



NEWSLETTER

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Foreword

Risk-taking – it is something all of us have done at different times in our lives. Probably some of our best memories come from the times when we did something a bit daft and we came through alright. Whether it is getting involved in a risky relationship, or drinking a bit too much at a party, or taking a sledge down a snowy slope – risk-taking provides much of the spice of life.

Yet once we start thinking about vulnerable adults, we can be tempted away from risk-taking. To keep someone safe, do we have to take away all risks? Maybe it is safer not to encourage them to go out on their own in the evening. Maybe they had best not have a drink in the pub. That new relationship might go wrong – best to play safe and discourage it. But that way dullness lies. At a recent seminar on risk organised by the Local Government Association, one delegate wrote “risk aversion closes your life down”. Another said “stay safe – nothing happens!”

Managing risk is a real challenge for front-line staff, and I think we need to put more thought into how to support them. As agencies, we need to have some clear principles that set out how we recognise the value of some risk in people’s lives, and seek to engage clients in understanding the risks they face. We need staff to know that they will not be blamed if they have worked honestly with a client to think through risk, even if something does actually go wrong. We need to help staff understand when highly risky behaviours (such as rejecting medication, or encouraging strangers into the house) might be a risk too far, and might trigger a mental capacity assessment. We need to think about how we can help clients to be involved in assessing sensibly the risks that they might be facing. And we need to think through how we record our assessment of risk, without going overboard on wrapping our clients in cotton wool.

Sir Paul Ennals CBE
Independent Chair, SSAB

[Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board \(SSAB\)](#) is a multi-agency partnership providing strategic leadership for adult safeguarding across the City of Sunderland to promote the welfare of adults at risk of abuse and neglect and is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of what partner agencies do to support this. **Follow us on Twitter:** @SunderlandSAB

Focus on: The Mental Capacity Act 2005

Mental capacity describes a person's ability to make a specific decision at a specific time. A person is deemed to lack capacity if, because of an impairment of or a disturbance in the functioning of the mind or brain, they cannot make a specific decision at the time the decision needs to be made. It doesn't matter if the impairment or disturbance is temporary or permanent.

The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 provides a statutory framework to empower and protect adults who are not able to make their own decisions and has five principles:

- A person must be presumed to have capacity unless it is proven otherwise
- All practicable steps must be taken to enable the person to make their own decision
- You must not assume a person lacks capacity if they make an unwise decision
- You must act or decide on behalf of a person who lacks capacity in their best interests
- You must ensure that the least restrictive option is taken

A capacity assessment should be documented and detail the assessor's reasons for deciding that the individual lacks capacity. The person who assesses an individual's capacity to make a decision will usually be the person who is directly concerned with the person at the time the decision needs to be made. The assessment is time and decision specific, in other words a person cannot be said to 'lack capacity' as a blanket statement, for example, a person may have the mental capacity to make a decision about where they want to live, or who they want contact with, but not have the capacity to manage their finances, and this capacity status may change over time if the individual has fluctuating levels of mental capacity due to the effects of a physical or mental health condition.

If a capacity assessment finds that a person does not have sufficient mental capacity to make a decision, the decision must be made for them in their best interests. This should involve:

- Encouraging the person to take part as much as possible
- Identify all relevant circumstances
- Find out the person's past and present wishes, feelings, beliefs values and any other factors they would be likely to consider if they did have capacity
- Do not make assumptions based on the person's age, appearance, condition or behaviour
- Assess whether and when the person might regain capacity to make the decision
- If the decision concerns life-sustaining treatment, then the best interest decision should not be motivated by the desire to bring about the person's death
- Consult with others, where it is practical and appropriate to do so

For further information please visit:

[SSAB Multi-Agency Procedural Guidance, 39 Essex Street Mental Capacity Law Guidance Note](#)

Training

SSAB safeguarding training is available to all employees working within health and social care within Sunderland. In January 2019 SSAB is expanding its training programme to include training on How to Assess Mental Capacity.

The How to Assess Capacity training is a full day course, which focuses on the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and their application when carrying out a capacity assessment. The session is aimed at frontline staff who work with adults who may lack capacity and support decision making and safeguarding, such as: Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Nurses, Housing Officers, etc.

Delegates are expected to have attended the multi-agency Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) training prior to attending this course.

For further information please visit: <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/14089/Training-safeguarding-adults>

Safer Internet Day

Safer Internet Day will take place on Tuesday 5th February 2019, with the global theme of 'together for a better internet'. Coordinated in the UK by the UK Safer Internet Centre, Safer Internet Day sees hundreds of organisations get involved to help promote safe, responsible use of digital technology for children and young people.

The day offers the opportunity to highlight positive uses of technology and to explore the role we all play in helping to create a better and safer online community. It calls upon young people, parents, teachers, social workers, law enforcement, companies, policymakers, and wider, to join together in helping to create a better internet.

Get involved

Over the coming months the UK Safer Internet Centre will provide all the materials you need to get involved. You will also be able to register your organisation as a Safer Internet Day supporter.

The success of the day is dependent on everyone coming together to raise awareness.

For more information please visit: <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/safer-internet-day-2019-%E2%80%93-save-date-tuesday-5th-february>

SSAB Development Day

In October 2018 SSAB met to reflect on the achievements and challenges of the previous year and consider its priorities for the future. Partner agencies were well-represented at the session and four key priorities were identified:

- Prevention
- Making Safeguarding Personal / User Engagement
- Partnership
- Key Local Areas of Risk

These priorities will be taken forward by the work programmes of the Board's sub-committees and progress will be included in the SSAB Annual Report 2018-19.

Report a Concern

Everyone has a responsibility to safeguard children, young people and adults who may be at risk of abuse.

If you are worried about someone:

- In an emergency call 999
- If there is no immediate risk, call the police on 101

If you are a professional wishing to report a safeguarding concern regarding an adult, please read the [guidance](#) and complete the [Safeguarding Adults Concern \(SAC\) form](#). Further information is available [here](#).

If your concern relates to a child, please call 0191 561 7007.

Future Articles

If you have an idea for an article for a future publication, please contact the Strategic Safeguarding Team: strategic.safeguarding@sunderland.gov.uk

Annual Safeguarding Conference

Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board are pleased to be involved in the annual safeguarding conference in partnership with South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group, Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board, Safer Sunderland Partnership, and South Tyneside Safeguarding Adults and Children Boards.

The conference will be held in March 2019 with a range of safeguarding topics covered.

Further information regarding the programme and booking information will be circulated in due course.