



City of

Stoke-on-Trent

One Minute Guide

Learning Lessons from Serious Case Reviews

Date: March 2018

Version: V14

Legislative background and guidance frameworks

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) Chapter 4
- Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Children Board (SCB) Policies and Procedures
- DfE Guidance
- SCB Learning and Development Framework (Joint with Staffordshire LSCB – to be reviewed when new local safeguarding arrangements have been agreed)
- SCB How To Do It Toolkit (Joint with Staffordshire LSCB – to be reviewed when new local safeguarding arrangements have been agreed)

The review of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) has brought about changes to existing local safeguarding arrangements including how / when cases should be reviewed where significant child abuse is either suspected or is known to have occurred.

The Serious Case Review (SCR) Process:

The revised publication of Working Together to Safeguard Children April 2018 Chapter 4 clearly sets out the process of undertaking reviews on cases where significant safeguarding issues have arisen which include serious injury / child death. Whilst the actual process is less prescriptive than it was previously, it remains rigorous and transparent and open to scrutiny and challenge. Reviews are not ends in themselves, as the purpose of these reviews is to identify improvements which are needed, address areas of concern, consolidate good practice and actively promote the learning from each review.

Where a local authority in England knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the local authority must notify the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

The Panel will consider the following criteria in order to decide when it is appropriate to commission a national review of a case / cases. When doing so, they must take into account:

- *Whether the case highlights or could highlight improvements needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including where those improvements have been previously identified*
- *Where the case raises or may raise issues requiring legislative change or changes to statutory guidance*
- *Whether the case highlights recurrent themes in the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children*
- *Whether the case raises or may raise issues relating to the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children in institutional settings*

There should be a culture of continuous learning and development rather than a culture of blame. The approach taken to reviews should be proportionate.

In line with the new safeguarding arrangements, the SCB Practice sub-committee will still undertake multi-agency case file reviews on behalf of the SCB in much the same way as we do currently.

For more detailed information about the Serious Case Review process, please go to:

www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk

Background in Stoke-on-Trent

The last two SCRs in Stoke-on-Trent concluded at the end of 2015, following two separate serious incidents resulting in the tragic deaths of three children.

Serious Case Review SOT14(1)

Baby who was the youngest of 6 siblings, died as a result of mothers neglect.

Three children lived with their respective fathers whilst the remaining three children were in mothers care. The baby was left with two young siblings downstairs over night and was found the following morning on the settee lifeless. Following a police investigation, mother was charged with child neglect and received a suspended custodial sentence. However, the independent review concluded that no one could have foreseen events leading to this child's death.

Serious Case Review SOT14(2)

Two children born in UK to Polish parents - only previously known to Universal Services. No concerns in respect of the care of the two children

Some adult mental anxiety issues emerged in respect of the mother, who went on to kill both children and also herself.

The learning from each of the above has influenced multi-agency frontline practice, the content of the SCB training provision and informed policies and procedures. Please go to the SCB Website to read the independent serious case review reports.

Additionally, we have undertaken a number of multi-agency learning reviews – where a case has not met the criteria for a serious case review but it is felt that there is learning from that specific case. The learning reviews are extremely well attended by multi-agency practitioners who are keen to share information and take the learning from the case back to frontline practice.

The Independent Overview Report, Recommendations and Action Plans

The Learning and Development Framework contains a step by step guide to the SCR process and the full range of reviewing options available when undertaking a SCR. This document provides further options to consider when a case doesn't meet the criteria for a full SCR but it is felt that there is learning to be shared.

There is also a 'tool kit' for professionals who work across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire to assist them to understand and comply with the process. This can be accessed via the SCB website.

Whilst the new safeguarding arrangements have yet to be agreed, we will still work with the existing documentation until such time in 2019, that the local changes have been implemented.

Monitoring and Accountability

In the first instance, the SCB Manager and members of the Serious Case Review sub- committee monitor progress against the findings contained in the Overarching SCR Reports. Progress Was presented to the SCB Executive Group (May 2016) and to the full SCB (June 2016) for scrutiny and challenge prior to Board members agreeing that all required actions have been completed and that any changes made to front line practice, policies and/or procedures have been embedded and are making a difference to the outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Each individual agency that had a specific recommendation following the serious case review would be held to account by the Safeguarding Children Board if the recommendations for change have not been addressed.

Contact for more information

www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk

SCB Manager, Carole Preston on:

01782 235863 / carole.preston@stoke.gov.uk