

# The adult safeguarding practice handbook.

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The Adult Safeguarding Practice Handbook,  
Kate Spreadbury and Rachel Hubbard,  
Bristol, Policy Press, 2020, pp. viii + 255, ISBN 978 1 4473 5167 2, £19.99 (pbk)

Adult safeguarding is a complex area of social work and requires the practitioner to draw upon many skills as they engage with the challenges of referrals, information gathering, multi-agency working and asserting the rights of the adult at the centre of each case whilst striving for the best outcome. *The Adult Safeguarding Practice Handbook* by Spreadbury and Hubbard is an attempt to bring focus to this valuable area of practice and aims to guide practitioners through some of the challenges that may be encountered in social work.

The book is well laid out and Chapter 1 gives an overview of the scope and contents of the publication, placing emphasis on legislation and practice wisdom, but there is no recognition of the historic context for creating legislation specifically for this area, and it may have been useful to have some explanation as to the journey which has led to the requirement of particular attention towards safeguarding. Human rights legislation is the focus of the second chapter which is explored and articulated clearly with very useful links to practice examples and dilemmas, as well as reflective activities which are underpinned by thoughts from the authors, a technique replicated throughout all of the chapters to good effect.

The focus on legislation tends to be strong on English/UK Acts, but less so on the devolved legislation. The approaches in Scotland and Wales are mentioned, but no depth is offered, and for practitioners in these areas, further reading will definitely be required to understand the importance of the criteria for involvement, as well as the interplay between other important legislation such as the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act (2000). It would be ambitious of any book to explore all of the safeguarding legislation in the UK, and what Spreadbury and Hubbard offer here is a very clear perspective on English legislation and the interplay between other Acts.

There is a useful exploration of definitions in Chapter 5 where attempts are made to outline some of the types of harm practitioners might encounter, as well as a good acknowledgement of service users who might be overlooked. Substance use was highlighted here and, given the complexities of fluctuating capacity and underlying reasons for use, it might have warranted a bit more of an exploration as, undoubtedly, it will be an area where practitioners will be faced with dilemmas. As the book goes on to explore practice issues in Part 2, there is a useful pointer towards considering relationship building and acknowledging how it must feel to be investigated by practitioners. Perhaps there could have been a bit more appreciation of the unintended harm that can be caused to adults by carers who do not have the right equipment, information or knowledge, and who require support. Being investigated can be a worrying experience, particularly when intentions by the carer were well placed.

The rest of Part 2 offers clear insights into issues around risk assessment, decision making, as well as practicalities around enquiries and outcomes. What was lacking was acknowledgement of social work education and our use of theories and intervention. Chapter 6 does mention attachment theory and motivational interviewing, but given the often complex situations we are asked to investigate in adult services, a wider knowledge base is drawn upon. From personal practice experience, knowledge of crisis intervention and family systems theory were often used, as well as an understanding of sociological and environmental factors, and therefore, the inclusion of such a small number of theories/interventions appeared tokenistic. The theoretical base of social worker should be celebrated and foregrounded as something which defines our professional identity within multi-agency and multidisciplinary teams.

In conclusion, this publication is a useful starting point for practitioners and students who are exploring the area of safeguarding in social work, and although it might be more applicable to practice in England, there are valuable signposts for all practitioners in terms of the issues which may arise in the field.

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