



**Durham
Safeguarding Adults
Partnership**

Safeguarding Adults: a recap for practitioners

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Why this topic?

Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) take place where an adult has died or been seriously harmed through abuse, neglect, or self-neglect, to learn how organisations can work better together and prevent it happening again.

Recent SARs have found that staff have sometimes normalised poor conditions that are unacceptable, as they have 'seen worse'. Some SARs also found anxiety about information sharing; a lack of professional curiosity; and that response to and recording of skin damage was not detailed enough.

Who is this safeguarding adults recap for?

Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership (DSAP) recommends that the [Safeguarding Adults Raising a Concern course](#) currently available as an online taught course or a workbook, is renewed every three years.

This recap, which will be regularly updated, will be most useful as a reference for people who completed their safeguarding adults training more than a year ago, or those new to County Durham who have completed safeguarding adults training in another area within the last three years.

What is a safeguarding adults concern?

This framework [Understanding what constitutes a safeguarding concern and how to support effective outcomes](#) published by LGA and ADASS in 2020, supports practice about making decisions about safeguarding concerns, recording, and reporting.

The key points are that:

- To report a safeguarding adults concern, you only need to:
 - suspect there may be abuse and neglect, and
 - that the adult appears to have needs for care and support.
- It may not be clear whether or not the adult can protect themselves until a Section 42 safeguarding enquiry or information gathering has taken place.
- You should clarify what if any other action may be required to reduce risk e.g. address poor practice, poor care, train staff, use complaints, or another multi-agency pathway.

Safeguarding adults and reporting concerns

Spot the signs: know how to recognise abuse, neglect, and self-neglect.

<https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse>

- Pass on your worries and concerns to safeguarding adults lead in your organisation; you have a duty of care.
- Make sure you are not putting up with things ‘that’s just how they are’ that you would not accept for your own family.
- Many people with some needs for care and support do not meet the eligibility criteria for care services. But there is no ‘threshold’ for safeguarding:
 - “The eligibility criteria that the local authority sets for services and support are not relevant in relation to safeguarding. Safeguarding enquiries should be made on the understanding of the risk of neglect or abuse, irrespective of whether the individual would meet the criteria for the provision of services.” [Care Act 2014 Explanatory Note 274](#).
- Report if you suspect there may be abuse, neglect or self-neglect, and that the adult appears to have needs for care and support.
- Once a young person turns 18, even if they are still at school, safeguarding concerns for a young adult with needs for care and support should be reported as safeguarding adults.

When does poor practice become a safeguarding issue?

- There is a continuum. Be aware that poor care, or care and support refused, can slide into neglect, self-neglect, or organisational abuse, and can become life threatening.
- Be aware of the inherent risk of closed cultures developing in care settings.
- DSAP briefing: [Closed cultures and safeguarding adults](#)

Self-neglect and capacity

- Self-neglect is not a ‘lifestyle choice’. Severe self-neglect is life threatening.
- If someone has capacity for a decision and makes choices that are harmful, consider what you can do to mitigate the consequences. Make sure you record your actions.

- Use the Clutter image rating tool to assess how serious clutter is and who should do what. When people are living with clutter at Level 2, it must be monitored regularly in the future due to likely risk of escalation or recurrence.
- If a person has a deteriorating condition, monitor and review changes in risk; consider when to re-assess capacity as capacity can change.
- [Clutter image rating tool](#)
- [DSAP briefing: Self-neglect](#)
- [The Mental Capacity Act what good looks like: capacity assessment](#)

Personal practice

- Are your organisation's safeguarding policy, procedures, and practice up-to-date and have you read them recently?
- Are your go-to people for safeguarding easily accessible and well known?
- Do you work or volunteer with adults who may have needs for care and support or members of the public? If so, your organisation should offer access to safeguarding adults training every three years.
- Keep safeguarding on your radar; be vigilant.
- If you do not pass it on, who will?

'I' questions:

- What am I concerned about?
- Am I going to walk away and worry about this?
- Do I need to tell someone?

It is important to be aware of unconscious bias, to avoid imposing your personal values inappropriately, beware of tolerating neglect, self-neglect or a poor situation, and question a lack of engagement, delve deeper.

[DSAP Practitioner newflash: Professional curiosity](#)

Sharing information

You should share information as appropriate. The UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 are not barriers to sharing concerns but a way to ensure data is kept safely and securely.

You should pass on concerns without relying on gaining consent, using the Data Protection Act's safeguarding individuals at risk exemption (public interest conditions) to prevent harm. Your legitimate grounds will be the most relevant one of:

- Vital interest: necessary to protect someone's life, or
- Public task: necessary for your lawful public function (e.g. enable risk to be assessed; uphold their human rights), or
- Legitimate interest: necessary to protect someone's legitimate interests i.e. protect from abuse and neglect, uphold their human rights (in a non-statutory service).

14.92 “If the adult has the mental capacity to make informed decisions about their safety and they do not want any action to be taken, this does not preclude the sharing of information with relevant professional colleagues. This is to enable professionals to assess the risk of harm and to be confident that the adult is not being unduly influenced, coerced or intimidated and is aware of all the options. This will also enable professionals to check the safety and validity of decisions made. It is good practice to inform the adult that this action is being taken unless doing so would increase the risk of harm”.

14.95 “Whether or not the adult has capacity to give consent, action may need to be taken if others are or will be put at risk if nothing is done or where it is in the public interest to take action because a criminal offence has occurred.”

Care and Support Statutory Guidance

The DSAP toolkit [Collaborative working and information sharing between professionals to protect adults](#) includes:

- Practical tips
- 8 Golden Rules
- Flowchart to decide whether to share information
- The escalation policy as agreed by DSAP partners

Coming soon: DSAP Managing professional differences of opinion procedure.

- If an adult with care and support needs is at risk of harm or abuse, or a crime has been committed, or another organisation needs to act to ensure the safety of care, you have a duty to report and should share information as needed.
- You have a duty to protect people’s human rights without the adult asking for help, including from abuse by another person, or if they refuse care, or if the adult does not have care and support needs.
- If you believe your organisation’s processes prevent you from passing on your concern to another organisation you must escalate concerns internally.
- If you do not get an appropriate response, you may need to consider passing on your concern externally.

✉ Available by email: Practitioner Newsflash: Speaking Out, Whistleblowing*.

Making Safeguarding Personal

Making Safeguarding Personal engages the adult in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing, and safety.

- It is best practice to ask what the adult would like to happen next if you are concerned about possible abuse or neglect.
- Sometimes this may not be possible before reporting a concern, especially if there is high risk or it is urgent.
- Find out more on [Making Safeguarding Personal](#)

Skin damage

[Reporting skin damage through the Safeguarding Adults procedure \(safeguardingdurhamadults.info\)](http://safeguardingdurhamadults.info)

Skin damage includes bruises, scratches, skin tears, wounds, and pressure ulcers. Causes may include fragile [older] skin, medical conditions, poor hydration, falls, accidents, poor care, abuse, neglect, and self-neglect. Not all skin damage can be prevented.

- Use a body map, with dates, to record skin damage.
- This good practice is especially important if the person is not able to communicate how and where an injury such as bruising happened, or has poor cognition, or capacity issues.
- While there may be no immediate suspicion of poor care, neglect, abuse, or self-neglect, recording change in skin damage over time is essential to provide evidence for appropriate medical care following falls or other accidents, and in case there are future determinations of abuse or neglect.
- In cases of injury such as bruising ensure there is a conversation with the adult on their own, or with an advocate if appropriate.
- If the injury or skin damage is unexplained or does not match the explanation given, consider abuse or neglect.

✉ New in 2022: Providers Briefing on Bruising, available by email*

To report abuse, neglect, or self-neglect

Contact Durham County Council Social Care Direct (SCD). The same number goes through to the Emergency Duty Team if it is outside office hours and is urgent. In County Durham there is no referral form.

- Call SCD on 03000 26 79 79
- Call 999 in an emergency

<http://www.safeguardingdurhamadults.info/article/18047/Concerned-about-an-adult->

Legislative links

- [Care Act 2014](#)
- [Care Act Section 42 Explanatory Notes](#)
- [Care and support statutory guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#);
- [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-capacity-act-code-of-practice>
- [The Serious Crime Act 2015 – Section 76 offence of controlling or coercive behaviour](#)
- [Statutory guidance framework: controlling or coercive behaviour](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
- [Domestic abuse: statutory guidance July 2022](#)

Resources

- DSAP Briefings: Self-neglect, Domestic abuse, Covid-19 fraud, Home invasion
[Training - Durham Safeguarding Adults \(safeguardingdurhamadults.info\)](https://safeguardingdurhamadults.info)
- DSAP Risk threshold tool, Risk factors recording sheet, Checklist for providers
[Policies, procedures, and forms - Durham Safeguarding Adults \(safeguardingdurhamadults.info\)](https://safeguardingdurhamadults.info)

***To request other DSAP briefings** email Safeguarding_training@durham.gov.uk

- Tricky Friends film - to support and empower adults to speak to someone they trust when 'something's not right', to share with clients
[Safeguarding Adults Week 2021 - YouTube](#)
- What to do about self-neglect - short ADASS film to share with clients
[What to do about self-neglect - YouTube](#)
- NHS England Safeguarding App
Is available for everyone, not just the NHS
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/safeguarding/nhs-england-safeguarding-app/>
- The Herbert Protocol – support if adults are at risk of going missing
[Herbert Protocol \(durham.police.uk\)](https://www.durham.police.uk/Herbert-Protocol)
- 'Raising a concern with CQC: whistleblowing quick guide'
<https://www.cqc.org.uk/files/whistleblowing-quick-guide-raising-concern-cqc>
- Grooming
[Signs of Grooming in Adults - What to Watch Out For - Ann Craft Trust](#)