

South Australian
Adult Safeguarding Unit

Annual Report

2021 - 2022



Government
of South Australia

SA Health



Director's Foreword

I am delighted to present the Adult Safeguarding Unit (the Unit) Annual Report for 2021-22. This is the Unit's third report since it commenced operating in October 2019, highlighting the work of the Unit in 2021-22 and its role in promoting the rights of adults to live free from abuse and neglect.

Established under the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995* and located within the Office for Ageing Well, the Unit has a strong focus on safeguarding the rights of adults at risk of abuse. When the Unit commenced, it was mandated to provide a service to respond to reports of abuse or neglect of adults aged 65 and over, and 50 and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. That scope was expanded the following year in October 2020, when the Unit was given legislative responsibility to respond to reports of abuse or neglect of adults 18 years and older living with a disability.



On 1 October 2022, the Unit celebrated its third anniversary, and its remit was expanded to respond to reports of all adults experiencing abuse who may be vulnerable, by reason of age, disability, ill health, social isolation, dependence on others or other disadvantage. The staged approach to implementing and operationalising the Act has enabled the Unit to review and improve its processes during its establishment phase and identify appropriate resourcing requirements to support the delivery of the service as complexity and demand increases.

The Unit is well placed to manage its further expanded remit, with the engagement of additional adult safeguarding practitioners, as well as policy and project officers, to enhance the Unit's operations and ensure it remains flexible and responsive.

Safeguarding the rights of adults who may be vulnerable relies on community connection and collaboration. I am grateful for the significant relationships Office for Ageing Well has built over many years, which support and strengthen the important work undertaken by the Unit.

I express my gratitude to the Adult Safeguarding Unit and broader Office for Ageing Well staff for their strong commitment to upholding the rights of adults who may be vulnerable to abuse, as well as their dedication to supporting all South Australians to age well.

Cassie Mason

Director, Office for Ageing Well



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Background

The Adult Safeguarding Unit (the Unit), established under the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995* (the Act), commenced on 1 October 2019 with a legislative mandate to respond to reports of abuse or neglect of adults vulnerable to abuse.

Part 3 of the Act sets out Adult Safeguarding provisions, including: Principles for the operation of the Act and the Unit (s12); Composition of the Unit (s14); Functions (s15); Powers of authorised officers (s19); Reporting suspected risk of abuse of vulnerable adults (s22); Assessment and investigation of reports (s23); Consent (s24); Further referral of matters (s25); Court orders (s31); Review of certain decisions (s38, s40); and Information gathering (s42, s43).

The legislation and Unit were the first of their kind in Australia. As such, the Act included a transitional provision to limit the Unit's remit to responding to reports of suspected or actual abuse or mistreatment of people aged 65 and over, or 50 and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for its first three years of operation.

On 1 October 2020, following the recommendation of the Safeguarding Task Force, the Unit's legal mandate expanded to have responsibility to respond to reports of abuse and mistreatment of adults living with a disability.

Role and Functions of the Adult Safeguarding Unit

The Adult Safeguarding Unit is a dedicated, South Australia-wide service that responds to concerns about adults who may be vulnerable and experiencing abuse or mistreatment, and has a strong focus on safeguarding their rights. The Unit provides free confidential advice, information and support and takes reports of actual or suspected abuse of an

adult who may be vulnerable. In 2021-2022, the Unit's remit was limited to responding to reports in relation to older people and adults with a disability.

The Unit and its service model is underpinned by a rights-based legal framework and also works to prevent abuse through early intervention, community awareness and education.

The Unit complements existing agencies and statutory authorities, ensuring the best outcomes for adults who may be at risk of, or experiencing, abuse or mistreatment.

Section 15 of the Act sets out its functions, which include:

- > promoting and advocating for the rights and interests of vulnerable adults in South Australia
- > promoting participation by vulnerable adults in the making of decisions that affect their lives
- > promoting and assisting in the development of coordinated strategies for prevention and early intervention of abuse of vulnerable adults
- > to receive reports relating to the suspected abuse of vulnerable adults
- > to assess reports relating to the suspected abuse of vulnerable adults
- > to investigate reports relating to the suspected abuse of vulnerable adults
- > to coordinate responses to reports relating to the suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult with State authorities and other persons and bodies
- > to refer reports relating to the suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult to appropriate persons and bodies
- > to follow up on reports that have been assessed or investigated where it is appropriate to do so
- > to collate data on matters relating to the abuse of vulnerable adults



- > to advise Ministers, State authorities and other bodies (including non-Government bodies) on matters relating to the abuse of vulnerable adults at a systemic level
 - > to prepare and publish reports on matters relating to the abuse of vulnerable adults at a systemic level
 - > to prepare and publish reports on issues relating to vulnerable adults that are of public importance
 - > to perform such other functions as may be assigned to the Adult Safeguarding Unit by the Minister or under this or any other Act.
- When performing its functions, the Unit must apply the principles set out in the Act (s12), which include:
- > all vulnerable adults are entitled to be treated with respect for their dignity, autonomy and right to self-determination
 - > it is presumed that a vulnerable adult has decision-making capacity, unless there is evidence to the contrary
 - > except in those cases involving serious and imminent harm, the primary consideration in the operation of this Act is to ensure that a vulnerable adult's autonomy is respected and maintained rather than safeguarding the person from abuse
 - > vulnerable adults must be allowed to make their own decisions about their health care, residential and accommodation arrangements, financial affairs and other personal affairs to the extent that they are able, and be supported to enable them to make such decisions for as long as they can
 - > dignity in risk must be observed through acknowledging the right of all vulnerable adults to take informed risks and to make decisions that others (no matter their experience or background) may regard as wrong, reckless or inappropriate
 - > a vulnerable adult with decision-making capacity who is experiencing abuse has the right to decline support, assistance or other measures designed to safeguard them from abuse
 - > vulnerable adults must be involved in, and their wishes must directly inform, decisions made, or actions taken to support and safeguard them
 - > the best approach to safeguarding vulnerable adults from abuse is through coordinating a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary response, drawing on the expertise of relevant persons and bodies in order to effectively support and empower vulnerable adults to safeguard their rights and mitigate against abuse

- > subject to the laws of the State and Commonwealth, the will, preferences (including sexual preferences and sexual orientation), cultural and heritage beliefs, religious beliefs, racial origin, ethnicity, background and other beliefs or rights of a vulnerable adult must always be respected
- > safeguarding measures should consist of those which are the least interventionist and the least intrusive to the vulnerable adult, thus ensuring that any consequential erosion of that person's rights is kept to a minimum
- > safeguarding vulnerable adults from abuse is ultimately achieved through preventing abuse in the first place, and therefore awareness raising, and community education programs must be a priority in the administration and operation of the Unit.
- > supported the South Australian Law Reform Institute's (SALRI) review of the Act, through the provision of information, feedback and participation in the stakeholder consultation process
- > contributed to the Office for Ageing Well's submission to SALRI regarding the legislation review
- > commissioned Tetra Tech to develop a high-level operating model and road map in preparation for the expansion of the Unit's legal mandate. The Unit was guided by this work to update and streamline its service delivery processes and procedures and improve reporting mechanisms ahead of the expansion of the Unit's remit in October 2022
- > established a Strategy and Policy Team within the Unit, with the recruitment of a Principal Policy Officer and Senior Project Officer, Community Engagement, Education and Prevention
- > recruited and trained six additional Adult Safeguarding Practitioners and engaged an additional Senior Adult Safeguarding Practitioner
- > refreshed the Adult Safeguarding Unit public awareness campaign material following a key audience engagement project conducted by Think Human, who engaged older people and people living with disability to provide valuable insights to shape the language and public messaging from the Unit
- > successfully tested the new look and feel public awareness campaign to promote the Unit between 1 - 22 October 2021.

Key Achievements in 2021-2022

This year has seen a number of key achievements within the Unit, including:

- > successful management of a continually growing service, with cases demonstrating increased diversity and complexity of needs of the adults concerned
- > strengthened relationships within the disability sector and increased understanding of safeguarding strategies for people with a disability
- > implemented the majority of recommendations made by the One Year Evaluation Report of the Unit's performance, conducted by Tetra Tech International Development Pty Ltd in 2020



Adult Safeguarding Unit Operations

The Act sets out requirements for receiving and responding to reports of abuse, referring and investigating matters, as well as consent and information sharing requirements.

Unit Staffing

In addition to the Director¹, the Unit comprises a Chief Adult Safeguarding Practitioner, three Senior Adult Safeguarding Practitioners and 14 Adult Safeguarding Practitioners. This is an increase of six practitioners and one senior practitioner from 2020-21 to meet the increasing demand for the Unit's services and prepare for the expansion of the Unit's remit in October 2022.

In 2021-2022, the policy and community education capacity of the Unit was also expanded to include a Principal Policy Officer and Senior Project Officer, Community

Education, Engagement and Prevention, in addition to the existing Project Officer Community Education and Engagement and administrative support. The Unit's operating budget in 2021-2022 was \$2,846 million.

Current Unit Staffing 2021-22 FTE

Director	1.0 FTE
Chief Adult Safeguarding Practitioner	1.0 FTE
Senior Adult Safeguarding Practitioners	3.0 FTE
Adult Safeguarding Practitioners	14.0 FTE
Policy and Education team	3.0 FTE
Administrative support	1.0 FTE
Current Staffing - Actual	23 FTE

¹Under the Act (section 14), the Director has statutory responsibility for both the Office for Ageing Well and the Adult Safeguarding Unit.



Adult Safeguarding Unit Phone Line

In response to the community consultation with Think Human in 2021, the name of the Abuse Prevention Phone Line was removed. Instead, people were asked to call the Adult Safeguarding Unit on 1800 372 310 to discuss concerns about abuse or mistreatment of an older person or an adult with a disability and seek information, advice or to make a report. The Adult Safeguarding Unit operates Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm (except Public Holidays).

Total Number of Calls to the Unit

1 Jul - 30 Sep 2021	566
1 Oct - 31 Dec 2021	514
1 Jan - 31 Mar 2022	586
1 Apr - 30 Jun 2022	603

In 2021-2022, the Unit received 2,269 calls, compared to 1,886 calls in the previous financial year. This was a 20% increase in calls. The increase reflects the expanded scope of the Unit in October 2020 to take reports of abuse regarding a person with disability, and increased community

awareness through public campaigns. Calls made to the Unit may be taken as an enquiry, with confidential advice and information provided, or taken as a report, which must be assessed by the Unit in accordance with the Act.

Adult Safeguarding Unit Email

The Unit can also be contacted by email - adultsafeguardingunit@sa.gov.au. The email is the Unit's centralised point of contact and is monitored daily. All emails received are sent an automated response from the Unit. Emails may be taken as an enquiry, with confidential advice and information provided, or taken as a report, which must then be assessed by the Unit in accordance with the Act.

Enquiries and Reports

In accordance with section 22 of the Act, anyone who suspects abuse of an older person or an adult with a disability who may be vulnerable, can make a report to the Unit. Making a report to the Unit is voluntary.

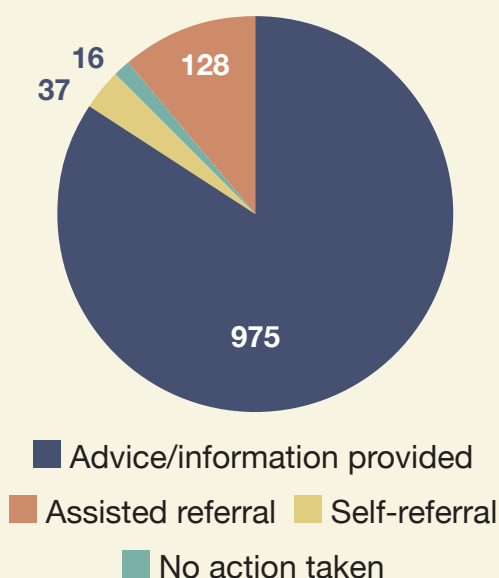
Service providers and community members can also contact the Unit to seek free confidential information, advice and support. If the person does not wish to make a report or the situation does not fall within the Unit's legislative remit, the contact is taken as an enquiry.

Enquiries

With an enquiry, the Unit provides advice, information and support to the person contacting the Unit based on the individual circumstances of the case. The Unit always attempts to provide the person with advice about possible services available to them, or relevant referral information to contact another agency or organisation. The case is closed at this stage but recorded on the Unit's data base in case further contact is made. For almost 90% of enquiry calls in 2021-2022, the Unit was able to support callers by providing information, advice or assistance with referrals to other agencies or organisations.

OUTCOME OF ENQUIRY

Advice/information provided	975	84.3%
Assisted referral	37	3.2%
Self-referral	16	1.4%
No action taken	128	11.1%
TOTAL	1156	100%



Reports

When a report has been made to the Unit, it must be assessed, and the Director must approve one of the following three actions to be taken (section 23 of the Act):

- > investigate the matter
- > refer the matter to a more appropriate organisation or body
- > take no further action.

Assessing the Report

Section 23 of the Act enables the Unit to gather a range of information without the consent of the person for the purposes of assessing the initial report and determining the most appropriate action. The Unit makes full use of these provisions to ensure all reports are comprehensively assessed, so appropriate next action can be determined.

Staff gather information that is relevant to understand the concerns reported about the adult, such as any current support, decision-making capacity and legal orders. This approach ensures well informed, targeted and sensitive discussions occur.

When assessing a report, the Unit's Adult Safeguarding Practitioners gather relevant background information. For example, the Unit can collect medical and financial information to assess a report. Contact is usually made with a range of government and non-government organisations, family members and friends. These contacts allow practitioners to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation and assess risk, including risks associated with contacting the adult at the centre of the report. Direct contact with the adult at risk of abuse is usually made as part of the assessment and it is at that point that consent is sought to continue with a safeguarding/investigation response.

The thorough assessment process supports practitioners to make a clear determination about next steps.

2021-2022 Activity



TOTAL CALLS

2,269

Number of calls to Adult Safeguarding Unit
20% increase from 2020/21

ENQUIRIES

1,156

Number of advice and information calls
25% increase from 2020/21

REPORTS

1,113

Number of reports to the Unit
16% increase from 2020/21

Older People & Disability Statistics



Older People

TOTAL CALLS

1,463

Number of calls to Adult Safeguarding Unit
64.5% of total calls

ENQUIRIES

668

Number of advice and information calls
45.7%

REPORTS

795

Number of reports to the Unit
54.3%

Disability

TOTAL CALLS

580

Number of calls to Adult Safeguarding Unit
25.6% of total calls

ENQUIRIES

261

Number of advice and information calls
45.0%

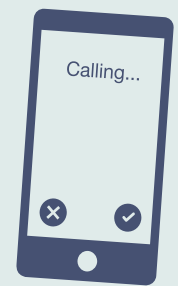
REPORTS

319

Number of reports to the Unit
55.0%

Note: A small proportion of cases are not identified as either an older person or an adult living with a disability.

Caller Relationship to Adult



Older People

Of the calls received, the highest five categories of callers were:

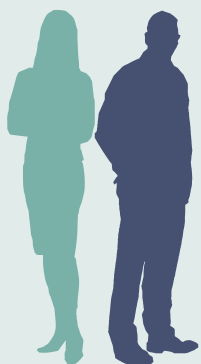
- 24.7% **Service provider**
- 12.8% **Daughter**
- 11.1% **SA Police**
- 9.4% **Other family**
(excludes children, parents, siblings and significant others)
- 9.2% **Public hospital employees**

Disability

Of the calls received, the highest five categories of callers were:

- 61.2% **Service provider**
- 5.3% **Self**
- 4.8% **Public hospital employees**
- 3.4% **SA Police**
- 2.8% **Other family**
(excludes children, parents, siblings and significant others)

Gender



FEMALE

69.4%
Older people

55.9%
Disability

MALE

28.3%
Older people

42.2%
Disability

In a small percentage of calls, the gender of the person experiencing the abuse was not disclosed.

Age

OLDER PEOPLE



75-84 yrs

24.1%

85+ yrs

21.3%

65-74 yrs

17.0%

DISABILITY

35-49 yrs

18.6%

55-64 yrs

14.3%

18-24 yrs

14.0%

25-34 yrs

13.3%

50-54 yrs

7.2%



In a high percentage of calls no age was disclosed either because the caller did not know it, or the person calling was making an enquiry rather than a report to the Unit.

Types of Disability



In some cases, the disability type was unknown or did not fit into the above categories.

Of the cases where the adult was living with disability, the types of disability of adults experiencing abuse were:

34.7%
intellectual

14.5%
neurological

14.3%
psychiatric

13.1%
physical
impairment

8.1%
cognitive

2.6%
sensory

Types of Abuse

	OLDER PEOPLE	DISABILITY
Psychological/emotional abuse	45.5%	36.2%
Financial abuse	38.6%	29.1%
Neglect	21.4%	25.2%
Physical abuse	16.8%	19.3%
Other	8.3%	8.1%
Abuse/exploitation of trust	3.3%	9.1%
Denial of basic rights	2.2%	4.7%
Sexual	1.2%	7.4%
Omission to Act – Duty of Care	1.0%	2.2%
Restraint – Physical/Chemical	0.9%	2.6%
Grooming	0.3%	2.4%



Person(s) responsible for the Alleged Abuse

In the majority of calls to the Unit, the alleged person(s) undertaking the abuse were:

OLDER PEOPLE

28.2%
sons

18.1%
daughters

DISABILITY

15.2%
mothers

11.0%
service providers



Taking No Further Action After Assessment

In 2021-2022, there was a total of 1,113 reports. Of these, 909 cases were closed as the Unit determined that no further action was required following assessment. 204 cases remained open at the end of 2021-2022 as they were still under assessment.

There were a variety of reasons as to why the Unit determined no further action was necessary after assessing a report (Refer to Diagram – Reasons for Closure Following Assessment).

On some occasions, the assessment provided sufficient information to determine no abuse was being carried out but found significant family conflict and breakdown in communication. Where conflict was identified and, where appropriate, the Unit provided information to family members regarding family counselling and/or family dispute resolution services.

In many cases, because of the Unit’s input and advice during the assessment phase, supports were strengthened to safeguard the adult such that the case did not need to formally progress to investigation and safeguarding. Information gathering during the assessment phase is an interactive

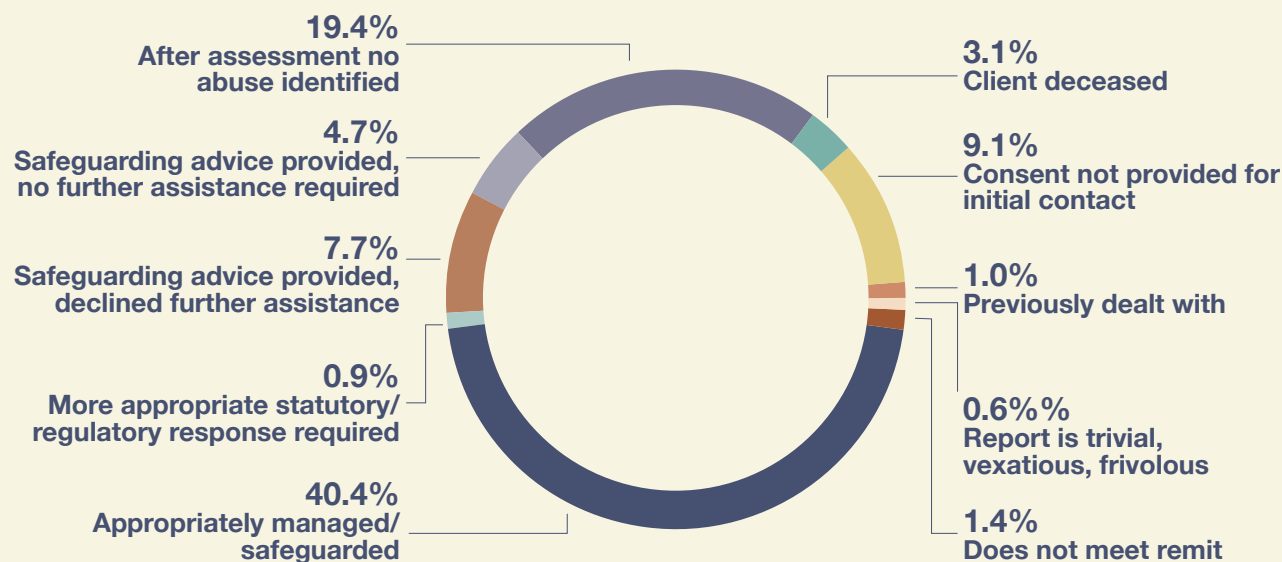
process where the person’s situation is usually discussed in detail. Solutions are identified and implemented by either the person themselves, the Unit or others involved in their support and care and safeguarding actions are completed. Safeguarding often overlaps with the assessment process.

In most cases the Unit took *no further* action due to the following:

- > The case was already being appropriately managed/ safeguarded – 40%
- > After assessment, no abuse was identified – 19%
- > Consent was not provided for involvement of the Unit – 9%
- > Safeguarding actions had been completed – 8%
- > Safeguarding advice was provided and further assistance from the Unit was declined – 8%.

Where the Unit recommended no further action and, where appropriate, the reporter was provided with contact details for the organisations involved with the person so they could liaise directly with them. Persons reporting to the Unit were encouraged to re-contact the Unit with any future concerns. In addition, staff assisted the person reporting to access other services such as counselling, advocacy and dispute resolution services.

Reasons for Closure Following Assessment





Case Study One – Connie

A hospital doctor contacted the Adult Safeguarding Unit to report the alleged abuse of Connie*, a 73-year-old woman from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. Connie had disclosed to the reporter that her son, who lived with her, was verbally, psychologically and financially abusive towards her. He had stolen a significant amount of money from her and made threats to harm himself and her if she took any action regarding the abuse.

When assessing the report, the Adult Safeguarding Practitioner discovered that Connie was engaged with a social worker through her aged care package. The practitioner contacted that worker, who knew Connie well and was aware of the abuse and her situation. The practitioner then contacted Connie by phone, and she agreed to the Unit and her social worker, who she had a good relationship with, coming to her at home to find out more about her situation and the concerns raised.

At the meeting with Connie, she again disclosed abuse from her son. She said it had

been ongoing for some time, and she did not want him to remain living with her. Initially she had been conflicted about taking any action, feeling a sense of parental responsibility, and not wanting to make her son homeless. However, she acknowledged that numerous previous attempts to engage her son in addressing his own issues (mental health, substance misuse, previous homelessness) had failed.

Connie remembered previously speaking with a worker about evicting her son from her home and obtaining an intervention order. In talking this through with Connie, this was identified as the Uniting Communities Elder Abuse Unit.

Connie agreed with the Unit's recommendation to be re-referred to the Uniting Communities Elder Abuse Unit for assistance with the eviction and intervention order. She wanted support from her social worker when meeting with them. The Unit re-referred her to Uniting Communities and liaised with the social worker to attend the appointment with Connie. The case was closed at this point as it was considered appropriately managed/safeguarded.

*Name has been changed to protect their identity.

Consent

Under the Act, the Unit is required to seek the consent of the adult to whom the report relates prior to taking any action (such as safeguarding, investigation or referral of the matter). However, in some instances it may be appropriate for the Unit to take action without a person's consent, and the Act outlines limited circumstances in which this can occur. These include:

- > when the person's life or physical safety is at immediate risk
- > where the risk of abuse to which the report relates consists of an allegation that a serious criminal offence has been, or is likely to be, committed against the person
- > when the person to whom the report relates has impaired decision-making capacity in respect of a decision to consent to action of the relevant kind being taken
- > when the Adult Safeguarding Unit has not, after reasonable inquiries, been able to contact the person.

In the vast majority of reports received during 2021-22, the Unit sought the consent of the person experiencing abuse before taking action. On eight occasions (0.7%), the Unit took action without a person's consent. In most instances, this was due to the person having impaired decision-making and being unable to consent to the proposed action (five cases, 0.4%). Prior to taking action without a person's consent, in most situations and where appropriate, the Unit met with the person to establish their wishes and preferences and ensure that, where possible, the person had the opportunity to be supported in their decision-making.

Investigations and Safeguarding

Following the assessment of a report, where the Unit determined that further information was needed to better understand a person's situation and/or actions to safeguard the person were necessary, an investigation was undertaken.

During the course of an investigation, further information is gathered to establish facts about an allegation of abuse, explore risk factors, ascertain the person's wishes and preferences, before safeguarding actions are implemented to address the abuse in the best way for that person. The significant information sharing provisions (sections 42 and 43) and powers of an authorised officer (section 19) in the Act ensure information can be gathered effectively.

Investigations are undertaken based on an individual's unique situation and wishes. Most investigations are undertaken with the cooperation of the parties involved. A high volume of reports relate to unintentional abuse, and in those circumstances the investigation is undertaken with a strong focus on preserving family relationships.

Once an investigation is completed or during the course of an investigation, the Unit works with the person to develop a safeguarding plan. Safeguarding plans map out actions to safeguard the person's rights and are aimed at reducing the risk of future abuse. Plans are guided by the person at risk, in line with the strong focus within the Act on the right to self-determination and autonomy. Safeguarding plans can either be formal or informal in nature.

For example, to reduce the risk of further financial abuse, the Unit can work with a person to change their banking details, set up direct debit arrangements, and support them to make a Power of Attorney/Enduring Power of Attorney. To reduce the risk of further physical abuse, the Unit can assist a person to increase formal supports or speak with South Australia Police and/or family violence services.

In more serious cases, the ability to easily obtain information from relevant parties has been highly beneficial to ensure the Unit has all necessary information to guide safeguarding responses, which can include referring to South Australia Police.

During 2021-2022, some of the main outcomes of investigations and safeguarding included:

- > information and education provided (62% of cases)
- > formal support services increased (e.g., aged care/disability supports) (32% of cases)
- > person moved to new accommodation (17% of cases)
- > a guardian and/or administrator was appointed (28% of cases).

Outcome of Safeguarding		%
Person has moved to alternative accommodation	6	7.9
ACD completed	0	0.0
Administrator appointed	10	13.2
Aged Care supports engaged/increased	15	19.7
Client moved to alternative accommodation	13	17.1
Client situation remains unchanged	8	10.5
EPOA completed	0	0.0
Guardian appointed	11	14.5
Information and education provided	47	61.8
Intervention Order in place	1	1.3
NDIS supports engaged/increased	9	11.8
Referred for advocacy assistance	2	2.6
Referred for dispute resolution	0	0.0
Referred for legal assistance	6	7.9
Report to SAPOL	4	5.3
Support provided to safeguard financial affairs	4	5.3
Total	76	100

Of the 1,113 reports, 76 requiring safeguarding were closed with the above outcomes. One case may have multiple outcomes identified.



Case Study Two – Lena

Lena* was a 50-year-old woman with an intellectual disability and mental illness.

The Adult Safeguarding Unit was contacted by Jen*, a Lived Experience Practitioner, reporting concerns that Lena was experiencing physical, emotional, verbal and financial abuse by her partner Jon*. Lena and Jon had been in a relationship for 30 years and had 3 children together.

At the time the report was made, Lena was in hospital. The Unit's Adult Safeguarding Practitioner assessed the report by seeking information from the hospital and accessing information from the local mental health team. The information assisted the practitioner to understand Lena's situation further and tailor the approach of how to best engage with Lena.

The Adult Safeguarding Practitioner met with Lena to gather further information directly from her, including the details of the abuse, risk factors and her preferences and wishes regarding how to address the abuse. The practitioner and Lena then worked together to develop a safeguarding plan, which included re-engaging with NDIS support services and her local Community Mental Health Team, as well as exploring alternative accommodation. Referring to agencies and working collaboratively with services enabled the Unit to help Lena achieve her safeguarding goals. Lena was appointed an NDIS support coordinator and was able to move away from Jon and into supported independent living. She engaged with her Community Mental Health Care Coordinator and commenced counselling to assist her to deal with the effects of the abuse.

*Names has been changed to protect their identity.

Referrals

Under section 25 of the Act, the Unit can formally refer a matter to a State authority other than the Adult Safeguarding Unit; or a specified person or body other than a State authority. This requires a formal written request from the Director, to the organisation, with the organisation required to provide a formal response within a reasonable timeframe.

As part of the assessment of a report, the Unit considers whether one or more other organisations may be more appropriate to play a role in the development and/or implementation of a safeguarding plan. The Unit's role is to complement rather than duplicate existing services. As such, where appropriate services can assist with safeguarding, and with the person's consent, cases are referred for a safeguarding response.

The Unit made one formal referral to another agency using these provisions in 2021-2022, however, this does not reflect the true number of referrals made by the Unit in this period. In many matters, referrals were made using established referral pathways already in place at the receiving organisation, rather than relying on formal referral provisions in the Act. This less formal approach is generally more conducive to a collaborative approach and ensures multi-agency responses are provided in a timely and collaborative manner.

During 2021-2022, the Unit referred to a broad range of stakeholders to assist with safeguarding.

These included:

- > South Australia Police
- > Multi Agency Protection Service
- > South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- > Uniting Communities Specialist Elder Abuse Unit
- > Community Geriatric Services
- > My Aged Care
- > National Disability Insurance Agency (via Local Area Coordinators)
- > Domestic Violence Gateway
- > Carers SA.

Case Study Three - Jane

A report was made to the Adult Safeguarding Unit by South Australia Police (SAPOL) as there were concerns that Jane* was being subjected to physical, psychological, verbal and financial abuse by her former partner. SAPOL issued an Intervention Order, however, her previous partner continued to breach this.

Jane was a 55-year-old woman with a psychosocial disability who lived alone.

An Adult Safeguarding Unit Practitioner met with Jane to discuss her situation and the details of the abuse, and she agreed to being supported by the Unit. It became evident that along with the concerns of abuse, she was also struggling to manage aspects of her daily life due to her disability. Jane had no formal supports in place and was heavily reliant on one of her siblings for support. Her sibling was experiencing carer burnout and did not know how to go about engaging formal supports for Jane.

The Practitioner worked with Jane to achieve her safeguarding goals. This involved working with Jane and her sister to become comfortable and confident to report the intervention order breaches to SAPOL. The reporting of these breaches led SAPOL to arrest Jane's former partner and he was incarcerated for an extended period. The Practitioner also referred Jane to a Local Area Coordinator, who assisted Jane to access the NDIS. Using her NDIS funding, Jane then accessed a Psychosocial Recovery Coach, and they were able to implement support to further help Jane to develop her independence and social connections. A referral to Carers SA by the Unit provided Jane's sister with access to extra support to help her maintain her caring role with Jane.

*Name has been changed to protect their identity.



Community Education and Awareness

A function of the Unit is to raise community awareness about abuse and its signs, and strategies to safeguard rights to contribute to abuse prevention.

In 2021-2022, Unit staff delivered 37 presentations to a range of diverse stakeholders and community groups. Community groups included older people, people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Unit also delivered presentations and information sessions to service providers (both government and non-government), universities, local councils, local health networks and the South Australian Police.

These presentations focused on raising community awareness of prevention strategies that may assist to safeguard the rights of older adults and adults living with a disability, and provided information about the Adult Safeguarding Unit, including how to contact the Unit and the role the Unit can play in safeguarding a person.

The Unit continued its partnership with Community Centres SA to deliver the Abuse Prevention Hubs project, which will build

on the Unit's capacity to deliver abuse prevention education for Community Centres SA staff and volunteers. The project is due to commence its pilot phase in two metropolitan Adelaide council areas in late 2022.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Adult Safeguarding Advisory Group (Appendix One) provides strategic advice on the operations of the Unit and includes key representatives from a diverse range of government and non-government organisations. The Advisory Group met on three occasions in 2021-2022.

The Interagency Phone Line and Adult Safeguarding Unit Implementation Workgroup (Appendix One) provides operational input and advice in relation to the service model, abuse prevention, community education and awareness. The Implementation Workgroup met on three occasions during the reporting period, contributing to the development of internal procedures, referral pathways and promotional material, and provided assistance to the Unit through discussion of the approaches to information gathering in complex cases.

The Unit partnered with Think Human in 2021 to shape the messaging and framing for the Unit's new promotional material, ahead

of its 2021 awareness-raising campaign. Think Human facilitated focus groups with older people, people with disability, family members and community members who were likely to make a report or voice a concern (e.g., community leaders, active citizens). The groups reflected the cultural and age diversity within South Australia's population. Feedback from the consultation showed that terms like 'abuse', 'report' and 'investigation' were off-putting for people and may result in them not phoning the Unit. It was further suggested that real people should be featured in the campaign. The Unit took this onboard and ran a photo shoot with South Australians. The new images appeared in the Unit's 2021 campaign and all its promotional materials.

In 2021-2022, Ageing Well Community Networks continued to bring together community leaders and stakeholders to share ageing well and safeguarding information in culturally appropriate ways through trusted networks to Aboriginal

people, people who are gender and/or sexually diverse, regional communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The Unit presented at two Network meetings upon request: in October 2021 at the ARAS Southern Ageing Well Aboriginal Community Network, and in May 2022 to the Ageing Well Community Network meeting of representative communities from Korean, Indonesian, Coptic, Egyptian and Spanish speaking backgrounds.

Public Campaigns

Stop Elder Abuse Campaign 2021

The evaluation from the 2021 Stop Elder Abuse campaign, which ran from 15 June to the end of July 2021, demonstrated an increased understanding of the signs of elder abuse, as well as increased calls to the Unit.



Elder Abuse Prevention Campaign 2022 – Tackling Ageism

In 2022, Office for Ageing Well’s annual public awareness campaign focussed on raising awareness about the impacts of ageism on older people’s rights, and how it can lead to abuse or mistreatment. The campaign ran from 15 June to 27 July. The campaign message was spread through digital and social media, metropolitan and regional radio, press, and shopping centre screens. Whilst the campaign’s call to action did not explicitly ask people to call the Unit, the Unit experienced an increase in calls, which showed that the campaign was successful in drawing the links between ageism and abuse and mistreatment.

A key pillar of the campaign was two 15 second and 30 second videos (one advert featured a man and the other a woman), and radio adverts, which were very well received. The link to the videos and tackling ageism website is available at: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/tacklingageism.

Adult Safeguarding Unit Campaign 2021- 2022

In 2021-2022, community consultation was conducted with older people and people with disabilities to inform the 2021 public awareness campaign. Following the consultation, the Unit’s campaign to raise awareness about abuse and mistreatment and its service was co-designed and refreshed, launching on 1 October 2021 (to coincide with the Unit’s second anniversary) and running



for three weeks. The new materials and messaging were tested via print, digital and social media to determine their effectiveness; and promoted the phone number 1800 372 310 and website as sources of information, advice and support.

The campaign resulted in a 36.1% increase in visits to the website from the same period in the previous year; an increase in calls to the Unit; and active social media engagement, particularly from young females (18-34 years) and older males (35 years and older).

Plan Ahead Campaign

Office for Ageing Well coordinates Plan Ahead Week annually and is supported by partners DonateLife SA, Legal Services Commission of South Australia, Office of the Public Advocate, COTA SA, Health System Performance, Department for Health and Wellbeing, and community organisations. In 2021, the campaign was held from 6 to 12 September and aimed to raise community awareness and literacy regarding the benefits of early planning and the legal tools that can be used by adults of all ages. It also aimed to promote the uptake of these plans in the community to support individual choice in the event of loss of decision-making capacity, planning ability or death, to safeguard rights and safeguard against abuse. This campaign supports the Unit's work in the prevention of abuse and mistreatment.

Review of the Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995

During the reporting period, the South Australian Law Reform Institute (SALRI) was engaged to conduct an independent review of the operation of the *Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995* (as required under section 53 of the Act). As per the requirements of the Act, the review and recommendations were submitted to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing by 30 September 2022.

The Minister must table the report in Parliament within 6 sitting days of receiving the report, following which it is expected the Minister will consider the recommendations of the report and approve the drafting of an amendment bill to incorporate reforms to the Act.

As part of the review, SALRI consulted with a wide range of government and non-government stakeholders, older people and the South Australian community across metropolitan and regional South Australia via a range of methods, including surveys, submissions and roundtables. The consultation process was supported by the Office for Ageing Well, who convened two Stakeholder and Lived Experience Reference Groups (as required by the review Terms of Reference) to provide professional and lived experience expertise and advice to SALRI during the review process.

The Unit contributed to the Office for Ageing Well's submission to SALRI and actively participated as a stakeholder in the consultation process.

Appendix One – Meeting Memberships

Adult Safeguarding Advisory Group

Membership:

Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation
Aboriginal Health Strategy
Adult Safeguarding Unit, Office for Ageing Well
Aged Care Quality Strategy, Commonwealth Department of Health
Aged Rights Advocacy Service
Attorney Generals Department
Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement
Council on the Ageing (COTA SA)
Dementia Australia SA
Department of Child Protection
Disability Policy and Inclusion, Department of Human Services
Disability Rights Advocacy Service (SA)
Legal Services Commission of SA
Oakden Family's representative
Office of the Chief Psychiatrist, SA Health
Office of the Public Advocate
Mental Health Coalition of SA
Multicultural Communities Council of SA
Public Trustee
South Australia Police (SAPOL)
South Australian Council of Social Service

Interagency Phone Line and Adult Safeguarding Unit Implementation Workgroup

Membership:

Adult Safeguarding Unit, Office for Ageing Well
Aged Rights Advocacy Service
Carers SA
Legal Services Commission of SA
Multicultural Aged Care Inc
Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA)
Office of the Public Advocate
Public Trustee
Relationships Australia
South Australia Police (SAPOL)
UnitingSA - Ethnic Link Services
Uniting Communities Law Centre



For more information

Office for Ageing Well

SA Health
PO Box 196
Rundle Mall
Adelaide SA 5000

Phone 08 8204 2420
Email officeforageingwell@sa.gov.au

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/officeforageingwell

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