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# UNDERSTANDING INTERVIEWING EXPERIENCES OF ADULT PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS

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GETTING BACK TO SOCIAL WORK

# CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION

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Worked in partnership with An Garda Siochana as a specialist interviewer for children and adults with a learning disability

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Completed a literature review to understand what strengthens and what undermines disclosures from adults at risk of harm or “vulnerable adults” whilst working as an Adult Protection Social Worker

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Adult Safeguarding trainer in Southern Trust tasked with training investigative social workers interested in their experiences of interviewing



# LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

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Greatest obstacle to equality in fair process adults ARH have to overcome culturally specific stereotypical perceptions of vulnerability impacting on their capability and reliability.

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Law enforcers

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Professionals (psychological and social work)

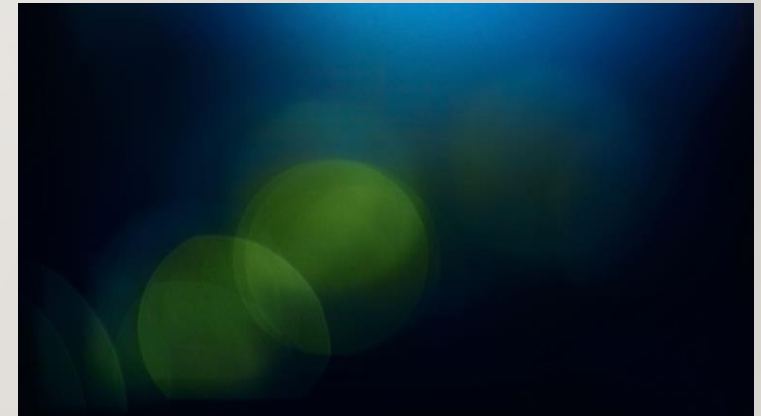
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Service users

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General population

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Societal stereotypes of vulnerability and incapability remain dominant and result in self-censorship, perceived diminished capability and failure to trust adult disclosures. Where professionals sense greater consequences as a result, they are less likely to trust adult disclosures of abuse/neglect.

Knowledge of how memory works, influences and ADDED impact of vulnerability influences memory recall

Rapport can't be underestimated when working with adults ARH, without it, limited ability to recall, deference, best guess, acquiescent, inaccurate replies.

Witness led interview remains the best method for adults ARH, avoids leading and subjective interviewing and less likely to retraumatise.

THIS RESEARCH AIMS TO EXPLORE THE  
EXPERIENCES OF ADULT PROTECTION  
SOCIAL WORKERS WHILST ENGAGING  
IN INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH  
THEIR SERVICE USERS. FINDINGS WILL  
INFORM THE PLANNING OF SPECIALIST  
TRAINING IN THIS PROFESSIONAL  
DISCIPLINE FOR INVESTIGATING  
OFFICERS (IOS) AND DESIGNATED  
ADULT PROTECTION OFFICERS (DAPOS)  
WITHIN THE TRUST.

# SOCIAL WORK INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWING





# METHODOLOGY

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Devised semi-structured interviews exploring experience of investigative interviewing (+pilot interview)

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Invited full participant pool of adult protection social workers

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Interviewed 10 from a mixture of directorates in adult services

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Thematically analysed the results to draw findings and conclusions



# FINDINGS

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4 themes and 13 sub-themes within

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Knowledge and understanding- diversity of pathways into this role meant there were differing training needs, not everyone had previous experience investigating

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Ethical practice was evident in every interview, although some couldn't recall there consciously, practice was clearly underpinned by core social work values

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Collaboration with PSNI, doctors, core teams, RQIA, carers etc

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Undertaking the interview there were differences between social work confidence in how they were doing this, every person said they needed more training



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Understanding the Social Work Role

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Relationship building

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Safety focus

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Task centred

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Two routes into Adult Protection Social Work

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Similar work in children's services

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Case management in adult services

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# ETHICS UNDERPINNING PRACTICE AND CHALLENGES THAT ARISE

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*“Empowering them to give their, I don't want to say a story, but their events of that, what has happened.”*

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*“Being mindful that this individual has been through, which could have been through a traumatic incident”*

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*“It's quite daunting as well, like, you know, imagine getting a call about, you know, your family member in a nursing home or your family member, something's happened and that there needs to be an investigation or what will that look like? What will that do” (Respondent 8)*

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*“We'll go back and say why hasn't service user been advised and say because they don't have capacity here and there's never been a capacity assessment completed. So, it's just the assumption that they don't have capacity.” (Respondent 8)*

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# SO WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

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I trained Investigative Social Workers to interview individuals without contaminating their disclosures

I devised a model derived from cognitive interviewing, similar to policing, but with the values of social work at its core.

Training was based on their own identified needs and reflecting core social work values to best hear the voice of the adult at risk of harm.

## Benefits?

- Witness led interviewing
- Person centred working
- Therapeutically aligned to trauma informed working
- Maintains dignity of person and provides greater access to justice

# WHAT DID THE SOCIAL WORKERS THINK?

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- All reported an increase in role confidence
- Some reported being interviewed this way “felt good”, “I felt respected and as though she really wanted to know about me,” “I felt they cared.”
- Some thought the skills should be rolled out universally in social work
- All reported that it changed investigative social work to align with core social work values, important for an area of work implementing legislative change to maintain Social Work identity.
- Importantly all found it easy to work through and learn.



“I FEEL LIKE YOU GAVE  
ME PERMISSION TO  
SOCIAL WORKER  
AGAIN!”

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(SOCIAL WORKER ATTENDING THE TRAINING)