

# Safeguarding Adults in Wales: Current Position, Challenges, and Opportunities

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# Purpose and overview

- Distinctive Welsh safeguarding landscape: small enough to be agile, complex enough to expose shared fault lines.
- What's working.
- What isn't.
- What needs to change.
- Key questions for the 5 Nations.

*Legislative ambition is strong - alignment and coherence remain the challenge.*

## Legislation

**Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014**

**Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015**

**Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

## Statutory guidance

**Volume 1 – Introduction and Overview**

**Volume 4 – Adult Protection and Support Orders**

**Volume 6 - Handling Individual Cases to Protect Adults at Risk**

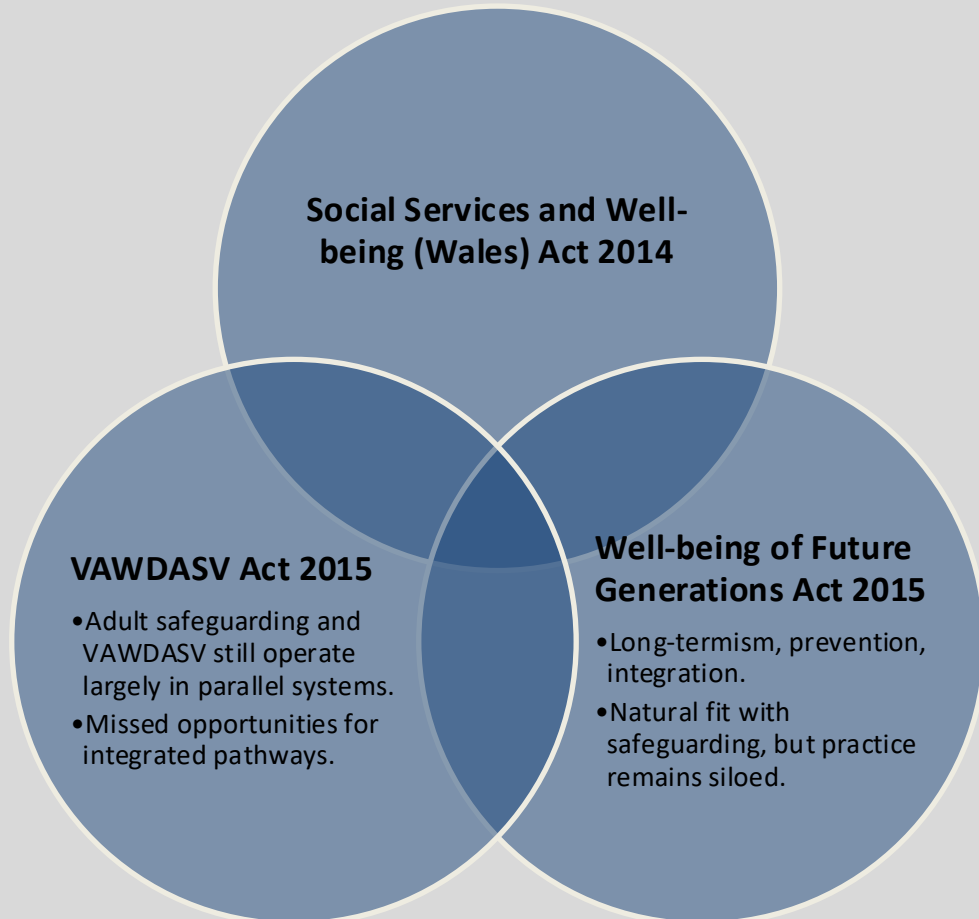
## Soft law

**Wales Safeguarding Procedures**

**National action plan to prevent the abuse of older people**

**Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: strategy 2022 to 2026**

# Wider Welsh Legislative Drivers



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Human Rights Act 1998/ ECHR

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Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006

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Wales Act 2017

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Equality Act 2010

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Mental Capacity Act 2005

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Mental Health Act 1983

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Domestic Abuse legislation

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Criminal Law

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Public Law

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Inherent Jurisdiction

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United Nations Principles for Older Persons 1991

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Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006

# Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – Part 7

## Aspirations and legal duties

## Key gaps compared with child safeguarding

Prevention.

No national practice framework.

Voice and control.

No national performance dataset.

Well-being.

No unified threshold model.

Proportionality.

These omissions drive inconsistency  
and weaken assurance.

Adult safeguarding is placed on a  
statutory footing.

No commissioned safeguarding  
medical service

# Governance Architecture

## National Independent Safeguarding Board (NISB)

Statutory role: advise Ministers on effectiveness.  
Increasing focus on data coherence, threshold consistency, transitional safeguarding.

## Regional Safeguarding Boards

Growing maturity and collaboration.  
Persistent variation in thresholds, APSO practice, and data definitions.

## Current Governance Review

Opportunity to streamline accountability, reporting, and national oversight.

<b>Regional Safeguarding Board</b>	<b>Local Authorities</b>	<b>Health Board(s)</b>	<b>Police Force</b>
<i>Cardiff &amp; Vale</i>	Cardiff; Vale of Glamorgan	Cardiff & Vale UHB	South Wales Police
<i>Cwm Taf Morgannwg</i>	Rhondda Cynon Taf; Merthyr Tydfil; Bridgend	Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB	South Wales Police
<i>Gwent</i>	Blaenau Gwent; Caerphilly; Monmouthshire; Newport; Torfaen	Aneurin Bevan UHB	Gwent Police
<i>Mid &amp; West Wales</i>	Carmarthenshire; Ceredigion; Pembrokeshire; Powys	Hywel Dda UHB; Powys THB	Dyfed-Powys Police
<i>North Wales</i>	Anglesey; Gwynedd; Conwy; Denbighshire; Flintshire; Wrexham	Betsi Cadwaladr UHB	North Wales Police
<i>Western Bay</i>	Swansea; Neath Port Talbot	Swansea Bay UHB	South Wales Police

## 1. Safeguarding Process

- How does the board ensure that safeguarding arrangements effectively identify and address concerns, and what are the outcomes of regional safeguarding interventions?

## 2. Multi-agency Activity and Data

- How are inter-agency protocols evaluated for effectiveness when individuals are at risk, and what data is collected, shared, and evidenced?

## 3. Thematic Hotspots

- Which key sources of harm needing safeguarding are shown in Board data, and what steps are taken in response?

## 4. Service User Feedback

- What are the RSB's aims for gathering user feedback on safeguarding? What do feedback metrics show, and how and when will the Board respond?

## 5. Workforce Information

- What is known about the safeguarding workforce's profile?
- How are recruitment and retention impacting safeguarding duties?
- To what extent is multi-agency training available and utilised?
- What evidence assures the Board that agencies support safeguarding the workforce's well-being?

# Safeguarding Thresholds

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## The Threshold Challenge

22 local authorities; 6 regional boards; no national threshold framework.

“Reasonable cause to suspect” interpreted inconsistently.

Self-neglect is variable – non-statutory guidance?

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## Why It Matters

Inconsistent thresholds = inconsistent protection. Undermines data comparability, workforce confidence, and public trust.

# Learning from Children's Safeguarding

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## What Adults Safeguarding Can Borrow

National practice framework.

Clear escalation routes.

Strong learning culture.

National dataset.

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## Transitional Safeguarding

Gap between Children Act and SSW(Wales) Act remains wide.

Young people 16–25 fall between systems.

Wales needs a coherent national model, not isolated pilots.

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# Criminal Justice: A Structural Constraint?

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## The Core Issue

Safeguarding is devolved; criminal justice is not.  
This creates misaligned duties, data-sharing barriers, and cross-border inconsistencies.

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## Challenges

Challenges in information sharing, workforce regulation, and cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

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# Adult Protection and Support Orders (APSO)

## Promise vs Practice

- Designed as a Welsh innovation to support adults at risk.
- Very low utilisation; significant regional variation.

## Barriers

- Lack of legal literacy.
- Confusion about thresholds.
- Professional anxiety about risk.
- Interface with non-devolved criminal justice: variable police understanding; courts not embedded in devolved safeguarding culture.
- APSO underuse signals deeper systemic weaknesses?

# Assessing Effectiveness: The Data Gap

## The Welsh Data Deficit

No national safeguarding performance intelligence report.

Fragmented regional data.

No outcomes framework.

## Key issues

What is the lived experience?

Is voice central?

Is the workforce capable?

Are systems coherent?

Are outcomes improving?

# What is working

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Strong legislative foundations; rights-based ethos.

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Growing maturity of regional boards.

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Wales Safeguarding Procedures provide national consistency.

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Commissioner's role strengthens accountability.

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Commitment to prevention and voice.

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UN Principles for Older Persons - as an emerging asset?

# What is not working

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Threshold inconsistency.

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APSO underuse???

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Transitional safeguarding.

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Data fragmentation.

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Misalignment with criminal justice.

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Workforce pressures and variation in training.

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Lack of national oversight mechanisms.

# What Needs to Change?

## National Safeguarding Performance Framework

Outcomes-based.  
Lived experience at the centre.  
Comparable regional data – not a league table.

## Strengthened APSO Guidance & Legal Literacy

National training.  
Joint police/local authority protocols.

## Transitional Safeguarding Model

National framework.  
Shared thresholds.  
Joint children/adult pathways.

## National Threshold Framework

Clear definitions.  
Case examples.  
Self-neglect guidance.

## Cross-Jurisdictional Protocols

Data sharing.  
Positions of trust.  
Cross-border risk management.

# Key Questions for the 5 Nations

- How do we build coherent, evidence-driven systems?
- How do we embrace lived experiences?
- How do we manage cross-border risks?
- How do we align devolved and non-devolved systems?
- How do we build a shared dataset across the 5 Nations?

**Wales has ambition, legislation, and commitment  
– the challenge is alignment.**

Our systems are only as strong as their weakest link, be it thresholds, transitions, or justice.

If we get those right, we move from aspiration to assurance.