

Bridget Penhale

Welcome to the first issue of 2023, as we are about to enter our third full year of an ongoing and evolving (and clearly still mutating) global pandemic. Although media coverage remains preoccupied and focused on more global issues such as war as well as the pandemic, in the UK we have seen continued coverage of safeguarding related issues many of which are related to ongoing problems that individuals experience caused by a combination of the pandemic, cost of living crisis and both the legacy and outcome(s) of over a decade of austerity measures and associated cuts to service provision, particularly in relation to social care, introduced by successive governments in the UK.

The first paper in this issue is by Nick Smith and colleagues at the University of Kent at Canterbury and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, who undertook a piece of research analysing Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) reports that related to care homes for older people. The key objective of the study was to explore how safety is understood in care homes and how it might best be measured. The coding that was developed in the qualitative (thematic) analysis of the reports was mapped onto a safety framework already used within health organisations – the Safety Measurement and Monitoring Framework. Although elements from the SARs related to the dimensions of the framework, the study determined that an additional understanding of how a care home context interacts with these dimensions and recognition of the importance of external factors that can affect safety in care homes is also needed. Some implications relating to the measurement of safety in care homes are explored within the paper, which provides some thought-provoking detail.

This is followed by a Viewpoint paper by Amanda Warburton-Wynn, an independent consultant from Cambridgeshire, which considers issues relating to abuse of (unpaid) carers that occurs within the domestic setting. This is an area that has not always received much attention, as it is often not considered within perceived traditional patterns of abusive relationships. In addition, the caregiving role and complexities associated with this can mean that options for such situations are somewhat limited and carers may not be offered relevant support services. The paper identifies some of the problems in the identification of carers who experience abuse and examines some of the ways that both identification and support services might be improved; this is a useful addition to the expanding literature relating to different, perhaps even considered as “non-standard” forms of abuse.

The third paper is by Mary O’Reardon of the University of East London. It is based on a research study that considered the contribution of SAR reports to narratives about what social work practice in relation to safeguarding consists of and what social workers should do in this area of work. In addition to an analysis of a sample of SARs to determine what they contained by way of discussions about social work practice, the paper also contains data derived from an analysis of focus groups and interviews held with social workers to explore experience, knowledge and opinions about SARs. Although the SARs analysed were from one geographical area and the sample of social workers who took part in focus groups and interviews was self-selecting, the paper provides some useful information and data for those from social work and social care to consider. Recommendations are also provided

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concerning the potential for SARs to help develop and even improve both the identity and practice of social workers within adult social care and safeguarding contexts.

The final paper in this issue of the journal is by Sakineh Taherkhani of Arak University in Iran. This is also a research paper, this time concerning the broader issue of intimate partner violence (IPV). This methodological study examined the potential adaptation and use of a questionnaire used in IPV research, the Ways of Coping Questionnaire, and in particular the factor structure of the questionnaire that might be relevant to Iranian women. Over 500 women, most of whom attended health centres and hospitals in a particular area of Iran, completed the questionnaire and an analysis was undertaken to determine the factor structure and the reliability of the questionnaire. Five specific factors were established as relevant in relation to coping within situations of IPV – these included elements such as planning, problem-solving and seeking support. The implications of the findings for promoting coping strategies, together with the further development of interventions that are context based, are also explored within the paper.

We hope that you will find papers in this issue of interest and use to you in your safeguarding work. Regular readers will know that we are always interested in receiving contributions to the journal, and we invite readers to continue to contribute papers about adult safeguarding, including papers in relation to safeguarding and COVID-19, which of course is still with us. If you may be interested and want to discuss further before committing to writing and submitting a paper, do get in touch with one of the editors as per our details on the inside cover of the journal or on the webpage for the journal. And just a reminder that we are looking forward to the publication of a Special Issue of the journal on European Perspectives on Safeguarding older people, later in the spring.

Finally, we hope that everyone has been managing to stay safe and well during these continuing difficult times and look forward to providing further issues for this volume during the year.

Bridget Penhale

Margaret Flynn

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