

REPORT TO:	NHS SOMERSET INTEGRATED CARE BOARD ICB Board Part A	ENCLOSURE: H
DATE OF MEETING:	30 January 2025	
REPORT TITLE:	Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements	
REPORT AUTHOR:	Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Office	
EXECUTIVE SPONSOR:	Shelagh Meldrum – Chief Nursing Officer & Director of Operations	
PRESENTED BY:	Shelagh Meldrum – Chief Nursing Officer & Director of Operations	

PURPOSE	DESCRIPTION	SELECT
Approve	To formally receive a report and approve its recommendations, (authorising body/committee for the final decision)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Endorse	To support the recommendation (not the authorising body/committee for the final decision)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss	To discuss, in depth, a report noting its implications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Note	To note, without the need for discussion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assurance	To assure the Board/Committee that systems and processes are in place, or to advise of a gap along with mitigations	<input type="checkbox"/>

LINKS TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (Please select any which are impacted on / relevant to this paper)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Objective 1: Improve the health and wellbeing of the population
<input type="checkbox"/>	Objective 2: Reduce inequalities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Objective 3: Provide the best care and support to children and adults
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Objective 4: Strengthen care and support in local communities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Objective 5: Respond well to complex needs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Objective 6: Enable broader social and economic development
<input type="checkbox"/>	Objective 7: Enhance productivity and value for money

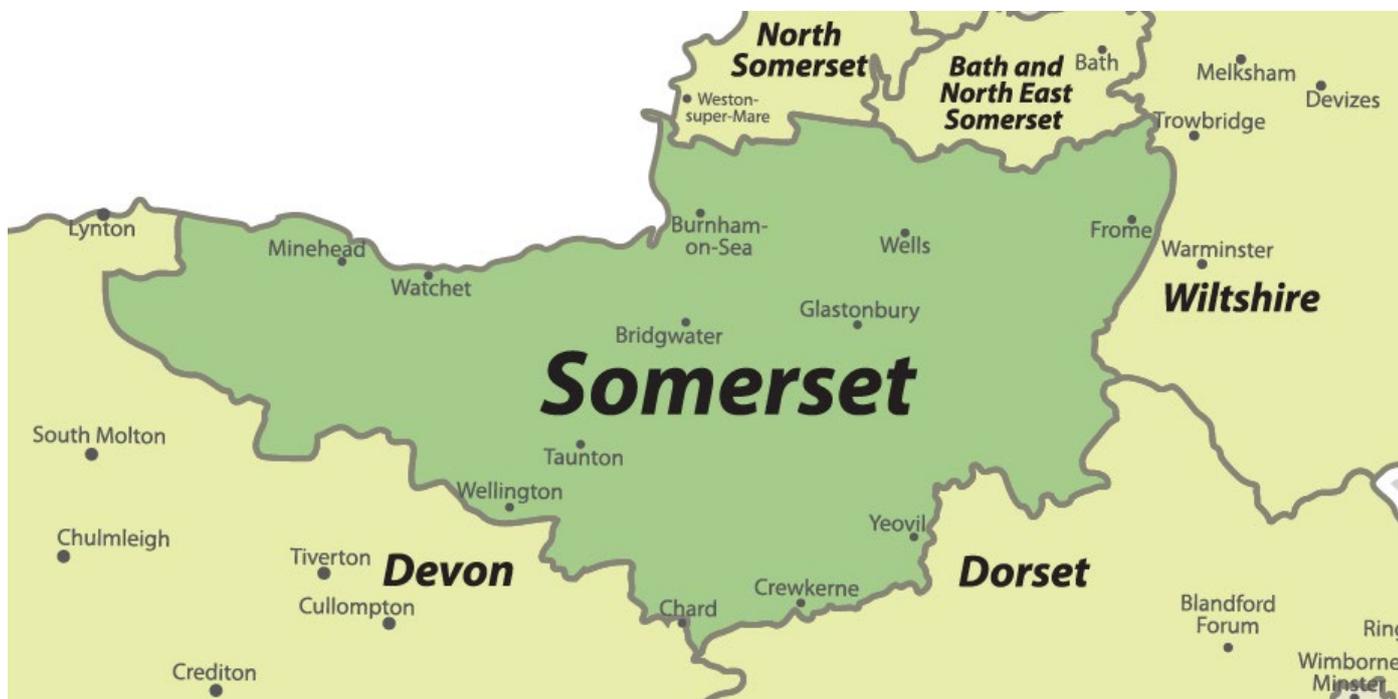
PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION / ENGAGEMENT
Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership

REPORT TO COMMITTEE / BOARD
The report sets out the arrangements in which safeguarding partners, along with other organisations including education, work together to safeguard children in Somerset. This is in response to the duties outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2023. The working arrangements set out in the report are crucial to ensure agencies work together to keep children and young people safe, hold partner agencies to account for safeguarding children, improve frontline practice and ensure that safeguarding is prioritised.

SOMERSET SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

1. Introduction

- 1.1 These arrangements set out how the safeguarding partners, along with other organisations including education, work together to safeguard children in Somerset. This is in response to the duties outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2023. These arrangements are crucial to ensure agencies work together to keep children and young people safe, hold partner agencies to account for safeguarding children, improve frontline practice and ensure that safeguarding is prioritised.
- 1.2 The arrangements apply to the area defined by the Somerset Council Local Authority boundary. Our statutory safeguarding partners are made up of one Local Authority, one Integrated Care Board and one Police force, who have equal and joint responsibility for local safeguarding arrangements and to promote the welfare of all children in Somerset.



2. Leadership arrangements

- 2.1 The three Lead Safeguarding Partners are:

- Avon and Somerset Constabulary: Sarah Crew, Chief Constable
- Somerset Council: Duncan Sharkey, CEO
- Somerset Integrated Care Board: Jonathan Higman, CEO

The Lead Safeguarding Partners meet twice per year in a regional meeting (Avon and Somerset Constabulary footprint) and once per year at local level, where they work to set the strategic direction, vision and culture of the Partnership.

- 2.2 Our lead members delegate some responsibilities to their agency representatives on the SSCP Executive, who are as follows:

- Avon and Somerset Constabulary: Rachel Shields, Exploitation and Safeguarding Chief Superintendent
- Somerset Council: Claire Winter, Executive Director – Children, Families and Education (Chair)
- Somerset Integrated Care Board: Shelagh Meldrum, Chief Nursing Officer and Director of Operations
- Education: Natalie Hanna, Headteacher

The Partnership Executive key responsibilities include ensuring there are effective information sharing arrangements locally, delivering high quality learning reviews and ensuring the provision of multi-agency safeguarding training.

2.3 The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership has invited an Education representative onto the Executive to support the voice of the sector being part of decision making on the highest level. This representative has been endorsed through consultation with the sector.

2.4 At an Executive level, the three safeguarding partners:

- Provide leadership for safeguarding children within the representing agency/sector.
- Have oversight and offer challenge to an agreed data set reflecting the safeguarding performance of Somerset.
- Ensure that the allocated agency resources, financial and ‘in kind’, are utilised to meet the partnership’s objectives.
- Take ownership of the strategic plan, budget, twelve-monthly report and risk register.

2.5 The Chairing of the Partnership rotates annually between partners on the Executive.

2.6 Appropriate safeguarding tasks are delegated to a regional safeguarding partnership on behalf of the three safeguarding partners in Somerset, based on the Avon and Somerset Constabulary boundaries. The three safeguarding partners retain responsibility and accountability for safeguarding children and young people in Somerset.

3. Relevant agencies

3.1 Relevant agencies include those organisations and agencies with a duty under Section 11 of ‘The Children Act’ (2004) to ensure ‘their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children’. They are also the organisations whose involvement the three named safeguarding partners consider are essential to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, as set out in ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ (2023). Relevant agencies include those services commissioned by partners to provide services to children, young people and families:

Somerset Council including Children’s Social Care, Youth Justice, Housing, Public Health and Regulatory Services	Somerset Integrated Care Board
Avon and Somerset Constabulary	All Education providers, including early years settings
Primary Care (GPs, Pharmacy and Opticians)	Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner

National Probation Service	Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
Children’s residential homes including private providers	CAFCASS
All voluntary, community and social enterprise groups who work with children and families	Sport and leisure organisations
South Western Ambulance Trust	Devon Doctors and Care UK
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue	Social housing providers, including Aster Group, YMCA, Curo Group, Yarlinton Housing Group, LiveWest, Magna Housing, SHAL Housing
Independent fostering agencies	NHS England
Faith organisations	British Transport Police
Somerset Domestic Abuse Service	Somerset Drug and Alcohol Service

- 3.2 This list is not exhaustive; in line with statutory guidance, the three key safeguarding partners note the option to co-opt representatives from other agencies/organisations as the need arises from particular areas of partnership work. Relevant agencies are expected to engage with the Partnership through contributing to learning reviews and disseminating learning from them; attending Partnership training and learning events; participating in subgroups; engaging in the Section 11 audit process and other activities as required by the Partnership to work together to improve outcomes for children and families.
- 3.3 Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership engages with relevant agencies through a range of events and written communication, including multi-agency training events and Conferences, surveys, focus groups, subgroups, Forum events and the Learning Bulletin. This gives opportunity for relevant agencies to understand the safeguarding arrangements and feed into policy development and decision making through surveys, audits and focus groups.
- 3.4 Engagement of schools and educational settings: Schools and education settings, including early years (Section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006), independent schools, academies, alternative provision and free schools are relevant agencies. There are Education representatives sitting on each Partnership group to ensure clear voice in Partnership decision making. Also, the Partnership present at termly Designated Safeguarding Lead meetings to support engagements and dissemination of key learning.
- 3.5 Engagement of health: The Partnership Health Safeguarding subgroup provides safeguarding children leadership to Somerset’s health community. Its key function is to quality assure the effectiveness of these safeguarding arrangements across health and to facilitate two-way communication between health and the wider partnership.
- 3.6 Engagement of youth custody and residential homes: There are no prisons or youth offending institutions in Somerset, however the Partnership links closely with the local Youth Justice Partnership Board to ensure relevant information is shared. Somerset has children’s residential homes, who are named as relevant agencies to engage with the Partnership.

3.7 Responsibilities of relevant agencies: Section 11 of 'The Children Act' (2004) places duties on a range of organisations, agencies and individuals to 'ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'. Partners with responsibilities under Section 11 are expected to ensure that their responsibilities are executed within their agency, and this will be fed into the Partnership through Section 11 audit and challenge events.

4. Wider partnership engagement

4.1 Organisations and agencies who are not named in the relevant agency regulations, whilst not under a statutory duty, should nevertheless cooperate and collaborate with the safeguarding partners, particularly as they may have duties under Section 10 and/or Section 11 of 'The Children Act' (2004).

4.2 Engagement of residential homes: All residential homes for children within Somerset, including those provided by Somerset Council and private sector providers, are deemed to be relevant agencies by the safeguarding partners. There are mechanisms in place to engage residential homes, for example through the Section 11 audit process.

4.3 Engagement of youth custody establishments: There are no youth custody establishments within Somerset's boundaries.

5. Participation arrangements

5.1 The partnership link with a range of participation groups to ensure that the voices of children, young people and families are heard in key decision making and strategic planning. These include:

- In Care and Leaving Care Councils
- Somerset Youth Forum
- National UK Youth Parliament
- The Unstoppables
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Participation Group
- Avon and Somerset Constabulary Young People's Independent Advisory Group
- Healthwatch projects

6. Governance and scrutiny arrangements

6.1 The Partnership structure for subgroups can be found here. The Partnership Independent Scrutineer is Dr Mark Peel.

6.2 Partners in Somerset are committed to independent scrutiny to provide assurance, monitoring and challenge to the quality of multi-agency work, and to be assured of the effectiveness of the multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in the area.

6.3 The Scrutineer of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership is an independent appointment confirmed by the three safeguarding partners. The Scrutineer is responsible for scrutinising and challenging local partners, considering how effectively safeguarding arrangements are working for children and how well the safeguarding partnership provides strong leadership, which is provided via attendance at Executive meetings.

- 6.4 The lived experience of children and young people in a multi-agency context is at the centre of scrutiny activity in Somerset. Likewise, the views of and learning from frontline practitioners are central to scrutiny arrangements and ensure that the line of sight on children and young people is maintained.
- 6.5 Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership arrangements are also scrutinised through the three key partners' organisational scrutiny functions to ensure accountability at the level of Chief Executive (Somerset Council), Chief Executive (Somerset Integrated Care Board), and Chief Constable (Avon and Somerset Constabulary), as well as external inspections (Ofsted, CQC and HMICFRS).
- 6.6 Across the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership there are a range of reporting mechanisms which are used to assess the effectiveness of services provided to children and families. This includes Section 11 audit, Section 175 audit, performance data, audit findings and annual reports. The partnership's Quality and Performance function is responsible for analysing multi-agency safeguarding quality assurance activity to inform the Executive of risks and trends, inform priorities for the Partnership and to oversee action.

7. Resourcing

- 7.1 Partners ensure funding covers activity required for core safeguarding arrangements. Contributions are agreed annually and the budget is overseen by the Partnership Business Manager. Arrangements for 2024-2025 are:

Contributor	% Contribution to SSCP budget
Somerset Council	33%
Somerset ICB	33%
Avon and Somerset Constabulary	15%
Income from training	19%

- 7.2 Locally, the Partnership have engaged in work to make contributions to the budget more equitable. Avon and Somerset Constabulary have agreed to increase their contributions to the SSCP budget for the 2025-2026 year, and the Delegated Safeguarding Partners across the Avon and Somerset footprint will continue to work together to develop effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The Lead Safeguarding Partners will also oversee work to ensure an equitable funding formula across the area.
- 7.3 Somerset employs a Business Unit team as agreed by the Executive, hosted by Somerset Council. The role of this team is to support the Partnership to fulfil its statutory duties, including the delivery of training, facilitation of learning reviews, data analysis and measurement of impact of Partnership initiatives.

8. Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

- 8.1 Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership commissions reviews where issues of importance are raised in relation to child safeguarding. This includes statutory reviews (Rapid Reviews) where the criteria set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) (Chapter 5) are met, or non-statutory reviews where there is important learning for two or more agencies but the criteria are not met.

- 8.2 Any organisation within statutory or official duties in relation to children (including all members of the partnership) informs the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Unit of any incident which they think should be considered as a notifiable incident and should be considered for a child safeguarding practice review through the case for consideration form.
- 8.3 When considering whether to commission a child safeguarding practice review the safeguarding partners will have regard to the definition of a serious child safeguarding case and the following criteria:
- Whether the case:
- highlights or may highlight improvements needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including where those improvements have been previously identified.
 - highlights or may highlight recurrent themes in the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children.
 - highlights or may highlight concerns regarding two or more organisations or agencies working together effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
 - is one which the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel have considered and concluded a local review may be more appropriate.
- 8.4 Where there are differences of opinion in whether the criteria for a review have been met, the views of an Independent Scrutineer will be sought, with further recourse to the National Panel to seek a resolution if required.
- 8.5 The three safeguarding partners may consider that a child safeguarding practice review is appropriate for cases that do not meet the definition of a 'serious child safeguarding case' but nevertheless might reveal learning for the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- 8.6 Reviews will be completed and published within six months unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as ongoing criminal proceedings. Publication of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews or information about the improvements that will be made is published on the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership website.
- 8.7 The partnership is committed to embedding learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews through the Learning and Improvement function. Learning from reviews will be disseminated through a range of methods, including single agency activity, through the Partnership Learning Bulletin, training, website articles and events. [You can find more information about our methodologies framework here.](#)
- 9. Resolving professional differences**
- 9.1 [You can find information about the Partnership Resolving Professional Differences protocol here.](#)
- 9.2 Whistleblowing procedures for each Partnership agency can be found on their individual websites.

10. Quality Assurance Framework

10.1 [You can find information about the Partnership Quality Assurance Framework here.](#) This also outlines arrangements for sharing data and how this will be used to assess the effectiveness of help being provided to children and families. The Partnership undertakes multi-agency audit to understand impact

10.2 [The Partnership Information Sharing Agreement can be found here.](#)

11. Effective Support Document

11.1 The Partnership Effective Support document provides guidance on when to request the involvement of agencies in Somerset, in line with the Partnership arrangements. [It can be found here.](#) It aligns with our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and is overseen by the Quality and Performance subgroup.

12. Multi-Agency Training

12.1 Partnership training is overseen and commissioned by the Learning and Improvement subgroup. The Partnership provide a wide range of training courses [which can be booked here.](#) Courses are offered both online and face to face, delivered by a range of experts from across Partnership agencies, as well as two SSCP Trainers. Impact of training is measured through a range of qualitative (eg. Feedback forms, surveys) and quantitative (learning gain scores, attendance data) measures, and reported into the Learning and Improvement subgroup for oversight and scrutiny.

Signed:

Sarah Crew, Chief Constable Avon and Somerset Constabulary



Duncan Sharkey, CEO Somerset Council



Jonathan Higman, CEO Somerset Integrated Care Board



IMPACT ASSESSMENTS – KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED
(please enter 'N/A' where not applicable)

Reducing Inequalities/Equality & Diversity	This is a pan Somerset report and seeks to ensure that agreed arrangements reduce inequalities and recognise the diversity of our population.
Quality	This report sets out the arrangements agreed to ensure that statutory safeguarding duties in partnership are met.
Safeguarding	This report sets out arrangements to safeguard children and young people in Somerset and those using services in Somerset.
Financial/Resource/ Value for Money	Not applicable
Sustainability	Not applicable
Governance/Legal/ Privacy	Information sharing requirements are key to safeguarding practice.
Confidentiality	Not applicable
Risk Description	Not applicable