

Ann Craft Trust

Latest Research and News on Safeguarding Disabled Children and Adults at Risk

Issue: 102

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THE ANN CRAFT TRUST

Bulletin No 102

January 2018

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By Anonymous Parent, Issue 48 2004

Editors Note

Welcome to Edition 102. We all hope that you had a good break over the Xmas holidays and we would like to wish you a happy and peaceful new year.

We were pleased to see so many supporters and friends at the ACT seminar in November. It was a special event as we were celebrating 25 years since the charity was founded and it was interesting to look back over that time and see how some things have changed but also how much more there is to be done. Many thanks to all the speakers who contributed to the day and also to Sallie Barker who chaired the day so seamlessly. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Sandy Pearce and Janet Garnons-Williams for all their support to ACT. Sandy has been a very long standing Trustee and decided to step down at this year's AGM due to other commitments but I am sure we will be keeping in touch with. Janet has been on the ACT Management Committee since 2008 so will also be missed by all.

We hope that you will all attend this year's seminar on 22nd November when we will be incorporating the day into the planned National Safeguarding Week – we will be giving you more news about this in the April edition but it would be great if you can start to think about any events, training, campaigning you could do that week.

We were delighted in December to launch our new website and many thanks go to Abra, our Marketing and Com-

munications Officer, who has worked so hard on this. We welcome any thoughts you have about the website and anything that you think we should add. Your contributions are also very welcome so if you feel like contributing something about the safeguarding work you are doing please get in touch. And if any of your colleagues would like to be added to our supporters database and receive the bulletin as well as news from ACT they can do so by using the online form – we would very much like to hear from them.

The events section has news about our annual seminar as well as news about the research My Marriage My Choice resources launch and the CSE training that ACT is delivering this year—you can now apply for any of these events online.

In this edition we have included information about the presentations from the seminar as well as an article by Sarah, our Safeguarding Disabled Children's Manager,

who has written about a local organisation that works with victims and survivors of domestic abuse, an update on safeguarding news and an article from the vault.

There is also news about a review of the experiences and outcomes of children and young people in residential special schools and colleges. Good Intentions, Good Enough? The Lenehan Review into Residential Special Schools will interest all those working with children with disabilities.

There is also new practice guidance from Community Care on understanding what mate crime is and who perpetrates it. The guidance also includes information on the environmental and social factors that lead to adults with learning disabilities being vulnerable to mate crimes. Hate/mate crime continues to be a concern for all who work with adults with learning disabilities.

I hope you enjoy this edition and do get in touch with your news and views.



Deborah Kitson, ACT CEO



ACT Seminar: Celebrating 25 Years of the Ann Craft Trust



ACT's Celebrating 25 Years of the Ann Craft Trust seminar took place on November 23rd last year with professionals from across the UK listening to expert talks and taking part in group discussions about the prominent safeguarding issues we've had over the last 25 years and challenges we look to face in the future.

After an introduction from our Chair, Sallie Barker, we heard from Deborah Kitson with '25 Years On...'.



Deborah Kitson, Ann Craft Trust CEO, discussed the impact of Dr Ann Craft's work and the inspiration she

gave to so many people working in safeguarding. Looking back at a history of safeguarding adults, Deborah discussed the journey from ICNHH/TANEA (It Could Never Happen Here/There Are No Easy Answer), No Secrets and Multi-Agency Working through to the Care Act, moving from 'protection' to 'safeguarding' and on to making safeguarding personal and organisations' commitment to safeguarding.

Deborah then followed with an exploration of abuse cases, prompting the question, "When will we ever learn?". From Longcare (1998), Steve Hoskins (2006), Fiona Pilkington (2007) to Winterbourne View (2011), Operation Yewtree (2012) and Justice for LB (2013) - we need to learn, change and develop working practices to make sure we don't see repeat cases like these.

Deborah finished her opening talk with a discussion of the safeguarding challenges facing us now and in the future.

Second, we had **Anita Franklin**, Reader and Co-Director of Children and Families Research in Children and Young People's Social Care at Coventry University and



Ann Craft Trust's Disabled Children's Manager, **Sarah Goff** with 'Safer? Stronger? Heard? Where are we now?'.

The talk focused on our progress and where we are now with safeguarding and protection of disabled children and young people by comparing key research findings.

The Children in Need funded research project 'Final Report on Disabled Children and Abuse' (1999) found that while over 50% of local authorities claimed to be able to identify abuse of disabled children only 10% could give a figure.

Anita and Sarah presented the findings of numerous studies from 1999 onwards, showing how our understanding of abuse and the barriers to reporting it have changed and developed including the 2017 European funded research, 'Identifying and preventing abuse of disabled children in institutions', which the Ann Craft Trust was involved in. The key questions for the UK

Safeguarding Challenges

- **Sexual exploitation**
- **Disability hate crime**
- **Keeping safe online**
- **Forced Marriage**
- **Domestic Abuse**
- **Prevent**

ACT Seminar: Celebrating 25 Years of the Ann Craft Trust

included why doors were locked, questions about choice, where and when is the young persons voice sought and how does this affect the young persons ability to seek, assert and develop self-reliance and an exploration of the individualised and institutionalised practices such as meals, bedrooms and activities.



After a short break, we heard **Kim Arnold**, National Lead of Choice Support's

Experts by Experience programme.

The Experts by Experience programme introduced the involvement of individual people who have experience of using health and/or social care services or who are family/carers of someone who uses health and/or social care services.

Starting in 2006, Experts by Experiences began with 26 people with learning disabilities who were recruited in the role of Quality Checker. Having gone on to work with the Care Quality Commission and conduct a number of inspections in response to the Winterbourne View abuse, Experts by Experience were awarded another Care Quality Commission contract in 2016 and now work with the Ann Craft Trust to recruit new experts.

The talk introduced us to current Experts by Experience and allowed us to hear how the programme has benefited both the experts and people using the services inspected too.



Next we heard from **Rachael Clawson**, Assistant Professor in Social Work at

the University of Nottingham.

Rachael shared findings from the My Marriage, My Choice; Assessing Capacity to Marry research project. The project focuses on the forced marriage of adults with learning disabilities and aims to develop knowledge, policy and practice to keep people safe.

The talk began with an introduction to forced marriage and where the law stands. The project builds upon previous work and will culminate in guidance and a tool kit to support practitioners assessing capacity to consent to marry, a film aimed at people with learning disabilities and families to raise awareness of forced marriage and a detailed case study report. The case study report will explain forced marriage from the perspective of people with learning disabilities, family members and community/faiths to help improve understanding of social care staff.

Rachael explored the perspectives gained from focus groups including people with learning disabilities, families, faith/community leaders and practitioners.

The resources will be launched on Friday, 9th March at the University of Nottingham. If you'd like to attend, [find out more and book your place to the launch of My Marriage, My Choice resources.](#)



Lastly, we heard **Nicola Dean**, Ann Craft Trust's Safeguarding Adults in Sport Manager and **Michelle North**, Senior Consultant at the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) with 'Safeguarding in Sport'.

Michelle discussed how safeguarding children in sport has moved on from the first high profile cases in sport in the 1990s where initial responses were geared towards dealing with rogue individuals rather than systematic change.

The CPSU has worked to address these issues by supporting the sector to safeguard children, as well as understanding the difference between safeguarding children and adults.

The Ann Craft Trust is working with the CPSU to grow knowledge and understanding of safeguarding adults in sport and activity.

As Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Activity Manager, Nicola Dean holds the first post of its kind in the UK. Sport England's 'Towards an Active Nation' described how we want everyone in England regardless of age, background or level of ability to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity to battle high levels of inactivity. Safeguarding is crucial to this success as feeling unsafe or excluded is a significant barrier for some groups.

Sexual Exploitation of Children with Learning Disabilities Training



The NWG Network and the Ann Craft Trust have worked in partnership to develop two new training courses for practitioners who work within the field of CSE and learning disabilities.

CSE & Learning Disabilities:

For Practitioners Specialising in Learning Disabilities

This course is aimed at practitioners who have experience in working with young people with learning disabilities.

This training will focus more on developing your knowledge on the complexities of CSE and relating the effect and impact back to young people with learning disabilities and difficulties.

21 March 2018

Location: Ann Craft Trust, University of Nottingham

Find out more and book a place

NIDAS Research Findings

By Sarah Goff, Ann Craft Trust

Nottinghamshire Independent Domestic Abuse Services (NIDAS) have carried out a piece of work locally which is called 'Research into Awareness and Experiences of Domestic Violence and Abuse among Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities' funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

NIDAS reviewed their own service user base and found:

- High numbers of family members had learning disabilities, some of whom had been working with the service for long periods of time
- Some had difficulties recognising risks to themselves and their children and struggled to make changes
- Many did not have appropriate support
- Many had experienced violence as children (NIDAS p.9)

NIDAS also did some research into the extent to which young people with learning disabilities understood domestic abuse; their initial work indicated the young people they worked with also faced higher risks of other forms of abuse, coercion and grooming.

They surveyed the young people aged 16-25 directly and found that while the young people with learning disabilities whom they surveyed had heard of the term domestic abuse, they largely saw it as:

- Physical abuse
- Many did not think that making someone do sexual things was abuse

- Many did not think that controlling and making people do things generally was abuse including taking and controlling your money (NIDAS p.14)

This suggested that work needed to be done in relation to sexual abuse, understanding grooming and financial exploitation and that domestic abuse takes many forms.

They found that around 40% of the survey respondents or their friends had experienced physical and/or verbal (emotional) abuse and approximately 1 in 5 had experienced some form of exploitative or grooming behaviour abuse (NIDAS p.15).

NIDAS work with the whole family approach with both the parent who experienced the abuse and their children, and with new partners through the 'blended families programme' and with young people who display harmful behaviour.

The Ann Craft Trust is now carrying out a piece of work funded by Lloyds Foundation which over the next two years is looking at the experiences which young people up to 25 have had of domestic abuse services and how services generally have responded to them when they have lived with, witnessed and been affected in any way by domestic abuse. Sue Ready from NIDAS will be part of the advisory group for this work. We will be partnered in it by Dr Anita Franklin reader in Children and Family Research at Coventry University.

Please get in touch with Sarah at the Ann Craft Trust if you are interested in our work on this project or would like to talk about the issues discussed here.

If you are interested in our wider work relating to the abuse of disabled children and young people, please get in touch.

More about Nottinghamshire Independent Domestic Abuse Services

NIDAS is a registered charity whose core purpose is quite simply to keep people safe from abuse.

We offer an individual a wrap around service to families either together or individually, with a focus on putting children and young people at the heart of everything we do.

We adopt a whole family support approach, or specialist support sessions to children and young people between the ages of 5 – 25.

In 2015 to March 2016, there were 14,228 incidents of domestic abuse -related incidents reported to Police in Nottinghamshire.

We support around 2,000 individuals directly each year. We support individuals and families from crisis through to recovery through:

- Immediate support and crisis intervention
- Planned 1-to-1 support and group work
- Telephone and outreach emotional/practical support to support their immediate safety and coping strategies
- Safety planning
- Risk and needs assessment
- Emotional health and mental well-being
- Healthy relationships – training and awareness
- Signposting to other relevant services or agencies

Sports Update

By Nicola Dean, Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Activity Manager

ann craft trust
acting against abuse

Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Activity Advice & Training

Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Activity is a project funded by Sport England to develop best practice in safeguarding adults at risk.

ACT was very pleased to have been successful in being granted further funding from Sport England for the next 2 years to support sport and activity organisations to address the issues of safeguarding adults.

The ACT 'safeguarding in sport' team is expanding to further develop this work. In addition to Nicola Dean as a Safeguarding in Sport Manager we are now receiving expert safeguarding advice from ACT Safeguarding Adults Manager Lisa Curtis, and will shortly be joined by a full time Safeguarding Adults in Sport Development Manager.

To shape the services provided to the sector ACT have developed a safeguarding adults delivery plan that includes provision of information and guidance to organisations, developing wider partnerships between sport, the

statutory sector and others, quality assurance in safeguarding adults, training and learning development and data collection and case management.

One of the tasks that we have outlined as priority areas for the next few months is developing a quality assurance framework for sport organisations. This will be designed to ensure that all sport and activity organisations can embed the essentials of safeguarding adults within their practices. It will be launched in June at the [ACT Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Activity Seminar 2018](#).

We are all very pleased with the new ACT website. It has a [dedicated section for sport and activity](#). Resources will continue to be added over the coming months.

This is an exciting time for ACT as

we build on the work that has been undertaken. It is a real challenge to make the principles of safeguarding adults relevant to the sport and activity sector. We look forward to working with sport and activity organisations to embed safeguarding adults within policies, procedures and service delivery.

If you are interested in this work please [Sign up for our safeguarding adults in sport update](#) or get in touch with the ACT team.

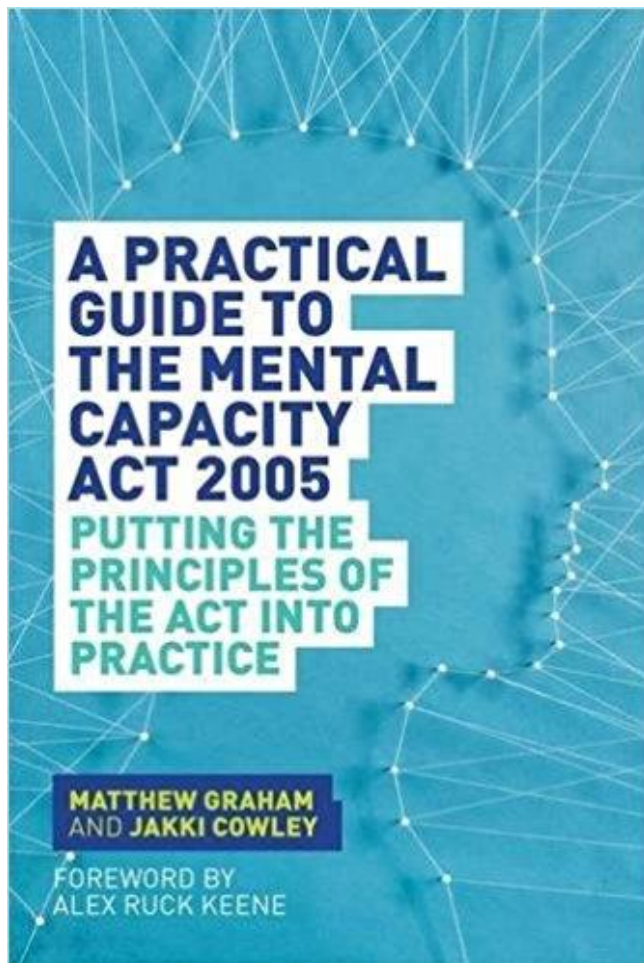
Safeguarding Adults in Sport Email Updates

Our Safeguarding Adults in Sport Update delivers the latest safeguarding news, resources and events straight to your inbox.

Sign up now

Safeguarding & Mental Capacity Act Book Reviews

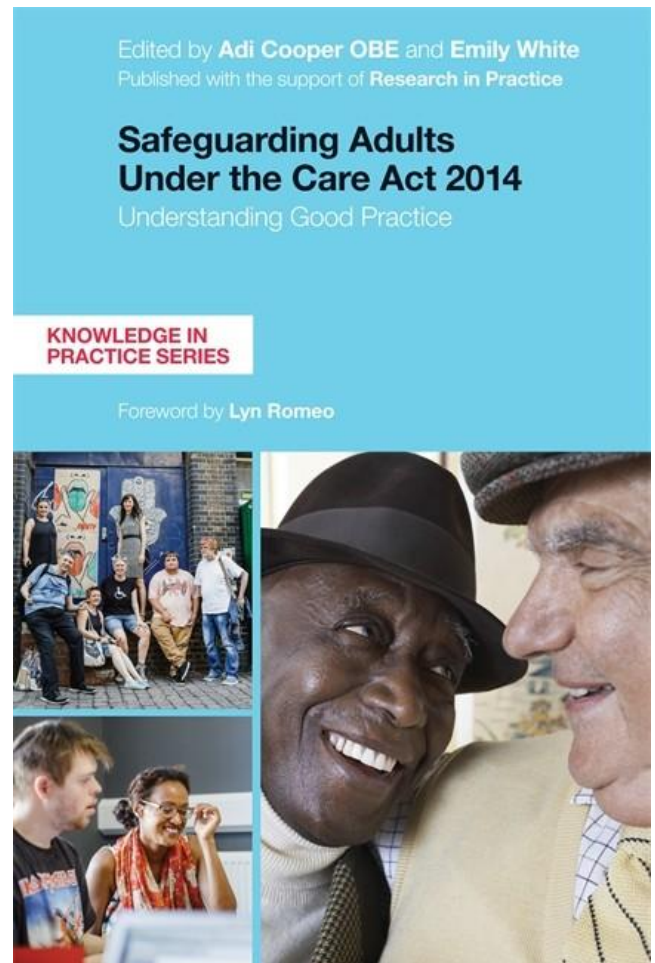
By Lisa Curtis



A Practical Guide to The Mental Capacity Act: Putting the Principles of The Act into Practice

Authors: Matthew Graham and Jakki Cowley

A practical guide to The Mental Capacity Act achieves exactly what it sets out to do, providing a logical and accessible approach to what can feel like a complex piece of health and social care law. This book is essential reading for anyone working with people who may lack capacity. The authors set the scene by exploring cultures and then takes the reader through a logical sequence of events following the 5 key principles of the Act by way of case studies, exercises and tips. The safeguards afforded by the Act are described and the final section 'liberty and choice' explains current practice issues associated with DoLs. The guide supports embedding the 'spirit' of the Act in practice and supports the practical application with the aim to increase confidence in the framework. An interesting read from start to finish.



Safeguarding Adults Under the Care Act 2014

Edited by Dr Adi Cooper OBE and Emily White

Published with support of Research in Practice

This book will serve as an important resource to practitioners in all agencies. Key aspects and challenges are introduced allowing for reflection regarding the challenges of implementation in practice. By use of case studies central themes of safeguarding under the Care Act are brought to life. Written in 3 sections the following areas are presented, Making Safeguarding Personal: approaches to practice, working with risk and using the law and Current issues for practitioners. This book presents a reminder of best practice in safeguarding and focusses on our continual learning, listening to what people tell us and the need to be legally literate. The book is easy to read allowing for the practitioner to select areas for immediate answers as well as embracing the whole book for a thorough insight into current practice.

Safeguarding News Watch...

Hillingdon taxi driver jailed for sexually assaulting vulnerable passengers with learning disabilities

A Hillingdon taxi driver who sexually assaulted his vulnerable, mentally handicapped passengers in his taxi over a four-year period has been jailed.

William Busher, 69, assaulted three women with learning disabilities while working as a taxi driver for vulnerable adults between February 2012 and June 2016 in the Henley-on-Thames area, Thames Valley police said.

Read the full story at getwestlondon.co.uk

Court rules children of learning disabled mother can be adopted despite criticising council

A court has ruled two young children whose mother has a learning disability can be adopted, despite accepting criticism by her legal team of the local authority involved with the family.

At the family court hearing in Bournemouth in November, Judge Dancey acknowledged there was "considerable force" in arguments that the authority's assessment and support of the mother could have been better.

Read the full story at communitycare.co.uk

Support people to make decisions if they have capacity but find it difficult, NICE says

They should support people even if they make a decision that they may disagree with. Making an 'unwise' or 'risky' choice does not mean that a person lacks capacity and decisions need to be made on their behalf, [the draft guidance says](#).

Using visual aids or involving friends and family can help a person communicate their wishes, NICE says.

Trapped campaign being launched to stop criminal gangs from grooming children and vulnerable adults to commit crime

POLICE, local authorities, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, young people and an MP are launching a campaign to stop criminal gangs from grooming children and vulnerable adults to commit crime.

The Trapped campaign aims to raise awareness of criminals who are grooming and exploiting children and young adults to commit crime on their behalf.

Read the full story at leighjournal.co.uk

Law on coach-player sexual relationships to change—Tracey Crouch

Sexual relationships between sports coaches and 16- and 17-year-olds in their care will be made illegal, says sports minister Tracey Crouch.

The age of consent in the UK is 16,

although that is extended to 18 if a person holds a position of trust.

The law currently covers teachers, hospital workers and carers, but not sports coaches.

Read the full story at bbc.co.uk

British Swimming apologises for 'climate of fear' findings

British Swimming has apologised to Paralympic athletes after it was found that a former head coach "created a climate of fear".

It said an independent inquiry into complaints of bullying from 13 Para-swimmers found they and their families faced "unacceptable behaviours".

The governing body said the unnamed member of staff - understood to be ex-head coach Rob Greenwood - was found to have been "communicating with athletes in an abusive manner, as well as using derogatory terms to describe athletes".

Read the full story at bbc.co.uk

Refreshed Health Charter to tackle health inequalities for people with learning disabilities

Public Health England and VODG (the Voluntary Organisations Disability Group), have launched the updated Health Charter for social care providers who support people with a learning disability. The Charter was developed with people with learning disabilities and their families to support providers to improve the overall health and wellbeing of people

Safeguarding News Watch...

with learning disabilities.

Read the full story at vodg.org.uk

Government must focus on how Brexit affects the voluntary social care sector

Brexit will undermine support for disabled people unless the government shores up the voluntary social care sector, according to a new report.

Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (VODG), representing leading not-for-profit disability support providers, has issued Risks and rights: how social care can survive Brexit. The report illustrates the negative consequences for social care once Britain leaves the EU, such as a loss of EU care workers. It also suggests practical solutions to avoid further instability in the sector.

Read the full story at vodg.org.uk

Disabled taxi price premium condemned by charity

Confusion over new rules for disabled taxi passenger fares has led to "discriminatory" price differences, a charity claims.

A test in Nottingham saw a wheelchair user quoted up to five times more than an able-bodied caller.

Muscular Dystrophy UK said the practice was unacceptable.

For an existing ban on charging more to come into force councils must compile a formal list of accessible taxis but many have not done this.

Read the full story on bbc.co.uk

History of learning disability nursing to be explored in 'unique' new study

The development of learning disability nursing in England and Ireland over the past 30 years is to be explored in a new project looking at the sustainability of the workforce.

Nurses and healthcare assistants are being encouraged to share their experiences with the project, which is being led by the University of West London, Trinity College Dublin and the Royal College of Nursing.

Read the full story on nursingtimes.net

4% of UK adults have seen child sexual abuse images – survey

As many as 4% of adults have engaged with images of child sexual abuse on the internet and 16% of young women receive unwanted sexual requests online each year, academic research reveals.

The extent of web-facilitated exploitation is detailed in a series of reports for the next strand of hearings at the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse (IICSA), looking into the role of the internet, which starts on Monday.

Three separate studies assessing the latest research have been released as the week-long session begins at the IICSA's headquarters in London.

Read the full story on theguardian.com

Blue badge scheme could be extended to cover autism and dementia

People with hidden disabilities such as dementia and autism could be given blue badge parking permits in England under new government proposals.

The Department for Transport said that only some councils currently recognised hidden disabilities.

It said the proposed new policy was designed to provide "clear and consistent" guidelines.

Read the full story on bbc.co.uk

Modern slavery: Nail salons 'using trafficked individuals'

There's a warning that workers in your local nail bar could be victims of human trafficking.

Rachel Harper, from the modern slavery charity Unseen, says they "see a lot of cases" in the nail salon industry.

They want people to be able to spot the signs of modern slavery, as the number of potential victims is going up.

Read the full story on bbc.co.uk

Nottingham Sports Direct modern slavery brothers ordered to repay £167k

Two brothers jailed for modern slavery offences have been ordered to repay £167,650 in criminal gains.

Erwin and Krystian Markowski, from Nottingham, trafficked men from Poland to work at Sports Direct's Derbyshire warehouse and kept most of their wages.

Safeguarding News Watch...

Police said investigations found the duo made a "considerable amount of money" between 2010 and 2016.

Sports Direct said it welcomed the conviction and "will not tolerate these kinds of behaviour".

Read the full story on bbc.co.uk

Health visitors warn of safeguarding concerns as caseloads increase

Children are being put at risk due to cuts in the number of health visitors and spiralling caseloads, according to the latest annual survey by the Institute of Health Visiting.

Read the full story on nursingtimes.net

Shocking story of woman told to attend bank with her rapist to close their joint account

A woman was told to visit the bank with her serial abuser and rapist in order to close a joint account in a shocking case raised in parliament.

Experts say forcing a victim to meet a perpetrator could be "life-threatening, as well as highly traumatic".

They warn that financial abuse is often a key factor in keeping a victim in an abusive situation.

Read the full story on mirror.co.uk

Almost quarter of large provider care homes are inadequate or require

improvement

Nearly a quarter of English care homes for the over 64s run by large providers require improvement or are inadequate, according to figures compiled by the consumer watchdog Which?

The charity examined the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection ratings for 54 providers who run at least 12 residential homes that care exclusively for people aged 65 and over.

Of the 1,917 homes examined 24% required improvement or were inadequate. The CQC's recent State of Health Care and Adult Social Care report puts the figure for all residential homes at 18%, but that figure includes services that cater for a wider age group or younger adults.

Read the full story on communitycare.co.uk

New director of nursing for Yorkshire mental health and learning disability trust

A nurse, health visitor and senior manager with more than 25 years' experience has been appointed as the new director of nursing and professions at Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Cathy Woffendin, currently deputy director of nursing, children's and specialist services at Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust will join her new trust in March.

Read the full story on nursingtimes.net

Council 'ignored' Care Act guidance on care home top-up fees

A council "ignored fundamental concepts" about top-up fees contained in guidance on the Care Act 2014 in a case where it placed a man in a care home on an emergency basis.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found Lincolnshire Council did not tell the man's family about the options available when he was placed in the home.

The family had to pay a 'top-up' fee when the council should have offered them the choice of a home which did not require the additional amount. When they struggled to pay the fee, the care home threatened to evict the man, known as 'Mr C', who has dementia and physical disabilities.

Read the full story on communitycare.co.uk

'Postcode lottery' leaves thousands of abuse victims without protection

Huge differences in the way councils interpret England's flagship adult protection law has created a 'postcode lottery' in which reports of abuse are more likely to be investigated in some areas than others, charity warns.

Action on Elder Abuse (AEA), the only UK-wide charity that exists specifically to combat abuse against older people, said local interpretation of the Care Act 2014 had led to massive differences in the number of people whose cases were investigated by local authority adult protection units.

Read the full story on elderabuse.org.uk

Research & Resources...



Policy Paper: Relationships education, RSE and PSHE

Policy Statement from Department for Education on relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE), and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE)

A policy statement to explain the government amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill to introduce statutory:

- relationships education in primary schools
- relationships and sex education in secondary schools
- PSHE in all schools

Statutory guidance sets out what schools and local authorities must do to comply with the law. You should follow the guidance unless you have a very good reason not to.



Sex Education Forum—Sex Education Information

Relationships and Sex Education will be mandatory in all secondary schools and Relationships Education mandatory in all primary schools from September 2019. There will be a process of consultation about how to deliver this.

There is useful information from the Sex Education Forum including FAQs.



Local area SEND inspections: One Year On

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission inspect how well local areas fulfil their 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice' duties.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will carry out 152 local area inspections in 5 years. Inspections began in May 2016 and this publication covers the first year.

**Download this
report**

Read this resource

Read this report



Research & Resources...



‘Good Intentions, Good Enough?’ The Lenehan Review into Residential Special Schools

A review of the experiences and outcomes of children and young people in residential special schools and colleges.

[Read this review](#)

Mate crime against adults with learning disabilities

Practice guidance from Community Care on understanding what mate crime is and who perpetrates it. The guidance also includes information on the environmental and social factors that lead to adults with learning disabilities being vulnerable to mate crimes.

[Read this resource](#)

‘Postcode lottery’ leaves thousands of abuse victims without protection

Huge differences in the way councils interpret England’s flagship adult protection law has created a ‘postcode lottery’ in which reports of abuse are more likely to be investigated in some areas than others, Action on Elder Abuse has warned

[Read this report](#)



From the Vault...

"They want to manager her, not to understand her..."

By Anonymous Parent, ACT Bulletin 48, 2004

This email from a parent who wishes to remain anonymous was circulated on www.ldforums.org and raised a great deal of discussion amongst members. I contacted the parent who agreed that ACT could print this account of her experiences of battling for her daughter's rights and her feelings of disempowerment and frustration.

I am the parent of a daughter with learning disabilities who lives in a residential home in England. She is

in her twenties. When she went to this house, they were given full information about how to support her successfully. They knew the things that she liked to do, where she needed support, how to communicate successfully with her, her need for respect and honesty, fairness and consistency. They were told quite clearly what would fail i.e. attempts to control her, putting anything in place which she did not fully understand and accept the reasons for etc. It was explained to them that she needed to work with reality more than most people - if something was not meaningful to her or she did not understand something, it seemed to affect her stability and her behaviour would deteriorate. The importance of meaningful activities was also stressed and agreed.

I understand that the experience and skill gained by other people are not immediately transferable to others and that it takes a period of time to understand a person, to make a few mistakes and learn from them. I also understand that different environments can throw up different challenges.

I am very fortunate in that my daughter has an excellent social worker, who will follow up a placement and will ask awkward questions and will challenge people. We listen to my daughter and we listen to each other and this makes us a good team. So my daughter and myself are very fortunate in that we have some very good support. My daughter is also fortunate in having a mother whose job is supporting people with learning disabilities and therefore has a

very clear understanding of issues around people's rights etc and the various difficulties around supporting people well. When my daughter went into this placement, I therefore knew all the right questions to ask and I asked them. I was given very encouraging replies. I then said that I did not want any spin. When I was speaking to my daughter, I spoke

to her with total honesty and if I was going to say that something was available, I wanted to know it would be avail-

able. I was assured that there was no spin in what was said to me and to her.

It did not take long to find that there was a considerable amount of spin or downright dishonesty. When I have tried to face them with this, it has been very difficult. As a parent, you get very used to being given the run around and if you say what you really

"It did not take long to find that there was a considerable amount of spin or downright dishonesty."

think, then you are emotional and unreasonable and you lose credibility - at least in their eyes - but as they have the power, that can be very important. And so, I try to be very reasonable and understanding but even in spite of this, I am sometimes accused of being frightening. I had always found this quite difficult to understand as I never shout - I don't even raise my voice, I never say anything without supporting it by clear evidence, I always listen to others and answer their questions and change my own view if shown why I should etc. When I asked someone who I knew respected me why this was said, their answer was because you don't back off when they try to disempower you and therefore to them you are frightening. I found this quite sad.



From the Vault...

As well as working with my daughter's social worker to try to improve things, I contacted an advocate who sees my daughter once every couple of months - she also attended a training day which was looking to improve the situation and she said there were positive outcomes from this - but to me it was again, until it is put into practice, just words. When I told her the very many things that have gone wrong from very basic personal care issues to matters which required more skill, she tells me that it is still one of the most successful placements for my daughter's particular condition - the others are less successful.

“There is however no easy mechanism for bringing people to task over their obvious and evidenced failures ...”

I have just attended another review and again raised my concerns and I have been told that this review was positive because the issues were raised and I have to give the organisation a chance to get things right - even although in essence we are covering the same ground all the time. I am encouraged to hope that this time it might be different - and maybe with all the energy and support systems I build around myself and my daughter - including good staff on the ground - it might actually be different.

I however did not feel like being reasonable any more. I felt a deep sense of anger, an anger that I feel I cannot express outside my home because if I

do, I will lose credibility and what benefit would be gained by the expression of my anger anyway. People may

have lied about the service that they said they would provide and are being paid countless thousands of pounds to provide. This can be easily evidenced. There is however no easy mechanism for bringing people to task over their obvious and evidenced failures and if you do go down that path, where else is

there which is going to even provide the positives that this service provides. This is a very dis-empowering place to be. I

“I felt a deep sense of anger, an anger that I feel I cannot express outside my home ...”

woke up at 4am this morning and I really cried. I do not have the power to change all of this myself. Yes, I will continue to work to do so. Yes, I will go armed with my support team and my evidence and maybe slowly bit by bit it will all improve or maybe it won't because ultimately the success or otherwise is not in my control or my daughter's. It is in the control of people who are being paid so much money but do not seem willing to be fully accountable and who get off with it because there is nowhere better. They should hang their heads in shame.

I say thank you however to all of you who do really try hard to support people with respect and who challenge themselves to gain the understanding that it takes to support people well. I know that it is not always easy. To the others I will say that I will not give you the ammunition of seeing my anger or my tears because you will use that to disempower me further. I will continue to be "credible" and hopefully a little more "frightening" in my quiet way - I will continue to build up the evidence until one day perhaps people might think it is in their best interests to provide my daughter with the service they are being paid to provide - even if just to get me off their backs.

Meanwhile, in the privacy of my own home, I will occasionally allow myself to feel my own anger so I can question whether I am really doing all that I can do or just allowing the weight of the system to disempower me. I will also occasionally allow the tears

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to flow as a pure expression of the pain I feel. I worked and listened and struggled for many years before I

gained an understanding of my daughter - that was the really difficult bit for me. Now, it should be easy but no-one seems to want to hear. They want to manage her, not to understand her.



THE ANN CRAFT TRUST

ACTing Against Abuse

ACT is an association concerned with safeguarding all adults at risk and disabled children.

AIMS:

ACT maintains an information exchange network for statutory and voluntary agencies, for professionals and individuals through a national office and

the production and circulation of a quarterly bulletin

the compilation of a network of members and their specific interests

the editing and updating of an annotated bibliography and information sheets on specific topics.

ACT works towards raising the general level of awareness of issues relating to the abuse of disabled children and adults at risk


making links with other relevant organisations (both specialist and mainstream)

producing a wide range of publications

organisation of, and contribution to conferences, seminars and training events

contributing to public debate as appropriate when matters of concern arise locally or nationally.

ACT works to an equal opportunities policy, facilitating protection to all people with disabilities, with attention and respect to race, culture, religion, gender, age and sexual orientation.



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ACTing against abuse

