



## **Managing care**

*Managing to protect*

### **Rissa de la Paz**

Managing to protect. In this section we explore the challenge of protecting individuals who are or may be described as vulnerable. For managers and practitioners this involves a complex assessment of the risks for different individuals in a given situation. In this band we focus on a group that in recent years has received a great deal of media attention.

### **Mandy Bearder**

When I had my first baby I was 15; it was my first relationship and I got pregnant. So I was like, do I have this baby or don't I have the baby or what now?

### **Rissa de la Paz**

Mandy recalls the anxieties that dominated a vulnerable period in her life.

### **Mandy Bearder**

We decided that we was going to have the baby and no matter if I was going to end up on my own, I was going to bring this baby up. I look back and I think, if only there was more people could tell me what to expect. When you start weaning your baby and how much clothes cost and toys and they start school. I needed just someone to come round, just tell me what was happening on the estate, just to say this life isn't sitting in at home, looking after your child. I'd wake up most mornings with the curtains shut all day and was really isolated. I think I can remember an health visitor come in and saying that she did a mums-and-toddlers, but I didn't know where it was, so what was the point of that? It was miles away as far as I was concerned and trying to get on the bus with the baby was... I'd rather stop at home.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

Young women who are pregnant and without support from friends and family face a range of issues and challenges. Sarah, a social worker who works for the children's and maternity team in a Leicestershire hospital.

### **Sarah Orgill**

There's a variety of risks that young women are particularly exposed to when they become pregnant. Even before the birth of the baby, we deal with a lot of cases where there's violence within the home. They also quite often end up homeless because they're thrown out of the family home by their parents and they have no resources themselves to survive. So they need a lot of support and if they don't get that at the crucial moment then things tend to go downhill very rapidly.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

The stigma associated with teenage pregnancy can affect access to services which would potentially support the young family.

### **Sarah Orgill**

Quite often the difficulties that can arise for young parents is that society doesn't view them in a positive way, and then they can't access the services they need to keep them and their baby together. And so they end up with the baby coming into care by an indirect route through a voluntary request, when actually if they could have been supported a bit more, they would be able to hold onto their baby.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

Compounding this are the risks that any teenager would be vulnerable to.

**Sarah Orgill**

Obviously for most young people these days, drugs and alcohol are a very big part of teenage life. Young parents are no exception to that, they're just as vulnerable as anybody else and we do deal with a lot of drug use and a lot of alcohol misuse. There's also the vulnerability of young women particularly, who end up in flats, isolated, with no support systems, without their families, they're vulnerable to being preyed on by older people who have more experience, who know how to manipulate them. The support that you can offer is to try and channel the energy that they have in a positive way, and try and avoid them going down those paths.

**Rissa de la Paz**

It's not just young women who are at risk. Gary works for Birth Link, an adoption agency in Edinburgh. He has conducted research on the experiences of birth fathers whose children have been taken into adoption. His findings give valuable insight into the impact of an unexpected pregnancy on the young men and their families.

**Gary Clapton**

The experiences of the men I talked to were one of exclusion. Social services, hospital workers, often parents, had worked to exclude them from actually becoming involved in either supporting their girlfriend through pregnancy or indeed being around at the birth and so on. One key thing was when the young man was excluded from the process, either consciously or unconsciously, the resources that he brought, resources such as his parents, his mother and father, and his brothers and sisters and so on, those resources were automatically denied. The fallout for the men involved was one of feeling quite agitated, quite depressed when things had become clear that they were not going to be included in the pregnancy, decisions about the baby's future, and they felt angry, extremely angry as a result of this disenfranchisement.

**Rissa de la Paz**

This sense of exclusion had a negative impact on the young men's behaviour.

**Gary Clapton**

They don't sort of take it out on themselves, they took it out on others. They went and got drunk, they got into fights, they got arrested, anti-social activities. But they never connected their activities with this upset, they, they just said to me that the time after the birth of their child or even the time during the late pregnancy when they realised they were going to be excluded from any involvement with the child, was one whereby they went into a sort of deep depression they said, and that took the form sometimes of anti-social activity.

**Rissa de la Paz**

At the heart of efforts to protect are dilemmas around the rights of the different individuals involved. Do you intervene to prevent harm to the child or do you respect the right of the family to remain together? While the mother may choose not to involve the father, the result is that the child becomes separated from a significant part of his or her birth family. Gary argues that even if the integrity of the family cannot be preserved, the role of the father shouldn't necessarily be disregarded.

**Gary Clapton**

Men in fact shouldn't be automatically excluded from the equation and we need to ask ourselves, well there's been a man around here somewhere along the line and just because either the girls' parents don't want him or maybe even the girl doesn't want him, that doesn't mean to say that he hasn't got some part to play. When a father has been around and been seen to wish to be involved, my research shows that the children of that relationship, many, many years in the future have actually seen that's something precious.

**Rissa de la Paz**

In situations such as this it's easy to assume that inexperience in itself can lead to vulnerability, without taking into account how much social inequalities can play a role. Jill from the Broxtowe Family Centre in Nottingham.

**Jill Green**

There's a bit of a myth that young parents aren't able to cope as parents. I think that many young parents do more than cope and bring their children up really well and that doesn't mean necessarily in the same way that somebody with lots of money in their thirties might bring up their children. I think the baby would probably be vulnerable to being brought up in poverty; probably poor housing. I actually view those things as much more of an issue than somebody being a young parent.

A lot of the women who use the family centre have huge strengths and lots of positive qualities in their lives and use their strengths to not only just survive but to develop and pursue their own kind of lives and provide for their children and I never cease to be impressed with how strong people are in very difficult circumstances.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

Mandy's own experience bears this out. She herself first came into contact with the Broxtowe Family Centre as a teenage mother. She now works as a staff volunteer, helping other young parents in the area.

### **Mandy Bearder**

I love the family centre now because I've got so much from it and I realise that the things I needed, I can now give to young parents that I work with. And do a young mums' group that I've done for over a year, and you know supporting young parents that have been through depression and just the isolation and it's just fantastic.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

However, it's important not to underestimate the complexity of assessing the needs of teenage parents and their children.

### **Sarah Orgill**

There's a balance to be achieved because young parents are quite often children in need themselves and so have often to be assessed from that perspective, as a separate assessment from the baby or prospective baby. And quite often you can end up going down the child protection route with very young mothers, balancing the risks and the vulnerabilities of the mother, the father and the child. Quite often young parents don't want to see themselves as children. And that can be very important in any assessment with them, to respect their views of themselves.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

Crucial to addressing the problem of teenage pregnancy is providing young people with the information that will promote their sexual health. Jackie is a health promotion specialist working in schools. Her role is to support teachers and school nurses in delivering sexual health education. Despite positive intentions at government and local level there are barriers to exploiting this policy fully.

### **Jackie Carter**

Often there's the risk of schools not actually being innovative enough, and so they're missing out on a lot of information, a lot of good resources really that are available to them because they don't want to be seen to be controversial if you like in dealing with issues around things like contraception. Leaflets for example that may be giving young people points of contacts, they may not like to use because it's seen to be encouraging young people to engage in sexual activity, when it's not, it's just offering the young people a service and you know a place that they have, that they can go to as a point of contact. It's giving them all the information so that they're able to make informed choices about what they want to do, just as they would with any other health issue.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

Providing an effective and sensitive service for young people also demands an awareness of the roles of all relevant staff. Managers have a key part to play here, argued Sarah, a social worker in the children's and maternity team at a Leicestershire hospital

### **Sarah Orgill**

You need a strong manager who's going to be able to recognise the abilities of individual members of the team, but also not to just dump on one person because they might be particularly good at one aspect of the work and make sure that the work load's spread evenly. And that's quite a crucial thing for a manager to do, really, to be able to recognise when people are stressed as well and to be able to talk to the worker appropriately and not de-skill and undermine, but to support and find a way forward together, so that you can carry on with the work.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

Sarah's manager also plays a crucial coordinating role so that staff from different areas of expertise can operate effectively without unnecessary duplication of effort. Previously for instance, Sarah and her colleagues were being asked by medical staff to assess all young women under 16 for counselling about pregnancy termination, which led to very heavy workloads.

### **Sarah Orgill**

Our team manager went and met with the consultant and together they drew up a criteria for referrals, which is now in operation and is working successfully, very quickly. So that's filtered out a lot of unnecessary referrals for us

### **Rissa de la Paz**

By co-ordinating the activities of staff across different sites Sarah's manager has also improved the effectiveness of the service.

### **Sarah Orgill**

We work four different sites here and she does that by directly communicating with the key people in each of those places, and having regular communication with them to make sure that she's not missed anything, and that she's passing on the relevant things to us, so that our practice is better informed, that we can access things quicker, and we know the people to go to straight away.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

We've seen that as far as teenage parents are concerned, vulnerability isn't caused by a single factor such as youth or inexperience. It's often the result of a complex mix of factors – including social disadvantage and a lack of access to adequate or sensitive service provision. It may be compounded by other factors, such as exposure to drugs or alcohol. People who are labelled as vulnerable may feel this undermines their strengths and the positive identities they've chosen for themselves.

The protection of vulnerable adults and children is a complex task. Different staff may be involved at different stages, raising concerns, referring people on for assessment or investigation and then making formal decisions to ensure that vulnerable individuals are protected in future. What's more, responses have to be coordinated across different agencies – health, social services, education and the police. For a flavour of the challenges a brief comment from an assessor at the social work department of a busy district general hospital.

### **Kay Holden**

We do assessments on the wards and I actually cover accident and emergency and the medical assistant unit. So we've had one recently actually, the police were actually involved with this one. This particular lady was brought in and she was naked on the floor, living with her daughter. She came in about 12 o'clock and she died at 4 o'clock in the morning. Is it neglect or is it abuse, what, so we haven't found that out yet.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

How can managers and front line staff be supported to work in this delicate and demanding area. In this band we hear about some of the causes in adult protection available at the East Sussex Social Services Training Department. It's a concrete attempt to address the varied training needs of staff working in different agencies and settings. What are the typical cases of adult protection that come to their attention? Bob Skinner, a senior training officer responsible for putting the programme together.

**Bob Skinner**

I suppose one of the most frustrating and often reported cases that I get is around financial abuse or the sense that a vulnerable adult who may or may not have full capacity is slowly having their resources eroded by members of the family or people who they have adopted as close friends. There are I suppose from the monitoring we've been able to do over the last three or four years, probably about 20% of the cases involved allegations against members of staff and that's both within the local authority bill, so within the independent sector, across the range of services that are provided. And those could be low level, inappropriate behaviour, use of abusive language to significant, occasional, quite unpleasant acts of violence. Beyond that, there have been some allegations of sexual abuse that we have investigated as well.

**Rissa de la Paz**

For most social care staff, their responsibility ends at the point where they pass on concerns to social services. But the training needs of this large group of so-called 'alerters', take up the bulk of the resources in Bob's department. The 'alerters' courses attract front-line staff and managers in social services and health, from both the public and private sectors. What sort of issues do they cover? Kay Holden, one of the training managers on the course.

**Kay Holden**

We mainly cover definitions of abuse, we look at examples of behaviours that might constitute abuse. We look at the policies and the procedures and staff roles and responsibilities. We spend some time looking at indicators of abuse, responding to disclosure, making a report. I think people generally find it quite helpful to look at the overall procedures to know, not only what their role is but to also have some understanding of what will happen next if they express a concern. And to have some understanding of where their concern will go and how it will affect the life of the person that they're supporting. And to get some kind of positive frame around the procedures, that they are about protecting people and putting in place something that will give the person the opportunity to be better protected. So a kind of positive frame on the procedures I think is quite important.

**Rissa de la Paz**

In addition, there are sessions for managers on supervision, case conferencing and the monitoring of adult protection procedures. A separate course provides specialist training for staff who act as investigators of adult abuse. They're encouraged to assess carefully the cases that come to their attention.

**Bob Skinner**

In the social care field and the world of community care assessment, I think one of the things we try to impress on staff in the investigation training is not to react too quickly and, as I put it, rush out to see the victim. I mean there are times when that's essential, particularly around urgency; or an assessment of seriousness or high levels of risk. But often we're encouraging staff to consider where else information relevant to the situation may be and take their time thinking through what may be going on and who the relevant parties are to interview. Or where else other evidence may be.

**Rissa de la Paz**

Most protection work involves inter-disciplinary co-operation, so a key feature of the courses is that they bring together staff from a number of agencies and settings. These groups may bring differing concerns?

**Bob Skinner**

I suppose from a social care perspective, people working for a local authority - their primary concern is about the vulnerable adult at the centre of the allegation. At times when the alleged perpetrator may also be a service user then they have dual responsibilities to those people, but essentially they're concerned with the care that the vulnerable adult is currently receiving and looking to improve that care if it's part of the reason that someone's saying they're being abused.

The inspectorate have a broader brief, they're looking at the management and overall quality of a care service and are looking to see whether the manager is fit to manage that service and looking at systems, policies and practices within that total institution or total service. So they have a broader focus. The police, I think their role is changing. Clearly they have duties to protect the public and that draws them in naturally in to the adult protection arena. And they clearly are interested in criminal outcomes through the criminal justice process. But my sense is that over the last 5 to 10 years, issues of domestic violence, racial harassment, issues like that, are beginning to draw them in to the vulnerable adults arena, as a natural partner.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

What do people attending the course gain from the experience. Here's the response from a member of a community health team who receives referrals of abuse from other practitioners.

### **Woman**

A much greater understanding of the awareness of adult protection and all that because we take the first initial phone call. And it's very difficult when somebody's requesting perhaps help with personal care and then it goes into that, where do you actually put those things? So for me, it was the understanding and actually being able to see where it goes afterwards as well.

### **Bob Skinner**

The obvious advantage is that throughout the three days of the introductory course and the two days of the follow-up course with the inspectors and the police, it gives people time to find out a lot more about each others' formal work roles but also the cultures and backgrounds that people come from and the legal framework that they're working within. Many of the skills required in adult protection they actually have and are applying through normal community care assessments, care planning, care management. And it's confirmation, affirmation, that they're using those skills in their normal work.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

Overcoming a sense of isolation was one of the benefits of the course for a Detective Constable at a local Criminal Investigation Department.

### **Jill Pelloni**

Having dealt with a vulnerable adult a couple of weeks ago, you feel you're out on a limb. Coming to these courses when you actually find out everybody else's involvement and what they can do to help, it becomes a much easier process. It gives you the confidence to go out and deal with it when the issue comes up again.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

A heightened awareness of issues can also lead to positive changes at the workplace.

### **Jill Pelloni**

We now have a vulnerable victims' department with the detective inspector who oversees it. Literally, she will trawl through all the calls that come in all over the division every day and will pick up the ones that in her opinion do involve vulnerable adults and then she will allocate them to officers who have done the course. And they're trying to train up far more of us as detectives in dealing with these issues that come up and working with joint agencies and it's overseen by the detective inspector who hopefully, if there is a need to attend any strategy meetings or case conferences, she will be the one that does it. Which leaves us free to carry on with whatever we're doing so it won't take up too much time.

### **Rissa de la Paz**

The Social services training department at East Sussex is also working with partner agencies such as the Victim Support scheme to promote more equitable access to the criminal justice system. But adult protection also needs to address unequal access to health, leisure and housing services. Where this provision is discriminatory it may lead to isolation or neglect. Encouraging service user involvement and developing advocacy services are part and parcel of addressing this issue.

**Bob Skinner**

Increasingly, locally at least, we're seeing the development of advocacy services. And there are clearly identified training needs not only for them to understand more about adult protection, but also what their role is in all of this and how they support a disabled adult, or a vulnerable adult, in accessing these procedures and being helped in a supportive way through that.

**Kay Holden**

We've also done some work particularly in learning disabilities services, where we've invited and encouraged service users to take part in that information-giving session. But we would hope that by helping staff to think about how they share the information with users, that the kind of cascade effect comes into play and services users do then get the information that perhaps they wouldn't get without spending some time exploring that.

**Rissa de la Paz**

Finally, there are links to be made with quality assurance so that the tone which is set in social care services actively prevents abuse and builds in safety. Managers in provider agencies have a key role to play in this area.

**Bob Skinner**

I think their primary role is around quality assurance which is a simple thing to say but difficult to practice, because it encompasses everything they do. They have to be confident that the service they manage is not colluding or actually abusing the people they're providing a service to. So that will start with the recruitment and support, supervision, induction of newly appointed staff. What checks and measures they have around recruiting new staff. And then the policies and procedures that those staff are then work, asked to work to. What training they're able to access, whether or not they're able to send staff on training. They also have to refer to a considerable range of employment and European legislation around issues to do with harassment, issues to do with race discrimination, sex discrimination. All of these things affect the work of their staff and I'm not sure some of those agencies get to grips with all those issues.

**Rissa de la Paz**

So supporting those who work in the area of adult and child protection demands a careful look at the training needs of different groups of staff, each with a different emphasis. Some courses may address very specific skills like chairing or minuteing case conferences. Others have a broader remit for advocacy or managing service provision, where the focus on preventing abuse will be an important but distinct element. Whatever the emphasis the goal is to ensure that managers and practitioners develop the skills needed to operate effectively in this demanding and sensitive area.