



**Strategic Plan**  
**September 2013 – March 2017**

# **Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Strategic Plan**

## **Foreword**

*As the Chair of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) I am pleased to present this, our first Strategic Plan, for consultation.*

*The SBNI was launched in September 2012, and is composed of organisations and professions, who play a special role in protecting and safeguarding children. This plan has three sections.*

*Section 1: “An Overview of the SBNI” – describes who we are and what we have been set up to do.*

*Section 2: describes how we have chosen our priorities, conscious of the fact that we could not do everything we wanted to.*

*Section 3: is the plan itself, on which we are seeking your views.*

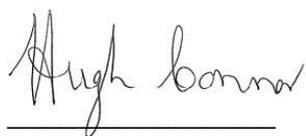
*There are approximately 430,000 children and young people in Northern Ireland, each one of whom has a unique range of talents and needs. We want all of our children and young people to be able to develop to their full potential. For this to happen, they need to grow up in a safe and caring environment and be protected from abuse or harm, from whatever source this might come. The responsibility to create this environment rests with each and every one of us but in particular with all of those organisations and professionals who work with or provide services to children and families.*

*The strategic objectives, we are proposing are challenging. They provide the foundation for our work over the next three years. They will only be achieved by the hard work, focus and energy of literally hundreds of people, who work for the member agencies and our other partners. Working together, each one of those people will play their part in keeping our children safer.*

*The first value which we as a Board adopted was that “children and young people’s wishes, feelings and experiences should be at the centre of what we do”. The challenge for the Board is not only to demonstrate to the adult world that we have made a difference in the lives of children, but to have this endorsed by the views of children themselves.*

*I would like to commend this report to you. The Board is keen to hear your views on this plan. I hope you will take the time to consider this and share your views with us.*

*Regards,*

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hugh Connor". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

*Hugh Connor*

*Chair*

## SECTION 1

### SAFEGUARDING BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND - OVERVIEW

#### 1. Introduction

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) was established in September 2012 under the Safeguarding Board (Northern Ireland) Act 2011 (the Act). The duties placed on the SBNI are stipulated in the Act. Further prescription of the membership, functions and procedures are provided for in the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (Membership, Procedure, Functions and Committee) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (the SBNI Regulations).

This Strategic Plan has been prepared to cover the period April 2013 to March 2016. Its aim is to fulfil the responsibility of the SBNI to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

The creation of the Board is a tangible demonstration of society's commitment, to protecting the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. The concentration will be upon looking at, how those agencies which make up the SBNI, can individually, and collectively, improve, their services and governance arrangements for families and children at risk or in considerable need. The Board will seek to coordinate the efforts of all its member agencies, to tackle issues in a coordinated and holistic fashion.

The term safeguarding is intended to be used in its widest sense, that is, to encompass both prevention and protection activity. Morrison highlighted that the safeguarding needs and risks to children who do not reach the threshold for statutory child welfare responses can be as severe as the risks to children who are within the formal multi-agency Child Care system (Morrison 2006). These have tended to be families characterised by emotional abuse or neglect which

appear on the surface to cope, but where children are very vulnerable to longer term effects, or which may be prone to sudden deterioration. Such cases rarely receive intensive or co-ordinated interventions.

Safeguarding children is the process of preventing impairment of children's health and development, and of ensuring they are growing up safely and securely and provided with effective care, all of which collectively enables them to attain greater success in adulthood. Safeguarding also extends to protecting children from abuse or neglect, when it occurs, including the promotion and protection of children's rights.

The annual business plan will provide a process by which the strategic plan can be delivered over three years. The objectives set within the business plan will therefore reflect the Board's strategy.

Section 7 of the Act states that SBNI shall establish the following:

- A prescribed number of committees to be called 'Safeguarding Panels';
- A committee to be called 'the Child Death Overview Panel'; and
- A committee to be called 'the Case Management Review Panel'.

In addition, the SBNI has the statutory power to establish other committees in order to facilitate its work. These are:

- Policy and Procedures;
- Communication and Engagement
- Education and Training
- Effectiveness and Governance

The Board must deliver its functions as set out in legislation and will therefore rely heavily upon its various committees to deliver on its annual business plan.

The SBNI Committees will act as 'programme boards' to drive the work forward. For each sub-objective allocated to them, they will develop detailed plans which

will identify specific project tasks. Each Committee will monitor progress on a regular basis, and the Board will receive a composite update of progress.

## 2. **Strategic Context**

The SBNI had been established because of the Northern Ireland Executive commitment to safeguard children. This is in keeping with the Executive's 10 year strategy for Children and Young People, '*Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge*' which seeks to achieve the following outcomes for all children and young people:

- Being healthy;
- Enjoying, learning and achieving;
- Living in safety and stability;
- Experience economic and environmental well-being;
- Contributing positively to community and society; and
- Living in a society which respects their rights.

The SBNI is bound by obligations to protect children in existing international and domestic law including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The UNCRC is an international agreement on the rights of children. It sets out the basic rights to which all children are entitled, in all areas of their lives. In 1991 the UK Government ratified the Convention, thereby committing itself to promotion of children's rights, through the provision of services as well as other means.

There are four guiding principles of the UNCRC:

- Non-discrimination, (Article 2)
- The best interests of the child (Article 3)

- Respect for the child's view and the right to participate and for their view to be given due weight (Article 12)
- The child's right to life, survival and development (Article 6).

Taken together, these principles form the corner-stones of the Convention, which provides a set of minimum standards for children's civil, political, economic and cultural rights. In addition to ensuring these guiding principles are central to the work of the SBNI, it will also make particular reference to Articles 19, 34, 36 and 39.

Article 19 relates to protection of the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent (s), legal guardian (s) or any other person who has the care of the child. Article 34 makes reference to protecting the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Article 36 states Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare. Article 37 places an emphasis on protection from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and Article 39 requires Parties to take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of any form of abuse identified in the above Articles.

SBNI also consider the UN Committee's Concluding Observations as important underpinnings in taking the Strategic Plan forward. The Committee whilst welcoming the efforts undertaken to tackle the problem of violence, abuse and neglect against children, reiterated its alarm at the still high prevalence including in the home, and at the lack of a comprehensive nationwide strategy. SBNI support the work of the UNCRC in its entirety and given the Board's commitment to the promotion and protection of children's rights, it supports the recommendation by the UNCRC Committee that there should be a removal of the deference of reasonable chastisement and the total prohibition of physical punishment.

The SBNI Strategic Plan also engages the child's rights under ECHR Article 2, the right to life, Article 3, the right to freedom from torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment under and Article 8, the respect for private and family life.

The UNCRD sets the standard when practitioners are working with children who have disabilities. SBNI recognise that children with disabilities are vulnerable to the violation of their rights and require adequate protection. Of particular relevance are Articles 7, 16 and 31. Article 7 requires the State to ensure the 'full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children'. Article 16 requires States to take all appropriate measures to protect person with disabilities from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse and Article 31 sets down the requirements for the state on the provision of statistics and data collection. This Article requires information collated to be disaggregated by disability and disseminated in an accessible manner to person with disabilities and others.

Obligations have been placed upon statutory bodies including SBNI to engage directly with children and young people, as the group who will be most impacted by the role of SBNI. These obligations include Section 75 of the NI Act 1998, UNCRC Article 12 and UNCRPD Article 7. Obligations associated with Article 12 mean that it is important for SBNI to consider whether the voice of the child is promoted; is the voice of the child integral to service design, planning, delivery and evaluation. SBNI uphold these principles and will review on a regular basis.

Section 10 of the Act sets out the duty on the Board, its Committees and its member agencies to cooperate with each with each other in the exercise of the SBNI's functions. The SBNI has the power (Section 11) to request information from member agencies. This power will be exercised judiciously and only when it is necessary and proportionate to the purpose for which it is being sought. The SBNI will develop Information Sharing Guidance in conjunction with member agencies, to assist in the sharing of information within agencies, with the SBNI, and each other.

The Act stipulates each member agency must make arrangements for ensuring that their functions are exercised having due regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The SBNI will seek assurance from each agency at an organisational and/or strategic level that the following is in place:

- Senior Management commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promotion children's welfare;
- A clear statement of the agency's responsibilities towards children which is available to staff;
- A clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;
- Service development in respect of the need to safeguard and promote children's welfare is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children and families;
- Staff training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agency's primary functions, in contact with children and families;
- Safer recruitment policies are in place;
- Effective inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and
- Effective information sharing arrangements.

The SBNI will establish arrangements for auditing, including self-audit, on how agencies are meeting their duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The SBNI will use a range of measures including a peer review process based on self-evaluation, performance indicators and joint audit. Its aim is to promote high standards of safeguarding work and to foster a culture of continuous improvement. It will also identify and act on identified weaknesses in services and report on these in the SBNI's annual report.

### 3. **SBNI Function**

As stipulated by Regulation 16 the SBNI must ensure that it exercises its functions in a manner that:

- Takes into account the views of children and young person's on the effectiveness of the arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- Takes into account the importance of parents and other carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; and
- Is transparent, proportionate and consistent.

The key functions of the SBNI are:

- To co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;
- To develop policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;
- Promote an awareness of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- Keep under review the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the Board to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- To undertake Case Management Reviews, in order to learn lessons in cases where children have died or have been significantly harmed;
- To review information in relation to the sudden and unexpected deaths of children;<sup>1</sup>
- To promote communication between the SBNI and children and young people;

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<sup>1</sup> It is planned that this function will become operational in 2013.

- Advise the Regional Health and Social Care Board and local commissioning groups in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

#### **4. SBNI Purpose**

To co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

#### **5. SBNI Vision**

“To promote the provision of early intervention<sup>2</sup> services which would prevent harm arising to children and young people and ensure that those most at risk are protected from death or repeated harm by having in place an effective protection service which also offers therapeutic intervention”.

#### **6. SBNI Values**

- Children and young people’s wishes, feelings and experiences placed at the centre;
- A relentless focus on the timeliness, quality and effectiveness of help given to children, young people and their families;
- The availability of a range of help and services to match the variety of needs of children, young people and their families;
- Recognising that risk and uncertainty are features of the system where risk can never be eliminated but it can be managed smarter;
- Trusting professionals and giving them the scope to exercise their professional judgment in deciding how to help children, young people and their families;
- The development of professional expertise to work effectively with children, young people and their families;

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<sup>2</sup> SBNI define early intervention as encompassing both early age and early stage intervention (irrespective of age)

- Continuous learning and improvement, by reflecting critically on practice to identify problems and opportunities for a more effective system;
- To ensure that all children receive the same legal protection from assault as adults.

## **7. SBNI Objectives**

The child protection system is centred on five interlocking objectives:

- Reducing the prevalence and incidence of child abuse and neglect through preventative approaches;
- Reducing the child mortality rate as a consequence of having a system for identifying and protecting children at risk of significant harm;
- Preventing children identified as being in need of protection from experiencing repeated harm;
- Addressing the effects of the harm experienced by children on their development and promoting their welfare resulting in improved psychological and social functioning and improved educational attainment;
- Addressing the needs of other family members so that they are in a better position to provide for the care and future protection of the child.

## **8. SBNI Strategic Priorities 2013 – 2016**

- working in partnership to ensure children and young people are living in safety and with stability;
- protect and safeguard children by responding to new and emerging concerns;
- providing leadership and setting direction;
- driving improvements in the current child protection system;
- building the capacity of the Safeguarding Board in the medium term.

## 9. **The Children and Young People's Partnership**

The purpose of the Partnership is to put in place integrated planning and commissioning across agencies and sectors in relation to the OFMDFM, 6 outcomes for children and young people. This is recorded through the Children and Young People's Plan, which is aimed at improving wellbeing and realising the rights of children in Northern Ireland. The SBNI will agree arrangements with the CYPSP to ensure that safeguarding issues can be raised and properly addressed within the planning and commissioning mechanisms. These arrangements will take into account each other's objectives and functions to ensure that duplication of work is avoided.

The partner agencies on the CYPSP relate to a range of strategies and policies in relation to requirements in terms of children and young people. Some key strategies are also being revised at present, so agencies need to review their own strategies and action plans in the light of changing expectations from Government.

The SBNI will also need to take into account the work and action plans of wider Government strategic policy agendas affecting children and young people.

## SECTION 2

### SAFEGUARDING BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND – CHOOSING OUR PRIORITIES

#### 1. **SBNI Membership**

The membership of the SBNI is made up of representatives from the Health and Social Care Trusts, Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency, Probation Board, the Police, Education and Library Boards, District Councils, Youth Justice Agency, the Prison Service, lay members and independent, voluntary representation from the NSPCC, Barnardo's, Action for Children, Include Youth, The Children's Law Centre and Children in Northern Ireland.

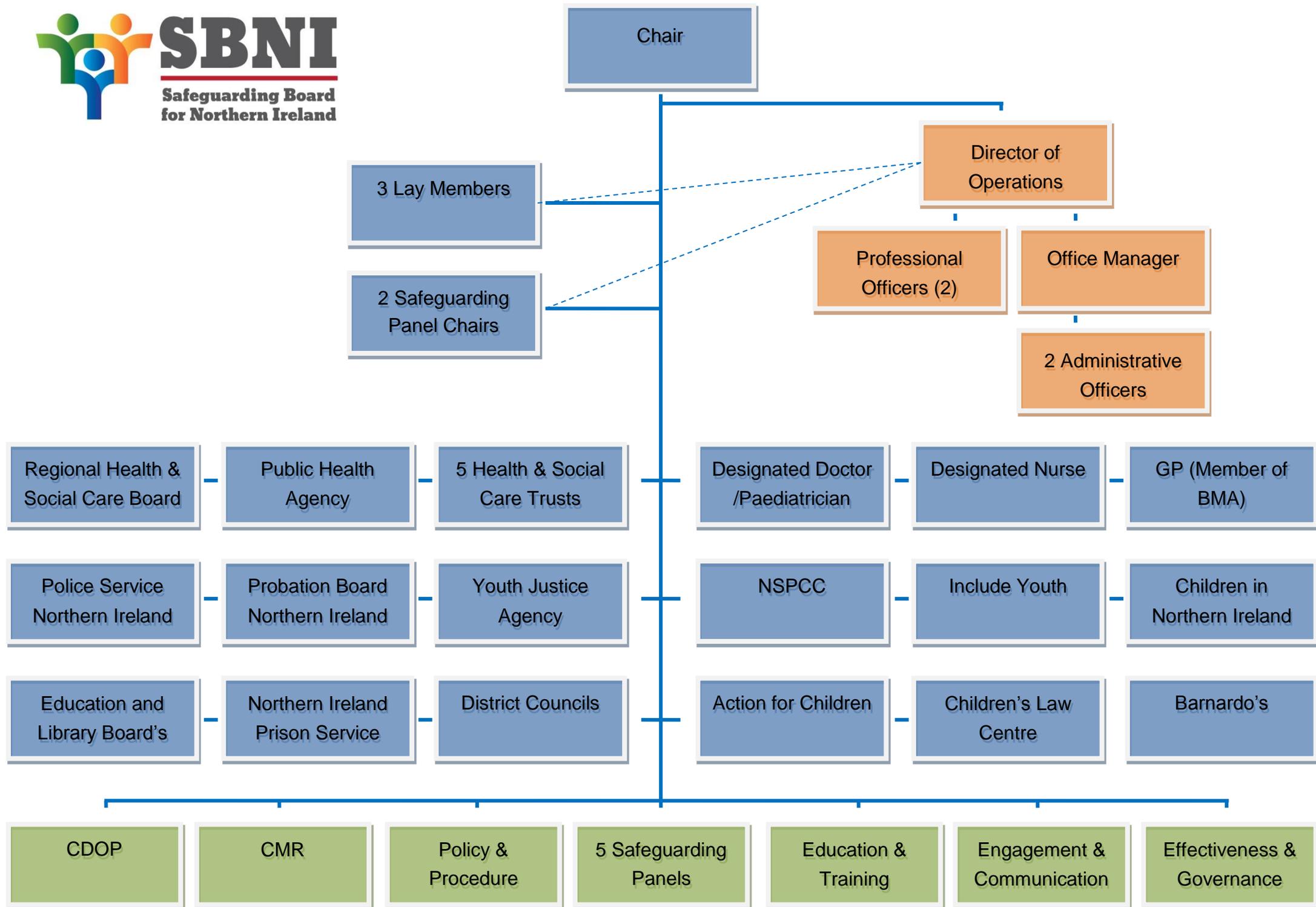
Member Agencies were cited in the Safeguarding Board Act (NI) 2011, because of their duty and capacity to safeguard and promote children's welfare in the context of the services which they currently provide. The SBNI has developed strong working relationships with its Member Agencies and with wider strategic partnerships within Northern Ireland; however the SBNI exercises a unique statutory role in being independent of all of these bodies. This means that the SBNI must be able to form a view of local activity, to challenge organisations as necessary and speak with an independent voice. The Member Agencies of the SBNI recognise that the SBNI role is that of oversight and scrutiny rather than operational delivery. It is through the work of the Member Agencies that the strategic priorities identified by the SBNI will be driven forward.

The Board meets six times a year in relation to SBNI business, (two of which are for training and development purposes). The Board has established a number of committees (some of which are identified in Statute) who are each responsible for delivering on specific key functions of the SBNI as identified in Section 1. The Committees include:

- Five safeguarding panels

- Case Management Review Panel (CRMP) - A key objective for the SBNI is to undertake Case Management Reviews (CMRs) in order to learn lessons in cases where children have died or have been seriously injured.
- Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) - Under Section 7 of the Safeguarding Board Act (NI) 2011, the SBNI is required to establish a Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP), which must review such information as may be prescribed in relation to deaths of children in NI. The purpose of CDOP is to collect, analyse and review information about child deaths in Northern Ireland with the purpose of identifying common, preventable factors and to work with the Public Health Approach in relation to learning and prevention.
- Policy and Procedures
- Communication and Awareness Raising
- Education and Training
- Effectiveness

See organisation chart below.



## **2. Identifying Strategic Priorities**

SBNI's strategic priorities have been identified and developed through working with the Member Agencies and other partners all of whom have contributed to this discussion. Each year the SBNI will produce its business plan and work programmes and these will be regularly reviewed to make sure we are doing what we said we would do. Sometimes other priorities may emerge as a result of government policies or from Case Management Reviews. If this happens we will revisit our plans and may decide to include some areas of work which weren't there at the beginning of the year.

As highlighted in Section 1 the SBNI has identified 5 strategic priorities for the period 2013 – 2016. Each priority will feature in the SBNI annual business plan which will detail the specific objectives to be delivered, and how these will lead to improved outcomes for children and young people. Each objective will be assigned to a specific committee, task group or individual who will be responsible for its delivery.

The key priorities contained in this document set out the strategic direction for the SBNI over the next 3 years. They are closely aligned with the core functions of the SBNI, as defined in legislation. The strategy takes account of the continuum of service provision in respect of safeguarding and includes prevention, early intervention and formal child protection procedures.

The SBNI recognises that it cannot target all the issues affecting the safety and wellbeing of children. Indeed it is not the organisation's strategic responsibility to do so. The Board accepts that other safeguarding child protection priorities could have been included in this plan. Many of these other issues are also of considerable importance in relation to the safeguarding and protection of children. The Board recognises that choices have to be made.

These choices have been made on the basis of the following feedback from:

- Voluntary & Statutory Organisations in relation to safeguarding priorities identified by children & young people;
- Practitioners;

- Member Agencies;
- SBNI's strategic responsibilities;
- Lessons from research;
- Lessons from Case Management Reviews; and
- The Board's determination to avoid duplication by not taking on tasks on which others are leading.

In an attempt to avoid the latter, the SBNI undertook a joint exercise with the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPSP) to consider the current thematic priorities for the CYPSP and SBNI. Both groups considered their unique input using the following classifications:

- the groups of children the SBNI has to 'protect', as part of its core functions, irrespective of resource limitations and organisational changes and require on-going or new work;
- the groups of children that the CYPSP or SBNI should give high priority to and require on-going or new work;
- the groups of children that the CYPSP or SBNI are unable to undertake active work with but either/both should continue to monitor need and service provision in some way;
- the groups of children that other partnerships are or can work with and can be held to account by the SBNI and/or CYPSP for this work.

Using this exercise as a filter was the first step in the process to identify our priorities.

Given the Board's core objectives of "ensuring and coordinating the effectiveness of what is done by Member Agencies to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children in NI", the SBNI can play a number of roles including monitoring, evaluating, challenging, driving change, and leading in relation to its core functions. This means that even if some themes are not issues that the Board will seek to directly tackle, it can still take steps to ensure, through the work of others, that progress is being made in protecting children. Examples of this are:

- Children who are living in circumstances where there is:
  - Domestic Violence
  - Parental mental health problems
  - Parental alcohol and drugs problems

Significant service developments in these areas are currently being taken forward by the Public Health Agency (PHA), Children and Young Person's strategic Partnership (CYPSP), DHSSPS, Department of Justice and Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) in its commissioning role.

### **3. SBNI Priorities**

In taking forward its priorities, the Board has sought to better understand the environment within which our children and young people live. In Northern Ireland the population of under 18 year olds is: 430,763, which represents 24% of the total population in Northern Ireland (Census data 2011). The Northern Ireland population has become increasingly diverse. On Census Day 2011 it was identified that 1.8% (32,400) of the usually resident population of Northern Ireland belonged to minority ethnic groups, more than double the proportion in 2001. The main ethnic groups were Chinese (6,300 people), Indian (6,200), Mixed (6,000) and other Asian (5,000) each accounting for around 0.3% of the usually resident population. A further 0.1% (1,300) of people were Irish Travellers. It therefore important that SBNI recognises the role that ethnicity might play in the interaction between parents, professionals and children in relation to safeguarding issues. SBNI will consider the needs of these diverse groups when taking forward its Strategic objectives.

At 30 June 2013, 1,790 children were listed on Child Protection Register in Northern Ireland. The largest proportion of children were on the Register due to Neglect Only (31%), with 28% on the Register due to Physical Abuse Only.

It is recognised that not all children who are subject to abuse will have been referred to Child Protection Services and it is generally accepted that figures on child protection registers will be an underestimation of the extent of abuse.

Although some children are on the child protection register due to a specific category of abuse, many children will have experienced multiple problems. Multiple adversities in childhood have been shown to have profound effects upon individuals in different ways not just in childhood but across the whole course of their life. The tendency for Professionals to sometimes focus on singular events such as child abuse can obscure or hide the longer term damage of cumulative adversity.

Well recognised risk factors for children include poverty, parental mental health problems, domestic violence and parental alcohol and drug problems. The cumulative and interactive impact of these risks on an individual's social, emotional and psychological health cannot be underestimated.

As a consequence, the SBNI will seek to ensure that Member Agencies take more account of children's experiences of multiple adversities; a lesson highlighted in several Case Management Reviews. The needs of children who experience neglect and multiple adversities will be a priority for SBNI.

The Board will also develop a collaborative and analytical process to review such cases in order to enhance learning and quality assure practice.

SBNI recognise that not all sexual abuse against children is committed by adults. There is a broad consensus supported by extensive evidence (NSPCC Sexual and Physical Violence against Children in NI, A statistical overview 2008 – 2010) that between 25% and 33% of all sexual abuse is perpetrated by children and young people. Children who display sexually harmful behaviours (SHB) present significant and incredibly complex issues which straddle many systems and processes. It is an issue that merits a strategic policy framework that drives systems and interventions with the young people, their families and their victims.

In terms of vulnerability to abuse, research would suggest that disabled children are more likely to be abused than non-disabled children. The UNCRPD defines disability as 'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and

effective participation in society on a equal basis with others'. Although vulnerable, it is noted that on our current Child Protection Register, disabled children are under-represented. The Board will want to examine the current level of collaboration between Professionals with safeguarding expertise and those Professionals who are expert in disability, in order to consider whether the current arrangements are working to best effect across the province. The SBNI will seek assurance through its partnership arrangements that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place.

One of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our society are Looked After Children, DHSSPS (Care Matters, March 2007). In comparison to non-Looked After Children their outcomes are poorer, including lower educational attainment and much higher rates of unemployment. At 31 March 2012, there were 2,644 LAC in Northern Ireland. Of these 74% of these were in Foster Care, 11.2% were placed with family and 8.7% were in Residential Care.

The numbers of Looked After Children who go missing from home are disproportionately high. PSNI statistics highlighted that 56% of children who go missing are between the ages of 15 and 17 years. 33% of these young people are Looked After and are living in children's homes. These children are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, which is defined as "a form of sexual abuse where children or young people are exploited, coerced and /or manipulated into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something they need or desire and/or for the gain of a third person".

There are no definitive figures regarding the prevalence of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Northern Ireland, however research into CSE completed over a 2 year period by Barnardo's NI "Not a World Away "(Nov 2011) found that, of 1102 young people in the sample known to Social Services, Sexual Exploitation was identified as an issue of concern for almost one in seven, with almost one in five being assessed as at significant risk of sexual exploitation.

Recently, there have been several extensively reported cases in other parts of the UK, of children being exposed to severe sexual exploitation and degradation. While it is usual for there to be special attention on Looked After

Children, the Board recognises that it must not view this problem in such a narrow way. Therefore, it will seek to develop a coordinated and consistent multi-agency approach to the identification of all children who are at such risk. Given that no other body is taking a strategic lead on this issue, the Board has decided to make this one of its key emerging priorities.

A further emerging issue is the risks which digital technology can pose to some young people. As the use of communication technology has grown, it is no longer enough to consider child safety in a purely 'real world' focus. To safeguard our children and young people, we must recognise that a greater percentage of children's time is spent connected to the online world and that this world poses risks as well as benefits.

The SBNI believes it is imperative that we educate our young people, their parents and professional carers, to ensure that all develop a safe and informed approach to the use of technology.

Therefore, it was agreed that the Board would work to develop a coordinated strategy and working model to help children at risk of:

- Becoming criminalised through on-line activity;
- Bullying through cyber activity;
- Sexual abuse (through 'sexting' and on-line exploitation).

#### **4. Review and Monitoring**

The Board will receive regular reports on progress on its strategic plan and annual business plan, through an agreed reporting structure from its committees. At the end of each year the business plan will be reviewed and a new one agreed for the following year.

As part of this process, the Board will carry out a "Section 12 Audit" to review with Member Agencies how well they are safeguarding and protecting children in Northern Ireland. This duty which was set out in legislation requires Member Agencies to review their performance against a number of policy issues and to

identify any areas of concern or underperformance. The Board will also use Case Management Reviews, the work of the 5 Safeguarding Panels and its consultations with children, families and front-line staff to produce a more rounded picture of how children are being safeguarded.

Each year the Board will lay before the Assembly, a report on its work which will include a report by the various committees.

## SECTION 3

### SBNI PRIORITIES SEPTEMBER 2013 – MARCH 2017

Strategic Priority 1	<b>Work in Partnership to ensure children and young people are living in safety and with stability</b>
1.1	<p>Work with organisations / partnerships e.g. Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) and Domestic Violence Partnerships to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements are in place for children and young people who are living in circumstances where there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• Parental mental health problems</li> <li>• Parental alcohol and drugs problems</li> </ul> <p>The voice of children will form part of the evaluation of effectiveness. (Section 3 (9) (10) SBNI Act 2011; 2.3.9 SBNI Guidance)</p>
1.2	<p>Work with member agencies to ensure that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place for children and young people with a disability</p> <p>The voice of children will form part of the evaluation of effectiveness. (Section 3 (9) (10) SBNI Act 2011; 2.3.9 SBNI Guidance)</p>
1.3	<p>Work with member agencies to ensure that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place for those young people who are at risk of sexual and violent offending</p> <p>(Section 3 (9) (10) SBNI Act 2011; 2.3.9 SBNI Guidance)</p>
1.4	<p>To uphold the principles of the UNCRC and support Member Agencies in their work to remove the defence of reasonable chastisement and the total prohibition of physical punishment.</p> <p>(Section 1.1 SBNI Guidance)</p>

Strategic Priority 2	<b>Protect and safeguard children by responding to new and emerging concerns</b>
2.1	<p>Work with member agencies to develop a coordinated strategy and working model to protect and safeguard children who go missing from home or care and / or at risk of sexual exploitation.</p> <p>(Section 3 (9) (10) SBNI Act 2011; 2.3.9 SBNI Guidance)</p>
2.2	<p>Work with member agencies to develop a coordinated strategy and working model to help children at risk of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becoming criminalised through on-line activity;</li> <li>• Bullying through cyber activity;</li> <li>• Sexual abuse (through ‘sexting’ and on-line exploitation).</li> </ul> <p>(Section 3 (9) (10) SBNI Act 2011; 2.3.9 SBNI Guidance)</p>

<b>Strategic Priority 3</b>	<b>Providing leadership and setting direction</b>
3.1	<p>Seek to develop consistent practice across the region by reviewing the existing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect and safeguard children to ensure greater consistency and standardisation of practice.</p> <p>(Section 3 (1) SBNI Act; Regulation 18; Section 2.3.1 SBNI Guidance)</p>
3.2	<p>Improve multi-agency working by developing a multi-agency education and training strategy to ensure that child protection training is delivered effectively and consistently to member agencies taking account of new and emerging trends or issues.</p> <p>Section 3 (1) SBNI Act; Regulation 18; Section 2.3.1 SBNI Guidance)</p>
3.3	<p>Raise awareness of child protection issues by developing an engagement and communication strategy to ensure that children, young people, families and communities are more aware of child safeguarding issues and how to get help if concerned.</p> <p>(Section 3 (2) &amp; (7) SBNI Act; Regulation 16 (a) &amp; 19; Section 2.3.2 &amp; 2.3.7 SBNI Guidance)</p>
3.4	<p>Develop a process within each Independent Safeguarding Panel to engage with frontline practitioners to hear their views on the current strengths and weaknesses of the child protection / safeguarding system in order to improve practice.</p> <p>(Section 3 (2) &amp; (7) SBNI Act; Regulation 16 (a) &amp; 19; Section 2.3.2 &amp; 2.3.7 SBNI Guidance)</p>

<b>Strategic Priority 4</b>	<b>Driving improvements in the current child protection system</b>
4.1	<p>Influence practice positively and enhance the learning from Case Management Reviews, by improving the CMR process.</p> <p>(Section 3 (4) SBNI Act; Regulation 17 (2) &amp; (3), and Regulation 38, Annex B SBNI Guidance)</p>
4.2	<p>Initiate a child death overview panel in order to understand trends in child deaths and where possible take preventative action to reduce occurrences in the future.</p> <p>(Section 3 (5) SBNI Act 2011)</p>
4.3	<p>Develop within each Safeguarding Panel a process to review cases in order to enhance learning. Themes to be based on key lessons identified from CMRs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long standing children in need / protection cases where neglect and multiple advertisements have been a causal factor.</li> </ul> <p>(Section 12 SBNI Act 2011; Section 2.2.3 SBNI Guidance)</p>

<b>Strategic Priority 5</b>	<b>Building the capacity of the Safeguarding Board in the medium term</b>
5.1	<p>Work to keep children safer by improving our understanding of the information currently held by member agencies and promoting effective sharing of this information on a multi-agency level between professionals / agencies by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying the information organisations currently hold;</li> <li>• Evaluating the strengths, weaknesses and gaps;</li> <li>• The development of an Information Sharing Agreement Protocol;</li> <li>• Evaluating alternative models of sharing information to better protect children.</li> </ul> <p>(Section 3 (1) SBNI Act; Regulation 18; 2.3.1 SBNI Guidance)</p>
5.2	<p>To review the effectiveness of the Board in terms of meeting its core functions. Functions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of standards and performance indicators against which the Board can be measured;</li> <li>• Judgement of how safely and effectively the child protection system is operating across the region;</li> <li>• Improve the safety and wellbeing of children by disseminating and ensuring the implementation of recommendations of Case Management Reviews.</li> </ul> <p>(Section 3 (3) SBNI Act 2011; Section 2.3.3 SBNI Guidance; (Section 3 (9) (a) SBNI Act 2011; Section 2.3.9 SBNI Guidance))</p>
5.3	<p>Develop, pilot and implement a child protection governance model to improve the capacity of member agencies individually and collectively to better protect children. This would involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of the section 12 legal duty to understand the current child protection / safeguarding governance arrangements each organisation has in place;</li> <li>• The review of governance escalation models which are informed by the views of children and young people, families, frontline staff and reports of inspectorial/regulatory bodies.</li> <li>• Working with HSCB and HSCTs to better understand their thresholds.</li> </ul> <p>(Section 12 SBNI Act 2011; Section 2.2.2 SBNI Guidance)</p>