

Welcome to 2017 and to our first issue of the year. First we provide some recent news items relating broadly to safeguarding issues that readers may find of interest.

Action plans are familiar to safeguarding practitioners. Can anyone remember what happened to the action plan promised by former PM David Cameron in the wake of the Brexit associated “spike” in hate crimes? Compassion for fleeing migrants has diminished and jostles with fearful hostility and intolerance. We now know that America’s new leader is likely to govern, as he campaigned and that hate may well constitute a key feature. Meanwhile, warlords thrive in Syria.

During December 2016 we learned that the NHS in England is continuing to send teenagers and young adults to Scotland for treatment because it does not have enough treatment facilities[1] and that “catastrophic consequences” are likely to result from tenacious austerity. Birmingham city council’s chief executive has stated that the city no longer has a youth service, its children’s centres have been dismantled and eligibility for social care is restricted to people with substantial and critical support needs[2]; a recent Local Government Association briefing[3] stated:

The Government must recognise why social care matters and treat it as a national priority. There needs to be an urgent and fundamental review of social care and health before next year’s spring Budget. Local government leaders, who are responsible for social care in their local community, must be part of that review. This is imperative to get a long-term, sustainable solution to the social care crisis that the most vulnerable people in our society deserve.

It also needs to include action to properly fund social care with genuinely new government money. This is now the only way to protect the services caring for our elderly and disabled people, which are at breaking point and ensure they can enjoy dignified, healthy and independent lives, live in their own community and stay out of hospital for longer.

Further casualties of the “do more with less” mantra are the recipients of personal budgets.

The Dunedin study – a research programme that has followed the progress of 1,000 children in Dunedin from birth (1972-1973) to midlife – has determined that a small segment of the population accounts for a disproportionate share of a wide array of public services. That is, “nearly 80 per cent of adult economic burden can be attributed to just 20 per cent of the Study members [...] [the] ‘high cost’ group accounted for 81 per cent of criminal convictions, 66 per cent of welfare benefits, 78 per cent of prescription fills and 40 per cent of excess obese kilograms”[4]. The study underlines the long-term benefits of investment in the early years. Such a shame that tenure of politicians so often gets in the way of decision making for the long term.

A year after the review which revealed failings at Southern Health Trust, the Care Quality Commission published “Learning Candour and Accountability”[5]. This highlights the treatment of bereaved relatives of adults with mental health problems or learning disabilities whose deaths were not adequately investigated. The CQC’s fact finding found that families had a poor experience of NHS reviews; there were inconsistencies in terms of reporting people’s deaths to service commissioners and other providers; investigations tend to result from serious incidents and the criteria for undertaking these may vary; the quality of the investigations is poor; and boards only receive limited information about investigations. The dissemination of learning from such investigations is also reported as inadequate.

Fingers crossed, the practice of violent and abusive men being allowed to cross examine their former partners in family court hearings will discontinue[6]. *The Guardian*’s investigation has revealed that even men who have been the subject of restraining orders use litigant in person access to continue their harassment.

The French President has pardoned Jacqueline Sauvage[7]. A victim of domestic abuse for 47 years, she had shot her husband in the back during 2012, a day after their son hanged himself. Their three daughters were also beaten and raped by alcoholic Norbert Marot. He had acted violently towards his son. Ms Sauvage had been sentenced to ten years imprisonment during 2014 and there had been a continuous campaign for her release since that time.

A British Bill of Rights is back on the agenda. Brexit has brought renewed legitimacy to the politicians who are hostile to Europe. The Human Rights Act 1998 protects all of us against abuses of public power. A British Bill of Rights crafted by the present government would constitute only those rights that politicians and bureaucrats would wish us to have – undoubtedly with plenty of scope for divisive authoritarianism.

Civil legal aid cuts are biting hard, with many thousands of people being made homeless each year because of “advice deserts”[8].

The fall-out from former footballer Andy Woodward’s disclosure of abuse has spiralled into a scandal engulfing many football clubs. During December 2016 more than 400 victims, 98 per cent of whom are men[9], had made themselves known to the police in relation to allegations of abuse by football coaches at an increasing number of clubs.

So – lots of lowlights from the end of 2016 ... time to acknowledge the structural violence of sustained austerity and inequality – and to identify positive ways of transforming the instinctive care we have for each other into something enduring. Let us hope that 2017 does not continue in the same vein.

This issue of the journal begins with a paper by Pete Morgan and provides a response to the paper that appeared in the last issue of 2016 written by Alyson Norman about the experiences of her brother relating to adult social care and safeguarding (Norman, 2016). Pete, a former Senior Manager in adult social care and safeguarding writes from his perspective about what he would have expected to happen, particularly in relation to the safeguarding of Roger and the situation that he was in in the latter stages of his life. This is a useful exploration and extension of the previous paper and will provide some food for thought for those involved in safeguarding.

Our second paper is from Australia, by Susanna Doyle (of the University of Queensland) and reports on the findings of a study that explored the experiences of older people who were receiving aged community care (the equivalent of adult social care in England). The older participants took part in research that explored their everyday experiences and this enabled the researcher to understand the very real impacts of receiving personal care. Generally the participants viewed their care experiences in terms of their relationships and emphasised both relationships and autonomy as being of central importance to them in their everyday lives. The combination of participant and researcher perspectives that was achieved during the study is discussed as a strategy for supporting older people in their care. It is also seen as a potential way of increasing involvement, satisfaction and safety from their experiences of care and provides some helpful indicators about experiences of care provision to older service users.

The following paper is by Gary Craig and Steve Clay and considers developments within the Care Act 2014 that introduced concepts relating to modern slavery into the world of Adult Safeguarding. The paper is based on a presentation originally given as part of the ESRC Seminar series that is currently running that is exploring Safeguarding Adults and Legal Literacy (SALLY, about which more later). In 2015, the Modern Slavery Act was introduced into legislation and one of the key areas of attention of the Act is to relate human trafficking and forced labour. Although the Care Act recognised modern slavery as an additional potential area of risk within adult social care, this paper also considers if people who provide care might be vulnerable to certain forms of modern slavery. The paper considers this perspective through the use of case studies collected from professionals and indicates that adult social care may well constitute an arena in which situations of modern slavery could occur and where safeguarding concerns could arise. This is potentially an area of increasing concern and one that is likely to require further investigation in future.

Our final paper for this issue is also from Australia, by Leigh Burrows of Flinders University, and considers issues in relation to vulnerability and safeguarding in relation to mindfulness. The paper is based on study that was undertaken in order to find out more about the experiences of college

students and their teachers concerning the teaching of mindfulness meditation. Particular areas of attention were the needs and experiences of those students who might be considered to be vulnerable and at risk. A key finding was that mindfulness meditation is not necessarily a positive experience for students who are in some ways vulnerable, and their teachers, and that there was a need for more individualised approaches to be developed for such students. Recommendations from the study included a need for more teacher training, knowledge and continuing support about the potential effects of some mindfulness meditations on some vulnerable students and how to adjust these and to introduce safeguards into processes for students who might be at risk. A further (as yet unreported) phase of the study is underway in order to attempt to provide and evaluate these changes.

January of this year sees the start of the second year of the ESRC Seminar series on safeguarding, mentioned last year and also above. There will be three seminars through the course of the year, in February, May and September, and further details can be obtained from the website for SALLY, which is hosted at <https://safeguardingadults.wordpress.com> or via contact with Professor Alison Brammer of Keele University, who is the Co-ordinator for the series. We are also planning a special issue of the journal later this year, which will be based on papers from one of the seminars from last year on safeguarding across the four nations of the UK.

As ever, as editors of the journal we are always interested in hearing from potential contributors and to discuss ideas for contributions. Do make contact with one of us if this is the case and we would be pleased to provide advice on this. Our contact details appear on the inside cover of the journal or are available on the journal website. We hope that this issue will be of interest to readers and provide ideas for further consideration related to the world of safeguarding.

Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/society/2016/dec/11/nhs-england-anorexic-patients-scotland-mental-health (accessed on 8 January 2017).
2. www.thechamberlainfiles.com/adult-social-services-to-bear-brunt-of-drastic-90m-birmingham-council-cuts/ (accessed 8 January 2017).
3. www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/8106439/NEWS (accessed 8 January 2017).
4. <http://dunedinstudy.otago.ac.nz/news-and-events/article/53> (accessed 8 January 2017).
5. www.cqc.org.uk/content/learning-candour-and-accountability
6. www.theguardian.com/society/2016/dec/22/revealed-how-family-courts-allow-abusers-to-torment-their-victims
7. www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/jacqueline-sauvage-kill-abusive-husband-france-leaves-prison-after-president-francois-hollande-a7499901.html
8. [www.newLawjournal.co.uk/content/justice-denied-0](http://www.newlawjournal.co.uk/content/justice-denied-0)
9. www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/38211167

Reference

Norman, A. (2016), "A preventable death: a family's perspective on an adult safeguarding review regarding an adult with traumatic brain injury", *Journal of Adult Protection*, Vol. 18 No. 6, pp. 341-52.