



**Policy and Procedures Sub Group
Annual Report**

2016 - 2017

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1. Introduction/context/background

The Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) Procedures Manual continues to be hosted by tri-x with the manual being updated twice during 2016–17. The updates were submitted to tri-x in May 2016 and again in November 2016, and went live on the NSCB Procedures Manual in July 2016 and February 2017 respectively. During April 2016, it was agreed to move to a new style of tri-x template manual which offered the Board with a more flexible and user friendly manual whilst ensuring it contained all of the necessary information and tools for practice.

During 2016–17 NSCB began a period of review for its Sub Groups and associated activity, and it was agreed at an early stage that the work of the Policy and Procedures Sub Group could be better carried out through the Business Office and led by the Board's Business Manager, without the need for a formal Sub Group to take place. As a result, the Sub Group ceased to meet on a formal basis during the year in August 2016.

2. Governance and accountability, links to objectives

The purpose of this report is to provide the NSCB Board with an update on its progress and work undertaken during 2016-17. The Policy and Procedures work reports directly into the Executive Support Group and Board.

3. Progress/services/provision (including progress on actions arising from recommendations in previous annual report)

A Sub Group Action Plan and work programme has remained in place to ensure that all work is in a suitable place for the group to no longer meet on a formal basis.

As a result of the decision to move to the new style Procedures Manual, all chapters were reviewed and updated to ensure they were correct and in line with processes for referrals in Northamptonshire, whilst maintaining the position of providing the high level guidance for agencies and practitioners to follow. The main advantage of the new manual is not only the style of the manual but it is now much more user friendly. This manual also enables using the full screen to display the information you require rather than a specific reading pane.

When reviewing all chapters, owners were instructed to pay particular attention to the 'action to be taken' sections, which has ensured uniformity in all chapters in line with national guidelines for definitions, risk factors and indicators of abuse, whilst still being able to offer specifics for Northamptonshire.

Following the re-launch of the manual in August and following all updates, targeted communications were sent to all partners in the form of an e-bulletin. The Sub Group also ensured that it has at least one article in each NSCB newsletter relating to a specific policy or procedure. As well as using e-bulletins and newsletter articles to highlight the Procedures Manual, the Business Office continues to use Google Analytics to monitor the use of the manual.

Three areas of work relating to policy and procedures are still in development:

1. The use of spot checks to understand practitioner knowledge on a specific subject. It is planned to ask practitioners to self-test their knowledge on procedures via a survey/questionnaire;
2. The creation of short procedural guides in line with NSCB 2017-18 Business Plan priorities, rather than formal spot checks as previously proposed; and
3. In addition, an impact survey of the manual was also due to be undertaken but put on hold during the NSCB review. This will now take place during the forthcoming year and will be incorporated into a wider survey on the activity of the NSCB to evidence impact.

4. Outcomes/performance/successes/achievements

The below statistics relate to the number of visitors and page views of the Procedures Manual during 2016 – 17 with 2015 – 16 data used as a comparison:

Procedures manual visitors and views	2015 - 16	2016 - 17
Total number of sessions – defined as period user has been actively engaged with the manual.	22,399	13,869
Average pages viewed per session by user.	2.07	2.35
Average length of time spent per session.	1 min 54 sec	2 min 2 sec
Users which have had one or more sessions including new and returning users.	16,802	9,025
Total number of page views including repeated and single page views.	46,106	32,555

These statistics show a decrease in the number of sessions, page views and users of the procedures manual showing, but an increase in the pages viewed and the length of time spent per session. Continued promotion and awareness raising from the NSCB and all partners is therefore needed for the coming year to ensure the Procedures Manual is being fully utilised.

It could be concluded that moving to the new style of Procedures Manual has not had the desired impact as yet, however, the new manual has received positive feedback from practitioners which have been captured below.

I love the new layout. It was a lot easier to find what I was looking for.

Fantastic new look to the manual. I have sent the link to all staff for future access, it's now much better to be able to view across the whole screen.

5. Challenges/issues/developments/opportunities

Some challenges remain in terms of establishing clear and appropriate ownership of each chapter in the manual, which resulted in delays in reviewing chapters of the Procedures Manual. A revised governance process to re-affirm ownership of chapters to partnership roles rather than individuals will hopefully rectify some of these issues.

It also remains a challenge for the NSCB to ensure that practitioners and managers are aware of the manual but that they continually use the manual as a source of information needed when working with children, young people and families. It remains the aim of the NSCB that practitioners working in the county see the Procedures Manual as a one stop shop for information and continued promotion of the manual will remain a priority for 2017-18.

6. Next steps/plans/priorities/actions

Following the review and restructure of the Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children Boards, the Policy and Procedures Group will no longer formally meet. The work required to update and create new policies and procedures will continue and be carried out via the Integrated Business Office with specialist task and finish groups formed if and when needed. This process will be managed by the Board's Business Manager and supported by the Project Officer, Northamptonshire County Council's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager and Policy Officer, to ensure open communication and joined up working. To ensure the NSCB fulfils its duty to ensure policies and procedures are accurate, effective and are making a positive impact on practice, the following actions have been set:

- To ensure a rolling programme is in place to ensure all chapters of the procedures manual are reviewed at least every 2 years;
- To ensure a process is in place to review procedures based on the outcome of review and audit activity;
- To create a series of short guides to specific key procedures based on priorities of the NSCB contained in the Procedures Manual;
- To ensure partners are encouraging all practitioners to access the Procedures Manual when needed; and
- To carry out a survey of practitioners to understand the impact the procedures manual has on practice.