

Somerset Safeguarding Children Board Communications Strategy 2016 – 2017



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Contents

Introduction	3
Governance	3
Background	3
What does this Strategy aim to facilitate?	4
Target Audiences	5
Key Messages	5
What will be communicated to each audience?	5
How and where will the SSCB communicate?	7
Media Protocol	8
Resourcing	10
Implementing, Reviewing and Monitoring this Strategy	10
Appendix 1 – Media Enquiry flow diagram	11
Appendix 2 – SSCB Press Release Format	12

Introduction

This document sets out the Communications Strategy for the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB).

This is a new strategy to raise public awareness of child safeguarding and encourage reporting of potential harm.

It is also to raise awareness of the role of the SSCB and improve communication between partner agencies, the broader community and children, young people and families.

Somerset LSCB will be rebranding itself and its new web site (<http://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/>) will be a 'shop window' upon the work of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board and its independent Chair, Sally Halls.

Governance

This strategy will be led by the business objectives of the SSCB, so changes may be required as business priorities change.

Background

Everybody has a responsibility to ensure that children and young people are safe and well.

Section.13 of the Children act (2004) requires that every local authority area must have an LSCB and it stipulates the organisations and individuals (other than the local authority) that should be represented on LSCBs.

The LSCB has a range of roles and statutory functions, including developing local safeguarding policies and procedures and scrutinising local arrangements

Section.14 of the Children act (2004) sets out the objectives of LSCBs, which are:

- Coordinate what is done by each member (individual or agency) of the LSCB in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people within the local authority area.
- Ensure that what is done by each board member (individual or agency) is effective and hold member agencies to account when it is not.

In broad terms, the functions of LSCB's including SSCB are as follows:

1. Develop policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people relating to:
 - a. Action to be taken when there are concerns about a child's safety/welfare (including thresholds for intervention).
 - b. Recruitment, supervision and training of those working with children and young people.
2. Communicating and promoting the need to safeguard children and young people (including how this can be done effectively).
3. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Local Authority and Partners (individually and collectively) and advising on ways to improve.
4. Input to planning of services for children and young people within the Local Authority area.
5. Undertaking serious case reviews and facilitating learning from such reviews.
6. Collecting and analysing information about child deaths.

LSCBs also have a strong role to play in effective sharing of information between and within organisations and addressing any barriers to this.

Good and effective communication is essential in order for Somerset LSCB to deliver its statutory objectives and functions.

This strategy aims to outline how we propose to use communications activities and tools to achieve our objectives.

What does this Strategy aim to facilitate?

1. Robust protocol for communications methods between all board members and partners
 - Improved Information sharing
 - Improved understanding of the need to and benefits of working collaboratively
2. Good awareness of SSCB functions and responsibilities.
 - Staff and practitioners have an improved understanding of the role of the SSCB
 - Children and young people, their families, carers and the general public have an improved understanding of the role of SSCB
3. Improved information sharing between partner agencies
 - Learning from Serious Case Reviews is effectively communicated to and within partner agencies
 - Ensuring that learning is incorporated into agencies best practice reviews, training and Quality Assurance reviews.
4. Broad awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) amongst all target audiences.
 - Frontline professionals know and understand what CSE is, how to recognise the signs and what support is available and how to access that support

- Children and young people, their parents/carers and the general public understand what CSE is, the signs and how to access help
5. To raise awareness around private arrangements for fostering to:
 - Broaden appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering arrangements
 - Signpost practitioners, the general public and Children and Young People to where they can get advice
 - Promote early notification requirements and ensure practitioners understand their role in relation to notifying the Local Authority.

Target Audiences

1. All board partners, agencies and practitioners
2. Children and Young People
3. Parents, carers and families
4. The third sector – voluntary, faith, community

Key Messages

- Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility
- SSCB aims to ensure effective partnership working between all agencies working with Children and Young People
- SSCB coordinates children's safeguarding and welfare promotion across all agencies within the Local Authority area.
- SSCB is not the first port of call to make a referral or discuss concerns about a child, but can provide general safeguarding information to professionals and the public

What will be communicated to each audience?

Target Audience – Everyone

- What to do if you have concerns about a child
- What safeguarding is
- Safeguarding is the responsibility of everybody within the community
- A basic understanding of the role of the SSCB and how to access it
- Any key changes in safeguarding and what these mean
- Raising awareness of CSE and Hidden Harm (business priorities in 2016)

Target Audience – Board Partners and Practitioners

- What to do if you have concerns about a child
- What a referral is

- The role of the SSCB and how to contact them
- Your safeguarding responsibilities
- Your agency's responsibilities
- Learning and recommendations from Serious Case Reviews
- SSCB multi-agency training strategy and plan (including conferences and events)
- What good safeguarding practice looks like and how to improve it
- Child protection procedures and policy/procedure updates
- Safe staff and volunteer recruitment
- Dealing with allegations made against staff/volunteers appropriately
- Local issues affecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people within the Local Authority area
- The need for effective information sharing, and how to do this
- The need for and benefits of effective partnership/collaborative working across all agencies
- Threshold Guidance – What it is and how to use it
- What your responsibilities are in relation to private fostering arrangements

Target Audience - Children and Young People

- What to do if you have concerns about yourself or a child/young person you know
- What safeguarding is and what it means to you
- How to stay safe
- What CSE is, what the signs are and how to get support for yourself or a child/young person you know
- How to tell us about issues affecting your safety
- What child protection is and what it means to you
- What private fostering is and what it means to you

Target Audience – Parents, Carers and Families

- What to do if you have concerns about a child/young person
- What CSE is, the signs and how to report your concerns
- How to protect your children
- How to provide safe parenting and access resources
- The role of the SSCB
- Action being taken to ensure children and young people are kept safe nationally and locally
- What child protection is and what it means to you
- What private fostering is and your responsibility to notify the local authority if you are privately fostering a child/young person.

The SSCB will ensure that other key Somerset forums are kept updated, such as the Adults Safeguarding Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Community Safety Partnership and the Somerset Children’s Trust. The SSCB Independent Chair Business Manager and SSCB Community Lay Members will make themselves available to attend other forums and board meetings to discuss their role and the work of the SSCB as appropriate.

How and where will the SSCB communicate?

Methods currently utilised:

- **E-Newsletter**
 - Issued quarterly, containing news and links to reports relevant to partner agencies (including schools and early years settings)
- **Things You Should Know (TUSK) – e-Learning Bulletin**
 - This is an informative bulletin sent out to practitioners across the partnership (including schools and early years settings) to share key messages and learning from serious case reviews and other learning reviews.
- **Website**
 - A central hub of information documents, links, policies and procedures for all target audiences
- **Annual Report**
- **LSCB Events/Conferences**
- **Multi-Agency Training**
- **Twitter**
 - Primarily used to convey messages and engage with multi-agency practitioners/professionals, but open for public viewing
- **Press Releases** (using partner Press Offices as appropriate)

Additional planned communications methods:

- **Social Media**
 - Facebook – Primarily aimed at parents/carers and general public
 - Instagram – Primarily aimed at Children and Young People
- **Leaflets**
- **Posters**

Media Protocol

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 required 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 SSCB should be undertaken by the Independent Chair or a designated other where appropriate.

In the event of a Safeguarding Children Review, all communication should be directed to the Independent Chair of the SSCB before any press releases are made.

Agencies should avoid responding independently and all press releases should be agreed by the Independent Chair to ensure a consistent response is delivered.

Partner agencies must ensure that any public communication does not negatively impact on another partner agency wherever possible.

Dealing with media enquiries

Much of the work undertaken by SSCB partner agencies is confidential and this confidentiality is fundamental. It is the intention of the SSCB to be open and transparent about its work, whilst protecting the personal details of Children, Young People and their Families.

From time to time issues may arise that are of interest to the media. These issues may be of a negative nature and may have a damaging impact on the reputation of the SSCB and of partner agencies.

If you receive an enquiry relating to Safeguarding, your Press Office and the SSCB Business Manager should be notified immediately.

If the enquiry relates specifically to the SSCB, the response should come directly from the SSCB Chair and signed off by the SSCB Executive. Where possible, responses should be sent to the SSCB Executive *before* it is sent to the journalist. However, media deadlines means it is not always possible to wait for a response from each organisation before it is submitted, although every effort should be made for this to happen.

The SSCB commits to ensuring joint responses to media enquiries wherever possible. This should be established at the initial contact stage. All relevant staff should be alerted to this protocol. (Appendix 1)

Proactive media / communications activity

The SSCB will issue proactive information to the media, as well as to staff, the public and other stakeholders. All SSCB communications will be joint communications with partnership approval. All proactive activity will be planned jointly and in advance by the SSCB.

All proactive safeguarding related information issued directly by any one organisation in the SSCB will be agreed by the SSCB Executive before it is sent to the media.

Speaking to the Press

When an immediate media response is required, this will be the responsibility of the Chair of the Board or whomever they designate this to.

The Chair will have authority to talk to the media on all Board matters. In the absence of the Chair, this role will be taken on by the Deputy Chair.

The Chair will undertake the role of 'talking head' for the SSCB. This will not be undertaken by any other person without prior agreement from the Chair.

Information will only be shared where all agencies are happy for that information to be broadcast or published.

Board members will not make any 'off the record' comments to the media.

Drafting and Publishing of Press Releases

Any press releases will be drafted by the Chair and Business Manager in collaboration with press officers from relevant agencies.

The press release template (Appendix 2) will be used for all statements.

Communicating following a Serious Case Review

The SSCB Chair should be the only representative who will speak to the media about a Serious Case (SCR) and any actions following that review on behalf of the partnership.

It is important to note that any press release will only be made once the SCR has been completed and published. If a media request for a statement is received prior to completion of a review, the SSCB will provide a holding statement on the case.

It is important that the families of those who have suffered the death of a relative or whose relative has been subject of a SCR is kept informed about the SCR process. The health/social care professionals, who would have been involved with the family before and at the time of the incident(s) that resulted in a SCR, may be best placed to make informed and professional judgements about the frequency and method of communicating information to the relatives and passing back information to colleagues.

Resourcing

The SSCB is funded through the partner agencies that make up its membership. The SSCB has an annual budget, and additional funding may be sought from partner agencies for specific projects that have not been identified within the business plan.

We are committed to ensuring that the most cost effective method of communication is used at all times, and utilising existing channels within partner agencies wherever possible.

Implementing, Reviewing and Monitoring this Strategy

This is a rolling campaign which will be monitored by a communications group set up through the LSCB.

Appendix 1

Media Enquiry Flow Diagram



