



Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board: PRESS RELEASE Review recommends national change

Nationwide changes to the way care placements are managed are being called for following a review into the mistreatment of residents at a care home for people with autism in Somerset.

The recommendations are in a report published today (8 Feb) by the Somerset Safeguarding Adult Boards (SSAB) which sets out the findings of a Safeguarding Adults Review into events at Mendip House.

Mendip House, near Highbridge, was home to six people with autism and complex support needs. It was one of seven separately registered dwellings on a residential care home campus for adults with autism run by the National Autistic Society (NAS) called Somerset Court. At the time, Somerset Court was home to 42 adults with severe autism placed by 30 different local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups from across the UK. No Somerset residents were placed there.

Mendip House was closed by the NAS in November 2016 following multi-agency investigations into allegations from whistle-blowers of mistreatment and abuse of some residents by a number of staff which were made in May that year.

Several staff members were dismissed and the review highlights weaknesses in the system by which authorities making care placements outside of their local area monitor the care being provided.

All the residents have been found new placements in Somerset or further afield.

The SSAB requested the review to identify lessons that could be learned from the case and the report calls for change at national level. Its recommendations include:

- The Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and the Local Government Association carry out a national consultation on steps to regulate of the commissioning of care placements.
The aim being to make sure there is clear responsibility for local authorities and clinical commissioning groups to actively monitor the quality of care provided for the people they place.
- That the Care Quality Commission (CQC) makes clear in its inspection reports that it will no longer register 'campus' model care arrangements.
- That commissioners should be required to notify the local authority in the area where a placement is being made.
- The Care Provider Alliance issues its members with guidance about roles and responsibilities in quality assurance and safeguarding.

- A way of working be agreed by which information about grievances, disciplinaries and complaints can be shared with the CQC and pooled with local authority safeguarding referrals and intelligence from police and others.

Richard Crompton, independent Chair of the SSAB, said: “These reviews are not about apportioning blame, they are about making sure lessons are learned and improvements made.

“This happened to be in Somerset, but the weaknesses in the system are nationwide and must be considered at that level. That is why some of our key recommendations are addressed to the Department of Health and Social Care and national bodies.

“This board exists to protect vulnerable people and reduce the risk of incidents like those at Mendip House happening again. This will have been tremendously upsetting for the victims and their families and the board very much thanks them for the support they gave the investigation.

“I know that the agencies involved it have learned lessons and I hope that they can be learned nationally too”.

In addition to the recommendations made in by the review author the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board has agreed that it will review the quality assurance arrangements for all people currently placed outside of Somerset, and to monitor the implementation of any actions identified as being required.

The Safeguarding Somerset Adults Board is made up of all the organisations which have a role in preventing the neglect and abuse of adults, including: Somerset County Council, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, Avon & Somerset Constabulary, National Probation Service, Somerset Partnership NHS Trust, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, Musgrove Park Hospital, Yeovil District Hospital, Registered Care Provider Association and Healthwatch Somerset.

For more information about the SSAB and a copy of the report visit

www.ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk

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For more information contact Somerset County Council Communications Team on 01823 355020 pressoffice@somerset.gov.uk

Notes to editors

A ‘campus’ model of care is a small number of individual residents units managed and resourced centrally.