
Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board: Strategic Plan (2020/2021) and Annual report (2019/20)

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Cabinet Member: Cllr David Huxtable, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Division and Local Member: Not applicable

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) operates as an independently chaired, multi-agency body under The Care Act 2014. It became statutory from April 2015.
- 1.2. The SSAB's role is to have an oversight of safeguarding arrangements within the County, not to deliver services or become involved in the day to day operations of individual organisations, including those of Somerset County Council. Any questions from committee members regarding operational matters, including individual safeguarding enquiries, should therefore be directed to the representative of the organisation that has the lead for this work.
- 1.3. The Board is required by The Care Act 2014 to produce and publish an Annual Plan and Report each year. The plan is normally considered by the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee in the spring (this did not happen in 2020 due to the Coronavirus Public Health Crisis) and the Annual Report in the autumn.
- 1.4. The purpose of this report is to present both the Board's Annual Plan for 2020/21 and Annual Report for the 2019/20 financial year to the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee.
- 1.5. Links to County Plan: "*Protect vulnerable children and adults and support them to reach their potential*"

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations		
2.1.	1	That the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee receives and considers the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board's 2020/21 Annual Plan and 2019/20 Annual Report (Appendices A and B).
	2	That the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health

	<p>Committee notes progress highlights during 2020/21 to date</p> <p>3 That the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee continues to promote adult safeguarding across the County Council and in the services that are commissioned</p>
<p>2.1.</p>	<p>Reason for recommendations: The purpose of this report is to present the Board's Annual Plan for 2020/21 and Annual Report for the 2019/20 financial year to the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee.</p>

3. Background

- 3.1.** The main objective of the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) is to seek assurance that local safeguarding arrangements and partner organisations act to help and protect people aged 18 and over who:
- have needs for care and support; *and*
 - are experiencing, or at risk of, abuse, neglect or exploitation; *an*
 - are unable to protect themselves from the risk of, or experience of, abuse or neglect as a result of their care and support needs
- 3.2.** The SSAB is required by The Care Act 2014 to produce and publish an Annual Plan and an Annual Report for each financial year.
- 3.3.** The Annual Plan must set out what the Safeguarding Adults Board intends to do over the next year to help and protect adults at risk of abuse and neglect in Somerset during that timeframe. In common with many other Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs), the Board chose to develop a three-year plan in 2019 that is refreshed annually.
- 3.4.** The Annual Report must set out what has been done to help and protect adults at risk of abuse and neglect in Somerset during that timeframe. It provides an opportunity to both reflect on achievements over the past year and to formally identify priorities for the year ahead. It also offers a chance to demonstrate the SSAB's fulfilment of its role and ongoing commitment to safeguard vulnerable adults in the county.
- 3.5.** Safeguarding is everybody's business, and the SSAB has a strategic role that is greater than the sum of the operational duties of the core partners. It means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.
- 3.6. The SSAB's Annual Plan**
- The SSAB developed a new 3-year strategic plan for 2019-2022 in early 2019, incorporating comments from Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee, and this has been refreshed for 2020-21. This refresh was originally due to be considered by the Committee in the spring, but this did not happen due to the Coronavirus Public Health Crisis. As part of the refresh the plan has been amended to reflect the competing demands on partners during the

ongoing crisis.

By its very nature a strategic plan will be high-level and contain objectives that will be updated as work progresses. Our plan also does not reference specific groups of adults in recognition that, while the general level of risk may vary, safeguarding work is rarely group specific. Our overarching priorities for 2020-21 are:

a) Listening and learning:

- Safeguarding is person-led, outcome-focused, enhances involvement, choice and control, and improves quality of life, wellbeing and safety
- We use learning from within Somerset and elsewhere to enhance practice across the system in Somerset.
- Identified best practice will be embedded throughout the partnership
- We will be open to constructive criticism, and take appropriate action to reduce risk and improve safeguarding practice.

b) Enabling people to keep themselves safe:

- People are aware of what abuse is and how to keep themselves and those that they care for safe
- People know what to do if they think that they or others are experiencing abuse or neglect

c) Working together to safeguard people who can't keep themselves safe:

- Organisations, including the third sector, work together to ensure that multi-agency arrangements are effective, and that people who are unable to keep themselves safe are supported in the least invasive way
- Policy and guidance reflects best practice and takes a positive approach to risk
- There is effective working across local, regional and national partnerships on areas of mutual interest
- The number of inappropriate referrals is reduced through people raising other types of concern in an appropriate way

d) Board Governance:

- Somerset has an effective Safeguarding Adults Board which fulfils its statutory responsibilities, has strong leadership and governance arrangements, and promotes a culture of collective accountability, respectful challenge and continuous learning
- The Board uses data appropriately to understand where risk exists within the system
- The Board can demonstrate progress through the regular monitoring of performance

3.7. Further information on the work that it is proposed will underpin these priorities can be found in Appendix A.

3.8. Assurance in relation to Adult Safeguarding Arrangements in Somerset

The SSAB undertook its annual multi-agency organisational self-audit process during the autumn of 2019. All SSAB members were invited to complete the audit, which was also published on the SSAB website. In a change to previous years it was agreed to pilot an audit tool used by the other SABs working within the Avon & Somerset Constabulary footprint, with the addition of a section to monitor the implementation of recommendations from local Safeguarding Adult Reviews.

- a) Organisations were asked to complete an agreed audit tool during Quarter 2 2019/20 encompassing 50 areas of safeguarding activity and practice, and to submit this for initial discussion by the Quality Assurance Subgroup.
- b) Nine out of twenty-three Board members returned a completed audit. This was an increase of two from 2018/19, and included all three strategic partners, Public Health Somerset, three out of four NHS Providers and both major social care providers represented on the Board. Some member organisations said they found the tool difficult to engage with and we plan to review it ahead of our next audit.
- c) Due to the change of audit tool the only section that is comparable to previous years is 'Learning from Serious Cases'. Within this section increased confidence was shown in most, but not all areas. No areas showed a decrease in confidence.
- d) The results were reviewed by the SSAB's Quality Assurance subgroup, which included representation from Healthwatch.
- e) Areas of development identified through the audit processes centred on:
 - Ensuring the voice of people who experience safeguarding is heard and listened to within processes
 - The application and understanding of the Mental Capacity Act across the whole adult workforce
 - Raising awareness of abuse, neglect and self-neglect with the public, adults with care and support needs and their families.

Those areas where development is required are understood and work is taking place, for example the development of new information for the public and people with care and support needs for all partners and the public to use.

An exception remains where services are commissioned by commissioners external to Somerset, which was highlighted in our last report in to the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee in 2019. We have now reached the point locally and regionally where further progress requires action to be taken on a national level to address the broader concerns about the practices of some commissioners when they place adults into services outside of their local area.

3.9. Key Progress, 2019/20

During 2019/20 the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board concentrated its efforts on improving its overall effectiveness in order to better coordinate activity, learn from serious cases locally, regionally and nationally; and raise its local profile and the value of what it offered through high quality communications with both professionals and the public. Particular highlights worth noting during the year are as follows:

- a) The SSAB welcomed its new Independent Chair, Keith Perkin, who took over the role in January 2020
- b) The SSAB continued to promote information about current safeguarding 'hot topics' including areas such as county lines, scamming and modern slavery through both its newsletter and social media in order to raise awareness among both professionals and the public. It has also sought to raise awareness of the work of partners, for example Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards, and national initiatives such as [Friends Against Scams](#)..
- c) The SSAB held its third multi-agency [annual conference](#) for safeguarding leads in May 2019. Attendees represented a broad range of organisations from across the health and social care sector. The conference was well received, with feedback on the day indicating that participants felt that it would have a positive impact on their practice.
- d) The Board's Policy and Procedures subgroup reviewed and enhanced its online guidance, including updating guidance on a number of areas [including self-neglect](#). It has also adopted guidance developed regionally on allegations against [people in a position of trust](#) and developed new guidance – ["What to do if it's not safeguarding"](#) – following learning about the effectiveness of multi-disciplinary working when a safeguarding response was not required.
- e) The SSAB once again led the development of a new sub-regional [Joint Safeguarding Adults Multi-Agency Policy](#) in partnership with colleagues in Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire to ensure standards are clarified and refreshed in light of more recent statutory developments or good practice. This was published in June 2019.
- f) The SSAB actively supported and contributed to "Stop Adult Abuse Week" during June 2019 with other Boards in the Avon & Somerset Constabulary area. In 2019 the focus of the week was the Mental Capacity Act which had been highlighted as an area for development by all the Boards involved, as well as nationally, and the SSAB published promoted information on this area of work as well as running a 'Myth Buster' promotion on the day that it led. The SAB also supported a new, national, week focusing on Safeguarding Adults in November. Throughout the year the SSAB continued to highlight particular areas of adult safeguarding.
- g) The Mental Capacity Subgroup began work to ensure that the Somerset system is as well prepared as possible for the introduction of the new Liberty

Protection Safeguards which, at that point, were expected to be implemented nationally in October 2020, but which have now been delayed until 2022.

- h) The SSAB continued to pursue the implementation of recommendations from the [Mendip House Safeguarding Adults Review](#). This included supporting the implementation of a notification process for external commissioners to use when placing into Somerset, and involvement with wider regional work to agree a single regional approach. The SSAB Executive Group also continued to monitor assurance from partners of the arrangements when people were placed outside of Somerset by local commissioners during the financial year.
- i) The SSAB's Learning and Development Subgroup developed an [Adult Safeguarding Learning Framework](#) that identifies the safeguarding knowledge that staff working at different levels within organisations should have, and continues to routinely consider learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews regionally and nationally.
- j) A [practice briefing was published for 'Kevin'](#). This related to a referral that did not meet the threshold for a SAR to be commissioned, but which felt valuable learning had been identified from while considering the referral.
- k) The SSAB contributed to training for commissioners and senior managers from Somerset County Council on its work including learning from SARs, and is looking at how this could be made available more widely with Somerset County Councils Adult Safeguarding Service and Adult Quality Assurance Team.

3.10. Key Progress, 2020/21

As a result of the demands that were placed on key partners in relation to responding to the Coronavirus Public Health Crisis, in common with the approach taken by many other SABs nationally, the SSAB took the difficult decision to suspend all of its subgroups at the start of the financial year and also to cancel its annual conference. The subgroups have now been restarted with a focus on the system's recovery and learning from the crisis. Highlights during the year so far include:

- a) The SSAB has supported the local system during the public health crisis by hosting, and maintaining on a daily basis, information to support organisations providing care and support to adults in Somerset on its [website](#). It has also supported work in relation to Personal Protective Equipment and Infection Prevention in the local system, and the development of Somerset's Adults Social care Winter Plan.
- b) Each of the SSAB's subgroups has looked to identify learning from the system from the crisis. The vast majority of this learning has been that, so far, the local system performed well, with good examples of partners working together effectively. However, this will continue to be monitored.
- c) The SSAB Executive and Quality Assurance subgroups have been closely monitoring performance data to ensure that any trends in the types and

locations of abuse and neglect are identified. This has identified that, while some areas of England have seen significant rises in some types of abuse and neglect, this has not been the case in Somerset to date. The Quality Assurance Subgroup has also taken a decision to move to a biennial audit cycle, with the next audit planned for 2021.

- d) At its meeting in June 2020 the SSAB Board received a report from the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) which had undertaken a review of its operations during the spring. While stating that "*Overall, this audit has found that the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board has satisfactory arrangements across most of the key areas, to ensure that it operates as an effective partnership*" there were a relatively small number of areas identified by SWAP where improvements were recommended, and work is in progress to address them.
- e) A [Safeguarding Adults Review into the death of 'Luke'](#) was published in August 2020, and the Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) Subgroup has continued to consider referrals for SARs when they are received.
- f) The Policy and Procedures subgroup has continued to review existing guidance, and develop new guidance in areas where it is identified that it would be beneficial. Documents under development include "Medication Management Guidance for Providers" and a regional Organisational Abuse Policy that the SSAB has taken the lead in developing.
- g) The SSAB once again actively supported and contributed to "Stop Adult Abuse Week" during June 2019 with other Boards in the Avon & Somerset Constabulary area. This year the focus of the week was focus is "Looking after your community" as we all work together to support our neighbours during the national pandemic and its aftermath. The SSAB will also support the national week of focus on Safeguarding Adults in November.

3.11. The Annual Report can be read in full in Appendix B.

4. Consultations undertaken

4.1. As part of refreshing the Strategic Plan and developing its Annual Report the SSAB sought feedback from all of its partners following its meeting in June 2020. This includes seeking feedback from representatives of people who use services, carers and the third sector, and Healthwatch. Partners were also invited to contribute content to the Annual Report, and this can be found in section 9 of Appendix B.

5. Implications

5.1. Financial implications: The majority of the SSAB's funding is provided by Somerset County Council, with contributions from Avon & Somerset Constabulary and NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group. Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) are resourced by the partnership as and when required and

an agreement is now in place between the three statutory partners to resource all SARs from outside the SSAB's core budget. In addition, a new approach that we have developed of asking a senior representative from a partner organisation that has not had involvement in a case to chair a locally led approach is likely to reduce the proportion of instances when an Independent Reviewer needs to be commissioned.

The SSAB continues with its decision not to professionally print the Annual Plan or Report to save on costs and environment impact. All reports are publicly available on the website www.ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk, including both appendices to this Report.

- 5.2. Legal implications:** The Care Act 2014 represented the most significant change to adult social care in more than 60 years, putting people and their carers in control of their care and support. For the first time the Act placed Safeguarding Adults, and the role and functions of a Safeguarding Adults Board, onto a statutory framework from 1st April 2015.
- 5.3. Partner organisations:** Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board benefits from strong partnership commitment. Organisations represented on the Board had the opportunity to detail their achievements and contributions in 2018/19 and all Board members are encouraged to take the Annual Report through their own internal governance routes.
- 5.4. Equalities Implications:** None. This report does not relate to a decision and has therefore not been impact assessed.
- 5.5. Risk Assessment:** Safeguarding activity by its nature is an inherently risky area and has the potential to bring a Council's reputation, and the wider safeguarding system, into question, when failings are identified. The Annual Plan and Report, both a legal requirement by the Care Act 2014, provide partner organisations and the public with assurances that adult safeguarding is being monitored and scrutinised in Somerset. The Board also has a robust risk register in place which identifies and tracks risk.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.**
- Appendix A, SSAB Strategic Plan, 2020/21
 - Appendix B, SSAB Annual Report, 2019/20

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author