

Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Manager's Blog

August 2020

Cleaning out the toaster: A shock to our system and the need for a safeguarding 'PAT test'

The other week our smoke alarm went off. The shrill piercing noise filled the house and as I came down stairs to investigate, the strong smell of burnt toast gave me a good idea of the cause. During lockdown my toaster has seen (and continues to see) a lot of action! Time to clear it out, I thought. I regularly empty the crumb tray, but it was some bigger bits that had fallen to the bottom that I needed to get out. *It took a good 10 minutes of holding the toaster upside down, tilting it this way and that (and a bit of vigorous shaking) to get the job done.*

The next day, while I was on an important Microsoft Teams call, the electricity tripped. Resetting the switch on the fuse box, I rushed back upstairs to rejoin the meeting. The next morning – and afternoon – the same thing happened (now you can hear my gnashing of teeth).

I rang an electrician friend, who quick pinpointed the source of the problem: the toaster. In my vigour clearing it, I had probably shaken the element loose and when plugged in the surge tripped out the electricity.

Like my short-circuiting toaster, the lockdown has acted like a shock to our safeguarding circuits, shutting them down: a sudden change to how we do our safeguarding business, the interruption to those vital face-to-face relationships, the emerging unforeseen new risks needing consideration and response. Just like our office equipment gets a yearly PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) and the little green sticker to show when the next test is due, after this 'shock' let's PAT our safeguarding system as we move into the next phase of Coronavirus response.

A simple and quick check will give you confidence the system will not 'short-circuit'. Here are 3 checks you can do to:

- 1) If you have a safeguarding adult lead in your organisation, check you have their contact details in your phone or know how to get hold of them. If you don't have one, make sure you know your organisation's policy and procedure (just do a refresh)

- 2) Check your awareness training is up to date. If you need an update and have inhouse training, book on the next course. For other partners, St Thomas Training, who provide safeguarding adults and Mental Capacity Act training in Norfolk, [have just published new dates](#)
- 3) **Take 3 minutes** to check for the latest updates on Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board's (NSAB) Coronavirus safeguarding page. Put a weekly alert in your calendar to check the news page on the NSAB website - new material is posted all the time. Stay in the loop, up to speed and in the picture!

If all 330 plus colleagues who receive my email alert do these quick checks, we will be prepared to protect those who are risk of abuse and harm as we move into whatever comes next. As a nurse colleague said you me recently... '**Winter is coming ...**'. So let's PAT test our safeguarding circuit.

In praise of your safeguarding leadership

Recently a colleague **Niki Shaw** (Strategic Manager: Quality & Performance at Somerset County Council) posted a thread on Twitter – *Reflections on Leadership during COVID-19*. On reading the thread I was struck by how much it resonated for me. I spoke with Niki on the phone and she explained that although she originally wrote it as reflections on leadership during COVID, these reflections are for us all in whatever role we do, or organisation, team or service where we work. [Click here to take a few minutes to read these.](#)

They are in praise of everyone and what you have done to keep the people you support safe. Thank you Niki.

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PS: If you are wondering about the toaster, I had to get a new one.