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**For Immediate Release**

## **Sentence for encouraging care home residents to fight is too short**

A coalition of anti-abuse charities has criticised as too short sentences for care home staff who encouraged residents to fight and racially abuse each other. The Ann Craft Trust, Respond and VOICE UK believe that the six month sentences passed today at Snaresbrooke Crown Court will do little to deter abuse. They are calling for increased training for care staff and managers as well as better whistleblowing policies.

“A six month sentence sends the message that abusing vulnerable people who depend on you for their care is not serious” said Kathryn Stone, Chief Executive of VOICE UK. “A sentence should be a deterrent and match the wrong done – this sentence does not.”

“A big part of the problem is poor training – staff don’t know good practice and don’t recognise the value of people with learning disabilities” stated Richard Curen, Director of Respond. “Managers also do not always get the training on how to tackle abuse and respond appropriately to whistleblowers’ concerns. We call on all care organisations to make sure that all their staff are properly trained.”

“We would like to congratulate the police and CPS on successfully prosecuting these people – it was a job well done” said Deborah Kitson, Director of the Ann Craft Trust. “It is rare for a manager to be prosecuted for failing to act on a whistleblower’s warnings and we applaud this conviction. This case and our research show the need for robust whistleblowing policies. We urge all care organisations to promote responsible whistleblowing.”

“The good news” said Stone, “is that after years of effort, the House of Lords has recently taken action to increase the sentences for these crimes to five years - about time too.”

### **Note to Editors**

1. VOICE UK supports people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable groups who have experienced crime or abuse. We also support their families, carers and professional workers. For further information visit [www.voiceuk.org.uk](http://www.voiceuk.org.uk).
2. The Ann Craft Trust works with staff in the statutory, independent and voluntary sectors to protect people with learning disabilities who may be at risk from abuse. We also provide advice and information to parents and carers who may have concerns about someone they are supporting. For further information visit [www.anncrafttrust.org](http://www.anncrafttrust.org).
3. Respond offers a range of services which provide emotional and psychological support to victims and perpetrators of abuse who have learning disabilities. It also provides training and support to professionals and carers working with them. For further information visit [www.respond.org.uk](http://www.respond.org.uk).
4. Interviews available upon request.

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