

Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership

PRACTICE REVIEW POLICY AND TOOLKIT



Involving Children and Families in Practice Reviews

1.1 Purpose

In Salford, we believe that children and their family members are an important source of information when undertaking a practice review. We are keen to understand the lived experience of those affected and use this information to learn and make improvements to the safeguarding system.

1.2 Family Engagement

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Guidance for safeguarding partners states that:

“There is no expectation to involve families in the rapid review; to do so is normally neither feasible nor appropriate within the timescales. When making a notification, local authority partners should consider whether and how to inform families of the notification. On concluding the rapid review, consideration should be given as to whether and how any learning/recommendations arising from the rapid review should be shared with the family. This contrasts with the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LSCPR) process where the expectation is that consideration is given to how families, and, where appropriate, children, can be involved in and contribute to the review”.

(Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2022, page 16).

Wherever possible, practice reviews should be informed by views and voices of key individuals. It is essential that this is undertaken in the most sensitive and appropriate way and does not impact negatively on their lived experiences. The SSCP can support and advise practitioners regarding how this may be best achieved.

It can be entirely appropriate for family members to decide not to take part in a practice review, and there should be a common understanding amongst professionals on when, and how children and their families should be involved and the most appropriate person to engage them.

Consideration should be given to the potential impact upon children and their families, when informed that a review is taking place; especially in the context that local child safeguarding practice reviews will be published. They should be supported, where appropriate to seek legal advice.

Not all information will be appropriate to share with children and families and should be treated confidentially. Such information might include personal information about family members, unless consent has been given, or information which, if disclosed, could compromise criminal investigations or proceedings.

1.3 Impact of Parallel Processes

In some circumstances, a parent/ caregiver or family member may be suspected of causing the alleged abuse. If the police are likely to question someone, care will need to be taken not to pre-empt their interview or cause a situation where a child or young person is put under pressure to

retract an allegation. If it becomes clear that the Police will be involved, this should be openly acknowledged.

Where there are criminal investigations and family members are witnesses or suspects, involving the senior investigating officer at an early point, and enabling them to understand the focus and scope of the review, is essential. It allows informed discussions about when and how family members can be involved and supports access to any relevant information.

Where it is decided not to involve family members in the review until after civil and/or criminal proceedings are concluded, it may be necessary to amend the analysis later. Anticipating such changes early on, can support to avoid their involvement being tokenistic.

1.4 Ethics

In general, there should be a presumption of openness, joint decision making and a willingness to listen to families and capitalise on their strengths. Agencies and professionals should be honest and explicit with children and families about professional roles, responsibilities, powers, and expectations, and about what is and is not negotiable. Being clear about the purpose and impact of their involvement is essential. It means that professionals need to be explicit about what is expected of them and what they can reasonably expect the outcomes of the process to be and not 'overpromise'. It is particularly important that the results of any engagement are fed back to individuals in an appropriate, timely and coherent way.

The overarching principle should always be to act in the best interests of the child.

1.5 Communication

Good communication both between professionals and with the family is an essential part of child protection. Families should be listened to and are entitled to ask questions. Professionals should try to answer all questions honestly and openly acknowledging that they may not have all the information at that point in time.

Professionals should bear in mind that they are likely to be more familiar with the system than the family, that explanations are likely to take time and may need to be repeated. It may be helpful to offer to put explanations in writing or offer an interpreter where appropriate. Silence should never be construed as understanding and professionals need to be alert to the possibility of misconceptions, arising either from lack of knowledge or from media reports. It is important, especially with children and young people, to check your interpretation and analysis of their responses or input is right.

1.6 Ensuring inclusivity

Consider how children and families with diverse backgrounds and characteristics will be given an opportunity to participate in a review. When planning engagement, it is important to consider

language; a venue where the child or family will be most comfortable, and timing of engagement. For example, it may mean organising meetings during evenings or weekends, so they do not clash with school or work.

Professionals should consider the necessity for reasonable adjustments to be made to support engagement and understanding.

Consideration may be given to onward referrals for specialist support or advocacy where appropriate.

1.7 Considerations for the Reviewer:

- Has there been discussion about which family members are involved and why?
- Is it agreed how family members are being supported to be involved?
- Do the family have the opportunity to influence the focus of the review?
- Is there clarity about what the family is going to be asked?
- Has there been discussion about how the analysis will be informed by family members' knowledge and experiences relevant to the period under review?
- Has there been discussion about how families are to be represented in the final report?
- If family members are not involved, are the reasons for non-involvement reasonable and are they documented?
- In circumstances where families are not involved, is there an opportunity to revisit this decision later down the line?
- Have all reasonable adjustments been considered to encourage family engagement?
- Are there mechanisms to allow the family to feed back on the report before it is completed?

1.8 References

[Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel guidance for safeguarding partners \(September 2022\)](#)