



## Barnet Safeguarding Adults Board

### Strategic Plan 2023-26

#### Chair's Introduction

In the time that I have had the honour of chairing the Barnet Safeguarding Adults Board, we have seen substantial changes across Barnet. The recent census results confirm our population has increased faster than the London and national average, up by 9.2% to nearly 400,000 making us within the top 15% most densely populated areas nationally. The census identified Barnet as one of the most ethnically diverse communities, with the second highest proportion of people (aged 5 and over) providing 19 hours of weekly unpaid care. This is something to both celebrate and bring to the fore when designing how vital public services will be delivered over the life of this strategic plan.

We welcome the reported increase in the Census of the proportion of residents describing themselves as in good health and a reduction in the number of residents reporting their disability impedes them 'a lot' or 'a little'. However, we also recognise that our local population rise means more of our residents may be living more isolated lives or experiencing greater frailty often associated with old age.<sup>1</sup> We know that this not only impacts on their ability to achieve important daily tasks, it can also impede their ability to stay safe. Our own data over this period has shown a significant rise in the rate of safeguarding concerns being reported to the local authority; up from 340 per 100k people in 2016 to 481 per 100k in 2021-22. In 2022-23 1,395 individuals were involved in safeguarding concerns (10.3% increase from the previous year) and 791 individuals were involved in a safeguarding enquiry, with almost 60% of individuals involved in enquiries experiencing abuse or neglect in their own home. As our public awareness campaigns continue to reach wider communities, we anticipate that these numbers will grow. We also expect, in line with national trends, for safeguarding enquiries to involve greater complexity. All of which will require practitioners and leaders from across our partner agencies to continue to exhibit the remarkable energy, compassion and fortitude I have witness throughout my tenure as Chair.

Previously, BSAB's strategic goals focused on establishing parity of esteem across our workforce. We have worked pro-actively with our voluntary, community and faith organisations to actively listen to the challenges they face when seeking to help adults with care and support needs stay safe in our borough. We are so fortunate to enjoy active participation from across that diverse workforce, from frontline staff engagement in learning events, right up to the commitment from the third sector to lead and participate in sub-groups and act as Vice Chair the BSAB.

We have also had a strong focus on developing consistency of practice to reflect the principles of good 'making safeguarding personal' practice introduced by the Care Act in 2015. We also worked to secure more opportunities to shape practice improvement by the views of communities and those who had experienced safeguarding interventions, including reporting barriers for adults to access rights to justice after experiencing harm. We have regularly reported on the assurances given by partners and secured through local data analysis on how well our partner agencies recognise, report and respond to abuse, exploitation and neglect of adults with care and support needs in Barnet.

This strategic plan has been developed, therefore, from very strong foundations. Throughout the last three years so many individuals have gone beyond expectations, including during the Covid Pandemic,

---

<sup>1</sup> Almost a third of all Barnet residents are over 50 years old.

putting themselves in harm's way to protect our vulnerable residents- working tirelessly to reduce risks, wherever possible, and providing care and comfort.

National and regional reports referenced below, however, highlight the ongoing challenges to bringing about the culture change that the Care Act duties were expected to provide. These challenges are made more acute at a time of grave workforce pressures on all core public bodies and cost of living pressures. It is well understood that the cost of living has a disproportionate adverse impact on people with care and support needs and their carers and so does need to be a factor in how we consider our statutory obligations to promote wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

Despite these many challenges, our new strategic plan is deliberately ambitious. It needs to be if we are to act on recommendations from local safeguarding adults reviews, regional and national briefings and clear messages from colleagues in community, faith and voluntary sector organisations and our experts by experience.

Our partners have agreed to spread the work over the next three years in recognition that we will need to work together with our residents over this time to improve our responses to abuse and neglect. This plan seeks to offer credible actions so our shared aspiration can be achieved.

Above all, we commit to working together so that our whole system, be that community, charity and statutory organisations, adopt approaches based on the most up to date evidence of what works. By doing so we aim to enable adults experiencing abuse, neglect or exploitation to know where to turn for advice and assistance and to have confidence that the response they receive will make a meaningful difference in their lives.

#### Our Purpose:

BSAB has statutory obligations to:

- build up an understanding of the prevalence of abuse and neglect locally,
- devise local policies to support effective multi-agency safeguarding practice,
- raise public awareness of types of harm and pathways for support or redress; and
- seek assurance from partners that local safeguarding practice acts to prevent abuse and, where this does occur, is responsive, proportionate and effective- keeping adults with care and support needs safe!

We must also conduct safeguarding adult reviews if an adult at risk has died or suffered serious harm when there are lessons to learn.

We have shaped our strategic plan to reflect the learning that has come from recent reviews, copies of which are available [Here](#). BSAB partners are committed to carrying out these functions in collaboration with adults and their carers/ family who have experience abuse, exploitation or neglect and to demonstrating the impact of our work.

#### Our challenge:

Creating a system approach that embodies the principle that safeguarding is everyone's business, but that is also responsive to individual needs, risks and aspirations so that we make safeguarding personal.

#### Our Values:

All our partners remain committed to the [six safeguarding principles](#). We know our efforts have the maximum impact when we work collaboratively, in a trauma-informed way with our residents and those who care for them.

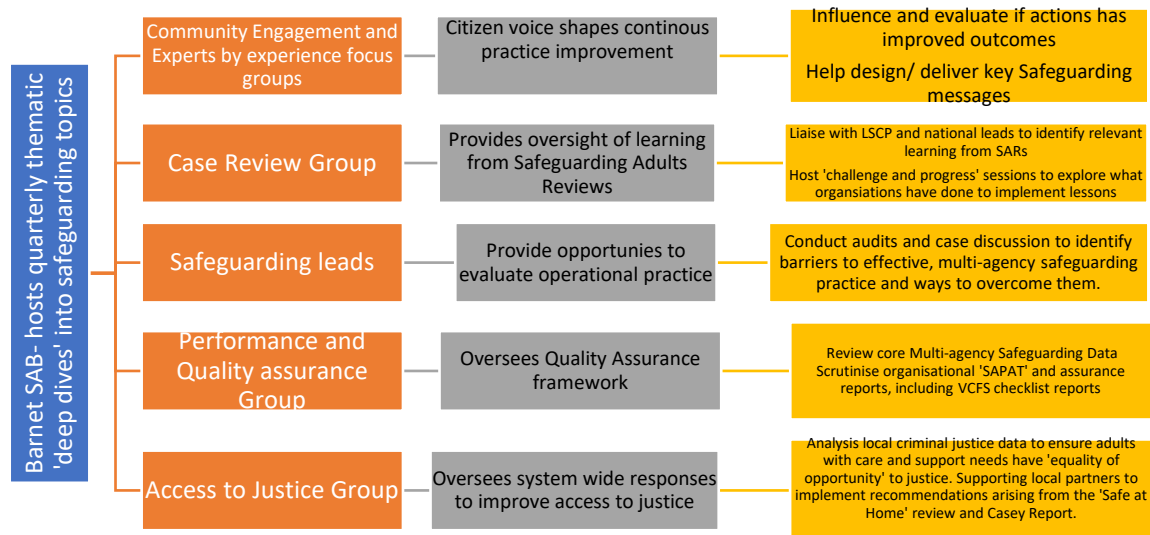
We hear and understand messages from our experts by experience and community focus groups, that our attention must be on supporting adults live balanced lives, one where staying safe means carefully weighing up what matters to them, their wishes, beliefs and values and working with them to find sustainable solutions to the risks they face which uphold their fundamental rights and freedoms.

There is also a clear commitment (and a legal duty) for this strategy and the work of the BSAB to be accountable. Partners have embraced the opportunity this new strategic plan brings to refine insight data

and bring together assurance frameworks into clear governance structures. Going forward, BSAB intends to report not only on the delivery of actions (output), but also on how successful those action were in achieving the overarching goal to reduce the prevalence's and severity of abuse in Barnet (outcome).

## Our Structure:

In recognition of the vital role that designated safeguarding leads have in promoting improvements to safeguarding practice, we have added an additional sub-group to our existing structure to enable practitioners across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors come together with our MASH team to continue to innovative and strengthen partnership collaboration. Our priorities are listed below, but to bring this strategic plan to life the BSAB chair, board manager and sub group chairs will develop a dynamic work plan to take forward actions and develop mechanisms to evidence those actions have resulted in measurable improvements.



## Our Priorities:

### 1. Reducing the severity and prevalence of abuse

Overarchingly this strategy aims to reduce incidents of abuse, exploitation and neglect its impact on adults with care and support needs. Since the pandemic and subsequent rises in the cost of living there has been both a significant change in the nature and complexity of abuse experienced by adults and also an increase in prevalence reported locally. Our partnership strategic plan must seek to counteract the rising demand on core public protection, health, social care services whilst at the same time reduce the most severe adverse impacts so that the system can continue to deliver effective help to those most at need.

The strategy is designed to deliver best practice in respect of coordinated advice, information and assistance at varying levels of risk. A crucial competent of this strategy is developing system-wide opportunities for early intervention to de-escalate and change harmful behaviours before offences are committed or long-term adverse impact on victims is felt.

In the first year of this plan, BSAB will provide a clear tool to support decision making drawing on the [LGA's framework](#) to support practice by defining what constitutes a safeguarding concern<sup>2</sup> and when a local authority will be expected to complete an enquiry.<sup>3</sup> Our local 'decision support tool', will provide guidance on local pathways to support from early intervention and prevention teams and integrated care system new initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities for residents with multiple disadvantage. This should better support practitioners and members of the public to identify (pre-referral stage) what type of response they expect from partners and which agency should lead on preventative actions to reduce the

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/understanding-what-constitutes-safeguarding-concern-and-how-support-effective-outcomes>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/making-decisions-duty-carry-out-safeguarding-adults-enquiries>

risk of abuse before harm occurs. This will also provide guidance on the interface with other multi-agency risk management process, including BSAB's risk panel.

In 2022-23 members of our Performance and Quality Assurance sub-group expressed unease that low referral data for s42 enquiries data in respect of adults at risk or experiencing sexual exploitation or abuse did not correlate with police data or reports from Barnet, Enfield and Haringey NHS Trust. BSAB, working with Barnet's Violence against Women and Girls strategic group and Community Safety Partnership intend to host focus group with relevant partners to explore baseline data, policy and governance arrangements across Barnet to assimilate understanding of current risks and aspirations for future improvements.

Thereafter, we will advocate for changes in partner agencies internal training and seek assurance safeguarding leads within those organisations are monitoring how the new tool has been adopted. Partners will report on barriers to implementing practice change and improvement in consistency of practice. Importantly, we will monitor performance indicators to ascertain if this is empowering more adults (and their carers) to access advice and assistance at the earliest opportunity.

We will also continue to work with colleagues in Central Government and national organisations to improve the credibility of safeguarding data so that it includes insights into preventative activity, thereby facilitating national and regional benchmarking of practice.

## 2. Securing a change in culture so responding to abuse is a shared responsibility.

Our demographic data suggests BAME communities are underrepresented within concerns and enquiry data. During 2022-23 our community engagement focus group has been working to better understand why some people find it harder to raise concerns that they, or someone they care about, is experiencing abuse. Conversations with a wide range of community groups and focus groups of people with protected characteristic confirmed this was not because individuals did not recognise harmful behaviours, but that they were not always confident that reporting this through current pathways (e.g., through the police or Barnet Adult MASH) [Here](#) would improve their safety. BSAB have rightly therefore made it a priority to provide clear reassurance to our diverse communities that everyone should feel safe to seek support when they, or someone they know, is at risk of abuse, exploitation or neglect.

Prior to the implementation of the Care Act, adult protection duties were predicated heavily on the local authority's social care taking responsibility for responding to adult abuse. Since 2015, this duty has been widened considerable so all 'relevant partners'<sup>4</sup> now also owe duties to act to prevent abuse and respond effectively in line with each organisations legal duties and [multi-agency policies](#). This includes a duty to report and undertake safeguarding enquiries (under s42(2) Care Act) even against the expressed capacitated wishes of the adult at risk, if there is a duty of care or wider public interests, for example organisational abuse, or risks identified to other adults at risk or children.

However, because in 2015 these duties were grafted onto existing organisational structures many partner agencies still follow a 'recognise and report' model, whereby their organisational safeguarding policy only requires that they notify the local authority of their concerns, not that they actively engage in activity to prevent abuse or utilise their own legal powers to lead on enquiries relevant to their area of expertise. This is not in line with Care Act obligations and as highlighted by the House of Lords report '[a gloriously ordinary life](#)' in December 2022, it is not a sustainable approach as it overburdens adult social care colleagues with activity that is more effectively addressed by other partners. In March 2022, the DHSC issued a briefing<sup>5</sup> setting out its expectations of the roles of senior leaders and designated safeguarding leads in member organisations to further improve on practice and innovation. This called for all partners to ensure their workforce is well trained and legally literate in safeguarding practice. Partner agencies are also expected to embed collaboration in their organisation, promote trauma-informed practice, ensure workloads are reasonable and help practitioners to maintain a relational practice across disciplines.

---

<sup>4</sup> Defined by s6 Care Act as local authority adult social care, children social care, housing, public health and community safety teams, police, all NHS bodies, prisons and probation, department for work and pensions.

<sup>5</sup> '[Revisiting safeguarding practice](#)' published by DHSC in March 2022

BSAB has, and will continue, to provide monthly 'learn and learn' webinars to provide consistently in key safeguarding messages for practitioners and the public. These will draw heavily on lessons from local, regional and national safeguarding case reviews. We will devise programmes designed to upskill practitioners so they are confident to discuss with victims and perpetrators of abuse the full range of legal consequences, including protective measures police have to disclose offences<sup>6</sup> to new partners, DWP and local authority finance or trading standards officers have to share suspicious activity and the role of primary care networks (including social prescribers) to monitor wider indicators of wellbeing.

We know from local data that the percentage of concerns where the abuse is happening in the adult's home is rising, so too are repeat concerns where family or person's living in the same household are the person alleged to be causing harm. As a partnership we will explore how changes introduced through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the findings and recommendations from the [Safe Care at Home Review](#) may assist partners to recognise and respond more effectively to protect adults feel safe in their home.

We will also seek assurance through quantitative and qualitative data when third parties (including relevant partners) are asked to lead on safeguarding enquiries in line with s42(2) powers and the DHSC's Care and support guidance to ensure *'the nature and timing of the intervention and who is best placed to lead [are] determined by the circumstances... It is important that all partners are clear where responsibility lies where abuse or neglect is carried out by employees or in a regulated setting, such as a care home, hospital, or college. The first responsibility to act must be with the employing organisation as provider of the service.'*<sup>7</sup> BSAB will seek to ensure that all safeguarding enquires, including those 'caused to be made' by organisations other than the local authority are conducted in line with MSP principles, provide clear rationale for actions taken and that feedback is provided on the outcomes, including to the adult at risk.

In the first year of this strategic plan, given the ongoing priorities arising from recent safeguarding adults reviews priority will be given to exploring:

- How criminal justice agencies undertake their public protection functions where allegations, if proven, would constitute a crime.
- How housing and health colleagues work collaboratively to act where adults experiencing multi-disadvantage are at risk of abuse or neglect
- How relevant partners respond to fire safety risks associated with self-neglect or increasing frailty.

### 3. Demonstrating a whole system approach to safeguarding

A golden thread running throughout this strategy is the need for clear and consistent support to ensure practitioners delivering support to adults have a strong organisational backing. Embedding the necessary culture change will require strong leadership within each organisation to ensure practitioners have regular access to quality supervision to promote reflection and analysis of case management. It is also understood that those working with higher risk should be able to access specialist legal, safeguarding, mental capacity and mental health advice.

Senior designated safeguarding leads should routinely offer staff opportunities to 'de-brief', share learning from challenging cases, and raise emerging areas of concern or persistent barriers to effective interventions.

Equally, commissioning decisions will need to respond to changes in the our local area's profile of need and risk. Crucial to all those objectives is that the BSAB strategy establishes clear governance to promote locally agreed processes and procedures, and has the ability to monitor effectiveness of provision to hold partners to account for practice standards.

---

<sup>6</sup> As set out in Home Office guidance available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1150072/DVDS\\_Updated\\_Guidance\\_April\\_2023\\_-\\_post\\_section\\_77\\_commencement.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1150072/DVDS_Updated_Guidance_April_2023_-_post_section_77_commencement.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Care and Support Guidance pg14.42-75

In the first year of this plan, BSAB partners will take an active role in the revision of the Pan London policies and procedures to ensure guidance reflects changes in core strategic partners organisational structures and own internal governance arrangements for quality assurance and safety frameworks.

Taking into account clear messages from our third sector colleagues, we will also explore how to better support the growing network of volunteers to develop their safeguarding practices and evaluate the impact the third sector has in reducing harm and prevent abuse so as to support with capacity building within this sector and further our strong and enduring commitment to ensure parity of esteem for all practitioners working to protect adults with care and support needs in Barnet.