



**Your experiences of the  
adult safeguarding process**

December 2020

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# Background

Healthwatch Wiltshire is an independent service which exists to speak up for local people. Our role is to make sure that the health and care system in Wiltshire reflects what local people expect and need. We listen to your opinions and experiences of health and social care services and feed back your views to the people who plan, pay for and deliver health and care services (the commissioners and providers).

Healthwatch Wiltshire has a seat on the Wiltshire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB). This is made up of professionals from the local authority, the police, health services and other local organisations and they work together to prevent abuse and neglect where possible and safeguard vulnerable adults across our county. Our role on the board is to ensure that the voices of local people are heard.

## What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It applies when an adult:

- has needs for care and support
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

When there is a concern that alleged abuse and/or neglect has happened to an adult with care and support needs, Wiltshire Council has a duty to investigate. This process is called safeguarding adults.

Effective safeguarding involves organisations working together to prevent the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while ensuring that the views and wishes of an individual are at the heart of decisions that affect them wherever it's possible.

# What we did

The safeguarding team historically has gathered little feedback from people that have been through the process and wanted to hear people's views so that the service could further develop and improve.

We worked with the Safeguarding Adults Board to develop a short survey that could be shared with people that had been through the safeguarding process to find what had worked well, how supported they felt and what could be improved.

This was shared widely between June 2019 and March 2020 through our voluntary sector colleagues and our own channels. The safeguarding investigating officers also took the survey out with them and asked people to complete and return them us. People had the option to complete the survey over the telephone with a member of the Healthwatch Wiltshire team and we offered home visits to allow everyone the opportunity to participate if they wished.

Unfortunately, we had a low response rate and so in early 2020 we shared the survey with the Local Independent Advocacy Service, who agreed to help facilitate completion with those that they were supporting through the safeguarding process. The survey was also made available at strategy and review meetings to try and encourage more participation.

In total, we received 16 responses from a mix of professionals, relatives and/or carers and the individuals involved. We completed the survey via telephone interview with one person.

## Limitations

Safeguarding is a sensitive issue and a difficult topic to engage with people about. [Local authorities in other areas of the country](#) have reported using a range of methods to gather feedback, including working with independent bodies such as Healthwatch, and have also struggled to find people who are willing to share their experiences.

Unfortunately, Covid-19 affected the end of this engagement and the decision was made to halt the exercise and compile what we had found so far.

This report highlights the feedback that we received during the timeframe set out above. Due to the low response rate, it is not a representative portrayal of all people that have been through the process but can give some insight in to how the process works for people.

It is also important to note that when completing the survey, some chose not to answer every question.

# What people told us

## Awareness of the process

We asked people if they were aware that they were part of a safeguarding process and if the reason for the investigation had been explained to them.

Ten of the 16 said that they were aware and nine (out of 13 respondents) felt that the reason had been explained to them. Some said that they were kept informed by their social worker or the care provider that raised the concern.

Yes – the social worker kept us informed.

[It was] explained to us from the company who provided the cover, who also reported the safeguarding issue.

Six of the 16 people said that they were not aware that they were part of a safeguarding investigation and four (out of 13 respondents) said that the reason wasn't explained to them. One person said that it was explained but not until a few months later.

Not immediately, approximately three months after the event.

## Support and involvement

Nine (out of 15) people said that they felt supported and involved through the process. They said that they had been kept informed, things were explained to them and they felt support was there when needed.

Everything explained and asked if help was needed and support was there if needed.

I have been kept informed by all departments of the investigations.

Six said that they didn't feel supported and involved. They said that they didn't receive the information that they needed or didn't receive a response when they tried to contact the safeguarding team. It was also mentioned here that there was a lack of follow-up and some said that they felt that they had to 'drive' the investigation forward themselves to make sure systems were in place for others in the future.

I was basically told to contact the safeguarding concerns GP. There was no ownership taken in the referral and no follow-up to see if I had contacted the GP. The person who is a concern has not been able to access any support.

No – I felt excluded and like I wasn't listened to. No advocacy support.

Most (10 out of 14) said that they found the staff polite, professional and approachable. The four people that said they didn't did not expand on why this was.

## Information provision

We asked people if they felt that they had been kept informed throughout the process. Eight out of 15 people that responded answered no to this question and seven answered yes.

Those who were kept informed seemed to have been contacted primarily via telephone.

Phone calls mainly. Feel well to a point.

I have received phone calls with updates and attended meetings with Adult Social Services.

Eight people felt that they hadn't been kept well informed and this led to them feeling frustrated, and at risk in some instances.

Only once (made approximately five [referrals]) have I received further contact after I have made a referral to WSAB and this was for further information only. Never been informed of outcome. Unsure if using service correctly. Embarrassed professionally to seek update through service users. Frustrated chasing information.

Had no idea what was happening at times. Felt at risk.

We also asked if information received before, during and after the investigation was helpful and in a format that was clear and easy to understand.

The response was mixed with several people telling us that they received no information and that it wasn't helpful or in a format that they could understand. One person said that they would have liked to have received information in audio format but this was refused. This then had an impact on their ability to be fully involved in the process.

Others said that they were kept informed via email and kept up to date, and that the information they received was helpful.

Before information was very good.

Yes. We were contacted re meetings and any developments.

None and definitely not helpful!

Not helpful and couldn't understand... I would have liked audio version as this works better for me but this was refused.

## Raising concerns

Nine of the 13 respondents said that they knew how to raise a concern or question and four said that they didn't.

We asked if they had any concerns during the process. Seven people said that they were concerned about the process and nine said they had no concerns. Just over half the people who responded said that they felt they were able to raise their concerns and that action was taken.

## What worked well and what could have been done differently

Just over half of the respondents indicated the process worked well for them and gave many reasons for this, including feeling involved and supported, being provided with clear information, and being kept up to date with the process as it progressed.

However, others had a less positive experience and gave examples of how the process could have been improved for them. These included better communication, particularly around the outcome of the investigation. Some people said they felt dismissed when raising concerns and that information wasn't recorded correctly. Some also brought up the need for social workers to take more time to build up relationships and improve advocacy support.

It may have been better for the social worker to have visited multiple times to obtain a more true picture of my elderly relative's circumstances and perhaps gain his trust so that he could have 'opened up' regarding his concerns/fears of his live-in carer.

With my incident, I feel more feedback should be made available. My mother passed away during the incident and up until now we have not had any more information, which was disappointing to us after a lot of hard work and a lot of suffering.

# Conclusions & recommendations

Overall, the feedback received from professionals, carers and individuals involved was very mixed, with some people reporting a good experience and others telling us of concerns that they had about the process.

This seems to be linked with inconsistencies in the way the process is dealt with, the information given or received and support and involvement during the process. When people said that they had been involved, kept up to date and felt listened to, a good experience was reported.

Based on what we have been told, we recommend:

- A consistent approach to all safeguarding concerns raised is developed.
- Considering whether the information provided to people could be improved, and particularly, provided in accessible formats.
- Reviewing the use of advocates to support people through the process to enable greater involvement.
- Looking at ways to ensure feedback is provided to those who raise a concern where this is possible.
- Developing ways to continue gathering feedback from those that have been through the process.

## Response

This report was shared with the Adult Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub who carefully considered it and put in place a detailed action plan that addresses the recommendations.

The action plan includes the redevelopment of the Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) leaflet, ensuring that it is available in accessible formats including Easy Read and the implementation of a focused audit on feedback to referrers.

## Thank you

Thank you to the people that took the time to share their experiences with us and to the WSAB, safeguarding team and independent advocates for supporting us by sharing the survey.



# Appendix



## Wiltshire Safeguarding Adults Board Survey Your chance to help us shape service

**Please circle or mark the answer that you want to give.**

- |   |   |     |    |
|---|---|-----|----|
| 1 | Were you aware that you were subject to/part of a safeguarding investigation? | YES | NO |
| 2 | If yes, was the reason for the investigation explained to you?                | YES | NO |

**Your comments:**

- |   |  |     |    |
|---|--|-----|----|
| 3 | Did you feel well supported throughout the process?  | YES | NO |
| 4 | If yes, why was this, what help were you given that was helpful? If not, what help would you have liked? |     |    |

**Your comments:**

- |   |                                       |     |    |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 5 | Did you feel involved in the process? | YES | NO |
| 6 | Why was this?                         |     |    |

**Your comments:**

- |   |  |     |    |
|---|--|-----|----|
| 7 | Were you able to ask questions?                | YES | NO |
| 8 | Do you feel that you were listened to?         | YES | NO |
| 9 | Were you kept informed throughout the process? | YES | NO |

10 If yes - How did this happen? If not - How did this make you feel?

**Your comments:**

11	What information did you receive before/during and after the investigation? Was this helpful?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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**Your comments:**

12	Was the information provided to you in a format which you could understand?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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13	Were the staff you came into contact with polite, professional and approachable?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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14	Did you know who to contact if you had a question or concern?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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15 What happened?

**Your comments:**

16	Did you have any concerns about the process?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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17	Were you able to raise these concerns and was action taken?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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18	Are there areas where you felt that the process didn't work well? Could you tell us why - what improvements could be made?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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29 **Your comments:**

20	Do you think that the process could have work differently?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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**Your comments:**





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