

Welcome to this final issue of the current volume. To start with, we provide some information and recent stories that relate to safeguarding, which have appeared in different types of media.

As we approach the end of the year, the Office for National Statistics[1] has revealed that last year there were an estimated 726 deaths of homeless people in England and Wales. Most of the deaths were of men and their average age was 43 years. The average of age of the women who died was 45 years. Liam Byrne, MP wants: “reviews for everyone who dies homeless, so that the inconvenient truths of life and death cannot be ignored[2].” Since there are overwhelming quantities of uneven reviews which are not easily retrieved and/or currently unequal to informing learning, arguably there is rather more promise in Liam Byrne’s proposal “to create a duty on public services, especially the DWP, the NHS, mental health services and the prison service to work with councils to prevent homelessness.”

We have also learned that convictions for rape in the UK are currently at a record low[3]. During the financial year 2018–2019 there were 1925 prosecutions – this represents a drop of 27 percent on the previous year. This is despite an increase in the volume of alleged rapes that are reported to the police. These and similarly troubling figures concerning suspects charged with such offences as stalking and domestic abuse, for example, have led the Crown Prosecution Service to request a review of rape charging decisions.

The death of Oscar Okwurime at Harmondsworth Immigration Centre is being investigated[4]. Inadequate healthcare, restraint and fear of restraint all appear to merit particular attention in relation to deaths like these. Furthermore, this bleak topic crosses such disciplines as education, psychology, the law, pharmacy, history, anthropology and sociology – and all untoward deaths should provide a powerful impetus for reflection and action.

In these strange and uncertain times, a post-graduate in search of a subject to investigate might well explore “verbal abuse” and the use of language to cause offence. In recent weeks a “shock jock” Australian broadcaster has been advised that his contract will be terminated if he makes more misogynist utterances[5]. Exploitative “reality” TV; anonymous and vicious social media postings; “Go back to where you came from;” and the lies and incendiary utterances of totalitarian Presidents and Prime Ministers suggest that verbal abuse seemingly plays no part in silencing diverse examples of hostility. Increased rates of reported hate crime focused on disabled people in recent years also often consists of barely disguised verbal abuse.

Finally, if you are wondering about Christmas stocking-fillers, Peter James’ “Dead at First Sight”[6] brings “romance fraud” in from the adult safeguarding margins. It is a “whodunit” that skillfully reports accounts of older, bereaved people seeking sexual intimacy and love once again. Some readers may recall a previous novel several years ago, by Marina Lewycka that also touched on issues relating to elder financial abuse (“A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian”)[7]. In James’ novel, the loneliness, losses and embarrassments that older bereaved people can experience are revealed with sensitivity, and the reach of internet scams is the flipside of their shame. Another Christmas candidate for discerning readers is Susannah Walker’s “The Life of Stuff: A memoir about the mess we leave behind[8].” This is a fascinating book because the author was a curator and her mother’s death occasioned the clearing and sorting of a dilapidated house crammed with rubbish and disguised losses. The author immerses herself in the topic of hoarding, revisits the efforts of her family to discourage the accumulation of stuff and describes the impact of her painstaking sorting of clutter. Her mother had recreated the splendor of her

family's lost wealth, its unhappy marriages, divorces, the deaths of young children and secrets through her hoarding activity. As Susannah Walker observes:

"The failure to look isn't mine alone; it's true of almost every person who deals with hoarding and hoarders. We walk around the hoard, we hate it, we see the quantity of stuff as a problem rather than examining its contents. More than anything else we want the hoard to be gone, as quickly as possible. The one thing we never do is engage with it" (p. 307).

That seems to lead to a pertinent observation and question: where are you going to store your Christmas presents?!

This issue contains three papers and a review of a board game that has been developed which relates to safeguarding. All of the papers report on issues that align with safeguarding, even if they are not generally of central concern to the overall topic as it is often currently conceptualized. All three papers provide interesting information and food for thought in their respective areas, and also illustrate the need for further work in these issues (as elsewhere in safeguarding).

The first paper, by Peter Bates (Nottingham) and Brendan McLoughlin (London) explores issues relating to privacy in care home settings. Due to concerns about mistreatment in care homes and the need for sharing of relevant information in recent years, it seems as if wider issues relating to privacy have been rather overlooked. This practice-oriented paper uses a human rights perspective to explore how information governance (in its broadest sense) affects the quality of life, health and well-being of residents. It also provides a useful template for a privacy impact assessment tool, which could be used to protect the rights of individual residents and promote their independence, whilst also developing an improved overall approach to privacy in such settings.

This is followed by a paper provided by Philip Heslop *et al.* from Northumbria University and London, which examines a rather different sort of topic, considering the experiences and needs of parents and carers who may experience violent or challenging behavior from their children and how far such needs might be met through models of support that are used within safeguarding. The paper reports findings from research on the experiences of parents/ carers of children with special education needs and disabilities who present violent and challenging behavior and considers the difficulties and challenges that can be experienced when caring for children with such additional needs. The study used a national online social media-based focus group to collect data on the experiences, views and perceptions of parents and carers and also explored parents/carers reports about how their support needs are met by social care services. The paper provides useful information on the innovative participatory method, which was developed for the study, and provides some interesting findings on this rather overlooked group of individuals.

The final paper in this issue, by John Woolham *et al.* from King's College, London, considers issues that may be raised when personal assistants (PAs) are employed by service users with social care needs. The particular focus of the paper is to examine the employment conditions that PAs reported. This was achieved through a study in which in-depth semi-structured telephone interviews were held with 105 PAs who were providing care and support for disabled individuals. These individuals were recruited via a range of third sector and user-led organizations across the country. Whilst many PAs reported high job satisfaction, some respondents revealed that they did not always enjoy satisfactory conditions of employment and indicated that their roles are largely unregulated and with little (or no) oversight of their situations. Whilst the use of PAs can be an effective way for people to attain person-centred care, the lack of regulation and oversight could mean that there is potential for exploitation or even abuse (of PAs – as well as service users) to occur. Further work on employment conditions for PAs is clearly needed in this area.

Our final piece, provided by Kate Brown of Norfolk County Council, is a review of a board game that has been developed in order to raise awareness about safeguarding. Kate shared the resource with some colleagues in the County Council who played the game and provided feedback about their experience of doing so. Whilst the game appeared to be a useful (and quite innovative) way in which to engage people in learning about safeguarding there was a view that it would be useful to use the game as part of training at refresher level, for those people who have some knowledge and understanding about the issues that can then be further built on.

Our thanks to Kate for undertaking the review and to her willing groups of volunteers who took part, played the game and provided their feedback.

We hope that this issue of the journal will provide items and ideas for readers to reflect on about the broad field that is adult safeguarding. As regular readers of the journal know, we are always interested in hearing from potential contributors and to discuss ideas for possible papers relating to research, policy and/or practice in this increasingly broad topic area (as neatly illustrated in this issue). If you have suggestions or ideas for papers, please do get in touch with one of us and we will be pleased to provide advice and offer support in relation to this. Our contact details appear on the inside cover of the journal and are also available on the journal website.

Notes

1. www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsofhomelesspeopleinenglandandwales/2018 (accessed October 20, 2019).
2. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/01/homelessness-deaths-liam-byrne (accessed October 20, 2019).
3. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/09/12/rape-convictions-record-low-cps-launches-review-examine-myths/ (accessed October 20, 2019).
4. www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/nigerian-man-detention-death-immigration-centre-oscar-okwurime-home-office-a9109281.html (accessed September 25, 2019).
5. www.theguardian.com/media/2019/aug/17/alan-jones-told-he-will-be-sacked-if-he-makes-more-offensive-comments-on-radio (accessed September 25, 2019).
6. Published by Macmillan in 2019.
7. Published by Viking Press in 2005.
8. Published by Penguin in 2018.