



Safeguarding Board Reporting Guidance

Turning safeguarding data into board-level insight

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), Safeguarding Leads, Welfare Officers, Senior Leaders, Trustees and Board Members.

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INTRODUCTION

Why This Guide Exists

A safeguarding board report should do more than present numbers. Its purpose is to help leaders understand where safeguarding risks exist, what has changed since the last reporting period, whether safeguarding arrangements are effective, whether practice is improving, and what action or decisions are required.

A good report enables effective governance. It should give the Board confidence that safeguarding risks are understood, appropriately managed and continually reviewed.

The Board should leave the meeting able to answer five questions:

- 1** What are our biggest safeguarding risks?
- 2** What has changed since the last report?
- 3** Are we responding effectively?
- 4** Are we improving?
- 5** What decisions or support are required from us?

SECTION 01

Every Number Needs Context

Safeguarding data should never be presented in isolation.

Instead of writing:

WEAK

"There were 56 safeguarding concerns this quarter."

Provide context:

STRONG

"There were 56 safeguarding concerns this quarter, compared with 44 last quarter and 53 during the same quarter last year. The increase relates primarily to low-severity safeguarding concerns following staff refresher training. High-risk concerns have remained stable."

When presenting any metric, consider whether it should be compared with:

- Previous reporting period
- Same reporting period last year (to account for seasonal trends)
- Rolling 12-month trend
- Changes in participant numbers
- Changes in staffing
- Growth in services or locations
- New programmes or events
- Increased safeguarding awareness or training
- Changes in reporting systems or procedures

Numbers alone rarely tell the whole story.

SECTION 02

Turning Data into Board-Level Insight

Use this simple framework throughout the report.

STOP REPORTING INCIDENTS.
START DESCRIBING RISK.

The Same Facts, Three Audiences

The same underlying facts read very differently depending on who is describing them. A board report should do the translation for the Board, not leave them to do it themselves.

What happened?

(Practitioner language)

- 6 bullying cases
- 4 emotional abuse cases
- 3 self-harm cases

What are we seeing?

(Professional interpretation)

- Increase in mental wellbeing concerns
- More peer-on-peer conflict
- Emerging online harm themes

Why should the board care?

(Board language)

- Risk to wellbeing
- Reputational risk
- Resource implications
- Need for intervention
- Emerging trend requiring oversight

THE BOARD DOESN'T WANT DATA

IT WANTS ANSWERS AND ASSURANCE

EXAMPLE 1 • Reporting Volume

DATA 48 safeguarding concerns reported	INFORMATION Reporting increased by 20% vs. previous quarter	INSIGHT Increase relates mainly to earlier reporting of low-severity concerns	ACTION Additional supervision and refresher training introduced	IMPACT Faster intervention, fewer repeat concerns
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EXAMPLE 2 • Online Harm

DATA Online harm featured in 38% of concerns	INFORMATION Up from 19% in the previous quarter	INSIGHT Online harm is now the most significant emerging theme	ACTION Targeted online safety training introduced	IMPACT Earlier identification of online risks
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EXAMPLE 3 • Staff Conduct

DATA 5 low-level concerns recorded	INFORMATION Compared with 2 in the previous quarter	INSIGHT Increase reflects reporting confidence, not rising risk	ACTION Continue monitoring through supervision	IMPACT Emerging behaviours addressed earlier
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EXAMPLE 4 • Statutory Referrals

DATA 6 statutory referrals this quarter	INFORMATION Stable against a range of 5-7 in recent quarters	INSIGHT Referral thresholds are being applied consistently	ACTION Continue existing multi-agency arrangements	IMPACT Consistent escalation of the most serious concerns
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EXAMPLE 5 • Training Compliance

DATA 92% training completion	INFORMATION Most outstanding training relates to volunteers	INSIGHT Compliance gaps are concentrated within one group	ACTION Offer more flexible training options and reminders	IMPACT Completion rates improve and knowledge gaps reduce
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EXAMPLE 6 • Out-of-Hours Reporting

DATA 30% of reports are submitted out of hours	INFORMATION Several urgent reports were not reviewed until the next working day	INSIGHT Current arrangements may not sufficiently support urgent concerns outside normal hours	ACTION Review out-of-hours guidance and escalation procedures	IMPACT Urgent concerns are escalated more quickly and response times improve
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THE OBJECTIVE

Move beyond reporting activity and towards supporting decisions.

SECTION 03

Suggested Board Report Structure

► Executive Summary

This should provide a concise overview of the safeguarding position.

Include:

- Overall safeguarding risk level (e.g. Green / Amber / Red)
- Key themes
- Significant changes since the previous report
- Positive developments
- Significant risks requiring Board attention
- Key recommendations

EXAMPLE

Reporting has increased by 18% compared with the previous quarter and remains broadly consistent with the same period last year. The increase is largely due to low-severity safeguarding concerns being identified earlier. Mental wellbeing and peer-on-peer behaviour remain the most significant themes. No increase in high-risk concerns has been identified.

► Safeguarding Activity

Provide an overview of safeguarding activity. Include where appropriate:

- Total safeguarding concerns, open cases, closed cases
- Referrals to statutory agencies
- Concerns by severity and by category
- Child safeguarding concerns / adult safeguarding concerns
- Concerns involving staff, volunteers or third parties
- Concerns by department, location or activity

Always provide context.

Measure	Current Q	Previous Q	Same Q Last Year	Commentary
Total concerns	56	44	53	Broadly in line with seasonal trend
High-risk concerns	4	5	4	Stable
Low-severity concerns	32	20	25	Increased following refresher training
Statutory referrals	6	7	5	Stable

► Staff Conduct, Low-Level Concerns and Allegations

Boards should receive assurance not only about safeguarding concerns affecting children or adults at risk, but also about concerns relating to the conduct of staff and volunteers.

IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

Low-severity concerns relate to the assessed severity of safeguarding cases.

Low-level concerns relate specifically to concerns about the behaviour or conduct of staff or volunteers that do not meet the threshold for an allegation but may indicate emerging risks or cultural issues.

Include where appropriate:

- Number of low-level concerns
- Number of allegations meeting the harm threshold
- Referrals to the LADO or other relevant agencies (where applicable)
- Investigation outcomes
- Emerging themes or repeated behaviours
- Learning identified and policy or practice improvements

EXAMPLE NARRATIVE

Five low-level concerns relating to staff conduct were recorded during the reporting period compared with two in the previous quarter. None met the threshold for an allegation. The increase is believed to reflect improved awareness and confidence in reporting following refresher training.

Two allegations met the threshold for formal investigation and were managed in accordance with organisational procedures. No recurring organisational themes have been identified.

This section should reassure the Board that staff conduct is actively monitored and that emerging concerns are addressed before they escalate.

► Themes and Emerging Risks

Categories help practitioners manage cases. Themes help Boards understand risk.

Rather than simply reporting categories, identify what the data is telling you. Examples of themes include:

- Mental wellbeing
- Peer-on-peer abuse
- Online harms
- Self-harm
- Criminal exploitation
- Adult safeguarding
- Harmful sexual behaviour

- Staff conduct
- Out-of-hours concerns

EXAMPLE

Online harm featured in 38% of safeguarding concerns compared with 19% in the previous quarter and has become the most significant emerging safeguarding theme.

The Board should be able to answer:

- What risks are increasing?
- What new risks are emerging?
- Which groups are most affected?
- Which locations or services require attention?
- What action is being taken?

► Quality of Response

This section demonstrates how effectively safeguarding concerns are managed. Possible measures include:

- Time to first review / time to first action
- Average case closure time
- Overdue actions and action completion rates
- Cases awaiting review
- Multi-agency involvement
- Safeguarding supervision

Measure	Current	Previous	Commentary
Average first review	2.1 days	3.4 days	Improved following revised triage
Average closure time	31 days	45 days	Cases progressing more efficiently
Overdue actions	9	16	Continuing improvement

► Reporting Culture

Good safeguarding depends upon people feeling confident to speak up. Low reporting does not necessarily indicate low risk.

Consider including:

- Number of reports over time
- Reporting by staff, by volunteers, and anonymous reporting
- Near misses
- Concerns by reporting source
- Areas where reporting appears unexpectedly low

EXAMPLE

The increase in low-severity safeguarding concerns is considered a positive indicator of improved reporting confidence following awareness training.

THE BOARD SHOULD ASK

"Are people confident to report safeguarding concerns?"

► Learning and Continuous Improvement

Explain how safeguarding practice is improving. Include:

- Lessons learned and audit outcomes
- Policy reviews and training delivered
- Practice improvements and actions completed
- Improvements resulting from previous Board recommendations

Learning	Action	Impact
Staff unsure about out-of-hours escalation	Guidance updated	Faster escalation of urgent concerns
Volunteer training gaps	Evening sessions introduced	Completion increased from 82% to 96%

► Are We Improving?

Avoid measuring success solely by whether incident numbers have increased or decreased. Improvement may instead be demonstrated through:

- Increased reporting confidence
- More low-severity safeguarding concerns identified earlier
- Stable or reduced high-risk concerns
- Faster response times and fewer overdue actions
- Better action completion and reduced repeat concerns
- Improved safeguarding audits and supervision
- Improved outcomes for children and adults at risk

EXAMPLE

Although safeguarding concerns have increased overall, this appears to reflect improved reporting confidence rather than increased safeguarding risk. High-risk concerns remain stable, average response times have improved and repeat concerns have reduced.

REMEMBER

Safeguarding maturity is not measured by having fewer concerns. It is measured by how quickly risk is identified, how effectively concerns are managed and whether harm is prevented.

► Board Decisions and Recommendations

Every report should finish with clear recommendations. The Board may be asked to:

- Note key risks
- Approve investment
- Endorse training
- Support policy changes
- Monitor specific risks
- Commission further analysis
- Review safeguarding resources

EXAMPLE — THE BOARD IS ASKED TO

Note the increase in online harm. • Approve targeted online safety training. • Monitor progress next quarter. • Review safeguarding resource requirements.

SECTION 04

Presenting Information Clearly

Boards absorb visuals. They understand narrative. Use visual presentation wherever possible.

Suitable visuals include:

- Trend lines
- Bar charts
- Heat maps
- RAG dashboards
- Action trackers
- Comparison tables
- Distribution charts

However, every visual should be accompanied by a short narrative. A useful rule is: every graph should answer three questions.

WHAT? <i>What does the data show?</i>	SO WHAT? <i>Why does this matter?</i>	NOW WHAT? <i>What action is required?</i>
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Example — Reporting Trend

What? Reporting increased by 22% compared with the same quarter last year.

So what? The increase relates mainly to earlier reporting of low-severity safeguarding concerns following staff training. High-risk concerns remain stable.

Now what? Continue monitoring reporting confidence and review trends next quarter.

If a graph cannot answer these three questions, it probably does not belong in the report.

SECTION 05

Context Checklist

Before presenting any metric, ask yourself:

- ☐ Compared with previous quarter?
- ☐ Compared with same quarter last year?
- ☐ Rolling annual trend considered?
- ☐ Has service provision changed?
- ☐ Have participant numbers changed?
- ☐ Has staffing changed?
- ☐ Has training taken place?
- ☐ Has the reporting process changed?
- ☐ Is there a seasonal explanation?
- ☐ Is this a trend or an isolated event?
- ☐ Does this require Board action?

► Worked Examples

A few short examples of how context reshapes the same underlying number.

SEASONAL EXPLANATION

Concerns rise every December, coinciding with the start of winter programmes and higher participant numbers. This is a seasonal pattern rather than a sign of increasing risk.

STAFFING CHANGE

A new Safeguarding Lead started in Q2. The rise in reporting since then most likely reflects improved awareness and confidence rather than a genuine increase in risk.

ISOLATED EVENT VS. TREND

A single spike in concerns followed a residential trip. Concerns returned to baseline the following month, indicating an isolated event rather than an emerging trend.

SECTION 06

Common Pitfalls

Avoid:

- Reporting numbers without context
- Too many charts
- Categories without themes
- No comparison with previous periods
- Ignoring changes in service provision
- No explanation of why changes have occurred
- No link to organisational risk
- No recommendations
- Reporting activity rather than improvement
- Expecting the Board to interpret the data themselves

A POOR REPORT SAYS

"There were 42 safeguarding concerns."

A STRONGER REPORT SAYS

"There were 42 safeguarding concerns, compared with 31 last quarter and 40 during the same period last year. Most of the increase relates to low-severity safeguarding concerns following staff refresher training. High-risk concerns remain stable. This suggests improved reporting confidence rather than increased safeguarding risk."

SECTION 07 • TEMPLATE

Example Board Report

A fuller worked example bringing together the structure set out in this guide. A real board report will typically run to several pages once every section is properly evidenced — use this as a model to adapt to your own data, themes and governance cycle.

Safeguarding Position

Reporting period: Q3 2026 • Prepared for: Board of Trustees • Prepared by: Designated Safeguarding Lead

CURRENT RISK LEVEL:
AMBER

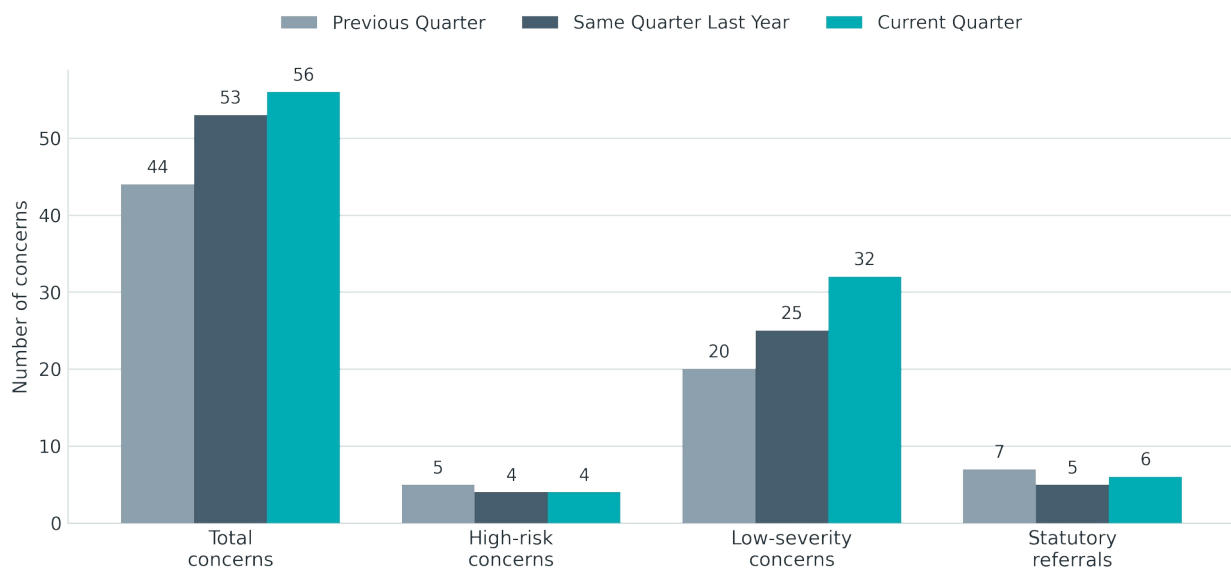
Executive Summary

Reporting has increased compared with the previous quarter but remains broadly consistent with the same period last year. The increase relates mainly to low-severity safeguarding concerns identified earlier following staff refresher training. High-risk concerns remain stable. Mental wellbeing and online harm continue to be the most significant safeguarding themes, and both are being actively monitored through targeted action.

No matters have been referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer this quarter. Statutory referrals remain within the normal range and multi-agency working continues as expected.

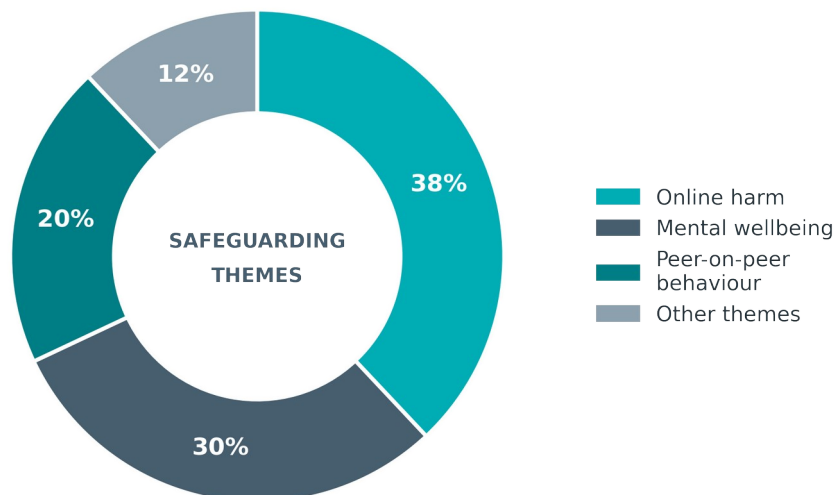
Safeguarding Activity

Measure	Current	Previous	Same Q Last Year	Commentary
Total concerns	56	44	53	In line with seasonal trend
High-risk concerns	4	5	4	Stable
Low-severity concerns	32	20	25	Increased following training
Statutory referrals	6	7	5	Stable
Overdue actions	9	16	14	Continuing to improve



Themes and Emerging Risks

- Mental wellbeing — the most frequently recorded theme this quarter
- Online harm — featured in 38% of concerns, up from 19% last quarter
- Peer-on-peer behaviour — stable, mostly resolved through early intervention
- Improved reporting confidence — evidenced by earlier identification of low-severity concerns



EXAMPLE

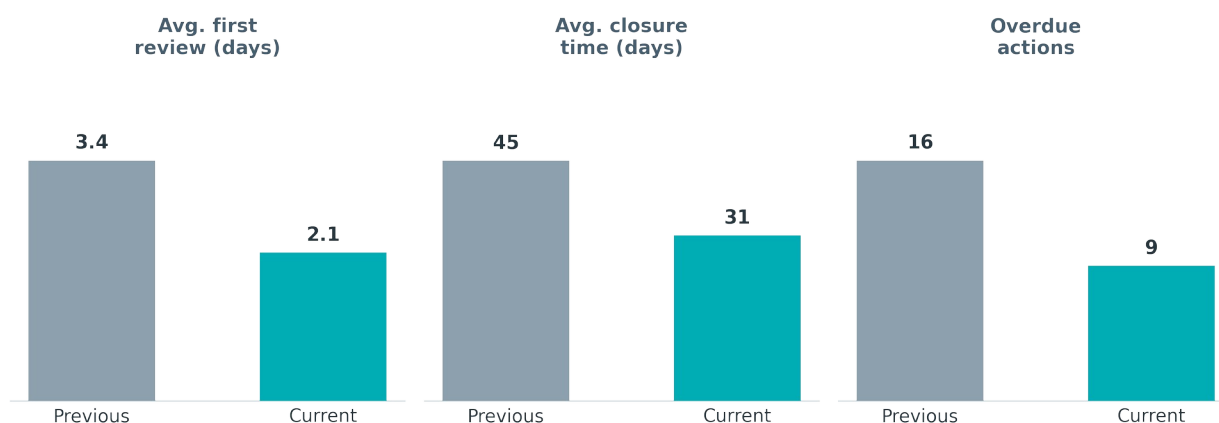
Online harm has become the most significant emerging theme this quarter. A working group has been convened to review current safeguards and identify any gaps in guidance for staff and volunteers.

Staff Conduct, Low-Level Concerns and Allegations

- Five low-level concerns recorded, compared with two last quarter
- No concerns met the threshold for a formal allegation
- No referrals to the LADO were required this quarter
- No recurring behavioural themes identified

Quality of Response

Measure	Current	Previous	Commentary
Average first review	2.1 days	3.4 days	Improved following revised triage
Average closure time	31 days	45 days	Cases progressing more efficiently
Overdue actions	9	16	Continuing improvement
Cases awaiting review	3	6	Reducing steadily



Reporting Culture

The increase in low-severity safeguarding concerns is considered a positive indicator of improved reporting confidence following awareness training. Anonymous and volunteer-reported concerns have both increased slightly, suggesting people feel able to speak up across all levels of the organisation.

Learning and Continuous Improvement

Learning	Action	Impact
Staff unsure about out-of-hours escalation	Guidance updated	Faster escalation of urgent concerns
Volunteer training gaps	Evening sessions introduced	Completion increased from 82% to 96%
Rising online harm reports	Targeted training scheduled for Q4	To be reviewed next quarter

Are We Improving?

Although safeguarding concerns have increased overall, this appears to reflect improved reporting confidence rather than increased safeguarding risk. High-risk concerns remain stable, average response times have improved and repeat concerns have reduced. Overdue actions continue to fall and case closure times have shortened significantly since the previous quarter.

What This Means for the Board

The increase in reporting appears to reflect greater confidence in identifying and reporting concerns rather than increased safeguarding risk. Online harm requires continued monitoring and targeted intervention. Staff conduct arrangements are operating effectively, with no unresolved matters outstanding.

Actions Taken This Quarter

- Staff refresher training completed
- Out-of-hours guidance updated
- Weekly safeguarding review meetings introduced
- Online safety resources refreshed
- Online harm working group convened

Board Decisions Requested

- Note current safeguarding themes and the position on online harm
- Approve targeted online safety training for Q4
- Continue monitoring reporting confidence
- Review safeguarding resourcing ahead of the next reporting period

FINAL REFLECTION

Before You Submit Your Report

Can the Board confidently answer:

- What are our biggest safeguarding risks?
- What has changed?
- Are we responding effectively?
- Are we improving?
- What decisions do we need to make?

If the answer is yes, your report is doing its job.

REMEMBER

The purpose of a safeguarding board report is not to prove that safeguarding activity has taken place. It is to provide assurance, identify risk, support effective governance and enable better decisions that improve outcomes for the people the organisation exists to protect.



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This guide is provided for the benefit of Patronus customers and their safeguarding governance teams.