

A report published today outlines a string of safeguarding improvements recommended by Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board (DSAB) following an investigation into a former Dorset care home for vulnerable adults.

The Serious Case Audit (SCA) into the now closed Purbeck Care Home in Wareham, found that residents suffered abuse and received inadequate standards of care between January 2010 and November 2012.

The report highlights a number of learning points for health and social care agencies, including better sharing of information, stronger links with families and advocacy services as well as improved procedures for staff to raise concerns about standards of care.

The investigation began in 2012, when the home had 40 residents placed by various agencies from across the country. A newly appointed member of staff raised concerns after finding verbal abuse as well as neglect of one of the vulnerable residents with learning disabilities.

He also reported that some residents were left on their own all day despite having a history of self-harming. As well as reports of neglect and abuse, there were also concerns about the dirty condition of the home and lack of staff on night-time duty.

Dorset County Council stopped funding any new placements in 2012, following an incident where a male member of staff subjected a female resident to a prolonged period of physical and verbal abuse. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment in 2013.

A subsequent multi-agency case audit uncovered significant gaps in staff training, lack of planning sufficiently for care of older residents, limited access to any activities and poor provision of food and beverages.

The report prompted the council to find suitable alternative accommodation for the residents, and the number of placements at the home dropped to 23. The home eventually closed in October 2014.

The SCA highlights a number of failings to ensure the privately owned and run home was adequately operated. It also calls for action on all health and social care organisations involved to improve communication, cooperation and sharing local intelligence.

The most significant point in the report underlines the view that vulnerable people with complex needs should be cared for in local communities, or care home placements close to their home and family where they can receive better care and support, to prevent institutionalised neglect and abuse in the future.

All agencies involved, including local councils, the police and Care Quality Commission, have welcomed the recommendations of the report and are keen to work closely to reduce the risk of similar mistakes being made in the future.

Jane Ashman, chair of the DSAB, said: “This in-depth review is about the lessons we must learn and the actions we must take to prevent abuse from happening again.

“It is also about promoting a culture and a way of working that actively challenges poor practice and promotes compassionate care across the system.

“Accommodation and support services for people with a learning disability have developed greatly over the past decade to meet changing needs and expectations. Most adults with a learning disability and their carers prefer more independent living where people have their own self-contained accommodation and yet can maintain contact with others such as friends.”

The full report can be found on www.dorsetforyou.com/

Notes to Editor:

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The Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board is a board made up of senior representatives from all the statutory agencies, including Dorset County Council, Health Trusts, Police, Dorset Probation, Dorset Fire and Rescue service, Ambulance service,

District and Borough Councils and the voluntary sector, including representation for people with learning disability and older people. It has been established to improve practice which protects and safeguards adults in vulnerable circumstances in Dorset.

The Safeguarding Adults Board works with other partnerships promoting the safety of residents.

The purpose of an audit is to establish whether there are lessons to be learnt from the circumstances of a case and the way in which local professionals and agencies work together to safeguard adults at risk.

The Board includes:

- Independent Chair, Jane Ashman
- Dorset County Council
- CCG, Dorset
- Dorset Healthcare University Foundation Trust
- Dorset Police
- Dorset Probation Service
- Dorset Community Health Services
- Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- South Western Ambulance Service
- Dorset Fire and Rescue Services
- North Dorset District Council
- East Dorset District Council
- Christchurch Borough Council
- Purbeck District Council
- West Dorset District Council
- Weymouth and Portland Borough Council
- Voluntary sector representatives including representation for people with a learning disability and older people