

Safeguarding Blog No. 7 for April 2025

by Grahame Snelling, Independent Chair of the District Safeguarding Group

April showers anyone?

I missed the opportunity on 1st of April to offer some thoughts about fake news and taking care when using social media. I note that London colleagues issued a timely reminder about this, and the need to keep online space as safe as physical space, in the London District weekly update. Advising on the use of social media is not one of my strengths though so I will probably leave others to share their thoughts, but here is a link to the Church's own guidance if you need it: [An Introduction to social media for churches - The Methodist Church](#)

I wrote in March about the outbreak of spring, and we now seem blessed with a prolonged spell of fine weather. I'm never too sure about the links between safeguarding and the weather. Do settled conditions lead to more or less concerns coming to attention? Does the warm, feelgood factor affect how we behave or respond to what we see and hear? It was the case in August last year that people exercised by their concern about what happened in Southport took to the streets in an unhelpful and at times destructive manner. Would they have behaved in the same way on a cold, wet and windy winter's day? I can recall as a young person in the 1960s riots in US cities, at the height of hot summers, when authorities would pray for rain to disperse the crowds. But winters also carry their challenges with some people experiencing depression because of being seasonally affected by a lack of light and warmth.

So, I don't think there is a clear answer here, and perhaps it's rather futile conjecture anyway. Our changing seasons, our well-known British obsession with the weather and talking about it as I am in effect doing here, does mean, however, that we take it seriously. Perhaps something deep in our psyche sees the weather's relevance to what we do, how we feel and, in some cases, how we behave. But talking about it can give us an 'in' when we need to have a meaningful conversation with someone about a concern. It's a neutral prompt towards engagement.

I know all this sounds pretty obvious, but it warrants a reminder that when we may need to offer support to someone we know, who perhaps seems a bit low in spirits, starting with the simple things and then listening with care to how they respond, may be the first step in enabling them to share what's on their minds. I've just updated my Mental Health First Aid training, and I was reminded that getting the approach right to someone in need is critically important. If first commenting on the weather helps you do that effectively, then so be it.

My day last Saturday was considerably brightened by the news that Crystal Palace FC are enroute to Wembley for the FA Cup semi-final at the end of the month. Sadly, I then dropped into gloom since I won't be able to go as I am already booked to be away that weekend. Still, I can but hope for a Cup Final place and I have the date firmly in diary. I hope it's warm and sunny! And I won't get started on my experience of not taking off from Heathrow the other Friday morning....

Enjoy the warm weather whilst it lasts.