VERSION 1.0

ADULT SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

PREVENTION AND CREATING A SAFEGUARDING CULTURE

The National Safeguarding Office
safeguarding.socialcare@hse.ie

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SAFEGUARDING?

Abuse is a violation of human rights that affects every aspect of a person’s life. Health and social care staff have an important role in preventing, identifying, and managing its occurrence. Beyond the required scientific and legal responsibilities, a humanistic approach within a human-rights framework to health and social care is required. Most adults live independent lives free from abuse or the harm caused by abuse. However, there are adults who have been abused or are at risk of abuse, influenced by both context and individual circumstances. Safeguarding is not just a response to a concern of abuse being raised. Safeguarding means protecting people's health, well-being, and human rights. It is about enabling people to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. It is about all the things staff working with or providing services to adults do in every day practice. It ranges from the promotion of welfare (based on the rights of the individual) through to the safeguarding response put in place when a concern is raised to restorative or rehabilitative care post abuse. Central to this is the need to develop, nurture and continue to work on a positive safeguarding culture. The preventative element of Safeguarding is the subject of this guidance document.

PREVENTION

The HIQA National Standards for Safeguarding (2019) are underpinned by key principles including “Prevention — it is the responsibility of health and social care services to take action before harm occurs. Preventative action includes care, support and interventions designed to promote the safety, wellbeing and rights of adults”

> *Whilst safeguarding relates to the prevention of abuse and has a broad focus that extends to all aspects of a person’s general welfare, adult protection refers to investigation and intervention where it is suspected that abuse may have occurred* [1]

[1] Braye S,Orr D and Preston-Shoot M, The Journal of Adult Protection, Vol. 14 No. 2 2012

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Preventative safeguarding has been defined by the Health and Social Care Council, Northern Ireland as

> “....a range of actions and measures such as practical help, care, support and interventions designed to promote the safety, well-being and rights of adults which reduce the likelihood of, or opportunities for, harm to occur. Effective preventative safeguarding requires partnership working, that is, individuals, professionals and agencies working together to recognise the potential for, and to prevent, harm. Prevention is therefore the responsibility of a wide range of agencies, organisations and groups” [2]

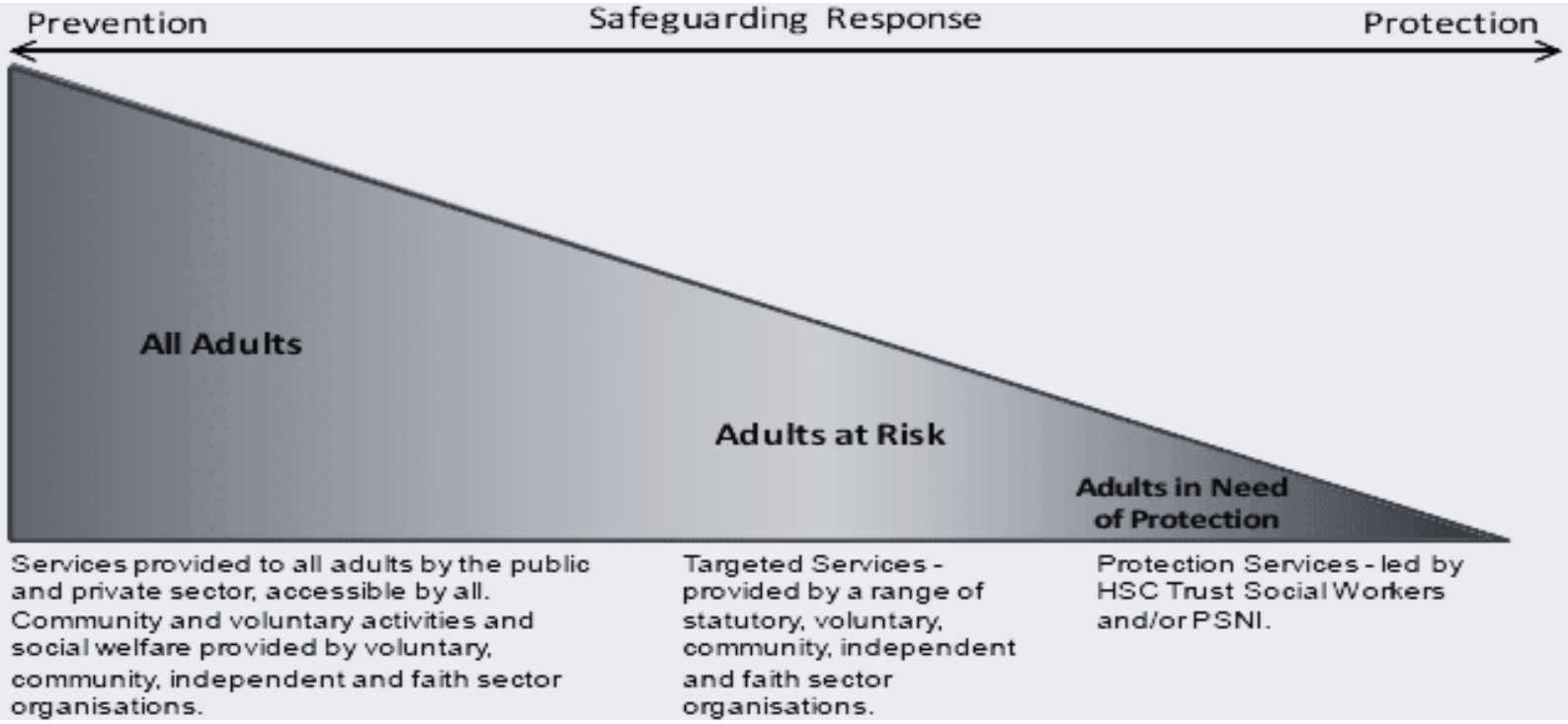
Prevention and early intervention approaches are vital in creating an environment that works to prevent abuse occurring in the first instance. Effective preventative safeguarding requires partnership working, that is, individuals, professionals and agencies working together to recognise the potential for, and to prevent, harm. The World Health Organisation also emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to adult safeguarding that takes into account a person’s physical, social and emotional needs and concludes that a range of professionals including social workers, healthcare providers, legal professionals, family members, and care givers are involved in the prevention and early identification of abuse.

Research has shown that if adults who are at risk of abuse are aware of their rights and are supported to exercise them in an effective way then abuse is less likely to occur. When appropriately supported, adults at risk of abuse are much more likely to report concerns and incidents earlier and to be more assertive in challenging people behaving inappropriately towards them.

[2] Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership, The Health and Social Care Council, Northern Ireland, July, 2015 , pg 5 / 6

CONTINUUM OF ADULT SAFEGUARDING

The Health and Social Care Council, Northern Ireland has further depicted preventative safeguarding on a continuum [3]



Safeguarding is not just a response to a concern of abuse being raised;

- it is also about all the things staff do every day when they are supporting individuals in their work
- it is about everything from the promotion of welfare (based on the rights of the individual) through to the safeguarding response put in place when a concern is raised. Central to that is the need to develop, nurture and continue to work on a positive safeguarding culture

[3] Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership, The Health and Social Care Council, Northern Ireland, July, 2015, p6

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

The Commission for Social Care Inspection has identified building blocks for prevention and early intervention; [4]

- **Public awareness about where to seek help**
- **People being informed of their rights to be free from abuse and supported to exercise these rights, including access to advocacy**
- **Effective and person centered universal adult health & social care services, including community safety services**
- **A well trained workforce operating in a culture of zero tolerance of abuse**
- **A sound framework for confidentiality and information sharing across agencies**
- **Needs and risk assessments to inform people's choices**
- **A range of options for support to keep safe from abuse tailored to people's individual needs**
- **Services that prioritise both safeguarding and independence**

[4] Safeguarding adults: A study of the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard adults from abuse (Commission for Social Care Inspection report,2008.

INFORMATION, ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

A report by the Social Care Institute for Excellence in 2011, identified the following themes as important factors in prevention in adult safeguarding: [5]

Public awareness campaigns

Public awareness campaigns can make a significant contribution to the prevention of abuse. They are more effective if backed up by information and advice about where to get help and training for staff and services to respond.

Accessible information and advice

These are essential building blocks for prevention of abuse and for building on public awareness campaigns. However, one size does not fit all. Information about abuse and what to do about it needs to reach all sectors of the community through a range of different routes. Advocacy can make a significant contribution to prevention of abuse through enabling adults at risk to become more aware of their rights and able to express their concerns.

Training and education

Some of the most common prevention interventions discussed in the literature are training and education. For both adults at risk and staff within services small group training approaches can raise awareness of abuse in adults at risk and enable them to build skills to protect themselves from abuse. Approaches may need to be different with different groups.

[5] Report 41: Prevention in adult safeguarding: SCIE, 2011

INFORMATION, ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

Policies and procedures

Along with a local safeguarding policy, a range of policies and procedures within services can support the prevention of adult abuse. These policies include but are not limited to; recruitment, induction, ongoing training & supervision, whistle-blowing/protected disclosures, management of service users finances etc.

Community links

Services and individuals benefit from having contact with a range of people in the community. Reducing isolation through links with the community can mean that there are more people who can be alert to the possibility of abuse as well as provide links to potential sources of support for adults at risk and family carers.

Regulation and Legislation

Both have an important role in the prevention of abuse.

Inter-agency collaboration

The importance of agencies (both statutory and voluntary) working together with a common understanding and collaborative approach is vital for prevention of abuse

Empowerment and choice

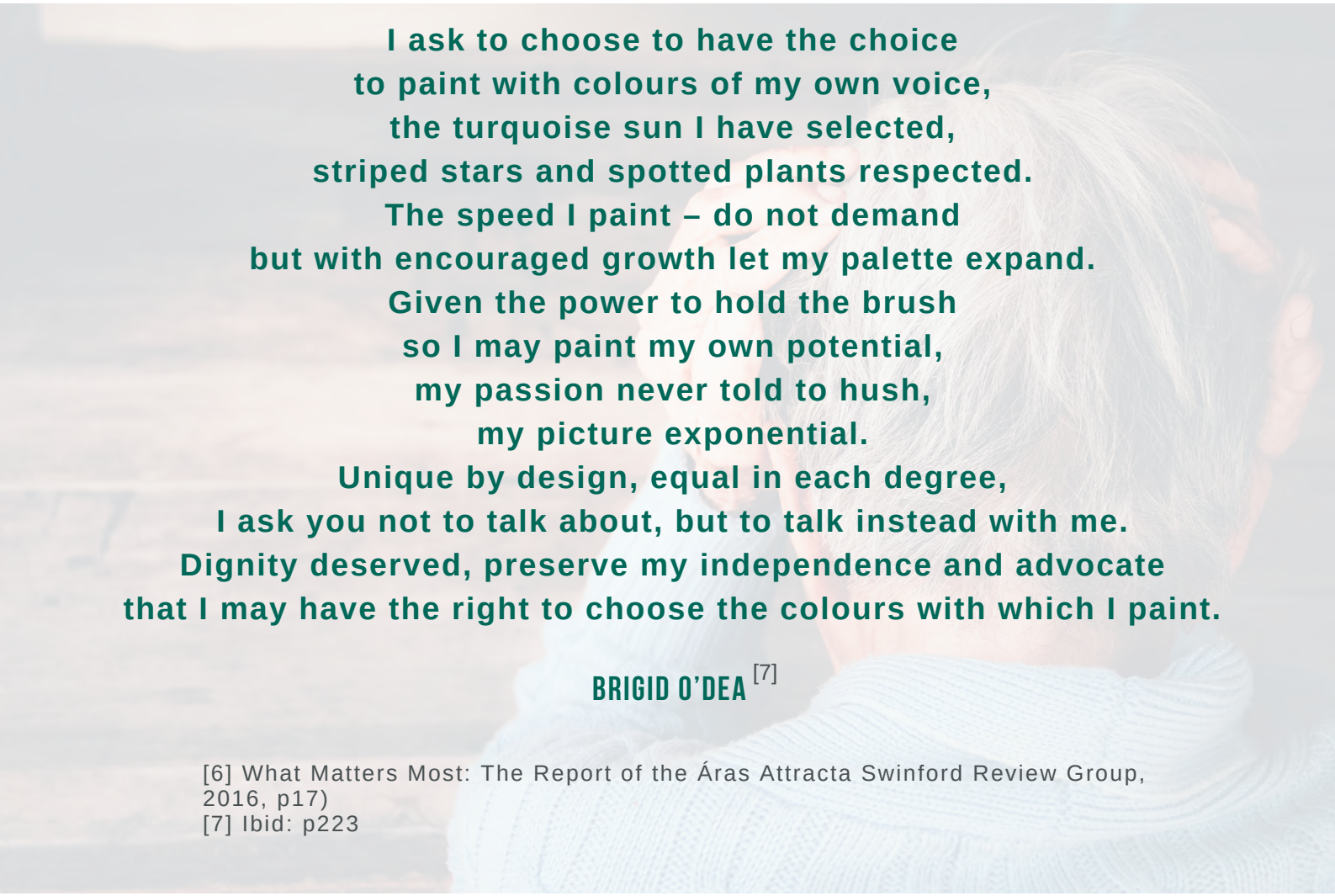
Enabling people to protect themselves from abuse is at the core of the principle of empowerment. If people are to protect themselves from abuse, they need to be aware of what abuse is, be informed about their rights and have the skills and resources to be able to deal with it. They need to have the information, knowledge and confidence to take action.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOICE

An important feature of empowerment is to offer people genuine choice when it comes to the services and supports on offer. Without choice and the ability to exercise choice, the potential for abuse can become greater and the opportunity to escape it becomes harder.

> *People with intellectual disabilities are seldom asked for their views or given opportunities to make basic life choices that the rest of the population take for granted …It is frequently assumed that other people know best – staff, families, professionals; or that the person does not have the capacity to make such choices or to communicate these for themselves* [6]

COLOURING MY CHOICE



I ask to choose to have the choice
to paint with colours of my own voice,
the turquoise sun I have selected,
striped stars and spotted plants respected.
The speed I paint – do not demand
but with encouraged growth let my palette expand.
Given the power to hold the brush
so I may paint my own potential,
my passion never told to hush,
my picture exponential.
Unique by design, equal in each degree,
I ask you not to talk about, but to talk instead with me.
Dignity deserved, preserve my independence and advocate
that I may have the right to choose the colours with which I paint.

BRIGID O'DEA [7]

[6] What Matters Most: The Report of the Áras Attracta Swinford Review Group, 2016, p17)
[7] Ibid: p223

IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCACY

Advocacy assumes an important role in the preventative work of safeguarding. It enables people to know their rights and voice their concerns. An advocate has a role to ensure that individuals have access to relevant and accurate information thus enabling them to make informed choices.

Adults at risk of abuse can be marginalised in terms of health, housing, employment and social participation. Advocacy is one of the ways of supporting and protecting adults at risk of abuse. Advocacy services may be preventative in that they can enable adults at risk of abuse to express themselves in potential or actual abusive situations.

THE PURPOSE OF ADVOCACY

Advocacy enables people to seek and receive information, explore and understand their options, make their will and preferences known to others and make decisions for themselves. Advocacy can support people to represent their own views, wishes and interests, especially when they find it difficult to express them. It ensures that people’s rights are respected by others and ensures that people’s needs and wishes are given due consideration and acted upon. Advocacy can enable people to be involved in decisions that would otherwise be made for them by others.

LINE MANAGERS/SERVICE MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITY

In an effective governance structure, overall accountability for the delivery of services is clearly defined and there are clear lines of accountability at individual, team and service levels so that all individuals working in the service are aware of their responsibilities and to whom they are accountable. Poor governance structures are a major contributing factor in adverse incidents and learning from serious case reviews and serious incidents recorded in healthcare organisations suggest that the absence of leadership can result in poor practice.

Strong leadership is essential to safeguard adults at risk of abuse. Positive role modelling is important as managers may perpetuate the tolerance of abuse and bad practice by failing to deal with concerns. It is important that managers are willing to challenge powerful individuals who impact negatively on individuals they support. If managers fail to challenge powerful individuals they become complicit in the abuse.

PROMOTING A POSITIVE SAFEGUARDING CULTURE

Put simply, organisational culture can be thought of as “the way we do things around here”. A positive safeguarding culture is a key building block in the prevention work involved in safeguarding. The culture of an organisation can be a highly valuable asset which supports an individual’s human rights, life choices etc. However the culture of an organisation can also be a toxic, highly potent factor which violates and undermines peoples’ rights, their choices and can impact very negatively on an individual’s life.

Culture is very powerful, more powerful than any policy or procedure or any value or mission statement. Organisational culture can work against raising and dealing with concerns of abuse. Consequently, abuse and neglect can thrive when organisational culture involves staff focusing on tasks, processes and procedures rather than service users’ experiences and aspirations. [8]

The HSE commissioned Review Group into the quality of care provided in Áras Attracta [9] also highlighted the key importance of promoting a positive safeguarding culture in the prevention of abuse. The Review Group made three overarching recommendations for the future of the service which strongly endorse this principle:

- A rights based social model of service delivery
- The voice of residents needs to be facilitated, listened to, and promoted
- A strengthening and enhancement of leadership and management

[8] [Ref: Shifting the focus: outcomes of care for older people: Heath Hazel Heath & Phair Lynne
[9] International Journal of Older People Nursing, 2009 [10] Áras Attracta Swinford Review Group, 2016

PROMOTING A POSITIVE SAFEGUARDING CULTURE

Key to safeguarding is the promotion of an open culture coupled with a genuinely person centred approach to care and support, underpinned by a zero tolerance approach towards abuse. A key requirement in the HSE Adult Safeguarding Policy is that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Every member of staff regardless of grade or sector has a responsibility to promote a working environment that prevents abuse from happening and works proactively to recognise and respond to abuse. As such it is vital for all staff to actively promote a working culture of "zero tolerance" in the area of abuse. These responsibilities form part of a moral and contractual duty of care towards service users.

Leadership in Safeguarding is required at all levels of an organisation. It is not just the responsibility of managers but rather each staff member, regardless of role, should be a leader in relation to safeguarding in their work.

A safeguarding culture prioritises the quality of care being delivered, seeks to continuously improve that care, and ensures it is person centered, safe and effective. A safeguarding work culture also demonstrates strong leadership and governance, with a competent and caring workforce.

SUMMARY OF KEY MESSAGES IN BUILDING A POSITIVE SAFEGUARDING CULTURE

- Fostering an open culture
- Effective induction for staff
- Leadership at every level
- Support for staff to raise concerns without fear of consequences of raising that concern
- Integrating whistle blowing into wider philosophies of good practice
- Challenging poor practice before it escalates
- Challenging dominant individuals who impact negatively on individuals they support
- Ongoing organisational learning and reflection from adverse incidents or incidents of whistle blowing