Learning On One Page (LOOP)

Derby Safeguarding Adults Board (DSAB): Audit – Criteria Not Met (November 2025 & January 2026)

Description of audit context

In 2025, the Quality Assurance Subgroup identified a growing concern regarding the number of cases that did not meet safeguarding criteria and agreed that a programme of audits focusing on these cases would be beneficial. The purpose of these audits was to identify any common themes as to why the criteria had not been met and to consider what actions partner agencies may need to take to reduce referrals, that didn't meet the criteria, to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The Derby Safeguarding Adults Board (DSAB) conducted multi-agency audits in November 2025 and January 2026, reviewing eight randomly selected cases where the safeguarding threshold had not been met. The aim was to identify both good practice and key learning that could be shared across partner agencies.

These multi-agency case file audits were undertaken with the support of a panel of practitioners from the Quality Assurance Subgroup. It was not possible to obtain feedback from adults as part of this audit.

Good practice

- In 87.5% (7) of cases, the views of the Adult were considered prior to the referral.
- In 75% (6) of cases, consent was sought from the Adult before the referral was submitted.
- In 75% (6) of cases, the referring agency had taken prior action before making the safeguarding referral.
- In 100% (8) of cases, the decision by the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) not to accept the referral was consistent with local safeguarding criteria guidance, and the rationale for the decision was clearly recorded.
- In 75% (6) of cases, no missed opportunities for earlier intervention or support were identified.
- All cases (100%, 8) were triaged on the same day, and in 87.5% (7) of cases it was concluded within two days that the safeguarding criteria had not been met.
- In 75% (6) of cases, information was appropriately shared with relevant agencies before a decision was made regarding the referral.
- In 100% (8) of cases, information was shared appropriately and in line with data-sharing protocols.
- In 100% (8) of cases, no barriers to information sharing or communication between agencies were identified.
- In 100% (8) of cases, agencies reported confidence in their understanding of the safeguarding criteria.

What didn't go so well

- In 37.5% (3) of cases, the referral form was not fully completed, including 25% (2) where the referral was submitted for the wrong individual.
- 62.5% (5) of cases, details relating to the adult's care and support needs were not disclosed or recorded. Within these 5 cases 60% (3) had no care and support needs present for the individual referred so the criteria were deemed as not being met.
- 50% (4) of cases, the level of risk and urgency was not clearly documented.
- In 37.5% (3) of cases, the Adults' mental capacity had not been considered.
- In 87.5% (7) of cases, the rationale for making the referral was unclear and not aligned with local safeguarding criteria guidance.
- In 50% (4) of cases, the referral should have been submitted as a Care and Support Assessment and not a safeguarding referral.
- In 25% (2) of cases, the Police should have been contacted due to the presence of domestic abuse.
- In 25% (2) of cases, the referring agency should have followed its internal processes before submitting a safeguarding referral.
- In 25% (2) of cases, opportunities for earlier intervention or support were missed.

Key learning themes

- Strong and positive practice in MASH Decision-Making and information sharing.
- Limited understanding or application of the Safeguarding Statutory Criteria.
- Concerns with quality and completion of the Adult Safeguarding referral form.
- Inconsistent use of alternative or internal processes.
- Consideration and application of mental capacity in decision-making.
- Safeguarding referrals made when a care concern referral would've been more appropriate.

DSAB recommendations

- DSAB and partner agencies to actively promote DSAB training opportunities, particularly the Adult Safeguarding course, encourage relevant staff to attend, and circulate the safeguarding decision-making guidance to support staff in applying the safeguarding criteria appropriately.
- All agencies to ensure the Adult Safeguarding referral form is fully completed before it is submitted to the MASH Team.
- All agencies to increase internal awareness of the process and criteria for submitting an Adult Safeguarding referral.
- All agencies to ensure that, where appropriate, a formal Mental Capacity Assessment is considered and completed.
- DSAB to circulate the Decision-Making Guidance once it has been signed off by the Derby and Derbyshire SABs Policy and Procedures Subgroup.
- Using the Decision-Making Guidance document, all agencies to ensure they understand the distinction between issues that require a safeguarding referral and those that should be addressed as care concern.