

Policy Briefing

WAKEFIELD & DISTRICT safeguarding children board

Working Together to Safeguard Children

Chapter 8: Serious Case Reviews

Following the death of Peter Connelly in Haringey and the subsequent progress report by Lord Laming into safeguarding and child protection in England, the Government made the decision to review and update Working Together to Safeguard Children, which is the statutory guidance that governs how agencies should work together to safeguard children.

A key component of Working Together to Safeguard Children is Chapter 8: Serious Case Reviews, which provides guidance on when a Serious Case Review should be undertaken, and on how the process should be implemented.

Although the full, revised Working Together to Safeguard Children is expected later in the year, the revised Chapter 8 has now been published by the DCSF.

Key Revisions

- A clearer statement that the purpose of a Serious Case Review is to enable agencies to learn lessons to improve the way they individually and collectively safeguard children in their area
- Safeguarding Children Boards **MUST** still undertake a Serious Case Review when a child dies and where abuse or neglect are known or suspected to be a factor in the death.
- Safeguarding Children Boards are still required to consider whether to undertake a Serious Case Review when a child sustains a potentially life-threatening injury or permanent impairment of physical and/or mental health and development through abuse or neglect, **if** the case also gives rise to concerns about the way in which local professionals worked together to safeguard children.
- The new guidance provides additional advice to help Safeguarding Children Boards decide whether or not to undertake a Serious Case Review.
- It is still the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board who must make the final decision to

undertake a Serious Case Review, within one month of the incident being brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Children Board.

- It is now clear that the Serious Case Review Panel that makes the recommendation to the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board must be chaired by a person who is independent of all the Safeguarding Children Board agencies. However, if the Safeguarding Children Board has an **Independent** Chair, this person can chair the Serious Case Review Panel themselves.
- Clearer guidance is provided about the way in which Safeguarding Children Boards must notify OFSTED of cases that may meet the criteria for a Serious Case Review.
- The timescale for completion of the Serious Case Review has increased from four to six months from the point at which the decision is made to undertake the review.
- The process for Safeguarding Children Boards to obtain extensions to this timescale is now stated in Chapter 8.
- Where a number of health trusts contribute Individual Management Reviews to a Serious Case Review, the local Primary Care Trust will be required to produce an overview report of the involvement of the whole health community. This report must be authored by a Designated Professional.
- Guidance on the content of Individual Management Reviews is now clearer and more helpful than in the previous Chapter 8.
- Guidance on Executive Summaries is now clearer and more comprehensive, with the requirement that names of Serious Case Review Panel members should be stated.

The revised Chapter 8 of Working Together to Safeguard Children can be downloaded from www.ecm.gov.uk

Hard copies are not currently being made available by the DCSF.

For further information, contact the Wakefield and District Safeguarding Children Board on 01977 727037 or wdsqb@wakefield.gov.uk