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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

TOWARDS SAFE(R)SPACE

DISABILITY AND EVERYDAY SPACES OF UN/SAFETY AND HOSTILITY IN IRELAND

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SHORT EASY READ REPORT

Institute for Social Science in the 21st Century
UCC University College Cork, Ireland Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh
IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

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Research about people with disabilities and feeling safe and unsafe



Around the world, there has been research that shows people with disabilities sometimes do not feel safe in different places.

This includes being at home, in the street, in shops, on public transport or anywhere that people go to do things.

Being and feeling unsafe can mean lots of things like:



- **Not wanting to go out at certain times** because you don't feel safe.



- Feeling unsafe out **on the street during the day or at night time.**

- **Having things stolen from you** when you are out or at home.



- **Being called names or attacked by people** who know you have a disability.



- **Not wanting to go to some places** because it doesn't feel safe.



- **Not feeling safe at home** or in the place where you live.



- We do not know very much about **how people with disabilities feel about being safe or unsafe in Ireland**.

The SAFE(R)SPACE Research Project in UCC



The SAFE(R)SPACE project believes that **people with disabilities have a right to feel safe in all spaces and places.**

The **SAFE(R)SPACE** project wanted to find out some things:



- Find out how **safe or unsafe people with disabilities** feel in lots of different places.



- What would make people with disabilities **feel safer in places we use every day.**



- **Talk to people who make laws and policies** to ask them what they know about safety for people with disabilities.



- Talk to **people in different areas in Ireland like cities, small towns and the countryside** about what their area is like.



- Find out if **people who work with people with disabilities** think safety for people with disabilities is something we need to think about.

FINDINGS: What did SAFE(R)SPACE find out about laws & policies?



There are lots of **laws and policies** that are important for people with disabilities and for safety.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) says what countries need to do so that people with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else.

All the rights in the UNCRPD are important.

There are some rights that are especially important for safety:



- **Article 16** says that countries should have laws and rules so that people with disabilities can be protected from violence at home and outside their home. It says people with disabilities should not be used or abused.



- **Article 12** says people with disabilities must be respected by the law in the same way as everyone else.



- **Article 19** says that people with disabilities have the right to live in the community, to make choices about where and who they live with.



- **In Ireland**, there are laws and policies that are important when we think about safety for people with disabilities. These are some of them:



- **Safeguarding** means that services and organisations need to keep service users safe.



- **De-congregation** means:
  - Services are supposed to support people with disabilities to live independently in communities.



  - That people with disabilities should be able to plan their own lives, make their own choices and take part in things they want to in their community.

There are **laws that look after people if they have been a victim of crime**.



- **Crimes** are bad things that people do and are against the law.
- **A victim** is someone who has had something bad happen to them.
- **The person who does the crime** could be someone you know or could be a stranger.



If you are a victim of crime, **the law says you have rights.** These are some of the rights:

- Easy to understand information.
- To support if you have to speak to the Guards or anyone else about the crime.



- To be protected from the person who was bad to you.
- To have information about how the Guards and everyone else is finding out about the crime.
- To support if you have to or want to go to Court.

A lot of people we spoke to said:



- It is important to **think more about safety so that people can feel safe if they want to live independently in communities.**



- It is important to think about our **laws and policies and if they work properly for people with disabilities to go places and do the things** that they want and need to do.

FINDINGS: What do people with disabilities say about being and feeling safe?

Feeling safe can mean lots of things like:



- **Getting around safely** on transport and knowing you can access places and your home safely.



- **Having people you trust** to support you when you need it.



- **Feeling welcome in places** you go to like shops and places in the community.



- **Being able to use technology safely**
  - to go places and do things.
  - to use everything in your home safely.
  - to feel safe and independent in your home.



- **Feeling like you are equal** to other people and can do things independently.

FINDINGS: Feelings about and Safety and Unsafety



People with disabilities **have the same right** to go to places that everyone uses. **BUT some people do not go to certain places because they do not feel safe**. This includes bars, nightclubs, train and bus stations, streets and parks.



Some people with disabilities **only go out during the day** because they think it is not safe to go out at night.



People with disabilities say that when they are out in public, **they have to watch out** for people who might say or do something to make them feel unsafe.

People with disabilities think some places are safer than others:



- **Some people feel safest in their own area** where they know the area and people. This could be in a big city, small town or the countryside.



- **Other people think the city is safer** than the countryside because there are people around.



- **And some people think the countryside is safer** because they think there is less crime in the country.

FINDINGS: People with disabilities and people who support them say their experiences of being unsafe are:



- **Being attacked**.



- **Having things stolen**, like mobile phones.



- **Being touched without permission** and in ways that are uncomfortable.



- **Having money taken without giving permission or being forced** to give people money.



- **Being teased or called names** just because they have a disability.

FINDINGS: The Home



A lot of people with disabilities say their home is safe and they feel safe there. **But some people with disabilities do not feel safe at home because:**



- It is hard to get in and out of their home and it is hard to move around in their home.



- They are afraid of people breaking into their house to steal.



- There are people living in their home, family or friends or partner, who treat them badly and make them feel uncomfortable.

FINDINGS: The Guards



- Some people with disabilities are not sure about contacting the Guards if something goes wrong.



- They feel the Guards might not understand them or be able to speak to them in a way that they can understand.



- Some people feel the Guards will not take some people with disabilities seriously.

What should we do about making things feel safe?

There are **5** things people said we should think about:



1. We should make sure:

- That the laws we already have are used properly**, so that people feel safe.**



- Some people think that Ireland should have new laws about **disability hate crime**. Disability hate crime is when people do bad things, called crimes, to you because you have a disability.

2. People said there are 3 things the Guards need to do:



1) **The Guards need to do more training** to understand people with disabilities so they can listen to and help people with disabilities when something bad happens.



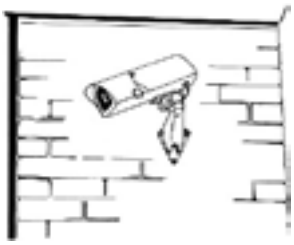
2) The Guards **need to make it easier for people with disabilities to contact them and explain** what has happened to them.



3) **There needs to be more Guards in the community** and they need to work with disability organisations.



3. **Being able to get around and having choice and access is very important,** especially with housing. For housing, people said 3 things:



1) **Services need to think about safety** when they are supporting people to live independently.



2) **People with disabilities need to have easy access to their home** and be able to get around their home easily.



3) **Homes need to be safe and in safe places** so that people feel safe living in them.



4. **People with disabilities need support** to learn how to be safe so that they can be in the community and live independently.



5. **People in the community need to understand that adults with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else.** This means that adults with disabilities:



- **Should be treated like adults** and be able to live independently and safely in the community.



- **Should not have to live in an institution and be looked after** all the time.



- **Decide what is best for themselves** and be supported to make choices.

Key Messages:



- People have **a right to feel safe in the places that they live.**

- **It is especially important to think about safety in the community** so that people with disabilities can take part and live in the community.

- When **people feel unsafe, it stops them** from doing things, or going to places.



- **People with disabilities and disability organisations need to be included and be able to use their voice** when government, the Guards and the people who write laws and policies are thinking about safety.

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