



Stop adult abuse

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SSASPB Newsletter

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board

1. Welcome

Foreword from Independent Chair SSASPB

In its Strategic Plan the SSASPB has two priorities under the headings of Prevention and Engagement and promoting and seeking assurances in relation to Effective Practice.

The purpose of this newsletter is to communicate the key messages relating to those priorities in a style that is easy to read and absorb. In response to helpful feedback the key points are listed in a bullet point format. It is written predominantly for all working with and supporting adults with care and support needs.

What the SSASPB is seeking to achieve

The SSASPB has a continuous focus on seeking assurances on the effectiveness of practice in safeguarding adults in a variety of situations. From the sharing of information through partnership working it is clear that there is a lot of activity both at an organisational level and in multi-agency situations to identify learning from adverse experiences. The constant challenge – it is a big one - is to demonstrate and evidence that the necessary changes in practice needed in response to the learning have been implemented to mitigate the potential for future recurrences.

The articles below seek to communicate learning from both the adverse and positive experiences of adults with care and support needs who have experienced abuse or neglect including:

- Recurring themes from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and learning events – with a list of helpful prompts.
- Communicating with adults who may be cognitively impaired – practical tips arising from engagement with national project through Alcohol Change.
- The importance of ensuring that the voice of the adult is heard – a case study on the learning from the experiences of Mrs X.
- The findings of an audit of online abuse of adults with care and support needs – this highlights the relatively small number of cases and that there may potentially be under reporting.

The newsletter concludes with details of the Festival of Practice a week-long learning event that runs between 12 and 16 June 2023 organised jointly across the Adult Social Care and Children Social Care directorates for all professionals in Stoke-on-Trent building on the successful event last year. An invitation is extended to multi-agency partners to attend reflecting the commitment to encourage a one-team approach to learning.

I conclude by asking for any feedback you have on this newsletter which would be most welcome as well your suggestions on content that would be helpful to you in future editions. Please use the email link ssaspb.admin@staffordshire.gov.uk

Thank you for reading.

John Wood, Independent Chair

2. Communicating with adults who may be cognitively impaired

In 2022/23 the SSASPB contributed to a national project to better understand adults who experience cognitive impairment through dependent drinking. The Board committed to the project arising from the learning from the Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) 'Andrew' during 2022. Andrew may have experienced cognitive impairment through dependent drinking, and it is recommended that you read the ['Andrew' SAR Report Final \(ssaspb.org.uk\)](https://ssaspb.org.uk) if you work with adults who have multiple needs including needing support to make decisions to improve their own health and wellbeing. The project was undertaken by Alcohol Change – this is a link to their website [Alcohol Change UK: Alcohol harms. Time for change. | Alcohol Change UK](https://alcoholchange.org.uk)

The project team engaged with 12 practitioners from Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire in April 2023 and offered the following tips which could help to improve communication with the adults you support.

Communication Tips:

- Find a calm, quiet space
- Minimise background noise
- Use words familiar to the person
- Talk about one thing at a time
- Ask one question at a time
- Write down key words and use pictures to keep on track and support memory
- Give the person time and silence to process what you have said – count to 10
- If the person gets stuck in trying to remember a word, ask what sound the word starts with or ask them to describe what it is like
- In a group conversation, just have one person speak at a time
- A person may be able to read, but may not remember what they have said

3. Ensuring the voice of the adult is heard—'the missing voice of Mrs X'

Following the death of an elderly adult in Staffordshire a Health Learning Review has recently taken place involving partners to the SSASPB. Mrs X had various chronic conditions including heart failure and diabetes and she had recently been discharged from hospital into the care of her son who also had care and support needs. Her death was not deemed suspicious, however it became clear from the collated health records that her 'voice' could not be heard in any of the interventions recorded by health professionals.

It was unclear whether she was happy and what her views and wishes were around her care, treatment or living conditions. Visiting workers referred to Mrs X often in the third person following conversations with her son and other family members.

The key learning from this review is that practitioners need to ensure that the adult being supported has as much voice, choice and control as they want in their own unique circumstances. This means avoiding assumptions about people's wishes and abilities and avoiding rigid, impersonal, "time and task" approaches. Practitioner approaches should be building constructive relationships with people and use professional curiosity skills to gather further information about what might be going on within a household if necessary.

In this particular detailed illustration practitioners could have asked Mrs X - "Where would you like to live following discharge from hospital", "How best can we support you to manage your diabetes", "I have noticed that you have been more tired over the last few days, can you tell me how you are feeling and what's going on for you"? Her responses could have been recorded in the first person, so that other professionals could have been informed of her views and wishes, and therefore ensured that individual care could have been given.

Having a voice and control over decisions that affect us in addition to having our views, wishes and feelings respected and taken into consideration are vitally important to all of us. It is essential that all adults with care and support needs are empowered to speak up about their own choices and views as well. The experiences of Mrs X are a reminder that all efforts should be made to engage the person in care. If an adult is struggling to communicate and be heard then an advocate should be arranged. Here is a link for more information. [Advocacy | ASIST Advocacy Services In Staffordshire | Stoke-on-Trent, England](#)

4. Online abuse of adults with care and support needs

One of the ways in which the SSASPB seeks assurances that processes, policies and procedures are supporting the identification and prevention of adult abuse and neglect is through audits. At a Local Authority scrutiny committee meeting the Board was asked to report on the themes and trends of online abuse of adults with needs for care and support. There was also interest in this topic at a national level where concerns have been raised as to the potential under reporting of such matters.

This audit identified the following:

- This type of abuse is very difficult to research because of limitations with case management systems and the lack of a defined type of abuse in the Care Act 2014
- Those affected are usually under 65yrs of age, with most being under 40yrs
- Those affected are males and females in equal quantities
- Sources of risk appear to be equally split too; however some people purport to be of a different gender to their own
- Those affected tend to have a learning disability or mental ill-health
- The concerns did not often lead to a S42 enquiry as most did not have care and support needs but had vulnerabilities
- Awareness of this kind of abuse was good (in those incidents reported) and in some cases further abuse was prevented
- There was evidence of prevention advice and tactics
- There was evidence of multi-agency working
- Most online abuse derives from the use of social media platforms
- Romance fraud is evident, with financial gain as a motive
- Some adults did not believe that they were being exploited when others did
- There were examples of sextortion – the threatened use of intimate images

It is of note that the audit involved scrutiny of a relatively small number of cases due to the limited information available, which may reflect the national concerns that this type of abuse may be under reported.

Following the audit, the SSASPB Business Manager met with representatives from both Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council Trading Standards teams and the following links will lead to further information about their work.

[Scams | Scams | Stoke-on-Trent](#)

[Friends Against Scams - Staffordshire County Council](#)

[Call Blockers - Staffordshire County Council](#)

5. Festival of Practice 12-16 June 2023

Following its success last year, Stoke-on-Trent City Council are delighted to announce the return of its **Festival of Practice**, taking place from **Monday 12 to Friday 16 June 2023!**

The Festival of Practice is a week-long learning event organised jointly across the Adult Social Care and Children Social Care directorates for all professionals in Stoke-on-Trent who work with adults, children and families.

The week is fully packed with over 40 one-off free learning sessions that align with safeguarding priorities for you to tailor around your own learning. Some of these sessions will be face-to-face while the majority will be delivered virtually.

We would like to extend the invite to our multi-agency partners, such as the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Board (SSASPB), local universities, health colleagues, Staffordshire Police and Voluntary Sector as part of our commitment to encourage a one-team approach to learning.

We are also delighted to have Helen Jones, SSASPB Business Manager, delivering a session on the Monday titled 'Safeguarding Adult Reviews: An introduction to what they are and why we do them'. This is definitely a session to keep an eye out for!

The Event Programme will take you through each day during the Festival of Practice, including the sessions on offer and how to sign up: [Click here to access the Festival of Practice Event Programme](#).

For any queries about the Festival of Practice, please contact: Sophie.cragg@stoke.gov.uk



6. Raising an Adult Safeguarding Concern

If you think that an adult with care and support needs is being abused or neglected:

If the adult lives in Stoke:

Telephone: 0800 561 0015 at any time

Minicom: 01782 236037

If the adult lives in Staffordshire:

Telephone: 0345 604 2719

Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 5pm, Fridays 8:30am to 4:30pm, excluding Bank Holidays

0345 604 2886 at any other time