

Editorial

Bridget Penhale

Welcome to the second issue of the current volume. In this issue, we are pleased to include papers from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, reflecting safeguarding work that is being undertaken in those nations.

The first paper in the issue is by Lorna Montgomery of Queen's University, Belfast, with Adi Cooper who is a former Director of Social Services in England and longstanding champion of adult safeguarding across the UK. The study reported in this paper was commissioned to provide a narrative overview of available literature on safeguarding in institutional settings, with a particular focus on individuals with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties. The objective of the work was to provide a broad perspective on practices relating to safeguarding within these areas of institutional care to inform and contribute to both practice and service development. A wide range of literature in this area was examined, including "grey literature" such as professional guidance, enquiry reports, discussion papers and regulatory reports, as well as empirical evidence from studies focusing on this area. Several key themes were identified through the review – failings in institutional care, practice in institutional care (including aspects of good practice) and safeguarding issues and concerns. Although guidance is available in some areas, the use of standards and protocols can be helpful to ensure that elements of guidance become more explicit and to expedite improvement(s) in practice. Despite the positive elements, the study found a consistent message that statutory recommendations relating to reform in this sector have not been successful and many were viewed as ineffective. This is a useful paper that provides a very relevant update about safeguarding in institutions together with information about a range of resources and practice standards in these institutional settings.

The second paper is provided by Sarah Mahon of the Health Service Executive in Ireland, together with colleagues working in several different hospital settings in the country and is a research paper reporting on a study on service user engagement within adult safeguarding. The specific focus of the research was on whether and how far adults with learning disabilities want to be involved in the development of safeguarding plans and how they might be supported to do so. A small-scale qualitative study was developed and focus groups were held in one large organisation involving service users from across the range of services provided by the organisation (residential, day services, independent living and clinical support). Participants contributed their views on knowledge and understanding of abuse and safeguarding, feelings about the issues raised and what they would like to happen when safeguarding concerns are being addressed, together with ideas about how to help with this. The findings demonstrated that individuals can be assisted to take part in safeguarding processes, including thorough use of devices such as communication tools, and also that they wanted to be involved in planning around safeguarding and outcomes. A comparison of the content of safeguarding plans, which included service user involvement in their development, and plans that were only developed by designated safeguarding officers established little overall difference between them. Some useful recommendations are made concerning the development and promotion of such inclusion of individual service users as routine practice.

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The final full paper in the issue is a practice paper by Bridget McDaid, also of the Health Service Executive in Ireland, but from a different branch of the service. The paper reports on a study undertaken to examine safeguarding officers' perceptions of and readiness to use online learning and blended forms of training in relation to safeguarding and the implications for practice that might be derived from that. A survey was sent out to over 230 designated safeguarding officers in the country; this used two validated tools: one in relation to online learning and the other concerning blended forms of learning. The survey also asked several demographic questions; the overall response rate was relatively good (49%). The findings from the survey indicated that of the sample of safeguarding officers, the majority were positive about engagement in online forms of training and were likewise positive in their views about blended forms of learning. Some participants also provided suggestions concerning potential improvements to existing training systems and provisions. The paper makes some useful recommendations in relation to this and reports that a number of changes have been made to the training provided for designated officers as a result of the survey.

The final contribution to this issue is a book review provided by Vernando Lamaky of UKIM University, Indonesia. The review is of a recent book by Andrews *et al.* and concerns the topic of mental health and the promotion of well-being in relation to children and young people, which some readers may find of interest.

We hope that you will find the papers in this issue of interest and use to you in your safeguarding work. As usual, and as previously stated, we are always interested in receiving contributions to the journal and invite readers to continue to contribute papers about adult safeguarding. If you are interested in a contribution and want to discuss it 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 Web page for the journal. And just a reminder that we are looking forward to several forthcoming special issues of the journal. The first of these covers the work that has been undertaken and actions that have resulted from the Safeguarding Adults Review at Cawston Park Hospital in Norfolk concerning the safeguarding of adults who have learning disabilities. A further special themed issue relating to topics concerning caregivers, abuse and safeguarding is in progress and likely to be published in the next volume (during 2025). For those who may be interested, including potential contributors, the call for this latter special issue appears on the journal web page; alternatively, if contact is made with one of the journal editors, the call for papers can be sent out on request.

We look forward to providing further issues for this volume during the year, covering topics related to the broad spectrum of concerns that comprise adult safeguarding. And hoping that your spring and early summer months will go well.

Bridget Penhale

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