

Serious Case Reviews:

A guide for professionals

What is a serious case review?

Chapter 8, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006) outlines the statutory requirement of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to undertake reviews of cases where:

- A child sustains a potentially life-threatening injury or serious and permanent impairment of health and development through abuse or neglect; or
- A child has been subjected to particularly serious sexual abuse; or
- A parent has been murdered and a homicide review is being initiated; or
- A child has been killed by a parent with a mental illness; or
- A child's case gives rise to concerns about inter-agency working to protect children from harm.

It is generally expected that the SCR will be produced in four months.

Purpose of a serious case review

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

They are not inquiries into how a child died or was seriously injured. That is for the Coroner and the courts to decide. They are also not about apportioning blame to individual staff.

Who decides to hold a serious case review?

The Independent LSCB Chairperson ultimately decides whether or not to hold a SCR. Their decision is usually based on a recommendation from the standing LSCB SCR Sub Group. This group comprises representatives from Social Care, Police, Health and Education as a minimum.

LSCB Chairperson will firstly set up a SCR Panel specifically for this review. This again is a multi agency panel and will be chaired by an independent chairperson.

As soon as agencies are aware that a case is being considered for an SCR, the records relating to the case will be secured.

About Individual Management Reviews

The SCR Panel will set clear terms of reference and then ask each agency involved with the child or their family to produce an Individual Management Review.

A senior member of staff from each agency will coordinate and produce this Individual Management Review (IMR).

The first step in the review is for the IMR report writer to create a chronology of all events and actions, including identifying each time the child was seen and spoken to/listened to. The IMR report writer will then analyse the practice of all those involved in their agency and from this pull together recommendations for their agency to agree and implement.

The aim of the IMR is to look openly and analytically at both individual and organisational practice to see whether changes could and should be made to improve safeguarding practices for children in the future.

The IMR will be signed off by the chief executive or equivalent of the agency and then sent to the SCR Panel.

Another independent person will then pull the IMR's together to produce an SCR Overview Report.

Whilst Serious Case Reviews are firstly and foremostly about learning lessons for practice, information can emerge that may indicate that disciplinary action should be taken under established agency procedures.

Will I be interviewed?

It is quite possible that the IMR report writer will need to talk with you to clarify an issue or gain a deeper understanding of the case.

If this does occur, a written record will be made of the interview and this record will be shared with you. You may also bring someone with you in the interview for your support. It is important to note that the SCR can be used in other settings, for example in the Coroners or the criminal courts

When will I get feedback?

When the IMR is completed, individual agencies will arrange a debriefing and feedback session for staff who were/are involved with the child or their family. This may be on a one to one basis or as a group as appropriate.

The LSCB will also offer feedback session after the full Serious Case Review report is completed, especially if this report raises new issues in safeguarding practice.

Will I get a copy of the reports?

Individual practitioners will not be able to access a full copy of either the IMR Report or the SCR Overview Report as these reports contain a variety of confidential information supplied by many different practitioners.

However the SCR Panel also produces an Executive Summary which is a public document, so you will be able to read this.

How will the family be involved?

Family members will be invited to contribute to the review in all but the most exceptional cases. How this will happen and who will lead with this will be decided by with SCR Panel.

Will the media be involved?

The Panel will always consider how to manage any public and media interest. This will vary on a case by case basis.

Will anything change as a result of the review?

Each Serious Case Review will make a number of recommendations. The LSCB has responsibility to produce a clear action plan in relation to both the SCR and IMR recommendations.

These actions plans will identify specific changes to be made, who is responsible to making them happen and by when. The LSCB will monitor these action plans to ensure that any changes needed do take place and within the timescales.

Additionally all SCR's are reported to Ofsted and to the Strategic Health Authority. Both of these bodies will also ensure that action plans are followed as well as reporting to the DCSF.

Further information

Chapter 8, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006) – Every Child Matters website:

www.ecm.gov.uk – outlines the statutory base of Serious Case Reviews.

North Yorkshire LSCB Procedures, Section 13: Serious Case Reviews outlines the procedures operating in North Yorkshire:

www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk

For an overview of the processes and lessons learned: the DCSF publishes a bi-annual review into SCRs in England.

This leaflet is based on one produced by the North Yorkshire and York PCT.

If you would like this information in another language or format such as Braille, large print or audio, please ask us.

Tel: 01609 532917

Email: communications@northyorks.gov.uk

