

DEBORAH BARNETT

OVERVIEW CURRICULUM VITAE

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Independent Social Worker | Safeguarding Consultant | Expert Witness | SAR Chair and Report Author | Trainer | Published Author

Professional Profile

Deborah Barnett is an Independent Social Worker, safeguarding consultant, Expert Witness, Safeguarding Adult Review Chair and Report Author, published author and national trainer. She has more than thirty years' experience across adult social care, mental-health social work, safeguarding, strategic leadership, multi-agency partnership work, teaching and independent consultancy, and has been a qualified social worker since 2001.

Her specialist practice concerns complex adult safeguarding, self-neglect, hoarding, trauma and adverse life experiences, executive functioning, decision-specific mental capacity, functional decision-making and multi-agency risk management. Her work is characterised by structured analysis, legal literacy, professional curiosity, transparent reasoning and practical recommendations.

Core Areas of Expertise

- Adult safeguarding, Care Act 2014 duties, section 42 decision-making and Making Safeguarding Personal.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005: decision-specific assessment, practicable steps, use and weighing, best interests and least-restrictive practice.
- Functional assessment of executive functioning and the gap between expressed understanding and everyday implementation.
- Self-neglect, hoarding, homelessness, trauma, substance use, domestic abuse and complex home-environment risk.
- Court of Protection and Family Court adult-focused expert evidence within social-work expertise.
- Safeguarding Adult Reviews: individual, thematic and gap-analysis reviews; practitioner learning and implementation assurance.
- Safeguarding consultancy, complex-case surgeries, supervision, audit, governance and organisational improvement.
- Professional learning, practice development, strategic briefings and multi-agency training.

Selected Professional Experience

- Independent social worker, consultant, Expert Witness, review author and trainer since 2016.
- Former Safeguarding Lead and Chair of a Safeguarding Adults Board, with strategic and operational safeguarding leadership experience.
- Independent Chair and Author of Safeguarding Adult Reviews and thematic reviews, including reviews concerning self-neglect, trauma, suicide and executive functioning.
- National Mental Capacity Act advisory and training work, including translation of legal duties into operational practice.
- Mental-health and substance-misuse social work, complex community practice, risk assessment and multi-agency planning.
- MARAC chairing and work concerning domestic abuse, safeguarding and multi-agency professional decision-making.
- Audit, quality assurance, policy development, complaints and review work across statutory and independent services.
- National conference speaking, professional teaching and bespoke organisational learning programmes.

Expert Witness Practice

Independent social-work opinion may address functional decision-making, executive functioning, mental capacity within social-work expertise, self-neglect, hoarding, parenting implementation, care and support, residence, property and affairs, complex safeguarding and least-restrictive planning. Opinions are confined to professional social-work expertise and do not replace psychiatric, psychological, neuropsychological, veterinary or legal opinion.

Safeguarding Adult Review Practice

Experience includes individual, thematic and repeat-learning/gap-analysis reviews; family and practitioner involvement; systemic analysis across practice, organisational, partnership and national domains; practitioner learning events; accessible learning products; and recommendations linked to measurable implementation and assurance.

Qualifications and Professional Development

- Diploma in Social Work – University of Northumbria at Newcastle (2001).
- Postgraduate qualification in Applied Sociology: Equality, Diversity and Criminology – University of Northumbria at Newcastle (2001).
- Practice Teacher Award – University of Sunderland (2007).
- PGCE / adult teaching qualification – New College Durham (2012).
- Cardiff University Bond Solon Expert Witness training, including report writing, courtroom skills and cross-examination preparation (2026).
- Registered Social Worker: Social Work England SW67557.

Selected Publications and Professional Contributions

- Self-Neglect and Hoarding: A Guide to Safeguarding and Support.
- The Straightforward Guide to Safeguarding Adults.
- Published articles, toolkits, briefings and learning materials concerning self-neglect, hoarding, safeguarding, trauma and mental capacity.
- Published Safeguarding Adult Review executive summaries, learning briefings and practitioner learning products.

Professional Approach and Boundaries

Practice is human-rights focused, person-centred, trauma-informed and evidence-led. Deborah distinguishes fact, observation, analysis and opinion; considers alternative explanations; and works within the agreed scope of instruction or commission. She does not provide diagnosis or legal conclusions outside her qualifications and experience.

Availability and Fees

Availability and timescales are agreed following review of the instruction or commission. Current professional rate: £100 per hour, plus agreed travel and accommodation expenses where required. No travel time is charged unless expressly agreed otherwise.