



**SUNDERLAND  
SAFEGUARDING  
ADULTS BOARD**

# Strategic Delivery Plan 2026–29

# 1. Who we are...

Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) represents a multi-agency working arrangement of key agencies in Sunderland, including:

- \*Sunderland City Council
- \*Northumbria Police
- \*NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (Sunderland)
- South Tyneside & Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
- Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust
- Healthwatch Sunderland
- Probation Service
- Gentoo Housing
- Sunderland Care & Support
- Department for Work & Pensions
- Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Service

(\*Statutory partner on the Board, as set out in the Care Act 2014).

# 2. What we do...

SSAB leads and holds partners to account for safeguarding adults in the city and is the principle vehicle for leading and securing the following aims, where partners:

- Agree to work together to achieve common goals and outcomes for local people around safeguarding
- Establish organisational arrangements with agreed multi and single-agency processes and procedures
- Share accountability, risk and resources appropriately
- Identify positive outcomes for adults at risk and communicate with and engage with communities, service users, their carers and families
- Demonstrate by their actions, their commitment to promoting and improving the work of safeguarding in Sunderland

SSAB works to ensure its strategic direction and operational activity is complimentary to that of the Safer Sunderland Partnership, Health and Well Being Board and Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership.

## 3. Who we serve...

Our overarching purpose is to help and safeguard adults in Sunderland with care and support needs.

Sunderland is the second-largest settlement in North East England, with an adult population of 220,189 and 25.7% of this population being over 65. The 2021 census describes an increase in 20.1% for the over 65 population since the previous census and the number of adults with care and support needs in Sunderland is expected to increase over the coming years due to the ageing population, increased needs resulting from the impact of Covid, increases in mental health problems, and complex and chaotic lifestyles.

## 4. Our vision...

**“People in Sunderland are able to live safely, free from neglect and abuse”**

SSAB’s vision for Safeguarding Adults in Sunderland can only be delivered effectively through the support and engagement of a wide range of partner agencies and organisations across the city. This Plan demonstrates the part that all relevant stakeholders will play in achieving this vision.

## 5. Our ambition...

We will have a Board that is effective at the following:

- Identifying areas of good practice and where this is providing positive outcomes for individuals
- Collecting and analysing system intelligence to inform and influence service design, delivery and development
- Identifying areas of poor practice and providing scrutiny and challenge to effect positive change
- Using national and local benchmarking and research evidence to inform and influence improvements in safeguarding adults
- Providing a clear and influential leadership role in relation to safeguarding adults
- Challenging key partners and other Boards where appropriate
- Driving forward an outcomes-focused safeguarding adults model, embracing the principles of [Making Safeguarding Personal](#)
- Ensure user involvement is embedded in the business of the Board by routinely incorporating consultation and co-production into its activity, ensuring the voice of those with lived experience is heard

## 6. Making safeguarding personal...

We will make safeguarding personal to the individuals we are working with. SSAB is committed to embedding the principles of [Making Safeguarding Personal](#) across our partner agencies, ensuring that we deliver person-led safeguarding, enhancing the involvement, choice and control of the individual with care and support needs, as well as improving their quality of life, wellbeing and safety. This approach underpins and informs SSAB's Strategic Delivery Plan, and corresponding governance documents.

## 7. Our core duties...

Under the Care Act (2014), SSAB has the following core duties:

### We will develop and publish a strategic plan

This sets out key focus areas and the vision of SSAB and identifies how we will ensure our statutory responsibilities are met, in accordance with the Care Act, and embedded in practice across the partnership.

Our plan covers the period of 2024–29 and will be reviewed annually as part of the SSAB governance and quality assurance processes, to ensure it continues to take account of local and national safeguarding adults developments and that the actions continue to be relevant to safeguarding adults in Sunderland.

The Plan will be supported by information gathered from the Safeguarding Adults Performance dataset, collated using a 'Performance Dashboard' approach.

The Plan is underpinned by the SSAB Multi-Agency Agreement & Memorandum of Understanding, which describes the Board's remit and governance arrangements, including Terms of Reference and the reporting structure of the multi-agency Sub Committees that sit under the SSAB. It also outlines the roles and responsibilities of Board members.

### We will publish an annual report

Our annual reports detail how we have worked together to implement our strategy and what we've done each year to deliver the objectives set out within our strategy. [Our annual reports can be viewed here.](#)

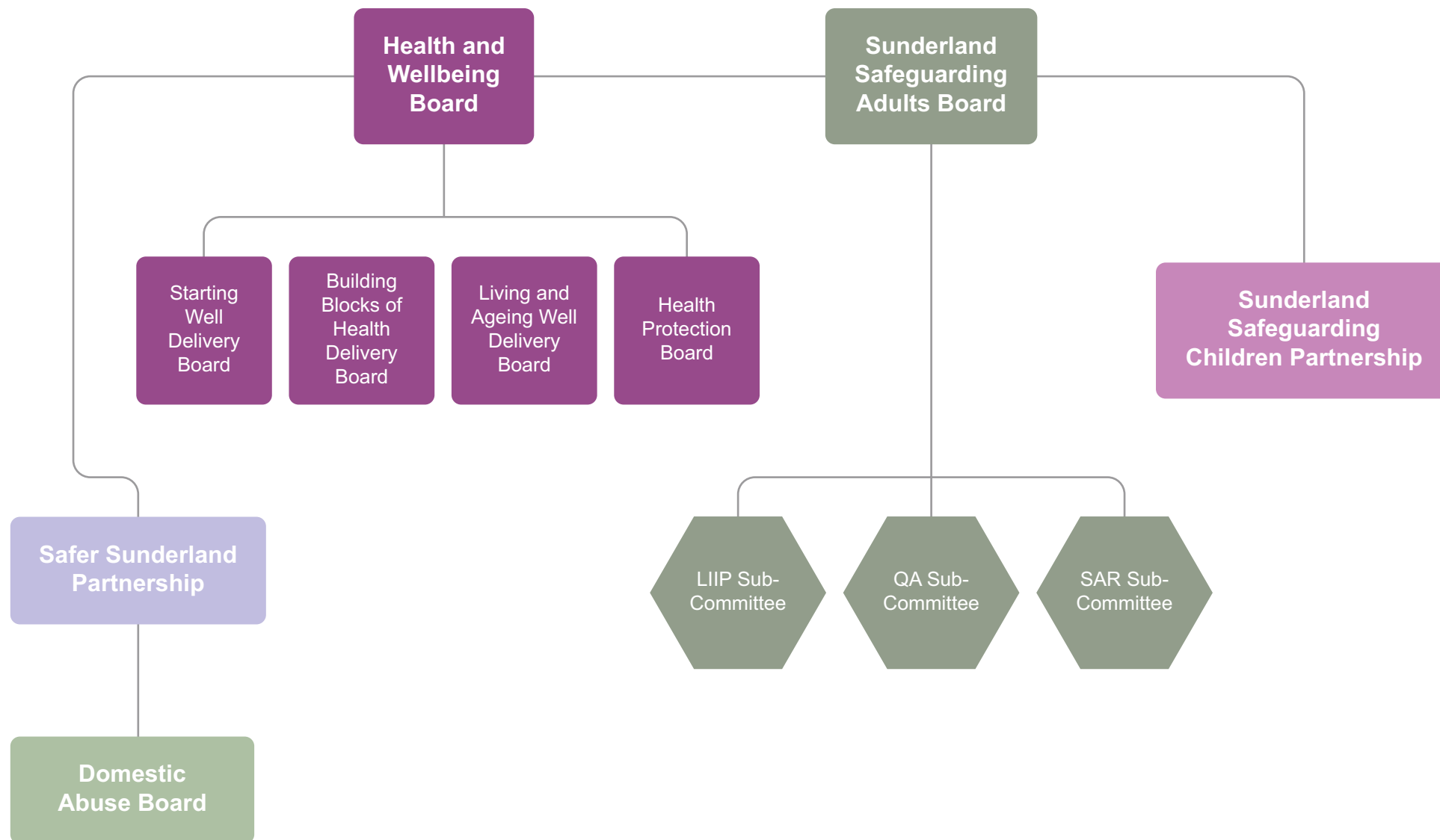
### We will commission Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs)

SSAB has developed a dedicated sub-committee that considers all cases referred for a SAR, decides whether a statutory review or other approach is indicated, and commissions and conducts a SAR as required.

The recommendations from completed reviews are used as a vehicle to drive effective change. We look at any trends identified, linking back to our objectives, and work as a partnership to embed relevant learning through a range of methods, including producing guidance, briefings, learning events, and presentations.

## 8. Context of safeguarding for SSAB 2024–29

We will deliver our core duties via the SSAB's governance structure:



## How we will deliver this strategy

All partners will be accountable to the Board and meet regularly to gain assurance that their organisations are complying with the strategic objectives embedded within this plan. This will be achieved through the following:

- The Sub Committees will oversee the delivery of the SSAB's Work Programme and report progress to the Board
- The sub-committees and task and finish groups will be tasked with delivery of the Work Programme, supported by the chairs and vice chairs to ensure that tasks have ongoing monitoring and regular, well-paced progression
- At the end of each financial year the Work Programme will be reviewed and updated as necessary
- A Risk Register will be updated and presented 6-monthly to Board meetings to give early warning of delivery issues, so that SSAB partners can offset the risks as far as possible
- We will publish a SSAB Annual Report which will give details of how partners have performed in delivering against the Work Programme and what they have done to enhance and progress SSAB's strategic priorities

## 9. Our strategic priorities are...

### A. A focus on prevention

We will focus on prevention, and it will be embedded in everything we do. A key element of SSAB's Strategic Delivery Plan is Prevention. The aim of adult safeguarding is to prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults. It is also about enabling and empowering adults to live their lives as they wish, and raising public awareness so that communities alongside professionals, play their part in preventing, identifying, and responding to abuse and neglect.

Under the Care Act 2014, Safeguarding Adults Boards have a duty to develop and implement a strategy around the prevention of abuse or neglect of adults at risk. Prevention and Partnership are two of the [six key principles](#) of adult safeguarding and as such form a vital part of adult safeguarding in Sunderland.

SSAB has a focus on Prevention, as this is a key priority that can have a positive impact on wider public 'keeping safe' issues as well as other safeguarding priorities.

SSAB will work collaboratively with the Domestic Abuse Board and relevant partnerships to ensure alignment of strategies, share intelligence, and promote early intervention and prevention approaches.

This includes ensuring professionals are equipped to identify and respond to DA and VAWG within safeguarding contexts, and that the voices of those affected inform policy and practice.

In this way, SSAB will embed consideration of Domestic Abuse (DA) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) within all safeguarding activity, recognising these as significant risks for adults with care and support needs.

### **We will measure the success of prevention activity by measuring the following...**

We will:

- Ensure that actions linked to the Prevention aims are included in SSAB's Work Programme
- Be assured that safeguarding in Sunderland is person-centred and outcomes-focussed, adhering to the principles of [Making Safeguarding Personal](#)
- Work in partnership to prevent abuse and neglect
- Respond to abuse and neglect in a timely and proportionate way
- Be committed to learning and improving, and sharing the learning across the partnership
- Put an emphasis on prevention in all multi-agency SSAB learning opportunities



## Link to other guidance: Professional Curiosity

Professional Curiosity is the capacity and communication skill to explore and understand what is happening with an individual and/or within a family. Professional curiosity was an issue picked up in SSAB's 'Alan' Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR), published in August 2021. As a result, SSAB produced Professional Curiosity Guidance (published on the [SSAB website](#)).

The Prevention element of the Strategic Delivery Plan should therefore be read and taken account of in conjunction with the Professional Curiosity Guidance, as safeguarding adults prevention activity will be more successful when a professionally curious approach is taken to interactions with individuals and their families, in order to maximise positive outcomes and also meets [Making Safeguarding Personal](#) principles.

## B. User engagement

We will:

- Champion the voice of the person and user engagement, in line with Making Safeguarding Personal principles
- Undertake consultation and co-production, and through this, people will have input into the development of policies and procedures and influence good practice, ensuring the voice of those with lived experience is heard
- Ensure that adults needing support with safeguarding can access this, including accessing relevant advocacy where appropriate
- Learn from feedback of those with lived experience

- Recognise the different needs and barriers to access, and aim to be inclusive in all aspects of safeguarding
- Seek evidence and assurance to demonstrate that people who use safeguarding services have been fully involved in what happens, following the principles of [Making Safeguarding Personal](#)
- Ensure actions taken are influenced and advised by the experience of people who have been or may be at risk of harm as well as those communities whose voice is seldom heard, including carers
- Ensure safeguarding approaches explicitly address the needs of inclusion health groups, such as those experiencing homelessness, asylum seekers, refugees, sex workers, and those with multiple and complex needs. These groups face disproportionate risks of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The Board will work with Public Health and specialist providers to take account of people's lived experience to embed trauma-informed, culturally competent, and accessible safeguarding practices.

### We will measure the success of user engagement by monitoring the following...

- Meaningful user engagement has been embedded at the heart of SSAB's safeguarding work, ensuring that people with lived experience have opportunities to shape policy, procedures, and practice. Through co-production and survey activities, their voices are reflected in strategic documents and service improvements, with participants reporting that they feel heard and valued

- Adults at risk are consistently offered safeguarding support and advocacy in line with statutory guidance. Feedback from those with lived experience is routinely gathered, analysed, and used to drive service improvements, with clear evidence of “You said, we did” responses
- Safeguarding services are inclusive and accessible, with materials available in appropriate formats and increased engagement from underrepresented groups. Staff are equipped through training to recognise and respond to diverse needs and barriers
- [Making Safeguarding Personal](#) principles are embedded across the partnership, with high levels of service user involvement and satisfaction. Targeted outreach ensures that seldom heard voices, including carers and communities at higher risk, influence decision-making and policy development. These efforts collectively ensure safeguarding is person-centred, equitable, and informed by those it seeks to protect
- Utilising the partnership to ensure information and key safeguarding messages are shared widely
- Working collaboratively across the Local Safeguarding Children’s Partnership, the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Community Safety Partnership on areas of risk which cross all three partnerships
- Effectively communicating and championing our good practice
- Enhancing communication and engagement with partners and providers who are not routinely engaged with the Board and Sub-Committees
- Promoting Safeguarding Adults key messages within our communities
- Ensuring safeguarding messages and materials are accessible to inclusion health groups, using plain language, multiple formats, and outreach through trusted community networks.

## C. Communication

We will communicate clearly and effectively to service users, partners and the public by:

- Building on and develop the SSAB’s Communication Strategy, ensuring it is effective and embedded across the partnership
- Ensuring effective, clear communication to workers, volunteers, service users and their carers and families
- Continuing to deliver annual Safeguarding Learning Week activity on a range of topical, engaging safeguarding topics, aimed at both professionals and the public

### We will measure the success of communication by monitoring the following...

- SSAB’s strengthened communication strategy and delivery methodology ensures that safeguarding messages are clear, accessible, and widely disseminated across the partnership and community. The Communication Strategy is regularly reviewed and is embedded across agencies, with SMART objectives and defined responsibilities, and is reviewed annually. Materials are accessible and well-understood by workers, volunteers, service users, carers, and families, as evidenced by high engagement and positive feedback. Materials are consulted on and wherever possible, they are co-produced

- Annual Safeguarding Learning Week is delivered successfully, with increasing participation and high satisfaction rates. Safeguarding messages are consistently shared across the partnership, reaching broad audiences through coordinated campaigns and digital platforms
- Collaborative communication with the Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership ensures alignment on cross-cutting issues, with joint campaigns and shared learning events
- Good practice is regularly highlighted and celebrated, with increased partner contributions and external recognition. Engagement with previously underrepresented partners and providers is improved, supported by targeted outreach and feedback mechanisms. Safeguarding messages are actively promoted within communities, leading to increased awareness, confidence in reporting concerns, and a rise in community-generated safeguarding referrals

## D. Multi-agency training

We will promote multi-agency training by:

- Continuing to provide consistent, high quality, effective multi-agency safeguarding training available to all sectors across the partnership. This should include, wherever possible, the voice of lived experience
- Continuing to develop training for front line practitioners that is guided by learning from reviews and enquiries, for example, using real-life case studies
- Producing/sharing relevant insights and guidance across our multi-agency partnership

- Collaborating with other partnership boards to identify any recurring themes, to develop and share approaches/material where learning can be applied more widely
- Reviewing the SSAB Training Strategy at regular intervals and embedding an effective workforce training approach into the SSAB's training offer, with particular focus on executive dysfunction, trauma-informed practice, and self-neglect
- Enhancing our multi-agency approach of sharing learning with front line practitioners

### We will measure the success of multi-agency training by monitoring the following...

- SSAB delivers a consistent, high-quality multi-agency safeguarding training offer that is inclusive, evidence-informed, and responsive to emerging themes. Training is well-received across all sectors, with lived experience used to inform training materials
- Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews, enquiries, and real-life case studies is incorporated into training to enhance practitioner confidence and improve safeguarding practice
- Collaborative working with the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership and Community Safety Partnership to ensure recurring themes are identified and addressed through training and shared resources
- Learning is actively shared with frontline practitioners through a range of resources, including 7-minute briefings, bulletins, peer-led sessions, and integration into supervision and team meetings, resulting in increased awareness and application of safeguarding principles across the partnership

## E. Data and intelligence

We will ensure that data and intelligence underpins our work by:

- Regularly revisiting the SSAB's Performance & Quality Assurance Strategic Framework and continuing to use it to guide quality assurance, audit and performance data-gathering activity
- Conducting regular case file audits on safeguarding themes identified from performance data, local issues and themes, and Safeguarding Adult Reviews and other learning reviews
- Conducting regular assurance exercises on safeguarding themes identified from performance data, local issues and themes, and as a follow-up to Safeguarding Adult Reviews and other learning reviews, to check Action Plan actions have been undertaken and that learning has been embedded across partner agencies
- Liaising with other bodies, e.g. Care Quality Commission (CQC) to identify good practice and ensure SSAB is operating as effectively as it can
- Ensuring SSAB and the wider partnership takes any relevant learning from the recent CQC inspection of Adult Social Care
- Strengthening safeguarding for inclusion health populations by receiving updates and assurance about the monitoring of risks and barriers to access. This information allows SSAB to support work to ensure pathways are inclusive and responsive to complex needs. This includes alignment with drug and alcohol strategies, homelessness strategies, asylum seeker support, and health inequalities workstreams

## We will measure the success of our use of data & intelligence by monitoring the following...

- SSAB has a robust and dynamic approach to performance and quality assurance through the Performance & Quality Assurance Strategic Framework, which is regularly revisited and clearly defines key performance indicators, audit cycles, and partner responsibilities. This framework actively guides the Board's quality assurance activities and is consistently used to monitor safeguarding effectiveness across the partnership
- Regular multi-agency case file audits are conducted on priority safeguarding themes identified through performance data, local intelligence, and learning from SARs. These audits result in SMART recommendations and measurable improvements in practice
- Assurance exercises are routinely undertaken to verify that SAR Action Plans are implemented and that learning is embedded across agencies. Findings are reported transparently through the SSAB's annual report, demonstrating accountability and impact
- SSAB maintains strong links with external bodies such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC), contributing to regional and national safeguarding networks and incorporating good practice into local guidance and training

## 10. Our local areas of focus

We will focus on our locally identified areas based on the data, intelligence and learning from previous years and actions in these areas will be delivered by our three Sub Committees. We will:

- Monitor and gain assurance on Homelessness including asylum seekers/refugees/immigrants within our communities and the services which support them
- Monitor self-neglect data and ensure strategies to tackle this are aligned across partner agencies
- Continue to promote mental capacity training, policies guidance and briefings to frontline staff
- Undertake horizon scanning to understand and respond to organisational changes that impact SSAB
- Focus on Safeguarding and Presentation of Younger Adults (up to 25 years) (linked to care experienced cases) to improve outcomes
- Work with our Public Health partners on their substance misuse (alcohol and drugs) strategies - adding value
- Work with our Public Health partners to ensure cohesion with Domestic Abuse/Violence Against Women & Girls (DA/VAWG) Strategy principle and priorities

- Continue to monitor the outcomes from our independent providers' market and seek assurance on the support which is provided to the market
- Respond appropriately to the changing demographics in Sunderland and ensure the safeguarding polices and processes are accessible for everyone

## 11. Conclusion

We will:

- Learn from implementation of our strategic and local priorities and continue to share good practice
- Drive our continuous improvement and monitor any emerging risks through the work of our Sub Committees
- Continue to revisit this Strategic Delivery Plan annually, to ensure the SSAB priorities are aligned with the themes that emerge from local data and intelligence, service user & public feedback, and Safeguarding Adult Reviews and other learning reviews



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For safeguarding adults resources please visit:  
[www.sunderlandsab.org.uk](http://www.sunderlandsab.org.uk)

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