

## 1.9 Lead coordinating agency

Local authorities have the lead role in coordinating the application of this policy and procedures, coordination of activity between organisations at a senior level, review of practice, facilitation of joint training, dissemination of information and monitoring and review of progress within the local authority area in partnership with the Safeguarding Adults Board.

In addition to this strategic coordinating role, the local authority also has responsibility for coordinating a multi-agency response to safeguarding alerts that have met the threshold. Further information about the role of each agency in responding to referrals is described within the safeguarding process. [LINK to Safeguarding Adults flow chart and 3.1 to 3.4 Alert process](#)

Safeguarding Adults is everyone's responsibility. Each agency working with vulnerable adults must have its own procedure and guidance for staff on how to raise concerns. This should include guidance for staff on the nature / level of concern that requires a referral into the multi-agency safeguarding process. Each agency should have a designated safeguarding lead or nominated individual with responsibility for providing advice and determining whether a referral to multi-agency procedures should be made.

Plymouth Joint Commissioning and Adult Social Care will monitor and ensure the reporting of all activity under safeguarding to both the Safeguarding Adults Board and National Information Centre (AVA). This means that Adult Social Care may not necessarily be the lead agency for investigating all individual alerts.

Decisions as to the most appropriate agency to lead on an individual investigation will be made following a strategy meeting or discussion under the multi-agency process with key agencies (Adult Social Care, NHS, police). This decision is described within the safeguarding process.

[LINK to Safeguarding Adults flow chart and 3.1 to 3.4 Alert process](#)

The police are responsible for investigating crimes. Health Commissioners and providers will lead on investigations into concerns about abuse in hospitals or alleged abuse by health staff. The local authority will remain involved in investigations relating to care homes and community services regardless of commissioning arrangements.

Lessons from serious case reviews highlight the importance of making alerts into the multi-agency safeguarding process and the local authority taking a lead role in the coordination of responses to these alerts.

In the [Winterbourne View Serious Case Review Report, South Gloucestershire Council](#) acknowledged it “should have led all the safeguarding investigations which concerned staff on patient assaults and ensured that patients who were the subjects of safeguarding alerts were always seen by a social worker or police officer. They should have managed all meetings and investigations with the confidence to challenge other professionals and rigorously “quality assure” the resulting processes.”

The importance of involving NHS commissioners in the safeguarding process was also highlighted in the review: “The NHS Review concludes *that there had been no formal process for commissioners in Primary Care Trusts to be informed directly of safeguarding alerts...reliance seems to have been placed on good informal communication...In some cases, commissioning managers became aware of serious historic alerts only during this review process*”

The importance of multi-agency working was also highlighted in the serious case review into the death of Steven Hoskins in Cornwall ([LINK](#)). The Council failed to do this.

“Steven’s murder presses the case for ever-greater investment in partnership working in safeguarding adults (Perkins et al., 2007). This cannot be regarded as the sole responsibility of Adult Social Care.”

While it is acknowledged that safeguarding is not the sole responsibility of adult social care, the review highlighted the consequences of failing to make use of the safeguarding process to facilitate inter-agency information sharing, risk assessment and protection planning. There were many agencies who held information about Steven Hosking however the review report laments “None of these facts triggered an adult protection ‘alert’ or the partnership working that is so critical to safeguarding vulnerable adults.”

When the local authority receives a safeguarding alert, it should:

- ensure that any Safeguarding Adults concern is acted on in line with this policy and procedure
- coordinate the actions that relevant organisations take in accordance with their own duties and responsibilities. This does not mean that local authorities undertake *all* activities under Safeguarding Adults – relevant organisations have their own roles and responsibilities. The role of the Local Authority is to ensure there is a single point of access
- ensure that key decisions are made to an agreed timescale
- facilitate learning lessons from practice and communicating these to partners.

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