



# **SARs Five Domains Good Practice Guidance**

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# SAR Five Domains: Good Practice Guidance

This good practice guide has been developed for use by SAB Chairs and Business Managers, Independent SAR Reviewers SAB partners and practitioners, Regional and national networks following recommendations from the Second Nationals SAR Analysis which highlighted a need to strengthen national consistency in how Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) identify, articulate and share learning.

Five key core domains identified within the SAR analysis were as follows:

1. Direct Work
2. Inter-agency Teams Around the Person
3. Organisational Support for Practice
4. Governance
5. National Context

The good practice guidance brings the core domains together into a structured resource that can be used by Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs), reviewers and partners, by providing a standardised, practical template for use to support:

- SAR commissioning
- Scoping
- Review methodology
- Assurance processes
- Dissemination of learning

## How the Good Practice Guide Can Support Consistent SAR Standards

### A. Provides a structured framework for SAR reviewers

By defining the core components within each domain, the guide helps reviewers assess:

- The quality of direct practice
- Multi-agency working
- Organisational systems
- SAB governance
- External/national factors that shape local safeguarding activity

## **B. Strengthens SAB commissioning and scoping**

SABs can use the guide to:

- Develop better SAR Terms of Reference
- Set clearer expectations with reviewers
- Identify where practice or systems require deeper exploration
- Ensure consistent language and standards across reviews

## **C. Offers a consistent lens for identifying learning**

Because the five domains mirror recurring SAR themes—such as professional curiosity, mental capacity, communication, oversight and multiagency risk management—the guide helps identify learning using a shared national structure.

## **D. Supports quality assurance and impact measurement**

The TOR highlight the need for evaluation within the workplan. Having a domain-based framework allows SABs to:

- Track improvements across each domain
- Compare findings across different SARs
- Identify systemic patterns across localities
- Measure the impact of learning responses

## **E. Enhances dissemination and organisational learning**

The guide will offer a coherent method for translating SAR findings into:

- Action plans
- Assurance questions
- Practice guidance
- Multiagency training
- Communication to frontline staff

## DOMAIN 1: DIRECT PRACTICE

<p><b>DESCRIPTOR:</b>  <i>Direct practice must be person-centred, outcomes-focused, and grounded in the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal. Practitioners must work with people, not to or for them, using a strengths-based and trauma-informed lens. Effective direct practice requires strong relational work, an holistic approach to assessment and support (including an understanding of the individual's whole life story and the wider context), legal literacy (e.g., MCA, Care Act), and the ability to recognise and respond to patterns of risk and harm.</i></p>	
<p><b>Thematic Areas (from SAR learning) in this Domain may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person-centred safeguarding</li> <li>• Health and mental health needs</li> <li>• Risk</li> <li>• Mental Capacity</li> <li>• Family / Wider Network approach</li> <li>• Trauma informed approach to engagement</li> </ul>	
<b>BENCHMARK STATEMENT / MEASURE</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>
<b>Person-centred safeguarding</b>	
The voice of the person is clearly evident even if capacity is in question, practitioners demonstrate professional curiosity and use a person-centred approach in all safeguarding responses.	Case audits, interviews with adults at risk, supervision records. Use of Advocacy. Effective Hospital discharge and transition planning.
Practitioners understand and address the impact of Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010) and protect individuals from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.	Those relevant Protected Characteristics are considered in assessments and impacts of those clear in records. Consider how identity culture and systemic inequality impact people's experience of care

<b>Health and Mental Health Needs</b>	
Physical and Mental health needs are identified, understood and addressed, including any impact on increased vulnerability to abuse/ neglect.	Review of case notes and audits. Timely and appropriate responses according to legal frameworks
<b>Risk</b>	
Risk assessments are dynamic and holistic, consider physical and mental health, social, psychological, and environmental factors. Risk is routinely re-evaluated.	Audit of assessments, QA feedback. Risk assessments need to balance autonomy versus protection recognising also the Mental Capacity Act.
<b>Mental Capacity</b>	
Mental capacity in relation to the individual's decision-making on matters relevant to their safety is regularly, consistently, and appropriately assessed including where necessary consideration of fluctuating capacity and executive function. Best Interests Decisions follow the principles of the Mental Capacity Act.	Case Audit. Best Interest decisions are made where appropriate.
<b>Family/ Wider Network Approach</b>	
A family/ wider network-based approach that recognises informal carer relationships and the importance of peers and chosen family in promoting safety.	Carers Assessment considered. Co-produced safety plans. Genograms demonstrate impact of wider network. Consideration of intersectionality
<b>Trauma Informed Approach to Engagement</b>	
Continuity, curiosity, perseverance and empathy are demonstrated with adults, taking account of their personal history and adopting a strengths-based approach	Chronologies, reflective supervision notes. Building effective relationships.
<b>USEFUL RESOURCES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCIE: Making Safeguarding Personal <a href="#">SCIE: Making Safeguarding Personal</a></li> <li>• Research in Practice: Self-neglect guidance <a href="#">Research in Practice - Self Neglect</a></li> <li>• SAR Quality Markers <a href="#">SAR Quality Markers</a></li> </ul>	

## PRACTICE RESOURCES

- MSP feedback tool
- Risk assessment templates
- Trauma-informed checklists

## CASE EXAMPLES

### **SAR "Jo" – Lewisham SAB (2021)**

- 1.Context: Adult with long-term mental health needs, PTSD, and substance use issues.
- Findings: Repeated disengagement was interpreted as non-compliance rather than trauma-related avoidance.
- Learning: Importance of relational, trauma-informed, strengths-based approaches in building trust.
- Search in National SAR Library for “Jo Lewisham SAR”

### **SAR "Andy" – Brighton & Hove SAB**

- Context: Middle-aged man with alcohol dependence, complex trauma, and self-neglect.
- Findings: Multiple missed opportunities due to a lack of sustained engagement and poor interagency coordination.
- Learning: Highlights the need for relationship-based practice and non-punitive engagement strategies.
- Search in SAR Library: “Andy Brighton SAR”

### **SAR "Richard" – Leicestershire SAB**

- Context: Adult with substance misuse, mental ill-health, and neglectful living conditions.
- Findings: No coordinated, trauma-informed safeguarding response; failure to assess capacity.
- Learning: Need for consistent, persistent safeguarding support using a person-centred approach.
- Search: “Richard Leicestershire SAR”.



## Partnership Working with Non-Statutory Partners, Voluntary and Community Sectors

Safeguarding practice actively includes and values contributions from non-statutory and voluntary sector partners, ensuring a holistic approach.

Escalation logs, audit

### USEFUL RESOURCES

- LGA: Multi-agency working in safeguarding [Multi Agency Working in Adult Safeguarding](#)
- SCIE: Information-sharing guidance [Information Sharing in Adult Safeguarding](#)
- Section 117 – Entitlement to After Care Reviews [Explaining your rights to section 117 aftercare | Mind](#)

### PRACTICE RESOURCES

- Multi-agency risk panel terms of reference
- Escalation pathway flowcharts
- Management Supervision [The benefits and outcomes of effective supervision | The HCPC](#)

### CASE EXAMPLES

#### SAR “Anna” – Norfolk SAB

- Missed opportunities to coordinate care across housing, health, and adult social care.
- Domestic abuse indicators were not shared across services.
- Learning: need for shared risk assessments and co-ordinated planning.

#### SAR “Olive” – Brent SAB

- Adult with LD, isolated by a coercive partner.
- Agencies failed to act jointly despite known risks.
- Learning: importance of inter-agency strategy meetings and joint decision-making.

#### SAR “Jo” – Lewisham SAB

- Substance use, trauma, and multiple service involvement with no lead agency.
- Highlighted need for consistent team around the person and shared case ownership.

## DOMAIN 3 : ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

<b>OVERVIEW / DESCRIPTOR:</b> Frontline practice must be enabled by a supportive organisation , environment and culture.	
<b>Thematic Areas (from SAR learning) in this Domain may include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management Oversight and Supervision</li> <li>• Workforce Development and Training</li> <li>• Processes, Policies and Procedures</li> <li>• Commissioning</li> </ul>	
<b>BENCHMARK STATEMENT / MEASURE</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>
<b>Management Oversight and Supervision</b>	
Agencies ensure safeguarding is embedded through clear accountability, strong leadership, welfare, reflective supervision and a culture of openness, professional curiosity, multi-agency collaboration and practice improvement supports safe, informed, and accountable practice at all levels.	Regular supervisions taking place, Internal audits, Record keeping evidences critical thinking and professional curiosity. Management scrutiny of high-risk decisions
<b>Workforce Development and Training</b>	
Agencies invest in workforce development through regular training (including multi-agency training), access to safeguarding expertise, and support for wellbeing. Staff are afforded the opportunity to develop the knowledge and practical skills necessary to respond confidently to safeguarding concerns, with training grounded in local need and legal literacy. Attention given to removing organisational barriers that may hinder the application of practitioners’ knowledge and skills in the workplace	Recordings of decision making is evidence based, training logs, Feedback on training is utilised and informs training development.
<b>Processes, Policies and Procedures</b>	
Agencies maintain clear and robust safeguarding policies and procedures that are regularly reviewed and aligned with statutory guidance. These frameworks are consistently applied in practice and enable effective multi-agency	Induction training, Clear information sharing, Decision making is in line with policies, procedures and processes.

collaboration, ensuring consistency, accountability, and transparency in safeguarding.	
<b>Commissioning</b>	
Agencies commission services based on robust needs assessments, local data, and engagement with communities and individuals with lived experience. Safeguarding is embedded in service specifications, with ongoing monitoring to ensure safe, legal, and effective delivery.	Staff feedback, case audit Commissioning frameworks are adhered to, Regular reviews of commissioned services takes local data and needs into account.
<b>USEFUL RESOURCES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care Act 2014 statutory guidance <a href="#">Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance</a></li> <li>• Skills for Care: Supervision frameworks <a href="#">Skills for Care - Supervision Frameworks</a></li> </ul>	
<b>PRACTICE RESOURCES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision templates</li> <li>• Safeguarding reflection tools</li> </ul>	
<b>CASE EXAMPLES</b>	
<p><b>SAR “Mr N” – Lambeth SAB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care home resident experienced neglect and organisational abuse.</li> <li>• Learning: importance of clear roles, supervision, and oversight by commissioner</li> </ul> <p><b>SAR “EF” – Worcestershire SAB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding alerts about neglect closed prematurely.</li> <li>• Gaps in record-keeping, training, and management accountability.</li> </ul> <p><b>SAR “Maggie” – Northumberland SAB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational neglect in a care setting.</li> <li>• Poor staff supervision and confusion around responsibilities.</li> <li>• Resulted in strategic changes to oversight and provider quality assurance.</li> </ul>	

## DOMAIN 4: SAB GOVERNANCE

<p><b>OVERVIEW / DESCRIPTOR:</b> Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) have a statutory duty to lead partnership working, promote learning, and oversee SARs. The governance of SARs is underpinned by the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability and Transparency</li> <li>• Continuous Learning and Improvement</li> <li>• Proportionality</li> <li>• Partnership</li> <li>• Empowerment and Inclusion</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Areas of work in this Domain may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAR commissioning and management</li> <li>• Policy and guidance oversight</li> <li>• Quality assurance and audit</li> <li>• Learning dissemination and impact tracking (may need a link to WS3 outputs)</li> </ul>	
<b>BENCHMARK STATEMENT / MEASURE</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>
SARs are commissioned in line with the statutory guidance	SAR tracker, commissioning log, quality markers
SARs should take account of, and work collaboratively with, other statutory review processes and criminal proceedings.	Terms of Reference, Local Best Practice Guidance, Coronial Process Guidance
Cases involving cross-border issues, should ensure clear accountability, effective communication and coordination with relevant safeguarding partners in other local authority areas.	Cross Boundary Protocols, Terms of Reference,
Learning from SARs is widely shared across agencies using accessible formats, embedded into training, policy and safeguarding practice	Action Plans, Report recommendations, single agency dissemination via communications and training

SABs embed robust quality assurance processes to monitor safeguarding practice, implementation and impact of SAR Learning	Audit Cycles, Impact Reviews, Assurance reports (possible link to WS3)
Policies are kept current, relevant and easily accessible	Policy review schedule
<b>USEFUL RESOURCES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGA: SAR Quality Markers      <a href="#">SAR Quality Markers</a></li> <li>• SAB guidance on SARs      <a href="#">Second National SAR Analysis</a>      <a href="#">ADASS Safeguarding Adult Policy Network Protocol</a></li> </ul>	
<b>PRACTICE RESOURCES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAR tracker tools</li> <li>• Learning action plan templates</li> </ul>	
<b>CASE EXAMPLES</b>	
<p><b>SAR “David” – Brighton &amp; Hove SAB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delayed SAR commissioning and learning remained at senior level.</li> <li>• Learning: Need for strong SAB oversight and active dissemination.</li> </ul> <p><b>SAR “Stephen” – Somerset SAB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAB did not have mechanisms to track whether SAR learning had changed practice.</li> <li>• Learning: Introduced multi-agency audit tools and learning loops.</li> </ul> <p><b>SAR “Clive” – Coventry SAB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SAR was comprehensive but not followed by a clear action plan.</li> <li>• Learning: Need for governance systems that hold partners accountable for implementation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Essex E Learning for SARS</b></p>	

## DOMAIN 5: THE NATIONAL CONTEXT (LEGAL, POLICY AND FINANCIAL CONTEXT)

<p><b>OVERVIEW / DESCRIPTOR:</b> Safeguarding practice is shaped by the broader legal, policy, and funding environment. National policy and commissioning priorities affect local services and create systemic challenges. SABs must ensure that SAR learning about these impacts is identified and escalated to influence government priorities and national policy.</p>	
<p><b>Areas of work in this Domain may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretation of national policy</li> <li>• Use of research and evidence</li> <li>• Financial and commissioning context</li> <li>• Translation of national SAR learning</li> <li>• Response to inspection/regulatory feedback</li> </ul>	
<b>BENCHMARK STATEMENT / MEASURE</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>
Legal, national policy and economic context impacting upon the SAR are identified. The SAB should consider which findings and recommendations would be addressed more effectively through regional and national forums.	SAB strategic plan, training materials, Escalation Policy, Commissioning reviews, budget plans
SARs will take into account regulatory and inspection feedback in understanding the local safeguarding adults' multi-agency system and in making recommendations for change	Inspection Reports, Action Plans, SAR Analysis outcomes
Think Family – the overlap with other Boards or Review Processes is considered and learning shared appropriately	Parallel Processes, Joint Commissioning, Information Sharing and Dissemination of Learning wider than SABs.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

- National SAR Library
- Care Act statutory guidance
- CQC and Ofsted reports

## PRACTICE RESOURCES

- National-to-local learning cascade tools
- Policy briefing templates

## CASE EXAMPLES

### **SAR Cathy” – Self-Neglect and Service Fragmentation (Worcestershire SAB)**

Context: Cathy, in her 60s, was known to multiple agencies for self-neglect, hoarding, and physical health issues. She frequently disengaged from support. Despite ongoing risk, she did not meet the threshold for Section 42 safeguarding or funded care. Services cited resource constraints and lack of national guidance for working with entrenched self-neglect.

National Issues Highlighted:

- No dedicated national funding for complex or preventative safeguarding.
- Limited national guidance on multi-agency working in self-neglect.
- Rising complexity linked to national austerity measures.

### **SAR Learning:**

- Advocated for better national-level commissioning models and CQC regulation to include oversight of preventative safeguarding practice.
- Supported by themes in the second national SAR analysis on systemic underfunding.