



Gateshead Safeguarding Adults Board

Thomas Adult C

7 Minute Guide

1. What is a safeguarding adult review (SAR)?

SARs are a statutory requirement for Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs). Safeguarding adult practice can be improved by identifying what is helping and what is hindering safeguarding work, in order to tackle barriers to good practice and protect adults from harm. SARs are not a mechanism for investigating or apportioning blame, but for identifying learning and making recommendations to improve practice and systems.

2. The SAR referral

The Safeguarding Adult Review and Complex Case Group agreed to undertake a safeguarding adult review following a subgroup meeting on 4h May 2021. It was agreed to explore how agencies worked together to support Thomas following his release from prison in January 2020. In particular, the SARCC wanted to explore:

- How well did professionals address the person's mental health needs?
- How well did professionals address the person's substance misuse needs?
- How well did professionals address the co-occurring substance misuse and mental health needs?
- How well did processes work at the point of prison discharge?
- What was the Impact of COVID 19 on service delivery?

3. Background

- Thomas was 41 when he died.
- A White male of local origin.
- He was found dead in his property in February 2021 and the Coroner deemed it to be a drug-related death.
- He was surrounded by drug packets and had Flubromazolam and Buprenorphine in his system.
- He had been released from prison in January 2020 following ten years' incarceration for an assault on his wife.

Thomas was in contact with numerous services following his release from prison in January 2020. His mental health appeared to be deteriorating for some time. Throughout his involvement with agencies, he displayed ongoing florid ideation about being persecuted, that agencies were conspiring to harm him. Thomas continued to present multiple times to agencies, in particular Police and Ambulance Services until his detention under the Mental Health Act in November 2020. Following discharge his continued beliefs around persecution resulted in him sleeping rough, even though he had a tenancy with The Gateshead Housing Company, until he was placed back into remand. He returned to prison twice in this period including just before his death.

4. Long History of Involvement with the Criminal Justice System

- 34 entries for him in Police records for the review period alone.
- Arrested a total of 89 times between 1995 and 2020 including offences against the person, public order, breach of bail, acquisitive crime, drugs, traffic offences and criminal damage.
- 27 pages of warnings about Thomas in the Police records, going back to 2004 including for weapons, violence and domestic violence.
- Warnings for officers to visit him double crewed. He was known to have concealed weapons.
- Reported as a victim in eight crimes during 2020.
- A history of poor compliance with sanctions imposed.

5. Key Themes of the Review

- The challenge of a man who is both difficult to diagnose and difficult to engage.
- Multi-agency management and escalation.
- The need for more support from mental health around personality difficulties.
- The importance of submitting safeguarding concerns.
- Outreach
- Mental capacity
- Data Collection and information sharing

6. Good Practice

- Thomas was never street homeless upon release. Agencies liaised prior to release to ensure that suitable accommodation would be ready. Services were flexible and adapted to meet his needs
- The local Community Hub set up by the Council as a temporary Covid response provided positive support to, and advocacy for, Thomas.
- During Thomas's time in both temporary accommodation and his tenancy, there were several licence breaches. Housing Officers worked with Police and Probation to support Thomas rather than act to enforce tenancy conditions.
- The Drug and Alcohol Service worked to support Thomas into residential rehabilitation and although this did not happen, the focus on this was good practice.
- The Drug and Alcohol Service generally continued to work with Thomas despite some very challenging behaviours.

7. Recommendations

A - Gateshead SAB should ensure that there is a collaborative approach by Mental Health and other services to the care of people with complex presentations, especially where there are difficulties in accurate diagnosis.

B - Gateshead SAB should develop a multi-agency protocol on managing people that services find difficult to engage. This should:

- include the development of a multi-agency management structure for this client group
- encourage the use of a care-coordination approach.

C - Gateshead's Public Health Commissioners should ensure that the needs of people with substance use disorders that services find difficult to engage are considered in any local needs assessment or commissioning plans. Consideration should be given to developing assertive outreach capacity for this group.

D - Gateshead SAB should ensure that agencies and individual professionals are recognising the need to safeguard individuals with challenging presentations like Thomas.

E - Gateshead SAB should remind all professionals of the importance of:

- considering mental capacity with these complex and challenging clients.
- considering "executive capacity" when assessing the capacity of vulnerable and self-neglecting individuals like Thomas.

F - Gateshead's Public Health Commissioners and the Integrated Care Board should review the response to people with co-occurring disorders to ensure that it is consistent with national guidance.

G - Gateshead SAB should remind all professionals of the importance of collecting accurate data on alcohol and drug use through screening tools such as the AUDIT screening tools and related drug tools and through the Police actively using the alcohol flag.