

Briefing Note: Review of Safeguarding Arrangements

Purpose and context

This briefing summarises the key findings and recommendations from a joint review by safeguarding partners in Gloucestershire. It considered a case of prolonged abuse and exploitation within a family setting which predated the legislation but would today be understood as modern day slavery across both children's and adult safeguarding systems, with the aim of supporting shared learning while recognising the historical context in which decisions were made. To protect the anonymity of those involved, this one-page summary is being published. The full report has been considered by the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (GSAB) and the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB) who will oversee the delivery of its recommendations.

Key findings

The review found that exploitation remained largely unrecognised for an extended period, despite professional involvement with other household members. This reflected the limitations of safeguarding frameworks, professional awareness and information-sharing arrangements at the time. Adult safeguarding duties were not statutory for much of the period, awareness of disability-related exploitation, coercive control and domestic modern slavery was limited, and records were fragmented or no longer retained. Where concerns were identified, responses were consistent with expectations of the time but did not extend to recognising wider safeguarding risks within the household, highlighting the challenge of identifying abuse within isolated private family settings.

Current assurance and learning

The review concluded that safeguarding arrangements have strengthened significantly over time. Legislative change, clearer statutory duties, improved safeguarding practice, multi-agency information sharing, electronic systems and greater professional understanding of exploitation mean that similar indicators would now be more likely to be identified and acted upon earlier. However, the review also noted that risks remain where exploitation is hidden within private settings and where visibility, disclosure or third-party reporting is limited.

Main recommendations

Agencies should strengthen community awareness of domestic modern slavery and coercive control, with a clear focus on exploitation within families and local communities. Public messaging should build confidence to recognise concerns and report them directly to services, reducing reliance on individuals experiencing harm to seek help themselves.

Professional curiosity should continue to be reinforced across all services, particularly where adults with care and support needs are present in households receiving services for children, housing or related functions, ensuring a whole-household approach to safeguarding.

A joint plan is being developed between GSAB and GSCP to implement these recommendations

Conclusion

The review confirms that safeguarding systems are now significantly stronger than in the past, but continued vigilance is essential. Strengthening professional curiosity, improving awareness of less visible forms of

exploitation, and increasing community understanding that modern slavery and coercive control can occur within ordinary family and community settings are key to reducing the risk of similar harm in the future.