

## **NSAB's *one small step***

### **Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Manager's Blog**

#### **August 2019**

July saw lots of stories, documents and films to mark the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. Too young to remember this event first time around, I have been gripped by the recent coverage.

One of my favourites is the film [Apollo 11](#). Director Todd Douglas Miller and his team worked through 11,000 hours of unreleased audio and film from the Apollo 11 mission, in partnership with NASA and the National Archives and it is a stunning watch. What was a surprise was the astronauts' humour among moments of real high drama and tension.

At 10.56 pm ET on July 20, 1969, Armstrong put his left foot on the lunar surface and famously declared, "*That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.*" This phrase has become universally recognised and there are a number of theories about it, see [Lots of People Have Theories About Neil Armstrong's 'One Small Step for Man' Quote. Here's What We Really Know](#) by Waxman. There is a long running debate about the missing 'a' – in the audio from the moon, Armstrong sounds as if he's saying "*one small step for man,*" and that's the wording that appeared in contemporary reports on the moment. But wouldn't it make more sense for him to have said "*one small step for a man*"?

The image of one small step, of Armstrong and Aldrin stepping into the unknown, came to me as I stood in front of a room full of colleagues about to open the first meeting of the safeguarding board's new subgroups – the PML subgroup. I am not for one moment making any grandiose claim that compares the massive technological achievement of thousands of people who worked on the mooning landing with our efforts to try a new approach to drive adult safeguarding forward in Norfolk, but I remind myself of the importance of taking a risk sometimes.

We had recognised for a while that way the previous board structure was set up, with a number of subgroups leading areas of work, wasn't always as efficient as it could be. If I can be candid, some pieces of work did take a long time to complete as they moved from one subgroup to another.

And we were potentially limiting the breadth of safeguarding knowledge and experience that we could bring to focus on a particular issue or problem.

Furthermore our structure led to some silo working, making it harder for colleagues from different sectors to talk to each other.

So with the board's endorsement we have stood down a number of the existing subgroups (health\*, housing\*, communications & publicity, and learning, improvement & policy) and in their place we have set up 3 new subgroups:

- Prevention
- Managing and Responding to concerns about abuse (Managing)
- Learning Lessons and Improving Future Practice (Learning)

Each subgroup has up to 12 members drawn from a wide range of partner agencies. But here is the different bit – rather that meet separately, we invite them to all meet

*on the same day, at the same time, in the same room AND to work on the same safeguarding topic/problem/issue.*

So instead of small groups of 6 to 8 colleagues, we now have up to 36 colleagues focusing on the topic, trying to really understand it, and out of these [reflective conversations](#) (as a way to really understand a safeguarding problem from different perspectives) comes a solution or solutions to move it forwards. This approach also draws on ideas about *learning through experimentation*.

The intention is to create space for reflective conversations to help us move a topic forward. A chosen topic is introduced to the meeting via an overview summary and a trigger question. Each of the three tables uses the trigger question to look at the topic from their perspective. Each group feeds back to the room, so generating the next trigger question, more discussion, feedback and so on. As [Helen Bevan \(Chief Transformation Officer at NHS Horizons\)](#) recently commented on [Twitter](#), this is an opportunity to spread change '*person to person, side by side, through social connections*' (see Tweet 07:09. August 17, 2019). By the way, if you don't yet follow Helen Bevan on Twitter, do so, she provides very inspirational material on practical actions for system change.

So, unlike a standard meeting with an agenda and a number of set items to work through, this was a *small step into the unknown*. And for someone like me who likes a structure and to know what is going to happen, it was a quite nerve-wracking!

As I said to the meeting, I had to trust the people in the room and ‘step off the ladder’, as I didn’t know where we were going to finish at the end of the day.

For the first meeting we started to look at **mental capacity in relation to safeguarding**. You couldn’t get a bigger topic to start with. There were lots of positive conversations across all 3 tables and an energy in the room to look at this.

The room generated valuable actions to move the topic forward while acknowledging one meeting was not going to resolve it. A few days later, I saw a colleague whose opinion I really trust and I asked them how they had found the meeting ... ‘*Would I come again? Definitely, yes!*’ was the answer.

Things I need to consider for the next meeting include:

- how not to jump to quickly to forming solutions (which is great) but there’s a benefit in letting the process work through and properly understanding the problem/challenge we’re trying to overcome
- how to balance deepening our understanding of the topic and the need, in the words of one colleague, to ‘*get shit done*’
- how we get people to present back their actions and ensure they come ready to present (I anticipate that this feedback will generate further trigger questions for the room)
- how to pick up any loose threads from the actions from the meeting

I am sure our new subgroup structure will further evolve and develop as we do more of them. I will keep you updated on progress in future blogs, but it does feel like one positive step forward for Norfolk’s Safeguarding Adults Board.

Walter Lloyd-Smith  
NSAB Board Manager

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I would like to dedicate this blog to Adam Clark who helped significantly to bring us to the start of the first PML meeting on 01 August. Adam has now moved to take up a senior role with Northern Star Housing Group. Thank you, Adam.