

**National Covid-19 safeguarding adults and insight project**

**What is the impact of Covid-19 on safeguarding adults? We don’t know.**

An initial reduction in concerns/referrals were reported in some places, whilst an increase was reported in others. There are concerns that safeguarding issues weren’t being identified and reported during the lockdown because there was a decrease in face to face contact with people with care and support needs, whether with families, friends, neighbours or professionals. Specifically, there have been concerns about Care Homes, which were closed to visitors to assist prevention of Covid-19 transmission. There are concerns about the increase in reported domestic abuse during the lockdown – but it isn’t clear whether people with care and support needs were equally affected. There is an expectation that there will be a surge in safeguarding activity as the lockdown is eased. What is the impact of this?

**Why is this important?**

It is important to understand what has happened in order to learn any lessons for future Covid-19 outbreaks, as well as responding to changing safeguarding needs. Data is essential to prompt further questions. It is useful to have data rather than anecdote to support understanding about the impact of Covid-19 on safeguarding activity in England, both during lock down and as the restrictions are eased. We hope this information will help inform preparations and planning for the future.

The proposal for this work came from the executive group of the National Network of Chairs of Safeguarding Adults Boards who suggested that it would be very helpful to understand the nature of the impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown on safeguarding activity before the NHS Digital returns are published (see below). This proposal is supported by the Safeguarding workstream of the Adult Social Care Hub (joint LGA/ADASS), the Care and Health Improvement Programme (LGA), the co-Chairs of the National Principal Social Workers Network and the safeguarding lead at the Department of Health and Social Care.

**What are our data sources? And current context**

The Safeguarding Adults Collection (SAC) is an annual data collection from local authorities which captures information about safeguarding activity. Data is collected, submitted to NHS Digital and published at the end of the following calendar year (i.e. data for 2019/20 would normally be published at the end of 2020, although the collection deadline has been deferred at the moment, and data for 2020/21 would normally be published at the end of 2021). Therefore, there is considerable delay before the impact of Covid-19 on safeguarding activity would be able to be described and understood across England.

This survey is entirely voluntary as it is recognised that Local Authorities continue to be under considerable pressure to meet other mandatory data requests from central government, which means it may be difficult to respond to this particular request. There may be conflicting priorities and so this survey request is flexible (provide whatever you can) and the timeframes are indicative (provide what you can when you can).

**What can we do now?**

This proposed **voluntary collection of data** on safeguarding activity aims to compare levels between 2019 and 2020, for example looking at the differences between activity in March 2019 and March 2020 to see what the impact of Covid-19 is on activity levels and types. Rather than the full SAC return, a sub-set of the data is proposed (see pro forma for further details – and not all the fields need to be filled in), with space for free text from participants regarding their insight into what their data is saying about local safeguarding issues and activity, what other information they might be using to understand the impac of Covid-19 on safeguarding activity in their locality.

In the first instance information from January 2019 through to April 2020 is requested, in order to capture the initial impact as Covid-19 began to spread in England. In this way it will be possible to make comparisons from January 2019 to January 2020, as well as look at trends from January 2020 onwards.

Participants are asked to provide the following:

***Initial information request (activity during lock down) by July 31st 2020***

* Monthly information regarding number of safeguarding concerns, section 42 enquiries, types of abuse, and age, risk management;
* This monthly information extending back to January 2019 to be able to compare activity to pre-Covid-19 levels e.g. the differences between January 2019 and January 2020, February 2019 and February 2020 etc. We would hope that April 2020 data would be provided, and May 2020 data, if available
* A narrative on the data including observations about other areas and issues that are of concern is be requested. This could include further information for example about safeguarding activity in Care Homes settings (which could come from ‘location of risk’ data’), safeguarding people who are homeless, people experiencing domestic abuse and any other local safeguarding issue which are considered pertinent because of Covid-19 related impacts, but not in the SAC data set covered above.
* The narrative is open text and could also cover any local insight for example noting where concerns have come from (source of referral data) indicating how the Covid-19 lock down may have affected this aspect of safeguarding activity.

***Follow-up data request (activity as lock down restrictions are eased) by August 31st 2020***

* Following the initial information collection, the data and insights for May, June and July 2020 will be requested in August 2020 to see what safeguarding trends might emerge as the lockdown continued, began to be eased and then is eased further. (If the data and insight reporting are proving useful, this process could continue further.)

**What will the information be used for?**

We would hope to provide an initial ‘emerging messages’ from the first round of data and insight information for participants, depending on what is submitted. The quality of the national picture will depend on the scale of participation across England and whatever patterns emerge. With the further data and insights from the second round of data and insight information, results can be aggregated at regional and national levels without identifying specific local authorities. This data should provide insight and help clarify what did/didn’t happen, and whether there were any national or regional trends during this period as lock down was eased. We would expect to produce a summary report after the information is analysed, for publication in the autumn.

The project will use the LG Inform site[[1]](#footnote-1) as access can be limited to participants only. LG Inform can be used to produce an online interactive report enabling participants to graphically explore the data they have provided and how their local situation compares to broader regional and national figures.

All responses will be treated confidentially. Identifiable information about individuals will be used internally by the LGA but will only be held and processed in accordance with the LGA privacy statement[[2]](#footnote-2). Identifiable information about local authorities will be shared among the participants of this exercise but will not be made available to other local authorities, central government bodies or the general public. We are undertaking this survey to aid the legitimate interests of the LGA in supporting and representing authorities.

**What you can do**

Please provide data and insight about safeguarding adult activity in your area.

The deadlines of July 31st and August 31st are not hard deadlines, but indicative; submissions after these points will still be gratefully accepted but may not be included in any interim reporting.

Participants are encouraged to provide as much of the data and insights as you can, and you can provide partial information if you are unable to cover all the data requests. A space for explanatory text is included on the return, enabling participants to contextualise any features of the data provided as required.

This information will be sent to the Care and Health Improvement Programme at the Local Government Association on an Excel pro forma. Simply add your data to the pro forma and send it to James Harman at CHIP@local.gov.uk

**Timetable summary**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Information requested | Additional Notes |
| July 31st 2020 | Initial data set and insights January 2019 – April 2020 | May information if available |
| August 31st 2020 | Data and insights May and June 2020 |  |

**Please provide as much as you can, when you can to** CHIP@local.gov.uk

**Further notes**

It is recognised and understood that data collected in 2020 will not necessarily be validated, so may not be 100% accurate. Further it is understood that in the past there have been some inconsistencies in the ways in which safeguarding concerns, section 42 enquiries and other enquiries have been counted, there has been a lot of work undertaken to address this[[3]](#footnote-3). This may mean that local practice has changed between 2019 and 2020 and this has impacted in the data. Participants can comment on this when they provide their data so this can be acknowledged.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 makes it clear that there is a duty to continue to undertake safeguarding work, e.g. s42 enquiries, and this is emphasised in the Care Act easements guidance 2020. If there have been any local changes in practice that impact on safeguarding activity, participants can comment on this when they provide their data so this can be acknowledged.

If you can wish to help develop the work, please contact adi.cooper@local.gov.uk

1. <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.local.gov.uk/privacy-policy-0> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. see <https://www.local.gov.uk/making-decisions-duty-carry-out-safeguarding-adults-enquiries-resources> and similar paper on safeguarding concerns to be published June 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)