

SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS: INFORMATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

Appointing reviewers

RCSCB will appoint suitable independent individuals to lead the SCR who have demonstrated that they are qualified to conduct reviews using the approach set out in this guidance. Engagement of organisations

Timescale for SCR completion

RCSCB will aim for completion of an SCR within six months of initiating it. If this is not possible (for example, because of potential prejudice to related court proceedings), every effort should be made while the SCR is in progress to: (i) capture points from the case about improvements needed; and (ii) take corrective action.

Publication of reports

All reviews of cases meeting the SCR criteria will result in a report which is published and readily accessible on the RCSCB's website for a minimum of 12 months.

SCR reports should be written in such a way that publication will not be likely to harm the welfare of any children or vulnerable adults involved in the case.

LSCBs should send copies of all SCR reports to the national panel of *independent experts at least one week before publication*. If an LSCB considers that an SCR report should not be published, it should inform the panel which will provide advice to the LSCB. The LSCB should provide all relevant information to the panel on request, to inform its deliberations.

Learning From Serious Case Reviews

Each review ends with a set of recommendations reflecting the learning from the case. RCSCB will oversee the process of agreeing with partners what action they need to take in light of the SCR findings. Recommendations can be focused towards individual agencies, all RCSCB member agencies or the LSCB itself. RCSCB will then be asked to adopt the recommendations and having done so the relevant agencies are expected to implement them. Each recommendation has a specific intended outcome, and a timescale within which it is to be undertaken. A report on progress is also made to the RCSCB.

As well as feedback to the people involved, RCSCB are working to develop ways of helping everyone to learn from Serious Case Reviews through active multi agency engagement, awareness briefings, newsletters and training.



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Ensuring all Children and Young People are appropriately Safeguarded



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Serious Case Reviews

Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006 sets out the functions of LSCBs. This includes the requirement for LSCBs to undertake reviews of serious cases in specified circumstances. Regulation 5(1) (e) and (2) set out an LSCB's function in relation to serious case reviews, namely:

5 (1) (e) undertaking reviews of serious cases and advising the authority and their Board partners on lessons to be learned.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1) (e) a serious case is one where:

- (a) abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected; and
- (b) either — (i) the child has died; or (ii) the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their Board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child.

The main purpose of a serious case review (SCR) is for agencies and individuals to learn lessons to improve the way in which they work both individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The lessons learned should be disseminated effectively, and the recommendations implemented in a timely manner so that the changes required result, wherever possible, in children being protected from suffering or being likely to suffer harm in the future. In order to achieve this learning it is crucial that the child and his or her welfare, wishes and feelings are at the center of the SCR, informing the scope and terms of reference as well as the ways in which the information is presented at all stages of the process, including the conclusions and recommendations

The final decision on whether to conduct the SCR rests with the LSCB Chair. If an SCR is not required because the criteria in regulation 5(2) are not met, the LSCB may still decide to commission an SCR or they may choose to commission an alternative form of case review.

The Purpose of Serious Case Reviews

The purpose of SCRs carried out under this guidance are to:

- Establish whether there are lessons to be learned from the case about the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result; and
- As a consequence improve intra and inter-agency working and so better safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

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Making a Referral for a Serious Case Review or Management Review

If you become aware of a case which you believe fits the criteria for a serious case review or management review you should discuss this with your manager or senior officer and s/he will discuss your concerns with your LSCB agency representative. If following this discussion it is agreed to make a referral for consideration, you will be advised to contact the LSCB Office who will provide a SCR Referral form and explain the next steps. Having made the referral it will be considered by the Learning Lessons and Improving Practice subcommittee who will make a recommendation to the Chair of the LSCB as to whether the information, having been thoroughly considered, meets the criteria laid down in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 for a Serious Case Review.

National Panel

From 2013 there has been a national panel of independent experts to advise LSCBs about the initiation and publication of SCRs. The role of the panel will be to support LSCBs in ensuring that appropriate action is taken to learn from serious incidents in all cases where the statutory SCR criteria are met and to ensure that those lessons are shared through publication of final SCR reports. The panel will also report to the Government their views of how the SCR system is working.

The panel's remit will include advising LSCBs about:

- application of the SCR criteria;
- appointment of reviewers; and
- publication of SCR reports.

LSCBs should have regard to the panel's advice when deciding whether or not to initiate an SCR, when appointing reviewers and when considering publication of SCR reports. LSCB Chairs and LSCB members should comply with requests from the panel as far as possible, including requests for information such as copies of SCR reports and invitations to attend meetings.

Decisions whether to initiate an SCR

RCSCB will decide whether an incident notified to them meets the criteria for an SCR. This decision should normally be made within one month of notification of the incident. The final decision rests with the Chair of the LSCB. The Chair may seek peer challenge from another LSCB Chair when considering this decision and also at other stages in the SCR process.

The LSCB must let Ofsted and the national panels of independent experts know their decision. If the LSCB decides not to initiate an SCR, their decision may be subject to scrutiny by the national panel. The LSCB should provide information to the panel on request to inform its deliberations and the LSCB Chair should be prepared to attend in person to give evidence to the panel. Where the criteria for a Serious Case Review was not met but it was agreed by the Panel and LSCB Chair that lessons could be learned, the LSCB will receive a report on the findings and any recommendations made.