

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews - engaging and supporting frontline practitioners

Purpose of this guidance:

One of Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's (NSCP) core principles when undertaking Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) is that practitioners are fully involved in reviews and invited to contribute their perspectives without fear of being blamed for actions they took in good faith (Working Together 2018). This guidance is intended to support NSCP's partner agencies to follow best practice to ensure that practitioners are facilitated and supported to contribute to case learning. This should be reflected in the analysis of learning undertaken by individual partner agencies in relation to their own involvement. The partnership as a whole will learn from cases most effectively when practitioners are enabled to share their experience of the case "on the ground" at the practitioner learning event which will be a key part of the review process in all CSPRs.

What is a CSPR?

[Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#) outlines the criteria and guidance on undertaking a CSPR including Serious Incident Notifications, the role of the national child safeguarding practice review panel and Rapid Reviews.

A local CSPR may be commissioned if:

- Abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected
- And the child has died or been seriously harmed.

Where a local CSPR has been commissioned, a panel will be set up and an Independent Reviewer appointed. The panel will agree the Terms of Reference for the Review and review the learning from the review including recommendations and will quality assure reports. The panel members will also ensure that any emerging learning or queries are fed back to the relevant organisation.

The importance of practitioner views to inform case learning

Historically learning from CSPRs has typically focused on reviews of case records, and particularly on whether formal written safeguarding procedures have been adhered to. Where case learning is limited to a review of written records, it is very likely that this will not capture the complexity of the experience of practitioners "on the ground" when trying to maintain engagement, undertake assessments and support families with multiple, complex needs. Current methodologies have moved on to a more systems approach which looks at the circumstances in which practitioners are working and ensuring that practitioners views and experiences are heard.

A number of CSPRs have identified issues with effective communication and information sharing. It is important to hear the views of practitioners to understand the barriers and challenges in practice and to ensure they are used to develop recommendations to lead to improvements.

While a key part of learning from CSPRs is around what could have been improved, it is equally important to focus on what went well or examples of work that has increased the safety and well-being of children and family functioning. Developing our understanding of “what works” may ultimately be more powerful in strengthening the work of independent practitioners and of services to change outcomes. All agencies should consider what is in place to promote and encourage all staff to share and learn from good practice.

The impact of serious safeguarding incidents on practitioners

It is important that the potential psychological impact on practitioners of being involved in the case with a very adverse outcome is recognised. Appropriate support for practitioners involved in such cases is essential, not just the practitioner well-being but also for wider workforce reasons.

It is important that we create a culture which promotes learning and where practitioners feel able to raise concerns or to reflect on their own practice and are supported to reflect and speak up if they are concerned.

Each agency within the partnership should have support available to staff and should ensure that staff are aware of how to access this.

CSPR practitioner events

A Practitioner event will be scheduled within the course of the CSPR, where the emerging findings of the case will be shared with professionals who have been involved directly with the child and family. This will be facilitated by the lead reviewer. This opportunity to “see the whole picture” can be extremely powerful for individual learning and reflection. It will typically present a picture of the lived experience of the child and may the first time many practitioners who have only seen certain aspects of the experiences of the child and family see the full picture. It may also often make it clear that significant information was held by practitioners in different agencies and that effective communication and joint assessment might have changed the outcome for a child. This can be distressing for professionals to hear especially if they have had significant involvement with the family.

Practitioners may feel anxious about attending the learning event and may be concerned that they may be blamed. The practitioner event will be facilitated in such a way that practitioners are asked to share their experience and contribute to learning focused on improving practice, rather than identifying failings. The practitioner events are also a forum for sharing good practice and recognising this.

Practitioner events are also the opportunity for the independent author to hear directly from practitioners involved with the child and family life. They offer an opportunity for the author to hear from individuals about practice and relevant information that may be critical to their overall report.

Where events are held “virtually” it must be recognised that practitioners may be isolated e.g. working from home, when potentially very distressing information about the lived experience of children, and professional and organisational failings is shared. Each agency should ensure that staff are supported.

If there is an issue where a practitioner does not feel that they would be able to participate in the practitioner event, this should be discussed with the line manager/ agency panel representative to identify if anything could be put in place to support attendance. If the practitioner is unable to attend, it may be appropriate for a first-line manager to attend, to share the practitioners case experience as appropriate. In some cases, it may be appropriate to arrange a one-to-one discussion with the lead review. The NSCP business office will facilitate this.

NSCP partner agencies are asked to:

- Identify relevant case involved practitioners who should attend the practitioner event
- Ensure wherever possible that practitioners are freed from other duties in order to be able to attend
- Ensure that practitioners have access to appropriate supervision and support before and after the practitioner event.
- Refrain from requesting that Senior service managers not directly involved in the case review participate in the practitioner event. The intention is that practitioners should be able to speak openly about any concerns they may have, which might include concerns about team capacity structure, supervision and other issues.

Independent Reviewers should:

- Ensure that there is an evaluation process and opportunity to feedback on their experience of the event.
- Provide some written information on the purpose of the event and what practitioners can expect.

Practitioners debrief

At the end of a CSPR process there will be a practitioners debrief arranged by the business office. This meeting is an opportunity for all who have been involved in the review process and relevant service representative to come together and hear from the Independent Autor their findings from the review and hear about what information has been included. This time is for practitioners to be able to reflect on the process and to hear about information that is due to be published.

These meetings will take place a few days before publication and attendance is encouraged so individuals can hear outcomes before publication.

Some publications may lead to media interest. In this case, there will be a communication plan which will be led by the NSCP business office who will liaise with all relevant agencies.

What happens after a CSPR

Throughout the CSPR process, themes are identified for learning. Partner organisations should not wait until the end of a review to implement changes or developments within organisations to address any themes and learning. The NSPC will coordinate learning with all partner agencies and agencies are required to feedback progress.

At the end of a CSPR, the author will make recommendations. These recommendations will be transferred to an action plan which is call the NSCP Composite Action plan. Each organisation is responsible to evidence actions taken and the impact these have had on practice and for the outcomes of children and families accessing our services and support.