

# Editorial

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Bridget Penhale and Jeremy Dixon

Welcome to this second of the journal for this volume. Although much of our media coverage remains focused on more global issues such as war and climate-related crises, we have also seen continued coverage of safeguarding-related issues in the UK. This includes those related to problems arise which appear to be related to continuing societal problems that individuals experience but where the root causes are cumulative and concern relative poverty, high levels of deprivation and the cost-of-living crisis. Additional safeguarding problems arise concerning the longer-term impacts and consequences of over a decade of austerity measures implemented by successive governments which continue to be apparent across society. Within this spectrum, there are continuing and repeated cuts to service provision, especially in relation to health and social care services, with associated acute shortages of resources. Safeguarding problems may occur for individuals and families, at least in part due to such continuing economic and social difficulties, and although there may be some signs of improvement following the change of government in the UK last summer, it is equally clear that there are continuing problems and difficult decisions about potential solutions being made, which have impacts on the safety and well-being of many individuals in society.

In this issue we are pleased to include papers from Wales and Ireland, as well as England, which emphasises the continuing and growing reach of the topic. The first paper in this issue is by Rachel Swan and colleagues from Cardiff University, who have provided a research paper reporting on a study that analysed adult practice reviews in relation to adult safeguarding. In total, 20 such reviews were analysed by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers to identify cross-cutting themes. Key themes that were derived from the analysis included issues relating to commissioning and inspection; inclusion of the voices of individuals and their carers/families; safeguarding, capacity and duties to report; and consideration of transitions. Additional issues that were established related to quality of services and good practice. Several useful recommendations arising from the findings are made; these may well have some read across to safeguarding/adult protection systems in other jurisdictions.

The second paper in this issue also reports on a research study and has been provided by Karl Mason of Royal Holloway, University of London and colleagues at the University of Portsmouth and King's College, London. The paper is legally based and explores the use of the Inherent Jurisdiction in the High Court in relation to how use of this legislation is considered within Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs). This legislation can be used to establish protective mechanisms for adults at risk of harm who are capacitous and can make their own decisions. The paper argues that there are systemic problems of relevance to this domain which go beyond increasing practitioners' legal literacy, which is sometimes referred to and recommended in SARs containing this aspect of safeguarding work. The paper provides some thoughtful and thought-provoking reflections on the legislation and its use, as well as adding to the increasing body of research in relation to SARs.

This is followed by our third paper, from Ireland, provided by Anita Duffy of University College, Dublin. The paper reports on an audit that was undertaken in one region of Ireland,

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which looked at the level of community nurses' knowledge, confidence in dealing with abusive situations and their training needs relating to abuse and safeguarding practices. The survey that was conducted as part of the audit established that there were clear gaps in practitioners' knowledge and understanding of abuse and safeguarding – for instance, none of the respondents reported knowing about all forms of abuse and there was quite wide variation between respondents in levels of confidence in reporting abuse and safeguarding issues. The audit determined clear needs for increased training and education on relevant pathways for identification and reporting systems and improvements to develop a more positive culture in safeguarding for this group of practitioners, and some useful additional recommendations are made in the paper. These could be of relevance to other health-care practitioners elsewhere.

This issue also sees us launch an interview series focussed broadly on the history of adult safeguarding. In recent years there has been a renewed interest in social work history on the basis that understanding our past gives us an enhanced understanding of contemporary policy and practice issues. Influential articles have focussed on a range of issues, such as the history of social work in palliative care ([Saunders, 2001](#)), the development of social as a human rights profession ([Healy, 2008](#)) and the history of personal social services ([Jones, 2020](#)). This interview series evolved from a book chapter written by [Jeremy Dixon \(2023\)](#), who is the series editor for these interviews. This chapter formed part of an observational study on adult safeguarding work and was designed to provide a potted history of adult safeguarding in England, identifying campaigns, public inquiries, political debate and policy development. Whilst the chapter provided a useful overview, there is much more to be said. Histories are inevitably contested, and so different people are likely to hold different perspectives on how adult safeguarding has evolved.

As adult safeguarding is a relatively new concern, at least in relation to the field of child protection ([Parton, 2002](#)), many of the key activists and policymakers are still with us. This provides us with an opportunity to explore their accounts in greater depth and to obtain their views about how adult safeguarding should develop. We envisage that we will publish an interview in most standard issues of the Journal of Adult Protection over the next two years. The first few interviews we have commissioned have focussed on practice in England, with future interviews to focus on practice within the devolved nations. However, we are acutely aware that adult safeguarding policy and practice are developing in a range of countries including Australia, Canada the USA and Switzerland, amongst others. We are therefore keen to commission interviews on the history of adult safeguarding with key figures from other countries. So far, we have focussed on the accounts of activists and policymakers but are also open to other perspectives. If you would be interested in submitting an interview or potentially undertaking an interview, then please contact Jeremy at [Dixonj7@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Dixonj7@cardiff.ac.uk) for further discussion.

Our final full paper, therefore, comprises an interview with Mervyn Eastman (a former Director of Social Services in a London Borough) by Dixon (from Later Life Radio Co-operative, London and Cardiff University, respectively). This practice-related paper consists of an interview intended to provide a record of the early development of adult safeguarding in the UK, relating to particular to practice and research in the area. In the interview, Mervyn Eastman discusses his campaigning work and research, particularly on the issue of elder abuse. This ranges from charting his own initial awareness of the abuse of older adults during the early 1980s, his work, with others, to raise awareness about the issue and his views about possible future directions for adult safeguarding and research relating to the area.

Our final paper in this issue is a book review provided by Vernando Lamaky of the University Kristen Indonesia in Maluku (Indonesia). The book reviewed is an edited volume by North American authors Pamela Teaster, Georgia Anetzberger and (the late) Elizabeth Podnieks, who brought together a useful selection of contributions from different countries

around the world that discuss the recognition and response to elder abuse globally. The book is organised by World Health Organisation Regions, and in each country covered by the book, the problem of abuse is situated in that location's societal treatment of older persons. (both past and present). This is a useful book that provides insight into how elder abuse is identified and dealt with across the countries and regions of the world and there is helpful inclusion of case study material.

We hope that you will find the papers in this issue of interest and that you will be able to make use of them in your safeguarding work. Regular readers of the journal will know that we are always interested in receiving contributions and that readers (and others, of course) are invited to continue to submit papers about all aspects of adult safeguarding and across the policy, research and practice spectrum in the broad area that comprises safeguarding. Please do get in touch with one of the editors if you would like to obtain further information or want to discuss potential ideas before writing. Our contact details can be found on the inside cover of the journal or on the specific Web page for the journal found on the publisher (Emerald) website.

Finally, a quick reminder that we are looking forward to several special issues of the journal over the coming months. The first of these, which focuses on Caregivers, abuse and safeguarding, is in progress and should appear as our next issue, slightly later in the summer. A further special themed issue relating to topics concerning austerity and safeguarding is in preparation, and a call for papers for this special issue will appear soon on the journal Web page or can be obtained following contact with one of the journal editors.

We look forward to providing further issues for this volume during the year covering the range of adult safeguarding topics. Meanwhile, we hope that the coming summer months will go well for you all.

## References

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