What is a Safeguarding Adults Review?

Practice briefing

A concise guide for adults, families, practitioners and partner organisations

A Safeguarding Adults Review is a statutory learning process commissioned by a Safeguarding Adults Board. Its purpose is to improve how organisations work together-not to determine individual blame.

When must an SAB arrange a SAR?

Under section 44 of the Care Act 2014, an SAB must arrange a review where there is reasonable cause for concern about how the SAB, its members or other relevant people worked together and either:

- the adult has died and the SAB knows or suspects that the death resulted from abuse or neglect; or
- the adult is still alive and the SAB knows or suspects that the adult has experienced serious abuse or neglect.

An SAB may also arrange a review in other cases involving an adult in its area with care and support needs. This allows proportionate discretionary review where wider learning would be valuable.

What does a SAR seek to understand?

- The adult's life, wishes, relationships, strengths and circumstances.
- How risks, needs and protective factors developed over time.
- What professionals and organisations knew and how they reasoned.
- How agencies communicated, coordinated and escalated concerns.
- What supported good practice and what obstructed effective safeguarding.
- What practical changes could improve future responses.

Who may be involved?

- The adult, where they are alive and wish to participate.
- Family members, friends, carers and advocates.
- The independent reviewer or review team.
- Relevant statutory, voluntary and independent-sector organisations.
- Practitioners, managers, commissioners and partnership leaders.

What a SAR is not

- It is not a criminal investigation, disciplinary hearing or complaints process.
- It does not replace coronial, regulatory or other statutory processes.
- It should not reproduce unnecessary personal or distressing detail.

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- It is not designed to assign individual blame.

Participation and publication

People should be told what the review is for, how they can contribute and how information will be used. Publication decisions must balance transparency, learning, privacy, safety and the wishes of those affected.

Sources and further reading

- Care Act 2014, section 44
- Care and Support Statutory Guidance
- SCIE SAR Quality Markers
- SCIE: involvement of the person, family and network

Links checked 22 August 2026. This resource provides general professional information, not legal advice. Apply current law, statutory guidance, local policy and professional judgement to the circumstances of each case.

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