



Discriminatory Abuse: Time to Revive a Forgotten Form of Abuse?

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Abstract

Purpose – Discriminatory abuse has been a distinct category of abuse in safeguarding adults policy since 2000, but it is rarely used in practice according to recent official statistics. As part of a larger project, the authors undertook a literature review to clarify the concept, explore reasons for low reporting and consider recommendations for practice. The findings are presented in this article.

Design / Methodology / Approach – This literature review comprises 35 sources, which were identified using three academic databases, reference harvesting and sector-specific websites. Findings were developed through thematic analysis of the data.

Findings – The literature review demonstrates that definitions of discriminatory abuse stretch from an interpersonal emphasis in policy documents to a more structural approach. There are open questions about the status of discriminatory abuse as a category of abuse, due to the complicated interface between discriminatory motivations and the abusive acts through which they are experienced. A range of factors can obscure its identification, particularly the hidden, stigmatised and normalised nature of discriminatory abuse. Some recommendations for practice are identified, but more work is needed to develop the practice vocabulary and required skills.

Originality – This article brings together existing research on discriminatory abuse in order to argue that it is time to revive this understanding of abuse and develop safeguarding practice with adults who have protected characteristics.

Keywords: Discriminatory Abuse; Safeguarding Adults; Hate Crime; Mate Crime; Structural Abuse

Introduction

‘Discriminatory abuse’ is a category of abuse in English safeguarding adults policy. It frames the ways that prejudice can motivate abuse and impact on adults with care and support needs who also have protected characteristics. It is defined in the Care and Support Statutory Guidance (DHSC, 2021), which supports the Care Act, 2014, as:

‘forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion’ (section 14.17).

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3 The Care Act, 2014 and its statutory guidance provide the first appearance of safeguarding
4 adults in primary legislation, but English safeguarding adults policy has included this
5 category since the 'No Secrets' (DH, 2000) guidance (which the new statutory guidance
6 replaces), where it was defined as:
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10 'including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment,
11 slurs or similar treatment' (p.9).
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14 The Care and Support Statutory Guidance has retained this 'No Secrets' definition and
15 updated it with a list of many of the protected characteristics from the Equality Act, 2010.
16 Other categories of abuse listed in the statutory guidance are physical, sexual,
17 psychological, financial, organisational (institutional) and domestic abuse, neglect, self-
18 neglect and modern slavery (DHSC, 2021). Most adults with care and support needs are
19 older people or have a disability (or both) (King's Fund, 2021) and many have additional
20 protected characteristics. Therefore, this category potentially applies to a wide range of
21 safeguarding scenarios.
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30 Under the Care Act, 2014, a Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) must be commissioned if
31 abuse results in death or serious abuse or neglect and partner agencies could have worked
32 together more effectively to protect the person (DHSC, 2021), though there is some local
33 discretion as to how these are commissioned. Preceding this Act, similar reports were
34 referred to as Serious Case Reviews and several high-profile reviews involve discriminatory
35 abuse. This includes the murders of Steven Hoskins (Flynn, 2007), Gemma Hayter
36 (McAteer, 2010), Peter Farquhar (Cooper, 2020) and the deaths of Fiona Pilkington and her
37 daughter Francessca Hardwick (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland SAB, 2008). Both
38 Steven Hoskins and Gemma Hayter were abused because of their learning disabilities and
39 Peter Farquhar was targeted due to his sexuality. Fiona Hardwick ended her own life and
40 that of her daughter following ten years of severe harassment based on her daughter's
41 disability. In this vein, Davies (2019) identifies that discriminatory abuse can apply to carers,
42 friends and family members of people with protected characteristics.
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53 Given the focus on discriminatory abuse within high-profile reviews, one might expect
54 discriminatory abuse to be well reported, but official statistics demonstrate that it is rarely
55 used. Less than 1% (n=1,395) of the 149,540 Section 42 safeguarding enquiries undertaken
56 nationally in 2020/21 corresponded with discriminatory abuse (NHS Digital, 2021) and is the
57 least likely category of abuse to result in a SAR (2 out of 399 SARs from 2017-2019)
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3 (Preston-Shoot et al, 2020). Other constituent countries of the UK (Scotland, Wales and
4 Northern Ireland) do not list discriminatory abuse as a form of harm in their safeguarding
5 policies. Scottish policy clarifies that omission should not infer that any form of harm is
6 excluded (Scottish Government, 2021), but Welsh commentators believe this will exclude
7 reporting on discriminatory abuse (Phillips, 2016). However, its explicit mention in English
8 policy has not led to significant reporting. Similarly, beyond the UK, it also accounts for less
9 than 1% of safeguarding adults activity in the Republic of Ireland where it is explicitly named
10 in safeguarding policy (Health Service Executive, 2020). These statistics are anomalous
11 given the concurrent rise in the related phenomenon of disability hate crime reporting (9,208
12 police recorded disability hate crimes in 2020/2021, up 9% on the previous year and up
13 449% since 2012) (Allen and Zayed, 2021). As a result, there may be cause for concern if
14 the low reporting rate reflects under-identification of discrimination in safeguarding adults
15 work.
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27 For this reason, the safeguarding workstream of the Care and Health Improvement
28 Programme (delivered by the Local Government Association in collaboration with the
29 Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) proposed discriminatory abuse as a priority
30 topic for 2021/22 and established an advisory group. This group includes ‘chairs’ and
31 managers from Safeguarding Adult Boards, safeguarding leads and practitioners across
32 England, people with lived experience of using services and the authors of this paper. The
33 aims of the advisory group are to stimulate discussion across four areas:
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- 38 1) Clarifying the concept of ‘discriminatory abuse’
 - 39 2) Exploring practice that engages ‘discriminatory abuse’
 - 40 3) Improving recognition and reporting of this category
 - 41 4) Improving experience re recovery and resolution
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47 This article aims to present a literature review, which was undertaken to explore the first aim.
48 The findings will inform the advisory group’s next steps.
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53 **Method**

54 Literature reviews provide a “comprehensive study and interpretation of the literature that
55 relates to a particular topic” (Aveyard, 2014, p.2). The purpose of the review was to support
56 a bigger piece of work around the development of practice and policy in this area, so it was
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3 important to optimise the likelihood of finding all relevant publications. Three databases
4 were used, selected due to the different sensitivities, strategies and reaches of each
5 platform: Web of Science, Social Care Online and Google Scholar. Search terms were
6 deployed across each platform as follows:
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10 "Discriminatory Abuse" OR "Discrimination" OR "hate crime" OR "mate crime" OR
11 "homophobi*" OR "transphobi*" OR "sexis*" OR "racis*" OR "islamophobi*" OR "anti-
12 semiti*" OR "ageis*" OR "ableis*"

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17 "safeguarding adult*" OR "adult safeguarding" OR "adult protection" OR "vulnerable
18 adult*" OR "adult* at risk"
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21 Inclusion and exclusion criteria were adopted to ensure relevance and quality. We included
22 articles published since 'No Secrets' in 2000 and articles related to safeguarding adults
23 policy and practice. Given the emphasis of the project on work across the sector we
24 included grey literature. We excluded articles published prior to 2000, articles that
25 duplicated results in second publications and those that did not refer to safeguarding adults
26 (e.g. workplace discrimination) and sources where discriminatory abuse was only listed as a
27 category of abuse.
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35 The original search located 61 results. After exclusion criteria were employed and
36 duplicates were removed, 26 articles were included in the review. Three further articles
37 were found through reference harvesting from included sources. Important sectoral
38 websites were also reviewed for additional grey literature, including the Association of
39 Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), the Local Government Association (LGA),
40 Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), Research in Practice, Age UK, Carers UK,
41 Mencap, MIND and Ann Craft Trust. Six additional sources were yielded through this
42 approach. Therefore, 35 sources were included in total.
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51 The search was undertaken by the first author who also read all articles. Each source was
52 read by a second member of the team in order to minimise reader bias and allow for differing
53 interpretations of connections and gaps in the literature. Thematic analysis (Thomas and
54 Harden, 2008) was used to structure the development of meaning from the data in a
55 transparent way, beginning with 'line-by-line' coding, the identification of lower-order
56 'descriptive' themes and working these into higher-order 'analytic' themes that generate new
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3 interpretations. This enabled the identification of four themes presented below. The first
4 author undertook the thematic analysis and the interpretation of the data was then discussed
5 and agreed amongst all authors.
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10 11 **Findings**

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13 Four themes were identified through our thematic analysis: (i) definitional stretch from
14 interpersonal to structural, (ii) interfaces with other forms of abuse, (iii) problems for the
15 identification of discriminatory abuse and (iv) recommendations for practice.
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21 ***Definitional Stretch: from interpersonal to structural***

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23 The Care and Support statutory guidance (DHSC, 2021) definition concentrates on
24 interpersonal levels of abuse emphasising language and behaviour (harassment, slurs).
25 This definition was drawn from 'No Secrets', which the new statutory guidance replaced and
26 updated to include many of the Equality Act, 2010 protected characteristics. These
27 characteristics point to more structural factors, such as racism or ageism in society, thereby
28 pushing away from more interpersonal illustrations of discriminatory abuse and this trend is
29 reinforced through a close reading of the literature.
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37 Discriminatory abuse was added as a distinct category of abuse "relatively late" in the work
38 of the 'No Secrets' steering group (Brown, 2000, p.17) as a surprising "rights-based
39 intervention" (Manthorpe, 2001, p.5). Despite reporting on 'No Secrets', Brown (2000)
40 introduces her own definition which diverges from the interpersonal approach of the 'No
41 Secrets' guidance and instead emphasising rights and citizenship.
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45 "Discriminatory abuse... describe(s) serious, repeated or pervasive discrimination which leads
46 to significant harm or exclusion...; less than equivalent health care and/or breaches in civil
47 liberties or civic status and/or which represents a failure to protect" (p.18)
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50 This rights-based emphasis coincides with anti-discriminatory policies and reports,
51 introduced in the years immediately preceding 'No Secrets'. This includes the Disability
52 Discrimination Act, 1995 and the Human Rights Act, 1998 (Brown, 2000), and the
53 McPherson Report, Acheson Report and Race Relations Act, 2000 (Forbat, 2004). Brown
54 (2000) believed that this reflected a commitment from the government to address racist,
55 sexist or disablist abuse.
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5 Stretching further in this direction, the now-defunct 'Pan-London' safeguarding adults
6 guidance (SCIE, 2011) stated:
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9 "Discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that
10 denies opportunity to... groups or individuals... It can result from situations that exploit a
11 person's vulnerability by exclud(ing) them from opportunities they should have as equal
12 citizens" (p.12)
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15 An explicit acknowledgement of power and values (alongside rights and citizenship) provides
16 further depth and meaning that is lacking in national policy and points towards structural
17 factors that influence and contextualise discriminatory abuse.
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23 Recently, the term 'structural abuse' has emerged in the literature as an "allied" category to
24 discriminatory abuse (Lyne and Parker, 2020, p.362). The term describes "in-built,
25 unquestioned devaluation of people through policy and practice based on certain
26 characteristics" (Parker, 2021, p.169) and it emphasises socio-structural factors and the
27 persistent 'othering' that marginalised groups experience in society. Both Iparraguirre (2014)
28 and Forbat (2004) emphasise the correlation between abuse and structural issues such as
29 poverty, race and class, rather than dominant accounts of abuse as an inter-personal
30 phenomenon, whilst Brown (2000) refers to discriminatory abuse as a consequence of
31 marginalisation. Several authors relate this to pathologising discourses about people with
32 disabilities (Doherty, 2015; Sin et al, 2011; Balderston et al, 2019, Healy, 2020), people from
33 minoritised ethnicities (Forbat, 2004), people who identify as LGBTQ+ (Westwood, 2018),
34 older people (Bogdanova and Grigoryeva, 2021; Lyne and Parker, 2020) and people who
35 experience mental health issues (Carr et al, 2019; Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2020).
36 Intersectional identities, for example a trans person with a disability, compound experiences
37 of discrimination further (Balderston et al, 2019).
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50 These accounts foreground critical accounts of vulnerability, which play out through factors
51 such as neighbourhood deprivation and poverty, poor housing and inadequate preventative
52 support (Carr et al, 2019; Balderston et al, 2019) as well as racism, homophobia,
53 transphobia and ageism and other forms of discrimination (Forbat, 2004; Westwood, 2018).
54 The impacts of austerity are also exacerbated through poorly-funded and fragmented
55 services that are slow to respond (Carr et al, 2019; Healy, 2020) and service failure may be
56 discriminatory in itself (Balderston et al, 2019; Parker, 2021). Political 'victim blaming' also
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3 creates permissive cultures where discrimination can thrive (Williams, 2021; Healy, 2020).
4 Several articles discuss the significant and disproportionate impact of policies during COVID-
5 19 for older people, particularly rights to private and family life (through increased social
6 isolation) and rights to life (through misuse of Do Not Resuscitate processes) (Williams,
7 2021; Lyne and Parker, 2020; Bogdanova and Grigoryeva, 2021). Issues of power in
8 statutory responses and unequal access to services are also emphasised (Hafford-Letchfield
9 et al, 2020; Forbat, 2004).
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17 ***Interfaces with Other Forms of Abuse***

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19 A dominant perspective in the literature is that discriminatory abuse might not stand alone as
20 a category, because discriminatory motives for abuse are implemented through other forms
21 of abuse. For example, SCIE (2011) notes that discriminatory abuse can be “a feature of
22 any form of abuse” (p.12). A key question here is the nature of the interface between
23 discriminatory abuse and other forms of harm. Some commentators confirm this splitting of
24 motivation and action, supporting the argument that it is a dimension of other abuse (e.g.
25 physical abuse motivated by racism) (McCreadie, 2000). However, Brown’s (2000) more
26 inclusive approach blurs this distinction, stating that discriminatory abuse “might describe an
27 act, the intent behind (abuse) and/or the consequence of marginalisation” (p.18). One
28 critique of hate crime is that it criminalises thought, but the intentionality to target on the
29 basis of protected characteristics is significant and may enhance the gravity of the offence in
30 terms of its impact (Mellgren et al, 2021). On the other hand, intentionality is not always
31 present, for example a lack of choice regarding culturally appropriate food in care settings
32 may not be intended as discriminatory but can amount to institutional racism (Forbat, 2004).
33 The nature of the interface with other forms of abuse are therefore unclear, but the literature
34 points us to examples, notably interfaces with institutional abuse and hate/mate crime.
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48 The interface between discriminatory and institutional abuse highlights that poor standards
49 of care, exclusion and abuse often apply to minoritised communities who live in formal care
50 settings (Westwood, 2018; Forbat, 2004). In particular, care settings are often assumed to
51 be safe spaces, but several studies point to the lack of safety in formal care settings for
52 people with protected characteristics (Carr et al, 2019; Westwood, 2018; Healy, 2020). The
53 Winterbourne View case (Flynn and Citarella, 2012) provides an example of how
54 discriminatory abuse in institutions involves the use of power and cultures of abuse by staff
55 who target vulnerable residents. There are also suggestions that discriminatory abuse may
56 be more common in residential settings, particularly in ‘out-of-area’ placements (Cambridge
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3 et al, 2006). COVID-19 has shone a light on hospital and care home settings and two
4 studies note the interpretation of 'do not resuscitate' or 'advance decision to refuse
5 treatment' policies to address organisational pressures rather than the human rights of
6 people in their care (Williams, 2021; Lyne and Parker, 2020).
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12 Literature on hate and mate crime is clearer in terms of the interface between prejudicial
13 motives and abusive actions. Hate crime is defined as "any criminal offence that is
14 motivated by hostility or prejudice" (Association for Real Change, 2009; p2). Not all hate
15 crime involves those with care and support needs, but there are clear intersections with
16 disability hate crime, for example. Mate crime is often seen as a sub-category of hate crime
17 and constitutes an acquisitive crime practiced through the method of befriending vulnerable
18 people (Doherty, 2015). It has been distinguished from hate crime as it acknowledges that
19 these crimes are not usually random or perpetrated by strangers. Indeed, perpetrators often
20 play significant roles in people's lives. Both forms of abuse intersect clearly with
21 discriminatory abuse but also with other forms of abuse such as cuckooing, where a person
22 is targeted for the purposes of taking over their home for illegal drug-related activity
23 (Landman, 2020). There are also intersections with 'romance scams' or 'predatory marriage'
24 (Ann Craft Trust, 2020; Landman, 2020) where a vulnerable person is targeted via an
25 intimate relationship, with the intention of financial or other forms of exploitation, as per Peter
26 Farquhar's murder (Cooper, 2020).
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39 ***Problems for identifying Discriminatory Abuse***

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41 Discriminatory abuse contains some definitional obscurity (interpersonal or structural; level
42 of motivation or level of action) that may lead to confusion about how this category is
43 interpreted, identified and reported (McCreadie, 2000). Additionally, there are concerns that
44 missing data about people's protected characteristics and social context in statistics
45 (Hussein et al, 2010) and Safeguarding Adults Reviews (Preston-Shoot, 2020) mean it is
46 difficult to identify discriminatory abuse at a strategic level. There may also be a lack of
47 specificity to differentiate discriminatory abuse (targeted at vulnerable community members)
48 from more general anti-social behaviour (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland SAB, 2008).
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57 Literature on the experiences of particular communities is difficult to locate. Our search
58 revealed just one study about LGBTQ+ discrimination (Westwood, 2018) and one relating to
59 racially minoritised communities (Forbat, 2004). Forbat (2004) identifies barriers that Black
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3 Caribbean and South Asian people experience when accessing care services, including
4 stereotypical assumptions about families providing care as part of “an unquestionable and
5 unproblematic obligation” (p.315). Meanwhile, Westwood (2018) identifies that there is
6 almost no literature on LGBTQ+ elder abuse and even less covering intersectional identities,
7 such as Black LGBTQ+ experiences of discrimination. Discrimination can be experienced in
8 new ways by older LGBTQ+ people due to homophobia in care settings or coming out in
9 later life. The stigma associated with LGBTQ+ identities in some settings can also conceal
10 discriminatory abuse (Cooper, 2020).
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19 Other research notes that the experience of discrimination is so embedded in everyday life
20 that it can be hard to identify it as a category of abuse (Landman, 2014; Carr et al, 2019;
21 Westwood, 2018). Landman (2014) notes that “bullying, harassment and abuse are so
22 common that they are described as part of everyday life” (p.361). Almost all respondents
23 revealed complex life histories including childhood abuse and trauma in Carr et al’s (2019)
24 study. As a result, ‘low-level abuse’ is often normalised and therefore under-reported (Sin et
25 al, 2011; Landman, 2014). Alternatively, discriminatory abuse may go unreported because
26 the person who experiences abuse perceives ‘pay-offs’ in terms of companionship (Terras et
27 al, 2019; Cooper, 2020) and consequently mate crime is sometimes called ‘counterfeit
28 friendship’ (Landman, 2014).
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38 Like most abuse, discriminatory abuse often occurs in hidden spaces (Landman, 2014;
39 Westwood, 2018) and this was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Williams, 2021;
40 Lyne and Parker, 2020). People who perpetrate discriminatory abuse may exploit the
41 hidden nature of abuse or the difficulties people may face when accessing services. This
42 may be exacerbated where the person who experiences abuse depends on the person who
43 abuses them for care, support or housing (Balderston et al, 2019). Unfortunately, people
44 experiencing abuse may lack awareness of what safeguarding adults is or what support
45 exists (Carr et al, 2019). There may be inadequate educational resources for people with
46 specific communication needs on the topic (Landman, 2014) or they may experience service
47 responses as hostile (Healy, 2020). For example, Forbat (2014) discusses racist service
48 environments, while Carr et al (2014) problematises social work responses that are narrowly
49 focused on eligibility rather than support. Poor service responses may themselves be
50 discriminatory (Balderston et al, 2019). Experiences of discriminatory abuse can result in
51 fear, low self-esteem and stigma so for some, it may be easier to simply not report it,
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3 particularly if the person fears they will not be believed or be labelled as an unreliable
4 witness (Carr et al, 2019).
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9 ***Recommendations for Practice***

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11 Many articles focus on discriminatory abuse policy rather than practice. Nevertheless, some
12 important messages for practice emerge through the literature review. Some of the
13 recommendations reflect common safeguarding themes around multi-agency work,
14 thresholds and risk management strategies such as MAPPA or MARAC. The
15 recommendations that follow are specific to practice in discriminatory abuse rather than
16 more generic recommendations.
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24 Greater public awareness and targeted awareness to 'at risk' groups are important
25 recommendations. Some adults at risk of discriminatory abuse may have inadequate
26 knowledge about safeguarding processes and others may not identify discriminatory abuse
27 because of the pervasive nature of discriminatory micro-aggressions in their lives (Carr et al,
28 2019; Westwood, 2018). This suggests that targeted public awareness campaigns are
29 important to spread knowledge and information about accessing support. Other literature
30 suggests that greater community participation initiatives can enhance public awareness and
31 empathy, which can lead to fewer experiences of discriminatory abuse (Iparraguirre, 2014;
32 Terras et al, 2019). The literature does not link poor public awareness to practitioner
33 awareness and this may be worth exploring in future studies.
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43 Practitioners who work with people experiencing discriminatory abuse need to be aware of
44 the impact of discrimination. This can lead to a loss of self-esteem, which may impact
45 engagement. Indeed, safeguarding work can itself feel intimidating and social workers who
46 are too focused on procedure or eligibility risk disengagement and withdrawal (Carr et al,
47 2019). Paying attention to power can both enhance engagement and reframe safeguarding
48 practice towards a more empowering practice, especially through approaches such as family
49 group conferences or restorative practice (Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2020). It also involves
50 care and thought when a person refuses support but appears to be at risk because refusal of
51 service is not always the result of autonomous choice and may be signs of duress, coercion
52 or fear (McAteer, 2010).
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3 Practitioners also need to attend to structural factors in their work because discriminatory
4 abuse extends beyond interpersonal violence or harm (Parker, 2021). This involves
5 engaging with the structural, social and environmental factors that shape the person's daily
6 experiences and develops a better understanding and commitment to address and advocate
7 around issues that allow discrimination to thrive, such as poverty, housing or neighbourhood
8 safety (Iparraguirre, 2014; Carr et al, 2019; McAteer, 2010). It also requires adopting anti-
9 discriminatory approaches (Brown, 2000) and acknowledging that protected characteristics
10 play a role in how people are targeted. However, the literature does not provide many
11 examples of how social workers can enact structural practice to combat issues such as
12 poverty or poor housing and some of the statements remain at a general level.
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22 Another recommendation for practice emphasises proactive multi-disciplinary support,
23 independent of statutory services (Carr et al, 2019). Discriminatory abuse is targeted at
24 static factors such as race, sexuality, gender identity and disability, so it can occur
25 repeatedly even if an initial episode of abuse is resolved (Healy, 2020). For example, re-
26 housing without ongoing support is not sufficient because the factors that caused the person
27 to be targeted in the first place can cause the person to be identified as vulnerable again in
28 their new environment (Flynn, 2007). Proactive and ongoing support is important to break
29 cycles of discriminatory abuse and to enable the person to recover (Balderston et al, 2019).
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38 Finally, more attention is needed regarding survival or coping strategies. Two studies
39 suggest that volunteering or community participation activities could be helpful (Carr et al,
40 2019; Terras et al, 2019). Both studies emphasise the impact that these activities can have
41 on self-worth and overcoming the impact of stigma through a sense of belonging to a
42 community or using one's own experiences to help others. This is not a panacea, for
43 example some older people may experience other obstacles to accessing volunteering, but
44 enabling techniques from professionals can promote access and overcome many barriers
45 (Terras et al, 2019). However, user involvement is frequently lacking in top-down
46 safeguarding work and attention is needed to consider ways of ensuring meaningful
47 inclusion (Hafford-Letchfield, 2020).
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56 Discussion

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58 Discriminatory abuse is a long-established category of abuse with the potential to spotlight
59 the significant impact of various forms of discrimination for people with care and support
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3 needs. However, it is rarely reported in practice (NHS Digital, 2020). Our findings provide
4 some insight in relation to this because definitional obscurity, differing interpretations and the
5 hidden or stigmatised nature of discriminatory abuse are likely to hamper reporting. Subtle
6 micro-aggressions are often normalised and difficult to label as abuse and the link with
7 protected characteristics may add layers of stigma, shame and embarrassment. Less
8 inclusive inter-personal definitions will capture fewer incidences and offer individualistic
9 support compared to structural definitions which pay attention to the environmental and
10 political context for discrimination. Discriminatory abuse may also be obscured if interfacing
11 categories are prioritised – for example an assault motivated by homophobia may be
12 labelled as physical abuse rather than discriminatory abuse.
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22 Ultimately, abuse does not occur in neat, well-packaged categories and therefore
23 scrutinising proper or improper categorisation is somewhat reductive and addresses
24 administrative rather than practical concerns. We are more interested in the practice
25 implications following low reporting because the safeguarding process may be compromised
26 if discriminatory dynamics are not clearly articulated and acknowledged. The findings of this
27 review strongly support explicit reference to structural level factors that create the conditions
28 for discriminatory abuse. It was striking, however, that few sources in this review dealt with
29 specific communities who might be targeted (e.g. race, sexuality, gender identity, religion
30 etc) and this is a significant gap in the literature. People have complex identities and may
31 have more than one protected characteristic. Here, understanding intersectionality
32 (Crenshaw, 1991; Bernard, 2020) and the experience of multiple types of discrimination
33 indicates a personalised approach to how people may be supported and safeguarded from
34 discriminatory abuse. The 'Making Safeguarding Personal' (MSP) approach (Lawson, 2017)
35 is a core component of safeguarding practice in England, emphasising person-centred
36 support. Discriminatory abuse also requires person-centred responses, because people
37 with different characteristics experience discrimination in different ways. Whilst Forbat
38 (2004) noted racism and a lack of cultural sensitivity in mainstream services, Singh's (2005)
39 report on four 'grass-roots' services for Black, disabled people has been cited as best
40 practice in the LGA's (2015) MSP toolkit. Key principles in these projects included
41 recognising multiple identities and experiences and using peer support and community
42 development approaches. However, successive cuts to adult social care have stretched
43 resources to enable such personalised responses and this has had a significant impact on
44 older people and people with disabilities (Glasby et al, 2021). Whilst discriminatory abuse
45 was initially hailed as a rights-based intervention (Manthorpe, 2001), decades of austerity
46 have fractured the potential of services to work in an anti-discriminatory way (Healy, 2020).
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5 Although the literature emphasises that discrimination is merely a dimension of other
6 categories of abuse (McCreadie, 2000; Brown, 2000), it is important to note that both
7 domestic abuse and institutional abuse operate in similar ways. Physical, sexual or financial
8 abuse can be carried out within the dynamics of intimate relationships (domestic abuse),
9 dynamics of organisations (institutional abuse) or dynamics of prejudice (discriminatory
10 abuse). Domestic abuse literature foregrounds abuse in the context of gender and power.
11 Meanwhile, institutional abuse literature emphasises organisational cultures. Both require
12 methods of support that appreciate these particular dynamics. Therefore, it is important to
13 develop a practice vocabulary that supports safeguarding work with discriminatory abuse.
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23 Discriminatory abuse is about power dynamics, further disempowering the person who
24 society has marginalised. Therefore, recognising and naming discrimination is important for
25 the person to know that they have been heard and their experience of discrimination has
26 been recognised. Safeguarding practice with discriminatory abuse should therefore act to
27 support those who experience discrimination using an understanding of what this prejudice
28 entails and how it can impact on people. Practice that operates purely at an interpersonal or
29 individual level is unlikely to achieve this. Instead, a structural understanding and practice
30 vocabulary should help practitioners to engage in meaningful and restorative conversations
31 about abuse. This includes approaches that promote advocacy, acknowledge power and
32 inequality and value the voices of marginalised people and communities. The next stages of
33 our work with stakeholders in the sector will aim to develop this practice vocabulary and
34 provide support to enact this.
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45 **Conclusion**

46 Although discriminatory abuse has been part of national policy for over 20 years, there has
47 been scant development of what it entails and what good practice looks like. In view of
48 rising hate crime, but no parallel rise in discriminatory abuse reporting, this is an urgent and
49 timely matter. Our findings help to consolidate existing and disparate strands of literature
50 and provide clarity around discriminatory abuse, its structural context and its interfaces with
51 other categories of abuse. Discriminatory abuse therefore requires a different practice
52 vocabulary and set of skills in order to support those experiencing it. This literature review
53 provides a first step in calling for the revival of discriminatory abuse and its identification in
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3 order to better support people who experience it, and will inform our next steps with
4 stakeholders in the sector.
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