

SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPILATION OF A BSCB OVERVIEW

The Purpose of a Serious Case Review

The purpose of a Serious Case review is set out in Working Together as follows:

To establish whether there are lessons to be learned from the case about the way in which local professionals and agencies work together to safeguard children;

To 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, and

To improve inter- agency working and better safeguard children

WHAT THE REVIEW IS NOT

It must always be remembered that Serious Case reviews are not enquiries into why a child died or who is culpable. Those are matters for Coroners Courts, Criminal Courts and Employment Procedures as appropriate. The Overview Report brings together, correlates and critically analyses the information and analysis in the Management Reports.

SETTING UP THE REVIEW

1 As soon as the BSCB have decided that a Serious Case Review will be conducted the Chair of the BSCB will write to the appropriate person in every Agency which has been involved in the case in hand ("the case") to ask that a Management Review be prepared. That person will ensure that a Management Review is written and will act as liaison between the Chair of the Review and the writer of the report. ("the liaison person")

The "appropriate person" will be the Agency Representative on the BSCB or a person of management level appointed by the Agency and notified to the BSCB. Guidance on the writing of the Management Review is attached as Appendix 1.

2 The Chair of the BSCB will choose the members of the Review Sub- Committee ("the Review"). The Review should have at least 5 members, including a member from Social Services. The Review should have access to legal advice from the solicitor to the BSCB.

3 The Chair of the Review ("the Chair") will be appointed. The Chair should be either from an Agency on the BSCB that has had no major involvement with the case or may be independent of the BSCB. If an independent Chair is to be chosen the BSCB shall insure that there are adequate insurance arrangements available. The Chair will be appointed in writing.



4 The members of the Review will receive the Agency Managements Reports from the Secretary to the ACPC. Strict confidentiality must be observed at all times.

5 The first meeting of the Review will be fixed by the Secretary to the ACPC after liaison with the Chair but thereafter the responsibility for fixing meetings will pass to the Chair. An invitation letter will be sent out to members of the Review in the Chair's name by the Secretary of the BSCB. (draft attached)

6 Subsequent meetings will be fixed at the first meeting and so it is vital that the members of the Review Sub- Committee bring their diaries with them.

THE COMPOSITE CHRONOLOGY

1 As the Chronologies are received from the individual Agencies who have prepared a Management Review it shall be the task of the Secretary to the BSCB to compile each chronology into a composite chronology. Agencies have been asked to put their chronologies into a set format and to send them to the CPU on a disk. If this has not been done the matter will be referred back to the Agency to ask them to comply.

2 When the composite chronology is ready it will be sent to the members of the Review by the Secretary to the BSCB. Any problems should be referred to the Chair of the Review, or, if he/she has not been appointed, to the Secretary to the BSCB.

3 The member of the CPU will ensure that the final amended version of the composite chronology is produced and therefore that member will have to be particularly careful to note any relevant comments made by members of the Review.

THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR

Before the first meeting

1 Before the first meeting of the Review the Chair will peruse the reports and documents received with a view to identifying any other documents which are not to hand but which may be required by the Review. The Chair will refer back to the liaison person to request the documents, which will be supplied if reasonably practicable. The Chair should be careful only to request documents that add details that are not apparent from the Management Reviews and which are necessary to the understanding of the case.

2 If an Agency refuses to supply a document after a reasonable request, the reasons for the request and refusal will be put in writing and may be referred to in the Overview Report or, if the Review think it appropriate, to the ACPC for resolution.



3 After reading the reports it may become apparent to the Chair that relevant details have been omitted from a Management Report and he/she will be entitled to ask the liaison person to obtain them, if possible before the first meeting of the Review.

4 If an Agency refuses to supply further information after a reasonable request, the reasons for the request and refusal will be put in writing and may be referred to the BSCB for resolution if the Review thinks it appropriate. A refusal to supply such information may be noted in the Overview Report.

5 When asking for such information it is useful to give the Agency a deadline – usually the date of the next meeting of the Review.

6 The Chair may need to consider the extent of media interest and make suitable arrangements with the Chair of the BSCB

At the first meeting

1 The members of the Review will probably already know one another but it is important that the members feel comfortable working in such a Group. The Chair will lead introductions and check out whether the members have taken part in such a Review before.

2 The Terms of reference will be clarified.

3 The receipt of documentation will be checked.

4 Time scales will be noted for the anticipated receipt of any other documentation.

5 The Review will note which ACPC Child protection procedures were in force at the various stages of the case.

6 Subsequent meetings will be fixed and the room booked.

7 Chair will check whether there are any criminal, civil or employment proceedings pending. This is vital as the final report may be called for in any of these.

8 Any holiday periods of members of the Review will be checked.

9 It is useful to ask members at this stage whether there are any issues that they want exploring in particular and the Chair will make a note of these.



10 Members will be informed of any extra documentation or information already asked for by the Chair and will be asked whether they think that they need any other documents or information. The need for other documents/ information may crop up at any stage in the Review but “missing links” may be apparent from a first reading of the documentation. The Review may find that although it would make the picture more complete to have certain other documents to hand they may not be actually necessary to the Review process. The Chair will explore why the member thinks that such extra documentation should be asked for. The reason for asking for the information will be minuted. The decision of the Chair as to whether the Agency will be asked to supply the missing information is final. The Chair will ask for the information (see paragraph above).

11 It is useful to note the e-mail address of each member!

Minutes

1 Minutes will be taken by the Chair and as far as possible will be circulated after every meeting. However, it is a hard job to chair a meeting and take minutes so members are advised to make their own notes!

Involvement of Parent or Members of Staff in the Review Process

1 The Chair will need to check ACPC instructions about the involvement of the parent/ member of staff involved in the case. (In particular, should individuals be allowed to comment or have an input into the Review)

2 It may become the task of the Review to decide how to involve the parent and it will need careful consideration. Certain Management Reviews may already have been shared and any significant comments on what is written in the Management Review should be shared with the Review Sub Committee. Any strategy should be checked out with the Chair of the BSCB before it is implemented.

3 It is the task of management to decide how to involve members of staff and the Review may need to liaise with an agency through the relevant ACPC member.

Review Process

1 It is easier to get the whole picture by first going through the composite chronology, paragraph by paragraph. Chair should ask Members of the Review to read a certain number of pages before the next meeting. This will speed up the process.

2 The issues that members will look out for are those listed in the instructions for writing a Management Review (annexed as Appendix 2)



3 The member of the review from the CPU will have the task of producing the final version of the composite chronology and so that member will have to be particularly careful to note any relevant comments made by members of the Review.

4 As Members peruse the composite chronology there may occur to them questions that need to be asked of an Agency. The Chair will ask for the information (see above) but it may be wiser to wait until the composite chronology and the Management Reviews have all been fully perused because the information first thought to be necessary may not prove so – or the answer may already be there in another document – or there may be other questions that the Agency also needs to answer. However, in all cases, the Chair must make careful note of any questions so that (s) he can check through them before writing the draft Report.

5 After the composite chronology, the Management reviews from each Agency will be studied. (At this stage the issues may have become apparent and have already been fully discussed and it may not be necessary to go through the management Reviews paragraph by paragraph. To speed up the process at this stage the Chair could ask members of the Review to re-read the Reports before the meeting and then can simply ask for further comments.

6 The recommendations from the Management Reviews will always be fully considered.

7 No witnesses will be called although the Chair may decide it is necessary to speak to a participant in the case face to face. Where appropriate, Management approval should be sought before this happens.

8 The quorum of every Review meeting shall be three, excluding the Chair. One of the three at least should have social work experience or background.

FORM OF THE OVERVIEW REPORT

1 The Chair will write the Report and will submit the draft to the other members of the Review for approval. When approved the Overview Report will be the report of the entire Sub- Committee.

2 The subject child will be referred to by his or her first name.

3 The other participants will be anonymised in a way decided by the Review.

4 There is no “set form” but the Review should include comments/critiques about relevant topics listed in the Guidance on writing a Management Review (Appendix 2)



5 The Introduction will:

- Summarise the circumstances that led to a Review being undertaken
- State the terms of reference of the Review
- List the contributors to the Review and the nature of the contribution (e.g. a Management Review)
- List the members of the Review and the Chair
- Note which edition of the BSCB Child Protection Guidelines was in force during the case

6 The Review will:

- Prepare a genogram showing members of family, extended family and household
- Analyse what information was available or known to the Agencies and the professionals involved about the parents, carers, any perpetrators, the home circumstances of the child(ren) and any views the child(ren) expressed
- Analyse how and why events occurred, what decisions were made and why, actions taken or not
- Consider whether different decisions or actions may have led to an alternative course of events
- Highlight any examples of good practice

7 Chair should be aware that members of the ACPC who receive the Report will NOT receive a copy of the composite chronology and therefore a list of Key Events in the case should be part of the Review.

8 The Review must always be very careful not to make any formal recommendations about internal Agency procedures, which do not impinge upon the way the Agency protects children. It is valid to comment on such procedures but it is not the place of a Review to tell an Agency how to carry out its work unless a recommendation will improve the Agency's Child Protection procedures.

9 Recommendations should be few in number, focussed and specific. They need not be limited to the recommendations in the Management Reviews.

10 The Review must be careful when they recommend something which means an Agency has to change internal procedures. Members of the Review are not experts in the way an Agency works and a change of internal procedure is a matter for the Agency. It is valid to comment on internal procedures. Comments can be very useful to an Agency and the Review must highlight any issue, which impinges upon Child Protection. Where appropriate, the Review can make a recommendation in the following terms, or similar:



” Recommended: That the (Agency) review --- (and here state the policy or procedure to be reviewed) in order to/ with a view to (and here state the ill to be cured with any amendment)

REPORT TO THE BSCB

1 The Chair of the Review will present the report to the BSCB who will accept or reject the recommendations.

2 The Chair may need to be involved in reporting to the Social Services Inspectorate.

ACTIONS OF THE BSCB UPON RECEIPT OF THE OVERVIEW

1 The ACPC will ensure that the constituent Agencies and individuals are satisfied that their information is fully and fairly represented in the Overview. It is not the function of the ACPC to change the Review but if any Agency feels aggrieved by any of the contents of the Review they will be entitled to put their comments in writing and these will be annexed to the Report.

2 It will translate recommendations into an action plan, which should be endorsed and accepted at a senior level by each of the Agencies involved. The plan should set out:

- Who will do what
- In what time scale
- With what intended outcome
- By what means improvements in practice/systems will be monitored and reviewed

SHOWING THE REPORT IN SUMMARY FORM TO PARENTS/ ALL STAFF ETC.

1 Serious Case reviews must be seen as a learning tool. The review will need to decide how the Report will be condensed into an Executive Summary which can be shown to parents/all staff or other relevant persons. The Chair of the ACPC will make the final decision as to who should be shown the report and the process for achieving this.

2 Any relevant comments from anybody who is shown the Executive Summary will be noted in an Appendix to the Report.

3 The Executive Summary will be shared with the Writers of the Management Reviews



PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT AND ITS RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The ACPC will decide how the report and the recommendations are to be publicised/ disseminated to staff and other relevant persons as above.
- 2 It will consider whether there ought to be and the form of a Press Release.
- 3 The Executive Summary of the Report will be posted on the Bradford Safeguarding Children Board website - www.bradford-scb.org.uk

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