

Safeguarding Bulletin

Safeguarding disabled children and adults at risk.

ann craft trust
acting against abuse

April 2018

Issue 103

Bringing you the latest research and news on safeguarding disabled children and adults at risk.

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Ann Craft Trust Safeguarding Bulletin

April 2018

Issue 103

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Editor's Note

Welcome to our 'new look' Bulletin 103. We have now launched our new website and logos and so are pleased to be able to produce the bulletin now in this format. Abra and the team have managed, at last, to drag me into the real world and introduced additional colours to our image which, after some initial reluctance, I now love!

In this edition we are featuring articles on social media and online safety and Sarah has written about the work she is doing looking at child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse of young people with learning disabilities. We have also introduced Marc who has joined the team to work with Nicola on safeguarding adults in sport and activity.

I also want to mention the 'Accessible Safeguarding Initial Screening Tool' [ASIST] developed by Karen Billyeald and colleagues in Derbyshire.

It is a series of pages with symbols and short simplified sentences that relate to different types of abuse e.g. physical, sexual, financial, neglect. It can screen for early warning signs that abuse is occurring and provide a vehicle for reporting and disclosure for people who may not have been able to do so before. The person carrying it out needs to be able to communicate effectively with people with learning disabilities and the person doing the screening must be up-to-date with safeguarding training. It may be that someone has made a disclosure and the screening tool

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We were pleased to be involved in the development of ASIST and are planning further training for those who may be interested in using it in their work. If you are interested please do contact for further information.

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could be used to get more detail of the type of abuse that the person has experienced for example.

We were pleased to be involved in the development of ASIST and are planning further training for those who may be interested in using it in their work. If you are interested please do contact for further information or you can 'express an interest' on our events page on the ACT website.

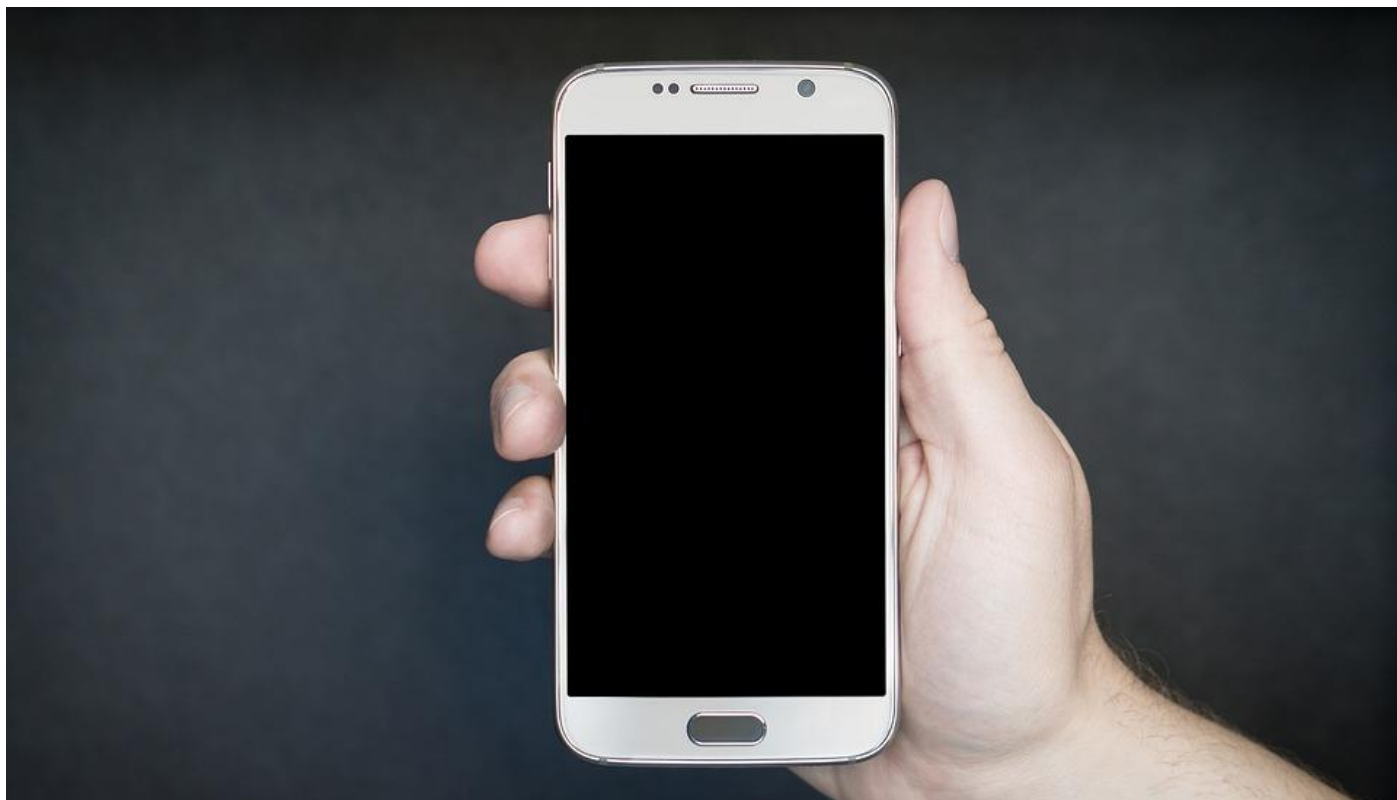
Finally you will find information about ACT events including open training and the Sport and Activity seminar in June. The next edition will feature information about our planned Safeguarding Adults Week in November and what you can do to participate and contribute to the week and details about our annual ACT Seminar on November 22nd 2018.

I hope you enjoy this bulletin and please do get in touch with any views and news – we are always pleased to hear from you.

DM Kitson

Practice Safe Social Networking: Think Before You Post!

By Lisa Curtis, Safeguarding Adults at Risk Manager



Social networking sites are a great way to stay in touch with family, friends and even meet new friends by sharing news and photos and broadcasting what's on your mind.

They're also a great way for cyber criminals to find out

information about you. After all, most people provide a lot of personal details such as where they work, who they're related to, when they're on holiday, check in to events

and so on without giving it much thought. This makes it easy for just about anyone to learn what they want to know about you which in turn increases the risk of identity theft and other scams. In addition to this geotagging

allows for your exact location to be known which could pose additional risks. Geotagging is likely to be part of your device unless you

“ It is important to stop and think before you post any information about yourself, family, friends, people you work with and people you support. ”

have switched this off.

Practice Safe Social Networking

By Lisa Curtis, Safeguarding Adults at Risk Manager

The places you visit, the comments and photos you post create a permanent digital footprint or record of your online activity creating an online reputation. The permanent record gives anyone, information about you good or bad.

It is important to stop and think before you post any information about yourself, family, friends, people you work with and people you support.

In the real world we follow unwritten rules and social norms that we have learnt throughout

our life based on maintaining civil behaviour such as holding the door for the person behind you, this is being courteous and respectful. We need to take this learning forward to our online relationships adopting the same level of respect and good judgement.

Setting up your profile

You can protect yourself on social networking sites by going to the profile settings and making sure your life isn't an open book for anyone to read.

A few tips to protect your social media profile:

- Always set your privacy settings to the highest level available.
- Control who can search your name, see your photos or view your profile.
- Don't respond to or add people that you do not know.
- Limit personal information, don't include your age, address, phone number or email address.
- Remember, photos or videos you post online can be downloaded, altered, printed, or stolen and may be used in criminal activity.
- Most of the big social networks have geotagging features built in, consider switching this off if you do not want this known.
- Stop and think about your posts, blogs and status updates, do they give away too much information.

Most importantly, share this information.

Disabled Children Research Network

Wednesday 27 June 2018

University of Nottingham

Disabled Children Research Network:

Annual Event

The network is for those involved in research about disabled children and young people and will be attended by colleagues from Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales.

Topics will include:

- Current challenges in safeguarding
- Serious Case Reviews
- Communication
- Recognition of needs and LGBTQ issues for disabled young people
- The needs of Looked After young people
- Violence and domestic abuse and disability
- Forced Marriage
- Disabled children and young people talking about abuse

How to Get Involved

If you are involved in research about disabled children and young people and would like to attend please contact us:

ann-craft-trust@nottingham.ac.uk

Sexual Exploitation

By Sarah Goff, Safeguarding Children & Young People Manager



At the Ann Craft Trust we have been working to address the needs of young people at risk of sexual exploitation by running training and developing and delivering bespoke materials to organisations willing to look at and address some of the complex issues and the challenges for care staff, social workers and other agencies. Training and developing practice like this involves working out what good care means in terms of relationships and how to help young people develop their understanding of what good and safe friendships and relationships look like. It involves a recognition that these issues do not just belong in the classroom, or at school, but are a shared and

constant part of the daily lives and needs of young people and those around. Learning about them starts very young in terms of the opportunities for socialising and making choices that can be limited for some disabled young people who may face greater isolation and lack of opportunity socially rendering them more vulnerable perhaps to being used or misled which is at the heart of exploitation.

The important work of Andrea Hollomotz has highlighted, in her study of 29 adults with

“ Training and developing practice involves working out what good care means in terms of relationships and how to help young people develop their understanding of what good and safe friendships and relationships look like.

learning needs, the harm that can be done when these needs are not attended to and young people are left to muddle

through and pick things up from the messages inherent in the behaviours of those around or

Sexual Exploitation

By Sarah Goff, Safeguarding Children & Young People Manager

in the media. Various pieces of research about sexual exploitation highlight this including the work of Franklin, Raws and Smeaton in their study of learning disability and sexual exploitation 'Unprotected Overprotected' in 2015. The need to address the social and emotional needs of children and young people at all stages of planning has also been highlighted by Taylor et al in 2014 (Protection of Disabled Children In Scotland). Work to develop a young person's sense of self, practice in

making choices, having close confiding relationships and knowledge to help a person recognise and report abuse are crucial parts of being safe alongside willingness of staff to recognise and address concerns and police and social care to take protective action. The challenges are many and broad; we all have different cultures and values in our homes, lives and communities; we have often mixed and sometimes complex feelings about talking about and working on the issues as carers and workers. The issues, however, continue to be vital as young people move towards adulthood when risks clearly continue and the

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needs for advice, support and attention to safe relationships are crucial; learning about safe relationships and having help to make decisions, and the recognition that social isolation, loneliness, discrimination, lack of knowledge and awareness can limit one's ability to make informed choices especially in

the face of deception on line, pressure and coercion from those around. The issues facing young people constrain or limit

the choices they make, lack of

information and knowledge shared in a way tailored to individual learning styles and emotional needs, and at a frequency and pace suitable for an individual, may make it harder to discern exploitative behaviour. From the University of Bedford, Jenny Pearce's social model of consent (2013) helpfully illuminates the need to consider factors which affect consent.

The National Working Group held its national conference in April this year with a wide range of speakers including a workshop led by Sam Keith from Newcastle City Council who works with young adults and Steve Barron from

Sexual Exploitation

By Sarah Goff, Safeguarding Children & Young People Manager

Newcastle Police. Steve talked about Operation Sanctuary and the investigation about sexual exploitation of children, young people and adults; Sam discussed good practice in multi-agency work in supporting young people who were both victims and survivors and also young adults at risk of exploitation. Her workshop addressed the need for proactive, persistent and empathic work with young people and adults; she highlighted the person-centred, attentive approach needed and the reality of long term support and recovery, recognising the enormous impact of trauma, the need for careful support through court processes and therapeutic help to recover.

Her workshop highlighted the need for raised awareness across adult services for young people and young adults to ensure we are switched on to the reality of risks of exploitation sexually and its links to other forms of criminal exploitation, harm and abuse.

The report of David Spicer, the 'Newcastle Joint Serious Case Review Concerning Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adults with Needs for Care and Support in Newcastle-upon-Tyne' published February 2018, has some key messages for practitioners, managers and senior managers alike.

Sexual Exploitation Training

The course being piloted on 14 June 2018 here at the Ann Craft Trust will address issues highlighted in this short article and seek to explore the challenges faced by health, police and social care workers in the voluntary and statutory sectors who work with young people and young adults;

- How do we work effectively across the gaps between children's and adults services?
- How can we bring shared learning and pool our skills and knowledge to support young people in transition from teenagers to adulthood?
- Between children's and adults services systems may change but needs and risks stay the same and good practice examples are there to be considered.

Book a place & find out more



Safeguarding Adults in Sport & Activity Seminar 2018

Monday 4th June 2018

University of Nottingham

**Join us at our Safeguarding Adults in Sport &
Activity Seminar 2018**

Join us at our annual Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Activity Seminar which will include:

- Launch of the safeguarding adults in sport code
- Introduction of a framework for safeguarding adults in sport
- NGBs and CSPs sharing their progress
- Safeguarding adults hot topics and key questions
- Opportunity to network

Speakers to be announced soon

This event is free.

Book a place & find out more



Safeguarding Adults in Sport Update

By Nicola Dean, Safeguarding Adults in Sport Manager



Image: Australian Paralympic Committee CC BY-SA 3.0

ACT welcomes Marc and learns more about Boccia

ACT is very pleased that Marc Scott has joined Nicola Dean as a Safeguarding Adults in Sport Manager.

Marc has worked in the sports development sector for over 10 years. In his last post at Boccia England Marc was the Development Manager and Lead Safeguarding Officer with overall responsibility for implementing and embedding safeguarding throughout boccia in England.

What is Boccia?

Boccia is an action packed inclusive and sociable game that tests muscle control and

accuracy. It can be played in a competitive situation or for fun with people of all ages and abilities. Hugely enjoyable and easy to learn, the idea of the game of skill and strategy is to throw your balls closest to the 'jack', the white ball, to win. Two sides compete as individuals, pairs or as a team of three over a set number of ends. Each side has six balls (red or blue) each end to try and score points. Points are accumulated over the course of a match to find a winner. The sport is played indoors on a 12.5m by 6m court, usually in a sports hall but any suitable flat playing area can be used. Boccia can be played by people with any disability and it is ideal for athletes in either power or manual wheelchairs, as the main rule of the game is that players must remain

Safeguarding Adults in Sport Update

By Nicola Dean, Safeguarding Adults in Sport Manager

seated throughout; ambulant players throw from a chair. Boccia is also a great sport for non-disabled and disabled players to enjoy and play together.

Not as simple as it sounds!

It is easy to get started, but the tactics of the sport offer both tension and excitement as the game plays out. A ball can be rolled, thrown or kicked. If a player is unable to throw or kick the ball, they can use a ramp. If players are unable to release the ball with their hands, they can use assistive devices – head/hand pointer.

View the [Boccia England 'Our Sport Video'](#)

Who are Boccia England?

Boccia England is the National Governing Body responsible for all aspects of the sport in this country, from beginner to expert, providing for all levels of participation. They work to support the development of boccia, run competitions and ultimately increase and maintain participation.

The vision of Boccia England is 'Playing Boccia – Changing Lives'

The Board Chair asserts that 'Boccia England is committed to ensuring that the sport of boccia is accessible to all and that there are no barriers to participation across the organisation, from players and volunteers to staff and Board members.'

What is a Governing Body?

Across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland there are many different national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) which have responsibility for managing their specific sport. NGBs are typically independent, self-appointed organisations that govern their own sports.

Sport Scotland explain very clearly [what an NGB does](#). Some of the functions include:

- Developing and promoting its sport;
- Influencing both members and organisations of which it is a member.
- Managing the rules and regulations of its sport, including anti-doping, safeguarding and equality;
- Implementing a governance framework for its sport;
- Administering officials of its sport;
- Encouraging and growing participation;
- Developing coaches, athletes, officials and participants;
- Organising and hosting competitions

The wider sport and activity picture

This vision of Boccia England fits the 2015 government strategy set out in Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation. This document asserts that Sport and activity

Safeguarding Adults in Sport Update

By Nicola Dean, Safeguarding Adults in Sport Manager

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Through my experience at Boccia England and also as a coach at my local athletics club I have seen first-hand the positive impact sport plays on all members of the community.

However, I'm also very aware that potential perpetrators of child and adult abuse will gravitate towards this environment and use it for their own personal benefits. This is why I am fully committed to ensuring the work ACT does is embedded right across the sporting landscape and we prevent these people from ruining the enjoyment of sport for everyone

– Marc Scott

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have the power to change the lives of all members of society. It outlines five key principles for the government strategy: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development.

There is an acknowledgement however that to feel able to participate, people need to feel safe. 'We know that feeling unsafe or excluded from sport is a significant barrier to getting involved in sport and physical activity for some groups' Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation.

The work of the Ann Craft Trust

The Ann Craft Trust is funded by Sport England to work with sport and activity to ensure that safeguarding adults is embedded throughout

organisations. From National Governing Bodies like Boccia England, through to local clubs providing activities, a culture of safeguarding adults is essential to widening participation and reaching those people in society who do not traditionally take part in sport and activity.

Safeguarding Adults in Sport Email Update

Get the latest in safeguarding adults in sport and activity straight to your inbox.

Our monthly email update will bring you the latest safeguarding news, advice, resources and training opportunities every month.

Subscribe now →

Mental Capacity Act & Safeguarding Adults at Risk Training

Thursday 14th June 2018

University of Nottingham

Join us for the morning, afternoon or both.

Morning Session: **Mental Capacity Act Training**

- To understand why the MCA is important.
- Understand the 5 core principles.
- Understand how an improved knowledge of the MCA can support decision making for an individual.
- Recognise when a person's rights are not being upheld.

Afternoon Session: **Safeguarding Adults at Risk Training**

- To gain an understanding of the categories of abuse and neglect.
- Know how to recognise and respond to allegations and disclosures of abuse.
- To be aware of the key safeguarding principles of the Care Act and how this will inform practice.

£55 per session (or **£99** for the whole day)

Book a place & find out more



Domestic Violence & Disability

By Sarah Goff, Safeguarding Children & Young People Manager

The Care Act now includes domestic abuse as a category of abuse, Working Together Guidance on children includes the category of emotional abuse and the 2002 Adoption Act contained an addition to include the requirement to consider witnessing domestic abuse as a form of emotional abuse. We know from research by Ravi Thiara in 2011 set out in her book 'Disabled Women and Domestic Abuse' that the rates of domestic abuse for disabled women are very high and Sonali Shah's work has helped to shine a light on experiences and the extent of violence experienced particularly by women and girls. Public Health England highlighted this again in 2015; 15.7% disabled women had experienced domestic abuse compared to 7.1% non-disabled women; and 8.4% Disabled men

compared to 4% non-disabled men (these figures coming from Office of National Statistics 2014). Both Women's Aid and Safe Lives have now produced reports recognising disabled people as being among those groups most at risk.

Nowhere to Turn discusses challenges faced by women who are parents, BME women, by those with support needs around language, No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), and needing mental health support. Clearly many women face many of these additional needs combined. Far less data is available about the needs of disabled men and young disabled people. These findings are discussed further in Survival and Beyond 2018, a second Women's Aid report addressing the range of domestic abuse services, effects on survivors and their

Nowhere to Turn:

Nowhere to Turn (Women's Aid 2017) highlights some of the resource challenges;

- There is only one refuge in England which is dedicated to women with learning disabilities
- Only 4% (11) of refuges provide any level of specialist support for women with learning difficulties, and under a third (77 refuges) have full wheelchair access throughout the refuge.
- Women seeking a space alongside their carer can be accommodated in just 18% of refuges (48) (RTS, May 2016)' (quoted from Nowhere to Turn Women's Aid 2017 page 39)

Domestic Violence & Disability

By Sarah Goff, Safeguarding Children & Young People Manager

children, funding and sustainability of services. Safe Lives' 2017 report *Disabled Survivors Too*; *Disabled People and Domestic Abuse* explores needs, risks and responses. They highlight that disabled victims typically experience abuse for longer before reporting it and average of 3.3 years before getting help compared to 2.2 for non-disabled people.

The Lloyds Bank Foundation project currently underway at ACT in partnership with Dr Anita Franklin at Coventry University is seeking to address some of these issues to support practice development. We plan to explore what help and support young people receive and their views about this to inform service development and delivery, training, raise awareness and seek to address what professionals require to meet the needs of the

young disabled people both young men and young women. We would like to talk to people working with disabled young men about their needs and responses to them, and to those working with young women and men in domestic abuse services, transitions teams, young adults and young peoples' services of any organisation. We know that training is an issue, alongside development of skills in recognition and awareness of domestic abuse and the risks, support to address them and understand the impact of trauma. We will be piloting a training program next year and developing analysis of the issues raised by the professionals from a wide range of social care, health, police and domestic abuse services to form a report and materials which we hope will assist in practice to support and share the many good practice examples out there.

How to get involved in this research

We would like to talk to people working with disabled young men about their needs and responses to them, and to those working with young women and men in domestic abuse services, transitions teams, young adults and young peoples' services of any organisation.

Get in touch

If you are interested in taking part in this research, or know of young people 16-25 who would like to and would benefit from sharing their views about what works and what helped them, please get in touch at ann-craft-trust@nottingham.ac.uk

Safeguarding News Watch:

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Surge in people seeking help to stop viewing child abuse images

4 April 2018 | theguardian.co.uk

New safeguarding system must be 'priority' for trusts, warns children's commissioner

13 April 2018 | nursingtimes.net

Prime Minister insists 'lessons have been learnt' after Connor Sparrowhawk tragedy

28 March 2018 | oxfordmail.co.uk

Investment and support: how a council halved its caseloads and agency rate in three years

4 April 2018 | communitycare.co.uk

Telford council to commission inquiry into current and historical child sexual abuse

10 April 2018 | bbc.co.uk

Scale of child abuse survey 'needed every 10 years'

27 March 2018 | bbc.co.uk

The IRIS Magazine: Information Service for Parents of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

March 2018 | askiris.org.uk

Safeguarding News Watch:

Safeguarding Adults at Risk

MPs announce hand car-wash 'slavery probe'

24 April 2018 | bbc.co.uk

More vulnerable male adults are victims of forced marriage than previously thought

9 March 2018 | phys.org

Scope for change: Scope Launches Campaigning Training

March 2018 | scope.org.uk

Just See – a poem by Paul Horan

10 April 2018 | aldatoxleas.blogspot.co.uk

STOMP Campaign: Stopping the over-medication of people with a learning disability, autism or both

April 2017 | vodg.org.uk

Mencap Launches Treat Me Well Campaign to transform how the NHS treats people with a learning disability in hospital

16 February 2017 | mencap.org.uk

Government response to damning inquiry into disability benefit system 'falls short', say MPs

23 April 2018 | independent.co.uk

Safeguarding News Watch:

Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Activity

Commonwealth Games: Para-athlete Nikki Emerson 'told to wait to go to toilet'

3 April 2018 | bbc.co.uk

FA to take lead in child abuse investigation where clubs are failing to conduct sufficient internal reviews

29 March 2018 | independent.com

Callum Hawkins discharged from hospital after collapsing

16 April 2018 | bbc.co.uk

Caroline Wozniacki may boycott Miami Open over 'threats and abuse'

19 April 2018 | theguardian.com

Duty Of Care In Sport: What Legal Rights Do Athletes Have?

20 December 2017 | lawyer-monthly.com

Michael Jamieson: 'Swimming has a problem. Micro-dosing is a huge issue'

29 January 2018 | theguardian.com

Barry Bennell: Lessons to be learned

16 February 2018 | anncrafttrust.org

Sophie Hahn: Classification claims heartbreaking

26 January 2018 | bbc.co.uk

Safeguarding Research and Resources

Domestic Violence Publications

Women's Aid have released a number of important reports relating to domestic violence.

Nowhere to Turn: Findings from the first year of the No Woman Turned Away project

This report by Women's Aid finds systematic failures by statutory agencies when it comes to responding to the needs of survivors of domestic violence.

Download and read [Nowhere to Turn: Findings from the first year of the No Woman Turned Away project](#).

Survival and Beyond: The Domestic Abuse Report 2017

This report by Women's Aid looks at service provision and the needs of women and children from 2010 to 2017. This information is presented alongside findings from multiple research projects including Routes to Support and On Track.

Download and read [Survival and Beyond: The Domestic Abuse Report 2017](#).

Sex Education: Consent Resources

The Disrespect NoBody campaign is designed to help young people understand more about healthy relationships. This includes what healthy relationships look like and how to challenge and consider your own views on controlling behaviour, violence, abuse and what consent is (and what it looks like).

Find out more about the Disrespect NoBody campaign and access online resources from the [Disrespect NoBody website](#).

Designing Services for People with Learning Disabilities

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) are sharing their new guideline covering services for children, young people and adults with a learning disability (or autism and a learning disability) and behaviour challenges.

The guideline aims to promote a lifelong approach to supporting people, their families and carers and focuses on prevention and early intervention.

Download and read [Learning disabilities and behaviour that challenges: service design and delivery](#).

Safeguarding Research and Resources

Real Life Safeguarding Stories

A free online resource for professionals with safeguarding responsibilities includes video stories relating to key safeguarding challenges. Designed to help people engage with their safeguarding responsibilities, topics include CSE, neglect, domestic abuse and forced marriage.

Find out more about [Real Safeguarding Stories](#).

Exercise and Sport Reports and Resources

New reports, resources and initiatives have been launched to help keep people in the UK active and safe.

Active Lives Survey Results 2016—2017

A report measuring the activity levels of people in England to give a picture of how this is changing over time.

Download [Active Lives Adult Survey 16/17](#).

Alzheimer's Society Exercise Advice and Information

The Alzheimer's Society provides information and advice on promoting an active lifestyle for people with dementia.

Find out more about [Alzheimer's Society Exercise and Physical Activity resources](#).

Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan

A government policy paper for improved mental health support to elite and professional sports people.

Download and read the government's [Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan](#).

Research Opportunities

Understanding experiences of hate crime

Research by NatCen is aiming to enhance understanding of victims' experiences of hate crime and would like to talk to people who have experienced or reported it.

Find out how you can get involved in [Understanding experiences of hate crime](#).

From the Vault: Social Media: An Exercise in Entrapment or Empowerment?

By Matt Parr, Issue 92: July 2015

Today, whether we are 12 years old or 80, we've all got the message in one way or another that the friends we have on Facebook or our followers on Twitter or Instagram project an image. The best they can be. The best nights out or best days at work. Tweets, posts and updates that make our online selves appear funnier or more interesting than we perhaps really feel. For some

people retweets, likes or pokes can become addictive with each post craving electronic attention of 'friends' and 'followers'. Throw a stone (metaphorically speaking of course!) into a crowd and chances are you'll hit someone who likes to think they're very, very good at tweeting, posting and all the other new adjectives that social media spews out. If they use these sites a lot they will often believe that they know all there is to know. But unless your name is Mark Zuckerberg you don't because when it comes to social media the rules are nascent, mixed with (objective) common sense, fear and always slightly made up.

I was once told that we can only know roughly 120 people at any given time. The theory's

based in our evolution from primitive communities to industrial cities. That's why, according to the theory, the news always focuses on the individual when a major catastrophe strikes. Our minds struggle to comprehend a huge death toll; we need

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For some people retweets, likes or pokes can become addictive with each post craving electronic attention of 'friends' and 'followers'.

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personal stories to really connect. Therefore to know all the people we follow on Facebook is impossible. Who they are and how

they interact within the real world is unknown to us as an individual, but we like their baby photos anyway. Scan through a young person's profile and they'll have at least triple the 120 number. The average 22 year old on Facebook has over 1,000 'friends'. So it's fair to say that they don't know all these people. They have met them on a night out, on a train, in a shop or at the match. The 'friend' might be completely random or a friend of a friend or family member. With so many connections can a young person really know that the 'friend' is who they say they are? How do we as professionals keep them safe and where do safeguarding ethics, rights to privacy and basic common sense fit in? Especially when for young people 1,000 plus friends is the norm or a target to achieve and for them these online

From the Vault: Social Media – An Exercise in Entrapment or Empowerment?

By Matt Parr

friends are exactly the same as their school mates and peers.

That is the start of a dangerous side to social media, where we start to worry about grooming and other forms of online abuse. But social media can have a huge and positive impact on a young person's life. From tweeting to blogging to online gaming whole worlds can open up for someone with a learning disability. If used properly, they can find pockets of likeminded people from all over the world, keep track of events or sessions in their community and, above all, feel less isolated.

A family I worked with struggled for years to engage with their son (who has Asperger's

Syndrome). He presented as unsociable and struggled being anywhere in the community. Online gaming opened up his world and his mum believes that the conversations he could have, via a headset, with people scattered all over the globe eventually gave him the confidence to engage with people within his community and led directly to him developing the independent living skills he desperately needed.

As professionals we have to decide where the boundaries are. Should we add young people? Send direct messages? 'Check' a young person's profile? The debate as professionals then becomes the boundaries of social media interaction. In a former life I was a Youth

Social Media Facts:

- There are over 2 Billion social media accounts out there
- Facebook is the largest Social Media site there is with 1.35 billion users in 2014, however it's estimated that 8.7 percent of accounts are fake, so that's about 83.09 million accounts. Or two million more than Germany's population!
- On average 500 million tweets are sent each day or 200 billion each year!
- According to the Huffington Post women dominate Pinterest
- Snapchat is tipped to be the fastest growing social media app of 2015 as it expands content to include news and videos

From the Vault: Social Media – An Exercise in Entrapment or Empowerment?

By Matt Parr

Worker and went for an interview at a school as a mentor. They asked me about their pupils using Facebook and the issues that arise. I gave an answer that involved cyber bullying, working with young people to explore boundaries and helping the perpetrator understand why what they wrote wasn't just 'banter'. The interviewee wanted me to say I wouldn't add a pupil on Facebook. That was their policy for social media – non-engagement. But if that's where young people live their lives is total avoidance the best policy? Organisations and individual workers hold electronic and paper files listing young

people's personal data in cabinets and PC's and work phones. We have their mobile numbers, their addresses and we often have them sign forms around respect. Why shouldn't this extend to Facebook, Snapchat or Twitter? As long as they want to share that information and we are professional and create sensible boundaries why not engage with young people over social media if that's the way they choose to communicate. As long as the personal boundaries are never blurred surely it's the same as an email, text, letter or phone call but just a different form of communication.

Useful Resources:

- Parent Info:
<http://parentinfo.org/>
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection:
<http://ceop.police.uk/>
- Parent Info and CEOP have recently produced resources based on a study into young people and sexting habits that's well worth a look:
<http://parentinfo.org/article/sexting-ceops-new-films-say-dont-panic-but-do-respond>
- The Safety Net Project by the Association for Real Change (ARC) <http://arcuk.org.uk> has some useful resources, videos and tips for working with young people

From the Vault: Social Media – An Exercise in Entrapment or Empowerment?

By Matt Parr

Social Media is only ‘dangerous’ when users are indiscriminate. An offensive avatar or emotionally charged status, however funny or truthful to the poster at the time, won’t be to everyone’s liking and an open profile can completely change an individual’s life. This works both ways, from ‘trolling’ (abusing another person)

on twitter – which in extreme cases is an offence (under Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003) – to workers sharing their professional life with ‘friends’.

Two years ago a Social Worker’s overly exuberant Facebook updates hit the headlines and ended in her sacking. On the day that three children from a family she was working with were put in care the Social Worker celebrated the ‘rollicking’ the judge gave the parents and posted “how proud am I” and claimed the moment as a “career high” to Facebook friends. The posts became public and the Social Worker lost her job. Stories like

this are where people start to fear social media rather than embrace it. Facebook et al can all of a sudden appear to be a

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On the day that three children from a family she was working with were put in care, the Social Worker celebrated the ‘rollicking’ the judge gave the parents and posted “how proud am I” and claimed the moment as a “career high” to Facebook friends.

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professional dungeon full of P45 shaped trapdoors and in the instance above the Social Worker quite clearly fell through one of them. But is that Facebook’s fault? How would you feel if you overheard her comments in a pub or on a bus? Social

Media isn’t a form of entrapment yet common sense does need to be exercised and if young people choose to communicate through Snapchat or Instagram or whatever comes next surely we are better embracing it, understanding it and engaging with them through it rather than pretending it doesn’t exist. Young people will be using it anyway and if a young person with learning disabilities wants to use it should we deny that right? Should we ignore their posts (especially if public)? Or work with them to be safe when online?

Scan your timeline and you’ll probably see

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myths and urban legends presented as facts. Young people are susceptible to taking posts, requests and messages at face value. The danger is if we don't work with young people on asking the right questions, understanding how to report posts that make them uncomfortable, they will be at more risk. Telling young people not to add people they don't know is great. Telling young people not to add friends of friends is fine. But how does that young person feel when they only have 120 friends and their peers all have an extra digit on their followers list. It's tempting then to add the strangers, the conversation with young people needs to be around 'why does it matter?' and 'what do you want to achieve'. Young people should be encouraged to follow their favourite football team or celebrity, add their friends and community organisations, they should be encouraged to be independent in all its forms whether out and about, at home or through the world wide web. Our role as their worker is to figure out how best we can facilitate this for

the young person.

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opportunities to engage through social media. We should always be willing to explore, understand and use (where appropriate) the apps/sites at young people's disposal because young people are always going to be

ahead of us when new technology and ways to communicate appear. In the 50's the deviant nature of comic books were rotting the minds of the young. In the 80's it was Space Invaders and city arcades corrupting our children. Today our fears lie with who young people add and direct message. In thirty years it will be something else. To keep young people safe the best way is to be open with them, trust and have the conversations that matter, both face to face and electronically.

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Everyone has a right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Everyone deserves to be safe.