



Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) - National Escalation Protocol for Issues from Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs) September 2023

Statement of Intent

This protocol has been agreed for the specific purpose of ensuring that SAR recommendations are shared more widely where:

1. there is a recommendation to share information for national and regional benefit; and
2. there is a need for wider discussion with other Safeguarding Adults Board Chairs; and
3. there are specific actions which may require policy or legislative change and may need onward referral/ discussion by the Network Convenors.

These are the criteria to be used for escalating a recommendation from a SAR.

This escalation protocol sets out that the findings of such SARs must be shared with the regional SAB Chair Network before referral of an issue for escalation to the National Network of SAB Chairs.

Context

- The National Analysis of SARs April 2017-March 2019 (2020)¹ provided priorities for sector-led improvement, including ‘How SABs, regionally and nationally, should discuss the role of: SARs in sharing learning with central government departments and national regulatory bodies; and
- holding them to account when findings require a response that is beyond the scope of local SABs.’

Subsequent discussions with safeguarding policy leads at the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) clarified that a nationally agreed escalation protocol would be helpful to confirm a process for escalating issues that arise from local Safeguarding Adults Reviews, which require a national response. A proposal for escalation was discussed at SAB Chairs national and regional meetings during 2021, and the process was agreed at the Executive meeting of the National SAB Chairs Network on July 19th 2021. The escalation protocol was reviewed in 2023 and revised for agreement at the Network in September 2023.

Stage 1 Regional discussion

When the local SAB formally agrees a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) report (mandatory or discretionary), any recommendation identified by the SAR author that meets the criteria (see above), is taken forward by the SAB Chair to their regional network of SAB Chairs.

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/analysis-safeguarding-adult-reviews-april-2017-march-2019#:~:text=This%20first%20national%20analysis%20of%20Safeguarding%20Adult%20Reviews,purpose%20was%20to%20identify%20priorities%20for%20sector-led%20improvement.>

The purpose of discussion at the regional level is to allow consideration as to whether the recommendation affect the specific locality or affects other localities in the region; whether the recommendation can be addressed or resolved regionally; to establish if the recommendation requires a national response in order to warrant escalation. **Contact with the SAR author may be helpful for clarification of the recommendation/learning, and they should be made aware that the escalation process is being initiated.** It is helpful if the information about an escalation recommendation is:

- circulated beforehand
- uses the attached template to ensure that the information is well understood, which sets out the particular issues which need regional and national responses. This will also set out whether the outcome is for important national learning and/ or whether the referral informs a request for policy or legal change.

The SAB Chair presenting the recommendation should provide background information (as above) from the SAR and present the case for escalating the recommendation to the regional meeting. This should include how it meets the criteria (see above).

Additional criteria for escalating from regional to national SAB Chairs Network

4. At the regional discussion there should be clarity regarding the outcome requested e.g., it involves changing statutory guidance or national policy.
5. Alternatively, and/or additionally, the recommendation may involve a national organisation e.g., CQC, NHSE, DWP, or specific sector e.g., Police, Fire & Rescue services, Probation, Prisons.

Following discussion at Regional Network, the Regional Lead/ Chair should collate examples of similar recommendations or issues from other SARs in the region to include in the presentation of the recommendation for escalation at the next stage. If there are no other local examples, the Regional Chair should approach the National Network to make enquiries regarding the specific issue arising from SARs elsewhere. This is in order to collect the evidence base for escalating a recommendation to the next stage.

In some cases, a SAR may not meet the criteria but may warrant national learning. In these cases, the SAB Chair can raise with the Regional Chair, who can highlight the SAR to the Executive and discuss options for dissemination.

Stage 2 National discussion

If the regional SAB Chairs group agree that the recommendation warrants national escalation, the Chair of the regional group escalates the recommendation and other evidence and presents to a meeting of the National SAB Chairs Network Executive, with the relevant SAB Chair presenting their SAR, who can provide detailed knowledge and answer questions about the SAR. The Executive may then refer back for more regional (or other national examples), so that when the matter is proposed to the full National Network meeting, there is a body of evidence included about which the Network can make a decision to escalate. Discussion at the National Network may result in further examples being provided from other regions which provide more evidence to support the escalation to DHSC or other national body/agency/organisation. In all cases the Executive will make a decision about how the case will progress and inform the relevant Regional Chair. The National Network will be informed at each meeting regarding these decisions.

The purpose of discussion at the national level is to allow consideration as to whether the recommendation for escalation has a national impact; whether the recommendation for escalation can be addressed or resolved through established national networks and connections; and to establish if the recommendation for escalation warrants national escalation.

Stage 3 Contact with DHSC policy leads/ other government departments, and other national organisations

If the recommendation for escalation warrants national learning or potential policy or regulation change, the Convenor(s) of the National Network will email the relevant safeguarding adults policy leads in government departments or organisations to request taking forward the recommendation.

DHSC

Depending on the recommendation for escalation and the subsequent discussion, the DHSC policy leads will respond by email and advise on how to progress and address the issue/learning. The relevant SAB Chair with the Convenors of the National Network and DHSC policy leads will discuss and take forward in the most appropriate and proportionate way.

The new internal DHSC process of reviewing the nationally escalated SARs to ensure a thorough response ensures DHSC safeguarding officials liaising with teams across the Department and across government to develop a response. This ensures the escalated SARs and the responses provided are sighted by senior officials.

Other government departments/ national organisations

In some circumstances a direct approach may be appropriate to another government department, national body or organisation e.g., the Anti-Slavery Commissioner's Office. If appropriate the Convenor(s) of the National SAB Chairs Network, in consultation with the relevant SAB Chair should agree how best to undertake any such approach. The Convenor of the National Network would contact the relevant body to consider how to take forward the recommendation.

The email referral should:

- provide the background, context and analysis leading to the recommendation for escalation
- demonstrate clearly that the issue raised is not a 'one off' and should provide the links to other relevant SARs where appropriate.
- Summarise what action may assist in achieving the appropriate outcome

There may be other further relevant considerations, such as joint reviews or parallel processes such as Child Practice Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, LeDeR reviews, Mental Health Homicide Reviews, and any other statutory review, and this may affect the escalation process and the agencies involved.

Stage 4

Feedback from government departments and national agencies to the National SAB Chairs Network will be monitored by the National Network Convenors to establish the outcomes of any escalation. Feedback will be provided to the relevant regional Lead regarding progress, through the Executive

meetings, national meetings, or emails. The operation of the escalation protocol will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis by the Network.

DHSC officials will attend the National SAB Chair's network to present the key points in the response to nationally escalated SAR recommendations received. Prior to the meeting responses are sent to the Convenors and the relevant SAB Chair. Other Government Departments and national organisations will be invited to the National SAB Chairs Network to respond to any SAR recommendations that have been escalated to them.

Individual SAB Chairs have responsibility for feeding back on outcomes of escalation of a SAR recommendation to their respective Boards.

Outcomes of escalation of SAR recommendations will always be uploaded to the National SAB Chairs Network website in the Members section.

Response times

Every effort will be made to ensure that unnecessary delay is avoided, including the use of ad hoc meetings.

Useful points to note

- **National Network Annual Report** - The Network Convenors will provide information about all escalation of SAR recommendations within the year and the responses provided by DHSC or other government department or national organisations.
- **Unpublished SARs** - It is the responsibility of the relevant SAR Chair to produce anonymised evidence when there are recommendations for escalation, but the background and context are confidential. Consequently, GDPR issues are addressed.
- **National Network SAR Library** - There is an expectation that published SARs are placed in the National SAR Library and SAB Chairs are responsible for ensuring that this happens
- **SAR Recommendations** - The SAB Chair is responsible for ensuring that SAR recommendations are SMART or CLEAR, prior to sign off by the SAB, especially if requiring national escalation.
- **Escalation Policy** – This policy document will be reviewed bi-annually following consultation with the national network of SAB Chairs.

Escalation Flow chart

