



SAR Quality Markers Guidance for the SAB Independent Chair / the Board

Overview of Role and Responsibility of the SAB Independent Chair / the Board in relation to SARs:

- Decide whether or not a SAR should be undertaken
- In conjunction with SAB Board Members, sign off final Overview Report, Executive Summary and Action Plan ensuring that multi-agency recommendations have Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Timebound (SMART) actions and clear action owners
- In conjunction with SAB Board Members, make a decision about publication
- Provide transparency and accountability via the SAB response and Annual Report
- Seek assurance of effective responses by agencies and/or Board

Not all Quality Markers are relevant to the SAB Independent Chair / the Board, as not all link in with their role and responsibilities. The relevant Quality Markers and the questions to be asked for each are listed below.

Setting up the Review – Relevant Quality Markers

Quality Marker 2: Decision making – what kind of SAR, if any?

Quality statement – Factors related to the case AND the local context inform decision making about whether a SAR is needed and initial thinking about its size and scope

Questions to ask:

- Is the rationale for the decision clear and defensible, paying close attention to the Care Act 2014 and Making Safeguarding Personal principles?
- Have SAB member agencies had the opportunity to contribute to decision making process?
- Are explanations provided for any delays in decision making?
- Is there transparency for SAB members on the decision making process and outcomes?
- Has independent challenge to decision making been considered?

Setting up the Review – Relevant Quality Markers

Quality Marker 3: Informing the person, their family or other important network

Quality statement – The person, relevant family members, friends and network are told what the SAR is for, how it will work and the parameters, and are treated with respect.

Questions to ask:

- Have you noted or praised prompt, clear, accessible, compassionate and respectful correspondence with the person and relevant family or network?
- Is there overt encouragement and support for honest communication to address legitimate questions posed by the person, relevant family members, or other important network?

Quality Marker 4: Clarity of purpose

Quality statement – The Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) is clear and transparent, from the outset that the SAR is a statutory process, with the purpose of organisational learning and improvement, and acknowledges any factors that complicate this goal

Questions to ask:

- Have you demonstrated strong overt leadership about the purpose of the SAR being learning and organisational improvement?
- Have you demonstrated clear expectations that people use the escalation pathway to you, if there is any non-engagement by providers, commissioners or other agencies involved in the SAR?
- Have any complicating factors been honestly acknowledged?
- While the SAR is not designed to apportion blame, it can provide information that feeds into individual or corporate discipline processes, or clarify the grounds for needing to initiate them. As a result, claims that the purpose of the SAR is learning can ring hollow for those involved.
- Has consultation with legal departments been sought if appropriate?

Quality Marker 5: Commissioning

Quality statement – Decisions about the precise form and focus of the SAR to be commissioned take into account a range of case and contextual factors, in order to make the SAR proportionate to the potential learning and improvement. Decisions are made with input from the SAB Chair and members.

Questions to ask:

- Has the right range of information been assessed, and the necessary expertise been brought to bear in deciding the precise form and focus of the SAR?
- Is the form and focus of the SAR best suited to maximising learning and improvement to the benefit of adults and their families?
- Does the judgement make meaningful reference to the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal and the six core safeguarding principles?

Running the Review – Relevant Quality Markers

Quality Marker 6: Governance

Quality statement – the SAR achieves the requirement for independence AND ownership of the findings by the SAB and members agencies

Questions to ask:

- Have you demonstrated strong, overt leadership about the significant degree of objectivity combined with sufficient understanding of context and organisational arrangements that is required for rigorous SAR analysis?
- Have you demonstrated clear expectations that when a consensus view cannot be reached about the analysis and findings/recommendations, the differing positions will be articulated in the final report?
- In a review involving other SABs, have you achieved clarity and agreement from the outset about who leads the SAR (e.g. area for whom most learning is likely to emerge) and governance arrangements?

Quality Marker 8: Parallel processes

Quality statement – When there are parallel processes, the SAR is managed to avoid as much as possible duplication of effort, prejudice to criminal trials, unnecessary delay and confusion to all parties, including; staff, the person, and relevant family members

Questions to ask:

- Have you made and supported efforts to communicate and cooperate with all relevant processes, to achieve the best fit for the circumstances?
- Is it clear who owns documents generated through the SAR so that the relevant body can make judgements on their disclosure?

Quality Marker 7: Management of the process

Quality statement – The SAR is effectively managed. It runs smoothly, is concluded in a timely manner and within available resources

Questions to ask:

- Have you made yourself available to assist in addressing any challenges that arise during the SAR?
- Does the provision of administrative support and reviewer capacity match expectations about the quality and timing of the SAR outputs?
- Is there enough slack in the plan to allow for legitimate delays?

Quality Marker 9: Assembling Information

Quality statement – The SAR gains sufficient information to underpin an analysis of the case in the context of normal working practices and relevant organisational factors.

Questions to ask:

- Have you made it clear whether or not you expect the SAR to;
 - establish whether any problematic practice identified in the case was more widespread at the time and/or
 - assess the current relevance of past practice issues identified in the case being reviewed?
- Does the structure of the SAR enable direct input by practitioners and managers (e.g. interviews, group meetings) as well as the person, and relevant family members or other important network members?
- Have you demonstrated clear expectations that people use the escalation pathway to you, if there is any non-engagement by participating organisations?

Running the Review – Relevant Quality Markers

Quality Marker 10: Practitioners involvement

Quality statement – the SAR enables practitioners and managers to have a constructive experience of taking part in the review

Quality Marker 11: Involvement of the person and relevant family members and network

Quality statement – The SAR is informed by the person and relevant family and network members' knowledge and experiences relevant to the period under review

Questions to ask:

- Have you communicated directly with practitioners invited to participate in the SAR, stressing the importance of their input, acknowledging their possible fears, clarifying the support that will be available, and the intention of creating a constructive and valuable experience for them?
- Are you planning to attend any of the practitioner events in whole or part, to reiterate your messages about the value of an open learning culture and the importance of their being able to 'tell it like it is'?
- Have you written to thank them personally once the SAR is completed?

Questions to ask:

- Has clear leadership been provided about the priority of enabling the person and relevant family and network members to contribute to the SAR?
- Is there clarity about why family members are being involved?
- If family members are not involved, are the reasons for non-involvement reasonable and are they documented?

Quality Marker 12: Analysis

Quality statement – The SAR analysis is transparent and rigorous. It evaluates and explains professional practice in the case, shedding light on routine challenges and constraints to practitioner efforts to safeguard adults.

Questions to ask:

- Are you championing the practical value of analysis that identifies what has led to and sustained the kind of practice problems or good practice that the case reveals?
- Are you building expectation at Board level of an analysis that seeks out causal factors and systems learning?

Outputs, Outcomes and Impact from the Review – Relevant Quality Markers

Quality Marker 13: The Report

Quality statement – the report identifies clearly and succinctly the analysis and findings of the SAR, while keeping details of the person to a minimum. Findings reflect the casual factors and systems learning the analysis has evidenced

Quality Marker 14: Improvement Action

Quality statement – the Board enables robust, informed discussion and agreement by agencies of what action should be taken in response to the SAR report.

Questions to ask:

- Has the report achieved the agreed commissioning specification?
- Does it provide insights into factors that increase the risk that people will not be effectively safeguarded?
- Does it illuminate conditions that are effective in enabling good safeguarding practice?
- Can you readily use it to inform work to enhance partnership working, improving outcomes for adults and families and preventing similar abuse and neglect in the future?

Questions to ask:

- Have you provided clear leadership about the need for an open and mutually challenging discussion about what is said in the report about the effectiveness of the safeguarding system and its component parts and what needs to be done to improve outcomes for adults and families?
- Have you planned, with those who conducted the review, how to structure and run discussions about the report findings, and relative roles in facilitating this discussion?
- Have you held preparatory discussions with relevant partner organisations to minimise defensiveness in wider discussions?
- Are there implications for the SAB strategic plan?