

# Learning Briefing Safeguarding Adults Review Gwen & Ian

**Sharing Learning**

Working together to prevent abuse and neglect is a key priority of the East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (EESAB). We do this by sharing learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) to drive improvement in safeguarding practice. All staff and managers are encouraged to discuss and share the briefing, to ensure that the learning outcomes are used to consolidate existing best practice and develop practice where required.

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**Background**

This review was commissioned to explore the circumstances surrounding the two unrelated deaths of a 95-year-old woman and 67-year-old-man who are respectively referred to in this review as ‘Gwen’ and ‘Ian’.

Gwen lived with her daughter and had little involvement with services. Following a rapid decline in her physical health, she was admitted to hospital in October 2021 and died the following day.

Ian lived with his son and had little involvement with services. Ian had experienced a range of traumatic events. Following a rapid decline in Ian’s mental and physical health, he was admitted to hospital in September 2022 and died the following month.

As the circumstances of Gwen and Ian and the potential learning were similar, a joint review was undertaken.

The SAR identified a number of themes including:

* Engagement with statutory services/agencies.
* Raising safeguarding concerns.
* Care and Support needs & carer assessments.
* Risk Management & safeguarding.
* Personalisation – Making Safeguarding Personal.
* Mental Capacity.

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**Key Findings**

The review highlighted:

* the importance of enhancing protective factors by making timely referrals and recognising carer stress.
* how further assessment potentially would have led to consideration of self-neglect, risk management, social care assessment and safeguarding action.
* the importance of developing close and trusting professional relationships which help build an understanding of lived experience.

**Good Practice**

There is evidence that professionals and agencies endeavoured to meet Gwen and Ian’s needs in a personalised and efficient manner and there were notable examples of good practice.

* The GP and Community Nurses were attentive in attempting to engage with Gwen and her daughter in April and May 2018.
* South East Coast Ambulance (SECamb) Paramedics provided timely and attentive support to Gwen in October 2021, involving her daughter sensitively in decision-making and in escalating the Safeguarding Adults Concern.
* Ian’s non-attendance for medical appointments were followed up by a GP home visit in April 2022 and a referral for a dementia assessment.
* A Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) in September 2022 was proactive in addressing a referral for Ian that had not been processed.
* Practitioners had respectful and skilled discussions with Ian’s son.

**Recommendations**

The review made six recommendations as follows:

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| **Learning Identified** | **What will help?** |
| **Engagement by agencies**  | 1. Developing a specific learning briefing for primary care on best practice recommendations, self-neglect referrals and carers assessment.
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| **Risk management & Safeguarding Adults Concerns** | 1. Overseeing a review of the pan-Sussex Multi-Agency Self-Neglect Procedures. ASCH to consider an audit of front door referral information, screening and recording of self-neglect referrals.
2. Assurance that the provision of appropriate risk management training across relevant agencies, is aligned to the pan-Sussex Multi-Agency Self-Neglect Procedures, with a focus on professional curiosity and active listening.
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| **Needs and carers assessments** | 1. Assurance that the relevant GP Practice and SPFT Memory Assessment Service improved referral arrangements, including follow-up, are embedded, and working.
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| **Personalisation** | 1. SAB partners to review the provision of information leaflets they publish for members of the public, to ensure that service users, families and the public have clear information on who to contact in the event of concerns about care, as well as what will happen when concerns are raised.
2. Promoting trauma-informed approaches, professional curiosity & active listening in service user interviews.
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**Key Points for Learning and Reflection**

**Making Referrals**

The review found that for both Gwen and Ian there were missed opportunities to make timely safeguarding referrals which could have improved Gwen and Ian’s wellbeing.

[Section 42 (1) and (2) of the Care Act 2014](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/42) sets out the criteria that must be considered in relation to raising a safeguarding concern, and the subsequent decision as to whether a safeguarding enquiry is triggered.

Brighton & Hove, East Sussex, and West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Boards have developed [Safeguarding Adults Thresholds guidance](https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Sussex-Safeguarding-Adults-Thresholds-Guidance.pdf). The thresholds document is to be used across Sussex to support professionals, partners, and providers to decide on whether to report a safeguarding concern for an adult with care and support needs (Care and Support (Eligibility Criteria) Regulations, 2014). It also helps differentiate between quality issues and safeguarding and provides alternative actions that can be considered.

**Involving and Supporting Carers**

An unpaid carer is someone who provides care and support to family members, friends, and neighbours; sometimes they can care for more than one person. The people they support may be affected by disability, physical or mental ill health, frailty, or substance misuse. Anyone can become a carer at any point in their life. Carers can also be any age from young children to the elderly.

The review highlighted there was a reliance on Gwen & Ian’s family carers who were experiencing difficulty in managing. It is evident that Ian’s son had eligible needs as a carer. There was every indication that his son would have accepted ASCH support, including respite.

[The Care Act 2014 and unpaid carers: A handy summary | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/care-act-2014-and-unpaid-carers-handy-summary%22%20%5Co%20%22LGA%20Care%20Act%202014%20and%20unpaid%20carers%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[State of the County 2023: Focus on East Sussex](https://democracy.eastsussex.gov.uk/documents/s51141/Appendix%201%20Focus%20on%20East%20Sussex%202023.pdf)  noted that 9.9% of the population in East Sussex provides any form of unpaid care, compared to the national average of 8.8%.

**When should you consider a carer’s assessment?**

If an adult looks after an adult who couldn’t manage without their help, they have a right to have their own needs assessed. A carer’s assessment looks at:

* The care they provide and how this affects their life.
* Ways they can access support and what they would like to achieve.
* Their strengths and capabilities.
* Types of support available to them in the community.

[Leaflet: Do you look after someone?](https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/getting-help-from-us/asc-leaflets/leaflet-do-you-look-after-someone)

**Self-Neglect**

Prior to Gwen’s hospital admission Paramedics reported that she was malnourished and showed visible physical signs of self-neglect. Gwen’s home was also reported to be in a neglected state. Prior to Ian’s hospital admission Paramedics recorded primary concerns as self-neglect and increasing care needs, with no care package in place.

The Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance provides the following definition: “Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding”.

Self-neglect is often defined across three domains:

* neglect of self and lack of self-care.
* neglect of the environment.
* refusal to accept help and support.

The Social Care Institute For Excellence have produced general pointers for an effective approach, including:

* multi-agency: work with partners to ensure the right approach for each individual.
* person-centred: listening to and respecting the views and perspectives of the individual, working towards outcomes they want.
* acceptance: good risk management, not behavioural change, may be the best achievable outcome.
* analytical: identifying underlying causes to help address the issue.
* patience and time: short interventions are unlikely to be successful, practitioners should take a long-term approach.
* always go back: regular, encouraging engagement and gentle persistence may help with progress and risk management.

[Self-neglect: At a glance | SCIE](https://www.scie.org.uk/self-neglect/at-a-glance)

The pan-Sussex Multi-Agency Self-Neglect Procedures stress the importance of a person-centred and compassionate approach, to building a rapport and trust over time, and to reaching an understanding of the complex causes of self-neglect.

* [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures](https://sussexsafeguardingadults.procedures.org.uk/pkoty/sussex-safeguarding-adults-procedures/adult-safeguarding-and-sharing-information)

**Further reading and resources**

* [Sussex Information sharing Guide and Protocol](https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Sussex-Information-Sharing-Guide-and-Protocol-v2.pdf)
* [Guidance on raising concerns about Abuse and Neglect](https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Sussex-Safeguarding-Adults-Thresholds-Guidance-Print-Version.pdf)
* [Reporting a Safeguarding Concern](https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/what-is-safeguarding/raise-a-concern/)
* [Sussex SAR Protocol](https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/documents/sussex-sar-protocol/)
* [East Sussex Learning Portal: A range of multi-agency safeguarding courses, including self-neglect, trauma informed practice and Mental Capacity Act training.](https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/jobs/learning-portal)
* [Care for the Carers - Supporting carers in East Sussex (cftc.org.uk)](https://www.cftc.org.uk/): Care for the Carers is an independent charity and the Carers Centre for East Sussex supporting and representing unpaid carers in East Sussex since 1989
* [Being Heard - a self-advocacy guide for carers | Carers UK](https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/guides-and-tools/being-heard-a-self-advocacy-guide-for-carers/)
* [Support for carers - Sussex Health & Care (ics.nhs.uk)](https://www.sussex.ics.nhs.uk/your-care/support-while-you-wait/support-for-carers/)
* [Carers Health Team (sussexcommunity.nhs.uk)](https://www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk/services/carers-health-team/108921)
* [Families & carers :: Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](https://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/your-mental-health/families-carers)
* [Support for carers – East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (esht.nhs.uk)](https://www.esht.nhs.uk/your-care/support/support-for-carers/)
* [Carers – Rural Rother Primary Care Network (ruralrotherpcn.nhs.uk)](https://www.ruralrotherpcn.nhs.uk/care-and-support/carers/)

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