

Welcome to this issue of the *Journal of Adult Protection* and this editorial. As in previous editorials, we begin with information from a range of media in recent months before moving to brief descriptions of the papers contained in this issue.

So, in terms of news related items, where best to start? New ways of out-muscling the weak? New and chronic grievances?

Let us start with the latter. Although it did not announce itself as such, at the end of March 2019 we learned that Japan will finally offer the victims of forced sterilisation a payment of £21,600[1]. Eugenic Protection legislation of 1948 was not repealed in that country until 1996[2]. The programme was developed to prevent the births of infants with disabilities. However, children as young as nine were victims of the state sponsored programme of sterilisation. The victims, their lawyers and advocates are challenging the payment as inadequate (some had sought over £200k) and they criticise the absence of an apology from government.

“We have better things to do with the money” – that was the message of the outgoing National Audit Office’s Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Amyas Morse[3]. His listing of government “failures” includes Crossrail, which cost £2.8bn more than forecast; changes to probation that have cost £468m to remedy; smart metres costing £500m more than estimated; and the unsustainable 10-year equipment plan promoted by the Ministry of Defence – £7bn over budget. Morse cited the “inappropriate bravado” of government ministers and expressed anger at the billions that could have been spent on vital public services, not least because when “world-beating” projects fail, they almost inevitably seem to Hoover money from other services. So, when the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 slashed the legal aid budget, for example, the valleys of South Wales became legal deserts. It appears to be of no matter that the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund states[4]:

[...] social spending is a broader concept than social protection as it includes spending on health and education – which are especially critical in low-income and developing countries.

There is no doubt that these programs are vital to promoting the well-being of citizens and social cohesion. Public pensions can make all the difference between poverty and a dignified life for our elderly loved ones. Health care does not just save lives, it extends them and improves their quality. Primary and secondary education give our youngest citizens the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to society.

At a deeper level, I would argue that social spending is a core component of the social contract needed to fulfil the missions of our respective institutions.

Little wonder, perhaps that the President of the Supreme Court, Lady Hale, has appealed to members of the public to donate to a charity helping unrepresented litigants. The overall context for this is that there has been an 80 per cent decrease in the number of people receiving legal aid over the last eight years[5].

A College of Policing study of knife crime[6] issued earlier this year (spring) reveals that both victims and perpetrators of such crime are likely to be males in their late teens; tough sentencing/prison does not work, and ethnicity has no significant effect. Additionally, “gangs” make up a small proportion of total knife crime and evidence to date indicates that public health approaches have the most promise in developing a range of interventions such as teaching children problem-solving skills and anger management.

Onto out-muscling the weak: a couple have been convicted of murdering Margaret Fleming, a woman with learning disabilities 20 years ago[7]. Media coverage somewhat euphemistically referred to the couple as her “carers” – but perhaps this was for lack of any other term for this non-familial situation that had developed. Margaret had moved in with the couple in her early teenage years following the death of her father; her body has never been found. It appears that money was a prime motive in the case, since the couple continued to fraudulently claim her benefits after her death; the couple described this as her “disappearance” as they consistently claimed that she had simply disappeared one day and was alive and living elsewhere in the country. The case only came to light in 2016 after concern was raised about a benefits claim made by one of the couple on her behalf and a police investigation was subsequently held. The court process, however, determined that Margaret had not simply disappeared and on the balance of probabilities had been murdered and the couple were sentenced to each spend a minimum of 14 years in prison.

During June, seven men and three women were arrested in connection with the abuse of adults with autism and learning disabilities at Whorlton Hall, County Durham. An undercover reporter for the BBC Panorama programme secretly filmed staff as they humiliated, harmed and terrified patients[8]. The owners, Cygnet Health Care, expressed shock and sadness and the regulator embarked on a review of all Cygnet services. Sounds (depressingly) familiar? The place was once owned by Castlebeck which is the company that owned Winterbourne View Hospital. And also in June, another Cygnet owned operation, this time a psychiatric intensive care unit for men in Kent was investigated following very high numbers of safeguarding alerts made to the local authority relating to patient on patient assaults[9].

After the summer holidays, food banks are running out of supplies. A surge in demand, in hand with delays in receiving benefits, has underlined the food poverty that is affecting increasing numbers of people – with Staffordshire University reported as the first university in the UK to install a food bank on campus to assist students who are in need[10].

In addition, early in September Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh was cheered in Parliament as he gave the Prime Minister and House of Commons colleagues a refresher on inflammatory rhetoric, or verbal abuse as it is known to those in the safeguarding business. He did not secure the apology he sought from the Prime Minister for his previously offensive writing concerning Muslim women, but his speech powerfully underlined the levels of hate crime offences that have been increasing in number and which are associated with racism that galvanise xenophobia.

The trouble with politicians preoccupied with a single issue is that their horizons are so limited that there is no room for competition. So questions such as “Why aren’t hedge funds and private equity firms prevented from owning care homes?[11]” are not even given airtime. Four Seasons’ parent company went into administration this year, with a £625m debt, after several years under private equity ownership. H/2 Capital Partners, based in Connecticut, is in advanced talks to rescue the bulk of Four Seasons Health Care’s 320 sites. This is all seems a very far cry from the innovations developed by Hilary Cottam. Check out her TED talk for evidence of this[12].

Jeffrey Epstein, the disgraced financier and convicted sex offender took his own life in prison during August. Apparently, he was interested in seeding a master race with his DNA[13] – involving “20 women at a time” at his New Mexico ranch (the latter is wholly unnecessary detail, but it is included as it captures the freewheeling arrogance of harmful wealth). However, by funding and promising to fund academics and their institutions, this arrogant and bonkers idea was circulated among the favoured few.

We conclude this section of news items with another chronic grievance, Personal Independence Payments (PIP) continue to deserve bad press. In late August, the DWP attracted criticism after a terminally ill man had been denied PIP payments after he scored 0 points in an assessment for the benefit and was then sent a letter inviting him to an appeal hearing several months after his death – causing yet more distress to his bereaved relatives[14]. From being plagued at the outset by poor administration in terms of processing claims; test centres with no disabled access; ignorant assessors; people with dementia having all their benefits cut because they were so able [15]; mandatory re-testing of disabled and chronically ill people; to our own recent experiences of assisting people with their applications – it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that PIP is an

example of an extremely mean-spirited and punitive legacy of a coalition government set on penalising people for generally doing all that they could to be as independent as possible.

The first paper in this issue by Sarah Donnelly of University College Dublin and reports on a rapid realist review that was undertaken in relation to Mandatory Reporting and Adult Safeguarding. The evaluation was conducted to critically analyse the concept of mandatory reporting in adult safeguarding across a number of different jurisdictions (Australia, Canada, England, Northern Ireland and Scotland). This was in order to try and answer the question: “what works, for whom and in what circumstances?” in relation to mandatory reporting mechanisms. In line with the methodology for realist reviews, specific attention was paid to CMO configurations (Context(s), Mechanism(s) and Outcome(s)) of adult safeguarding reporting systems and processes. Perhaps not too surprisingly, the evaluation found international variation relating to the nature, scope and powers of mandatory reporting and also established a range of arguments for and against mandatory reporting in these contexts. The paper also explores the possible advantages and disadvantages of introducing mandatory reporting in the context of adult safeguarding.

The second paper, by Helen Thacker of Norfolk County Council Adult Social Services and colleagues (Ann Anka and Bridget Penhale) from the University of East Anglia (UEA), is a practice-based paper that explores issues relating to professional curiosity and partnership working in adult safeguarding and the importance of these issues for effective safeguarding practice. The paper draws on a range of materials including review of published materials in relation to professional curiosity, reports from adult Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and relevant materials from the SAR Library, and a number of thematic reviews of SARs. Observations from practice and experience are also included. A number of SCRs and SARs indicate in their reports that a lack of professional curiosity and lack of co-ordination and partnership working can lead to inadequate assessments and result in intervention measures that can fail to support those at risk of harm and abuse. Working in partnership and collaboration is likely to increase the chance that professional curiosity will be successfully employed by practitioners. The paper also discusses implications for improving practice in this area of adult safeguarding.

The final paper in this issue is a book review of an edited collection: “Protecting children and adults from abuse after Savile”, which was published during 2018. Given the title, it is not surprising that the volume focuses on the learning from the numerous public inquiries that were held relating to Jimmy Savile, but also includes several other (related) cases of institutional abuse and covers a range of different settings (schools, hospitals and sports organisations). Independent consultant (and SAB Chair) Pete Morgan provides a useful review of the book to assist readers to decide whether this is a must-read or not.

We hope that this issue of the journal provides some ideas and suggestions for readers to reflect on in relation to adult safeguarding. As we have previously said in other editorials, we are always interested in hearing from potential contributors and willing to discuss ideas for possible papers relating to research, policy and/or practice in this broad topic area. If you have suggestions or ideas, and wish to discuss these further, do make contact with one of us and we will be pleased to provide advice and offer support. Our contacts details appear on the inside cover of the journal and are also available on the journal website.

Notes

1. www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/japan-forced-sterilization-sterilisation-eugenics-compensation-lawsuit-nazi-germany-a8825596.html (accessed 3 May 2019).
2. www.economist.com/asia/2018/09/27/victims-of-forced-sterilisation-in-japan-fight-for-compensation (accessed 3 May 2019).
3. www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/Sir-Amyas-Morse (accessed 3 May 2019).
4. www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2019/06/14/sp061419-md-social-spending (accessed 30 June 2019).
5. www.theguardian.com/law/2019/jul/28/uks-top-judge-calls-for-donations-to-personal-support-unit (accessed 5 August 2019).

6. https://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Documents/Knife_Crime_Evidence_Briefing.pdf (accessed 3 May 2019)
7. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-49014751 (accessed 30 July 2019).
8. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tees-48585903 (accessed 15 June 2019).
9. www.kentononline.co.uk/maidstone/news/hospital-for-patients-described-as-dangerous-under-investigation-205857/ (accessed 6 June 2019).
10. www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-stoke-staffordshire-49842550/we-are-stoke-on-trent-the-food-bank-for-students
11. www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/markets/article-7453791/Chunk-Britains-second-largest-care-home-chain-set-sold-hedge-fund.html (accessed 22 September 2019).
12. www.google.com/search?q=hilary+cottam+ted+talk&rlz=1C1GCEA_enGB831GB831&oq=Hilary+Cottam+TED&aqs=chrome.69j69i57j9332j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 (accessed 22 September 2019).
13. www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/jeffrey-epstein-seed-human-race-dna-baby-ranch-new-mexico-eugenics-a9030411.html (accessed 1 September 2019).
14. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49524259 (accessed 1 September 2019).
15. <https://inews.co.uk/news/david-cameron-said-joy-watson-dementia-ambassador-now-benefits-cut-521590> (accessed 12 September 2019).