

Health and Wellbeing Board

24 January 2025

Durham Safeguarding Adults
Partnership

Annual Update



Report of Lesley Jeavons, Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership (DSAP) Independent Chair

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present to Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) the Annual Report for 2023/2024 of the Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership (DSAP), which provides assurance of safeguarding adults activity across County Durham.
- 2 To present the accompanying suite of documents including the Annual Report on a Page (Appendix 2) and Easy Read report (Appendix 3). The full suite of reports can be accessed via the [Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership website](#).

Executive summary

- 3 The Care Act 2014 outlines the requirement upon Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) to publish an annual report.
- 4 This is the ninth Annual Report which provides information about the achievements and challenges during the year 2023/2024.
- 5 Key data relating to safeguarding activity is included and based upon 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. Safeguarding adults data is also published within [NHS Digital Safeguarding Adults Collection](#).
- 6 The Annual Report outlines the DSAP progress in line with its vision and strategic priorities.
- 7 For the fourth year the DSAP has agreed that the Annual Report will be conveyed as a YouTube video via its website. The report can be accessed [here](#). The aim is to increase the attractiveness and accessibility with to improving the uptake of key safeguarding messages for County Durham.

- 8 The Annual Report includes headline messages of the learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews as well as partners' contributions to the work of the partnership.
- 9 Content of the Annual Report encompasses:
- Highlights
 - Message from our Independent Chair
 - Introduction
 - The Local Picture
 - Our Vision and Partners
 - The Role of the Independent Chair
 - Our Strategic Plan and Priorities
 - Safeguarding Adult Reviews
 - Safeguarding Adults in County Durham
 - Reflection on themes and trends
 - Safeguarding is Everybody's Business
 - Quality and Assurance
 - Looking ahead
 - What Partners Told Us

Recommendation(s)

- 10 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
- (a) Receive the Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership Annual Report suite for 2023/2024 and note the progress made by the Partnership.
 - (b) Note the future work of the Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership.

Background

- 11 The DSAP regularly reviews its strategic plans. Its current plan was agreed in September 2020, reviewed in 2021, refreshed towards the end of the year 2022/23 when partners focused upon the Coronavirus (Covid-19) recovery, and in May 2023 with an increased focus on the learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews and strengthened activity to capture 'lived experience' and the voice of adults. The refreshed version [2023-2026](#) is published on the DSAP website. The plan has three agreed priorities:
- (a) Reflect upon the local safeguarding picture, identify trends and innovative actions;
 - (b) Seek assurance from agencies and use that information to strengthen safeguarding;
 - (c) Share key messages with our community, our networks and work co-productively with adults.
- 12 The DSAP Annual Report is minded to its vision to support adults at risk of harm to prevent abuse happening and when it does occur, to act swiftly to achieve good outcomes, consulting with the Local Healthwatch as a source of support to inform DSAP activity. The Local Healthwatch was consulted in relation to its revised strategic plan.

Safeguarding Adults Assurance

- 13 The proceeding section outlines highlight messages that offer a level of assurance to HWB and of safeguarding activity during 2023/2024.
- 14 Under the Care Act 2014, the Partnership should undertake Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) when certain criteria are met, for example, when an adult with care and support needs has died or been seriously harmed, and there are concerns about how partners worked together to protect the adult. SARs give a focus upon what can be learnt about improving practice, what worked well, and about cooperation between organisations. SARs are not about blaming any individual or organisation.
- 15 During the year one SAR was completed and reported to the partnership. One SAR was ongoing at the end of the year.
- 16 Examples of emerging themes from the SARs include working with adults who self-neglect or who misuse alcohol and substances; application of and attention to the Mental Capacity Act 2005; applying risk guidance and recognition of risk; and creating safer organisational cultures.

- 17 As a consequence, the DSAP held key events for practitioners in safeguarding week 2023/2024, dedicated sessions for partners, and a range of practitioner briefings, newsflashes and ebuletins.
- 18 Further activity related to the emerging themes from SARs has included a multi-agency training and workshop offer, partnership development days, and a range of published briefings such as a self-neglect resource pack, and continuation of 'The Mental Capacity Act: what good looks like' suite of resources.
- 19 The DSAP published the full Report and easy read Report of the Whorlton Hall Safeguarding Adults Review in May 2023. The review findings place a lens upon national learning. The DSAP held a Summit to explore the local and national action plan from that review in January in 2024 and will take forward any local activity into the next year.
- 20 Closed/Toxic Cultures training was delivered by the Independent Chair of the Partnership to both social work practitioners and care providers, and it is planned to roll out Part 2 for next year.
- 21 The DSAP has addressed other nationally emerging themes with briefings, newsletter articles and awareness raising activity, covering a range of topics including Carers Week, Deaf Awareness Week, Co-Production Week, and Safer Internet Day.
- 22 Other publications developed to support providers included briefings on Falls, Resident to Resident Abuse, and criminal Offences, and the new procedure Managing Professional Differences. During the year we updated the Professional Curiosity briefing and also updated the Skin Damage Toolkit again with the 2024 revised Government Guidance.
- 23 A key focus continued to be the use and application of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, and embedding human rights into safeguarding adults training offers.
- 24 The DSAP held its fourth virtual Safeguarding Week in conjunction with Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safe Durham Partnership, with 496 places taken up across 19 webinars on a range of topics.
- 25 During 2023/2024 there were 56,674 visits to the DSAP website and 2,460 visits to the 'report abuse' page, an increase of 37 percent.
- 26 There were 59 core and single agency training courses delivered through 2023/24, with 811 places taken up (some delegates attend more than one course). We awarded 475 certificates to people who completed the DSAP Raising a Concern Workbook and passed the assessment for the same period.

- 27 All of our easy read booklets are written for adults with care and support needs. We updated the booklets during the year. Certificates were awarded for 'Stop Abuse Now' completed by 32 adults and 'Staying Safe' completed by 27 adults. The easy read 'What happens after abuse is reported?' was also updated.
- 28 We developed the easy read booklet, 'Being safe using your phone and social media' following requests from a provider and commissioner and published in January 2024. Certificates were awarded on completion by four adults.
- 29 Reported safeguarding concerns during 2023/2024 saw an average of 174 reports a week. As a partnership this offers assurance that reports have continued to be submitted. Not all reports require a safeguarding response.
- 30 When adults are at risk of or experiencing abuse Durham County Council Adult and Health Services may need to trigger the duty to undertake a safeguarding enquiry (Section 42 of the Care Act 2014). A key element of that safeguarding practice is to place emphasis upon the 'voice of adults'. People in receipt of safeguarding services are asked 'what would they like to happen'.
- 31 The DSAP is assured that the voice of adults is central to its safeguarding practice. From the year end data of adults or their representatives who were asked and expressed desired outcomes, 94 percent in concluded enquiries had their outcomes fully (76 percent) or partially (18 percent) met.
- 32 The DSAP were further assured about practice where risk was identified, in that risk was reduced or removed for 86 percent of concluded enquiries. There will always be a percentage of enquiries where the 'risk remains' following a safeguarding intervention, and this can be linked to the autonomous decision making of adults who may choose to live with a level of risk.

Looking Ahead

- 33 The DSAP will continue its focus into 2024/25 on priorities of raising awareness and improving practice particularly in relation to working with adults who self-neglect or misuse alcohol or substances, professional curiosity, closed/toxic organisational cultures, risk assessment, and proper use of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- 34 Local and national activity in response to the findings of the Whorlton Hall Safeguarding Adults Review will continue, with the establishment of the national organisational abuse expert reference group.

- 35 The partnership will maintain its focus upon key learning opportunities and strengthening its safeguarding offer, inclusive of Toxic Cultures training.
- 36 The Partnership will commission a local 'expert by experience' reference group led by lived experience leads with support from Durham Enable. The remit of the group is aimed at supporting Board priorities and activities.
- 37 Furthermore, it will strengthen its wider community related activities inclusive of empowerment activity and will engage a community reference group for co-production work as well as delivering community-based engagement events in 2024/25.

Conclusion

- 38 The Annual Report provides a comprehensive overview of the work of the DSAP during 2023/24 and the priorities for 2024/25.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Care 2014 states that Safeguarding Adults Boards must publish an annual report and strategic plan, and that the report should outline its progress against that that plan as well as learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews.

Finance

Continuing financial pressures on public services remain a challenge for member agencies and contributory partners of the DSAP. The DSAP monitors risk and challenges through its governance arrangements, including business continuity. Durham County Council ensure it includes any such areas in those arrangements.

Consultation and Engagement

The annual report is consulted upon with all partner agencies. It consults with the local Healthwatch on its strategic plan. The DSAP offers opportunity to partner agencies to submit an annual overview of their own contributions to the work of the DSAP for inclusion within the annual report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Adult safeguarding is linked to and covered in DSAP policies and procedures with equalities impact assessments undertaken when and where appropriate.

Climate Change

The DSAP Business Unit is minded to the impact of climate change and aims to reduce its carbon footprint where possible. Emissions due to DSAP activity are in line with other County Council activity. For this report they include power use due to online processing and storage; and heating, lighting, travel, and other emissions by use of staff both homeworking and office working in line with the Council hybrid working model.

Human Rights

Upholding human rights is a fundamental element of the DSAP core activity. The DSAP and relevant partners within the context of safeguarding adults should continue to ensure that they are embedded in policy and practice.

Crime and Disorder

Adult safeguarding is linked to and covered within the DSAP policies and procedures. There is a close working relationship with the Safe Durham Partnership and working arrangements across agencies and broader

partnership including but not limited to the County Durham Anti-Slavery Network. Durham Constabulary is a statutory partner of the DSAP.

Staffing

The sustaining of adult safeguarding activities requires continued priority to staffing to ensure adequate resource is maintained. The continued contribution to staffing from partner agencies is supportive of a dedicated support function to the DSAP, there can be continued pressure for capacity within the staffing function when unforeseen situations arise.

Accommodation

No impact

Risk

The risks associated with not appropriately managing responses to safeguarding are extremely high and include risks of ongoing abuse and neglect and the risk of serious organisational and/or reputational damage to statutory and non-statutory organisations in County Durham.

The DSAP puts considerable effort into training and awareness raising to ensure that abuse and neglect is recognised and reported. Screening of all reported concerns takes place, and they are directed appropriately to ensure the most appropriate response is taken.

Any risks identified under the umbrella of the DSAP is updated within a risk and challenge log which is reviewed quarterly. The impact of training is regularly explored and is reported annually. Partner agencies of the DSAP are committed to improvement activity. In 2022-2023 the partnership strengthened its arrangements through updates from Durham County Council, Principal Social Worker. The partnership also receipted update of three multi-agency reflective exercises related to provider concerns. That work will continue with further reflective exercises planned for future board reporting.

Procurement

The adoption of safeguarding principles in the procurement of health and social care services is essential. An example is the DSAP support for Durham County Council checking supply chains for modern slavery and a focus upon safeguarding within regionally agreed procurement frameworks for Safeguarding Adults Reviews.