

7 Minute Brief – SAR Kathy

Reason for SAR and background:

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership (SSP) commissioned a mandatory [Safeguarding Adult Review \(SAR\)](#) to explore how well partners respond to concerns of alcohol use and self-neglect.

Kathy, a woman in her 40s, died at home in November 2025. She reported agoraphobia and not leaving the house. Her stepfather explained she used cannabis and had periods of heavy binge drinking. Kathy had limited involvement with services until before her death. 10 days before Kathy was not drinking or eating. Ambulances attended to her, but she declined observations and support and was assessed as capacitated.

Alcohol Screening Tools

The level of Kathy's alcohol use was not really known to professionals and it was unclear whether she had a dependency on alcohol, as when she stopped drinking she did not experience expected side effects of withdrawal, such as shaking. It is possible this may be due to her pattern of heavy binge drinking.

The author has highlighted the need for all partners to be aware of and confident in using alcohol screening tools, such as the [AUDIT tool](#).

Mental Capacity Act 2005

There was good practice recognised by the paramedics who undertook Mental Capacity Assessments and intervention, these were thorough and well considered. Kathy was assessed to have capacity and declined all observations and support offered.

'Moral Injury' was raised by professionals who felt that Kathy needed support and they wanted to provide this, but they could not do anything further other than safety advice due to Kathy's capacity to make 'unwise decisions'.

[MCA principal 3](#)

Learning Resources:

[7 Golden Rules of Information Sharing](#)

[Process for the Resolution of Professional Disagreement](#)

[Professional Curiosity](#)

[A guide to alcohol use disorders and self-neglect](#)

[Alcohol & MCA webinar recording](#)

[How to use legal powers to safeguard highly vulnerable dependent drinkers](#)

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Alcohol use and self-neglect

[SAR Robert](#) highlighted the need to support practitioners to recognise and understand the link between alcohol dependency and self-neglect. This review highlights that there may still be more work needed to support systems to understand the link between alcohol use and self-neglect.

[Alcohol Change UK](#)

[Change Grow Live CGL](#)

Think Family

It is vital family and informal carers are seen and heard. Where there is a carer or someone supporting, discuss their role and offer support, such as [Swindon Carers Together](#) or a carers assessment.

Home visits and urgent response

The ambulance service requested a home visit from Kathy's GP Surgery due to their concerns about her health and social circumstances. A paramedic from the surgery called Kathy and spoke to her on the phone, due to Kathy not wanting any professional involvement she declined any support, saying people were worrying but she didn't need support. Recommendations include GP surgeries reviewing processes to ensure they have robust systems in place to effectively triage and prioritise urgent support needs, including home visit requests where required. Also, for Adult Social Care to clarify the route for urgent referrals and inter-agency relationships to prevent delay in urgent response.