

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

2022 - 2024

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Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. The Care Act	3
3. Key Principles	3
4. Local Context	4
5. What is the Quality Assurance Framework?	5
6. Data and Information	5
7. Source of Information	6
8. The Quality Assurance Framework	7
9. Roles and Responsibilities	8
Appendix I - Quality Assurance Self-Assessment Tool	9-10

1. Introduction

This framework applies to all Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB¹) member organisations. Any organisation in Northamptonshire may utilise the partner self-audit tool by agreement with NSAB.

NSAB's Quality & Performance (Q&P) Sub Group has developed the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) to give assurance that the Board² and its partner agencies demonstrate that effective systems, structures and processes are in place to improve outcomes, and provide evidence that they are supporting adults at risk of abuse.

The QAF is a key mechanism by which NSAB holds local agencies to account for their safeguarding arrangements including prevention risk management. NSAB has a duty to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding and promote the safety and wellbeing of adults at risk in the County, including effective multi-agency working to contribute towards achieving better outcomes for adults at risk and prevent harm to those most at risk.

2. The Care Act 2014

Section 43(3) of the Care Act 2014 places a statutory responsibility on the Local Authority to establish a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) to co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of what each of its member agencies do to help and protect individuals from abuse and harm.

2.1 [The Care and Support Statutory Guidance](#) (DH, October 2014) states Safeguarding Adults Boards should:

- Establish ways of analysing and interrogating data on safeguarding notifications that increase the SAB's understanding of the prevalence of abuse and neglect locally to build up a picture over time.
- Establish how it will hold partners to account and gain assurance of the effectiveness of the partners safeguarding arrangements.
- Determine its arrangements for peer review and self-audit.
- Evidence how NSAB have challenged agencies and held each another to account.

2.1 Good practice guidance suggests a performance or quality assurance framework provides a robust mechanism by which SABs obtains assurance from agencies that these responsibilities and evaluate whether systems are working effectively to help and protect adults from abuse and neglect.

3. Key Principles

3.1 As outlined in the Care Act 2014, good quality safeguarding arrangements are underpinned by six key principles outlined in the table below and are mirrored in NSAB's Strategic Plan:

Key Principle	Description	What this means to the people who live in Northamptonshire
Empowerment	People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.	"I am asked what I want as the outcomes from the safeguarding process and these directly inform what happens."
Prevention	It is better to take action before harm occurs.	"I receive clear and simple information about what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and what I can do to seek help."
Proportionality	The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.	"I am sure that the professionals will work in my best interests, as I see them and they will only get involved as much as needed."
Protection	Support and representation for those in greatest need.	"I get help and support to report abuse and neglect. I get help so that I am able to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which I want."
Partnership	Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.	"I know that staff treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. I am confident that professionals will work together and with me to get the best result for me."
Accountability	Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.	"I understand the role of everyone involved in my life and so do they."

¹ NSAB refers to the organisations that are working together within the partnership.

² The Board are a group of senior officers and directors who make up the Strategic Board membership.

3.2 The NSAB Quality Assurance Framework is also underpinned by the following local principles:

- **Openness and transparency:** Each agency within NSAB is likely to know where good practice, areas for development and risks are within in its own organisation. NSAB needs to be assured that agencies have identified and acted upon potential risks. All partners should therefore share their agency's good practice, development and risks so that the Board can agree how risk can be mitigated, whether by single agency or multi-agency response and action.
- **Outcomes:** In line with Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) we need to agree what degree our safeguarding arrangements deliver what is important to adults at risk, and the outcomes they want to achieve. Good quality safeguarding arrangements should be person-centred, outcome-based and make a positive difference.
- **Triangulation:** Different qualitative and quantitative information sources should be compared and contrasted to verify the data and validate any conclusions being drawn. This will enable the Board to understand whether arrangements are effective and making a positive difference.

4. Local Context

4.1 NSAB is a group of statutory, private and voluntary organisations who work together to protect the most vulnerable members of the community. NSAB provides strategic leadership for safeguarding arrangements and is committed to partnership working.

NSAB assures itself that:

- Local safeguarding arrangements are in place as defined by the Care Act 2014 statutory guidance.
- Safeguarding practice is person-centred and outcome focused.
- Agencies are working collaboratively to prevent abuse.
- Agencies are providing a timely and proportionate response when abuse has occurred.
- Safeguarding practice is improving the quality of life of adults in the county.

4.2 The work of the Quality & Performance Sub Group will focus its activities on the four components of the Quality Quadrant below:



5. What is the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)?

5.1 In order to measure and seek assurance that safeguarding arrangements in Northamptonshire are effective, the QAF seeks to answer three key questions:

1. Are adults at risk being kept safe?
2. Are partners working well together to respond to safeguarding concerns?
3. Do safeguarding arrangements improve outcomes for adults at risk?

5.2 Effective quality assurance is essential if we are to improve the quality and application of practice to ensure safeguarding outcomes for adults, and to contribute to a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

5.3 The QAF evidences whether safeguarding practice is being undertaken and enables the use of information and data to provide greater knowledge and effectiveness.

5.4 A QAF consists of a programme of activity, assessment and reporting into the quality and effectiveness of systems and processes. It enables the Board to triangulate a variety of information, about quantity and quality from different sources to objectively evaluate the effectiveness of arrangements, rather than relying on a single means of assessment.

5.5 Northamptonshire's QAF sits alongside NSAB's Risk Register, Safeguarding Adults Review Protocol and Dashboard (business intelligence) as part of a wider approach to quality and performance. It utilises mechanisms for sharing learning. The QAF helps NSAB gain assurance that single and multi-agency systems, processes and practice are effective in improving outcomes and experience in the context of safeguarding adults.

5.6 The QAF will be used to:

- Evidence and gain assurance that safeguarding arrangements in Northamptonshire are effective.
- Identify priorities and make decisions on how we improve safeguarding services.
- Hold local agencies to account for their safeguarding work and arrangements.

5.7 Across the partnership, the QAF will facilitate:

- Quarterly monitoring of multi-agency performance data covering prevalence and nature of abuse, activity and effectiveness of responses, and making safeguarding personal.
- Regularly gather feedback from individuals on their experience of safeguarding and whether it made a difference to their wellbeing.
- Gap analysis of Board and multi-agency arrangements against statutory responsibilities and best practice.
- Self-assessment of safeguarding arrangements in individual member agencies, to gain assurance that areas are effective, and discuss how to take action on areas requiring improvement.

5.8 Gathering and triangulating this quality intelligence will support NSAB:

- Gain a holistic view of safeguarding arrangements to recognise good practice and identify areas for improvement.
- Develop a culture of openness and transparency across the partnership regarding risk and areas that require improvement.
- Identify priorities to feed into the Board Strategic Plan and individual agency action plans to help achieve and evidence continuous improvement over time.

6. Data and Information

6.1 There are three types of performance information/measures:

- **Quantitative information** - To help inform 'What we do', and answer 'How much/how many?'
- **Qualitative information** – Tells us more about 'How well we are doing, to support the functioning of the organisation and the quality of what was done.'
- **Outcome information** - Tells us 'What difference we have made' through services, strategies and interventions, to support the lives of adults at risk.

- 6.2 Traditionally, quality assurance in safeguarding has focused largely on quantitative information, not qualitative or outcome focused results. The challenge is to increase the proportion of outcomes information.
- 6.3 In line with the NSAB Strategic Plan, where possible, the Sub Group will seek support from Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire to seek the views from service users and carers on specific matters relating to the plan.

7. Source of information

- 7.1 Information sharing will be in line with Data Protection and GDPR regulations, and any local agreements, and will come from the following sources:
 - Organisational performance/activity data.
 - Case records.
 - Experiences of frontline staff and managers.
 - Experiences of customers/patients/carers/family/advocates.
- 7.2 Organisational performance/activity data and case records have been the main sources of information in safeguarding quality assurance. It is recognised that these are important and valuable sources to gain a picture of what is really happening, but it is also important to capture the experience of customers/patients/carers/family/advocates together with experiences of frontline staff and managers.
- 7.3 All partner organisations will need to consider how they collate quantitative, qualitative and outcome-based information from the above sources to inform improvement activities in respect of their safeguarding practice.
- 7.4 A clear, comprehensive range of organisational performance and activity information/data supports an understanding of effective safeguarding practice, and is vital to secure continuous improvement and delivery of high-quality services.
- 7.5 Case records held by an organisation are a rich source of information. Case record ‘auditing’ involves the systematic analysis of records by staff with relevant professional expertise. Auditing a sufficient case sample provides an overall picture of good practice and areas for improvement.
- 7.6 Obtaining the views of adults at risk or their carers in safeguarding work is underdeveloped because it is hard to do, especially where the case is of complex nature. It’s important to know how adults and carers feel they are being treated by professionals and the agencies they interact with. If their experience is negative, this may have an adverse impact on outcomes. Remember to use an MSP approach to support adults’ outcomes.
- 7.7 Staff and frontline managers will know about the quality and impact of their agency’s services, and those of partner agencies they work with. Nationally, Safeguarding Adult Reviews have highlighted a gap in terms of policy, procedure and practice.

In order to support good practice and learning, it is important to have an effective feedback mechanism from frontline staff so that improvements can be identified and acted upon by senior management and those with governance responsibilities.

8. The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

There are 12 elements to the QAF:

1. **NSAB Self-Assessment Tool** - measures the strategic and organisational arrangements to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of adults at risk. This tool will provide all organisations in the county with a consistent framework to assess, monitor and improve their safeguarding adult arrangements and can be used by a wide range of organisations.
2. **Data/Performance** – a range of data is required from partner agencies to inform quality indicators/ data/performance. The Board aims to use information to understand the prevalence of abuse/neglect, highlight themes and trends in safeguarding activity, and identify issues that need addressing in safeguarding arrangements. The information will cover trends in reported abuse and partnership working to respond to safeguarding concerns, and outcomes. As far as possible, data from across the partnership that is already collected and used by individual agency management teams to monitor the effectiveness of their individual safeguarding arrangements, will be utilised.
3. **Duty of Candour** – The QAF places a duty of candour on all partner agencies. In practice, this means there is an expectation that all partner agencies will notify the Board of any issues of concern such as poor regulatory inspection outcome, serious incidents, issues that might attract media attention, safeguarding red risks on their organisations risk register etc.
4. **User Experience** – All partner agencies should have processes in place to understand the service user experience, and the experience of the safeguarding adults' process. This framework places a duty on agencies to ascertain people's safeguarding experience and report them to the Board, via the Communication & Engagement Sub Group, to inform the work of the Board.
5. **Training/Competency** – NSAB needs assurance that safeguarding training is sufficient, positively impacts on care and practice, and in turn improves positive outcomes for adults with care and support needs. Staff working with adults should be skilled, competent and confident. The Learning & Development Sub Group will lead on this area of work.
6. **Single Agency Audits** – Each partner agency must have in place auditing arrangements to assess the quality of their day to day safeguarding adults' work. The Quality & Performance Sub Group will ask to review such arrangements or ask partners to share findings on an annual basis.
7. **Multi-Agency Case Audits** – The Quality & Performance Sub Group will provide a quality assurance audit programme, and will undertake themed audits, as proposed in the programme.
8. **Complaints** – Each partner agency must have in place arrangements for monitoring complaints to ensure safeguarding issues are identified and responded to early and quickly. A review of complaints will be reviewed by the Quality & Performance Sub Group.
9. **Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SAR)** – There are lessons to be learned from local and national cases to assist professionals to work together to safeguard adults at risk. Whilst the SAR Sub Group oversees the process, the Quality & Performance Sub Group will monitor progress against action plans, and seek assurance that learning has been embedded in practice, highlighting any issues to the SAR Group Sub.
10. **Multi-Agency Policies & Procedures** – A range of multi-agency policies and procedures will be developed by the Quality & Performance Sub Group to help inform effective practice. Policies and Procedures will be reviewed in a timely manner, or when there are changes to legislation.
11. **Annual Report** – With the support of the Quality & Performance Sub Group, NSAB will publish an annual report each year to highlight its achievements in line with objectives, and will include the findings of any Safeguarding Adults Reviews concluded in that year.
12. **Inspections** – The Quality & Performance will prepare for any inspections including that of the Local Authorities by the Care Quality Commission.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Individual agencies are responsible for:

- Their own quality assurance activity in relation to safeguarding.
- Supplying information and data as required by this framework.
- Ensuring appropriate representation on the Q&P Sub Group.
- Participating in single and multi-agency audit activity as defined by the Q&P Sub Group.
- Notifying NSAB on any areas of concern, poor regulatory inspection outcome with regards safeguarding.
- Request a Safeguarding Adult Review, as appropriate.
- Participate, where necessary, in SARs.

Quality & Performance (Q&P) Sub Group

The Q&P Sub Group is responsible for the co-ordination and management of the QAF and will provide reports including any improvements made as a result of quality assurance activity conducted by partner agencies and through multi-agency processes.

Other NSAB Sub Groups

Each of the Sub Groups has a different remit with the consistent theme of understanding and achieving better outcomes for adults at risk.

Each Sub Group is expected to work within this Quality Assurance Framework to:

- Provide the Q&P Sub Group with data, information and reports as required.
- Respond to and receive requests from the Q&P Sub Group.
- Participate in audits as directed by the Q&P Sub Group.

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB)

The Board oversees the effectiveness of the arrangements made by individual agencies and the wider partnership to safeguard adults from abuse, and is responsible for holding to account organisations on their performance to ensure adults at risk are kept safer in the county of Northamptonshire.

The Board will:

- Scrutinise agreed performance information including the Dashboard.
- Organise and co-ordinate annual development days with a focus on quality assurance.
- Work effectively with other Partnership Boards, such as Northamptonshire Childrens Partnership, Health & Wellbeing Board, Integrated Care Partnership Board, to ensure adults at risk are safeguarded from abuse and harm and their wellbeing is promoted.
- In accordance with the provisions of the Care Act, publish strategic plan, and an annual report, and provide analysis of the effectiveness of safeguarding within the county. The report will highlight good practice and evidence where improvements can be made.
- Ensure the NSAB Quality Framework informs the NSAB Strategic Plan.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD - SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Audit of arrangements in individual organisations to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of adults with care and support needs.

1. Introduction

The aim of the self-assessment audit is to provide all organisations with a consistent framework to assess monitor and/or improve their Safeguarding Adults arrangements. In turn, this will support NSAB to gain assurance that there is effective safeguarding practice in place across the county. The framework has been developed so it can be used by a wide range of organisations from varying perspectives and to varying degrees to help identify:

- Strengths - in order that good practice can be shared.
- Areas for improvement where organisations can work together with support from the NSAB.
- Single agency issues that need to be addressed by NSAB.
- Multi-agency issues that may need to be addressed by NSAB.

The self-assessment audit should also be used to help organisations to improve and strengthen their own arrangements for safeguarding adults. An open and honest approach is encouraged to enable the organisation to get maximum benefit from the process. It is suggested a lead officer is identified for the organisation to coordinate the self-assessment.

The Quality and Performance Sub Group review the self-assessment tool within their work planning to ensure it is up to date with legislation.

Timeframe – 2-Year Rolling Programme

What	Who	When
Members complete the NSAB Self-Assessment Audit and submit to the Business Office.	All members	Year 1 Q3
Completed self-assessment audits findings discussed at the NSAB Quality & Performance Sub Group.	Quality & Performance Sub Group	Year 1 Q4
NSAB's strategic plan will be reviewed at the annual development session and tabled at the next Strategic Safeguarding Adults Board meeting.	NSAB Strategic Board	Year 1 Q4
Partnership analysis (trends, patterns and relevant issues) will inform NSAB's Strategic Plan.	Business Office	Year 1 Q4
Members should include the NSAB self-assessment action plan in their own agency's quality assurance activities to ensure any outstanding actions/RAG ratings are progressed.	All members	Ongoing
Where there are outstanding points from the previous self-assessment audit and action plan, members will provide an annual progress report on their agency's self-assessment action plan to the Quality & Performance Sub Group.	All members	Year 2 Q3
The self-assessment audit process starts again.	All members	Year 1 Q3

2. Completing the Self-Assessment Audit

All partner agencies represented on NSAB will be asked to complete the self-assessment audit as part of a rolling 2-year programme. Organisations are required to make a judgement as to how well each question is being achieved based on the following RAG rating:

RED rating	Your organisation does not meet this requirement
AMBER rating	Your requirement is met in part but there may be pockets of good practice and areas for improvement
GREEN rating	Your organisation meets the requirement consistently across the organisation
BLUE rating	The action is completed
PURPLE rating	Not yet started

For each requirement, the following should be identified:

- What have you found that is good about your organisation's approach to Safeguarding Adults that you could share across your organisation and with partners.
- What have you found that identifies that there is room for improvement or gives you cause for concern - including evidence from Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR), provider level concerns, serious incident investigation or other reviews, as appropriate.

The self-assessment should be a realistic, proportionate working document for improvement. You should consider your own internal governance arrangements including who is going to monitor improvement?

After organisations have completed the self-assessment the NSAB Independent Scrutineer and Business Manager will review so that the following can be identified from the partnership:

- Individual and/or collective strengths.
- Common areas for improvement where organisations can work together with support from the Board.
- Single agency issues that need to be addressed.
- Partnership issues that may need to be addressed by the Board.
- Issues that need to inform the Board's Strategic Plan.

3. Next Steps

Once the NSAB officers have had the opportunity to review the self-assessment audits, a review and challenge session will be held with each organisation to enable a more robust conversation about the findings to help identify good practice and areas for improvement. This may also necessitate a multi-agency response and support by the Sub Group in order to progress and complete actions. Where appropriate, issues or themes could be considered/recommended for further partnership education and learning.