

Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Manager's Blog

March 2021

Lights ... Camera and ... thinking about clear messages

Last week I did a filmed interview. Professional film crew, lights, sound, green screen, two camera men, sound man: the works. After setting up and planning the different shots, the interview took all morning (following very strict Coronavirus guidelines). I can now appreciate how documentaries and feature films can take months and years to make. I haven't done media interviews like this before, so it was an interesting insight into the process. This was just a short piece, with me talking to camera about how the safeguarding adults board has been working with the Police and Crime Commissioners Office.

Later that day I was chatting with a colleague about how the filming went. This led to a discussion about how important (and sometimes difficult) it is to make messages about adult safeguarding as clear as possible. All sorts of things can (and do) go awry between the sender and receiver of a message, but clear communication is important because it:

- improves efficiency in all activities (adult safeguarding included)
- reduces the frustration which arises from misunderstandings
- promotes clearer, more structured thinking (and actions)

NSAB's current key message (adapted from the one developed and used by our safeguarding children colleagues during the lockdown #1) is *See Something, Hear Something, Say Something*. I like this phrase, because in six words it gives a very clear and straightforward message.

Thanks to the support of colleagues from the Clinical Commissioning Group, this message is being displayed in Norfolk's vaccination centres. As more centres receive their roller banners (see [James Paget Hospital Tweet 22 February](#) and [NFST Tweet from 23 February 2021](#)), the message is being seen by more and more people - all very positive.

Clear messaging is something I think a lot about, and it's a topic that comes up regularly in the NSAB team meetings. For example, the number of our Twitter followers continues to grow slowly and steadily (which is great), and the NSAB

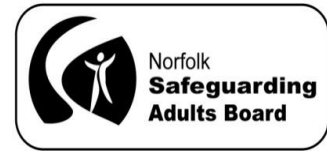
team has working on how to improve engagement and make our messaging clearer and easier to grasp.

Thinking about clear messages also brings up a key and frequent phase used in adult safeguarding discussions/communications – vulnerability. This is a word that is often included in safeguarding concerns reported to the local authority, but it may mean different things to different people. While the term ‘vulnerable adult’ does not directly feature in the Care Act (which refers to ‘*an adult experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect*’), the Statutory Guidance does use *vulnerability and a vulnerable adult*. These words and phrases are used widely, partly I guess because they convey a lot of meaning in shorthand.

We can all be vulnerable at some points in our lives: due to changes in our health and as we age, employment, personal circumstances (including social isolation), relationships and the degree to which we may depend on others for support. It can be temporary or more long lasting. With increased vulnerability can come the increased risk of harm. I think there is an important task for us to think about this more deeply, and how we might strengthen our shared understanding of this in our messages.

However, Alison Brammer and Laura Pritchard-Jones (2019) remind us that term ‘vulnerable adult’ is contentious. They say that the term can be misunderstood, because it seems to locate the cause of the abuse with the victim, rather than placing responsibility on the actions or omissions of others (Association of Directors of Social Services 2005, as cited by Brammer & Pritchard-Jones pg 9 2019). Brammer and Pritchard-Jones note that is ‘*term will endure as it exists elsewhere*’.

Ensuring clear safeguarding messaging is part of the work that NSAB’s Prevention, Managing & Responding Subgroup is doing. This acknowledges that our Norfolk safeguarding system would benefit from a ‘framework document’ which sets out, with examples, the kinds of concerns that should be shared with the local authority and those which might require different approaches, such as managing it locally or viewing (and *acting* on it) as a quality concern. We have the benefit of working from the Suffolk Safeguarding Framework document and adapting it to meet Norfolk’s needs. As we continue into the granular detail of this work, we will ask colleagues from different agencies to talk clearly about their perspective and understanding of adult safeguarding. The aim is to strengthen a shared consensus on safeguarding adults at risk of abuse and harm.



When we come to launch the document, our message will need to be clear about who and what it is for and how to use it.

In the meantime, if you are work in a vaccination centre or going for your job and see one of the *See Something, Hear Something, Say Something* roller banners, please take a picture and

- 1) post it on your Twitter feed and tag in @NorfolkSAB (we can retweet it) or
- 2) send it to me at the email address below and we can share it (and you never know, it might make the annual report!)

Help NSAB spread its message. Thank you.

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Reference:

Brammer A & Pritchard-Jones L (2019) Safeguarding Adults Second edition. Red Globe Press