



# Swindon Safeguarding Partnership

## Quality Assurance Framework 2026-27

Date	Version	Document owner	Review Date
April 2026	Final	Swindon Safeguarding Partnership	April 2027

## 1. Introduction

This Quality Assurance Framework sets out how the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership will monitor the impact of safeguarding activity for children and adults. The Partnership is committed to protecting children and adults with care and support needs, and a key part of this commitment is ensuring that multi-agency practice is consistently effective and of high quality. This framework outlines how we will evaluate the quality of work undertaken with children, their families and adults with care and support needs across Swindon, and how we will ensure that robust multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are in place.

## 2. Aims of the Framework

Quality assurance is a continuous, reflective learning process that uses a range of methods to understand the quality, effectiveness and impact of safeguarding practice. Through this framework, the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership aims to:

- Provide robust oversight of the effectiveness of multi-agency practice and its impact on outcomes for children, and adults with care and support needs.
- Celebrate, share and evidence examples of best practice.
- Identify and clearly articulate areas for development.
- Provide assurance that improvements are implemented and sustained.
- Promote the dissemination of learning across the safeguarding system.

## 3. Safeguarding Partnership Quality Assurance Duties

In line with Section 14 of the Children's Act 2004, safeguarding partners have a statutory duty to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken—both individually and collectively—to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and to advise on how practice can be improved to secure better outcomes for children and young people. To fulfil their duties under Regulation 5, Safeguarding Partnerships must use data to assess the effectiveness of the support provided to children and families, including Early Help, and to:

- Assess whether partners are meeting their statutory obligations as outlined in Chapter 2 of *Working Together 2026*.
- Quality assure practice, including through joint case audits involving practitioners and identifying lessons learned.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training, including multi-agency training designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

In addition, *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026* places a further statutory requirement on Safeguarding Partners to evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency working through regular audits of case files.

In line with the Care Act 2014, safeguarding partners have a statutory duty to protect adults with care and support needs. The Partnership will seek assurance that safeguarding activity is effective, consistently improving, and enhancing the quality of life for adults and carers across Swindon, in keeping with the principles of *Making Safeguarding Personal*. This assurance must consider both the quality and quantity of safeguarding work, with particular emphasis on the experiences and outcomes of those who have received safeguarding support.

The Partnership will:

- Assure itself that local safeguarding arrangements are in place as required by the Care Act 2014 and associated statutory guidance.
- Ensure that safeguarding practice is person-centred and outcome-focused.
- Work collaboratively to prevent abuse and neglect wherever possible.
- Ensure that agencies and individuals provide timely, proportionate and appropriate responses when abuse or neglect has occurred.
- Continually seek assurance that safeguarding practice is improving and enhancing the quality of life for adults within Swindon.

## 4. Assurance of Swindon Safeguarding Partnership

### Our Vision

To focus on continuous learning and improvement with a clear line of sight on frontline safeguarding practice to improve outcomes for children and adults with care and support needs

What does Swindon Safeguarding Partnership need from assurance?

**Accuracy:**  
Understanding current and emerging issues & assessment of performance

**Adds Value:**  
Drives improvement across the safeguarding system

**Accountability:**  
To the population and governance hierarchy

**Authoritative:**  
It adds to local and national learning

The core focus of Swindon Safeguarding Partnership assurance

**Neglect**

**Adult Self-Neglect**

**All Age Exploitation**

**Child Sexual Abuse**

The five 'enablers'

Independent scrutiny

Outcome Based Accountability Scorecards and Partnership Dashboard

Multi-Agency audits

Section 11/157 /175/Care Act Audits & Walk the Floor

Assurance Requests

## 5. Governance

The Quality Assurance Group is responsible for overseeing the multi-agency Quality Assurance Framework, with a clear focus on understanding the experiences of children and adults with care and support needs in Swindon and assessing the impact of services and practice on their outcomes.

The Group contributes to the scrutiny of the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and provides robust challenge where required. It also monitors and interprets performance data and management information, including the Partnership Dashboard and Outcome Based Accountability Scorecards.

Through this analysis, the Group will identify themes, patterns and areas requiring attention whether arising from performance data, exception reports, or the early identification of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats.

The Quality Assurance Group Chair will provide bi-monthly reports to the Delivery Group to support informed decision-making, strategic oversight and timely action on any emerging risks.

Findings and learning from quality assurance activity will directly inform the Safeguarding Partnership's annual report.

## 6. Role of Partner Agencies in Quality Assurance

Partner engagement is crucial to the success of the quality assurance work of Swindon Safeguarding Partnership. This section provides more detail on each of the Five Quality Assurance Enablers and the expectations of partner agencies in relation to them.

### Enabler 1: Independent Scrutiny

The role of independent scrutiny is to:

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies including education providers and childcare settings with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level.
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods.
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice.

- Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership.
- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures.
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.
- The decision on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny is to be made locally, and LSPs should be assured that the system in place leads to objective and rigorous analysis of local arrangements.

*(Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026)*

Partner agencies are expected to comply in a timely manner to requests from the Independent Scrutineer employed by the partnership.

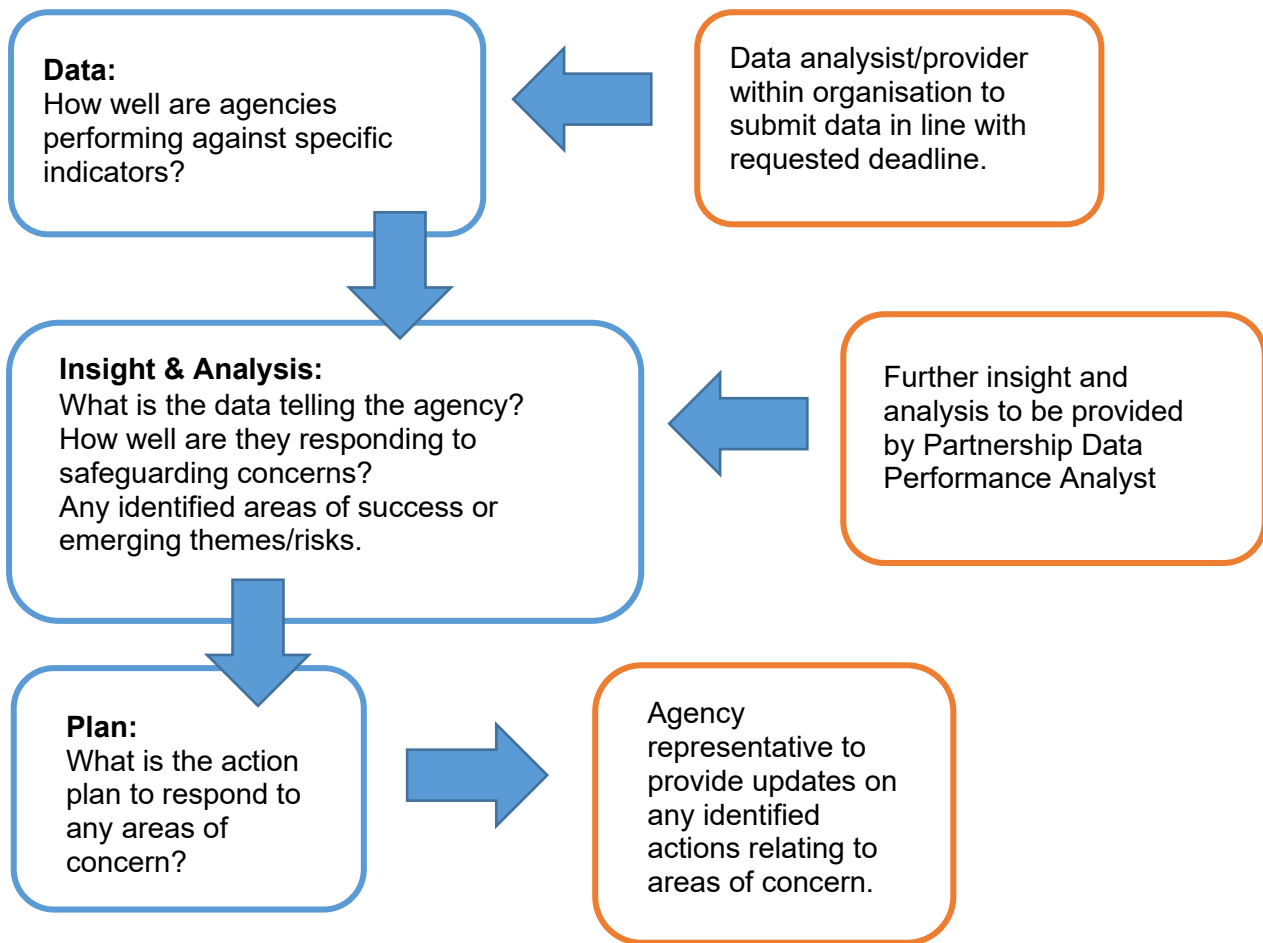
## **Enabler 2: Outcome Based Accountability Scorecards and Partnership Dashboard**

The Partnership uses Outcomes Based Accountability to define the impact it aims to achieve for children, their families, and adults with care and support needs across each priority area.

The Partnership Dashboard aligns directly with the Outcome Based Accountability Scorecards, bringing together quantitative performance indicators from all partner agencies alongside narrative insight and analysis.

Each agency is responsible for submitting accurate and timely data, insight and analysis for the agreed indicators. This information is then reviewed and analysed by the Partnership's Business Performance Analyst to inform assurance, highlight emerging issues and support improvement activity.

The flowchart below sets out this process.



### Enabler 3: Multi-Agency Audits

Audits are a key mechanism for collective learning as well as assurance. They are designed to promote professional curiosity, reflection and shared understanding of what is helping or hindering good outcomes. Learning does not wait until audit completion. Where emerging practice concerns, examples of effective work or system barriers are identified during the audit process, these will be shared promptly with relevant partners and groups to support immediate learning and response.

Thematic multi-agency audits will be undertaken annually, aligned to core safeguarding themes and the Partnership’s strategic priorities. For 2026–27, audits will be scheduled across quarters 3 and 4, allowing sufficient time between audit activity to reflect on findings, implement learning, and evidence impact. Neglect-related audits have been intentionally deferred to allow for the completion of current reset and development work within this priority area; subject to readiness, these audits are anticipated to take place in quarter 4.

The Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Strategic Support Unit will coordinate the audit process and collate all returns. Partner agencies are responsible for submitting accurate and timely information to ensure a comprehensive understanding of each child’s or adult’s multi-agency involvement.

Each audit will examine the effectiveness of practice, process and impact across four key lines of enquiry:

- The individual's lived experience.
- Identification and early intervention.
- Partnership working and information sharing.
- Governance, policies, and procedures.

An audit tool will be designed by the relevant priority group for each thematic audit, ensuring that the methodology, lines of enquiry and evidence requirements are clearly defined. All participating agencies must complete and return the tool within the specified timeframe, providing comprehensive and robust evidence to demonstrate the quality of practice, decision-making and multi-agency involvement.

Partner agencies are expected to complete their audit submissions independently and objectively, with direct input from frontline practitioners who have been involved in the case. Wherever possible, agencies should capture both the practitioner's professional perspective and the lived experience and voice of the child or adult with care and support needs. All audit returns must be submitted by an agreed deadline. Where an individual is not known to the agency, a formal response confirming this is required to ensure full system visibility.

Following each audit, a reflective multi-agency feedback session will be held with auditors, practitioners and managers from across all relevant agencies. These sessions will focus on analysing findings, identifying strengths, and understanding areas for improvement. Learning and examples of effective practice will be explored, reflected on and applied and will directly inform the priority group's work plan and the wider safeguarding improvement cycle.

In addition, single-agency assurance reports and practitioner questionnaires may be commissioned to supplement multi-agency findings and ensure alignment with the Partnership's priorities.

When considered alongside completed audits, these reports and questionnaires will provide partners with a comprehensive understanding of current strengths, areas for development and emerging learning across the safeguarding system. Robust, outcome-focused action plans will then be developed and monitored through the relevant Partnership priority groups to ensure progress is tracked and improvements are embedded.

Single Agency Assurance Requests will clearly outline the specific recommendations each agency is responsible for delivering and will provide a consistent, transparent framework for reporting progress, evidencing impact and demonstrating accountability.

## Audit schedule for 2026/27

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Audit Schedule for 2026-27							
Audit Title	Why	SSU Lead	When				Sub-Group responsible for audit
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Multi-agency response to adults who self-neglect – <b>theme details to be confirmed once current audit and SARs have been completed.</b>	Self-neglect Neglect has been a consistent theme in SARs for the Partnership within an increased number of referrals for SARs where self-neglect was a factor in Q3 & Q4 of 2025-26.	Faith Margle				✓	Self-neglect Group
14.12.2026 - Scope and tool to be agreed by Self-Neglect Group							
Multi-agency response to children who have been criminally exploited and have low school attendance/missing education	Exploitation remains a priority for 2026-27. Previous audits have not focused on how we are responding to criminal exploitation.	Jackie Chipping			✓		All Age Strategic Exploitation Group
17.9.2026 - Scope and tool to be agreed by All Age Exploitation group							
Multi-agency response to adults with care and support needs who have been criminally exploited.	Exploitation remains a priority for 2026-27. Previous audits have not focused on how we are responding to criminal exploitation.	Faith Margle			✓		All Age Strategic Exploitation Group
17.9.2026 - Scope and tool to be agreed by All Age Exploitation group							
Multi-agency response to Children who have been Sexually Abused	Further auditing required to evidence whether there has been any improvement in practice relating to the identification, assessment and support for children who have reported sexual abuse.	Hannah Woloszczynska				✓	Child Sexual Abuse Group
25.8.2026 - Scope and tool to be agreed by Child Sexual Abuse group							

## **Enabler 4: Section 11/Care Act Audits and Section 175/157 Audits for Education Providers**

### **Section 11/Care Act Audits**

All partner agencies are required to complete the Section 11 / Care Act Audit on a bi-annual basis. This audit ensures that agencies are routinely reviewing, updating and evidencing the effectiveness of their safeguarding policies, procedures and practice.

#### **Year 1**

Partner agencies are responsible for completing the audit within the specified timeframe and ensuring that all information submitted is accurate, current and fully reflective of their safeguarding arrangements. Any areas for improvement identified through the audit must be incorporated into a clear and deliverable action plan, with agencies accountable for progressing and completing these actions within agreed timescales.

#### **Year 2**

A selection of agencies will be identified by the Quality Assurance Group for a 'Walk the Floor' assurance visit. These visits will be undertaken jointly by the Partnership Strategic Support Unit and a representative from the Quality Assurance Group. The purpose of the visit is to review progress against the previous year's audit, gather evidence and gain assurance that practice, procedures and organisational culture are embedded in frontline delivery. This process also provides an opportunity to engage directly with staff and ensure that safeguarding expectations are consistently met in day-to-day practice.

### **Section 175/157 Audits for Education Providers**

The Section 175 audit is conducted annually and overseen by the SBC Education Safeguarding Team. It must be completed by Heads, Principals, Executive Leaders and Designated Safeguarding Leads to ensure that education providers are routinely reviewing, updating and evidencing the effectiveness of their safeguarding policies and practices.

Education providers are responsible for submitting the audit within the required timeframe and ensuring that all information provided is accurate, comprehensive and reflective of current safeguarding arrangements. Following completion, the Education Safeguarding Team will produce a report for the Safeguarding Partnership's Quality Assurance Group. Education providers are expected to monitor progress against any actions identified through the audit, with follow-up and oversight provided by the Education Safeguarding Team.

## Enabler 5: Single Agency Assurance

Single Agency Assurance Requests will be used to seek clear and proportionate assurance from partner agencies regarding the completion and embedding of recommendations arising from multi-agency audits and other activity within the scope of the Quality Assurance Framework. These requests provide a structured and consistent mechanism through which agencies are required to demonstrate progress, evidence impact on practice and outcomes, and confirm that identified improvements have been implemented in full and are being sustained over time.

Responses to Single Agency Assurance Requests will support partnership scrutiny by enabling the Quality Assurance Group to assess the effectiveness of actions taken, identify any ongoing risks or barriers to improvement, and determine whether further partnership support or escalation is required.

In addition to responding to formal assurance activity, partner agencies are expected to take a proactive role in sharing learning, emerging risks and examples of effective practice identified through their own quality assurance, audit, complaints, supervision and case review activity. This intelligence should be shared promptly through established governance routes, including the Quality Assurance Group, Priority Groups or Partnership Executive arrangements, rather than waiting for routine or scheduled reporting cycles.

Safeguarding Partnership Executives will routinely share current and emerging safeguarding risks, pressures and issues arising from their organisational quality assurance activity on a bi-monthly basis through the scheduled Executive Group meetings. This ensures that system-wide concerns, learning and themes are collectively understood, appropriately scrutinised and acted upon at the earliest opportunity.

The Quality Assurance Group will provide proportionate exception reporting on wider intelligence received from partner agencies, including data analysis, practitioner insight and thematic learning. This aggregated intelligence will support the timely identification of priority areas for action and will directly inform the Partnership's continuous improvement activity, strengthening practice and outcomes across Swindon's safeguarding system.

## 7. Learning and Development

### Our Approach to Learning

The Swindon Safeguarding Partnership approaches learning as a dynamic, shared and continuous process. Learning is not confined to formal audits or training activity; it is generated daily through frontline practice, reflective supervision, multi-agency problem-solving and engagement with children, families and adults with care and support needs.

The Partnership expects all agencies to actively contribute learning as it emerges, enabling timely collective sense-making, rapid response to risk and sustained improvement in outcomes.

Recommendations arising from the Partnership's quality assurance activity will be added to the Learning Needs spreadsheet and will be shared and discussed with the Learning and Development Group. This process ensures that learning directly informs the ongoing development and refinement of the multi-agency safeguarding training offer and associated resources.

The Learning and Development Group determine the most effective methods for creating opportunities for shared learning across the workforce. These may include:

- **Communications Campaigns:** Development of 7-Minute Briefings, guidance documents or targeted communications.
- **Virtual or Face-to-Face Learning:** Information-sharing events, workshops or multi-agency training sessions.
- **Online Learning Tools:** Development or revision of online learning modules to support flexible, accessible learning.

Learning and Development Group members are responsible for disseminating relevant learning within their respective agencies and providing assurance on how this learning has been communicated and embedded.

The Partnership will routinely monitor the extent to which learning has had a demonstrable impact on practice and on outcomes for children, young people and adults with care and support needs. To support this, a robust [Learning and Improvement Framework](#) and a 'Closing the Learning Loop' process has been developed and implemented to ensure that learning from case reviews is effectively embedded across the safeguarding system.

The Chair of the Learning and Development Group will provide a bi-monthly report on progress against the 'Closing the Learning Loop' process. Where organisations are identified as non-compliant or where learning has not been effectively embedded, a Single Agency Assurance Request can be issued directly to the organisation to provide evidence of action and impact.

Any learning and development proposals that require commissioning or funding will be escalated to the Partnership Executives for consideration and approval.

## 8. Participation

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership must ensure that the voices of children and the views of adults with care and support needs are central to all quality assurance activity. Their lived experiences should directly inform understanding, decision-making and improvement across the safeguarding system.

The views and experiences of *experts by experience* will be captured through direct work with adult scrutineers and meaningful engagement with children and young people. Additional insight will be gathered through multi-agency case audits and the work of the Participation Network, ensuring that these perspectives are embedded within learning and improvement activity.

The Partnership must also ensure that the perspectives of frontline practitioners are routinely captured to strengthen multi-agency working. This will be achieved through targeted online surveys aligned to Partnership priorities and coordinated through the priority groups and practitioner forums.

Practitioner feedback will also form a core component of the Section 11 / Care Act Audit 'Walk the Floor' activity. These discussions will focus on key lines of enquiry to understand staff knowledge, explore frontline experiences and ensure that practitioner insight aligns with findings from single-agency self-evaluations and case audits.

## 9. Review

This Quality Assurance Framework will be updated annually to ensure the quality assurance process is effective in providing an appropriate level of assurance to partners. The next review will be **April 2027**.

Proposals for suggested multi-agency audit activity for 2027-28 can be emailed directly to [safeguardingpartnership@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:safeguardingpartnership@swindon.gov.uk) or can be discussed at the Quality Assurance Group.