

Safeguarding Annual Report

2021/22



midland
heart 

Foreword from the Chair



It gives me great pleasure as our safeguarding lead to present our Safeguarding Annual report for 2021-22.

During another year working through the Covid-19 pandemic, we've continued to adopt flexible and collaborative approaches to working with partners to make sure our customers are safe from harm and abuse. It's reassuring to note that 79 of our referrals were accepted by the local authority in the past year, a 31% increase from the year before. This demonstrates that our intensive training is helping us to get the right outcomes for customers.

Following a review of some of the most concerning safeguarding cases, we're developing a 'home checker' form that will be used to highlight safeguarding concerns. While we are already receiving referrals from our frontline staff, this will help us identify issues earlier, particularly when property condition is a factor. This year we've worked hard to support those who have decided to not use their gas supply to make sure they have access to heating and hot water.

The Board prioritised developing audio training for our telephone-based colleagues who take many thousands of calls over the phone every year and have been key in referring safeguarding concerns. We continue to work with our statutory partners and have been involved in two concluded safeguarding adult reviews that found we had worked with all our statutory partners to keep these customers safe from harm and abuse.

Finally, I'm pleased to report that we've recruited an independent Chairperson, who will support us in setting our new strategic aims to ensure we deliver positive outcomes for our most vulnerable customers. This is an important part of our newly formed Safeguarding Board that will meet for the first time in October 2022.

Thank you for taking the time to read this important annual report, Safeguarding is and will always be a priority for each and every one of us.

Sharon

Sharon Alexis-Wilson

Director, Retirement and Supported Living





Cases in our retirement and supported living accommodation continue to decrease overall.

Our figures show our colleagues are better understanding what constitutes a statutory safeguarding concern over a general well-being concern with over 1,068 cases raised by our front line colleagues. These cases are then investigated by specialist safeguarding officers who decide on the best way to support the customer and their family. Some cases will be escalated to the local authority and it's encouraging to see more of them being accepted.



33,792
Homes managed



1,068
Concerns raised during
the year
(2% fewer than last year)



79 Concerns accepted by the local
authority. 7 Retirement Living, 6 Supported
Living, 66 General Needs (55 last year)

Demographics



Gender: It is important to note that we house a higher proportion of women than men and therefore this reflects our customer profile.



66% female



34% male



Ethnicity: As outlined in previous annual reports the trends in referrals remains the same with BAME groups being over represented when compared to our profile. National research shows that deprivation is a correlating factor in regards to safeguarding and this reflects the communities we work in that have high levels of BAME Customers.

35% Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME)

50% Non BAME

15% Did not disclose

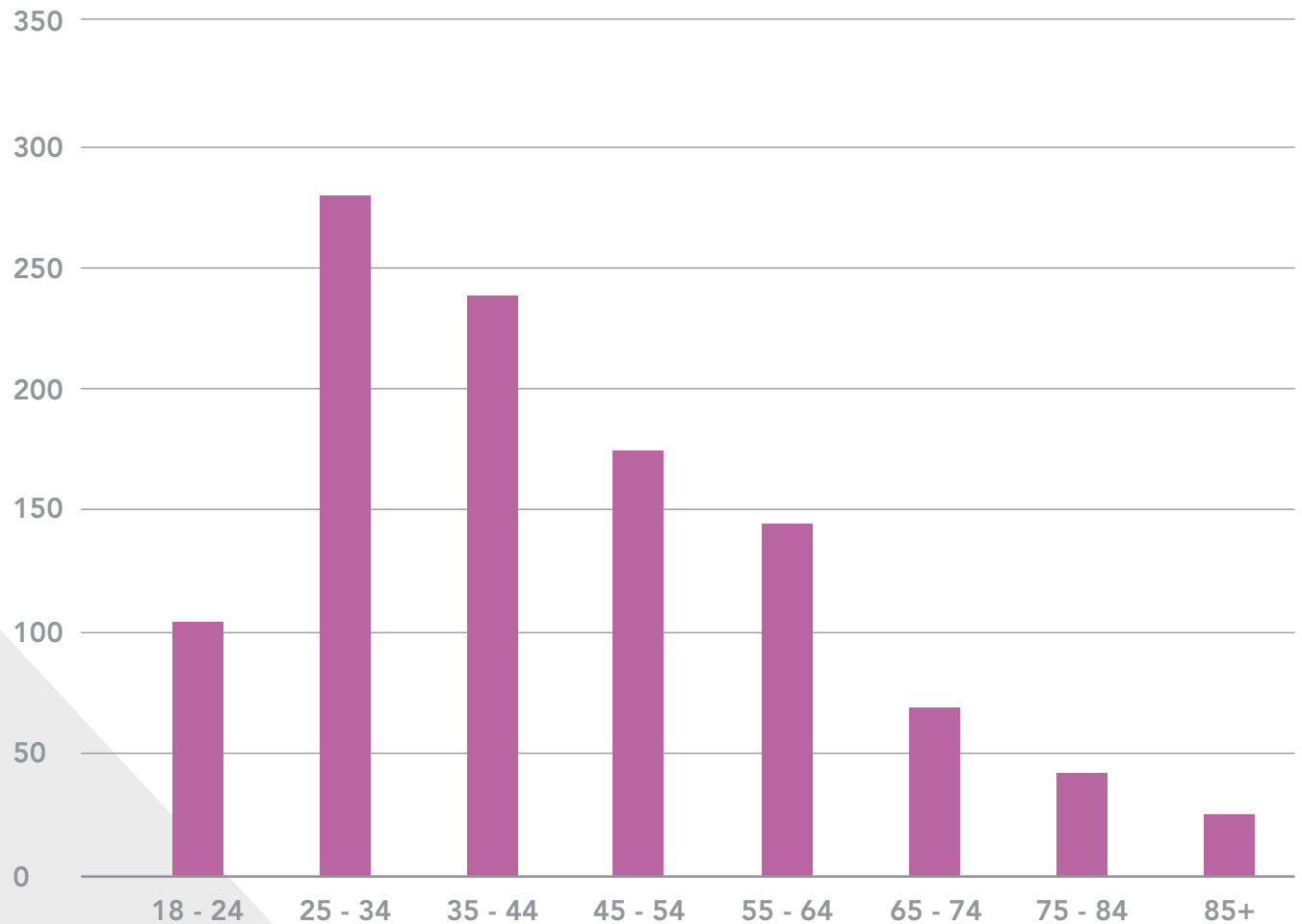


Age of our customers - concerns raised



The trend shows a higher number of 25-34 year olds have had the most concerns raised. This is due in part to our age profile in our general needs properties and the number of concerns raised in our supported living portfolio.

Age Range of Customers



■ 2021/2022

Nature of reports

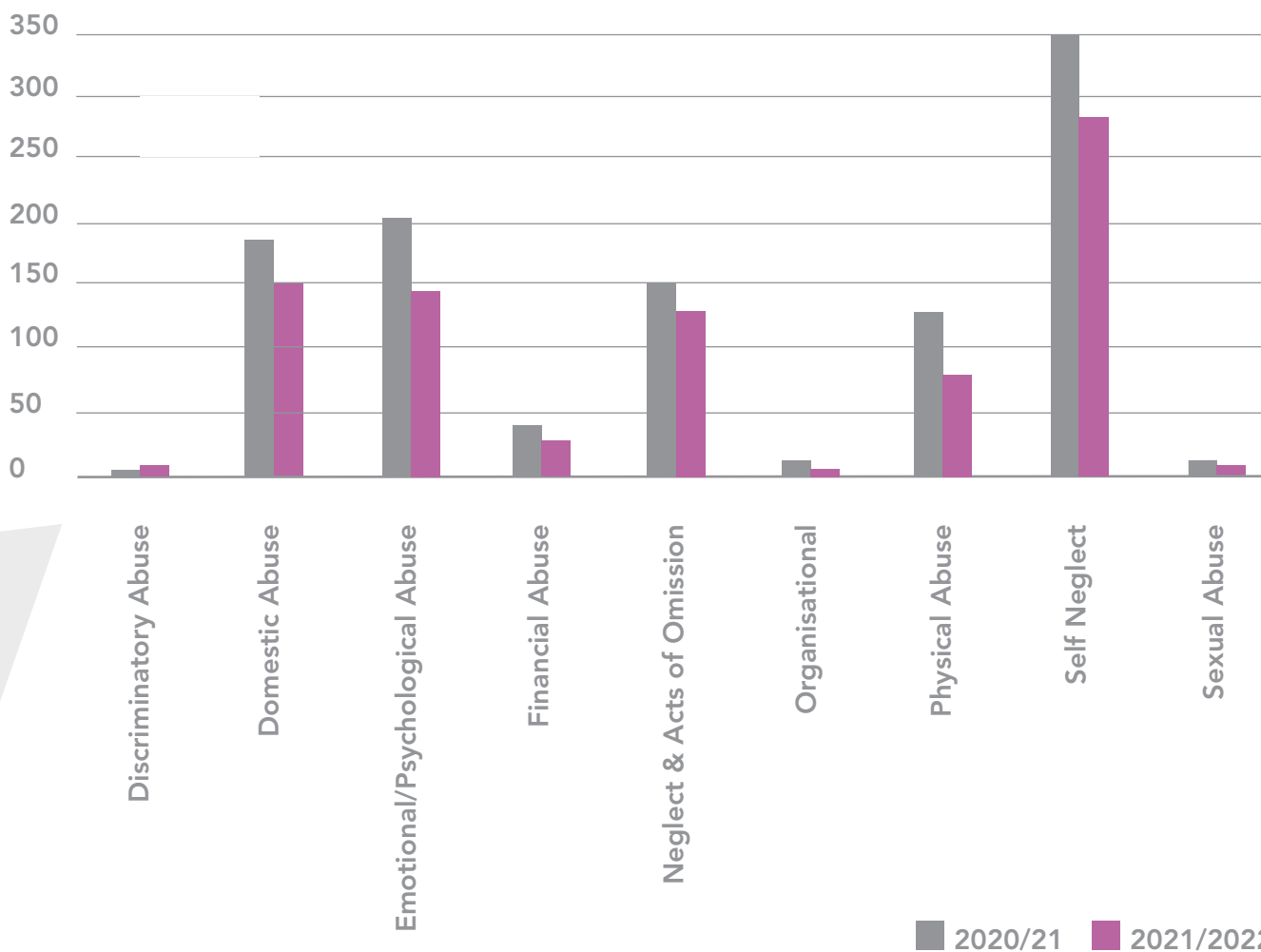


Cases of Self Neglect continue to represent our largest area of concern with hoarding continuing to be one of the most common aspects of self-neglect. While it can be challenging to get the local authority to accept these cases we work closely with the customer and other agencies to mitigate the risk of harm.

Whilst self-neglect is one of the most common presenting root causes of safeguarding, we also recognise that we have a number of customers experiencing domestic abuse. In these instances other agencies have already made the statutory referrals and we work intensely with all parties supporting the victim or survivor.

Our comprehensive training for colleagues continues to support colleagues in identifying a range of different safeguarding concerns including self-neglect and domestic abuse.

Safeguarding Concerns 2020/21 vs 2021/22



Actions we took



During the last financial year three investigations relating to safeguarding took place, this is down from six last year and no action was taken as a result of these investigations.

The reduction in cases reflects our divestment from the delivery of care services in retirement living but we continue to work closely with our care providers to monitor performance and encourage a culture of speaking out.

This approach is in line with guidance issued as part of the Social Housing White Paper.

Roles:

Team Leader (supported living) _____	1
Senior independent living officer (supported living) _____	1
Independent living officer (supported living) _____	1

No action required in any of these cases



What we have delivered...



Continued close partnership working with care providers in our retirement living plus schemes to ensure safe working practices



Continued specialist training from a national provider for appropriate staff (SCIE) to help them spot the signs and escalating referrals when needed



Developed bespoke audio e-learning for key teams including our customer hub and income dialler teams



Specific communications campaigns for a range of topics made available in a range of formats including easy read



Our Safeguarding Ambassador Group continue to meet bi-annually to share best practice and champion our focus on safeguarding



Example: lessons learned...



Summary

A case came to our attention when a resident reported he was in hospital and didn't want to return to his property due to being bullied by regular visitors.

Whilst we were trying to find out more information about Mr O's situation, we received a phone call from the police. They informed us that there'd been a serious allegation of sexual assault at the property – but Mr O wasn't a subject in the case.

It was clear that this individual was a victim of 'cuckooing' – a crime in which drug dealers take over the home of a vulnerable person to use it as a base for drug trafficking and other criminal activity.

By spotting the signs of abuse and working closely with the police, we were able to tackle the criminal activity happening in the area. Thankfully Mr O is now living safely and is no longer being exploited - a great outcome for our customer. These actions have also had a positive impact for residents in the wider area.

What have we done?

- Our Safeguarding Ambassadors have created a toolkit about cuckooing and county lines.
- We've been building stronger relationships with 10 Local Authority Safeguarding Boards, contributing to three safeguarding adult reviews and attending lessons learnt workshops.
- Comprehensive training has helped staff differentiate the types of abuse - such as physical and domestic - which has resulted in much more accurate reporting.
- We've implemented our new 'home checker' project and training for staff which will enable us to have senior level oversight of cases posing the greatest risk and provide reassurance on our approach to our governance boards.
- Delivered toolbox talks with our operatives and briefings with our hub to make sure all our colleagues are confident to spot the signs of harm and abuse when they're working with customers.

Key outcomes



60% more General Needs referrals accepted by Local Authority when compared to two years ago



All staff 100% compliant with safeguarding e-learning



3 serious case review contributions all learning implemented and 14 internal case reviews with full learning implemented

Key Priorities 2022/2023



Good Governance



Embed our new safeguarding board led by our independent chair, to further assure ourselves our practices supporting safeguarding are working and delivering positive outcomes for customers.

Continue to monitor and assure ourselves that we comply with the new consumer regulations, outlined by the social housing white paper.

Strategic Development



Review our policy in-line with the new consumer regulation and any supporting procedures to deliver this.

Develop a communications plan to make sure that our customers know how we support vulnerable individuals and our aims for the future.

Building Relationships



Revisit our care provider partnership agreements to ensure they are fit for purpose and adequately protect our vulnerable customers.

Work with our Local Authorities to identify any key groups where we can support and contribute to their work.

Learning & Development



Monitor the impact of audio training and make sure compliance is tested.

Continue to use SCIE specialist training for all new starter practitioners across our frontline services.



*“safeguarding is
ever present as one
of our priorities to
keep those living in our
homes safe”*