



7-minute briefings: What is a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR)?

Background

Since the Care Act 2014, every Local Authority has had a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB). Their main objective is to assure itself that local adult safeguarding arrangements and partners act to help and protect adults in its area who are eligible for support under the Care Act. Alongside its two other duties - to publish a strategic plan and annual report - it must also conduct Safeguarding Adults Reviews in accordance with s.44 of the 2014 Care Act

What is a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR)?

SABs must arrange a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) when an adult in its area dies or comes to serious harm because of abuse or neglect, whether known or suspected, and there is concern that partner agencies could have worked more effectively to protect the adult.

SARs seek to determine what relevant agencies and individuals involved might have done differently that could have prevented harm or death, so that lessons can be learned from the case and applied to future cases to prevent similar harm occurring again.

Its purpose is not to hold any individual or organisation to account. Other processes exist for that, including criminal and disciplinary procedures, employment law and professional regulatory bodies such as the [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#), the [Nursing and Midwifery Council](#) and [Social Work England](#) for example. SARs can also highlight effective practice.

Who is involved in a SAR and what happens?

Although Safeguarding Adults Boards lead SARs, they often bring in external, impartial people with experience of working within criminal, or health and social care organisations at senior levels to undertake the review itself. These commissioned consultants, often called 'independent authors', must have no connection with any of the organisations or personnel involved in the review.

Organisations involved in the care and treatment of the person under review must co-operate with the SAR.

Once a SAR has been agreed, an independent author is commissioned, and terms of reference and key lines of enquiry established. Requests for information, including chronologies of events and documentation are made to the agencies involved. Sometimes, interviews or learning events are conducted. Finally, the independent author begins writing their report, consulting on, and sharing drafts until a final version is agreed

Types of review and the involvement of family, victims & others

The SAB should be primarily concerned with weighing up what type of review process will promote effective learning and improvement to prevent future deaths or serious harm occurring again. There are several different types of review possible: appreciative enquiries, thematic reviews and [SCIE's 'Learning Together'](#) reviews being just three examples

It is common to seek the involvement of the person who has been abused and/or their families in SARs. Whilst they can expect to be consulted as part of the process, they should be supported to understand the limits of their contribution. However, a good SAR report should provide answers for families and friends of adults who have died or been seriously abused or neglected

What happens when the SAR is completed?

Once the independent author has finished their report, it is usually published on the SAB's website.

Once published, the SAB draw up an action plan listing everything that all agencies, not just those involved, should do to ensure that the lessons learnt are implemented. SABs monitor the progress of these action plans to completion.

Whilst SAR reports are legal requirements, their recommendations are not, and agencies do not have to agree to implement all of the changes listed.

Links with other statutory reviews

In setting up a SAR, the SAB should also consider how the process could dovetail with any other investigations that are running in parallel, such as a child Serious Case Review or Domestic Homicide Review, a criminal investigation or an inquest. It may be helpful when running a SAR and DHR or child SCR in parallel to establish at the outset all the relevant areas that need to be addressed, to reduce the potential for duplication for families and staff

What to do: How to make a SAR referral

A referral to the Safeguarding Adults Review Sub-Group can be made by any partner agency. However, it should be made on the SAR Referral Form with the agreement and sign-off from the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board representative for the agency. If the agency does not have a Board member, the referral should be agreed by the Safeguarding Adults Lead within that agency. If further guidance is needed in relation to making a referral, please email the Safeguarding Adults Strategic Team.

If you are concerned about an adult at risk, contact the MASH on 0300 500 80 90, or [Report abuse or neglect of an adult | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

[NSAB Procedures](#)

[NSAB Resources](#)