

Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Manager's Blog

May 2021

How would you measure up? A fitness test for safeguarding

As lockdown eases and we move along the government roadmap to the next phase of the pandemic response, my sons have started playing football again. Chatting the other day, they remarked how 'un-match fit' they were, but 3 or 4 weeks of training would put that right again. They are young and will bounce back quickly I am sure. For some great home workout [programmes and tips, see the Football Association website. I do like the sofa workout.](#)

For me ... well, that is different story entirely. Being 'match fit' came up in another conversation I was having, with a service director. She was talking about how she was working to bring her executive team to 'match fitness' for safeguarding.

I was intrigued by this image of colleagues practising the adult safeguarding equivalent of the 'beep test' (also known as the 'multi stage fitness test'). Created by Luc Leger of the University of Montreal in the early 1980s, it is a simple running test designed to test a person's fitness levels. Over 30 years later it's still in popular use because it remains a great way to measure a person's all-important aerobic capacity (VO2 max).

There are several variations on the beep test, but the one I remember involves running back and forth between two points 20m apart. Each run must be synchronised with a pre-recorded audio track which plays beeps (hence the name) at regular intervals. Over the course of the test, you progress up through various levels (lasting just over a minute each), with the beeps getting faster at each new level reached. At the point where you fail to reach the line before the beep, this becomes your highest score and the test is over. You can [read more about the beep test here.](#)

There are 21 levels to enjoy! Most of us will be done before we reach level 13, which takes less than 14 minutes. If you make it to this stage, you'd have run just over 2.5 km, which is equivalent to 1.6 miles.

If you make it to the end of the test (level 21), something almost completely unheard of, you'd have run nearly 5 km in a shade over 22 minutes, that's

Olympic standard. The rest of us will be running on empty somewhere between levels 8 and 12.

In a similar way to how the beep test assesses the body's physical fitness ... how might we 'test' our safeguarding skills to ensure they at the forefront of our practice?

Here are some 'areas' you can use to assess your safeguarding '*fitness*'.

Professional curiosity, asking the question

How professionally curious are you? Do situations of concern catch your attention? Being alert to the specific needs of adults with care and support need, those with increased vulnerabilities in their lives is key to your safeguarding fitness. A sharpness of thinking, asking that question '*tell me more*', ... '*that does not look right to me*', and keeping the possibility of abuse and harm on your 'mental checklist' is all important.

Sharing with a colleague

When was the last time you shared something '*that just does not look right, just does not add up*' with a trusted colleague or your adult safeguarding lead? Being about to explore your concern like this helps make sense of what you have picked up. Doing nothing with a concern is not an option.

Talking about safeguarding with people who use your service

When was the last time you talked about safeguarding with the people who use your service? Do people who use your service (or services you commission) know they can talk to staff about abuse, harm or anything that is worrying them?

How do the people you support hear about safeguarding? Can safeguarding material be easily seen – posters, banners, in newsletter etc by people who you support? This material can you help start these conversations. Remember a simple poster can have a big impact – [See June 2019 blog | The power of a piece of paper.](#)

Keep yourself (and your team) up to date

When was the last time you refreshed your adult safeguarding skills? This might be using formal training or might be a discussion in your team meeting or supervision.

Part of our role is to keep up to date with adult safeguarding practice changes and emerging issues (for example Liberty Protection Orders – LPS, or exploitation linked to county lines, or knowing how to spot concerns about modern slavery). A great way to keep fresh and understand the key themes emerging from Safeguarding Adults Reviews is via the [St Thomas Training, Learning lessons from SARs course](#).

Links with others ... part of 'Team Safeguarding'

Do you know what is happening in your local area on adult safeguarding?

The best connection you can make, and use, is with your locality safeguarding adult partnership (LSAP). [Read more here about how to connect](#)

In support of keeping safeguarding 'fit' you could:

- add a regular item to the team meeting which can be used for discussion of incidents, reflection or learning. Check that all your team/colleagues know how to report a safeguarding concern AND are confident to record it and take action?
- take 5 minutes to refresh yourself on what the [Norfolk Safeguard Adult Board policy covers and how it supports your responsibilities](#). The ability to recognise behaviour that may indicate abuse or other indicators of abuse and harm is of fundamental importance.
- if you don't receive the NSAB email alert I send out, just drop me a line and I can add you to the list. Helping keep you safeguarding fit!

Using all of the above as part of your safeguarding fitness regime, you will reach a really solid 'level' 15 to 18. I was going to say level 20+ - but there is always room for improvement!

Thank you.

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