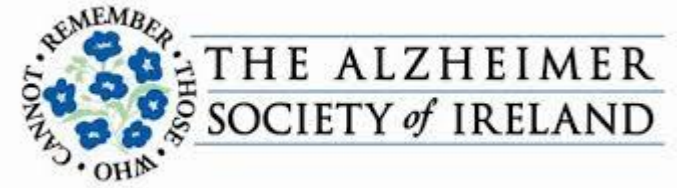


# **Irish Association of Social Workers National Safeguarding Day 2021**

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## **Falling Through the Cracks**

The case for change, key developments and next steps for Adult Safeguarding in Ireland



- The *Adult Safeguarding Bill 2017* was introduced by Senator Colette Kelleher in the Seanad in April 2017.
- This study set out to explore how the absence of Adult Safeguarding Legislation in the Irish context may be impacting on safeguarding processes.

# Background

<b>Focus Groups</b>	Dublin Focus Group (n=5)	Galway Focus Group (n=3)
<b>Narrative Interviews</b>	6 x Safeguarding and Protection Social Workers	2 x Disability Social Workers 2 x Primary Care Social Workers 2 x Medical Social Workers 2 x Mental Health Social Workers
	2 x ASI Dementia Advisors	1 x SAGE Regional Coordinator
<b>Online Survey</b>	N=116 respondents (social work practitioners)	

# Methodology



**Additional protections  
required to ensure  
that adults at risk are  
fully safeguarded**

**Standardisation in  
Practices**

*...there are huge regional  
discrepancies and if this referral  
was in another part of the  
country, it wouldn't be taken on*



**Additional protections  
required to ensure  
that adults at risk are  
fully safeguarded**

**Inability to access  
Services**

*Biggest issue I have in working in the area of safeguarding in the community is the lack of supports to offer as part of a safeguarding plan. It is easy to identify the risks and write up a plan of what might reduce the risk but the resources are not there to back this up -simple resources like access to daycare and respite to provide an outlet for the person, and to relieve the stress of carers*



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**Mandatory Response**

*My experience in relation to safeguarding, people are certainly willing to refer but there's a risk that nobody wants to do the safeguarding. Safeguarding as everybody's business is another great cliché...But again I make the point, one person or one team on their own is not going to save anybody, it's not going to reduce the risk. It is a multiagency, and multidisciplinary effort so I think anything that would formalise that approach more-I would certainly welcome that.*



**Additional protections  
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**Power of Entry**

#### **POWER OF ENTRY**

*Right of entry or the right of removal would be helpful, we've had a couple of cases locally where just I suppose it's the flip side of assistive technology, the family members got bugs and recording devices on the premises.*



**Additional protections  
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**Information Sharing**

*GDPR has made things very difficult and I'm not sure the legislation was written to cause the trouble, it has caused. The person causing it (abuse) is not named anymore. In terms of pattern forming because that's part of the stuff that we would look at when we get preliminary screens.*





Additional protections required to ensure that adults at risk are fully safeguarded

**Oversight Of Private Nursing Homes And Private Home Care Providers**

*We view people in private nursing homes in the same way as people living in the community- the nursing home is their home and they need protected the same way as everyone else however HIQA can't deal with individual cases....*



Additional protections  
required to ensure that  
adults at risk are fully  
safeguarded

## **Duty to Cooperate and Multiagency Working**

*Legislation does change things, if the legislation has a duty to cooperate, to have a safeguarding committee that has a bit of bite, that would be much better. I want to sit with the guards and the guards see it as part of their job. I want to sit with the consultant or the mental health team and they understand that safeguarding is as much their business as it is mine. That they can't throw me half the information on something, and I make a miracle happen.*



**Additional protection  
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**Legislative  
Underpinning the  
Roles And  
Responsibilities in  
Safeguarding  
Processes**

***We need a clear legal  
framework as with child  
protection to ensure adult  
safeguarding is taken seriously.  
Social workers support and  
advocate for clients every day -  
this role needs to be recognised,  
supported and amplified - not  
undermined.***



**Report:**  
Health  
Minister  
Simon Harris  
and Senator  
Colette  
Kelleher at  
the launch of  
the 'Falling  
Through  
the Cracks'  
research  
yesterday.  
PHOTO: COLLIN

Two years  
later...what has  
changed?



# Falling Through the Cracks

## Conclusions

- Whilst the current policy measures offer some protection for adults at risk in Ireland, additional legal provisions are urgently required and that safeguarding procedures should be placed on a statutory basis to ensure that practices and processes are delivered in a standardised way.
- Legislation by itself is not a panacea and cannot guarantee safeguarding in each and every situation and currently there is a concerning lack of empirical research and data.
- One of the key benefits of having a standalone ASL statute is that it can become a significant means of bridging legal and policy silos and can offer jurisdictions the opportunity to reprioritise service provision across the preventative-protection continuum.
- ASL can offer a very public appearance of doing something about a problem, but its effectiveness, as observed by Harbison et al., (2012), will depend on the provision of adequate resourcing of safeguarding and protection teams and funding for proper support services in the community.
- People are 'falling through the cracks' in current system and immediate action is now needed to protect the most vulnerable in our society.



- ◆ **Thanks to Senator Colette Kelleher for commissioning the research report.**
- ◆ **Thanks to coauthor Dr Marita O'Brien.**
- ◆ **Thanks to all research participants and Collaborators (HSE National Safeguarding Office, IASW, Alzheimer Society of Ireland and Sage Advocacy).**
- ◆ **Thanks to Professor Jim Campbell, UCD for peer reviewing the research report.**

