



**Dudley Safeguarding
People Partnership**

**Dudley Safeguarding Adults Board
Annual Report 2020/21**

Reporting Period April 2020 – March 2021

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Message from the Independent Chair

I am pleased to present this report as Independent Chair of the Dudley Safeguarding Adults Board (DSAB). Last year, we discussed our work as we entered the first lockdown of Covid-19. The report covers the second and third lockdowns and highlights the excellent work of the people of Dudley in order to ensure that safeguarding our most vulnerable adults and adults at risk have not suffered despite the enormous challenges everyone faced. The sacrifices and losses that have touched each and every one of us must not go unnoticed.

Not only has the pandemic dictated how we operate both strategically and operationally, but we have encountered changes to legislation that has meant professionals have had to adapt quickly and effectively. The Covid-19 Prioritisation with Community Services Guidance, The COVID 2020 Act, Changes to the Care Act 2014 (known as the Care Act Easements) and the various Covid-19 related guidance, have all emphasised that safeguarding children and adults is as critical during the pandemic as at any other time. With this in mind, we are also working on the introduction to the new Liberty Protection Safeguards, now delayed until April 2022, but which will bring with it a major change to the current Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards process and one which will impact children and adults.

The global Covid-19 pandemic is unprecedented and the impact for individuals, families, communities and wider society is significant and will be long lasting. Due to the restrictions in place, many adults have become at increased risk of harm such as exploitation, domestic abuse and financial scamming. The most vulnerable in our society have been hidden from day to day services that would normally have provided a protective shield, and it is likely that the true impact of harm to these individuals will not be fully known for many more months. In addition we have seen a rise in the number of mental health referrals and domestic abuse. There is a new unmet need and a backlog of concern to work our way through as a Partnership.

As we focus on our 'recovery' and living with Covid 19, I would like to thank the dedicated people who work across all of the organisations in Dudley who are working to promote the welfare and safety of adults, particularly in these challenging times. I have seen first-hand the amazing and inspiring work carried out daily by our partners, key workers and voluntary organisations to keep people safe in the Borough.

We will continue to ensure that safeguarding adults remains a priority.

Finally, I would like to thank the chairs of the subgroups and to the Safeguarding Business Unit for their hard work and support during these unprecedented times.

Dr. Paul Kingston

Independent Chair, Dudley Safeguarding Adults Board

What is Dudley like?

A total of 252,769 adults aged 18 and over live in Dudley (Mid-Year population estimates 2020). This is 78.4% of the total population in the area. (source: ONS)

The number of people aged 75 and over is 32,182 (10.0%). This proportion is greater than the West Midlands region (8.8%) and England (8.6%) as a whole. Additionally, this cohort is a growing proportion of Dudley's population each year. (source: ONS)

Homelessness

Dudley has a good track record in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping. The service normally receives around 2,500 enquiries per year but during the 2020/21 period this increased to 2,700. This is a worrying increase because during the pandemic the Government put lots of interventions in place to suppress homelessness including bans on evictions (except in exceptional circumstances), the furlough scheme, uplifts to Local Housing Allowance and Universal Credit uplifts. There was also a drive to house all rough sleepers through the 'Everyone In' campaign. Dudley participated and offered accommodation to the small number of people who were sleeping rough and also continued to house a higher than normal number of single people who were at risk of being 'roofless' mainly owing to relationship breakdown or parents/friends no longer willing to accommodate. Since the onset of the pandemic the enquiries to the service have been dominated by single person households who have been at greater risk of imminent homelessness than other cohorts because they were living in insecure housing arrangements prior to the pandemic, for example, lodging with others, living with parents and were not tenants in their own right so they weren't protected by the eviction ban.

Looking forward, we anticipate there will be increased demand on services as house prices and most rental market prices have increased during the pandemic thus causing affordability issues for many households seeking to enter the housing market. The furlough scheme and the Universal Credit uplift has ended during the 2021/22 financial year and the courts are now beginning to process repossession claims again so homelessness could increase.

Further information about homelessness can be found at:

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-advice-information-and-support/plans-policies-strategies/>

Fuel Poverty in Dudley has been increasing in absolute terms. Latest figures from 2021 showed it affected 23,512 (16.9%) of households within the Borough. (source: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy). Recent increases in energy costs are likely to exacerbate Fuel Poverty.

Domestic abuse-related incidents and violence rates for Dudley are derived from the West Midlands force area at 29.7 crimes per 1,000 people for 2019/20. It should be noted this measure will be influenced by other areas outside Dudley, but it is the same as the West Midlands region rate and above the figure for England (28.0 per 1,000). (source: PHE Public Outcomes Framework) Whilst all victims of domestic abuse are vulnerable due to the risks they face, we recognise that some victims falling under the provisions of the Care Act face an even greater risk if exposed to domestic abuse

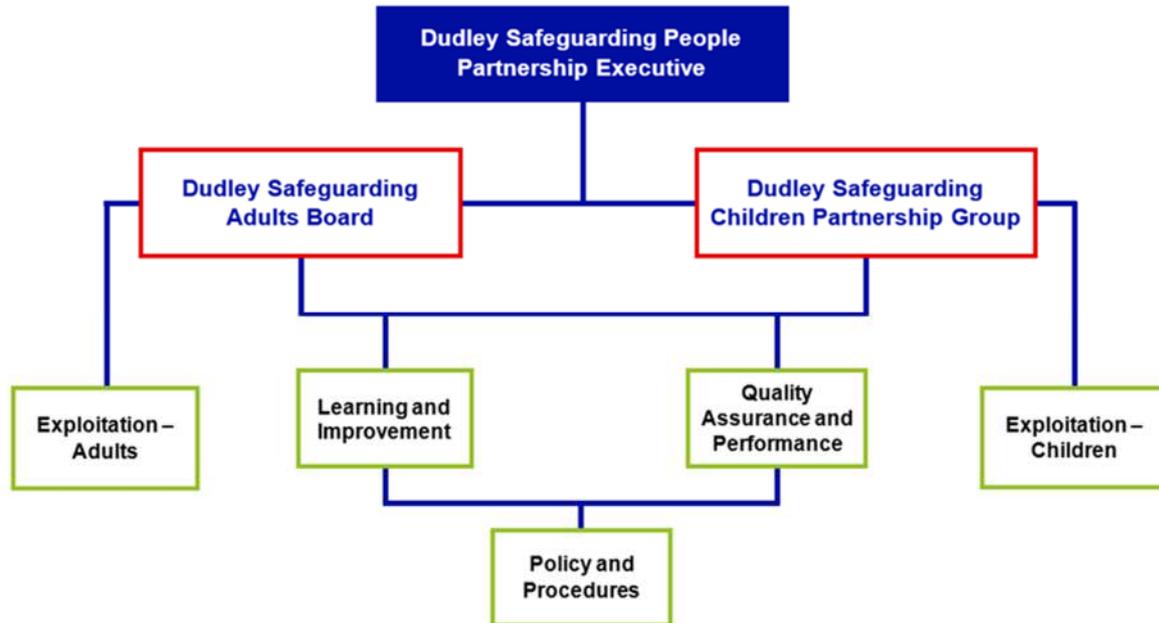
Life Expectancy, Health Conditions and Health Inequalities

Life expectancy within Dudley is 78.8 years for men and 82.2 years for women. This is similar to the wider region (men 78.5, women 82.5); however it is lower than England (men 79.4, women 83.1) (source: Life expectancy estimates 2018-20, ONS). Within Dudley, life expectancy is 9.3 years lower for men and 8.0 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Dudley than in the least deprived areas. (source: PHE Public Outcomes Framework).

Dudley had a diagnosis rate of 2,386 for patients in the Borough with dementia. However, total prevalence including those yet to be diagnosed is modelled in excess of 4,000. (source: Dudley CCG Dementia Strategy 2017-2019).

The suicide rate in Dudley has increased since 2015-2017. From the latest data available for 2018-20, there were 11.3 suicides per 100,000 population (or 94 persons) which is the highest rate recorded since records began in 2001-03. This is not significantly different to the West Midlands (10.5 per 100,000) or England (10.4 per 100,000). (source: PHE Public Outcomes Framework). This is a growing concern and suicide awareness, and support will need to be a focus of both our learning and development and service offer going forwards.

Governance Arrangements



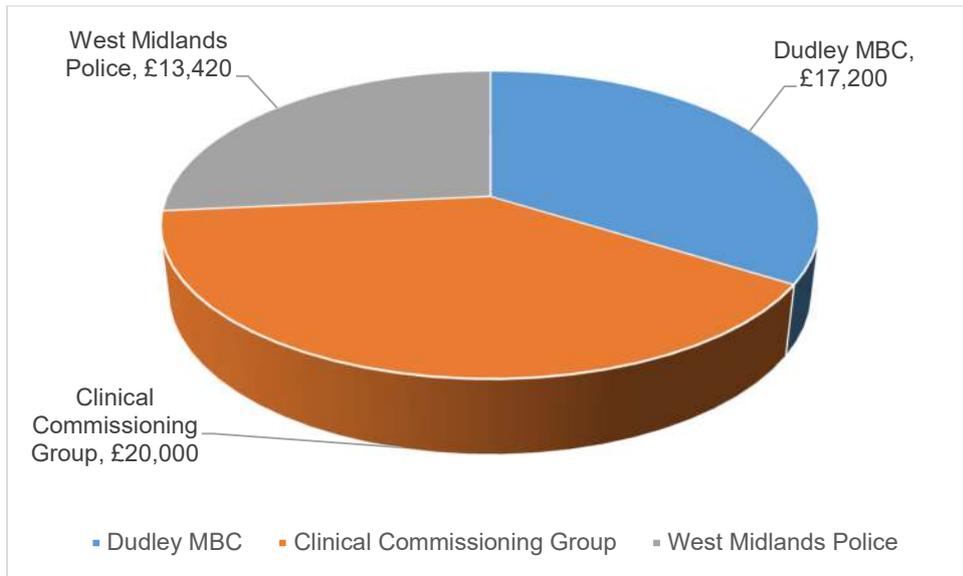
The primary purpose of the Partnership is to ensure that people in Dudley, who might be at risk, are protected. The Care Act 2014 underpins the strategic direction set by the Dudley Safeguarding Adult Board, along with Making Safeguarding Personal to embed a person-centred approach to safeguarding and the six principles of adult safeguarding. The Learning and Improvement sub group and Quality Assurance sub group ensure that learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) and multi-agency audits is implemented and embedded into practice. We have now amended this structure, introducing a dedicated workstream for our neglect priority as well as separating our quality assurance and performance sub group, to allow for a focus on adults with the ability to cover life course themes where appropriate.

Overview 2020-21

The priorities of the DSPP remained the same as the previous year, during this reporting period. Despite the impact of Covid-19, safeguarding activities remained a priority and activity did not decrease. It was inevitable that some changes were made, for example, our multi-agency face to face training offer was converted to eLearning and all sub group meetings and practice events were held virtually. The partners, despite the extraordinary challenges faced on the frontline, remained fully committed to Partnership working.

Funding Arrangements

The financial contribution for DSAB work in 2020-21 was £50,620. This was made up of contributions from Dudley MBC, Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group and West Midlands Police and was used to fund DSAB staff salaries and expenses, the 2020-21 training programme, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and other miscellaneous costs, e.g. publications and venue and hospitality costs. Wider partners provide staff and resources for meetings and training courses.



What our data is telling us

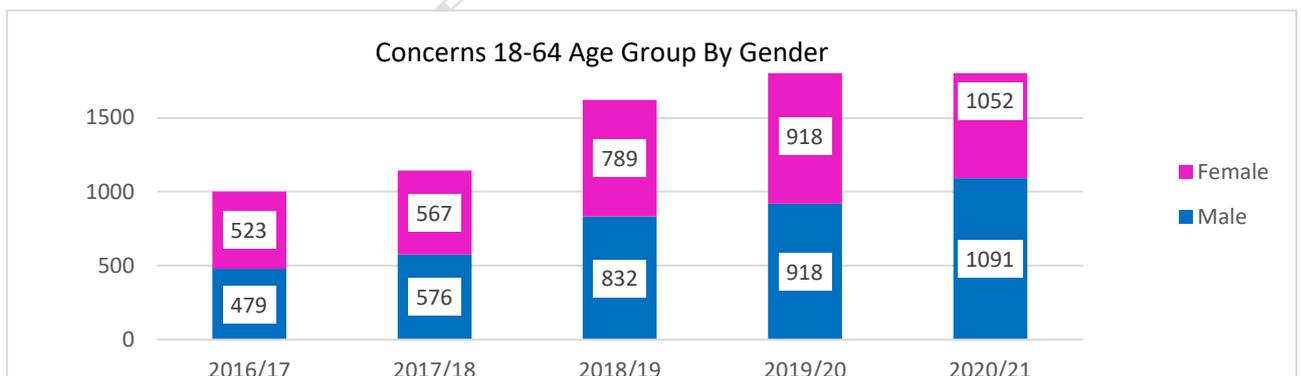
Safeguarding Concerns

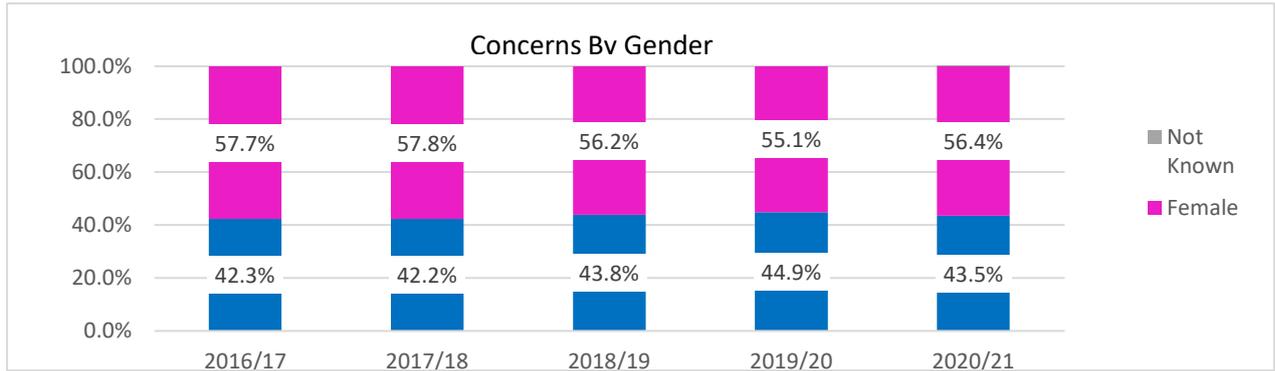
During 2020-21, 498 concerns were not recorded correctly or fully and therefore were excluded from the submission. This was due mainly to the implementation of a new recording system and a change in recording processes. These safeguarding concerns would still have been followed up through standard adult safeguarding processes. If these had been included, the number of enquiries for 20/21 would have been highest since 2014-15, highlighting the impact of Covid.

The overall proportion of concerns within the 18-64 age group remains the highest proportion by age group overall (40.5%) with males forming the highest proportion in this age group. However, overall, and consistently over the past 5 years, females continue to be the highest proportion of all concerns.

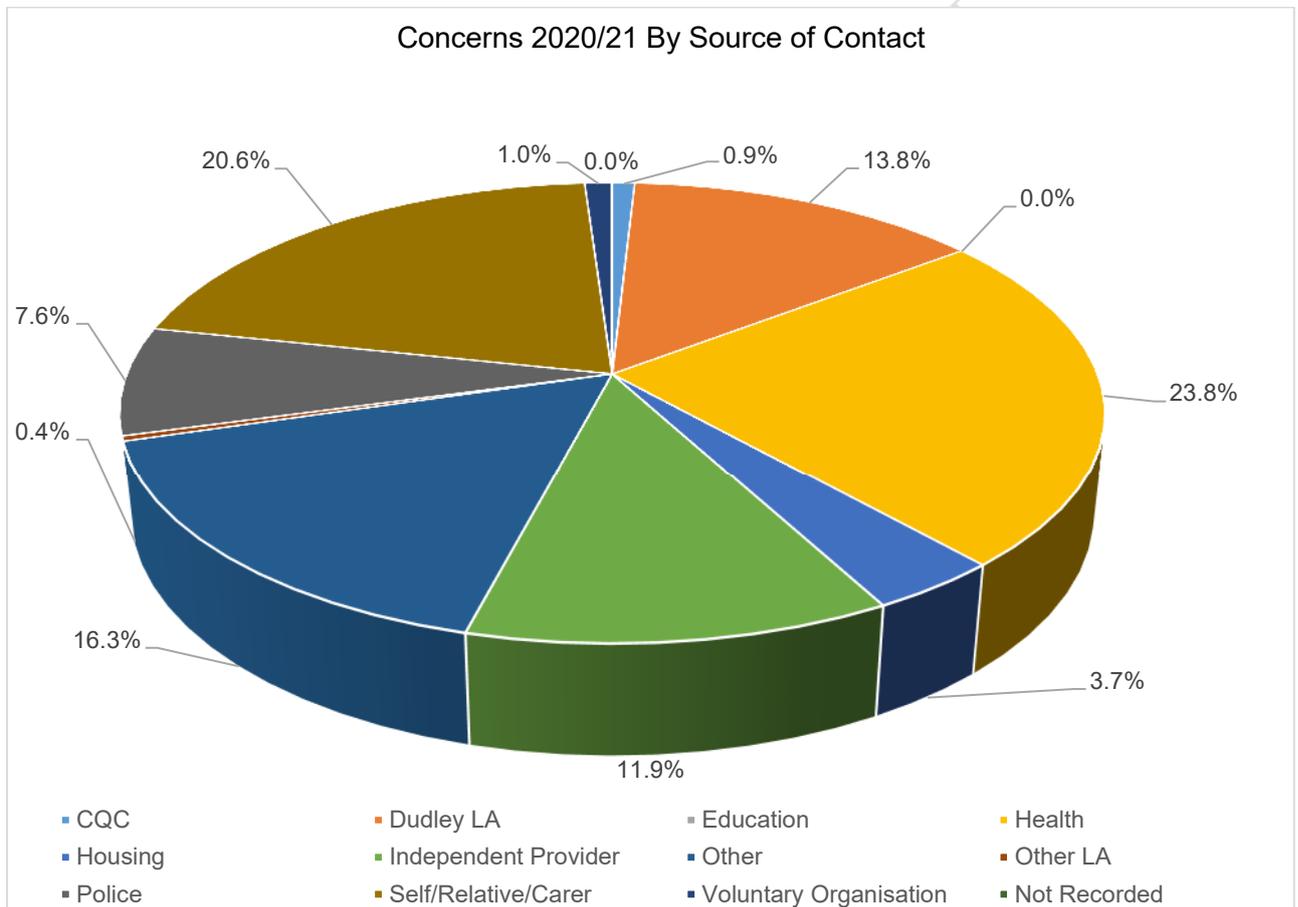
Year	Concerns	% Increase From Previous Year	Enquiries	Conversion
2014/15	1713		726	42.4%
2015/16	2091	22.1%	743	35.5%
2016/17	2809	34.3%	831	29.6%
2017/18	3051	8.6%	727	23.8%
2018/19	3941	29.2%	752	19.1%
2019/20	5299	34.5%	773	14.6%
2020/21	5294	-0.1%	343	6.5%

MASH is intended to screen and determine the appropriateness of referrals, so the lower percentage means that MASH is effective in ensuring that safeguarding enquiries only progress where relevant. The higher referral rate reflects a greater awareness of safeguarding and the MASH but also brings with it a higher number of inappropriate referrals. The lower percentage shows that MASH is being effective in ensuring our response is targeted and that signposting or assessments take place instead of safeguarding where appropriate.





Concerns by source

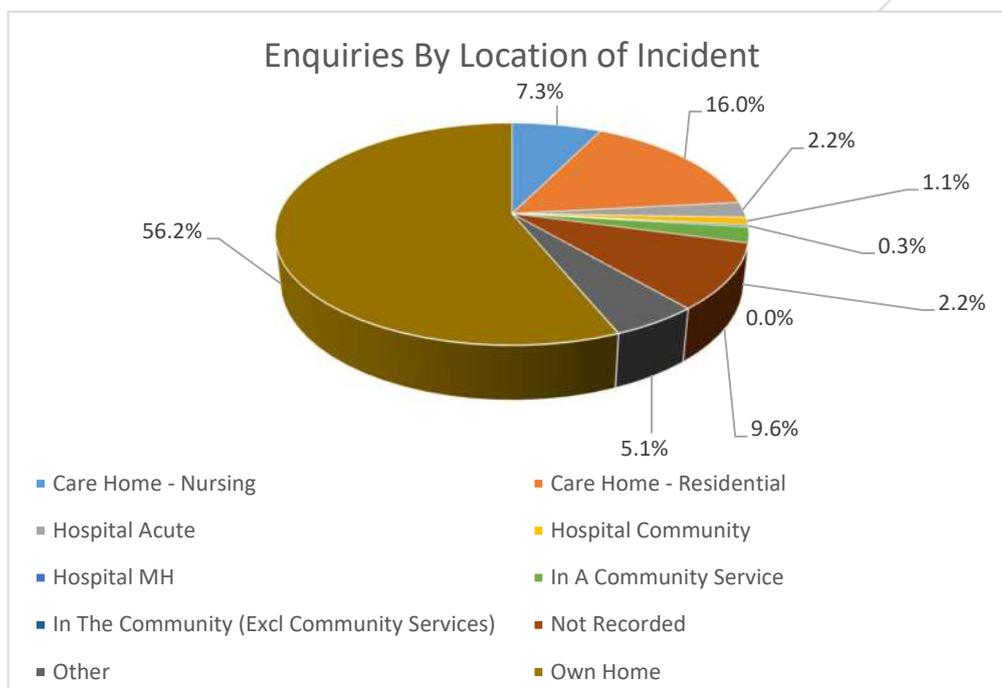


2020/21 Enquiries

The detail of the enquiry, e.g. abuse category, location of abuse etc, is not submitted in the SAC (Safeguarding Adults Collection) until the actual enquiry is completed. Therefore, the following is an analysis of 2020/21 enquiry data only.

Enquiry Type	Number	%
Section 42	300	87.5%
Other	43	12.5%
Total	343	100.0%

In line with concerns, females formed the highest proportion of enquiries at 55.4%. Males form the highest proportion within the younger 18-64 age group (55.9%) and in general, females within the older age groups, however, this could have a direct correlation with the general population overall in Dudley, where females form the highest proportion of older adults.



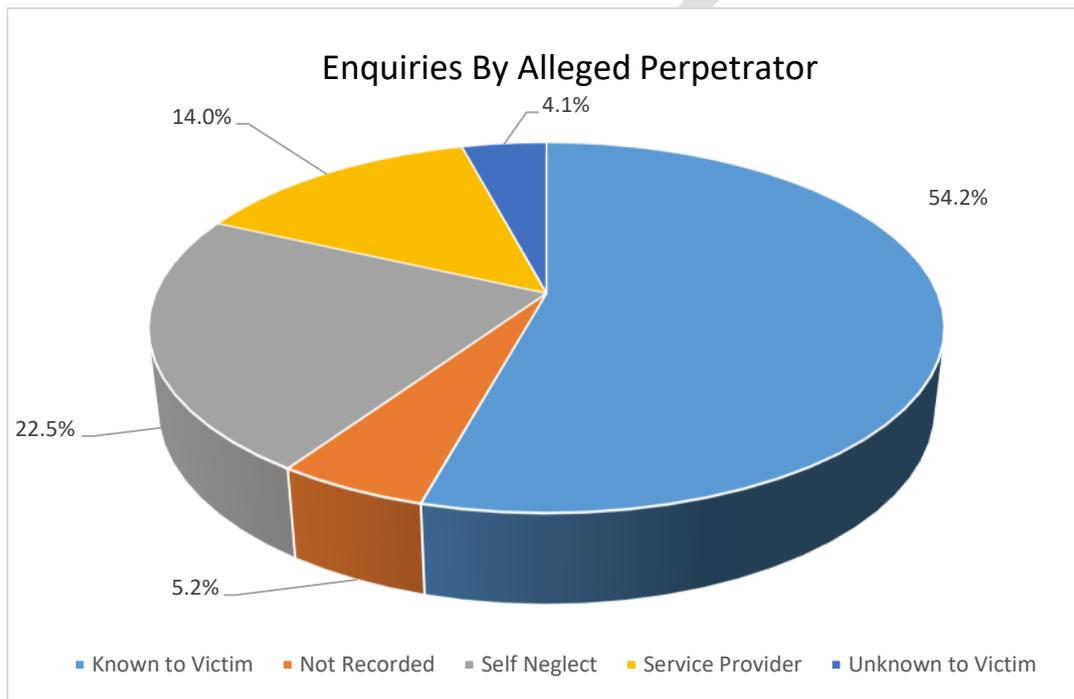
Abuse Category	Female	Male
Discrimination	3	2
Domestic	36	9
Emotional/Psychological Abuse	58	24
Financial/Material Abuse	29	31
Institutional Abuse	9	12
Modern Slavery	0	0
Neglect and Acts of Omission	82	70
Physical Abuse	49	21
Self-Neglect	51	56
Sexual - Sexual Exploitation	2	0
Sexual Abuse	5	3
Total	324	228

As in previous reporting the category of Neglect & Acts of Omission forms the highest proportion of all enquiries at 27.5%

As in previous reporting, the highest proportion of incidents occurred in the victims own home 56.2% with 61% of these recorded with an alleged perpetrator known to the victim. 58.5% of these incidents which occurred at the victims own home were for females.

34 episodes were recorded with no location.

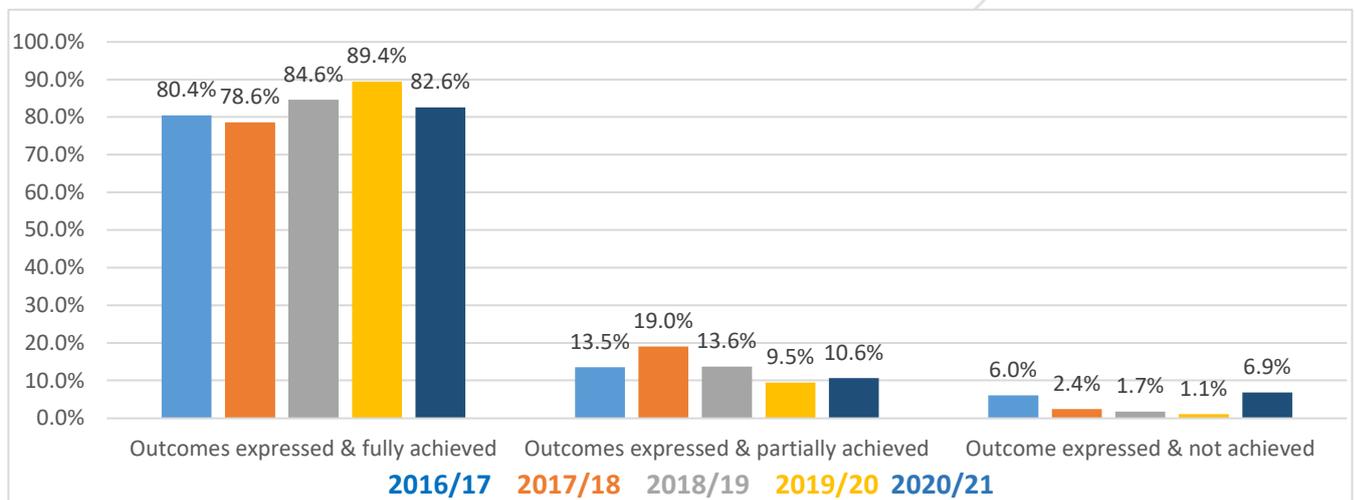
Overall, 54.2% of incidents were recorded with an alleged perpetrator known to the victim.



Concluded Enquiries

Year	Concerns	% Increase/Decrease From Previous Year
2014/15	567	
2015/16	529	-6.7%
2016/17	625	18.1%
2017/18	589	-5.8%
2018/19	542	-8.0%
2019/20	564	4.1%
2020/21	448	-20.6%

Dudley implemented a new recording system Liquidlogic's LAS in September 2020, some of the data proportion differences are due to migration from the legacy system to the new recording processes as the new system records safeguarding differently.



Partnership working for better outcomes for adults in Dudley

There is a continued strong working relationship between partners in Dudley and this has continued to grow and develop in strength. We have highlighted key areas of work that demonstrate how our priorities have continued to keep adults safe in Dudley.

- The local authority has introduced a process which supports providers who are experiencing safeguarding issues prior to decisions being made to move into a large scale investigation as directed by the Care Act 2014. The support offered to organisations helps to minimise risk and provide support to organisations, residents, carers and family members
- CCG Safeguarding Quality Review Meetings continued during 2020, which brought together health providers across Dudley to regularly share good practice and learning, and address issues as and when they arise. Through whole systems partnerships and services, assurances were given to ensure providers are able to discharge their statutory duties effectively.
- CCG Medicines Management Team have developed a training package for domiciliary care and due to the pandemic has adapted safeguarding training so that it can be delivered virtually as well as with the continuation to send out safeguarding briefing to primary care and small providers.
- The Healthy Ageing Team in partnership with Adult Social Care, has developed a social connected network led by communities and third sectors organisations. Two events were held, looking at the impact of Covid-19 on loneliness and isolation and mapping existing interventions and the network is in the process of developing a system wide plan to improve social connectedness.
- An evidence review of interventions to improve digital literacy of older people to inform the development of a digital literacy strategy was carried out and we are awaiting these results.
- A virtual version of Self-Management Programme was developed to support people living with long term conditions and are shielding due to Covid-19 to manage their disease better

Priorities 2020-21

The impact of the pandemic has not detracted from working on our agreed priorities; however the pandemic has influenced the way everyone prioritised their workload and the services offered. There is a strong working relationship between partners in Dudley and this has continued to grow and develop. Our focus is now on 'recovery' and more so, living with Covid. We need to understand that the challenges faced so far are not over but may present themselves in different ways, and this is likely to be our focus in next year's report. Our priorities for the forthcoming year remain the same, and we continue our focus on preventing harm across the life course, preventing exploitation across the life course and preventing neglect and self-neglect. In many ways, these priorities have become even more important as the impact of the pandemic may take years fully understand.

DSPP Priorities 2020 – 2022

**Neglect
across the life course**

**Preventing harm
across the life course**

**Exploitation
across the life course**

Neglect/Self-Neglect

- The Partnership successfully responded to individuals who presented with alcohol and or substance misuse and were either street homeless or in temporary accommodation. The safeguarding partnership ensured emergency accommodation was made available to vulnerable adults.
- The Dudley Group of Hospitals carried out a review of policies, particularly updating of the Did Not Attend procedures for adults who required support to be brought to appointments. This ensured that adults in need of support were not missed during the pandemic and received the help they needed.
- West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service' digital transformation has been embedded throughout the pandemic enabling the delivery of remote Safe and Well checks for the most vulnerable people within our communities.

Exploitation

- The Domestic and Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategic Group has played a crucial role in supporting and overseeing the transition to Dudley's new Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, in line with the new Domestic Abuse Act. This group is closely aligned to the DSPP, providing assurance to the Safeguarding Adults Board and ensuring safeguarding concerns are highlighted in a timely manner.
- Dudley Police and Dudley Council partners have created a new Exploitation Panel, which looks at all aspects of exploitation across the life course. We recognise that exploitation is not an issue that stops impacting young victims at the age of 18. As we grow our collective understanding, we can see that adults are also victims of exploitation. The panel has oversight of themes and commonalities linked to Dudley's most vulnerable victims and more will be reported on this in next year's report.
- Posters of how patients, carers and visitors can access support if they are concerned about abuse have been distributed throughout the Hospital Trust.
- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) continue to work very closely with trading standards to achieve good outcomes for people experience fraud or financial abuse.
- A pathway is in place for concerns around modern slavery and improved links are in place with the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network. Work is ongoing to embed and improve the pathway, particularly in respect of resources available, and will be reported on in next year's report.
- There continues to be a strong relationship between Community Safety Partnership (Safe and Sound) and DSAB with the Head of Community Safety also leading on the exploitation workstream. Through the Community Safety Partnership (Safe and Sound), work continued to take place with partners to identify victims and concerns. A 'protocol' was developed in respect of new cases to be used to ensure that partners are being involved as appropriate and know what their response should be in respect of first responder organisations and non-first responder organisations.
- A briefing note was developed and shared with unregulated accommodation providers and Private Sector Housing to highlight the signs of modern slavery, how to report concerns and signpost them to the available training.

Preventing Harm

- The Adult MASH has experienced unprecedented demand with regards to the number of safeguarding concerns being received, at times during the past year this has increased by over 50%. However the conversion rate across the directorate decreased, suggesting that people are receiving the right level of support and their needs are being met despite the challenges of the pandemic.
- Increased reported numbers of domestic abuse disclosures, which had been reported to third sector organisations. IRIS project delivered leaflets with information on Domestic Abuse services to local pharmacies to place in medications bags.

- Working with the Police, Mental health triage tactical advisors have been created who can advise and support with tactical options when dealing with persons in crisis. This demonstrates commitment and increased capacity to supporting vulnerable persons, understanding vulnerability and making the correct assessment early at the initial point of contact to get them the best treatment.
- An Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) commenced within Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust ; a project in partnership between the Trust and Black Country Women's Aid. The presence of the IDVA in the emergency department has resulted in an increase in referrals from the Trust to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- The Domestic Abuse 'Home' campaign developed during the first lockdown highlights support available to victims of domestic abuse.
- The Dudley Group of Hospitals carried out training for emergency department staff on the recognition and questioning around domestic abuse to help spot early signs of domestic abuse
- Public Health Dudley worked closely with partners and the NHS to support care homes to manage COVID effectively. This included developing pathways of cases and where and how to seek help, training staff on infection prevention and control and on the use of PPE. This intensive system wide support resulted in early identification and management of COVID outbreaks and reducing the impact of the disease of residents, staff and providers.
- From the start of the vaccination centre opening in early February 2021 to end of March 2021, the staff at the vaccination centre have identified and reported 11 safeguarding adult concerns, demonstrating positive safeguarding practice
- The Adult and Children and Young Persons Substance Misuse Services continued to provide a high level of provision in challenging conditions. Services adapted to support clients where appropriate via online, phone calls and WhatsApp.

How do we listen ?

Healthwatch

The most effective services are those which are influenced by the experiences of people who access them. In the last year, Healthwatch Dudley has supported the work of Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership, by giving local people opportunities to share their views and by working with partners to meaningfully involve communities in their service delivery and planning.

As health and care services swiftly responded to the outbreak of Covid-19 to keep people safe, Healthwatch Dudley found new ways of engaging with local people, to ensure their voices would continue to have influence. In place of face to face community activities, the team supported participants to share their views at online events.

Further work is needed to capture the lived experience of people who access our services, and we will update on this in our next annual report. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this was not progressed as fully as we would have liked however Dudley Neighbourhood Policing Unit re-established their Independent Advisory Group, Dudley: Have Your Say. The voice of adults has also been heard through Dudley: Have Your Say, on-line surveys, and participation in meetings including the Youth Police and Crime Commissioners.

Case Study 1

Jack (not his real name) is a 56-year-old man. He was referred to Adult MASH because of concerns relating to self-neglect. He was drinking very heavily and occasionally using illegal drugs. Jack had been referred to recovery services for his alcohol use but had not engaged with these. He met the threshold for a safeguarding enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act. Jack was allocated to a social worker in the Adults at Risk Team. Jack understood that his current choices were harming him and could cause his death.

Jack's social worker ensured that he put Jack's wishes at the centre of his intervention. It was agreed to provide support to Jack with his medication, personal care and to attend medical appointments

Jack continues to drink, although at a reduced level. Jack's voice was heard in that the changes he was willing to make were less than perhaps the social worker would have thought as ideal. Nonetheless they were Jack's goals. The social worker therefore respected this, and using a strengths based and person-centred approach, Jack is in a better place. There remains a risk to his health, but this is reduced and better managed. This was a realistic and achievable outcome for Jack and can be considered a success based on Jack's terms and understanding.

Case study 2

Michael (not his real name) was first referred into the Safeguarding Adults At Risk Team (SAAR) due to concerns raised by his neighbour that Michael was being financially abused by his neighbours. Michael was living in very dirty conditions, there was visible dirt on the furniture and walls. Michael disclosed that two neighbours of his had been financially abusing him for the past 2 years. The perpetrators would come to his door and intimidate Michael into providing them with a 'loan' which of course they did not pay back. This left Michael with barely enough money to pay his bills or pay for food. Michael complained of being depressed and being lonely.

All the relevant agencies that could support Michael came together to create a plan of action to rectify the situation. With Michael's consent he was taken alcohol recovery. The Police, Integrated Plus, Housing, Anti-social Behaviour Team, and a local care provider came together for a meeting.

During alcohol detox, Michael was out of his property for 7 days. This allowed the Police and ASB team to act against the perpetrators of abuse without Michael facing any retaliation. Unfortunately, they were unable to completely negate the risk within 7 days, so Michael was placed in respite care home service to further protect him whilst SAAR worked with housing to find suitable accommodation for Michael. Michael has now been offered a place in an Extra Care Housing Scheme in an area he chose and is going to move there where all his care and support needs can be met. As there is 24/7 access to care the risk of financial abuse is also dramatically reduced.

Covid-19: A community response

In May, 46 people from local communities, health and care settings and voluntary organisations, zoomed in to a People's Network event to talk about how they had been accessing services and what the future of health and care in the Dudley borough might look like. In June, a report was published with recommendations that is helping to inform local NHS planning.

In April 2020, the team supported its host organisation Dudley CVS, to match 984 people who were shielding, with volunteers who delivered essential food and medication supplies and to give important information to keep them safe and well.

Vulnerable people were interviewed so their experiences could help shape what future support might look like should they need to shield again. The team heard how there had been a quick response from local organisations and from communities with support and how volunteer involvement had reduced anxiety, loneliness and isolation, which had been especially important for people who did not have friends or family close by. The Covid-19 Pandemic, a community response in Dudley borough, report was published in October 2020.

Learning from the LeDeR process

- There has been a training video developed to ensure clinical teams understand the importance of the use of Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) orders for people with a learning disability - the use of DNACPR was recognised in the annual LeDeR report.
- COVID rapid reviews of deaths in hospital were undertaken by the learning disability team to support the LeDer process in the community.
- Easy read COVID information and COVID passports were distributed by the learning disability team via email to care providers in Dudley.
- An annual audit of learning disability deaths in Dudley Group of Hospitals Trust using a template developed by the lead nurse.

Multi-Agency Training

The pandemic meant we had to change the way we offered multi-agency training. In early 2020 we purchased a new eLearning platform and our eLearning courses have been developed in house and are available for all partners to access.

Throughout 2020/21 there were 656 bookings across adults and life course eLearning courses, with nearly 1400 hours of learning completed in that time. The number of people who failed to pass the course was less than 1%

As part of National Safeguarding Adults Week 2020, DSPP also hosted an event on the impact of coercive control on Safeguarding Adults with need for Care and Support. This event was well attended by members of the West Midlands region.

Learning identified from Coercive Control event

- Older people are less likely to see themselves as victims
- What is coercive control and signs of it
- Good recording and multi-agency communication is vital to ensure the true picture is revealed.
- Need for professional curiosity
- Better understanding in relation to the legal framework

Learning Gain from event

- Pre event: **2.64** Post event: **3.62**
This shows a significant increase in knowledge following the event

"Domestic abuse can take many forms such as psychological, emotional, physical and sexual. - Over 2 million people across UK experience some form of domestic abuse each year. - People who are LGBT are much more likely to suffer domestic abuse in their life."

(Understanding Domestic Abuse)

*"1. How to identify if somebody has mental capacity or not
2. Rights of people with and without capacity
3. How I can help identify someone's capacity/help them appropriately."*

(Introduction to Mental Capacity Act)

"It brought to my attention the presence and the impact of modern slavery. The different forms of modern slavery. How those who are victims of modern slavery can be protected."

(Introduction to Modern Slavery)

Other key areas of development

12 Safer 7's (DSPP 7 minute briefings) have been published and shared.

The bi-monthly DSPP Newsletter (called Safer) has been reinstated and has been running since August 2020

During March and June 2020 DSPP produced 14 weekly briefings on safeguarding news and information during the first Covid-19 lockdown

DSPP have worked in partnership with Dudley Voices for Choices to design 4 animated videos for the learning-disabled community around Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) and related subjects. The short films were viewed across the UK and were shared widely by Learning Disability England, self-advocacy groups and local authorities across the UK. The videos have been used for training by Dudley Voices for Choices and others and the DNACPR video was used in local hospitals for awareness. In addition, because of the DNACPR film and conversations local CCG's sent a directive to all health professionals who were distributing/writing DNACPRs to clearly state that a Learning Disability is not a reason for a DNACPR and the reasons why. In total there were 55,000 impressions on the videos and in total the week Dudley Voices for Choices shared the films they were viewed and shared 688 times in seven days on Facebook.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) helps to prevent harm, neglect or exploitation across the life course.

DoLS supports all applicable adults over the age of 18. It ensures if individuals lack the mental capacity to consent and they are deprived of their liberty in a hospital or care home; they are assessed by two independent assessors and the Local Authority as Supervisory Body makes a determination as to whether the deprivation is in the person's best interests. The individual is also then granted legal rights to appeal, access to an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate if needed and the support of a named representative to ensure the care and placement continues to represent their best interest. The individual and their representative may also access the Court of Protection.

What we did:

- We continued to complete a high level of assessments despite Covid-19 restrictions
- Developed a regional audit tool to benchmark practice
- Continued to meet regional peers as support framework but also to learn from each other which supports the safeguarding of vulnerable adults in Dudley.
- Developed and delivered training for assessors but also for the wider social care arena to improve practice and compliance with the Mental Capacity Act

Impact of Covid-19 on DoLS assessments:

We were prevented from accessing the care homes and hospitals due to Covid-19 for large periods of time. We developed legally literate procedures to meet the Covid -19 guidance but also to ensure we could continue to safeguard the vulnerable adults of Dudley. We utilised the development of virtual assessments and ensured the individual, family and friends were part of all assessments. The DoLS Assessors were often the only people who had contact with the individuals, and they were thanked on many occasions by relatives for continuing to safeguard the individuals and enabling families to have an insight into the individual's life. Where necessary we assessed face to face using individual risk assessments for each event and PPE.

Safeguarding Adult Reviews

Under the 2014 Care Act, Safeguarding Adults Boards are responsible for Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs). The purpose of SARs in the statutory guidance is to 'promote effective learning and improvement action to prevent future deaths or serious harm occurring again'. The aim is that lessons can be learned from the case and for those lessons to be applied to future cases to prevent similar harm re-occurring.

SARs had been placed on hold due to the competing demands across partner agencies as staff had been seconded to support areas of urgent need during the Covid pandemic. This was agreed by the Executive Group of the DSPP

In 2020/21 13 cases were referred to the Safeguarding Adult Review Panel for consideration and 2 progressed to a SAR, 2 were included in a thematic review on self-neglect and 1 was recommended as a local review. These had not been completed within the timescale of this Annual Report.

The number of referrals increased significantly during Covid. The learning and improvement sub-group looked at ways to get to the final report stage quicker, by using different methods, such as practitioner events to gather information and rapid reviews to embed learning quickly across agencies

The Care Act 2014 states that lessons learnt should be published in the Annual Report following the conclusion of the review. These lessons will be published in the 2021/22 Annual Report following the final sign off by the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership.

Although these reviews are not yet published it is possible to say that themes of domestic abuse, self-neglect (linked with substance misuse) and the use of the Mental Capacity Act have been identified and will be explored in the reports. Immediate learning identified was also actioned by partners.

Embedding the Learning

The Learning and Improvement sub group monitor and review action plans of recommendations for partner agencies involved following a completed SAR. We collate the themes that arise from case reviews and include information relating to these themes in the practitioner workshops and multi-agency training offer

When a SAR is completed, a briefing (Safer7) is prepared highlighting the learning for safeguarding practice across all agencies in an easy to read format.

Summary

During 2021/22 the Dudley Safeguarding Adults Board will continue to embed agreed strategic priorities and the work of the subgroups, whilst engaging with and listening to adults at risk and with care and support needs. We aim to do this by including more people with lived experiences in our sub group work and ensuring that the voice of people who access services is heard throughout our multi-agency case file audit process. There will also be additional learning from Covid-19 which has impacted in so many ways. In 2022, we will come together as a Partnership to review our priorities to make sure that we focus on what is really important to the people of Dudley. We know our focus may change following Covid-19, but what does not change is our commitment across the Partnership to ensuring everyone who needs help, receives the right help. In addition,

In our next report, we hope to be able report more on the recovery and more so, how we are living with Covid, to be able to 'see' our colleagues and people who access our services more, where appropriate and safe to do so. The effects of Covid 19 cannot be underestimated, we have seen individuals present to psychiatric service for the first time in crisis, a significant amount of these individuals have not been known to services. There are concerns that certain safeguarding types have been hidden during the pandemic, specifically domestic violence and abuse. The partnership is committed to monitoring concerns and taking appropriate action through agreed strategies, for example a communication plan to raise and maintain awareness. Furthermore the impact of working in isolation on staff is not as yet known and again this will have to be monitored.

We will continue to learn from our safeguarding adult reviews, ensuring timely and appropriate dissemination of themes and trends and to use this information to underpin our training and influence our strategic direction. As a Partnership we will also support our colleagues when they move into Integrated Care Systems to ensure that safeguarding is embedded.

Finally, we could not conclude this annual report without recognising the significance of planning and supporting providers for the changes in the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 and implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place for the most vulnerable in our Borough. We know that significant work is underway, and this presents one of the biggest changes to legislation for many years, which will be covered in more detail in our next Annual Report. A task and finish group has been dedicated to readying Dudley for the new legislation which becomes effective 1st April 2022.