

BOLTON ADULT ASPERGER SUPPORT

Minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2014

1. In attendance: Eleven members and one guest

Apologies were received from Philip Martin, Helen Green, Julie Martin and Stuart Ball

2. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman extended a warm welcome to all members and introduced the guest speaker, Detective Inspector Phil Key from Greater Manchester Police Authority.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 18th December 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th December were accepted as a correct record

4. Matters arising from the above minutes

There were no matters arising

5. Guest Speaker

Detective Inspector Phil Key gave a full and informative explanation of his role and outlined the procedures and policies of the force in relation to engaging with members of the public in a public spaces. In particular he referred to the various laws under which the police exercised powers of intervention and arrest.

Various members expressed concern regarding the procedures when the police confronted vulnerable individuals, particularly as to when arresting or apprehending officers were likely to discover that a person was classed as vulnerable and which might not be discovered until perhaps that person had been subject to arrest procedures in a police station and any alert card being carried by the arrested person might not be discovered until his/her condition had deteriorated due to fear, confusion or problems relating to communication or the absence of an alert card.

Inspector Key outlined the normal procedure that followed when a person is arrested and agreed that if a person was carrying an alert card, that card may only become evident on formal caution or arrest by which time a vulnerable adult's (a person with Asperger Syndrome and other condition such as AHD) condition may well have deteriorated. However, Inspector Key did say that not all people confronted by officers in the street or other public place were necessarily removed to a police station. Normally, efforts would be taken to assist a person who was obviously distressed by low key and sensitive questioning, including requesting identification, at which time an alert card would most likely be revealed and any emergency number given would be investigated.

Individual members related cases where the procedures outlined by Inspector Key appeared not to have been followed or at which the investigating officer had been un-necessarily brusque or intimidating, causing further anxiety to the individual. He conceded that officers may not always be as sensitive as required and that the mode of dress, which he said was regulatory, can add further stress to a person being questioned. Inspector Key said that whilst officers did not always engage with vulnerable in the most desired manner, he felt that over recent years, the conduct of officers

had improved overall and ongoing training was designed to ensure the best possible outcomes for vulnerable individuals.

The Chairman informed the meeting, that Ms Mari Saeki from the National Autistic Society (Manchester) was, as we were meeting, giving training to Rapid Response Unit officers at Sedgely Park in Prestwich and has asked him (Chairman) to raise the question of alert cards, which she said she had raised with officers when training and she had been told by some officers they would not necessarily find them useful!

Inspector Key said that he hoped that the training officers were given would result in more cards being carried by vulnerable adults and that over time officers would be more aware of their existence and usefulness. He also remarked that the Police were now less of a force and more of a (public) service.

The Chairman asked Inspector Key of the role of the Police Commissioner in relation to the Chief Constable as he (the Chairman) had been unsure to whom he should send correspondence. Inspector Key said that correspondence to either person was acceptable, but generally, matters relating to policy and budget setting and control were the responsibility of the Commissioner and general day to day management of the force were the responsibility of the Chief Constable.

Following further personal (negative) experiences being highlighted by members in relation to their sons, Inspector Key re-iterated that he regretted these examples as reported but felt that whilst there were still some bad examples of police intervention, he believed that procedures were overall improving within Greater Manchester and thanked the group for inviting him along and offered the opportunity for any member to contact him in the future by email (available from the Chairman) if they so wished.

6. Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported as follows:

- i) The Bank account was now fully operational
- ii) An application for grant aid had been submitted to the local authority in the sum of approximately nine thousand pounds, to fund a web site, publications (flyers and posters) and a drop-in centre facility at Lower Bridgman Street premises.

- iii) The Chairman said he had recently attended a free training session provided by Bolton CVS on the subject of Volunteers and their engagement.
- iv) The Chairman distributed to committee members, copies of the group's Safeguarding Policy, to which Tony Shaw drew attention regarding the document being undated. The Chairman thanked Tony for bringing this oversight to his attention and agreed to rectify the omission.
- v) Drop-in Sessions. After some discussion, it was agreed that from March 2014, drop-in sessions would be piloted at the new meeting place of ABAG.

7. Date of next meetings

The date of the next meeting is **February 26th**, followed by March 26th and then April 30th. All meetings will start at 2.00pm and will be at Thicketford Care Centre, Thicketford Road.

8. Any Other Business

There being no further matters to discuss, the meeting closed at 4.30pm