



## **Summarised Guidance on Initial Case Reviews and Significant Case Reviews**

### **Introduction**

As one of its key functions, Child Protection Committees (CPC) are responsible for undertaking reviews of significant cases. Broadly, there are two levels of case review – Initial Case Review and Significant Case Review. National and local guidance is available either through accessing the information on the relevant pages of your local CPC's web pages or by contacting your local Child Protection Lead Officer. (Contact details are provided at the end of this document)

This document contains summarised guidance for practitioners and managers, across all services involved with children and their parents/carers and reflects the refreshed National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Conducting a Significant Case Review, 2015. It is intended to assist practitioners and managers to: identify significant cases, collate information to inform the decision making process, understand the review process and fulfil their responsibilities in relation to initial and significant case reviews.

### **What is an Initial Case Review?**

An Initial Case Review (ICR) is the process carried out to examine the facts of a particular case in order to make a decision about whether or not there is a need for a Significant Case Review (SCR). This process allows any agency to refer a potential "significant case" to their local Child Protection Committee (CPC), where a professional (with the approval of their Head of Service) considers the criteria for an SCR has been met. The ICR process is designed to capture all relevant information across agencies/services involved with the child, with a view to allowing the ICR Panel, which is a mandated subgroup of the Child Protection Committee, to make an informed decision on whether to progress to an SCR or not.

### **What is a Significant Case Review?**

A Significant Case Review is a multi-agency process for establishing the facts of, and learning lessons from, a situation where a child has died or has not died but has sustained significant harm or risk of significant harm. They should be seen in the context of continuous improvement and should focus on learning and reflection on day-to-day practices.

### **What is a "significant case"?**

A significant case need not be about just one significant incident. In some cases, for example, neglect, concerns may be cumulative.

## Criteria

**When a child<sup>1</sup> dies and the incident or accumulation of incidents (a case) gives rise to significant/serious concerns about professional and/or service involvement or lack of involvement, and one or more of the following apply:**

- Abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor in the child's death;
- The child is on, or has been on, the Child Protection Register (CPR) or a sibling is or was on the CPR. This is regardless of whether or not abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor in the child's death unless it is absolutely clear to the Child Protection Committee that the child having been on the CPR has no bearing on the case;
- The death is by suicide or accidental death<sup>2</sup>;
- The death is by alleged murder, culpable homicide, reckless conduct, or act of violence<sup>3</sup>;
- At the time of their death the child was looked after by, or was receiving aftercare or continuing care from, the local authority<sup>4</sup>,

**When a child has not died but has sustained *significant* harm or risk of significant harm as defined in the National Guidance for Child Protection Scotland<sup>5</sup>, and in addition to this, the incident or accumulation of incidents (a case) gives rise to serious concerns about professional and/or service involvement or lack of involvement, and the relevant Child Protection Committee determines that there may be learning to be gained through conducting a Significant Case Review.**

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1 A child is generally a person under the age of 18. (See National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, 2014, (Part One) for more detail.

2 SUDI toolkit - <http://www.sudiscotland.org.uk/index.aspx>

3 The Children (Scotland) Act 1995: 'A local authority shall – (a) safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need'

4 Notifying the death of a looked after child is a statutory duty of the local authority looking after that child under regulation 6 of the [Looked After Children \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009](#). Notifying the death of a person being provided with aftercare under section 29 of the [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#) will be a statutory duty of the local authority under section 29(10) of the 1995 Act when section 66 of the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) comes into force. Notifying the death of a person being provided with continuing care will be a statutory of the local authority under section 26A(10) of the 1995 Act when section 67 of the 2014 Act comes into force. This guidance on significant case reviews does not replace each of these statutory notification duties. Every effort should be made to avoid duplication of the two processes (i.e. the notification of the death and the review of it) in each of these cases, only one of which (the notification of the death) has a legal basis.

5 National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland – Scottish Government – May 2014

### What do I do if I identify a “significant case”?

It is the responsibility of all professionals to protect children and the review of significant cases plays an important role in protecting children. Any agency can identify that a case may be significant and if you identify a case that appears to fit the criteria above, you should immediately bring this to the attention of your line manager. With the agreement of the Head of Service for your agency, you should complete an Initial Case Review Notification Form (Annex 1 of Pan Ayrshire Protocol for Conducting an Initial or Significant Case Review) and **send it electronically by e-mail to the CPC Chair and Lead Officer as soon as possible and in any case within 7 working days from the date of the incident leading to the concern or the date when cumulative concerns are recognised as being potentially significant.**

Heads of Service have access to the ICR Notification Form, or it is available by contacting your local Child Protection Lead Officer. Please note, a family cannot ask for a review and concerns raised by families should be addressed through relevant agencies' normal complaints procedures.

### What will happen next?

The Chair (or in their absence, the Vice Chair) will consider this notification and decide which agencies are involved with the case and ask each one identified to complete an Initial Case Review Agency Report (Annex 2 of *Pan Ayrshire Protocol for Conducting an Initial or Significant Case Review*). This request for information is sent to the Head of Service for each agency and is usually delegated to the professional with the most knowledge of the case to complete the report. Once completed the **Initial Case Review Agency Report (Annex 2) must be sent electronically by e-mail to the CPC Lead Officer as soon as possible and in any case within 14 working days from the date the Initial Case Review Agency report was requested.**

The Chair of the CPC (or in their absence, the Vice Chair) identifies participants of an **ICR Panel** (which represents the Child Protection Committee) and convenes a meeting of the **Panel within and no longer than 28 days from the date of the ICR Notification being received.**

This Panel considers all the agency reports submitted along with a combined chronology (compiled by the Lead Officer from the submissions gathered from the agencies involved). It is the Panel's responsibility to consider all the available information, compare what is known about the case against the nationally set criteria for conducting a Significant Case Review and come to a decision as to whether the criteria is met or not and what recommendations should be made to the Child Protection Committee and Chief Officers' Group to progress the matter.

### How to complete the ICR Agency Report

If you are asked to complete the Agency Report you do not need to make contact with the family concerned. Reports should be completed on the basis of the agency's existing knowledge of the family.

Effort should be made to complete every possible section of the report as comprehensively and objectively as possible. While the focus of the review will be the incident(s) of concern that formed the basis for referral for review, other information may be relevant too, particularly where there are relevant circumstances surrounding the background and issues faced by the parents/carers of the child (e.g. mental health issues, domestic abuse or other medical problems). You should record as much information in relation to the reason for case review as possible and make clear the history of your agency's / profession's involvement with the child and their family/carer(s).

In respect of the completion of the chronology section of the report, provide relevant dates & times of each incident/event/contact/appointment etc, the reason for contact and details of the staff member(s) responsible for the file record (including where the record is stored i.e. Swift, CareFirst, iVPD or FACE etc.) Where a direct lift of text is from a system/record then this should be placed in italics and use of normal text is used to indicate the entry is either summarised or is annotated text from the actual record.

It is also important to try and maintain an objective overview, particularly when reflecting on practice, which may include comments on key issues, such as those indicated for consideration in the report template.

It is recognised that case reviews can be anxiety provoking for staff involved with the case. In any profession, the practice of staff regularly needs to be examined. Case reviews are an opportunity to do this in a multi agency way and help to identify where any necessary changes need to be made.

Your professional contribution to this process is essential and support will be available as required.

The Child Protection Committee want to reassure staff that this information gathering process is to best inform those involved in conducting the review and to improve practice, where necessary, in protecting children and young people in Ayrshire.

### What are the possible outcomes of an initial case review?

Initial Case Reviews focus on whether something can be learned from the circumstances of the incident. They are a means for recognising good and poor practise and improving services. When an Initial Case Review is undertaken, the possible decisions are:

- No further review required
- No further review required but follow-up action desirable
- Initiation of local action to rectify any immediate issues
- Instruct any further information gathering required
- Significant Case Review required

A Significant Case Review should only be undertaken when the national criteria are met; where there is potential for significant corporate learning; and where an SCR is in the public interest and in the best interests of children and young people and their family. If there is no clear consensus within the ICR Panel as to whether or not to progress to an SCR, the final decision rests with the Chair of the ICR Panel.

### What is the difference between an Initial Case Review and a Significant Case Review?

An Initial Case Review can be seen as the *process that leads to the decision* as to whether or not to undertake a Significant Case Review and a Significant Case Review is a *comprehensive review of the circumstances* of the case.

### Who is given information about the review?

An Initial Case Review is an internal process and these records are internal documents. The Chief Officers of health, police and the local authority, to whom the Child Protection Committee is accountable, are advised of all Initial Case Reviews notified to CPCs and will be responsible for ratification of decisions. The Child Protection Committee and Chief Officers Group will receive a copy of the ICR report. The Care Inspectorate will be provided with the section of the ICR Report which sets out decisions made by the ICR Panel, the Child Protection Committee and the Chief Officers Group and the rationale for these decisions. The undertaking of Initial Case Reviews may also be recorded for statistical purposes and reported in the Child Protection Committee's Annual Report.

Significant Case Review Reports are intended for shared learning and those who have a legitimate interest in the SCR will receive information proportionately. Each case is considered individually and the distribution list for information may include:

- Those with responsibility for local service delivery and review (such as staff involved in the review, managers and senior managers and Inspectorates)

- Those with wider interests in the SCR (such as the child's family, local councillors, health board chairs, press officers, the Scottish Government)
- Others (such as the general public, the media)

The child's family will always be advised when a Significant Case Review is being undertaken.

#### How is learning from Initial/Significant Case Reviews taken forward?

Where a case review identifies areas for learning, action will be taken by the Child Protection Committee to implement improvement activity as required. This includes promotion and sharing of any identified good practice.

The Child Protection Committee and local agencies will look at recommendations from reviews and decide:

- A timeframe for action
- The scope of change required
- Who and/or what services and organisations are responsible for change; and
- The resource implications.

Examples of change are things such as new policies and procedures or additional training.

The Child Protection Committee will monitor the progress of change and ensure all actions are taken forward.

Sometimes local reviews highlight issues that are relevant across the whole of Scotland and may influence developments at a national level.

For further information in relation to this Ayrshire guidance document, the refreshed National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Conducting a Significant Case Review, 2015, or for any other aspect of child protection please refer to your local CPC website pages or alternatively contact your local Child Protection Lead Officer/Co-ordinator by email or telephone.

#### **East Ayrshire CPC**

Chair: Susan Taylor, Email Address: [susan.taylor@east-ayrshire.gsx.gov.uk](mailto:susan.taylor@east-ayrshire.gsx.gov.uk)

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#### **North Ayrshire CPC**

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#### **South Ayrshire CPC**

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### APPENDIX 1 FLOWCHART FOR SIGNIFICANT CASE REVIEWS

