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## Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board: Strategic Plan (2021/2022) Refresh and Annual report (2020/21)

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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 or 2021 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 refreshed Annual Plan for 2021/22 and Annual Report for the 2020/21 financial year to the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee.
- 1.5. Links to Business Plan:  
*Outcome 2: Safe vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment whilst addressing climate change*

### 2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

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|------|---|---|
| 2.1. | 1 | <b>That the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee receives and considers the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board's 2021/22 Annual Plan and 2020/21 Annual Report</b> |
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	<p><b>(Appendices A and B).</b></p> <p><b>2 That the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee notes progress highlights during 2021/22 to date</b></p> <p><b>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</b></p>
<b>2.1.</b>	Reason for recommendations: The purpose of this report is to present the Board’s Annual Plan for 2021/22 and Annual Report for the 2020/21 financial year to the Scrutiny for Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee.

### **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; *and*
  - 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. The 2021/22 refresh is the last refresh of the current cycle.
- 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 2021-22. As part of the refresh the plan has been amended to reflect the competing demands on partners during the Coronavirus Public Health 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, other than in one specific case, in recognition that while the general level of risk may vary, safeguarding work is rarely group specific. Our overarching priorities for 2021-22 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 on 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

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

### **3.8. Assurance in relation to Adult Safeguarding Arrangements in Somerset**

In common with many other SABs in England, SSAB did not complete its usual

annual self-audit process in 2020/21 due to the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus Public Health Crisis on partners capacity to participate in the process. In the absence of this audit the Board and its Executive Group regularly monitored the response of the system, with no significant concerns or additional priorities for the Board emerging during the year. This monitoring has included the Board's Independent Chair observing meetings, for example The Vulnerable People's and Care Providers meetings in order to gain assurance that partners were working together to effectively support people with care and support needs.

The Board has also supported work by the Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to gain additional insight in to safeguarding data during the Coronavirus Public Health Crisis nationally, and the Board wishes to thank Somerset County Council's safeguarding service for its support with this work. This work has resulted in comparative data being made available to the Board which has supported monitoring during the year.

Those areas where development was identified in previous audit process have resulted in work being completed during the year, for example the publication 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 previous two reports the Committee. As stated in our previous report, we have reached the point locally 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. South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) Audit of the SSAB**

During the spring of 2020 the SSAB was independently audited by the South West Audit Partnership, and also conducted an effectiveness survey of members. While the audit highlighted a number of areas for improvement the overall finding was that the Board has satisfactory arrangements across key areas to ensure that it operates as an effective partnership, and at the Board meeting on 12/06/2020 members agreed actions to take work forward to address the findings.

The recommendations include:

1. A review of the Terms of Reference for the Board and all of its Subgroups, and the expectations on its members
2. The inclusion of a standing agenda item for the Executive Group to ensure that all strategic actions are equally owned and resourced by the Board partner
3. For any subgroup meetings that are cancelled or postponed to be reported to the Board each time it meets
4. For self-referral data to be considered by the Quality Assurance Subgroup
5. For the Quality Assurance Subgroup to progress Somerset County

Council's implementation of the feedback process proposed by Healthwatch Somerset in 2019.

6. For the Board to consider the results of the effectiveness survey with a view to improving confidence levels in the identified areas of lower confidence

The implementation of the recommendations has been monitored by the Board's Executive Group and reported to the Board each time it met during the year. All recommendations have now been completed.

### **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. Once restarted subgroups had a focus on the system's recovery and learning from the crisis. Highlights during the year 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 was that, during 2012/21, the local system performed well, with good examples of partners working together effectively. However, this will continue to be monitored given the significant pressure that the local system is currently under.
- c) The SSAB Executive Group and the Quality Assurance subgroup monitored the levels and types of safeguarding concerns for adults at risk throughout the year, including working to understand any variations compared to the previous two years. While there were some variations in the types of abuse being reported the Subgroup was satisfied that the system in Somerset was responding to referrals appropriately. The Quality Assurance Subgroup has also taken a decision to move to a biennial audit cycle, with the next audit planned for 2021.
- d) [Safeguarding Adults Reviews into the deaths of 'Luke' and 'Damien'](#) were published in August 2020 and March 2021 respectively and the Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) Subgroup has continued to consider referrals for SARs when they are received. Appendix B includes a summary of the progress that has been made so far to address the recommendations from 'Luke', and further update will follow in our next report alongside a summary of the progress in relation to 'Damien' and any Reviews published during 2021/22.
- e) 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 published during 2020/21 include "[Medication Management Guidance for Providers](#)" and a regional [Organisational Abuse Policy](#) that the SSAB took the lead in developing. New public facing materials have also been developed by the Policy and Procedures Subgroup which have been promoted with partners and via social media. These include:

- [What is Abuse and Neglect](#)
  - [What happens after abuse or neglect is reported](#)
  - [What is a Planning Meeting](#)
  - [What is a Safeguarding Adult Enquiry](#)
  - [What is a Review Meeting](#)
  - [Preparing for a safeguarding meeting](#)
  - [Mental Capacity](#)
- f) As in previous years each Safeguarding Adult Board in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary area undertook to promote adult safeguarding through the annual 'Stop Adult Abuse Week'. The focus in 2020/21 was "Looking after your community".
- g) Due to the coronavirus pandemic, during 2020/21 we were not able to arrange for anyone who had direct experience of safeguarding in Somerset to talk to the Board in person due to the on-going restrictions, however we hope to be able to resume inviting people during 2021/22. However, to ensure an effective link between senior leaders on the Board and those who provide a direct safeguarding service, practitioners have presented to the Board on the challenges they have faced over the last 12-18 months.

### **3.11. Key Progress, 2020/21**

Our work during 2021/22 has once again been impacted by the need of our partners to prioritise their response to the Coronavirus Public Health Crisis and associated system pressures. Highlights during the year include:

- a) The SSAB continued to support the local system by hosting, and maintaining on a daily basis until August 2021, information to support organisations providing care and support to adults in Somerset on its [website](#). It also continues to support work on Infection Prevention and Control and Rapid Testing grant funding for care providers.
- b) The, now merged, Learning & Development and Policy & Procedures Subgroup has continued developing guidance for staff working with adults who may make disclosures regarding alleged non-recent incidents involving children following the publication of the 'Luke' Safeguarding Adults review, and had also published new public facing materials in relation to Mate Crime, which it intends to add further to during the year.
- c) The, now renamed, Performance and Quality Assurance Subgroup has developed a new performance scorecard. This is expected to have additional measures added from partners over the coming months. It has also been monitoring feedback received through a new feedback process

that was agreed following a report by Healthwatch Somerset.

- d) The Performance and Quality Assurance Subgroup led on the development of a new audit tool, for use by the five SABs that operate within the Avon & Somerset Constabulary footprint on a biennial basis. The submission date for audit returns was 01/10/2021 and the Board was pleased to receive the highest number of returns to date. Analysis of local themes will take place during the autumn of 2021 and will be included in our next Annual Report.
- e) The Board has reviewed the finding and recommendations from a National Analysis of Safeguarding Adult Reviews from April 2017 to March 2019. It has conducted a gap analysis of to identify those that apply to SABs where work is required, and this will be led by the Safeguarding Adults Review Subgroup in the first instance. The Board is also actively contributing to work to take forward national recommendations made in the report.
- f) The SSAB is working with other Boards within the Avon & Somerset Constabulary footprint to provide a series of webinars and other promotional material during the National Safeguarding Adults week from 15/11/2021 to 19/11/2021 having not been able to arrange a conference once again in 2021.
- g) The Safeguarding Adults Review Subgroup has commissioned three Safeguarding Adults Reviews that are expected to be completed during the first half of 2022, with at least one further review expected to be completed during 2021/22. In line with other SAB's, there is a growth in the number of SAR referrals. We are working locally, regionally & nationally to ensure we are reviewing such cases in a timely manner enabling learning from such reviews to be embedded promptly.

**3.12.** 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. 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. A new approach that we developed, before the Coronavirus Public Health Crisis, of asking a senior representative from a partner organisation that had not had involvement in a case to chair a locally led approach has not yet reduced the proportion of

instances when an Independent Reviewer needs to be commissioned due to the ongoing pressure on the local system.

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](http://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 2020/21 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, 2021/22](#)
  - [Appendix B, SSAB Annual Report, 2020/21](#)
  - [Appendix C, SSAB Annual Report summary, 2020/21](#)

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