

## Making A Referral For A Safeguarding Adults Review

This information sheet has been produced to support referrers to understand what a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) is, and whether a referral is appropriate.

Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) have a statutory responsibility to consider arranging a SAR when the following three criteria are fulfilled:

1. An adult with care and support needs (as defined by the [Care Act 2014](#) and paragraphs 14.162 to 14.178 of [statutory guidance](#))<sup>1</sup> (whether or not the local authority has been meeting any of those needs)<sup>2</sup>.
2. Has:
  - Died as a result of abuse or neglect, whether known or suspected<sup>3</sup> **or**
  - Had not died, but has experienced serious abuse or neglect, whether known or suspected<sup>4</sup>.
3. **And** there is reasonable cause for concern about how the SSAB, members of it or other persons with relevant functions worked together to safeguard the adult.

Section 44 also provides for SABs to commission reviews of any other case involving an adult in its area with needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority has been meeting any of those needs)<sup>2</sup> where points 2 and 3 of the above criteria have not been met.

The purpose of a SAR is to promote learning and improve practice across the system, with the intention of reducing the risk of reoccurrence of the safeguarding incident.

The objectives of SARs include establishing:

- Lessons that can be learnt from how professionals and their agencies work together.
- How effective the safeguarding procedures are.
- Learning and good practice issues.
- How to improve local multi-disciplinary practice.
- Service improvement or development needs for one or more organisations.

The purpose of a SAR is to identify learning and is therefore **not** to:

- Be a primary investigation process.

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<sup>1</sup> In cases where an adult did not have any care and support needs during **all** of the events that the referral relates to, even if they now do (possibly as a consequence of the abuse or neglect they experienced), then this criterion would not be met.

<sup>2</sup> If the adult was not identified by the Local Authority (for example, they were not assessed) as having care and support needs under the Care Act prior to the events to which the referral relates, then you should consider whether there is evidence that they would have been had an assessment taken place.

<sup>3</sup> This can include where an individual has taken their own life as a result of abuse or neglect,

<sup>4</sup> In the context of SARs, something can be considered serious abuse or neglect where, for example the individual would have been likely to have died but for an intervention, or has suffered permanent harm or has reduced capacity or quality of life (whether because of physical or psychological effects) as a result of the abuse or neglect.

- Re-investigate a safeguarding incident.
- Apportion blame.
- Be a substitute for a complaints or disciplinary process.

SARs are an important part of safeguarding processes because:

- The findings or recommendations are used to develop action plans for making changes and improvements to services to reduce risks of future harm.
- The learning is shared with SAB partners and other Boards through briefings and events to support continuous development and support good practice.

### **Making a referral**

The SSAB will consider if the criteria for a SAR has been met and, if so, what type of review process could promote effective multi-agency learning and improvement action to prevent future deaths or serious harm occurring to adults with care and support needs.

When considering making a referral please ensure you:

1. Understand what a SAR is and is not, and consider the statutory criteria:
  - If the person is alive, has there been serious abuse/neglect?
  - Did the person have care and support needs at the time of the events to which the referral relates, or if they had not been assessed by the Local Authority can it be reasonably concluded that they did?
  - Has there been a concluded enquiry/investigation by an agency (e.g., Adult Social Care, Police or an NHS organisation)?
  - Is there an indication of multi-agency learning?

#### **And:**

- You are not asking the SSAB to consider a referral in place of primary enquiries/investigations, or before they have been completed. Sometimes it may be appropriate to inform the SSAB if there is a very significant process underway, but in most cases it is more appropriate to contact the SSAB once the outcomes are known.
  - You have checked with all the other organisation involved to make sure that there aren't other enquiries/investigations underway by other organisations that should be concluded before the referral is made?
  - You are not making the referral in order to resolve a professional difference – where this is the case the [SSAB's process](#) should be used.
  - Where an adult has died, you are not making a referral before the cause of death, and whether abuse or neglect was a factor, has been established.
2. You are not making the referral because you are unsure what happened next after your, or your organisations', involvement ended and want to make sure that everyone did what they should have done. This is because any concerns should be established by primary enquiries/investigations **before** a referral is made.

Discuss the appropriateness of a referral with your supervisor/ manager/ safeguarding lead:

- Consider the criteria above and the information in this information sheet.
  - Look at the referral form to see if you are able to evidence in all sections how the criteria is likely to be met.
3. Consider contacting the SSAB Business Manager using [ssab@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:ssab@somerset.gov.uk) if, following steps (1) and (2), if you still have any queries.
4. Complete the [SAR referral form](#):
- Fully and with as much detail as possible.
  - Being clear about:
    - What the investigation(s) have already concluded (e.g., Serious Incident, Root Cause Analysis, Safeguarding Enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act, Criminal investigation).
    - Which organisation has carried out the investigation (e.g., police, NHS, Adult Social Care).
    - What the outcome of the investigation(s) was
    - If there are any other processes underway, what these are and which organisations are involved, then state this on the referral form.
  - Ensure that you have listed all the organisations with involvement as failing to do so can slow the decision-making process considerably. For example, in the past we have only found out about some involvements when collating the information that has been returned as a result of an information request despite them being known to the referrer.
  - Submit the form via email to [ssab@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:ssab@somerset.gov.uk) along with any supporting documents, for example a report from an investigation that has been concluded.

### **Once you have submitted a referral**

- The referral will be triaged and reviewed by the SSAB SAR Subgroup which will consider the criteria, where necessary make information requests from the organisations involved and make a recommendation to the SAB's Independent Chair. This may include requesting and then reviewing detailed chronologies.
- The Independent Chair will then make a final decision on whether to commission a SAR, and the most appropriate way to undertake it. The decision-making process will also include consideration of the best way, if appropriate, to involve the person, family or carers in the process.
- Once a decision has been made you will be contacted by the SSAB to inform you of the decision.
- If the decision that is made is to commission the SAR then all contact will be made through the organisation's lead representative on the SSAB or, if different, the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) that the organisation has identified for the SAR.