

Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Manager's Blog

April 2020

Behind closed doors

'We have never seen or responded to anything like this!' Comments or words to that effect have been shared with me numerous times in the past 3 weeks by colleagues who work in a whole range of different settings. No one could have predicted the series of events we are all living through.

On the evening of **Friday 20th March** the Prime Minister requested the closure of pubs, restaurants, gyms, entertainment venues, museums and galleries. Three days later on **Monday 23rd March** the government directed people to stay at home except for essential purchases, essential work travel (if remote work was not possible), medical needs, one exercise per day (alone or with household members). We all started a period of 'lockdown'.

At the time of writing this blog, *how* things have changed! In just 25 days:

- we now stand on our doorsteps and applaud those who put themselves in harm's way to protect us (as a friend who works in the finance sector said to me, '*Thursdays at 8pm has become the highlight of the week*')
- for many, working lives have moved online – I have learned so much about my colleagues' interior design taste and have met their children or cats who walk into shot during the daily video conference calls
- a fitness coach can now slow the internet down at 9.00am each weekday
- we have seen moving acts of kindness: just a few examples. [People queuing outside Lidl in Cromer, made way for a paramedic – who had just finished a night shift - "with applause and thank yous" and one shopper paid for his food.](#)

We have also seen [road signs of thanks to NHS & key workers](#) and [a 99-year-old army veteran Tom Moore aimed to complete 100 laps of his Bedfordshire garden by Thursday](#), walking with the aid of a frame to raise money for NHS in the fight against Covid-19. His original target was £1,000. At the time of writing he has raised more than £4m.

- toilet roll has become a highly prized commodity (I am waiting for it to replace sterling as our medium of exchange)
- people have found novel ways to keep themselves entertained – my two favourites so far have been [sports stars doing keepy-uppies with toilet rolls](#) and [opera singing beer cans](#)

As streets emptied out and workplaces closed their doors to save lives and protect the NHS, we have been staying indoors. A place of safety. **But for many behind those closed doors the risks & threats of adult abuse are still very real, present and now amplified.**

New threats – look out for signs of abuse during lockdown

EVEN while social distancing amid the coronavirus lockdown, we can all pass on a **simple message to everyone we know: See Something, Hear Something, Say Something.** Keep an eye out for signs that vulnerable children or adults might be at risk of abuse.

There are **NO changes** to our safeguarding role and responsibilities (as set out by the Care Act – see [Annex D: Safeguarding Guidance, Care Act easements: guidance for local authorities 01 April 2020](#)), although it is more difficult at this time because of the social distancing guidelines. It is *more important than ever* in these challenging times to look out for one other, to report anything that does not feel right, and for those who need support to speak up.

We have seen evidence of the safeguarding risks increasing for vulnerable children and adults while they are staying at home and social distancing, through scamming financial abuse and domestic abuse. In response to a shocking increase in calls to domestic abuse charities – the National Domestic Abuse helpline has seen a [25% increase in calls and online requests since the lockdown](#) (06 April 2020) – the government has provided [an extra £2m and launched a new support campaign during the coronavirus lockdown](#) (11 April 2020). The additional money will "immediately" bolster helplines and online support.

Abuse and neglect are likely to increase due to increased isolation and stress, and professionals have fewer opportunities to identify abuse. But individuals and communities can help by being aware of potential indicators of abuse. Support services are still operating and will work with the individual to help keep them safe.

Actions

Norfolk is a community, and I am asking everyone to take just 4 simple actions to help protect those at increased risk of abuse & harm behind those closed doors:

1) **Share the following NSAB advice**

We have adapted the following advice to professionals on COVID-19 from the Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board.

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

2) **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](#)

3) **Volunteers**

We have published safeguarding advice for volunteers. Help NSAB make sure all the new volunteers are aware of signs that someone may be suffering abuse and how to report it / discuss it with someone. [Click here for the safeguarding advice for volunteers](#)

Norfolk now has community hubs across the county coordinating vital support to those who need it. [Click here to read more – County wide response to COVID-19.](#)

4) **Download the App**

Download the free NHS Safeguarding App which has local safeguarding contacts and has been newly updated:
<http://www.myguideapps.com/projects/safeguarding/default/>

Many of you will be right at the heart of this crisis, directly treating people with Coronavirus, or supporting those who do. Whatever your role, I stand on my doorstep to applaud you all and say thank you for everything you are doing to keep Norfolk safe.

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