

# Safeguarding Experiences Review

Report to the Wolverhampton  
Safeguarding Adults Board Meeting  
on 15th September 2016



## 1. Introduction

The Wolverhampton Safeguarding Adults Board commissioned Healthwatch Wolverhampton to conduct a research project with adult service users to gain further insight into their experiences of safeguarding. The project, known as the ‘Safeguarding Experiences Review’ consisted of two parts:

Part One involved a series of focus groups facilitated by One Voice, consisting of carers, service users and advocates to discuss their views on safeguarding and their understanding of the processes in place to support them if they had a safeguarding concern.

Part Two consisted of structured interviews with adults who have been through a safeguarding review to better understand their experiences. Further details are included in the Methodology section of the report.

## 2. Executive Summary

### 2.1 Part One

The key themes emerging from Part One of the Safeguarding Experiences Review were presented to the Safeguarding Adults Executive Board at their meeting in February 2016 and are summarised below.

- 2.1.1 Awareness of Safeguarding:** Most participants did not understand the term “safeguarding” and there was a general lack of awareness of the people and systems in place to protect them from abuse and neglect.
- 2.1.2 Trust of Professionals:** There was general distrust of professionals who were sometimes seen as unhelpful. Participants felt that it takes a long time to get action from a professional leading to change, during which time people are still in the vulnerable situation.
- 2.1.3 Access to Support:** Some of the participants with mental health issues felt that there was “too much pressure on resources and too little care for patients”. There was a shared perception that social workers “only seem to visit when they want to reduce the money available for care” and they have little concern for what happens afterwards.
- 2.1.4 Access to Information:** None of the participants had a clear idea of where to go for help or what services were available
- 2.1.5 Role of Advocates:** Those participants who had used advocates, felt that they were better able to access the help they needed and that advocates had facilitated this more quickly.
- 2.1.6 Choice:** It was felt that, whilst Direct Payments offered choice, this choice can only be effective if people have both capacity and knowledge about what is available.

## **2.2 Part Two**

One observation from the second part of the research is the inconsistency in the quality of experiences with the safeguarding reviews. The findings can be summarised, as follows:

### **2.2.1 Reporting the Safeguarding Concerns**

For the people who did not already know, it was difficult to find out who to talk to at the Council about their safeguarding concerns. Most said that their concerns were listened to and that the safeguarding process was explained, but not all. Provision of an information leaflet and the offer of advocacy support was inconsistent.

### **4.2.2 Managing the Safeguarding Concerns**

There was a general feeling that the participants' views and wishes were listened to, that they felt involved in all decisions and were kept informed of progress at all stages. However, not all of the interviewees felt this way. Less than half were involved in putting together a Safeguarding Plan.

### **4.2.3 Outcomes of the Safeguarding Concern**

Satisfaction with the outcomes was inconsistent. Criticisms included the lack of follow through or review and the feeling of not being able to influence the outcome.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Part One**

For Part One of the Safeguarding Experiences Review, four focus groups were facilitated during December 2015 and January 2016 by One Voice through the organisations they work with. These groups were selected, because their members are often in, or previously have been in, vulnerable situations and they would be able to offer unique insight to the Review. The groups involved were:

- One Voice - disabled advocates;
- Aquarius - service users with substance misuse issues and their carers;
- Portobello Community Centre - carer support group;
- Zion City Tabernacle - mental health special interest carers' group.

The focus groups were conducted by a moderator using a semi-structured format and a recorder to make notes of the discussion. The topics of focus were: feeling safe/unsafe; understanding of safeguarding processes and terminology; and reporting of safeguarding concerns. The list of questions and prompts is included in Appendix A.

There were 26 participants across the four focus groups. Eight of these (31%) were advocates, 12 (46%) were carers and 6 (23%) were service users. The groups contained a cross-section of ethnicities (69% white and 31% black and minority ethnic communities) and included people with disabilities.

A thematic analysis of the recorded notes was undertaken and the findings of the research are outlined in the Section 4.1 of this report.

### **3.2 Part Two**

For the second part of the project, the City of Wolverhampton Council supplied Healthwatch Wolverhampton with the contact details of 77 adults who had experienced a safeguarding review and had consented to participate in the research. Having contacted these individuals, seven agreed to be interviewed for the Safeguarding Experiences Review, which is equivalent to a self-selecting sample size of 9%. Due to the small sample size, numbers of responses will be used in the report rather than percentages.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face using a structured questionnaire with a blend of closed and open questions. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix B. The responses were analysed quantitatively for the closed questions and descriptively for the open questions and the findings are summarised in Section 4.2.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1 Part One**

#### **4.1.1 Awareness of Safeguarding**

Most participants did not understand the term “safeguarding”. None of them, other than three advocates who have received specific training, were aware that there is a safeguarding team at the Council. With the exception of the advocates, the groups were unaware that there was a number they could contact if they had concerns over their safety and welfare. They did not know there was action that could be taken before it reached the seriousness of a crime against them, in which circumstances they would contact the Police.

#### **4.1.2 Trust of Professionals**

There was general distrust of professionals who were sometimes seen as unhelpful at best, and often identified as obstructive or dismissive. Participants felt that it takes a long time to get action from a professional leading to change, during which time people are still in the vulnerable situation. It was felt that the exception to this was responsiveness of the Police to serious, violent incidents.

#### **4.1.3 Access to Support**

Some of the participants with mental health issues felt that Community Psychiatric Nurses had been the most helpful support workers, but could no longer access this service, they believed, due to “too much pressure on resources and too little care for patients”.

Many of the participants had a Social Worker, but there was a shared perception that “they only seem to visit when they want to reduce the money available for care” and they have little concern for what happens afterwards. It was felt that Social Workers dismissed issues that were raised without further investigation and didn’t offer information about other sources of help.

The groups agreed that there should be safe places to go, where their concerns could be discussed with someone who would understand and be non-judgmental.

#### **4.1.4 Access to Information**

None of the participants had a clear idea of where to go for help or what services were available. It was felt that a single point of contact for carers with a clearly identifiable telephone number would be helpful.

#### **4.1.5 Role of Advocates**

Many of the participants saw the role of advocates as crucial. They felt that the advocate would be listened to when the individuals and their carers were not. Those participants who had used advocates, felt that they were better able to access the help they needed and that advocates had facilitated this more quickly.

#### **4.1.6 Choice**

It was felt that, whilst Direct Payments offered choice, this choice can only be effective if people have both capacity and knowledge about what is available. For example, one participant felt that it would be helpful for the Council to have a list of trusted providers for services such as cleaning, so they would not be vulnerable to theft.

### **4.2 Part Two**

The findings from the closed questions are summarised below under the headings that correspond to the sections of the questionnaire. A table containing a full breakdown of responses by question can be found in Appendix C.

#### **4.2.1 Reporting the Safeguarding Concerns**

Of the seven interviewees, four knew who to talk to at the Council about their safeguarding concerns. The remaining three reported that it was difficult or very difficult to find out who to talk to. When they first contacted the Council, five of the seven felt that their concerns were listened to, but two strongly disagreed. Five interviewees said that the safeguarding process was explained and three of these said that the explanation was clear and understandable.

Four of the seven respondents were told the name of the person undertaking the safeguarding enquiry and how to contact them. Four (not the same four) were offered an advocate and three were given a leaflet explaining the safeguarding process.

#### **4.2.2 Managing the Safeguarding Concerns**

Six of the interviewees felt that their views and wishes were listened to, however the other strongly disagreed. This individual used strong language in the interview, describing feelings of being bullied and being called a liar. Five of the seven felt involved in all decisions and five (not the same five) were satisfied that they were kept informed of progress at all stages of the process.

Four of the seven respondents attended meetings to discuss their situation. All four reported that the meetings were held at a time and place that suited them and that the purpose of the meeting was fully explained. Three of the four were told who would be there and what they would be doing.

Of the seven interviewees, only three were involved in putting together a Safeguarding Plan.

#### **4.2.3 Outcomes of the Safeguarding Concern**

The agreed actions fully matched what four of the respondents wanted to happen and partially matched for two of them, who felt that they were happy with the agreed outcomes, but that the follow through was lacking. For example, in one case, a review was agreed but never took place. One respondent felt that the investigation “took one perspective and continued with it” and she was not listened to, resulting in an outcome that she was unhappy with.

Four respondents fully agreed that the actions helped them to feel safe, one partially and one did not know. The reason given for the partially safe response was that their situation began to change shortly after the enquiry, but they received no follow-up support as the case had been closed.

#### **4.2.4 Feedback on Experiences and Improving the Safeguarding Process**

Two of the respondents offered very positive comments about their experiences of the safeguarding process. The first of these said that there was “nothing to be improved. She reported that she was “always kept safe” and well informed and that the process was effectively managed. The second respondent to make positive comments had been through the process twice and the second time was much improved on her first safeguarding review. The second time, she “was made to feel very safe” and she had the support of an advocate so “felt listened to”. Her experience of the process first time left her feeling “unlistened to and not believed in what [she] was saying”.

Three of the respondents, including the one whose experiences are described in the previous paragraph, provided negative feedback. For one of these individuals, there were strong

feelings of not being listened to or her wishes being taken into account. Feedback from another respondent related to the poor follow up after the Safeguarding Plan had been agreed. It was agreed that there would be a review of her situation, but this never took place. When she tried to contact the authority to chase the review “no one followed up [her] calls” and she was later told that her case was closed.

One of the participants offered some constructive feedback on how to improve the safeguarding process, including an easy read flowchart, customizing information for “different types of individuals” and clearly communicating the timescales for feedback. These ideas are considered from a broader perspective in the recommendations of this report.

## **5. Equalities Issues**

Information was collected on the nine protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010, for those participants who have been through a safeguarding review, to identify any discriminatory practices within the process. A profile of the participants is included in Appendix D. All seven of the interviewees reported that they had not felt unfairly treated because of their protected characteristics.

## **6. Conclusions**

A number of issues were identified by the focus groups composed of individuals who are, or previously have been, in vulnerable situations. In terms of the safeguarding process, there was little awareness amongst these groups of the people and systems in place to protect them from abuse and neglect. The information about where to go for help and what services were available was not generally reaching these groups. Where information or advice had been sought from their professional support workers, the groups felt that communication and support was not fully meeting their needs.

For those individuals who had raised a concern and had been through the safeguarding process, some had had difficulties in finding out about how to report their concerns. Once the process was initiated, there was inconsistency in the quality of their experiences. Some of the issues raised were due to inconsistencies in practice, for example whether they had received an information leaflet or been offered an advocate.

Other issues were related to the safeguarding review not being personalised to meet their needs, for example clear explanations that were understandable or discussions around individual expectations and desired outcomes. There was a sense of not having ownership of the safeguarding review outcomes for a number of participants who were not involved in producing their Safeguarding Plan. One of the respondents felt that her views and wishes were disregarded completely.

## **7. Recommendations**

### **7.1 Raising Awareness of Safeguarding**

It is recommended that:

- A programme of public engagement be developed to raise awareness of the role of Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub in protecting the citizens of Wolverhampton from abuse and neglect. This programme is to include those groups who are at risk of experiencing safeguarding issues. For this research project, those groups included: disabled people, people with substance misuse issues, carers and people with mental health needs, however the scope could be widened based on local knowledge and professional intelligence.
- The contact numbers for reporting concerns (01902 551199/552999) be more widely distributed including greater visibility in public places.

## **7.2 Making Safeguarding Personal**

It is recommended that:

- A method be adopted for involving people who have been through a safeguarding review, so that processes and practices can become more inclusive and personalised using their knowledge and experiences. A number of research participants have indicated that they would be willing to be involved further, so this could be the starting point for developing a reference group for the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board.
- The reference group has a remit that includes:
  - Improving awareness of access to safeguarding help and support
  - Developing a range of person-centred information and advice to improve choice and control at an individual level
  - Reviewing communication and developing standards for engaging with service users
  - Developing its own priorities and agenda and having a forum to express these to influence change
- The findings of this research be shared with social workers and other relevant practitioners to obtain their feedback, as this was not within the scope of the research. This will enable a better understanding of how to remove the barriers to person-centred, outcomes-focused practice.



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## APPENDIX A      Questions and Prompts for the Focus Groups

1.    a) Feeling safe - what attitudes, behaviours, environments encourage you to feel safe/looked after/cared for?  
  
      b) Feeling unsafe - what attitudes, behaviours, environments do not encourage you to feel safe/looked after/cared for?  
  
      c) Who is responsible for keeping you safe?  
  
      d) Who makes you feel unsafe?
2.    What do people understand by these words:
  - a) Abuse;
  - b) Safeguarding;
  - c) Bullying;
  - d) Support?
3.    a) What are your experiences of telling someone that you felt unsafe?  
  
      b) Could you offer short examples of when you felt unsafe when someone was looking after you and what happened?

**Name of person answering the questions:**

**Contact phone number and/or email address:**

**Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to talk to us about your experiences of reporting abuse or neglect. The Council wants to improve the ways in which people are supported to do this, so your opinions matter to us.**

**Some difficult words that may need explaining:**

**Adult safeguarding** is the way we try to work with you to protect you from abuse or neglect. This may include helping you to protect yourself.

**Abuse** is when someone else causes you harm. This can be when someone bullies or hurts you. It can be when someone makes you feel bad or makes you do things you don't want to do. It can be when someone takes your money without your permission.

**Neglect** is when someone is not caring for you properly. This can be when someone doesn't help you to put on clean, warm clothes. It can be when someone doesn't help you to eat enough food or keep yourself or your home clean. It can be when someone doesn't help you to stay healthy.

**For each question, please tick the response which best answers the question.**

**SECTION 1: REPORTING WHEN YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW DID NOT FEEL SAFE?**

1) Did you raise your safeguarding concerns...

**About yourself?**

**On behalf of someone you provide a service for?**

(for example, if you are a care worker or social worker)

**On behalf of someone you care for?**

(for example, if you are a friend or family member)

**Other, please state:**

2) Did you know who to talk to at the Council about safeguarding concerns?

**Yes** (Please go to Question 4)

**No** (Please go to Question 3)

3) How easy was it to find out who to talk to?

**Very easy**

**Easy**

**Neither easy nor difficult**

**Difficult**

**Very difficult**

4) When you first contacted the Council, would you agree that your concerns were listened to?

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree nor Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

5) Was the safeguarding process explained? (**Interviewer:** The safeguarding process is what happens after a concern has been reported)

**Yes** (Please go to Question 6)

**No** (Please go to Question 7)

6) Would you agree that the safeguarding process was explained in clear and understandable language?

**Strongly agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree nor Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

7) Were you told the name of the person undertaking your safeguarding enquiry and how to contact them?

**Yes**

**No**

**Unsure**

8) Were you offered an advocate? (**Interviewer:** An advocate is someone who can support you so that your views are respected and your rights are met)

**Yes**

**No**

**Unsure**

9) Were you given a copy of a leaflet explaining the safeguarding process?

**Yes**

**No**

**Unsure**

## **SECTION 2: YOUR SAFEGUARDING CONCERN**

10) Would you agree that your views and wishes were listened to throughout the enquiry?

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree nor Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

11) Would you agree that you were involved in all the decisions that were made at every stage?

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree nor Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

12) Were you satisfied that you were kept informed of the progress being made at all stages?

**Very Satisfied**

**Satisfied**

**Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied**

**Dissatisfied**

**Very Dissatisfied**

13) Did you attend any meetings that were arranged to discuss your situation?

**Yes**

**(Please go to Question 14)**

**No**

**(Please go to Question 15)**

14) Would you agree with the following statements?

a) The meeting(s) was (were) held at a time and place that suited me

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree nor Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

b) The purpose of the meeting(s) was fully explained

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree nor Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

c) I was told who would be there and what they would be doing

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree nor Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

15) Were you involved in putting together a Safeguarding Plan? (**Interviewer:** a Safeguarding Plan is a written record of any action or support that may be needed to help keep you safe)?

**Yes**

**No**

**Unsure**





**SECTION 3: OUTCOMES OF YOUR SAFEGUARDING ENQUIRY**

16) Did the agreed actions match what you wanted to happen?

**Fully**

**Partially**

**Not at all**

**If partially/not at all, please explain**

17) Did the agreed actions help you to feel safe?

**Fully**

**Partially**

**Not at all**

**If partially/not at all, please explain**

**SECTION 4: YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON YOUR SAFEGUARDING EXPERIENCES**

18) Is there anything about the safeguarding process that could have been improved?

19) Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your safeguarding experiences?

20) The Council would like to form a group of Wolverhampton people whose opinions can influence decisions about safeguarding. Would you like us to contact you later in the year with more details of how you could take part?

**Yes**

(If yes, we will provide your name and contact details to an officer at the Council, who will be in touch)

**No**

## SECTION 5: CONCLUSION OF INTERVIEW AND EQUALITIES MONITORING FORM

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing your experiences with us today. We will produce a report for the Safeguarding team to help them to improve their services.

We will not name you in the report and we will not pass your personal details on to others, unless you have said you would like us to contact you again.

To find out whether the needs of different people are considered, we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself.

- 1) Age    **Prefer not to say**
- 2) Sex **Male** **Female** **Prefer not to say**
- 3) Is your gender the same as the sex you were born?  
**Yes** **No** **Prefer not to say**
- 4) Are you disabled?  
**Yes** **No** **Prefer not to say**
- 5) Religion  
**Buddhism**  
**Christianity**  
**Hinduism**  
**Islam**  
**Judaism**  
**No Religion**  
**Sikhism**  
**Other Religion (Please State)**  
**Prefer not to say**
- 6) Race  
**Asian**  
**Black**  
**Mixed**  
**White**

**Other**  
**Prefer not to say**

7) Sexual Orientation    **Bisexual**  
**Gay/Lesbian**  
**Straight/Heterosexual**  
**Prefer not to say**

8) Marital Status        **Divorced**  
**Married/In a civil partnership**  
**Separated**  
**Single**  
**Widow/widower**  
**Prefer not to say**

9) a) Are you pregnant?

**Yes**            **No**            **Prefer not to say**

b) Have you given birth in the last 26 weeks?

**Yes**            **No**            **Prefer not to say**

10) When you were going through the safeguarding process, do you feel that you were treated unfairly because of any of these characteristics?

**Yes**            **No**            **Unsure**        **Prefer not to say**

**If Yes or Unsure, would you like to tell us about it?**

**APPENDIX C**

**Responses to Interview Questions**

Question	Number of Responses												
Did you know who to talk to at the Council about safeguarding concerns?	yes	4	no	3									
How easy was it to find out who to talk to?	very easy	0	easy	0	neither	1	difficult	1	very difficult	1	not applicable	4	
When you first contacted the Council, would you agree that your concerns were listened to?	strongly agree	3	agree	2	neither	0	disagree	0	strongly disagree	2			
Was the safeguarding process explained?	yes	5	no	2									
Would you agree that the safeguarding process was explained in clear and understandable language?	strongly agree	0	agree	3	neither	1	disagree	0	strongly disagree	0	not applicable	2	not completed 1
Were you told the name of the person undertaking your safeguarding enquiry and how to contact them?	yes	4	no	3	unsure	0							
Were you offered an advocate?	yes	4	no	3	unsure	0							
Were you given a copy of a leaflet explaining the safeguarding process?	yes	3	no	4	unsure	0							
Would you agree that your views and wishes were listened to throughout the enquiry?	strongly agree	1	agree	5	neither	0	disagree	0	strongly disagree	1			
Would you agree that you were involved in all the decisions that were made at every stage?	strongly agree	1	agree	4	neither	1	disagree	0	strongly disagree	1			
Were you satisfied that you were kept informed of the progress being made at all stages?	very satisfied	1	satisfied	4	neither	0	dissatisfied	2	very dissatisfied	0			
Did you attend any meetings that were arranged to discuss your situation?	yes	4	no	3									
The meeting(s) was (were) held at a time and place that suited me	strongly agree	2	agree	2	neither	0	disagree	0	strongly disagree	0	not applicable	3	
The purpose of the meeting(s) was fully explained	strongly agree	1	agree	3	neither	0	disagree	0	strongly disagree	0	not applicable	3	
I was told who would be there and what they would be doing	strongly agree	1	agree	2	neither	0	disagree	1	strongly disagree	0	not applicable	3	
Were you involved in putting together a Safeguarding Plan?	yes	3	no	4									
Did the agreed actions match what you wanted to happen?	fully	4	partial	2	not at all	1							
Did the agreed actions help you to feel safe?	fully	4	partial	1	not at all	1	don't know	1					

## **APPENDIX D**

## **Protected Characteristics**

Characteristic	Number of Responses							
	20-39	2	40-59	3	60-79	1	80+	1
Age Range	20-39	2	40-59	3	60-79	1	80+	1
Sex	male	2	female	5				
Gender same as birth	yes	7						
Disabled	yes	2	no	5				
Religion	christian	3	no religion	2	sikh	1	other	1
Race	asian	1	black	2	white	4		
Sexual Orientation	bisexual	1	straight	5	prefer not to say	1		
Marital Status	married	1	separated	1	single	4	widowed	1
Pregnant	no	7						
Given birth in last 26 weeks	no	7						

