



# Working with People with Learning Disabilities and Offending Behaviour

A handbook

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and Steve Hardy

Foreword by Nick Bouras

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# Foreword

Forensic issues for people with learning disabilities have attracted a lot of attention in recent years with the implementation of community care programmes. This publication is an important addition to our knowledge in the field and it is exceptionally noteworthy in addressing best practice and training.

Conceptual issues related to the definition of learning disabilities and forensic issues, particularly unreported offending behaviour, complicate the understanding of the association between offending behaviour and learning disabilities. The prevalence of people with learning disabilities and forensic issues varies with laws, social policy and the presence of alternative rehabilitation and support systems in place.

Following deinstitutionalisation, the needs of people with learning disabilities and offending behaviour – some of whom also have additional mental health problems – have been overlooked, in spite of a few innovative community care schemes for some subgroups of people. Service provision has lagged behind developments for local services, resulting in many people with learning disabilities and forensic needs being placed in residential facilities a long way from their local communities, and at times in unnecessary restrictive environments. The lack of training in how to address their needs has contributed to the creation of a vacuum of know-how for this population, with adverse effects on their quality of life. The coexistence of mental health problems for a sizeable number of people with learning disabilities has further exaggerated the problems. Care for people with learning disability and forensic needs requires strong interfaces and partnership between learning disabilities, mental health and forensic services. Such links are still weak and hampered by ideologies, insufficient policies and shortage of resources.

This comprehensive publication is well presented and structured in four parts. These include an overview including the historical context, legal and ethical issues, mental disorder and offending, and clinical working. It promises to be a most useful tool that can be used to facilitate training and improve our understanding and practices in a most needed area for supporting people with learning disabilities. The book and training resource are user-friendly in format and the way they are written, and follow a well-established series of publications by the Estia Centre.

I am very pleased to welcome this publication on issues in forensic learning disabilities with the excellent contributions by colleagues with knowledge and a wide range of expertise in practice, training and service developments.

It is my hope that this book and training resource will contribute to raising the awareness of all concerned about the needs of people with learning disabilities and forensic issues, and facilitate the necessary reforms.

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# Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the handbook and training resource with a special thanks to Dene Robertson for all his extra help and input.

Thank you to Mary Williams and Sarah Halls for their help in proofreading and to the service users at the Eric Shepherd Unit, Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust for their involvement.

# Contributors

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**Christopher Bennett** is a consultant clinical psychologist working at the Eric Shepherd Unit, part of Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. He is a co-facilitator of the sex offender treatment programme run by the unit and works individually with men with learning disabilities who have sexually offended. He provides teaching on forensic issues for people with learning disabilities for two Doctorate in Clinical Psychology training courses. He has also provided training sessions to the probation and police services, on sexual offending in men with learning disabilities.

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**Eddie Chaplin** is the principal strategy/research nurse at the Estia Centre, having previously spent over 20 years managing and working within the Mental Impairment Evaluation Service (MIETS) and Behavioural Disorders Services at the Bethlem Royal Hospital. Eddie teaches on a number of academic courses, including the MRCPsych, and devised a forensic module for the MSc Mental Health in Learning Disabilities at the Institute of Psychiatry, along with a 30-credit forensic learning disabilities short course. His current research and clinical interests include self-help for people with learning disabilities, physical restraint and offending behaviour.

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**Quinton Deeley** specialises in developmental psychiatry, particularly disorders of social cognition such as autism spectrum disorders and personality disorders associated with challenging behaviours and forensic presentations. In addition to his work as a consultant psychiatrist at the Mental Impairment Evaluation Service (MIETS) and Behavioural Genetics Clinic at the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust, and as consultant psychiatrist at the Springs Unit, Cygnet Hospital Harrow, he is senior lecturer in social behaviour

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**Sarah Halls** is the training officer at the Estia Centre. She graduated in 2002 with a BSc (Hons) in Psychology. Previously, Sarah has worked in outreach, residential and day services for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. She has also worked as an assistant psychologist, helping to develop and run a specialist assessment and treatment unit for people with learning disabilities and severely challenging behaviour.

**Steve Hardy** is the training and consultancy manager at the Estia Centre, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. He has worked in services for people with learning disabilities for 20 years. He has focused in the area of mental health problems, specifically developing training materials and guidance on best practice for a range of professionals.

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**Helen Philp** qualified as an occupational therapist in 1992, working in a range of psychiatric settings and developing a specialism in learning disabilities, mental health and offending behaviour. She qualified as a systemic family therapist in 2000 and continued working in the same field for a number of years before transferring to child and adolescent mental health services.

**Dene Robertson** is a consultant psychiatrist and specialises in working with adults with neurodevelopmental disorders and challenging behaviours on the MIETS and Behavioural Disorders Unit at the Maudsley Centre for Behavioural Disorders. His research interests include the determinants of behavioural disorder, developmental disorder and psychosis.

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**Matthew Stewart** is the manager of forensic services for Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust, which encompasses the Eric Shepherd Unit. This provides 36 medium-secure beds for men with learning disabilities, a community forensic service, court diversion services and a prison in-reach team at HMP the Mount. He began his nursing career in the late 1980s, working in one of the old institutions in central Scotland (RSNH). Since 1992, he has worked in a range of forensic services, both in the NHS and independent sectors, which included setting up a learning disability medium secure unit at the North London Forensic Services.

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