



Merton Safeguarding Adults Board Communication Strategy

**Version: 1
Date: March 2021**

Introduction

As defined under Section 43 of The Care Act 2014 (Safeguarding Adults Boards), each Local Authority must establish a Safeguarding Adults Board (a “SAB”) for its area.

1. The objective of a SAB is to help and protect adults in its area in cases of the kind described in section 42(1).
2. The way in which a SAB must seek to achieve its objective is by co-ordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of what each of its members does.
3. An SAB may do anything which appears to it to be necessary or desirable for the purpose of achieving its objective.
4. Schedule 2 (which includes provision about the membership, funding and other resources, strategy and annual report of a SAB) has effect.
5. Where two or more local authorities exercise their respective duties under subsection (1) by establishing a SAB for their combined area—**(a)** a reference in this section, section 44 or schedule 2 to the authority establishing the SAB is to be read as a reference to the authorities establishing it, and **(b)** a reference in this section, that section or that schedule to the SAB’s area is to be read as a reference to the combined area.

In recognition of these duties Merton Safeguarding Adults Board have developed this Strategy to ensure the timely and coordinated response to:

- General and High Risk communications across the partnership.
- Raising awareness of the safeguarding agenda and the work of the Board and its partners.
- Respond appropriately to areas of public interest.
- Media requests.

Purpose

The purpose therefore of this Communication Strategy is to support the messages that:

Safeguarding is everyone’s business and that effective communication is the responsibility of all partner agencies represented on the Merton Safeguarding Adults Board.

This Strategy contains the Board’s Communication Protocol that must be followed in the event of a Significant Safeguarding Incident and an overview of the Board’s target audiences, the messages we need to send out and some of the agreed methods of communication

Introduction

Protocol of communication in significant events Board members have agreed this Communication Protocol to ensure an effective process for communicating with the public and stakeholders, thereby promoting public confidence in the arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the prevention of abuse.

Media strategy for response to a significant safeguarding incident.

A significant safeguarding incident may include:

- A case where an adult has died, and the SAB knows or suspects that the death resulted from serious abuse or neglect, or if the adult is still alive, and the SAB knows or suspects that the adult has experienced serious abuse or neglect.
- A case involving the abuse and / or neglect of a number of adults at risk, or by multiple perpetrators.

- A case giving rise to concerns about the way in which local professionals and services work together to safeguard adults at risk.
- Any safeguarding case where there are public interest issues.

In the event of a significant safeguarding incident:

1. Wherever possible, communication with the media and other public communication around the case should be undertaken jointly by the partner agencies involved. Agencies should avoid responding independently. The exception to this is:
2. Any communication with the media in the name of the Safeguarding Adults Board should be undertaken by the Independent Chair or a nominated substitute where appropriate.
3. Partner agencies must take account of the reputational impact on another agency and must ensure that any public communication does not comment negatively on another agency.
4. Senior staff should notify their own organisation's Press Office and the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Adults Team.
5. The Safeguarding Adults Team in the relevant Local Authority must notify their Press Office, the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Assistant Director who will notify the Elected Lead Member and Director.
6. The Safeguarding Adults Board will have a single initial point of contact for the media which will be agreed depending on the nature of the incident. The lead agency for communications will be agreed in partnership and will always be a SAB statutory partner agency.

Public and Media Interest:

It is the responsibility of Senior Managers in each individual agency, alongside the Independent Chair, to anticipate public and media interest in the death or serious harm caused to an adult at risk by abuse or neglect, or in the investigation of organisational abuse or harm.

When agreeing a strategy for managing public information, consideration must be given to the following:

1. The need to maintain confidentiality in respect of personal information contained within reports on the individual, family members and others. All reports will be anonymised in the first instance unless there is public interest to provided identifiable information;
 2. The accountability of public services and the importance of maintaining public confidence in the process of internal review;
- 2a. In any case where the police are involved in a live investigation of a safeguarding incident, Metropolitan Police (MET) would take primacy in the communications process. This helps to ensure the integrity of the investigation and supports and guides partner agencies in the scope of their own associated staff communications.
- 2b. MET Police Media team will work with the senior investigating officer and the Press Office of relevant partner agencies to provide appropriate guidance.
- 2c. Agencies other than the MET Police would not be expected to comment on live investigations.
- 2d. MET Police Media team will ensure that the MET representative on the MSAB is aware of the investigation and can brief the Independent Chair.

If the investigation results in a court case, following sentencing MET Police will relinquish primacy following the announcement of the criminal justice outcome.

3. The need to secure full and open participation from the different agencies and professionals involved.
4. The responsibility to provide relevant information to those with a legitimate interest.
5. The constraints on sharing information when criminal proceedings are outstanding, in that access to the contents of information may not be within the control of the SAB.
6. Each individual agency has their own process but should escalate any incidents of public interest to the Board.

It is the duty of Board Members to continue to ensure that staff in their organisation are aware of this agreed Protocol. This document should be disseminated to staff and in the event of a significant safeguarding incident it should be recirculated with a reminder of the Protocol.

Board members will keep the SAB Business Manager informed of all actions undertaken and send a copy of all communication with the media for inclusion in the audit trail.

Dispute Resolution

If there is a dispute between Board partners, dispute resolution procedures must be followed. These are outlined in the Board's Memorandum of Understanding.

Outcomes

The successful delivery of this Strategy will lead to the following outcomes:

- ✓ The public can recognise abuse and neglect when they see it, know what to do in these circumstances and have the confidence to take whatever action is needed.
- ✓ Partner agencies are responsible for the timely sharing of information in the event of an emergency or safeguarding concern.
- ✓ Board members communicate in a timely and appropriate way to meet the needs of the target audiences.
- ✓ Stakeholders have an appropriate mechanism to communicate views and comments back to the Board, ensuring meaningful participation.
- ✓ Board members communicate information to their staff in order to support best safeguarding practice.

Audiences and Messages

There is a wide audience consisting of both professionals and members of the public, so a broad approach to communication is necessary.

Merton Safeguarding Adults Board has its own website with dedicated sections for the public, for practitioners and for Board members. It is kept up to date by the Board's administrator/ Business Manager.

Who do need/want to communicate with and why?

Communicating with the public

It is crucial to ensure that the public are well informed about the potential risks relating to adult abuse, and what to do if they suspect abuse or neglect is taking place. Similarly, if someone is living in fear or is subject to abuse, they must have the right information, guidance and support.

Communicating with staff

There are a range of organisations and staff with whom the Board and the Safeguarding Adults Teams need to share information in order to ensure best safeguarding practice. The Board also needs to ensure that each partner agency continues to learn and improve safeguarding practice.

Good quality inter-agency communication is needed so that key issues in regards to safeguarding adults and the prevention of abuse and promotion of their welfare are highlighted to all staff members.

In order to ensure that each partner agency co-operates appropriately and consistently, a Merton Information Sharing Protocol is in place.

Communicating with the media

Proactive use of the media to promote good safeguarding messages should be a routine part of any public awareness campaign. Responsive media statements may be necessary when there is a case issue involving a specific person, or where there is negative media coverage of key safeguarding matters which needs to be addressed.

Any communication with the media in the name of the Safeguarding Adults Board should be undertaken by the Independent Chair or a nominated substitute where appropriate.

In the event of a significant safeguarding case, the Communication Protocol in section 2 above should be followed.

The Board's **target audiences**, the messages we need to send out and some of the methods of communication are summarised below. This list is not exclusive.

Target Group	What information do we need to send out	Method of communication
General Public, Carers and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What safeguarding is• Safeguarding is a responsibility shared across the whole community• What constitutes an 'adult at risk'• What constitutes 'harm'• What to do if they witness, or suspect, harm• Sources of safeguarding advice for carers• Relevant learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pan London Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy and Procedures• Publicity material in public places• Board website• Partner agencies' websites• Targeted events• Bespoke communications• Local networking• MSAB Newsletters
Adults at risk, Carers and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to stay safe• How to raise awareness of risks without raising fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publicity Material in public places• Board website• Partner agencies' websites

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What to do if they or someone they know is being harmed or exploited • For those involved in the safeguarding process, a basic understanding of the protection available and what it means for them. • Advocacy services and IMCAs • Sources of safeguarding advice for carers 	
Voluntary and Community Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good safeguarding practice • How to access safeguarding advice and help • How to recruit staff and volunteers safely and deal with any allegations made against them • What training is available • The role of the Board and Board documents • How to engage with the Board • Good news stories • Information about events, including Learning Events as appropriate • Feedback from events and training • Advocacy services and IMCA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pan London Multi-agency Safeguarding Policy and Procedures • Safeguarding training advertised on the Council and other partner agencies websites • Publicity Material in public places i.e. Libraries, GP Surgeries, Council buildings, Health Centres • Board website • Partner agencies' websites • Voluntary Sector Learning Forum • Via the Safeguarding Forum in each area • Board briefing notes • Board Partners and Statutory Agencies
Board Partners and Statutory Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the Board and Board documents • How to engage with the Board • How to access Safeguarding Adults Procedures • How to access safeguarding training • Shared learning and best practice • SAR publications and Learning Briefs • Changes in legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pan Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy and Procedures • Board website • Via the Safeguarding Forum in each area • Board briefing notes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about local trends and risks 	
--	--	--

Delivery of the Communications Strategy

The Communication and Publicity Subgroup on behalf of the Board has a key role in the successful delivery of this Strategy. The Subgroup will collate information regarding the effectiveness of the Communication Strategy, reporting any areas that require addressing. Key measures include:

- Feedback from events and training relating to adult safeguarding via evaluation forms.
- Increase in alerts due to higher awareness levels.
- Feedback from local Safeguarding Forums.
- Media coverage, reach and sentiment.
- Findings from the annual self-assessment audit for member agencies.

The Board's annual Business Plan will include actions to address identified gaps and issues. There is an expectation that Board members are aware of this Strategy and put mechanisms in place to ensure its successful delivery.

Each partner agency has opportunities to promote safeguarding awareness among staff and networks through internal communication channels including newsletters, briefing notes, training, social media and internal and external web pages.

Agency Communication Links:	
Mental Health	Grover, Alex Communications & Stakeholder Engagement Manager Chief Executives Office, Springfield Hospital Alex.Grover@swlstg.nhs.uk Alex.Grover@swlstg-tr.nhs.uk 020 3513 6864
CLCH	CLCHT.Adultsafeguarding@nhs.net 0208 102 4218
Trading Standards	Ranjeev Sohal Senior Fair Trading Officer. Enforcement (Trading Standards) Regulatory Services Partnership Serving Merton, Richmond & Wandsworth Councils Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ Direct: 020 8288 5637
CCG	Theresa.Hart@swlondon.nhs.uk
Wimbledon Guild	Wendy Pridmore (Chief Executive) wpridmore@wimbledonguild.co.uk

Date of Board endorsement: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Review Date: 13th March 2022