

## Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Manager's Blog

March 2019

### Two cans and a piece of string – sending, receiving (and acting on) a message

Do you remember as a kid making your own 'telecommunication network'? OK – that's a rather elaborate description for two tins connected by a piece of string. One person talks into their cup, the bottom of the cup vibrates and the sound waves travel along the string (providing it's kept taut) to the bottom of the second cup, allowing the second person to hear what they're saying.

Simple, but it worked. I can remember one of my friends coming into school and explaining that he had managed to connect up two of his friends in neighbouring houses. Not at all bad for a 10 year old!

However, when we're communicating with someone, it's not just about the medium of sending and receiving messages, it's also about *what we do with the information we receive*. In my role I am fortunate to talk with a wide range of colleagues from lots of different organisations all over Norfolk (and some beyond). Fairly often, when talking about adult safeguarding, people will say they made a referral but have not heard anything back. Of course, they do not expect to get all the details, but would simply like to know, is the person OK and have the risks been removed or reduced?

Giving feedback after a referral is critically important in all areas of public service, but particularly so in adult safeguarding.

Making a safeguarding adult referral can be big step. Have I got it 'right'? Have I given the 'right' information? Have I done the 'right' thing to help make the person safe? These may be some of the questions a referrer may ask themselves. Giving feedback on referrals plays a key role in strengthening our inter-professional and inter-agency practice, and Safeguarding Adult Reviews frequent highlight when it does not happen or is slow to happen.

So it was interesting to speak with some safeguarding colleagues working in the local authority recently. I raised this very point and they were well aware of the critical importance of giving feedback to the referrer.

In fact it is such an important component of our work as a 'safeguarding system', it is captured in [Norfolk SAB's business plan for this year](#) (see Strategic Intention 2.2).

So I asked how many cases per month they deal with, where a referrer has called because they did not get feedback and this was actually the case, expecting at least double figures. 'None,' came the reply, 'because before a case is closed this action needs to be added to the record'. The safeguarding team recently reviewed a set of sample records, to check this was being done properly. Each record clearly recorded that feedback had been given.

I am not saying all referrers for all adult safeguarding referrals have been given feedback, because I am sure there are some which have been missed. What I am saying is that these haven't (so far) come to the attention of the safeguarding team.

So what might explain this gap, between what referrers are telling me and what is shown in the records?

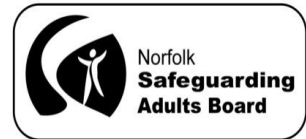
Maybe feedback is being given to a colleague of the referrer if, for example, if the referrer is not on shift or on leave, and the message does not get passed on?

We do need to address this ongoing concern about our adult safeguarding system. So this is what I suggest you could do:

- Double check your internal arrangements and make sure that feedback on an adult safeguarding referral will reach the right person (please ensure your internal communication 'string' is nice and taut!)
- If you have do have examples of adult safeguarding referrals where no feedback has been received, *PLEASE* share these cases with the local authority. This will help improve the system.

### **Recognise harm and doing something**

You may have seen this story recently in the local press – [Man lines up circle of wheelie bins to protect collapsed carer from vehicles on busy road, Eastern Daily Press \(03 March 2019\)](#). When a young man's carer collapsed onto a busy road he recognised the danger and created a circle of wheelie bins around the carer to protect him from harm. Then the young man went to get help. The report says the young man has complex needs himself, requiring one-one support, his communication is extremely limited and he speaks no English.



What a great example of creative problem solving to reduce risk! Recognising that another person could be harmed and doing something about it, whatever that something might be, is safeguarding at its best. A key safeguarding message is to recognise when something is not right or another person could be harmed and to tell someone. It's a role we all can play.

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