

Editorial

Bridget Penhale

Welcome to the fifth and penultimate issue of the journal for this year, which is fast approaching its final few months. In this issue we are pleased to include several research papers on the broad topic of abuse and mistreatment of older people, reflecting work that is happening in several countries, which we hope will be of interest to readers and cover a range of different aspects of safeguarding. Some readers may recall a paper published in 2023 that covered relevant Human Rights issues in relation to older people (Penhale, 2023) and an update relating to this in the autumn of last year (see Editorial, issue 26.5, Penhale, 2024). Further elaborations have occurred this year and readers may be interested to hear of these additional recent developments in this area.

Following the developments that had taken place during 2024, in April 2025, a Resolution on the Human Rights of Older Persons was presented at the Human Rights Council spring session (the 58th session) in Geneva. This Resolution (A/HRC 58/L.24/Rev.1) was adopted, by consensus of member states (without a vote) [1]. The principal effect of the resolution was to mandate that work should commence on the establishment of an inter-governmental working group to begin the drafting of a legally binding instrument. The work of this group is in its formative stages, with a series of meetings planned to take place during next year and is likely to take some time to complete but is an encouraging development at this point and a much-needed step towards a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

The first paper in this issue is by Rosemary Godbold and colleagues from the University of Hertfordshire (UK). This is a Research paper that reports on a study undertaken to evaluate safeguarding training that is held (and completed) online. The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of such training that developed largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic when a switch from in-person to online delivery happened and to explore the impacts of this change on safeguarding practice across a large Integrated Care System that was operating in England.

The study used a mixed methods approach. The first Phase consisted of an analysis of 2,415 evaluation surveys that had been obtained following 29 safeguarding training sessions and that yielded quantitative and free text data. In the second, qualitative phase, interviews were held with a range of health and social care professionals (13 interviews being held).

Findings from the first phase established that most people considered online training to be effective for achieving training objectives and identified potential ongoing positive effects on safeguarding practice. Some disadvantages of such training were identified, but the convenience this type of training was held to offset any loss of social and networking opportunities that face-to-face delivery offered. Suggestions were made for facilitating networking and collaborative working during online training. The health and social care practitioners who were interviewed during the qualitative phase discussed actual impacts on safeguarding practice, which represented relevant ongoing changes to practice following online training.

Although the study covered one integrated care system in a specific area, some useful findings were obtained, which may be of interest and use to people involved in safeguarding training, either as facilitators or participants.

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The second paper in the issue is provided by Ece Bas Suzel, of Istanbul University in Turkey, who has provided a legal research paper that examines the topic of adult protection in both Turkish and Swiss Civil Law. The paper explores legal frameworks that have developed for adult protection in Turkish and Swiss civil law systems and emphasises the apparent differences in approach between the two countries. Whilst both legal systems aim to safeguard adults who may be vulnerable, Turkish law follows state-controlled guardianship, whereas Swiss law prioritizes self-determination through voluntary protection measures. The study explores the effectiveness of these frameworks and alignment with contemporary needs.

The study undertaken used a comparative legal analysis and evaluated the main provisions of the relevant laws. There is therefore a focus on a comparison of legal systems, together with an analysis of voluntary protection measures, and this established identification of a developing need for reform of adult protection law. Relevant legislative texts, case law and international legal instruments were examined. Findings established that whilst it appears that Swiss law provides a more flexible, autonomy-based model, Turkish law seems more restrictive, relying on guardianship measures that limit autonomy. The study also identified a need for Turkey to modernise its legal framework in relation to adult protection law. The paper makes several interesting policy recommendations which are aimed at promoting a gradual shift in Turkey from state-centred guardianship to a rights-based model which is more aligned with international human rights standards.

Our third paper for this issue is a further international paper, provided by Hemant Singh Gurjar and colleague from Mohanlal Sukhadia University, India. This is a research-based paper that considers the topic of the possible roles of poor sleep, self-rated health and functional difficulties in mediating the relationship between elder abuse (here referred to as elder mistreatment) and depression found in older adults from India. This study aimed to explore the possible associations between Elder Mistreatment (EM) and depression among Indian older adults, with an emphasis on examining the role played by poor sleep, health and functional mediators. Cross-sectional data was obtained from the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI study) (2017–18) with over 30,000 older participants (aged 60+), whilst elder mistreatment was measured through self-reports. Depression was measured using the Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D-10).

The findings determined that the prevalence of elder mistreatment was 5.2%, with higher rates among women. Further analyses, using logistic regression established that depression significantly increased the likelihood of elder mistreatment for both women and men. Use of a mediation analysis identified that poor sleep, health and functional difficulties were significant mediators, with stronger effects again seen in women. The findings make for interesting reading and appear to be novel. It is possible that they findings could be useful for those involved in developing focused interventions such as those to improve sleep quality and functional health, as well as introducing specifically designed strategies that are gender-responsive and that aim to reduce risk of elder mistreatment and promote mental health for older people.

Our final full paper for this issue is a Viewpoint paper, provided by Stefan Brown of Royal Holloway College and Claire Hilton of Birkbeck College, both colleges being part of the University of London. This is a further paper in our current series of interviews, commissioned by Jeremy Dixon of Cardiff University, about topics relating to the development of Adult Safeguarding. Claire Hilton, who is interviewed for the paper, provides perspectives on the dignity and care of older people in health and social care settings. The aim of the interview was to provide a record of the development of thinking and practice related to the promotion of care and dignity of older people from the period of the 1960s. The interview covers the development of policy and practice in social care and health systems and draws attention to the evolution of adult safeguarding from a focus on the promoting the rights of older people with mental health needs, with an emphasis on

rights to care and dignity. This is provided through a consideration of the work of Barbara Robb (and her organisation) during this time, which prompted government consideration of the poor standards of care provided to older people in NHS hospitals. This is an interesting and useful paper, and likely to be useful to anyone who has an interest in historical aspects of health and care policy, in particular relating to safeguarding adults.

The final paper in this issue is a book review provided by independent consultant Susan Harrison, who is based in London. The book reviewed is *Professional Curiosity in Safeguarding Adults*, by Ann Anka, Bridget Penhale (both of University of East Anglia) and colleagues Becky Booth, Helen Thacker and Water Lloyd-Smith, who all have adult safeguarding roles within Norfolk County Council Adult Social Care. Professional curiosity is a topic of current interest across the safeguarding spectrum, both adult and child-related, but has its roots in long-standing concern about use of the concept (or lack of use) within relational practice and work with service users, particularly those who might be at risk of harm. The book provides information about the development of the concept and its potential use within protective systems, although there is also a focus on difficulties arising from a lack of use by professionals in their work and how such curiosity might be better operationalised within safeguarding practice. The authors hope that the book will be of interest to all those working in different ways across social care and health sectors.

We hope that you will find items of interest and use in this issue of the journal and that they provide useful points for reflection about laws, policy and practice related issues. As we have previously (and consistently) stated, we are always interested in receiving contributions to the journal and invite readers to continue to contribute papers about the range of topics relating to adult safeguarding. If you may be interested in a contribution and want to discuss further before committing to writing and submitting a paper, do get in touch with one of the Editors as per our details on the inside cover of the journal, or on the webpage for the journal.

We look forward to providing the remaining, final issue for this volume later in the year, to be published in December. This issue will include further topics related to the broad spectrum of concerns that comprise adult safeguarding, as well as another paper in our interview series on the development of adult safeguarding. And we hope that your autumn and early winter months will be both healthy and successful for you.

Note

- [1.] General Assembly – Human Rights Council: A/HRC/58/L.24/Rev.1 Open-Ended intergovernmental working group for the elaboration of a legally binding instrument on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons (adopted April 2025).

References

- Penhale, B. (2023), "Human rights and older people: process and perspectives", *The Journal of Adult Protection*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 105-116, doi: [10.1108/JAP-04-2023-0012](https://doi.org/10.1108/JAP-04-2023-0012).
- Penhale, B. (2024), "Editorial", *The Journal of Adult Protection*, Vol. 26 No. 5, pp. 209-210, doi: [10.1108/JAP-10-2024-093](https://doi.org/10.1108/JAP-10-2024-093).