

## Bridget Penhale and Margaret Flynn

Welcome to this first issue of 2022. In northwest Greenland, the Inuit people who live there call February *seqinniaq*; this means “the month when the sun appears”. We are told that the worst of COVID-19 is likely to be behind us, and in several countries, regulations, laws and rules are being replaced by advice and guidance, so perhaps we are seeing glimmers of sunshine now after almost two years of the global pandemic. However, it seems that many of these changes are based on the belief that the Omicron variant has less severe consequences than those posed by the Delta variant, and this is not yet totally clear from a public health perspective. It may well be some time, however, before we can mix at social events, on public transport and at other gatherings with absolute confidence but perhaps the green shoots are beginning to be apparent as we head into the spring here in the UK.

The first paper of this new volume is a research paper by Emma Stevens and colleagues at the University of Hull and considers issues relating to dignity in the context of district nursing provision to older people. This research, undertaken in England, consisted of observations of care interactions between community district nurses and older people, together with a number of semi-structured interviews of older people/patients and nurses. Although the study considered issues concerning the concept of dignity in a broad sense, this paper focuses on the relationship (and interaction) between dignity, abuse and safeguarding. When dignity is rendered marginal or is missing from interactions, then abuse and neglect appear more likely to occur. The role of district nurses in safeguarding their patients through ensuring dignity is maintained and upheld is explored and some useful conclusions are drawn in the paper. These may also be relevant for other staff who work with individuals in their homes in community settings.

The following paper is by Anita Jahid from the University of Western Sydney and is one of our occasional papers that concern situations relating to domestic violence and safeguarding during the global pandemic. The paper relates to situations that occurred within Bangladesh, which, similarly to many other countries, experienced an increase in levels of domestic violence during periods of major restrictions during the pandemic. This is a Viewpoint paper but is based on a literature review that covered publicly accessible documents via media sources as well as academic and grey literature. Some useful observations about domestic violence within the pandemic crisis are included in the paper; readers may find that some of these are more generally applicable to other countries.

The third paper in this issue is a research paper by Ana Gil from the Catholic University of Portugal (based in Lisbon) and relates to abuse within institutional settings. Some readers may recall previous papers on the topic of institutional abuse by Professor Gil. This paper considers issues relating to reciprocal abuse within care settings and levels of conflict that might be found within them. The study that was undertaken included 16 different care homes in Portugal using a survey that was completed by care staff working in these institutions. The survey asked about care staff experiences of abuse within the homes – in terms of witnessing or committing abuse but results also determined that over half of those who completed the survey reported that they had been abused by residents. This was reported (by a number of respondents) as leading to situations in which they retaliated towards the resident. The paper explores the implications of the results for institutional care in terms of prevention of abuse with a focus on several key contextual matters and discusses needs for improved working

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conditions and training for staff. This would also include better support for and communication with staff, which it is believed would help to improve the overall environment and increase levels of co-operation.

The next paper is also a research paper, by Jane Healy and Rosslyn Dray of Bournemouth University. This study concerned the issue of disability hate crime; the specific focus of this paper is to explore the relationship between adult safeguarding and disability hate crime. Interviews with key informants included consideration of whether relevant organisations have worked together to deal with hate crime-related issues. The contributions of different agencies were considered likely to have improved due to increased engagement with multi-agency working within local systems since the implementation of the Care Act. Some helpful suggestions are explored within the paper for achieving better outcomes for adults at risk of hate crime(s).

The fifth paper in this issue is a Viewpoint paper, provided by Amanda Warburton-Wynn, working in an independent research capacity in Cambridgeshire. During the first part of 2021, Amanda undertook a study in which Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were made to all NHS hospital Trusts across England concerning the number of reported incidents of sexual assaults of older people (aged 60 years or older) by hospital staff over a five-year period (between 2016–2017 and 2020–2021). At least 75 reports were made by Trusts during this time-frame – in their responses, some Trusts stated that there had been less than five reports, others less than ten, but did not specify the exact number of reports; this meant that those Trusts could only be recorded as having one response/report. Whilst by far the majority of reports related to older women, almost one-third concerned older men. Only a small number of reports (16) were subsequently made to the police and further action was only taken in two of these cases. The paper draws attention to this much-neglected issue and puts forward a case for further research and action on the topic.

The final paper of this issue is a Book Review, written by one of the journal editors, Bridget Penhale. The book is an edited collection by Amanda Grenier, Chris Phillipson and Richard Settersten (2020) relating to the concept of precarity in later life. Several of the authors in the volume consider topics related to insecurity and risk in ageing. Although it does not contain a specific chapter on safeguarding and abuse (there is, however, a section in the chapter on Precarity, migration and ageing), the topic is relevant to those working in adult safeguarding and there is some useful discussion around concepts of vulnerability and risk which may well be of interest. This might perhaps be of particular relevance to professional practitioners working with older people.

As we have stated in previous Editorials, we hope that you will find several items of interest in this issue and that some of these will be useful in both your safeguarding work and more general interests. We are always interested to receive contributions for consideration, and as the current pandemic situation looks likely to continue, we would like to invite readers to continue to contribute papers in relation to safeguarding and COVID-19, as well as other aspects of adult safeguarding. If you are potentially interested and wish to discuss this before working on a submission, do get in touch with one of us to discuss further. Finally, we hope that everyone is continuing to stay safe and well during these continuing difficult times and look forward to providing future issues of the journal later this year.

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