

# Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership



## ANNUAL REPORT 2015 - 16

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the fifth Annual Report of the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership (NIASP) and covers the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

In 2015 – 16 NIASP activities centred on a Work plan designed around the following core themes within the NIASP Strategic Plan 2013-18:

- Leadership and Partnership Working;
- Public Awareness and Prevention;
- Access to Safeguarding Services;
- Effective Interventions;
- The User Experience;
- Training and Practice Development; and
- Governance and Quality Assurance

Throughout 2015-16, NIASP continued to integrate adult safeguarding into practice across a growing range of organisations and networks.

In particular, partnership working with the PSNI continues to provide significant benefits for adults at risk or in need of protection and the revised protocol for Joint Working will further enhance working arrangements.

While the number of referrals to adult safeguarding has reduced slightly compared to previous years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of referrals where there is a concern that an adult at risk has been subject to financial exploitation. Such cases are very complex and require equally sophisticated responses from a range of organisations. NIASP is uniquely well placed to develop these responses and to produce innovative solutions to these challenges.

New challenges and ways of working require practitioners to develop more specialised knowledge and expert skills. The Professionals in Practice – Adult Safeguarding Programme was developed and delivered by adult safeguarding practitioners and is the first post-qualifying award for social workers in the UK.

The new regional policy, Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership was published in July 2015. The Policy presents a new and different set of challenges to adult safeguarding, particularly in relation to prevention. In responding to those challenges, NIASP has reviewed its own membership and ways of working to ensure that it is well placed to deliver the core objectives of the Policy now and into the future.

## Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership Work plan 2015-16

The NIASP workplan for 2015-16 is based round the following key themes contained in the Strategic Plan for Adult Safeguarding (2013):

1. Leadership and Partnership Working;
2. Public Awareness and Prevention;
3. Access to Adult Safeguarding Services;
4. Effective Interventions;
5. The User Experience;
6. Training and Practice Development; and
7. Governance and Quality Assurance

The Workplan contains a number of objectives rolled over from 2014-15. In addition, it seeks to address some of the new issues or interfaces that emerged in 2014-15.

Each objective is supported by a brief commentary outlining progress made in 2015-16 and the current status of the objective.

<b>Theme 1: Leadership and Partnership Working</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Commentary</b>	<b>Status</b>
Clarify the interface between adult safeguarding and other public safety strategies such as the Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy and Community Safety Strategy	<p>Adult safeguarding is a complex task involving a range of skills and expertise. This is reflected in the wide range of organisations who are members of NIASP. This allows NIASP access to an equally broad range of initiatives and developments across government departments which, in turn, significantly increases opportunities to raise awareness of adult safeguarding.</p> <p>This inclusive approach has also provided NIASP with important opportunities to shape emerging policies and strategies to ensure that the needs of adults at risk and in need of protection are included. Many strategies, such as the new Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy (2016) also serve as vehicles to take forward NIASP's core messages and safeguarding objectives. This is reflected in the growing number of strategic plans where adult safeguarding is specifically referenced as a key objective.</p> <p>One example of this is NIASP's participation in the Community Safety Strategy Delivery Groups on Fear of Crime in Older People and Hate Crime. This has presented opportunities for co-working and inter-agency collaboration. This work has been led by colleagues in the PSNI, local Councils and Trading Standards and has resulted in significant benefits for adult victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation.</p> <p>NIASP continues to work with the Department of Justice through the Annual Strategy to identify, protect and met the needs of adult victims of human trafficking and modern slavery.</p>	On-going. Remains a high priority.
Develop and describe a Human Rights based Model of Adult safeguarding	Human Rights are a core consideration in all NIASP developments, publications and guidance.	On-going. To be completed by September 2016

	<p>This year, NIASP finalised a new Protocol for Joint Working with the PSNI and RQIA and Procedures for Protection. Both these documents have adopted an explicitly Human Rights based approach to adult safeguarding.</p> <p>This approach will continue in the further development of Procedures for Adults at Risk which are due for completion by the autumn 2016.</p>	
<p>NIASP will review current adult safeguarding structures and ensure they are fit for purpose</p>	<p>Following the publication of Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership, NIASP undertook a stocktaking exercise to find out:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What currently works well and what P needs to change;</li> <li>2. Whether current structures are fit for purpose and if there are more efficient/effective ways to organise resources;</li> <li>3. Whether has access to the right expertise / specialist advice and what additional expertise might be required; and</li> <li>4. Whether members get the appropriate level and quality of information at the most appropriate time.</li> </ol> <p>Following on from this exercise, membership has been reviewed and revitalised. Working arrangements are also being revised to reflect the priorities of new Policy. These new arrangements will take effect from June 2016.</p> <p>Individual partner organisations have also completed significant pieces of work to ensure that their arrangements meet the requirements of the new Policy and the needs of adults at risk or in need of protection eg the PSNI have introduced a Central Referral Unit to respond to all allegations of a crime against adults at risk. The Health and Social Care Board has also issued a Commissioning Vision for Adult Safeguarding in Health and Social Care Trusts which, if adequately resourced, will support the HSC Trusts to fully implement the Policy.</p>	<p>On-going.</p>

<b>Theme 2: Public Awareness and Prevention</b>		
Objective	Commentary	Status
Develop a regional programme of awareness raising and prevention activities to complement local prevention plans.	<p>In 2015-16 NIASP participated in a number of regional initiatives to raise awareness of adult safeguarding and to promote prevention activities.</p> <p>This included working with the PSNI to develop crime prevention material targeted at people with complex needs living in the community. NIASP also engaged with a number of Police and Community Safety Partnerships to develop general awareness-raising materials and to publicise material produced by local groups for example to address financial scamming of older people.</p> <p>The LASPs continue to engage in prevention activities that are tailored to meet the requirements of specific services or communities. These include the development of apps containing local information, contributions to Talking Newspapers, targeting of local independent sector organisations, hosting information stands and engagement with local representatives of Black and Minority Ethnic Groups.</p> <p>The Belfast Local Adult Safeguarding Partnership (LASP) has developed a Keeping Yourself Safe Programme which has now been piloted with a range of service users. The programme will be available to all NIASP partner organisations from June 2016.</p> <p>The current restructuring of NIASP will ensure appropriate focus on prevention and the development of a comprehensive regional prevention plan will be a key activity in 2016/17</p>	To be completed by 31 March 2017

<b>Theme 3: Access to Adult Safeguarding Services</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Commentary</b>	<b>Status</b>
Ensure that NIASP and all partner organisations have separate internet sections on adult safeguarding which include easy access to core documentation including referral forms.	NIASP has a separate page on the HSCB website. This is subject to regular update and includes Annual Reports, Policy statements; Procedures, contact details etc. New information is posted regularly, such as conference presentations, new procedures etc	On-going. Remains a high priority
<b>Theme 4: Effective Interventions</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Commentary</b>	<b>Status</b>
Ensure that practitioners have access to relevant, evidence-based interventions and approaches	<p>Financial abuse is one of the most challenging areas of work within adult safeguarding. Many health or social care professionals, lack confidence in identifying and responding to situations of financial abuse or exploitation.</p> <p>In 2015-16, NIASP commissioned the National Centre for the Protection of Older People in University College Dublin, to investigate the applicability of an international tool to identify people at risk of financial abuse in a Northern Irish context. Phase 1 of the Measuring Financial Exploitation in Northern Ireland research project has now been completed and the findings shared with the LASPs. Discussions continue as to how this tool might be introduced.</p> <p>The Southern and South Eastern LASPs were able to access funding and support through the Social Work Strategy to pilot the use of the Family Group Conferencing approach in adult safeguarding. Both projects have been evaluated as providing effective interventions and appear to have resulted in very positive outcomes for the families concerned.</p>	On-going. Remains a high priority

	<p>A key priority for NIASP has been the importance of recognising and building upon the high levels of expertise in adult safeguarding amongst front-line practitioners, through the development of a post-qualifying award in adult safeguarding.</p> <p>In 2015-16, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council in partnership with the University of Ulster introduced the Professionals in Practice: Adult Safeguarding Award. Participants are drawn from both the independent and statutory sectors and delivery of the course is supported primarily by HSC Trusts, with significant teaching input from the Trust Adult Safeguarding Specialists.</p> <p>This is the first post-qualifying award of its kind in the United Kingdom and is a significant achievement.</p>	
Finalise and complete a limited public consultation on a Manual of Operational Policies and Procedures	<p>In 2015-16 NIASP completed 2 important elements of the Manual of Operational Procedures, the new Protocol for Joint Working with PSNI and RQIA and the Procedures for Responding to Adults in Need of Protection. These were both subject to lengthy consultation with front line practitioners and, through NIASP, with organisations representing users and carers.</p> <p>Work continues to develop Procedures for Responding to Adults at Risk, which will be subject to the same scrutiny process.</p>	On-going. Core procedures to be completed by June 2016
<b>Theme 5: The User Experience</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Commentary</b>	<b>Status</b>
NIASP will ensure that the experience of service users is sought at all stages of service development, planning and implementation	In 2015-16 NIASP completed a regional file audit to ascertain the level and nature of service user involvement in decision-making in adult protection cases.	On-going. Remains a high priority

	<p>The audit identified some examples of good practice, but also highlighted areas for improvement.</p> <p>On considering the findings, NIASP agreed that further work was required to obtain more detail on the experience of service users as they moved through the various stages of the protection process and to clarify whether the service user’s aspirations or objectives for engaging with the safeguarding process had been reached.</p> <p>This work has now commenced using the 10,000 Voices methodology as developed by the Public Health Agency. This approach is designed to give service users the opportunity to highlight issues that are important to them with the underlying goal of introducing a more user-focused approach in the future.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the initial results from this audit will be available in early 2017 and will significantly inform future developments in adult safeguarding.</p>	
<b>Theme 6 Training and Practice Development</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Commentary</b>	<b>Status</b>
Review general and specialist training courses to ensure they meet the needs of practitioners and partner organisations and are responsive to developing policy, standards and practice	<p>The NIASP Training Framework provides guidance to employers on the level and content of training in relation to adult safeguarding that is appropriate for their organisation. This has now been reviewed to reflect the priorities of Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership in general and the new Protocol for Joint Working in particular.</p> <p>Training for the voluntary and community sector can be accessed through Volunteer Now. This training has also been revised in the light of the new policy.</p>	On-going. Remains a high priority

	Volunteer Now is also developing an app for front-line care workers, to help raise awareness of adult safeguarding and support them to raise any concerns.	
<b>Theme 7: Governance and Quality Assurance</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Commentary</b>	<b>Status</b>
Develop and publish a suite of standards for adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland.	<p>Every new Service Framework issued by the DHSSPS includes a core standard in relation to adult safeguarding. In addition, the Older Person's Service Framework contains a suite of Standards in relation to adult safeguarding, ranging from prevention through to protection activity. These Standards were all developed with the assistance of service users. The HSCB is required to report on the achievement of these Standards every six months.</p> <p>In addition, the UK Commissioner for Modern Slavery recently issued a set of Standards for organisations offering support to victims of modern slavery or human trafficking.</p> <p>NIASP is currently engaged in a significant piece of work to ascertain what is important to adults who have received support through the safeguarding processes. It is anticipated that this will provide a rich source of data to inform the development of Standards for adult protection.</p>	On-going. Remains a high priority

## OVERVIEW

In 2015 – 16 awareness of adult safeguarding in general and the needs of adults at risk of harm or in need of protection in particular, continued to grow. The publication of the new policy by the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Justice marked a significant and important milestone in the development of adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland and meant that a number of significant initiatives were able to be completed by NIASP.

### Policy Development:

**Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership**, the new policy on adult safeguarding for Northern Ireland, was published in July 2015. The policy provides clear direction for the development of all aspects of adult safeguarding into the future and aims to:



Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership

- promote zero-tolerance of harm to all adults from abuse, exploitation or neglect;
- influence the way society thinks about harm to adults resulting from abuse, exploitation or neglect by embedding a culture which recognises every adult's right to respect and dignity, honesty, humanity and compassion in every aspect of their life;
- prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults, while supporting people's right to maintain control over their lives and make informed choices free from coercion;
- encourage organisations to work collaboratively across sectors and on an inter-agency and multi-disciplinary basis, to introduce a range of preventative measures to promote an individual's capacity to keep themselves safe and to prevent harm occurring;
- establish clear guidance for reporting concerns that an adult is, or may be, at risk of being harmed or in need of protection and how these will be responded to;
- promote access to justice for adults at risk who have been harmed as a result of abuse, exploitation or neglect; and
- promote a continuous learning approach to adult safeguarding.

The new policy was warmly received by all partner organisations and the renewed emphasis it places on prevention activity was particularly welcome.

Full implementation of the policy will not be an easy task: it places new responsibilities on organisations and groups providing support or services to adults at risk and those in need of protection, and requires both flexible approaches and robust governance arrangements to be in place. Lack of resources to support implementation, particularly outside the statutory sector and in driving forward the prevention agenda, is a significant challenge.

## Completion of Joint Protocol

In 2012 the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland (CJINI) jointly undertook a review of the Protocol for Joint Investigation of Alleged and Suspected Cases of Abuse of Vulnerable Adults (2009).

A key recommendation of that review was that:

“The NIASP (in consultation with the 5 Local Adult Safeguarding Partnerships and other relevant agencies and the DHSSPS) should consider any amendments required to the Protocol in the light of new legislation and the learning from this review and their operational experience, in order to ensure the continued safeguarding of vulnerable adults.”

This work has now been completed and revised guidance for joint working has been completed.

The new guidance is based firmly in a Human Rights approach and places great emphasis on the individual’s autonomy and self-determination whilst balancing that with the need to protect others from actual or potential harm.

The revised guidance specifies the thresholds for intervention at this level and clearly describes the tasks that staff in the HSC Trusts and the PSNI are required to carry out. These thresholds were piloted on 2 sites prior to completion of the guidance and the experiences of both staff and service users were used to inform the final document.

The evaluation indicated that the new guidance was relevant, accurate, applicable and, most importantly of all, has resulted in better outcomes for the adult in need of protection.

The new guidance is currently being rolled out across the region. However, constraints within the training budgets for both HSC Trusts and the PSNI have meant this has been slower to implement than NIASP would have wished.

## Audit of user involvement in adult safeguarding

The involvement of service users is a pivotal aspect of the new policy. In 2015-16, NIASP undertook a file audit of user involvement in the adult safeguarding process within HSC Trusts. The purpose of this audit was to:

- review user involvement in adult safeguarding protection processes as evidenced by the use of the standardised adult safeguarding documentation;
- establish a baseline for future developments; and
- make any necessary recommendations for improvement.

The audit returns provided a rich source of data on the level and nature of user engagement in the process.

The audit identified a number of areas of good practice, for example in extending written invitations to people to attend case conferences or case discussions, and in informing people that a safeguarding referral was being considered. However, more could be done to ensure that information on safeguarding is readily available to share with adults at risk and/or their carers.

NIASP subsequently held a workshop for all partner organisations to share best practice in involving users in the safeguarding process. It is the intention to combine the learning from this workshop with the audit findings to produce a more comprehensive review of user involvement across the partnership.

Following this audit, NIASP agreed to adopt a more pro-active approach to gathering information on service users' experiences and in 2016-17 will work with them to collect their stories more systematically, using the 10,000 Voices approach and methodology. This approach has been tested in a range of health and social care settings and provides important qualitative as well as quantitative information drawing on the user's own experiences.

### **Demand/ Capacity Analysis within HSC Trusts:**

The continued growth in referrals to adult safeguarding, revised working arrangements such as the Protocol for Joint Investigations and the new roles and responsibilities arising from Adult Safeguarding in Northern Ireland: Prevention and Protection in Partnership have all presented challenges to those organisations that are required to respond quickly and effectively to situations where adults are at risk. At a time of significant financial pressures for all agencies, it is incumbent on HSC Trusts and the PSNI to ensure that they are making the most efficient as well as effective use of all available resources.

The PSNI has already moved to establish a Central Referral Unit (CRU) to manage all cases where joint investigations may be required.

Within the HSC Trusts, work is almost complete on an analysis of current demand and available resources. Early indications are that significant work is required to ensure that resources are used efficiently to ensure timely and effective responses. Implementing the required structural and operational changes locally will be challenging, particularly in the absence of any new funding to manage the required transition.

## Sharing learning and best practice

On 17 June 2015 NIASP celebrated World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) by hosting an event designed to showcase some of the developments in adult safeguarding since NIASP was established in 2010.



Delegates at the WEAAD conference

The event was an opportunity to share learning from across the region and sectors, including the voluntary independent and statutory sectors. Contributors included the faith sector, South West Fermanagh Domestic Violence Partnership, the contribution of nursing to safeguarding, identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery and the views of the Public Prosecution Service.

Service users were represented by the Derry Top Ten Women's Group who presented their training DVD on financial abuse and scams; the Orbit Dance Troupe (Artscare) and the Junction Club (Belfast) who opened the event by describing why safeguarding was important to them.

At the close of the conference, the Commissioner for Older People and the Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast signed the International Declaration on Elder Abuse on behalf of their organisations. This has been developed by the United Nations and commits their organisations to combatting abuse of older people.

## PROTECTION

Every incident of harm that occurs as a result of abuse, neglect or exploitation, is a personal crisis for the individual concerned and their family.

Any interventions designed to respond to situations where an adult is in need of protection must always be focused on that person. They must also ensure that the relevant procedures are followed, any protective measures taken are effective and the best outcomes achieved for that person or their family.

Whilst the responsibility for protection activity sits primarily with HSC and PSNI personnel, effective protection measures require significant contributions from a range of partner agencies, including provider organisations, the voluntary and community sector and other statutory bodies such as the Police and Community Safety Partnerships and local councils.



Ministers Hamilton and Ford with the Human Trafficking Gift Box

In 2015-16 some of the key achievements, challenges and opportunities in relation to protection included:

### **ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- Call blockers initiative – funded through Community Safety Strategy and PSNI this initiative provides blocking devices to fit to domestic telephones. These screen calls from known scammers and protect adults at risk of financial exploitation from further harm;
- Increased use of Registered Intermediaries to support victims of alleged crime to tell their stories and improve access to justice;
- The streamlining of referral arrangements within and between PSNI and HSC Trusts has facilitated improved protection responses.

### **CHALLENGES:**

- The rates of referral to adult safeguarding services remain high, whilst available resources in both the HSC and PSNI are increasingly limited;
- Development of a suite of responses to financial abuse will require the identification of a range of new partner organisations and the development of new professional relationships; and
- Development of person-centred outcomes for service users

### **OPPORTUNITIES:**

- The consolidation of expertise in adult safeguarding in the Central Referral Unit of the PSNI and Adult Safeguarding Gateway Services in HSC Trusts provides an opportunity to improve partnership working and the timeliness of the most appropriate response to any safeguarding situation;
- The new Strategy for Domestic and Sexual Violence provides a new opportunity to manage the interface between domestic and sexual violence and adult safeguarding more creatively and make more efficient use of available resources; and
- The roll out of more specialist protection interventions such as Family Group Conferencing

## PARTNERSHIP

Adult safeguarding is not the sole responsibility of a single agency or organisation. The prevention of abuse and the protection of adults at risk or in need of protection require contributions from a broad range of groups, agencies and organisations. Most importantly, it requires the active involvement of service users at all levels and stages of the safeguarding process.

In 2015-16, NIASP reviewed the effectiveness of its own partnership arrangements and identified areas for improvement. These will be implemented in 2016-17.

In 2015-16 some of the key achievements, challenges and opportunities in relation to partnership included:

### ACHIEVEMENTS:

- The Professionals in Practice Adult Safeguarding Programme provides an opportunity for social work practitioners to access a post qualifying award in adult safeguarding. The training is delivered through a partnership with the University of Ulster, the HSC trusts and frontline practitioners. This is the first such award in the United Kingdom;



Participants on the Professionals in Practice Programme

- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Conference on 17 June was a celebration of developments in adult safeguarding since 2010. It was an opportunity for a range of partner organisations from across the region to share learning and developments. The event received nearly 10,000 engagements on Twitter; and

- Increased engagement of service users such as the work the Junction Club in Belfast did to develop their own policy on adult safeguarding and keeping safe.



Fionnuala McAndrew congratulates members of the Junction Club on completing their policy

### **CHALLENGES:**

- The growing awareness of adult safeguarding has highlighted the need for more effective co-operation and joint working with a range of new and existing partner organisations such as the local councils;
- The demand for adult safeguarding support and services is increasing at a time when the resources to respond appropriately remain static across all partner organisations. Such support will need to be targeted at priority areas of concern or where the support can be most effective; and
- Existing partnerships, both formal and informal, are working well but require continuing attention to ensure they continue to function to a high standard.

### **OPPORTUNITIES:**

- Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership has placed a renewed emphasis on partnership working and has provided an opportunity to develop new partnership arrangements such as with Trading Standards;
- The NIASP Stocktake exercise has allowed NIASP itself to review its working arrangements, streamline processes and develop new ways of working; and
- Adopting the 10,000 Voices methodology to ascertain user experiences of adult safeguarding is still in its early stages. However, engagement with key stakeholders to design the questions for the audit has already proved invaluable in improving capacity for co-production.

## ACTIVITY REPORT

### BENCHMARKING EXERCISE

NIASP receives regular reports on adult safeguarding protection activity, which provide an analysis of activity on a regional basis, across all 5 HSC Trusts. Members had identified the need to extend the available analysis of activity information and benchmark adult safeguarding activity in Northern Ireland against activity in other areas or jurisdictions.

The benefits of such benchmarking include the opportunity to assess over or under performance generally or in relation to a particular service area, eg support to people with Learning Disabilities. However, it proved challenging to identify a single information source that allows any level of meaningful comparisons.

Adult safeguarding in Wales was used as a benchmark for Northern Ireland, as there are sufficient similarities in terms of population size, rurality, levels of deprivation etc to generate some meaningful comparisons.

While there are some significant structural and other differences between how activity in relation to adult safeguarding in Wales and in Northern Ireland is recorded and analysed, a limited comparison of recorded activity between completed cases in Wales and referrals in Northern Ireland did provide some information as follows:

- Northern Ireland screens out a higher proportion of referrals as inappropriate;
- More adult safeguarding cases are concluded each year in Wales than Northern Ireland;
- Activity in relation to people over 65 years appears comparable;
- Activity in relation to people with a Learning Disability is lower in Northern Ireland than in Wales;
- Northern Ireland is more likely to receive referrals under the category of Physical Abuse than Wales;
- Activity in relation to care homes is comparable; and
- Wales deals with many more adult safeguarding events within service users' own homes in the community.

The comparison exercise supports emerging conclusions from work currently being undertaken within HSC Trusts to analyse demand and the capacity available to respond to adult safeguarding concerns. This has highlighted the number of inappropriate referrals received and lack of throughput as areas for future consideration.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST ADULT PROTECTION ACTIVITY 2015-16

This section of the Annual Report is based on activity data collected manually by the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts and then submitted to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) on a monthly basis. The data is then collated by the Information Team of the HSCB.

Following publication of Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership, the decision was made to include referral information from Primary Health and Adult Community and Health Promotion Programmes of Care.

The HSC Trusts have agreed that manual collection of data is both inefficient and difficult to quality assure. They are currently introducing an electronic data collection system and are at differing stages of that implementation.

The Northern HSC Trust experienced particular difficulties in moving from manual to electronic data collection, and were unable to submit a full suite of data for some 3 months in 2015-16. While possible, regional comparisons have been made using data from the remaining 4 HSC Trusts.

While it is possible to make some adjustments to the analysis of the regional data, it should be noted that there is the potential for some key information to be missing from the final activity returns.

### Referrals:

The total number of recorded referrals to adult safeguarding services in 2015-16 was 7747, compared to 9061 in 2014-15, a decrease of 1314 or 14%.

However, if the figures from the Northern HSC Trust are removed from the totals for both 2014 – 15 and 2015-16, then there is a decrease in referrals of 449 or 6.5%.

There are a number of reasons for this decrease in referral numbers:

- There has been a decrease of 228 or 19% of referrals received from mental health services. This is disappointing as HSC Trust had made concerted efforts to raise awareness of adult safeguarding with colleagues working in this area of practice; and
- There has been a decrease in referrals in relation to older people of 306 or 11%.

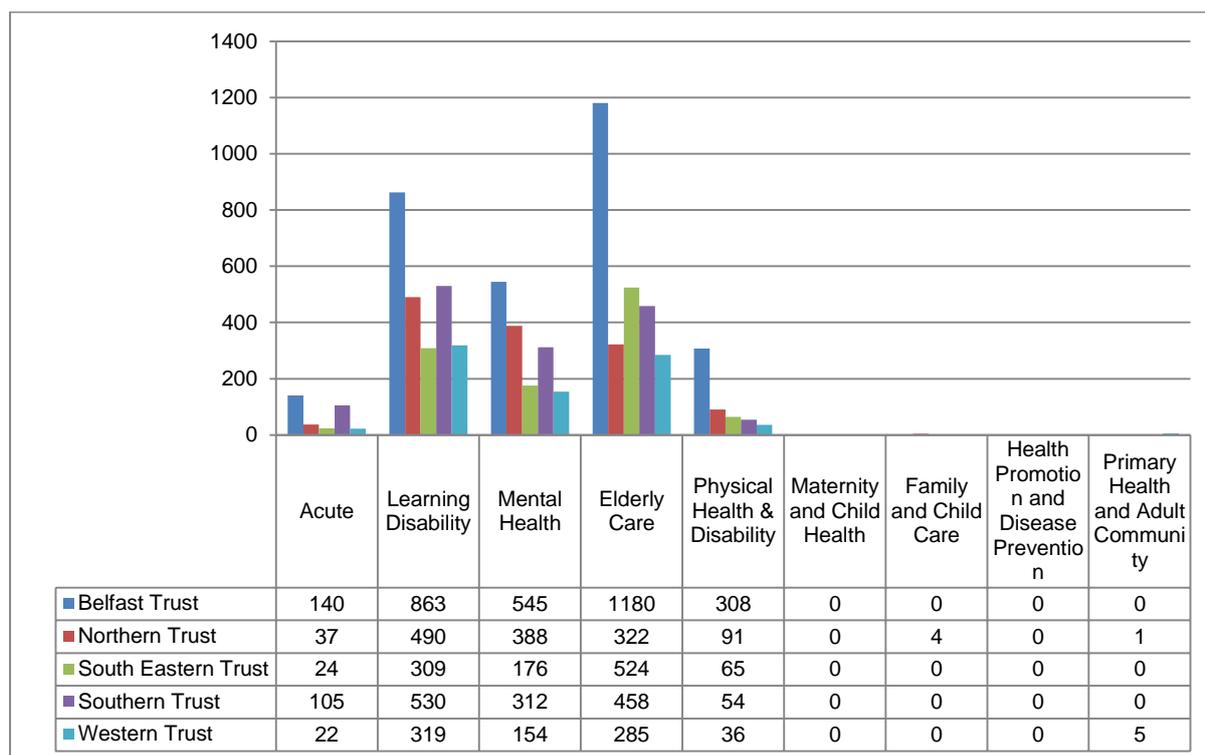
These figures are, however, balanced by an increase in referrals from acute settings of 71 referrals or almost 32% compared to 2014-15.

As in previous years, 36% of all recorded referrals were made on behalf of older people, with 32% of referrals being made by Learning Disability services. 20% of referrals were made by Adult Mental Health services, a reduction of 2% compared to 2014-15.

Rates of referrals vary across the HSC Trusts, ranging from 3036 or 39% of referral's originating in the Belfast HSC Trust, to 821 or 11% originating in the Western HSC Trust.

The South Eastern HSC Trust received 48% of their referrals from Older People's Services, compared to 32% of referrals in the Southern HSC Trust.

**Chart 1:** Recorded referrals received by HSC Trusts during the period April 2015 to March 2016 broken down by Programme of Care



### Reasons for Referral:

It is not uncommon for individuals to experience a range of different types of abuse, for example physical abuse *and* neglect or neglect *and* financial abuse. However, HSC Trusts record only the presenting or primary type of abuse to which an adult in need of protection may have been subjected.

In 2015-16, the most common reason for referral to adult safeguarding was concern that an individual had been subjected to some form of financial abuse. This accounted for 3778 or 49% of all referrals, but made up 45% of referrals in relation to Older People and 64% of referrals from the Learning Disability Programme of Care.

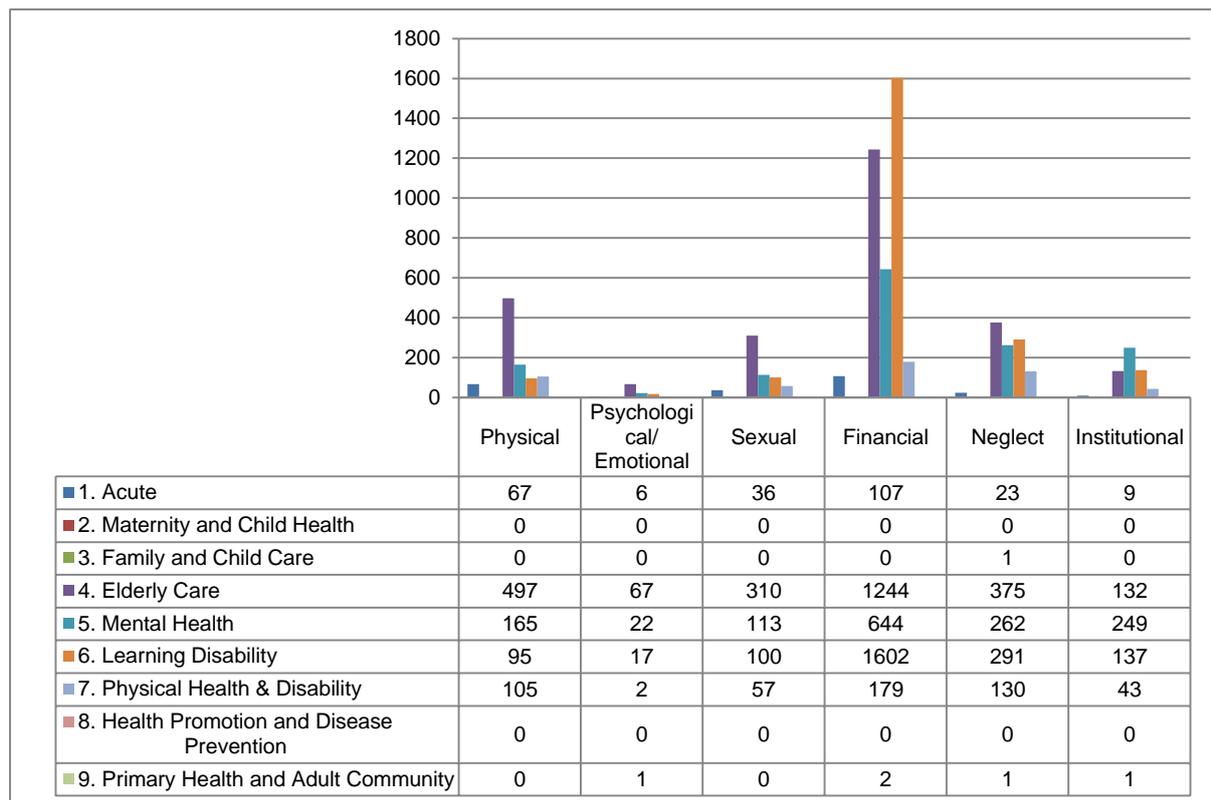
This is a significant increase when compared to 2014-15 and there are a number of potential reasons for this:

- Growing public awareness of issues of financial abuse eg through Trading Standard;
- More effective leadership in bringing interested parties together eg NIASP and the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland;

- Growing awareness of the prevalence and nature of financial abuse; and
- Specific crime-prevention initiatives such as the installation of Call Blocker devices through the Police and Community Safety Partnerships

Responding to situations of financial abuse is challenging for HSC Trust professionals and more work is required to equip staff to respond as effectively as possible to this challenging area.

**Chart 2:** Recorded referrals received during the period April 15 to March 16 categorised by Type of Abuse and broken down by Programme of Care



The other most common categories of referral were “neglect” at 1083 or 14% of all recorded referrals and “physical” at 930 or 12% of referrals.

### Investigations commenced:

Not every referral made to the HSC Trust adult safeguarding service will require a protection response. Some referrals will have been made inappropriately, others will be re-directed to other services which can provide a more effective response or result in a better outcome for the person in need of protection eg a single agency intervention by the PSNI or referral to Trading Standards for support in relation to financial scams.

In 2015-16, HSC Trusts recorded that adult protection investigations were commenced in relation to 4225 referrals, or 54% of the totals.

### Location of Abuse:

In 2015-16, a total of 3172 referrals were received where the alleged abuse took place in a regulated service or facility. This represents 41% of the total recorded.

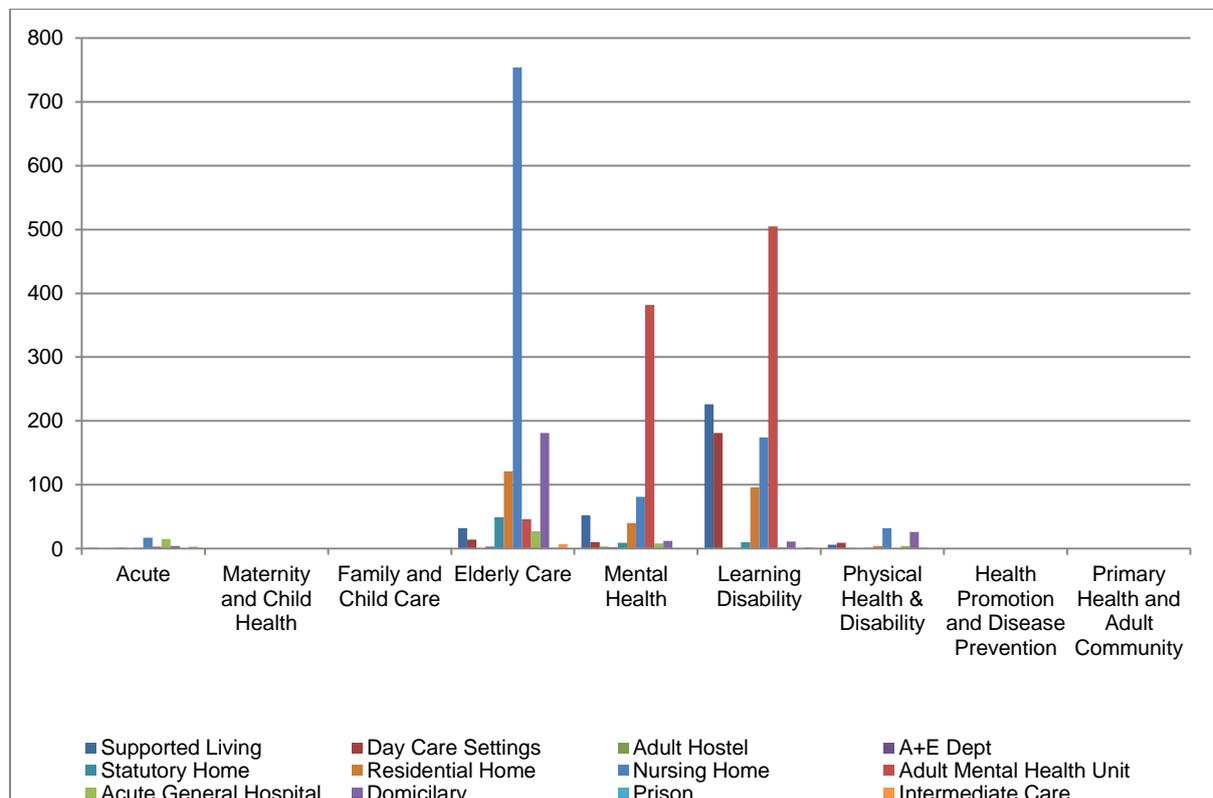
Not all alleged abuse takes place in either regulated services or facilities. An increasing number of referrals are being received where the adult in need of protection is in receipt of services in their own home, or where they are being supported by informal caring networks or family members.

1389 or 44% of investigations took place in residential or nursing homes for older people. A similar pattern of investigations is evident in other jurisdictions such as Wales and may be explained by the fact that residents of such facilities are extremely frail and less able to keep themselves safe, are in receipt of high levels of care and may be more socially isolated than the general population.

936 or 30% of recorded investigations took place in adult mental health units. This category includes not only mental health in-patient facilities, but also the specialist assessment and treatment unit for adults with learning disabilities.

317 or 10% of recorded investigations took place in supported living facilities and involved adults with learning disabilities.

**Chart 3:** Recorded investigations commenced during the period April 15 to March 16 across Programmes of Care and regulated facilities involved



### Care and Protection Plans:

Care and Protection Plans are put in place to ensure that the alleged abuse either reduces or ceases completely. They are subject to regular review not only in the course of an investigation as more detailed information becomes available, but as part on an on-going support plan after the safeguarding investigation has concluded.

It is also possible that an adult in need of protection will not actually require a Care and Protection Plan as the source of the abuse has been addressed through a referral to adult safeguarding eg where a paid employee is placed on precautionary suspension.

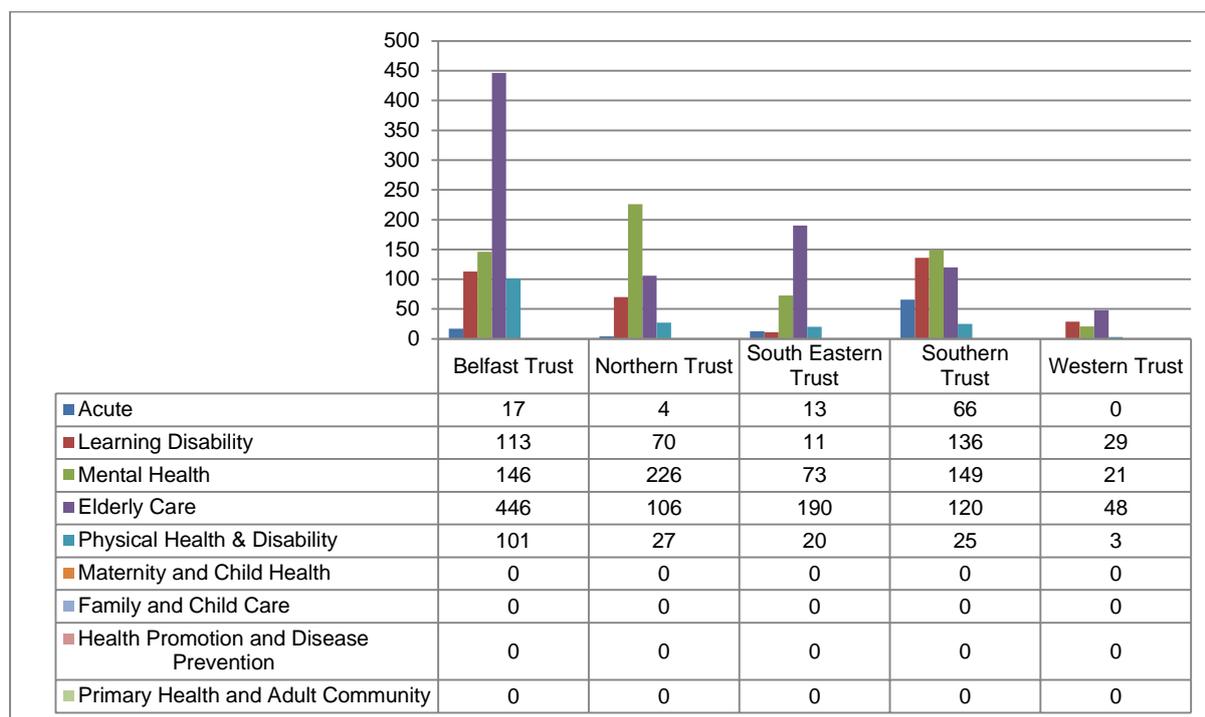
In 2015 -16, 4167 Care and Protection Plans were implemented, approximately 54% of all recorded referrals. There is significant variation across HSC Trusts, with 73% of referrals in the Northern HSC Trust and only 45% of referrals in the Southern HSC Trust resulting in a Care and Protection Plan.

	Belfast Trust	Northern Trust	South Eastern Trust	Southern Trust	Western Trust	Region
<b>Total referrals</b>	3036	1333	1098	1459	821	7747
<b>Protection Plans</b>	1580	978	541	650	418	4167
<b>% of Referrals Translating into Care Protection Plan</b>	52%	73%	49%	45%	51%	54%

### Closed Cases:

In the course of 2015-16, adult safeguarding services closed a total of 2160 cases. This is 28% of the referrals received throughout the year.

**Chart 4:** Cases closed during the period April 15 to March 16 by HSC Trusts broken down by Programme of Care



There is a noticeable variation in HSC Trust practice in closing cases, ranging from 1459 or 34% of recorded referrals within the Southern HSC Trust, to 101 or 12% in the Western HSC Trust.

There is also variation across Programmes of Care, with 910 or 33% of cases involving Older People being closed, and only 359 or 14% of cases within Learning Disability being closed.

It is vital that the resources available to adult safeguarding are used as effectively and efficiently as possible, while still attaining the outcomes most desired by the adult in need of protection.

Further regional work is required to understand the variation in practice in relation to closing adult safeguarding cases and to introducing more consistent decision-making.

## NIASP Workplan 2016-17

The NIASP Workplan for 2016-17 is based on the core themes contained in Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership (2015).

The Workplan contains a number of key priorities and objectives from last year, where either the work has not been fully completed, or the objective continues to be of a high priority. In addition, it seeks to address emerging issues and challenges.

Each objective is supported by a brief rationale and the expected timescales for completion.

## Priority 1 Prevention

Objective	Rationale	Target Completion Date
<p>Develop a regional programme of awareness raising and prevention activities to complement local prevention plans.</p>	<p>Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership places significant emphasis on the importance of prevention and early intervention. Developing a regional programme will ensure that local initiatives are identified and supported; and that learning from experience is shared across organisational boundaries.</p>	<p>By March 2017</p>
<p>Ensure that NIASP and all partner organisations comply with the relevant requirements set out in Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership</p>	<p>The Policy identifies a set of minimum expectations on partner organisations as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising that adult harm is wrong and that it should not be tolerated;</li> <li>• Being aware of the signs of harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect;</li> <li>• Reducing opportunities for harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect to occur; and</li> <li>• Knowing how and when to report safeguarding concerns to HSC Trusts or the PSNI.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, partner organisations delivering, commissioned or contracted to deliver targeted services must have an identified Adult Safeguarding Champion in place.</p>	<p>By December 2017</p>

## Priority 2 Protection

Objective	Rationale	Target Completion date
Ensure that NIASP and all partner organisations have separate internet sections on adult safeguarding which include easy access to core documentation including referral forms.	Increased use of social media sites to communicate with users and practitioners mean that information on how to access services should be easily accessible, user-friendly and consistent.	By March 2017
Ensure that practitioners have access to relevant, evidence-based interventions and approaches	NIASP will continue to ensure that opportunities to work in partnership with academic bodies are made available to practitioners either through the identification of research opportunities and priorities, or through specialist learning opportunities.	By March 2017
Finalise and complete a limited consultation on a manual of Operational Policies and Procedures	NIASP will ensure that the Manual of Operational Policies and Procedures is kept up-to-date and reflects developing practice in adult safeguarding in general and more specialist interventions such as cases of Modern Slavery	By September 2016

### Priority 3 Partnership

Objective	Rationale	Target Completion Date
Clarify the interface between adult safeguarding and other public safety strategies such as the Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy and Community Safety Strategy	The Policy makes a clear statement that adult safeguarding is everybody's business. NIASP will continually review emerging policies and strategies to ensure that appropriate linkages with adult safeguarding are made and that where appropriate joint working or action can be progressed.	By March 2017
Develop and describe a Human Rights-based Model of Adult Safeguarding	NIASP will ensure that Human Rights principles continue to be the foundation of practice and underpin all adult safeguarding developments in 2016-17	By March 2017
NIASP will review current adult safeguarding structures and ensure they are fit for purpose	NIASP will keep the new arrangements to implement Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership and associated actions under review to ensure that the resources available to NIASP are being used as efficiently and effectively as possible.	By June 2016
NIASP will ensure that the experience of service users is sought at all stages of service development, planning and implementation	NIASP will build on the information provided by users through participation in the 10,000 Voices audit of their experience of adult safeguarding, to identify any necessary changes or improvements to services	By March 2017
Review general and specialist training courses to ensure they meet the needs of	NIASP will build on the most recent review of the training framework to ensure that the needs of front	By December 2017

practitioners and partner organisations and are responsive to developing policy, standards and practice	line staff, specialist practitioners and Adult Safeguarding champions are identified and addressed	
Develop and publish a suite of standards for adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland.	While a number of standards currently exist in relation to adult safeguarding, more detailed work is required to develop standards for protection activity	By December 2017

## Appendix 1 - Membership of NIASP 2015– 16

### Organisations:-

Northern Health & Social Care Trust  
Northern Ireland Association of Social Workers  
Ballymena Borough Council  
Action Mental Health  
Crossroads  
PSNI  
Western Health & Social Care Trust  
Royal College of Nursing  
Praxis Care Belfast  
Independent healthcare providers  
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority  
Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
Social Care & Children's Directorate, HSCB  
Action for Real Change  
Age NI  
Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Carers NI  
Cause  
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust  
Red Cross  
Southern Health & Social Care Trust  
Social Security Agency  
Public Health Agency  
Women's Aid  
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust  
Probation Board for Northern Ireland  
Volunteer Now

## REFERENCES:

1. Adult Safeguarding in Northern Ireland: Regional and Local Partnership Arrangements.  
DHSSPS and Northern Ireland Office 2010
2. NIASP Strategic Plan 2013 – 18
3. Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership, 2015