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### SAR

Alan was a 53 year-old man who died as a result of an accident with a fire caused by a cigarette in a garage where he was sleeping for the night. Following Alan's death [Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board](#) (SSAB) undertook a scoping exercise, which determined that the circumstances leading up to his death met the [statutory requirement](#) to undertake a Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) under the Care Act (2014).

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### Background

Alan had a pattern of involvement with health, social care and criminal justice services throughout his adult life. This was underpinned by his chronic alcohol dependency, with Alan having begun drinking at 15 years of age. He lived a chaotic lifestyle and at the time of his death Alan was homeless and subject to statutory safeguarding, though sadly he died before any meaningful safeguarding work was undertaken.

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### Key Learning

- Those who commission and plan the development of health, social care, criminal justice and housing services need to recognise the specific needs and impacts of chronic, change resistant and dependent drinkers and commission appropriate services to meet those needs
- Improving the care for clients like Alan requires staff to have positive attitudes and beliefs about response
- This positive approach requires organisational and managerial support and a robust governance structure
- All frontline services need to understand that chronic dependent drinkers are generally no longer "choosing their lifestyle"
- The role of brain injury as a driver of presentation of people like Alan needs to be recognised by professionals; particularly in the context of mental capacity assessment
- Self-neglecting drinkers with care and support needs require safeguarding under the Care Act (2014)
- All frontline services need to be aware of the key elements of a good care plan for a chronic drinker
- Adult Social Care and Safeguarding staff need to recognise the need for proactive/assertive steps to safeguard chronic-dependent drinkers with care and support needs who are at risk of abuse or neglect/self-neglect
- Services need to move away from episodic, crisis-driven responses to people like Alan
- Frontline alcohol services should have the commissioned capacity to undertake assertive outreach with the most challenging chronic dependent drinkers
- Local commissioners and strategic leads may wish to consider setting up a multi-agency group (or nominating an existing group) to manage chronic dependent drinkers
- Frontline services need support to understand how the Mental Capacity Act applies to chronic dependent drinkers
- Relevant frontline services need to ensure that they are appropriately assessing capacity and not just assuming capacity with this complex client group

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### CARM

Following the learning identified in this SAR the Complex Adults Risk Management (CARM) approach has been developed and is supported by SSAB partners. This process provides a framework for professionals to facilitate effective multi-agency working with adults at risk who are deemed to have mental capacity and who are at risk of serious harm or death through self-neglect, refusal of services and/or high levels of risk-taking activity. Further information will be circulated prior to the Autumn launch, and the CARM policy, Practice Guidance and Referral and Risk Assessment form will be made available on [SSAB's website](#).

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### The Review

The [review](#) covers the period 01/01/2019 to Alan's death in February 2020 and involved a number of partner agencies who operate in Sunderland. As part of the review frontline staff who worked with Alan participated in a workshop, which provided valuable insight and supported the SAR process. The review was published August 2021.



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### Links to 'Eva' SAR

In February 2018 SSAB published the ['Eva' SAR](#), the key learning from which has similarities to those identified in this review. A recommendation from this SAR is to ensure that the learning identified from the Eva SAR is being applied locally. In particular, differentiating between an assessment of capacity and an assumption of capacity, and safeguarding referrals for self-neglect. SSAB partners and their staff should refamiliarise themselves with the learning from the Eva SAR and seek assurance that the learning is embedded across their organisation.

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- Frontline services need support to understand how the Mental Capacity Act applies to chronic dependent drinkers
- Professionals need to consider how the application of the 2nd stage of the mental capacity test applies to a group of people who may be able to understand and retain information but are unable to "use" it in making decisions due to the compulsion associated with alcohol dependency
- Professionals need to understand how the concept of executive capacity applies to this client group
- Local agencies need to recognise that alongside self-neglect this client group are also vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by others