

## **R071: Adult Safeguarding in Northern Ireland: a study of the relationship between social deprivation and adult protection referrals in Northern Ireland – QUB**

The landscape of Adult Social Care, and in particular of Adult Safeguarding, has shifted considerably over the last decade. Increased public and political awareness have developed alongside policy and professional intervention to increase our understanding of the abuse and protection of adults whose personal characteristics or life circumstances may put them at risk of harm. It has long been framed as a public health and social problem and has received increased attention internationally. Safeguarding adults is a complex and multi-faceted challenge in society. The impact and cost to the individual and communities is high. Arguably, anyone in the public has the potential to be affected by social deprivation and/or abuse during their lifetime. The Health Department of Northern Ireland has committed to establish an Adult Safeguarding/Adult Protection Change Programme to make lasting improvements to adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland. This study intends to use data help inform social care service provision, shape developing policy and contribute to the current development of a specific Adult Safeguarding Bill.

Research into adult protection locally, nationally and internationally, is limited in range and volume; where it exists, the research tends to consider issues at an individual micro level. The existing literature highlights gaps in systemic screening, prevention and intervention for all adults at risk of harm from abuse. This study will move our knowledge forward by developing an understanding of adult protection as a multiple and systemic issue which includes wider structural issues such as poverty, unemployment and service provision. It is important for us to understand the link between deprivation and adult abuse so that if there is a significance or relationship between them, targeted resources can be used to those communities and families that need the early support and help the most.

**Research aims:** The primary research aim is to examine if there is an association between area level deprivation and adult safeguarding interventions in investigations and outcomes in Northern Ireland.

**Research questions:** Is there an association between area level deprivation and adult safeguarding referrals and outcomes?

Do patterns of referral, safeguarding investigation and outcomes vary by HSCT, service and case characteristics and, if so, how does this interact with deprivation?

To what extent are service users subject to repeat referrals, investigations and protection plans over time (2015-2021) and is this associated with deprivation, HSCT, service user or case characteristics?