

Editorial

Bridget Penhale

Welcome to this mid-year issue of the journal for this volume. Although much media coverage remains focused on more global issues such as war and climate-related crises, there has also been continued coverage of safeguarding-related issues in the UK. This includes those related to migration and human trafficking. Additional safeguarding 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. There are also ongoing issues relating to the longer-term impacts of the C-19 pandemic. The consequences of over a decade of austerity measures implemented by successive governments is also apparent across society. Within this spectrum, there are continuing and repeated cuts to service provision, especially in relation to health and social care services. Safeguarding problems may occur for individuals, and families at least in part due to such continuing economic and social difficulties.

The first paper in this issue is by independent researcher Amanda Warburton-Wynn, a health professional who is based in the East of England. She has provided a paper related to safeguarding practice concerning the development of using an established programme within health and care, the shared lives approach, to support individuals who have experienced domestic abuse but who also have complex needs. This includes individuals with physical and/or learning disabilities, some older people and also some unpaid carers. There are currently known gaps in the provision of support services to a number of such individuals due to the lack of appropriate facilities and/or adaptations to assist people and their subsequent exclusion from mainstream services. This means that risk may be increased and recovery from abuse and abusive situations rendered more difficult, resulting in generally poorer outcomes for individuals. In an interesting paper existing information and evidence about the approach is used to explore how it might be further developed for those with more complex needs. Recent policy announcements endorsing the use of the approach are considered potentially relevant for individuals from these groups.

This is followed by the second paper of the issue by Ann Anka and Bridget Penhale of the University of East Anglia. This research-based paper concerns the relatively unexplored topic of the safeguarding and abuse of family carers by the individuals that they care for, explored through the use of a literature review. The purpose of the review was to establish what is known about this issue. An initial search of the literature was undertaken in relation to unpaid family carers who are at risk of or have experienced abuse from the people they provide care for. The search and review included grey literature as well as policy guidance and law, to determine the existing knowledge base and to identify gaps in practice and also areas that might require further research. The findings from the review indicate that carer harm is a serious but under-researched topic. Further, the needs of unpaid family carers who are at risk of or have experienced such forms of abuse, violence and harm are generally dealt with as related to “adults at risk” within safeguarding policy/law processes and practice rather than an issue relating to the

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safeguarding of “carers at risk”. Some implications for practice and research are also considered in the paper.

The next paper in this issue is by Ashfaque Talpur and colleagues at the University of Sheffield. It reports on a qualitative study undertaken to explore knowledge and understanding about elder mistreatment in the Pakistani community in one area of the UK. Two gender-based focus groups (one for men and one for women) and a number of individual interviews were held, across a range of participants, including older people, family caregivers and key stakeholders in the local community. Findings from the analysis that was performed on the data established quite a wide range of understandings about mistreatment towards older people, which varied across both age and gender and key forms of abuse were identified. Some interesting findings relating to cultural and moral dilemmas and difficulties in reporting and acting on mistreatment, and recommendations from the study, including the need for more targeted interventions to meet the needs of older Pakistani individuals who experience or are at risk of mistreatment provide useful food for thought. The paper also establishes a good case for the need for more integration of cultural, ethnic and gendered perspectives in the development of inclusive services in response to elder mistreatment.

The final full paper in this issue is by Mahvia Gul and colleagues from Foundation University, Islamabad in Pakistan. The paper reports on a research study considering the feasibility and acceptability of using an acceptance and commitment therapeutic approach with unpaid caregivers of people with dementia but including an emphasis on matters relating to abuse and protection. The aim of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) is to help the person to develop acceptance of internal experiences and to promote positive behaviours that align with the individual's personal values, which would also act to decrease some of the more negative aspects of caregiving such as increased anxiety, depression and sense of caregiver burden. The study reported was an initial pilot study that aimed to evaluate the feasibility and acceptability of an online ACT intervention, as well as the preliminary findings about the effect of the therapy on improving well-being for carers of people living with dementia. Some interesting findings are noted, including the fact that all participants in the study completed the online programme and provided very high satisfaction ratings (93%), as well as determining a specific need for tailored interventions that can help to support and protect both older people and their carers.

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 by Smith and Grabovac and is on the topic of sexual behaviour and health in older adults. It provides a useful examination of sexual behaviour and health in older people, including such topics as levels and trends of sexual activity, health-related benefits of sexual activity and the impact of harmful sexual activity on health. There is some consideration of sexual abuse and also challenges that can arise due to gender and sexual identity.

We hope that you will find papers in this issue that are of interest and use 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 webpage 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 focuses on actions that have resulted from the safeguarding adults review on Cawston Park Hospital in Norfolk; this should appear as our

next issue, slightly later in the summer. 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 the range of adult safeguarding topics. We also hope that the forthcoming summer months will go well for you all.