

SECTION 32

SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

This section sets out –

- The circumstances in which a serious review must be arranged;
- How the terms of reference of a serious case review are drawn up;
- How the individual management reviews are carried out;
- How the overview report is produced; and
- How Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board will monitor implementation of the recommendations.

1. GUIDANCE

Working Together to Safeguard Children [2010], Chapter 8

2. CRITERIA AND PURPOSE

2.1 A serious case review will be arranged when a child has died (including death by suicide), and abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor in the death. In addition a serious case review should always be carried out when a child dies in custody, whether in police custody, on remand or following sentencing, or while detained under the Mental Health Act 2005.

2.2 The purpose of a serious case review is:

- To identify the lessons that can be learned from the case about the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together;
- To establish how and within what timescales those lessons will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result; and
- To improve work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within and between agencies.

2.3 Serious case reviews are not inquiries into how a child died or was harmed, or who is culpable. These are matters for coroners and criminal courts to determine.

3. INITIATING A REVIEW

3.1 If the Child Death Overview Panel considers that the death of a child may meet the criteria for initiating a serious case review, they will refer the matter to the Serious Case Review Sub-Group.

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- 3.2 The Serious Case Review Sub-Group will consider whether the criteria for undertaking a serious case review are met. A checklist of questions relevant to this issue will be found in Paragraph 8.12 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* [2010].
- 3.3 The Chair of the Serious Case Review Sub-Group will pass the Sub-Group's recommendation to the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board, who will decide whether a serious case review will be held. This decision must be made within one month of the case being brought to the Chair's attention.
- 3.4 If the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board decides to conduct a serious case review s/he will notify the Director of Children's Services and the Serious Case Review Sub-Group will:
- Establish a panel to manage the process.
The responsibilities of a serious case review panel are listed in Paragraph 8.41 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* [2010].
 - Draw up the terms of reference for the review.
A checklist of issues to consider when drawing up the terms of reference will be found Paragraph 8.20 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* [2010]. The Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board will ensure that the terms of reference address the key issues in the case before approving them.
- And
- Write to the Service Director for each relevant service instructing them to undertake an individual management review,
Copies of these letters will be sent to the Project and Business Support Manager in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate.
- 3.5 As the review progresses, the serious case review panel may revisit the terms of reference in the light of new information. Any amendment must be agreed by the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board.

4. TIMESCALE

- 4.1 A serious case review should be completed within six months of the decision to initiate it. If it emerges that the review cannot be completed within six months (for example because of court proceedings) –
- The serious case review panel will prepare an update on progress and a revised project plan;
The update should include:
 - Recommendations for action which are not dependent on the review being concluded;

- Actions taken to date;
 - An explanation of the extension to the timescale; and
 - The revised completion date.
- The serious case review panel will notify the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board; and
 - The Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board will inform Ofsted of the new completion date and the reason for the extension.

5. INDIVIDUAL MANAGEMENT REVIEWS

- 5.1 On being notified that a case is being considered for review, each relevant service should secure records relating to the case to guard against loss or interference.
- 5.2 When it is decided that a serious case review will be undertaken, each Service Director will identify an author for the individual management review - this must be someone who has not been directly concerned with the child or family, or the immediate line manager of any of the practitioners involved. The Service Director will write to the author requesting that the review be completed within one month. A copy of the request should be sent to the Project and Business Support Manager in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate.
- 5.3 The chair of the serious case review panel will arrange a briefing for IMR authors, the responsible senior managers and the author of the serious case review which will:
- Discuss terms of reference;
 - Discuss quality assurance;
 - Address any gaps; and
 - Respond to any questions.
- 5.4 The aim of an individual management review is to look critically at individual and organisational practice and at the context within which practitioners were working to see whether improvements could be made and, if so, to identify how those changes can be brought about.

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- 5.5 An outline format for the preparation of an individual management review will be found in Paragraph 8.39 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* [2010]. The questions listed there do not comprise a comprehensive checklist relevant to all situations: each case may give rise to specific questions or issues to be explored.
- 5.6 When the individual management report is completed, the Service Director who commissioned it will sign it before sending it to the Assistant Director Safeguarding in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate.
- 5.7 An electronic version of each completed individual management review will be sent to the CDOP coordinator who will forward it to members of the serious case review panel for the case. Copies will also be sent to the Project and Business Support Manager in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate.

6. THE OVERVIEW REPORT

- 6.1 The serious case review panel will commission an overview report that brings together and analyses the findings of the various individual management reviews and makes recommendations for future action. The author of the overview report must be independent of all the local agencies and professionals involved and of the Safeguarding Children Board.
- 6.2 The overview report will bring together the information and analysis contained in the individual management reviews, information from the child death review processes and reports commissioned from any other relevant interests. The precise format used will depend on the features of the individual case, but an outline format will be found in Paragraph 8.40 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* [2010]
- 6.3 The serious case review panel will translate the recommendations of the overview report into an action plan, identify the agencies that will be involved in implementing it, and invite the senior manager of each agency to sign up to the action plan.
- 6.4 The serious case review panel will commission the executive summary. This will be produced from the overview report and the individual management reviews, and must accurately reflect the full overview report. The precise format used will depend on the features of the individual case, but an outline format will be found in Paragraph 8.42 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* [2010]
- 6.5 The executive summary and, if the serious case review was initiated on or after 10th June 2010, the overview report must be anonymised to protect the identity of children, relevant family members and others.

7. ACTION BY BIRMINGHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

7.1 When the overview report is completed it will be presented to the Serious Case Review Sub-Group and then to the Safeguarding Children Board.

7.2 The Safeguarding Children Board will:

- Approve the final serious case review;
- Ensure that anonymised copies of the individual management reviews, the overview report, the executive summary and the individual and multi-agency action plans, and the chronologies are provided to Ofsted, the Strategic Health Authority and the Department for Education;
- Make arrangements to provide feedback and debriefing to staff and the media as appropriate;
- Disseminate the executive summary and key findings to relevant interested parties;
- Publish the executive summary and, if the serious case review was initiated on or after 10th June 2010, the overview report.
- Implement those actions for which the Safeguarding Children Board has lead responsibility;
- Monitor the timely implementation of the action plan; and
- When the action plan has been implemented, formally conclude the review process and inform the Department for Education of this decision.

Monitoring implementation of the action plan

7.3 The serious case review action plan is sent out to all agencies for implementation of the review's recommendations. The officers with responsibility for acting on recommendations will provide evidence of action taken to the Project and Business Support Manager in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. The Project and Business Support Manager is responsible for monitoring implementation of the recommendations, and will provide quarterly updates to the Safeguarding Children Board.