



## **Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership**

### **1. Background**

1.1 This document sets out how Somerset is responding to the new safeguarding children partnership arrangements which replace the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB), as required by 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018).

1.2 The partnership is known as the 'Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership' (SSCP) and will be coterminous with the Somerset local authority area.

1.3 The three lead safeguarding partners are as follows:

- Avon and Somerset Constabulary: nominated officer – Mike Prior, Superintendent for Neighbourhoods and Partnerships for Somerset
- Somerset County Council: nominated officer – Julian Wooster, Director of Children's Services
- Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group: nominated officer – Sandra Corry, Director of Quality and Nursing

1.4 The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership builds on a long history of partnership working in Somerset to promote the welfare of all Somerset children and to ensure that they are effectively safeguarded.

### **2. Geographical area**

2.1 The new arrangements apply to the area defined by the Somerset County Council Local Authority boundary. Further information regarding children and young people

is available via the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which is focused on vulnerable children and young people in Somerset.

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/files/JSNA%20Summary%202017-18.pdf>

### **3. Leadership arrangements**

3.1. The Executive for the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership is comprised of the three key safeguarding partners. They work in partnership to fulfil their statutory duties as set out in the 'Children and Social Work Act' (2017) and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018). Sections 16-23 of the Children and Social Work Act (2017) set out a duty on the three key partners to make arrangements with other partners to work together to protect and safeguard children in the local area, and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018), stipulates the 'shared and equal duty' of partners 'to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area'.

3.2 The Executive holds responsibility for wider duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under Section 11 of 'The Children Act' (2004). It will also ensure that duties placed on local authorities under Section 10 of 'The Children Act' (2004) to make arrangements to promote co-operation between the authority, relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate, are carried out.

3.3 At an Executive level, the three safeguarding partners will:

- 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 (against the agreed partnership contribution formula).
- Take ownership of the strategic plan, budget, twelve-monthly report and risk register.

3.4 Accountability for safeguarding children lies with the Chief Constable, Avon and Somerset Constabulary, the Chief Executive Officer, Somerset County Council, and the Chief Accountable Officer, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, who have delegated responsibility to the three named safeguarding partners.

3.5 Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership activity will be reported within Somerset via a twelve-monthly report to the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board. A structure chart is shown in Appendix 1.

3.6 Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership will engage with relevant agencies through a Partnership Forum (*working title*) which will have a focus on themed learning, as priorities and areas for development arise across the partnership. The Partnership Forum will be one of a range of methods for relevant agencies to engage with the safeguarding arrangements which include, but are not limited to, opportunities for digital engagement, safeguarding children bulletins, and scrutiny activity.

#### **4. Relevant agencies**

4.1 Relevant agencies are 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' (2018). Relevant agencies also include those services commissioned by partners to provide services to children, young people and families

These organisations have been selected as relevant agencies given the key strategic and operational insight they provide to the work of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

See over.

Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust/ Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
National Probation Service	Community Rehabilitation Company
Further education and alternative education providers	Early years providers
Children's residential homes including private providers	CAFCASS
Local charities	Sport and leisure organisations
Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, Somerset West and Taunton District Council	

#### 4.2 Regional and national organisations which also constitute relevant agencies:

South West Ambulance Trust	Devon Doctors and Care UK
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue	Social housing providers – Aster Group, Mendip YMCA, Curo Group, Yarlington Housing Group, LiveWest, Magna Housing, SHAL Housing
Independent fostering agencies	NHS England
Religious organisations	British Transport Police

In line with statutory guidance, the three key safeguarding partners note the option to co-opt representatives from other agencies/organisations as the partnership develops or the need arises from particular areas of partnership work. The list of locally selected relevant agencies may therefore change over time to reflect those present in the local area, and other opportunities explored to strengthen the partnership.

4.3 Engagement of schools and educational settings: Schools and educational settings, including early years (Section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006), are vital

safeguarding partners. The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership builds on the strong relationships with schools, colleges and early years settings and has established an Education Safeguarding Partnership to ensure greater leadership and strong communication between education and the wider partnership. The further focus of the Education Safeguarding Partnership is on how educational settings contribute to making the voices of children and young people heard within an educational safeguarding context.

4.4 Engagement of health: The existing strong relationships with health partners are reinforced through a Health Safeguarding Partnership, which builds on the work undertaken by the previous Health Advisory Group. This is led and chaired by Clinical Commissioning Group Designated Safeguarding professionals.

The Health Safeguarding Partnership provides safeguarding children leadership to Somerset's health safeguarding 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.

4.5 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.

4.6 In addition, in having oversight of the Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and Families (2019-2022), the partnership has a clear direction and works together on shared priorities, in order to make the necessary changes to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in Somerset. By so doing, partners can collectively achieve Section 10 of 'The Children Act' (2004) which places a 'duty to cooperate' on relevant agencies with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority area.

4.7 At the level of subgroup delivery activity, relevant agencies and wider partners are expected to:

- Ensure appropriate seniority of representation, attendance and commitment to the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership subgroups.
- Share the responsibility of ensuring that the Business Plan and Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and Families (2019-2022) are delivered.
- Ensure that policies are in place which are compliant with partnership arrangements to safeguard children and young people.

- Promote the voice of the child to inform local safeguarding children arrangements.
- Attend and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding children training.
- Act as a channel of communication for proactive dissemination of information and learning within agency/sector (and beyond as appropriate).
- Ensure, as part of the Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, that single and multi-agency action plans are implemented in a timely manner.
- Make arrangements for financial or 'in-kind' contributions to the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- Provide professional challenge and act as critical friends, as appropriate.

## **5. Wider partnership engagement**

5.1 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).

5.2 Engagement of residential homes: All residential homes for children within Somerset, including those provided by Somerset County 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.

5.3 Engagement of youth custody establishments: There are no youth custody establishments within Somerset's boundaries. However, youth custody establishments exist within the Avon and Somerset Constabulary boundaries. The three key safeguarding partners will seek assurance from other safeguarding partnerships within the region that measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of children are robust, including children under the care of other local authorities who are placed in Somerset.

5.4 Community (lay) members will be co-opted as required and have a role to play in the Partnership Forum and as independent scrutineers.

5.5 The Partnership Forum is a key part of local arrangements in Somerset to engage and connect all partners across the workforce. Through the Partnership Forum, partners across the wider workforce are invited to:

- Attend themed events to strengthen the partnership and proactively disseminate learning across agency and sector.
- Promote the voice of the child to inform local safeguarding children arrangements.

Appendix 2 shows a diagram of partnership engagement.

## **6. Involvement of children and young people**

6.1 The partnership will make use of existing structures to ensure that the voices of children, young people and families are heard. These include:

- In Care and Leaving Care Councils
- National UK Youth Parliament
- The Unstoppables
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Participation Group

6.2 The partnership will explore other opportunities to engage with wider children and young people's population in Somerset. Young people will also be co-opted on to the new safeguarding children arrangements as appropriate.

6.3 The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership works to the refreshed Participation Strategy (2019-2022).

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/somerset-childrens-trust/>

The guiding principles of the strategy are that:

- All children and young people have the right to be heard and have their views valued and acted upon.
- All Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership members undertake to involve children and young people at all levels in shaping their services, and acknowledge that this enhances the quality of services provided and creates services that people want and need.
- Appropriate feedback is given to children, young people and their families, in a timely fashion, about their feedback has had upon the services delivered.

6.4 Through consultation on the Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and their Families (2019-2022), children and young people have said that they wish to hold partners to account for keeping children safe in Somerset through an annual face-to-face meeting.

## **7. Scrutiny arrangements**

7.1 Independent Scrutiny: Arrangements are being developed to secure sufficient challenge and independence in the new safeguarding partnership.

7.2 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. Partnership-wide scrutiny and quality assurance arrangements will ensure that the new arrangements for safeguarding children are robust and satisfy the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018) statutory guidance. Local scrutiny activity will include, but not be limited to, multi-agency audits, Section 11 audits, peer reviews and a twelve-monthly report. In addition, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018) stipulates the need for independent scrutiny which will be provided both by local and regional peer review and by engagement of independent scrutineers.

7.3 The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership will focus on learning as its outcome and scrutiny activity will be conducted in the spirit of positive improvement. A systemic approach will be taken to understanding, analysing and acting on learning across the partnership. Somerset uses tools such as appreciative inquiry to draw out evidence-based good practice.

7.4 The lived experience of children and young people in a multi-agency context will be 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.

7.5 Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership arrangements will also be scrutinised through the three key partners' organisational scrutiny functions to ensure accountability at the level of Chief Executive (Somerset County Council), Chief Operating Officer (Clinical Commissioning Group), and Chief Constable (Avon and Somerset Constabulary).

7.5 Further detail regarding local and independent scrutiny arrangements will be progressed over the next twelve months, alongside an intention to develop regional scrutiny opportunities within the Avon and Somerset area.

## **8. Reporting**

8.1 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. The partnership's Quality and Performance function will be responsible for analysing multi-agency safeguarding performance data and intelligence to inform the Executive of risks and trends, and to oversee action.

8.2 The Somerset Safeguarding Children Board had an established Quality Assurance Framework which has been adopted by the new partnership and will be developed further as the new safeguarding children arrangements mature.

<https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/groups/quality-and-performance-group/>

## **9. Resourcing**

9.1 Partners will ensure funding covers activity required for core safeguarding children arrangements. The Executive will agree on a future funding formula using equitable and proportionate principles.

## **10. The role of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Support Unit**

10.1 Somerset will employ a team of support staff as agreed by the Executive, hosted by partners. Staff roles and functions will be consistent with delivering the priorities of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership as a Business Unit, in a manner consistent with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018).

## **11. Regional co-operation**

11.1 Appropriate safeguarding tasks will be delegated to a regional safeguarding partnership on behalf of the three safeguarding partners in Somerset, based on the Avon and Somerset Constabulary boundaries, as regional arrangements develop. Any such arrangements will be contractual, and the three safeguarding partners retain responsibility and accountability for safeguarding children and young people in Somerset.

## **12. Twelve-monthly report**

12.1 The Executive will produce a twelve-monthly report on safeguarding arrangements in Somerset, as specified in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018). The report will be available on the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership website. The report will be submitted to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care within seven days of being published, having been subject to independent scrutiny, as specified in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018).

12.2 The report will be submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board to be discussed in a local public forum.

## **13. Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews**

13.1 Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership will identify serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to the area and

commission and oversee a review of those cases where they consider it appropriate to do so. The identification of serious child safeguarding cases will primarily be through the notification requirements placed on Somerset County Council which require certain incidents to be notified to the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership will consider the potential for oversight from an independent scrutineer on a case-by-case basis.

13.2 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.

13.3 The definition of a serious child safeguarding case is that in which:

- abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected; and
- the child has died or has been seriously harmed.

13.4 Notification of incidents: 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018) places a duty on local authorities to notify the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel if a serious child safeguarding incident has occurred. They must do this within five working days of becoming aware that the incident has occurred using the approved on-line process. They must also report the event to the safeguarding partners within five working days.

13.5 Rapid Review: The Business Unit will arrange for a Rapid Review to be undertaken and completed for all cases agreed to be a notifiable incident. The Rapid Review will be undertaken and completed within 15 working days of notification.

13.6 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 (see earlier) 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.

13.7 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.

13.8 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.

13.9 The response of the National Panel to the Rapid Review will be reported back to the three named safeguarding partners. Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews will be undertaken in line with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018).

13.10 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 should be made will be published on the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership website.

13.11 The partnership is committed to embedding learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews through the Learning and Improvement function.

#### **14. Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)**

14.1 The Child Death Notification, Investigation and Review processes fall outside the new safeguarding arrangements. A child death review partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as (a) the local authority, and (b) any clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area.

The Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Group hold responsibility for the review of deaths of all children normally resident in their area, and, if appropriate and agreed between Child Death Review partners, the deaths in their area of non-resident children, in order to learn lessons and share any findings for the prevention of future deaths.

14.2 Through annual reporting, the Executive safeguarding partners will seek assurance from the child death review partners in relation to safeguarding matters and ensure that learning from child deaths is incorporated into wider learning within the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

<https://somersetccg.nhs.uk/about-us/how-we-do-things/safeguarding-children/statutory-safeguarding-responsibilities/>

## **15. Learning and staff development**

15.1 The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership is fully committed to multi-agency workforce development and seeks a range of ways to deliver key safeguarding children messages and to test how the learning has been implemented in practice. Activity includes face-to-face training, multi-agency practitioner information groups, safeguarding children conversations using an appreciative inquiry model, and single agency training. Evaluation takes the form of formal agency feedback processes, multi-agency audits, and case reviews.

<https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/working-with-children/learning-reviews/>

## **16. Effective Support for Families in Somerset**

16.1 The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership has adopted the threshold document formerly used by the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board.

<https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/effectivesupport-documents/>

## **17. Resolving professional differences**

17.1 The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership has adopted the policy for Resolving Professional Differences for dispute resolution formerly used by the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board and recently refreshed.

<https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/RPD-Protocol-v3.1-updated-December-2018.pdf>

## **18. Quality Assurance Framework**

18.1 The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership has adopted a revised Quality Assurance Framework.

<https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/groups/quality-and-performance-group/>



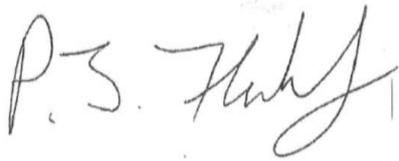
Mike Prior, Superintendent for Neighbourhoods and Partnerships for Somerset



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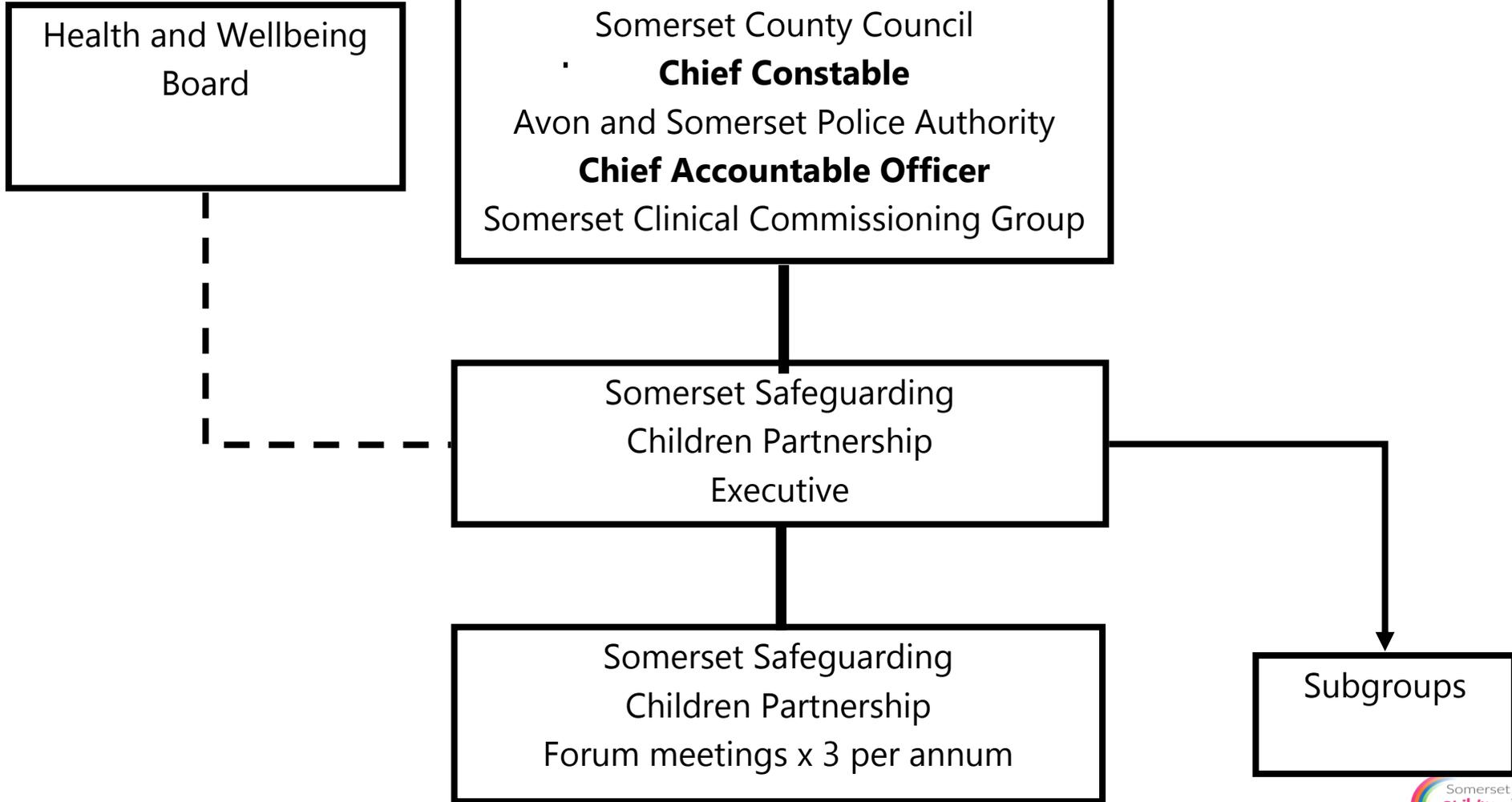


Patrick Flaherty, Chief Executive of Somerset County Council

**June 2019**

Appendix 1: Structure chart

# Structure Chart



## Appendix 2: Partnership engagement

