



Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements Partnership Agreement

Revised to reflect the new safeguarding arrangements
under Working Together 2023

**This Partnership Agreement is the governing document of the Somerset
Safeguarding Children Partnership.**

December 2024

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THIS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT is made on the 30th day of December 2024.

BETWEEN:

(1) **AVON & SOMERSET CONSTABULARY** of Police and Fire Headquarters,
Portishead, Bristol BS20 8QJ

and

(2) **SOMERSET COUNCIL** of County Hall, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4DY

and

(3) **SOMERSET INTEGRATED CARE BOARD** of NHS Somerset Wynford House,
Yeovil, Somerset BA22 8HR

Each a 'Partner' and together the 'Partners'.

BACKGROUND

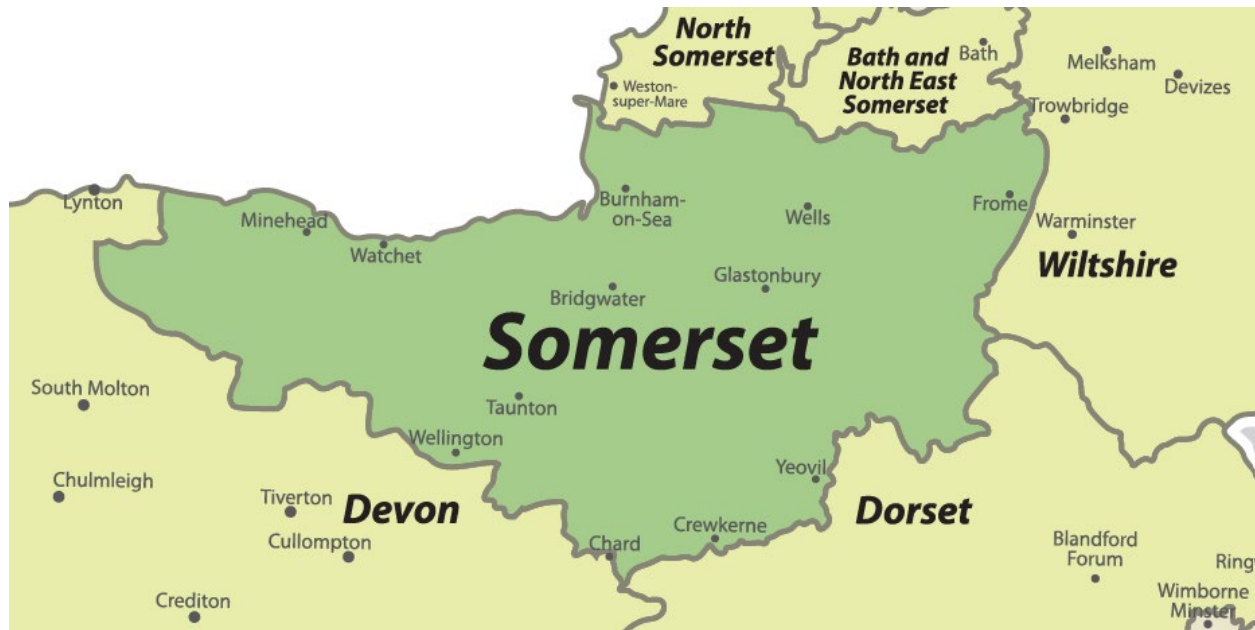
Working Together 2023 is the statutory guidance setting out key roles for individual organisations and agencies to deliver effective arrangements to help, support, safeguard, and protect children. Under Working Together 2023 statutory safeguarding partners have a shared and equal responsibility to ensure:

- i) A clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm.
- ii) First and foremost, there are appropriate multi-agency responses to children who have been identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.
- iii) Effective scrutiny arrangements to ensure that organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately and held to account for the quality and impact of their work.
- iv) Multi-agency learning is rooted in the voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, to provide a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice.
- v) Information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children.
- vi) Collection, sharing and analysis of data, enables early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats enabling a joined-up responses across relevant agencies.

INTRODUCTION

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.

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.



LEADERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

RELEVANT AGENCIES

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

WIDER PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

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).

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.

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

PARTICIPATION ARRANGEMENTS

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

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

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

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.

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.

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.

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).

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.

RESOURCING

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%

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.

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.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEWS

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.*

RESOLVING PROFESSIONAL DIFFERENCES

You can find information about the Partnership Resolving Professional Differences protocol here.

Whistleblowing procedures for each Partnership agency can be found on their individual websites.

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

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

The Partnership Information Sharing Agreement can be found here.

EFFECTIVE SUPPORT DOCUMENT

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.

MULTI-AGENCY TRAINING

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.

SIGNATORIES

This Partnership Agreement has been signed by the Parties hereto and is intended to be and is hereby delivered on the day and year first above written.

Signed for and on behalf of Avon & Somerset Constabulary

Signed:



Name: Sarah Crew

Position: Chief Constable Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Date: 17 December 2024

Signed for and on behalf of Somerset Council

Signed:



Name: Duncan Sharkey

Position: CEO Somerset Council

Date: 17 December 2024

Signed for and on behalf of Somerset Integrated Care Board

Signed:



Name: Jonathan Higman

Position: Chief Executive Somerset Integrated Care Board

Date: 30 December 2024