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# Developing safeguarding resources for the voluntary sector:

# Summary findings from service-users

Introduction

This report forms part of the Safer Social Sector Partnership[[1]](#footnote-1) Project and focuses specifically on ascertaining safeguarding resourcing needs within the voluntary sector, as perceived by service users themselves and those who support them. This report summarises the findings from an on-line survey conducted during April and May 2019 which encouraged service users to contribute to the development of safeguarding resources by telling us about their understandings of safeguarding, how they approach the issue of keeping themselves and others safe, whether they have received training to do so and what more could be done to support them to safeguard themselves and others.

47 service users engaged with a 12-question survey, comprising open and closed questions.

# How would you describe your living arrangements?

I live alone

I live with my

family

I live in shared...

Other (please

specify)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

**ANSWER CHOICES**

**RESPONSES**

I live alone

I live with my family

I live in shared accommodation Other (please specify)

TOTAL

47

23.40% 11

Of the service users responding almost a half (49%) lived with their family whilst equal numbers (23% both cases) lived alone or shared accommodation with others. One person told us they live with their husband and another received one-to-one care in 24-hour supported living.

48.94% 23

23.40% 11

4.26% 2

# How long have you lived in your current accommodation?

Less than one

year

1-3 years

More than 3

years

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

**ANSWER CHOICES**

**RESPONSES**

Less than one year 1-3 years

More than 3 years

8.51% 4

12.77% 6

78.72% 37

# Most people (79%) had lived in their current accommodation for more than three years, whilst 8.5% of those responding had lived in their present accommodation for less than a year.

TOTAL

47

# What does the word "safeguarding" mean to you?

Although we assume that safeguarding is universally understood, it is key that we try to understand perceptions of safeguarding since this will influence how policies and processes to safeguard people are formulated and should inform the resources that support this.

When asked, “What does the word ‘safeguarding’ mean to you?”, of the 43 service-users who responded, 39 used either the words *being* or *keeping* *safe* or the word *protect* and its derivatives when describing what safeguarding means to them. One also suggested that as well as protection, safeguarding is also about empowerment, whilst another said that it was to “manage risks”. These orientations to empowerment and the management of risk are insightful because of the tenuous relationship between safeguarding and being risk-averse. As another service-user said, safeguarding is “Keeping me safe but not controlling me”. All of these insights have implications again for the provision of resources and guidance since policies should have protection and safety at their heart but not at the expense of people’s rights and choices to also take (‘calculated’) risks in order to lead a full life. Some people referred to the idea that safeguarding was also about protecting sensitive information about people and also that safeguarding is a legislative matter – “making sure that an individual is safe under legislation that is put in place to follow”. The issue of “taking corrective actions if abuse occurs” was also highlighted.

Notably there was also some scepticism voiced too; in response to our question one person said that safeguarding means,

“Not much. It means a lip service to what should be a means by which concerns can be raised and acted on. But it’s just an exercise that a section of the local government carry out pretending to care about vulnerable people in care.”

This would suggest that safeguarding to this person is something that happens ‘apart’ from them and is, it appears, ineffectual. It is important to note such a message and to address this in resources and guidance that supports safeguarding policy-making as an inclusive and collaborative activity between relevant stakeholders rather than a ‘something’ that is done for or to a somewhat discrete and separate stakeholder group.

# Which of these terms do you think are likely to be used when talking about people who are at risk of being harmed?

# (respondents selected as many they wished)

Safety

Keeping people

safe

Safeguarding

Bullying

Being harmed

Risk

Abuse

Exploitation

Other (please

specify)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

**ANSWER CHOICES**

**RESPONSES**

Safety

Keeping people safe Safeguarding Bullying

Being harmed Risk

Abuse Exploitation

Other (please specify)

76.09% 35

76.09% 35

73.91% 34

67.39% 31

76.09% 35

76.09% 35

84.78% 39

63.04% 29

8.70% 4

Total Respondents: 46

**‘Other’ responses were:**

Caring Control

All of the above

Neglect

Independence, rights and learning

# Would you know what to do if you were worried about keeping safe?

Yes

No

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

**ANSWER CHOICES**

Yes No

TOTAL

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **RESPONSES** |  |
| 86.96% | 40 |
| 13.04% | 6 |
|  | 46 |

Of the 46 service-users responding to this question, 87% said they would know what to do whilst 13% said they would not. Although it is encouraging that the majority of responses were affirmative, it is quite concerning that, albeit, a small group in terms of this sample (6 of 46 people) would not know what to do if they were worried. This would suggest that some awareness-building would be highly desirable so that everyone had some idea of a ‘next step’ should they feel a sense of risk and worry.

Thought will also need to be given to how information about what to do in worrying situations, is distributed and made known. It is quite feasible that in shared living settings there may be someone assigned to field queries and concerns – for example a key worker or a support worker with a dedicated role for listening to concerns, but for those who live alone or with their families and who, in addition, may not access many social events or groups, the chance of receiving any awareness-raising information may be limited. Pathways for outreach will need to be developed to support those who might live in relatively more isolated accommodation settings (we have already established from the survey results that this is almost 47% of those who responded).

# Who would you approach if you were worried about feeling safe?

A family member

A member of

staff

A friend

Other (please

specify)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

**ANSWER CHOICES**

**RESPONSES**

A family member A member of staff A friend

Other (please specify)

35.56% 16

33.33% 15

15.56% 7

15.56% 7

TOTAL

45

The ‘other’ people specified by 7 respondents included the Police, a Manager (though not specified what type of manager), someone who knew them well and that they knew well. For one person with limited verbal communication, it was suggested that their Mum would advocate for them in worrying situations, and Mum would do so in response to behavioral alerts that may manifest in worrying situations. (The importance of including any ‘experts by experience’ and advocates in information provision and awareness-building would therefore seem highly advisable). One concerning response suggested that an individual would tell no-one if they were worried and so thought needs to be given to how resources might appropriately be provided to encourage people who feel they can tell no-one, to actually do so.

# Have you ever received training about keeping safe?

Yes

No

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

**ANSWER CHOICES**

Yes No

# If you answered "yes" to the previous question, can you tell us more about the training you received?

 Over 56% of those responding had received some training about keeping safe whilst just under 44% had not. The type of training that people had received was very variable; for one person it was “Basic stranger danger talks at school 20 years ago”, whilst another individual reported that “I am checked weekly to make sure I know what to do if I feel unsafe”.

 Some people had received training in a work setting whilst for others “Staff and mum talk to me, us, on a regular basis and explain what to do, who to speak to and how to behave”; so there was a mix of the formal and the informal in terms of training and advice about keeping safe.

TOTAL

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **RESPONSES** |  |
| 56.52% | 26 |
| 43.48% | 20 |
|  | 46 |

#  How confident do you feel in your abilities to stay safe online?

Extremely confident

Very confident

Somewhat confident

Not so confident

Not at all confident

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

**ANSWER CHOICES**

**RESPONSES**

Extremely confident Very confident Somewhat confident Not so confident

Not at all confident

32.50% 13

27.50% 11

22.50% 9

10.00% 4

7.50% 3

Whilst it is largely encouraging that over 80% of those responding had some confidence in their ability to stay safe online and the spread of responses illustrates that most people feel extremely confident or very confident, the over 17% who felt not so confident or not at all confident indicates a need for more information and awareness to build greater confidence.

# If you don't feel confident about online safety, could you tell us a bit about what would help you to feel safer online?

The kind of help that respondents said they would like to help them feel safer online was varied from being taught more about staying safe and having someone with them when online to broader issues such as being able to stop scam emails and feeling that internet providers were taking safety seriously. One very practical suggestion concerned having an easy-read or easy-listen information or short training package; this is a very useful platform from which to start developing resources that would directly respond to a voiced need.

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# If you thought someone was being hurt, or at risk of being hurt, would you tell someone?

Yes

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |

No

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

**ANSWER CHOICES**

Yes No

TOTAL

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **RESPONSES** |  |
| 97.50% | 39 |
| 2.50% | 1 |
|  | 40 |

Over 97% (39 of 40 people responding), said ‘Yes’ they would tell someone if someone was being hurt or at risk of being hurt.

# If you answered "No" to the previous question, what would stop you from telling someone?

When asked what would stop individuals from telling someone, responses suggested that no one really listens, but also that some people would not tell someone else so that they could “relax their mind and not be bothered by the questioning”. This suggests that any resources to support service-users to speak up might need to reflect and respond to a possible passivity in speaking out and there may need to be greater emphasis on the ‘urgency’ of doing so – without of course alarming people unnecessarily; in other words creating resources that support people to be pro-active rather than passive, as well as empowered rather than fearful.

1. The Safer Social Sector Partnership is coordinated by the [National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/). It involves 13 national umbrella bodies and organisations. They share their skills, knowledge and experience so that all voluntary organisations can be a safe place for beneficiaries, volunteers and staff. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)