

# EAST RIDING SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD



*Safeguarding  
is everybody's  
business*

# East Riding Safeguarding Adults Communication Protocol

**APRIL 2016**

**This protocol sets out how communication relating to enquiries and statements about specific safeguarding cases will be managed**

**East Riding Safeguarding Adults Board version control template.**

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**Revision History:**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>	<b>Approved</b>
Version 01.0	20/04/16	Final Document Agreed	SAB

## East Riding Safeguarding Adults Board Communication Protocol

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Preventing and/or investigating adult safeguarding concerns is a multi-agency operation and health, social care professionals or police officers may have to take the lead in relation to any safeguarding investigation/enquiry or media request. However, on most occasions East Riding of Yorkshire Council Adult Services is likely to be the lead agency. It is therefore vital to be clear about:
- Who is doing what
  - When they need to do it
  - What their associated responsibilities are.
- 1.2 The East Riding Safeguarding Adults Board (ERSAB) has a key role in bringing together agencies involved in this work at a strategic level and seeking assurance that adult safeguarding is given sufficient regard within all partner agencies.
- 1.3 To support staff from agencies who have a key role to play in communication and media handling, the ERSAB Communication & Media strategy is separated into two discrete documents.
- 1.4 The first is concerned with handling immediate communication issues when there are concerns about adult/adults at risk of harm which may attract media attention. This document is the **Communication Protocol**.
- 1.5 The second document is concerned with communicating a range of general safeguarding adult topics, with a range of people including members of the public, other organisations etc. This document emphasises the use of various types of media including social media where appropriate. This document is the ERSAB **Media Strategy**. The main focus of the media strategy is to raise the profile of adult safeguarding.

### 2 Aim of this Communication Protocol

1. To coordinate communications regarding safeguarding adults at risk of harm between ERSAB and its partner agencies.
2. To agree key safeguarding messages and communicate them in a coherent consistent and timely manner through a variety of channels whilst recognising the need for partners to maintain their organisational integrity and decision-making.
3. To ensure communication and statements issued in response to serious and or high profile cases are co-ordinated and consistent across agencies.

### **3 Communication leads network**

- 3.1 In order to ensure consistency of approach is maintained an East Riding safeguarding adult's communication leads network will be established which will meet twice a year. Other meetings will be convened as needed. However, it is anticipated that the majority of discussions in between the bi-annual meetings can be held via email and/or telephone.
- 3.2 Some agencies which are **not core** to the SAB and are unable to provide dedicated communications support will maintain contact and continue to be engaged via a named single point of contact (SPOC).
- 3.3 An up to date contact list will be maintained and it is the responsibility of the named person on the joint communication protocol to notify the ERSAB of any staffing/role changes. (The up to date contacts lists for communication leads/press offices for key agencies is attached as **Appendix 1**).
- 3.4 The Safeguarding Adults Communication Leads Network will also advise on and undertake activities to raise the profile of the role and work of the ERSAB. This will include engagement with the local community. A separate proactive media strategy and programme will be agreed annually.

### **4 Communicating with the Media**

- 4.1 The approach defined within this protocol in respect of the media is intended to ensure a co-ordinated response by East Riding Safeguarding Adults Board partner agencies to specific media requests.
- 4.2 The East Riding Council press office is the first port of call for all media enquiries relating to council services.
- 4.3 As soon as the ERYC press office becomes aware of a media enquiry relating to an adult safeguarding concern the press officer must inform the press offices of all the other SAB partner agencies in a consistent and timely manner. All agencies should have the same information at the same time.
- 4.4 In the event that the press office of another partner agency is approached about a safeguarding concern first, it is the responsibility of that agency to inform the ERYC press office, will then inform all the other SAB partner agencies so that all agencies have the same information at the same time.
- 4.5 As soon as the ERYC press office becomes aware of a media enquiry relating to an adult safeguarding concern the press officer must inform the SAB Board Manager, the SAB Independent Chair and the Head of Adult Services.
- 4.6 The Head of Adult Services will decide whether or when other council staff need informing such as leaders, directors etc.

- 4.7 The press office will then make a decision based on a number of factors related to the issue, about whether another partner is best placed to take the lead role in communicating with the media.

Any communication with the media in the name of the East Riding Safeguarding Adults Board **must** be undertaken by or with the close involvement of the Independent Chair. This remains the case even when another partner agency is leading on media handling.

- 4.8 ERSAB will not provide a response to the media on behalf of a partner agency.
- 4.9 To support agencies with the above an “at a glance – leading on media handling” flowchart is attached as **Appendix 2**.

## **5.0 Information Gathering**

- 5.1 The press office will gather as much information as possible when deciding how to proceed with a potential breaking news story. Some issues which are always considered are:

- What is the reporter asking us?
- Where has their information come from & is it a trusted source?
- Who else will they be speaking to
- When is a story likely to run and how prominently?

- 5.2 In seeking answers to a number of questions the press officer is able to validate the reporters claims and thus ensure it is applicable that the Safeguarding Adults Board is appropriate to be involved.

- 5.3 The press officer can then make the decision about how best to proceed with either holding off, preparing a statement/release etc.

- 5.4 In most cases it is better to say something than nothing – “no comment” should be avoided and the press officer will always attempt to add context and balance to any potentially negative news story.

## **6.0 Safeguarding Adults Reviews**

- 6.1 Under the Care Act 2014 Safeguarding Adult Reviews are to be led and managed by the Safeguarding Adults Board only.

- 6.2 In the event of a Safeguarding Adult Review all communication should be directed to the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board before any press releases are made. Agencies should avoid responding independently and all press releases should be agreed by the Independent Chair to ensure a consistent response is made.

## **7 Handling Media releases & statements**

- 7.1 When a media enquiry results in the need for a media statement arrangements will be agreed on a case by case basis but will broadly reflect the below process:-
- 7.2 There will be a need to plan early and consider communications from the outset of any issues that will require a co-ordinated response across agencies; for example safeguarding adult reviews, domestic homicide reviews, etc. and a communications lead appointed as soon as possible.
- 7.3 The Head of Adult services will agree jointly with the Independent Chair how to respond to the request for a statement or media release. This will be agreed on the day of the request.
- 7.4 When it has been agreed that a press statement will be released the press office will immediately draft a statement. The draft will be shared with the Head of Adult Services and the SAB Independent Chair for their agreement.
- 7.5 No statement or press release should ever be issued to the press without it going through a thorough and stringent sign-off process involving the relevant senior managers which may include heads of service, directors etc. Internal sign-off processes must not delay progress.
- 7.6 In determining their response the press office will always consider a range of stock answers which can be used in any combination depending on the case. These include:-
- “We are sorry, we made a mistake and we are taking steps to rectify it.”
  - “We cannot comment on individual cases, but in circumstances like this, this is what we do.....”
  - “It is not appropriate for us to comment.”
  - “This is not an issue for the Safeguarding Adults Board.”
- 7.7 As soon as the press statement has been agreed it will be shared with all SAB partners in the network. This is for **information only**, not for any further comments, as there will already have been a thorough checking process as outlined in earlier parts of section 7. This will ensure consistency and continuity in case the press approaches any other partner agency for comment.

- 7.8 All partner agency press officers must make their own internal arrangements for sharing the press statement with other appropriate managers such as service managers, directors or the chief executive.
- 7.9 The press office will then make the decision about when or if to issue the statement to the press. There may be occasions when the statement is no longer required such as when another story has taken precedence.
- 7.10 Where it is agreed that a verbal statement is provided to the press, the spokesperson for the Safeguarding Adults Board will usually be the Independent Chair, unless it has been agreed at the outset that there is a different spokesperson or a joint statement.
- A timeline for all media releases/statements is attached as **appendix 3**.

## **8 Communicating with the person who is the subject of the media enquiry**

- 8.1 It will be agreed at the earliest stage in the process who will act as single point of contact with the person who is subject of the media enquiry.
- 8.2 This early stage discussion will include whether it is more relevant to communicate with a family member or advocate and agreement will be reached on a way forward.
- 8.3 The nominated single point of contact will usually be an individual from the agency which has had the majority of the contact with the individual up to the point of the media interest.

## **9 Communicating with staff**

- 9.1 It will be the responsibility of the employing organisation where the staff member is employed to communicate the concerns to that staff member. This is where the staff member has either been directly named as the person responsible for the alleged incident, or where there is a possibility they may be named at a later stage.
- 9.10 It is also the responsibility of the employing organisation to handle any ongoing staff/HR issues with the staff who may be the subject of media attention.

## **10 Key Messages**

- 10.1 The key messages about the role of the ERSAB can be used in any combination to provide added positive statements to adult safeguarding cases:-
- ERSAB is a statutory partnership board, established by the local authority and made up of representatives from a number of external organisations (see

appendix 1), which provides strategic leadership for adult safeguarding across the East Riding of Yorkshire.

- ERSAB's remit is to agree objectives, set priorities and co-ordinate the strategic development of adult safeguarding.
- ERSAB acts as the key mechanism for agreeing how agencies will work together effectively to safeguard and promote the safety and well-being of adults at risk and/or in vulnerable situations.
- ERSAB aims to promote awareness and understanding of abuse and neglect among service users, carers, professionals, care providers and the wider community.
- ERSAB is responsible for ensuring that the systems in place locally to protect people at risk are proportionate, balanced and responsive.
- ERSAB will undertake and or commission Safeguarding Adult Reviews in cases where there is a reasonable concern about how ERSAB members, or other relevant persons worked together to safeguard adults at risk of harm to ensure that lessons are learnt.

#### 10.2 Key messages about safeguarding adults at risk or in vulnerable situations:-

- Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.
- Safeguarding is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action.
- The wellbeing and safety of local people is our main concern and we adopt a zero tolerance stance on the abuse, neglect or discrimination of any person but particularly people at risk or in vulnerable situations in whatever setting.
- We are encouraged by the increasing number of reports highlighting concerns because this indicates that people are growing more confident to report abuse which previously may have been hidden and unreported.
- The local authority has the lead co-ordinating role for safeguarding adults and it works in partnership with local agencies and organisations to safeguard people at risk. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone including the wider community.
- There is good partnership working at the local level when concerns are raised and agencies work together effectively to ensure a co-ordinated approach.



- We work proactively with care providers to address any concerns raised about their service to ensure that local people have access to good quality and safe care when they need it.
- Any suspicion of abuse or neglect should be reported either to the local authority adult services safeguarding team on 01482 396940 or if out of hours the East Riding of Yorkshire Council Emergency Duty Team on 01377 242273 or to the police on 101.
- In an emergency, if it is suspected someone is in immediate danger, 999 should always be called.

These messages will be used as appropriate by the ERSAB and its partner agencies in any communication about safeguarding adults in general or when commenting on a specific case. These will also be provided as 'Notes for Editors' in any press release

## **11 Governance:**

- To provide (via the ERSAB Board Manager) regular updates on progress to the ERSAB Business Implementation Group on the implementation of the Joint Safeguarding Adults Communication Protocol.
- Members will also be responsible for reporting by exceptions to their ERSAB member and for escalating any unresolved issues which have the potential to undermine the achievement of stated objectives.
- The joint Safeguarding Adults Communication Protocol will be reviewed annually.

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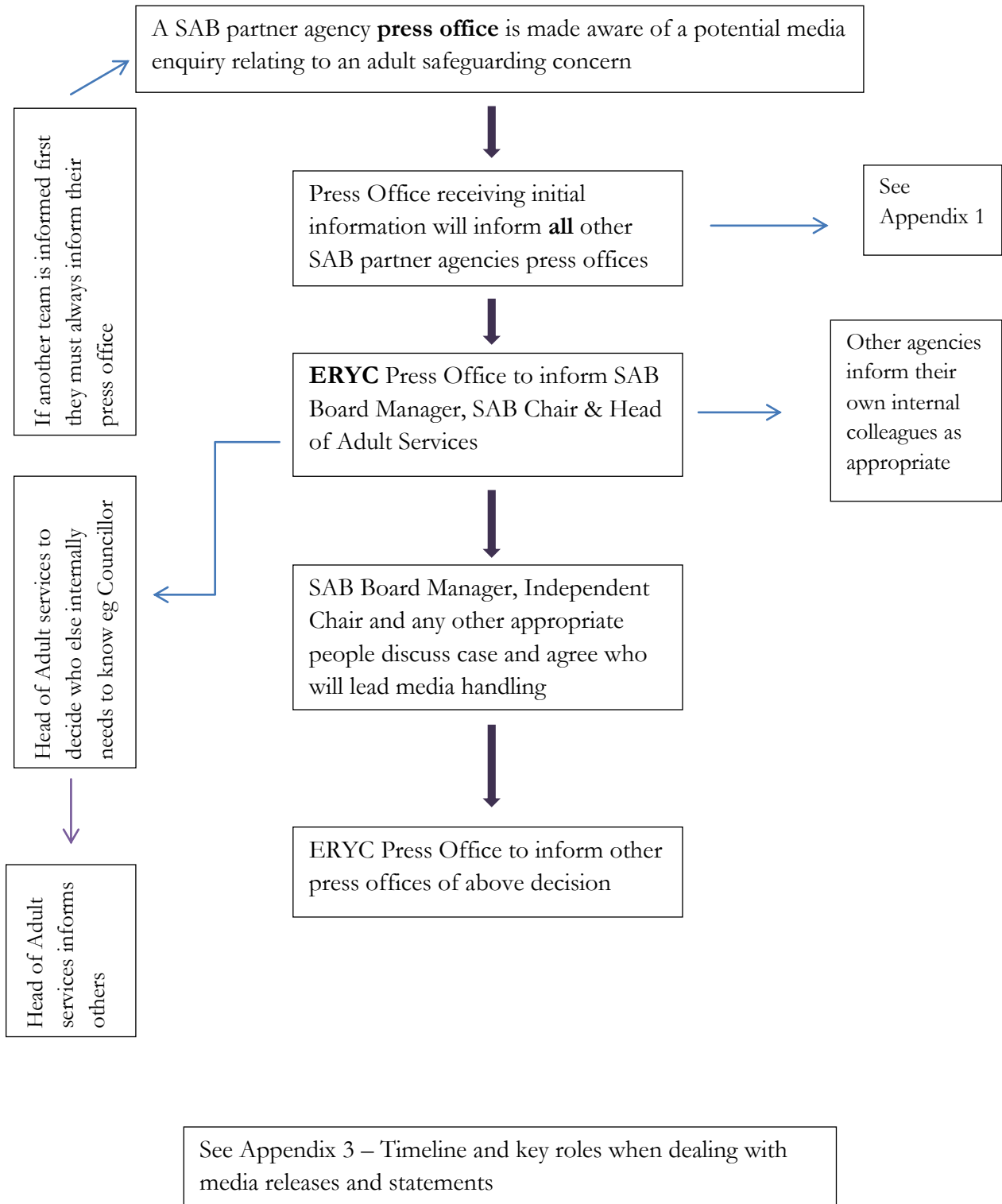
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**At a glance – leading the media handling**



Timeline and key roles – dealing with media releases & statements

What happens when a news story breaks?

