

**Extract from the Annual Report - 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011****1. Introduction/ Foreword**

I am grateful to have the opportunity to introduce this year's annual report from the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board. It is my chance to express appreciation to all those staff, volunteers, advocates, and community members who work hard to keep people safe from significant harm and to provide the highest standards of personalised responses when individuals do need support.

Since the last annual report I have co-led two research projects funded by the Department of Health, both of which have helped to shape how we have understood and taken forward the Board's structure and functions in Luton.

One project scoped the issue of adults who self neglect and explored whether the practice and research evidence supported the inclusion of such cases in adult safeguarding (Braye, Orr and Preston-Shoot, 2011a). Whilst strictly speaking falling outside the statutory guidance which currently shapes adult protection (Department of Health, 2000), the research found that such cases were often considered within an adult safeguarding framework in order to ensure that the person's needs, best interests and rights were addressed. The Law Commission (2011) has also considered this question of whether adults who self neglect should be included within adult safeguarding procedures and made just such a recommendation to government.

The second project (Braye, Orr and Preston-Shoot, 2011b) reviewed the governance and effectiveness of Safeguarding Adults Boards, seeking to identify best practice in terms of structures, roles and functions, and budgets and membership. The Luton Board was able to consider the different types of structures that the project uncovered and to use this evidence in reviewing and reconfiguring its own structures, roles, reporting and accountability lines, and approaches to developing its strategy for adult safeguarding and ensuring the quality of operational delivery.

The Law Commission (2011) has published its recommendations for the reform of adult social care law, including adult safeguarding. The Commission is critical of terminology that describes individuals as "vulnerable adults", preferring the language of adults at risk. In line with this thinking, the Luton Board has dropped the word "vulnerable" from its title and will in future be guided by the concept of adults at risk of serious harm.

Government has yet to respond in full to the proposals for legislative reform. However, the Department of Health (2011) has issued a statement of policy. The overriding message is that practice must be informed by, and deliver outcomes consistent with principles of empowerment, protection, prevention, partnership, proportionality and accountability. People should have all the information they need and be centrally involved, whenever possible, in decisions about how to reduce risks to their safety and well-being. The statement also indicates that it is government's intention to legislate to make Safeguarding Adults Boards statutory. The Luton Safeguarding Adults Board has, and will have these principles at the forefront of its strategic direction and review of operational delivery, for instance when it requires partner agencies to audit their services and report on outcomes.

Away from the national scene, in Luton, the year to which this annual report refers has seen a complete restructuring of the Board, and a commissioned review of adult safeguarding policy, procedures and operations, especially in Adult Social Care, which has led to some far-reaching decisions about how strategy will be set in the future and safeguarding services delivered. The Safeguarding Adults Board has been streamlined to ensure that the major statutory partners are engaged at the highest strategic managerial level. It is now supported by an executive which draws together senior managers and operational staff across all the agencies responsible for service delivery, within which adult safeguarding may be one component of their provision. Changes in the way that referrals are allocated and adult safeguarding investigations are managed have been agreed. In order to maximise effectiveness and improve efficiency, in a tight financial climate, the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board has approved much closer working relationships with parallel activity in Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council, especially at the level of operational procedures (how incidents of adult safeguarding are responded to) and sub-groups (designed to take forward policy development, service audit, and training).

A Serious Case Review on Adult A has been completed and action plans approved for the agencies involved. A similar process is underway in respect of Adult B. The issues involved in two other cases, known as Adult C and Adult D, will be explored by means of internal management reviews, which will be scrutinised by the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board. In all cases, action plans for individual agencies and/or the Board will be agreed where necessary and relevant, and their outcomes critically evaluated by the Serious Case Review Panel, which I chair, and the now three-borough sub-group responsible for audit and quality. In all cases, executive summaries will be published on the Board's web pages.

This year has also seen a rise in the number of serious establishment concerns and improvement notices served on individual provider agencies by the Care Quality Commission. This coincides with media scrutiny, Ombudsman inquiries and other reviews of the standards of provision in residential, nursing and hospital care settings.

It is an ever present reminder that, whilst many staff and organisations provide high quality care and care-ful-ness, in some instances the care provided is care-less, abusive and neglectful (for one review, see Preston-Shoot, 2010). I would strongly encourage anyone who encounters such poor care to inform the Board.

This year has also seen the Board give evidence to the Equality and Human Rights Commission inquiry into disability-related hate crime. This serves as a useful reminder of the community dimension to, and responsibility for safeguarding adults, since adults are sometimes at risk because of the attitudes and behaviours to which they are subjected. Again, I would encourage individuals to bring to the notice of the Board and relevant agencies instances when people are the victims of hate crime.

This year has seen the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board on a journey of improvement, both in terms of its own operation and its review and strengthening of the agencies involved in service delivery with adults at risk. I appreciate the commitment of the personnel involved in this journey and I ask for the assistance of everyone living and working in Luton to ensure that adults at risk know how the Board, and the agencies that come together within it, can engage with them in enhancing their safety and wellbeing.

Professor Michael Preston-Shoot  
Independent Chair, June 2011.