

Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Manager's Blog

November 2020

A reflective drive home and the second lockdown

Like so many of us, it is now rare I find myself in the car driving home at the end of the day. For the last seven months it has been a very different journey, a short walk from the home 'office' down the stairs to the kitchen / garden / living room. Lots has been said about the upsides of working at home and how it has shifted the way we work. However, I still feel there are important aspects of safeguarding adult work which don't translate easily to home working, or are missing altogether.

One of them is how important face to face conversations are when talking through a safeguarding concern or exploring with colleagues how to hold a partner agency to account for their safeguarding activity. Another is the loss of the journey home from work as a time for reflection.

The transition space between a busy day at work and arriving home was a time to review the day's decisions and judgement calls. Not all decisions in adult safeguarding work are clear. Some decisions can be difficult, complex, emotive and nuanced (and not easily translated via a MS Teams or Zoom call). The use of reflection / supervision is so helpful to develop skills and insights to support good safeguarding practice. Working through an event again, considering different perspectives, is a process of consolidation. This helps us avoid missing something important for next time.

Chatting with another safeguarding adult board manager about what might be coming next (a [second national lockdown was announced on Saturday 31 October](#)), Steve talked about how in April, May and June people really went above and beyond. Staff gave that bit extra. But as we get to the autumn he said, '*colleagues across the safeguarding partnership feel tired: is that resilience there?*' He wondered if the workforce can find that extra gear again. Has the intensity of working from home – in which the reflective element of practice been squeezed - added to the fatigue?

The loss of momentum and hitting a six month 'wall' is a normal but temporary phase, according to Dr Aisha Ahmad writing in the Telegraph in September ([How to power through the six-month 'crisis wall' – by an expert in disaster zones](#)).

Dr Ahmed has experience of working in disaster zones and has worked through multiple long-haul crises. She offers a unifying, human perspective on where many of us are right now. *'Your mind and body are simply asking you for respite, exactly on schedule. The six-month wall is not a sign you are lost or failing. It just means you are tired.'* Importantly, Dr Ahmad reminds us *'Do not be afraid of round two. You have already learnt how to navigate this 'new normal' and have the skills you need.'*

For World Mental Health Day in October, the King's Fund [rounded up some useful resources to help support mental wellbeing and provided information about mental health services in the time of Covid-19.](#)

I also watched a 4 minute [TED talk by Podcast host and writer Morra Aarons-Mele](#), who makes some helpful points about the challenges of working from home for us all. Too much screen time, too many video calls and too few boundaries make working from home hard for all of us. Morra proposes the following to helping to manage remote working:

- Pay attention to ritual and routine
- Manage pace, place, space
- Using audio over video calls

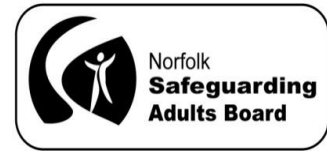
To all these resources, I would add another: take a moment to reflect.

Whether adult safeguarding role is a major part of what you do or just one of many responsibilities in your role, reflecting on practice is critical to us all.

What I have found helpful is using a few trigger questions at the end of the day. I can't say I manage it every day, but I am trying to make this a new ritual for working from home. I have adapted some questions used by Tracey McGee (Quality Care Consultant Services):

- *what happened today that went well?*
- *how did I manage that?*
- *specifically, what one thing would I do differently?*

As we move into the second lockdown our responsibilities for responding to safeguarding concerns remain and need to be at the forefront of our minds. While we now have the experience of earlier in the year to draw on, make sure you also have time at the end of the day (the 'journey home') for reflection.



NSAB safeguarding Coronavirus – 2 minute survey

Thank you everyone who took the time to respond to the survey from the September blog. The number of replies was small (19), but this was valuable feedback giving a 'sense' on how the board has been supporting the network. These colleagues felt NSAB's leadership had been visible and they felt well supported.

Walter Lloyd-Smith
NSAB Board Manager

Email: walter.lloyd-smith@norfolk.gov.uk

Tuesday 03 November 2020