

## Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Manager's Blog

March 2020

### *A different landscape for safeguarding*

For all of us, last week was like nothing we had ever worked through before. Writing in The Guardian on Saturday 21 March, [Jonathan Freedland](#) said:

*'In the course of a week the British landscape has changed, and changed utterly. Once-crowded streets are deserted. Schools are closed, summer exams cancelled. Football grounds are padlocked. Theatres are dark, cinemas silent.*

The scale and breadth of developments of measures against the Coronavirus (COVID-19) public health threat was staggering. I am sure by the time you read this we will be in a different situation again. And the tone of reporting now is suggesting we are in a war situation, fighting an invisible enemy. The safeguarding landscape too is heightened.

From Monday 16th March we saw a dizzying number of announcements and activity, including:

- daily emergency government meetings and Downing Street press briefings
- on **Monday 16th** we were told to avoid all non-essential contact and travel
- on **Tuesday 17th** the Chancellor announced £350 million of measures to support businesses
- on **Wednesday 18th** – the epidemiologist Professor Neil Ferguson, who is advising the government – decided to self-isolate. In parliament there were lots of questions about testing for medical staff and protective equipment. That evening the Government announced schools will close to all but the children of essential workers
- on **Thursday 19th** an [emergency powers bill](#) was published and
- on **Friday 20th** came the immediate closure of pubs, restaurants, clubs and gyms, while the Chancellor unveiled a plan to pay 80% of the wages of workers affected by the virus

From **Monday 16th** NSAB stood down all its partnership meetings (including the locality safeguarding partnerships) in support of colleagues and partner agencies responding to the COVID-19 threat.

We are keeping the situation under constant review and we are exploring how we might switch at least some of this work online. I have been updating the NSAB website news page with relevant information.

Over the weekend (**21st and 22nd March**), the press reported that the necessary social distancing measures needed to ‘*flatten the curve*’ were not working. If we need any sort of reminder why this is important, [watch this short explanation by intensive care specialist Professor Hugh Montgomery interviewed by Channel 4 Dispatches on why this coronavirus is different from ordinary flu](#). And now this fast-paced and evolving situation just changed again, [with new restrictions announced on 23rd of March](#).

In response we have seen have seen thousands of people across the country [flock to join community support groups](#) (BBC News website – 22 March) with some media outlets reporting that more than 1,000 Coronavirus Mutual Aid groups have launched across the UK in the space of a week. The mutual aid website gives the following information:

*Covid Mutual Aid UK is a group of volunteers supporting local community groups organising mutual aid throughout the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK. We focus on providing resources and connecting people to their nearest local groups, willing volunteers and those in need.*

It is so inspiring to see how organisations and communities are pulling together to make things as safe as possible in these challenging times. There are hundreds of local stories – one in particular caught my eye – [Landlords forced to shut their pub launch fresh food boxes for NHS staff](#). However, we have also seen increased opportunities for adult abuse. (The Government is setting up support networks, with councils, the military and voluntary groups, to help ensure essential items like groceries can be delivered to people who are at risk).

On Thursday of last week, I received reports (which I shared on to NSAB’s network) of people (in Walsall, Sandwell, **Norfolk**, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire) purporting to be from British Red Cross (BRC) knocking on the doors of the elderly and vulnerable and taking their money to do shopping – and not returning. People are also charging for coming into people’s home with testing kits (that don’t exist).

In West Sussex a man has appeared in court charged with selling counterfeit Coronavirus treatment kits. The Local Government Association (LGA)’s warning that bogus scammers are pretending to be able to test people for the virus was reported on [BBC Radio 4’s Money Box on Saturday 21st March](#).

As the financial impact of Coronavirus pushes through our communities, this will potentially gift new opportunities for loan sharks to target and exploit those in hardship.

In relation to our adult safeguarding role, we have a steer (of sorts) in Government guidance (published 19 March 2020) – [Responding to COVID-19: the ethical framework for adult social care](#) - aimed at planners and strategic policy makers at local, regional and national level to support response planning and organisation of adult social care for COVID-19. It also aims to support the work of professionals and others in the health and social care workforce who are developing policies and responding to the outbreak, in line with their own professional codes of conduct and regulations.

These principles can also be applied more widely in the social care sector.

### **What can we do?**

Given all this momentous change, there are important practical actions you can take to support adult safeguarding during COVID-19:

- **Responsibility**

At the time of writing this blog, The Care Act (in relation to adult safeguarding) is not being suspended or relaxed. Continue to raise safeguarding concerns as per the NSAB policy and procedure.

The COVID-19 Bill, announced on the 19th March, [allows ministers to suspend key duties under the Care Act](#).

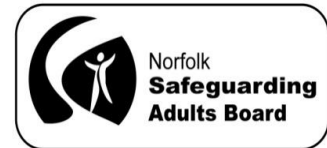
Whilst the bill mentions the MCA, it did not give any meaningful detail, though [some guidance has been published in relation to the MCA with COVID 19](#) – please share this with your colleagues and networks.

- **Scams**

With increasing numbers self-isolating, now is a golden opportunity to do the Friends Against Scams online training. If you have already done it, it is an excellent refresher to protect those we know who may be vulnerable to scams – [click here for Friends Against Scams FREE online training](#)

- **Share the following NSAB advice**

We have adapted the following advice to professionals on COVID-19 from the Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board. My thanks to Claire Nixon,



Newcastle SAB Coordinator, for sharing their work and to Becky Booth (see below) for adapting it.

- ❖ [Safeguarding adults for COVID-19 Mutual Aid Groups | Poster](#)
- ❖ [Safeguarding adults for people self-isolating](#)

### **Welcome to NSAB's new deputy board manager**

I am very pleased to tell you that **Becky Booth**, NSAB's new Deputy Board Manager, has now started in post. Becky has worked in adult social care for Norfolk County Council since 1994; she did a degree in Applied Social Studies in Preston, then came back to Norfolk and started as a Social Work Assistant in South Norfolk, qualifying as a social worker in 2001.

For the last ten years she has mainly worked as a Safeguarding Adult Practice Consultant, still doing direct safeguarding practice, but also supporting social care staff, partner agency colleagues and providers in s42 enquiries and associated safeguarding work, working across all specialisms, and at times across the county. This included being co-located with the AAIU (Adult Abuse Investigation Unit) for 4 years. In 2012-13 Becky was seconded to develop the adult care part of the MASH in a project manager role, and then returned to the Safeguarding Adults team, moving to the East locality in 2015.

All this has given Becky extensive experience and confidence working with adults at risk in a wide range of complex situations, including organisational and service concerns; also working with local and higher-level networks to identify and put into practice prevention and protection strategies. I can say without hesitation she is very enthusiastic about her new role supporting the work of the NSAB!

When we return to working in the partnership space, Becky will be out and about, looking forward to meeting many of you. In the meantime, why not drop her an email to say hi or schedule a video call to make introductions.

Becky's email is [becky.booth@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:becky.booth@norfolk.gov.uk)

Thank you

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