people were interacting more around people and acknowledging the fact that things like isolation, massive change in personal circumstances, can impact some people in terms of potentially their mental health and people with differing abilities, for example, who may have had support around getting their food in or whatever the situation might be, they just needed a little bit of extra help.

You know, I did notice that people were asking people more if they needed extra help, which was wonderful, which was wonderful. But, you know, I was interested again, and I often see these things and I always like to do a little bit of research myself, but, you know, when I did have a look, the incidences of reported hate crime had gone up. And there was some correlation with a change in the reporting structure. But, you know, they did attribute some of it to be a real increase in hate crime. And some of it was attributed to the fact that people were online, and potentially more susceptible to conspiracy theories, or misinformation, and things like that. So I could see it from both sides, you know, that sometimes stressful, threatening situations can trigger reactions in people or put them into unusual circumstances, which manifest in these ways, sadly.

But also, I saw a real generosity of spirit, you know, people actually caring about other people. And as I said before, I assume that from people anyway, but you know, it may manifest by the situation. So it was more obvious to me - people asking, *actually genuinely asking* and having conversations particularly about mental health.

**Olivia**

[6:24]

Yeah. Do you think it's changed? Obviously, we're not out of the pandemic fully. But do you think it has changed a little bit from people wanting to help each other out?

**Astrid**

[6:31]

I think, as I said, I think it's always been innate within people. I think it's more explicit now, which is wonderful. Yeah. And I do think it might have made people more aware, perhaps people I mean, you know, this is all guessing, but perhaps people that hadn't necessarily had any particular issues with any disability, whether it be mental health, physical health, whatever it may be, in the past, you know, for some people, it might have been a new experience of anxiety, or fear or some of those feelings, and maybe there might have been more people starting to understand some of this language and what other people go through and realising the value of our connection.

Because I think as human beings, we know that we need connection as human beings. We know that and we generally, most of us, we’re fortunate enough to be able to do that. We have connection and it's vital, and I think when that was taken away, I think it possibly may have put some people in other people's shoes as well. You know, lack of connection does impact your mental health and there are people in society that are isolated because of various reasons because of disability, one form or another. So yeah, it may well have made people think. I don't know, but I certainly saw from my own interactions, an increase in compassion, or at least an articulation of an increase in compassion.

**Olivia**

[7:52]

Yeah. That's a good take on it. So what do you think are the impacts of disability hate? It’s quite a broad question, really.

**Astrid**

[8:01]

Oh, my goodness. Uh, yeah, I imagine it is manifold and huge. I mean, all the way down from, you know, if a horrific crime has been perpetrated against you, because of who you are, just who you happen to be, at that given moment in your life. Horrific, you know, there are horrific consequences for some people. I think on a more subtle note - you know, I talked about the subtleties; the definitions don't encompass the subtleties of it - but I imagine that some people experience it on a day-to-day basis, on a daily basis, whether it's feelings of self hatred, of guilt, of shame, of lack of self esteem, simply because who you are.

And I know, from my personal experience, in terms of, you know, I'm recovering from addiction and I've had poor mental health, for many years, fluctuating for me. And I know that there are subtleties. And it wasn't a conversation I felt very comfortable to have, but I do now. I do now, because things have shifted, and I think the narrative is shifting, but certainly for many, many years, it wasn't something that um, that I wanted to talk about.

And I would avoid situations. I think that people actually might structure their lives differently, to avoid certain situations, if they're able to go to those situations - I’m talking about external places. You know, they may structure their life differently to avoid potential conflict impacted by other people, which saddens me that, you know, people have to rearrange their life to avoid situations and I can imagine. That's an absolute real thing. I know it from myself. And it’s sort of just personal as well. It’s massive, it's a societal thing; it changes the way or it can influence the way that society behaves. And yeah, I mean, talking about the individual is very important but you know, it's huge as well. It's all about sort of victim culture, it's about social cohesion, it's about communities, it’s about everything. So the impact’s been massive. And you know, you could talk forever about the specifics of it. But yeah, massive on every level. There’s the subtlety of whether to go to the shop if you're able to do that or not, or which route you might take - to those underlying feelings of shame and guilt and anger and fear that you may feel but not articulate - to the obvious real life horrible consequences of hate.

**Olivia**

[10:30]

Yeah. And I think moving on to the next one, if you would like to share, can you tell us about a situation where disability hate was dealt with well? So this can be in general, or it could also be a personal experience.

**Astrid**

[10:47]

Hmm. It's really interesting. I haven't in recent history been in a situation where I can think of an example of where I've seen disability hate been turned into positive or handled well, but I certainly know from some of my experiences in the past. I mean, what really struck me about this question was personal experience. It didn't necessarily fit into the definition. But it would certainly be - you know, that's why misogyny was important to me, because I've got a few decades behind me now, and I know as a younger woman, in my 20s, that I was very much subjected to, I can only deem as, misogynistic acts because the brutality of them was such that I couldn’t, not *only*, but certainly I couldn't have any other feelings into how someone could perpetrate that sort of thing to another human being without being fueled with something akin to hate, right?

So I've got many examples of that, sadly, that happened to me. And the narrative was such back then that for me anyway, the way that I’d possibly been conditioned, was we don't talk about those things. And it was very much a failing on my behalf that I shouldn't have been out at that time; I shouldn't have been walking down that road at that time; I certainly shouldn't have had a drink at that point in my life, you know. So, therefore, it became very much about personal responsibility and that felt like it was very much a narrative, and how to turn that into a positive. I know that there's more discussion now. And I know that, thank goodness, that we can have more of a dialogue about it and utterly the whole narrative needs reframing to talk about perpetrators, rather than - I don't even like the word victim - but the people that these acts are perpetrated upon. You know, we need to flip it all the way around and look at the perpetrators' behaviour and how that's coming about, and what we need to do to address that. What we need to do, what sort of conversations do we need to invite people into to make that change?

**Olivia**

[12:15]

A hundred percent. And yeah, I think you're taught even - I've been taught from a young age - don't go out at this time, make sure you're always with a group of people. Like even someone in my family said it to me the other day when I went out with some friends, like, oh, make sure you're not by yourself, or you don't drink too much. And it's, you know, we shouldn't always have to be consistently [aware]. And I think we follow it as well. And then bad things still happen. So you think to yourself, well, the problem isn't with us. Like, you need to switch this and change it. But there are a lot of people doing things. Like I'm working on stuff to do with public sexual assault on transport and things like that. So, I think it is positive that there are people doing stuff about it, and just having the conversation like here and now.

**Astrid**

[13:34]

Yes, thank goodness and conversations that, you know, we absolutely need to have. And I know it's more out there now thankfully. But you know, I'd hate for another generation of women to have guilt and shame because of what someone else did to them. That makes me feel sad that that has to continue or might continue.

So, and also on another note of personal experience - you know, we talk about disability as I've talked about my mental health and addiction before that can be classed as a disability or mental health. Yeah, I've had many experiences - my drinking, my addiction led me into severe consequences in my life; there were convictions etcetera. And some of it was very public and I take full responsibility for those things that happened but a consequence of that sort of publicity, if you like, is very much negative online hate. So I got so much kind of trolling and, you know, all that sort of thing to which I couldn't indulge, I didn't want to because my mental health was such that I needed to protect myself and actually get to a position where I was feeling well - more well - than I was.

So, that kind of thing is just terrific, and it's really hateful. And it's an interesting kind of development, you know, a long standing development. Well it’s not a development now, of how narratives can change when people are behind a screen and how it somehow is so much more hateful. Because of the potential and the anonymity behind it. And it's funny how it can psychologically change what people would ordinarily say to other people. So, I would say that's interesting. That's a very generous word.

But yeah, so I've had many an example of discrimination on that and turning it into a positive. The only way that I've found to turn it into a positive - again, through personal experience - is to be able to talk about it. And if people have experienced this sort of thing, this is not, for me, an instantaneous point that you can get to. It has to be the right time, and you can't expect people to have free flowing dialogue about things that are extremely traumatic for them at that given point in their life.

So when that person is ready, talking about it can be of immense help. And I'm not talking just about in a therapeutic manner, which of course it can be. But also, you know, I had a little think about it. And I thought to myself, and I don't go out to do this - this is not about necessarily trying to change things from a personal perspective. It is about just, you know, if I can talk, perhaps someone else might want to talk and if there's one person who doesn't have to go through what I went through because we've had a conversation, that would make me so so happy, because, you know, I think that it's so important that we're able to talk about it. It really is. And I know it sounds like a bit of a cliche, but it's a cliche because it's true. And it's vital and important. And we take away the stigma, we take away the power, we make it more normal, because, you know, disability, physical, mental - there are lots of people with it, you know, obvious or not so obvious, walking around today that the whole idea of ‘the normal’ [is negative], and it's because we don't have these conversations. We don't know what people are going through. We don't know what people are experiencing, and we need to start talking about it. And that's that. And we are, and we are sitting here today and doing that. But yeah, that would be - I haven't got an example of, you know, an actual real life example of seeing that. But I do know through the last few years of being more open about these things that there are ripples, you know, and we need to keep talking.

**Olivia**

[17:26]

Yeah, no, I want to say a massive thank you for talking to me today. I really appreciate you sharing your thoughts and your experiences with me. Thank you.

**Astrid**

[17:35]

Thanks very much, Olivia.

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