

Making Safeguarding Personal

Executive summary



Sector-led improvement

The Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) development project was run by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) to undertake some small scale development work in relation to Making Safeguarding Personal. The final report draws together the findings from four test bed sites and other councils that are using or developing person-centred, outcome focused responses to safeguarding adults.

The testbed sites were:

- Central Bedfordshire Council (Social Work Practice Pioneer)
- Royal Borough of Greenwich (Social Work Practice Pioneer)
- London Borough of Hounslow
- London Borough of Hackney.

The project has provided valuable information on what councils are already doing to focus on outcomes for and the experiences of people who use adult safeguarding services. It starts to explore and identify what works in individual council areas and some of the challenges experienced.

More importantly, it starts to raise questions about whether a person-centred, outcome focused, approach could be more cost effective, than a professionally led, process driven one. The transformation of social work practice with adults is key to achieving this.

The project took place between February 2012 and March 2013. It was funded by the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care (TEASC) Project Board (the board steering sector-led improvement in council adult social care), the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and the LGA.

Making Safeguarding Personal was funded by the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care (TEASC) programme board £25,000, SCIE £10,000 and the LGA £2,000. This has funded project management support, development work and dissemination and £5,000, (plus VAT) to two of the test bed sites. The other two were supported as social work practice pioneers.

A project board directed the project. This included partners and valued academics.

Findings

The Making Safeguarding Personal development project supported four councils to test the proof of concept, in supporting people to make difficult decisions using person centred, outcome focused approaches.

Two test bed sites, Greenwich and Central Bedfordshire, used family group conferencing or network meetings to support people to make difficult decisions in complex situations, whilst remaining in control. Social workers were trained in the application of these approaches and explored how the principles could be applied to managing other complex cases.

A small number of family group conference or network meetings were held by both test bed sites. The benefits were felt to be preventative in helping people and their families, to find solutions that were acceptable to them, sometimes addressing longstanding complex relationships.

Both councils felt that there was a significant change in culture and social work practice as a result of using this approach. Social workers in both councils have applied the principles of family group conferencing and network meetings to managing complex cases, keeping a focus on the person and the resources and networks that they can draw on to help them to manage their situation.

Initial findings indicate that family group conferences can be cost effective, as the cost per case of a family group conference using external facilitators is £1,500 which compares favourably to the saved cost of supported accommodation when admission to a care home has been avoided.

The other two test bed sites, Hackney and Hounslow, worked on the outcomes and experiences of people in safeguarding circumstances. Hounslow asked at the beginning, middle and end of the safeguarding process the outcomes that people wanted and can now demonstrate the extent to which they have been met. This has changed social work practice and is now integral to the way social workers work.

Hackney produced detailed qualitative information on people's experience of the adult safeguarding process. This has been used to shape practice and will influence policy and practice. Both of the test bed sites that asked people about their experience of the service found that most people were satisfied and their outcomes were met. The main reason for dissatisfaction or not having an outcome met was when a person had failed to be prosecuted or they had not been asked early on what they wanted to achieve.

Six other councils have engaged with the Making Safeguarding Personal development project. Most of these used a quality assurance approach to get people's views on their experience of the safeguarding adult service.

The key messages from the Making Safeguarding Personal development project are:

- If practitioners only focus on making people feel safe, they may compromise other aspects of their wellbeing, such as feeling empowered and in control.
- Using an outcome focused approach and engaging with the person throughout the safeguarding process can be done. It appears to lead to better outcomes for the person and does not cost anything. It can inform practitioners and safeguarding boards of the effectiveness of their work.
- Using an asset based approach to identify a person's strengths and networks can help them and their family to make difficult decisions and manage complex situations, preventing future referrals and potentially delaying long term care.

- In the councils we worked with, approaches such as family group conferencing, that focus on a person centred, outcome focused approach and empower the person to draw on their strengths and personal networks, are having a positive impact on social work practice in general, as social workers start to apply these principles to all complex cases and there is a gradual shift in culture.

The Making Safeguarding Personal development project set out to test some approaches as proof of concept. The findings are encouraging, but more research and development is needed on approaches to help people resolve their circumstances, when faced with difficult decision making, if we are to change social work practice in safeguarding adults from being process driven to having one with a focus on outcomes.

The frustration of people who felt that there was no retribution for the perpetrator, highlights the need to support people in getting better access to justice and using restorative approaches. This too is an area for further development supported by research.

The Making Safeguarding Personal development project, although small in size and funding, has made some important developments. It is clear that people want to feel in control and are more likely to do so when an outcome focused, person centred approach is used.

There is a need to move adult safeguarding from a process driven approach to one that is focused on improving outcomes for, and the experience of, people who are referred to the service. Small changes can be made at relatively no cost to social work practice, but further research and development is needed to explore more fully approaches that help people make difficult decisions in complex circumstances.

Further work is also needed to ensure that policies and procedures embody this approach and that systems are adapted to capture the outcomes people want and the extent to which they are achieved. The LGA and its partners will be seeking to explore these issues further.

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