

# West Midlands Regional Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) Guidance



WEST MIDLANDS  
**REGIONAL ADULT  
SAFEGUARDING  
LEADS**  
DEVELOPING POLICIES AND  
PRACTICE ACROSS THE REGION



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## 1. Introduction

The Care Act 2014 requires Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs) to arrange Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs), and mandates when they must be arranged and gives Safeguarding Adult Boards flexibility to choose a proportionate methodology (see appendix 1. for options).

This guidance is a Pan West Midlands document and should be read in accordance with:

- West Midlands Multi-Agency Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Local Board procedure.
- SCIE- SAR Quality Marker checklist (cited as QM# throughout this document) [Safeguarding Adults Reviews \(SARs\) - SCIE](#)

## 2. SAR Criteria

*Criteria from S44 of the Care Act 2014:*

- (1) An SAB must arrange for there to be a review of a case involving an adult in its area with needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority has been meeting any of those needs) if—
  - (a) there is reasonable cause for concern about how the SAB, members of it or other persons with relevant functions worked together to safeguard the adult, and
  - (b) condition 1 or 2 is met.
- (2) Condition 1 is met if—
  - (a) the adult has died, and
  - (b) the SAB knows or suspects that the death resulted from abuse or neglect (whether or not it knew about or suspected the abuse or neglect before the adult died).
- (3) Condition 2 is met if—
  - (a) the adult is still alive, and
  - (b) the SAB knows or suspects that the adult has experienced serious<sup>1</sup> abuse or neglect.
- (4) An SAB may arrange for there to be a review of any other case involving an adult in its area with needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority has been meeting any of those needs).

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<sup>1</sup> something can be considered serious abuse or neglect where, for example the individual would have been likely to have died but for an intervention, or has suffered permanent harm or has reduced capacity or quality of life (whether because of physical or psychological effects) as a result of the abuse or neglect.

When making a referral the referrer must ensure that the referral explicitly references how each of the statutory criteria has been met and should include any learning that has been identified to prevent a similar situation happening. (QM1, Referral)

The referral should also include the protected characteristics of the adult as codified by the Equality Act 2010, including race, culture and ethnicity. Information provided in the referral should evidence the rationale given for why the case is being referred for consideration for a SAR and include relevant supporting information. (QM1 Referral)

### 3. Decision making, Leadership and Governance

In making a decision about whether to undertake a SAR and of what kind, SABs must ensure that the decision is defensible paying attention to the Care Act 2014 and Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) principles and ensure that the SAB member agencies have had an opportunity to contribute. (QM2)

SABs are required to ensure that decision-making is lawful, reasonable and rational. Decision-making should be timely once individuals and agencies involved in the case have been consulted and all relevant information considered. Reasons for decisions should be recorded. Decision-making can be challenged in the High Court by way of judicial review or investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Please check individual SAB local procedures/toolkits for information about local governance arrangements. (QM5)

Governance: QM6 considerations not already covered in the paragraph above –

QM6 those with ultimate accountability, [lists 12 factors](#) to consider as the SAR progresses. These refer to matters of leadership, oversight and accountability and include timeliness, organisation engagement, family involvement, quality assurance, challenge (factual accuracy), consultation, handling of disagreements etc.

Review authors will ensure that organisation representatives have the appropriate level of seniority to be involved in the SAR. They will also identify escalation routes – including how to raise concerns about delays to the review process. Any reasons for delay will be fully recorded QM7.

Those with ultimate accountability (Chair of the Board/The Board) must make themselves available to provide leadership in addressing any issues that arise during the SAR. Senior leads of statutory partners will deliver clear messages that how the SAR is conducted is important and will ensure that people are cared for, and relationships fostered through the process. QM7

### 4. Purpose

SARs should seek to determine what the relevant agencies and individuals involved

in the case might have done differently that could have prevented harm or death. This is so that lessons can be learned from the case and those lessons applied in practice to prevent similar harm occurring again.

SARs should help to achieve understanding for individuals, families and friends of adults who have died or been seriously abused or neglected.

The purpose of the reviews is not to hold any individual or organisation to account. Other processes exist for that, including criminal proceedings, disciplinary procedures, employment law and systems of service and professional regulation, such as CQC and the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Health and Care Professions Council, and the General Medical Council. (QM4 Clarity of purpose)

It is vital, if individuals and organisations are to be able to learn lessons from the past, that reviews are trusted and safe experiences that encourage honesty, transparency and sharing of information to obtain maximum benefit from them. If individuals and their organisations are fearful of SARs, their response will be defensive, and their participation guarded and partial.

This document has been cross-referenced with the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) Quality Markers for SARs.

## 5. Principles and Process

The following principles apply to all reviews:

- The individual (where able) and their families should be invited to contribute to reviews. They should understand how they are going to be involved and their expectations should be managed appropriately and sensitively; (please refer to QM3 informing the person, their family or other important network and QM11 involvement of the person, relevant family members and network) The family, friends and carers booklet can be found [here](#).
- Professionals/practitioners should be involved fully in reviews and invited to contribute their perspectives. QM9 assembling information
- There should be a culture of continuous learning and improvement across the organisations that work together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing and empowerment of adults, identifying opportunities to draw on what works and promote good practice. (QM4 Clarity of purpose)
- The approach taken to reviews should be proportionate according to the scale and level of complexity of the issues being examined;
- Safeguarding Adult Reviews should be led by individuals who are independent of the case under review and of the organisations whose actions are being reviewed; and

The Safeguarding Adults Board is responsible for the review and must assure themselves that it takes place in a timely manner and appropriate action is taken to secure improvement in practice

- The judgement should make meaningful reference to the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal and 6 core safeguarding principles (as outlined in Section 14.13 Department for Health and Social Care's Care and Support Statutory Guidance)
- Consideration must be given to any impact that changes in key personnel has on the SAR - QM7
- Administrative support and reviewer capacity should match expectations about the quality and timing of the SAR – QM7
- Feedback on the SAR process should be encouraged, considered and addressed in real time - QM7
- Any known sensitivities, tensions or conflicts are to be shared with the Reviewer - QM7
- Roles and responsibilities in the SAR process will be made clear at the initial review meeting – QM7

## 6. SAR Methodologies and Commissioning

The process for undertaking SARs should be determined locally according to the specific circumstances of individual circumstances. Methodology is not prescribed in the Care Act 2014 and this enables flexibility to consider a range of options. QM5 states that consideration should be given to using a tried and tested methodology, however it is acknowledged that this should not limit creativity and/or proportionality.

Where it is thought to be necessary an Independent Reviewer should be considered and if used they should be involved in the discussions regarding the preferred methodology.

Conflicts of interest are to be raised and addressed at the earliest opportunity.

Equality matters must be considered and included within the Terms of Reference. Early identification of case characters will assist with Local and National research.

No one model or methodology will be applicable for all cases, the SAB will need to weigh up what type of 'review' process will allow the SAR to fulfil its purpose of illuminating barriers and enablers to good practice, untangling systemic risks, and progressing improvement activities. When considering a methodology it is also important that consideration is given to how the SAR will cover the range of relevant positions and perspectives, including all parts of the multi agency system, both operational and strategic.

Commissioning: other QM5 considerations.

Multi-agency partners will be involved in setting the form, focus and scope of the SAR – this must not be delegated to the SAB Business manager or equivalent.

SABs should research what relevant learning is already available using the Regional

or National networks and the SAR library (put link in).

It will be useful to consider several local factors including the SAB's Strategic Priorities and also those of connected partners in their area (where there are links to Adult Safeguarding), local media interest, previous SAR findings etc. The urgency of addressing the learning required may lead to a decision to utilise a review in rapid time methodology.

The ultimate decision to commission a SAR is the responsibility of the Chair of the SAB.

## 7. Duty of Candour

All members of a SAB and/or their staff are expected to have a culture of openness, transparency and candour within their day to day work and with the SAB including any SARs undertaken. In interpreting this "duty of candour", we use the definitions of openness, transparency and candour used by Robert Francis in his report into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust: QM10 practitioners involvement

**Openness** – enabling concerns and complaints to be raised freely without fear and questions asked to be answered.

**Transparency** – allowing information about the truth about performance and outcomes to be shared with staff, patients, the public and regulators.

**Candour** – any patient harmed by the provision of a healthcare service is informed of the fact and an appropriate remedy offered, regardless of whether a complaint has been made or a question asked about it.

**In practice** - as a member of the SAB all agencies have a responsibility to ensure it is open and transparent with the SAB when certain incidents occur in relation to the care and treatment provided to people who use their services and ensure that their staff understand their responsibility to report all incident that meet the criteria for a SAR. The SAB will routinely assure itself that mechanisms are in place to respond to single and multi-agency concerns.

Every agency has a responsibility for identifying own learning and multi- agency learning.

An SAB may request a person to supply information to it or to another person. The person who receives the request must provide the information to the SAB if:

- the request is made in order to enable or assist the SAB to do its job
- the request is made of a person who is likely to have relevant information and then either:
- the information requested relates to the person to whom the request is made and their functions or activities

For further information please refer to section 45 Care Act 2014 and paragraph 14.186 of the Care Act Guidance

This statutory duty should be clearly communicated to all agencies requested to provide information. Any non-compliance of information sharing should be considered and addressed at the earliest opportunity and should issues persist these should be escalated using the SAB's escalation pathway. The SAB should make mindful requests for information bearing in mind the need to be proportionate, the value of the information to the SAR and, wherever possible, should seek to reduce the demands on all participants. The SAB should be clear who owns documents generated through the SAR, this should be included on the index of documents, so that the relevant body can make judgements on their disclosure.

## 8. Cross Boundary SARs

A SAR must be carried out by a Board when an adult in its area dies as a result of abuse or neglect. If there is a lack of clarity regarding the responsible SAB this should be negotiated and will vary depending on the lessons to learn.

Regardless of the lead of a SAR all represented SABs should have responsibility to share all learning and ensure recommendations/ actions for their area are implemented within agreed timescales.

Boards and organisations should cooperate across borders and requests for the provision of information should be responded to as a priority.

## 9. SARs and Childhood Experience of Abuse

SARs should be undertaken in accordance with the criteria identified above and focusses on a person's experience of abuse as an adult.

It is acknowledged that there will be cases where adults have moved from Childrens to Adult Services and their predominant experience of abuse happened before the age of eighteen. Early consideration should be given to identifying the most appropriate route for responding to the concerns raised for example, historic child abuse may be more appropriately dealt with by the Police or reviewed by Local Childrens Safeguarding Partnerships (LSCP).

Boards and organisations should cooperate across reviews and requests for the provision of information should be responded to as a priority.

Appendix 2 provides more information about the interface with other reviews.

## 10. Links with other reviews

When victims of domestic homicide are aged between 16 and 18, there are separate requirements in statutory guidance for both Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) and a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR). Where such reviews may be relevant to SAR (for example, because they concern the same perpetrator), consideration should be given to how SARs, DHRs and CSPRs can be managed in parallel in the most effective manner possible so that organisations and professionals



can learn from the case. For example, considering whether some aspects of the reviews can be commissioned jointly so as to reduce duplication of work for the organisations involved.

In setting up a SAR the SAB should also consider how the process can dovetail with any other relevant investigations that are running parallel, such as a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) or Domestic Homicide Review (DHR), a criminal investigation or an inquest. This should take place at the earliest opportunity possible.

It may be helpful when running a SAR and DHR or CSPR in parallel to establish at the outset all the relevant areas that need to be addressed, to reduce potential for duplication for families and staff. QM5 states that each review run in parallel should have their own Terms of Reference. Any SAR will need to take account of a coroner's inquiry, and, or, any criminal investigation related to the case, including disclosure issues, to ensure that relevant information can be shared without incurring significant delay in the review process. It will be the responsibility of the manager of the SAR to ensure contact is made with the Chair of any parallel process in order to minimise avoidable duplication.

Consideration should also be given to ensure that there is no prejudice to criminal trials, unnecessary delay and confusion to all parties, including staff, the person and the relevant family members. Consideration should be given to the retention of notes of interviews and meetings as well as copies of reports that might be relevant to the criminal proceedings. An index of materials generated by the SAR should be maintained so that it can be readily considered to see if it is disclosable. Additional information can be found on the [CPS website](#).

## 11. Analysis

Analysis should be undertaken ensuring that it seeks out causal factors and systems learning but should also seek to identify areas of good practice that may need to be replicated in other areas. It should show clearly how the conclusions relate to the individual case as well as why they are relevant to wider safeguarding practice. Techniques should be used that ensure that bias is kept to a minimum and which allow a transparent working out of conclusions in order for these to be critiqued. The analysis should be undertaken against a backdrop of the most up to date research in respect of good practice, QM12 analysis.

## 12. The Report

SAB members should ensure that the report achieves its commissioned specification, captures the learning for organisations or partnerships and also that provides insight into factors that may prevent or hinder individuals from being safeguarded. The SAB members should also ensure that the level of details in the report satisfies the need for privacy by the adult or their family.

The report identifies clearly and succinctly the analysis and findings of the Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR), while keeping details of the person to a minimum. Findings reflect the causal factors and systems learning the analysis has evidenced.

In Michael Preston Shoot's research Analysis of SAR's 2017-2019 on page 45 he states 'The best reports demonstrated good concordance between the issues identified through analysis of key episodes or events and recommendations, made explicit use of the six adult safeguarding principles, and detailed how the SAB would be expected to monitor the actions arising from the SAR. The best reports were structured to illuminate findings, learning points and recommendations that clearly flowed from the case chronology and analysis, with sufficient examples to demonstrate what enabled and what obstructed positive practice, and what challenged the practitioners and services involved and their response. The best reports drew on advice from experts and specialists, and drew in learning from other SARs, research and theory to underpin and reinforce the emergent learning. The best reports concluded the analysis and linked the findings and recommendations back to the terms of reference. The recommendations were SMART and CLEAR where the latter refers to recommendations that have established the case for change, are learning oriented, evidence-based, with responsibility assigned and review planned.'

SARs must include the type of abuse or neglect, consideration of how race, culture, ethnicity and other protected characteristics as codified by the Equality Act 2010 may have impacted on case management. The privacy of the family must also be ensured. QM13 Report.

### 13. Improvement Action

The SAB should ensure that it enables robust, informed discussion and agreement by agencies of what action should be taken in response to the Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) report. Decisions should be made in respect of individuals, agencies or forums who are able to tackle the systems findings raised and consideration should also be given to which factors can best be addressed locally, regionally or nationally.

If there are issues that arise from Local SARs that require a national response the escalation protocol will be followed. Those concerns will be forwarded to the WM regional SAB Chairs network in the first instance. QM14 improvement action.

### 14. Resolving Disagreements

If local agreement cannot be reached on the requirement for a SAR to be undertaken, then the Safeguarding Adult Board should refer to its dispute resolution agreement.

As a last resort a complaint can be made to the Local Government Ombudsman if the complainant:

- Disagrees with SAB decision to not undertake a safeguarding adult review;
- Unhappy with decision of a SAB or outcome of a safeguarding adult review;
- Makes a complaint is about the makeup of the SAR and potential conflict of interest;
- Is concerned the Chair of the SAB is also the chair of the SAR; or
- Is unhappy with the conduct of a professional on an SAB who is employed by

a body that falls outside the LGO's jurisdiction.

## 15. Retention

The retention period for SARs including the report, executive summary and supporting information can be found in the local SAB SAR guidance document.

## 16. References

### [Care Act 2014](#)

Department of Health and Social Care (October 2018) [Care and Support Statutory Guidance](#) – issued under the Care Act 2014.

Social Care Institute for Excellence (2015) [Safeguarding Adults Reviews under the Care Act](#) – implementation support.

ADASS Safeguarding Adults Policy Network – [Guidance](#) - June 2016

Out-of-Area Safeguarding Adults Arrangements - [Guidance for Inter- Authority Safeguarding Adults Enquiry and Protection Arrangements](#)

London Joint Improvement Programme: [Learning from Serious Case Reviewson a Pan London Basis](#), Sue Bestjan, March 2012

SCIE / RiPFA [Safeguarding Adult Review Quality Markers checklist March 2022](#)

Coventry Safeguarding Adults Board – [Safeguarding Adults Review Toolkit](#)

Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board [Safeguarding Adults Review Protocol January 2016](#)

Hereford Safeguarding Board [Formal Multi-Agency Case Review Toolkit](#)

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board [Safeguarding Adult Review Protocol](#)

Dudley Safeguarding Adult Board – [SAR Policy](#)

Sandwell Safeguarding Adult Board [Procedures and Practice Guidance](#)

[Telford and Wrekin safeguarding partnership](#)

Warwickshire Safeguarding Board: [WS SARs Protocol and Guidance](#)

# SAR Methodologies and Checklist

Each of the following methodologies are valid in itself, and no approach should be seen as more serious or holding more importance or value than another. *Please note this is not a prescriptive or an exhaustive list, these are only suggestions and can be combined into hybrid approaches or new approaches used as suits the needs of the review.*

## 1. Rapid Reviews

This methodology is based on the Children's Safeguarding Practice Review process as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

The aim of the rapid review is to enable safeguarding partners to:

- Gather the facts about the case, as far as they can be readily established at the time
- Discuss whether there is any immediate action needed to ensure the adult's safety and share any learning appropriately
- Consider the potential for identifying improvements to safeguard and promote the welfare of the adult;
- Decide what steps they should take next, including whether or not to undertake a Safeguarding Adult Review

Upon receipt of a notification which may meet the criteria for a Safeguarding Adult Review, a multi-agency rapid review meeting is called, within 12 working days, to consider the case. Scoping and analytical chronology requests are sent to all partners involved to gather facts about the case and determine the extent of agency involvement with the adult. Partners are asked to return information within 5-7 working days, this allows the business unit to review responses and consider key lines of enquiry prior to the rapid review meeting.

During the rapid review meeting the information gathered to date is considered and the case is reviewed against the SAR criteria, initial learning points are established, and any further actions agreed. The partners then record a decision on whether there is further merit in progressing to a more detailed review or whether the learning has already been established.

If the rapid review is thorough, it can in some cases, obviate the need for further review and enable areas to move quickly to implement the learning across the system.

## 2. Traditional Review methodology

This model is traditionally used where there are demonstrably serious concerns about the conduct of several agencies or inter-agency working and the case is likely to highlight national lessons about safeguarding practice.

This model includes

- a. The appointment of panel, including a Chair (who must be independent of the

- case) and core membership-which determines terms of reference and oversees process
- b. Appointment of an Independent Report Author to write the overview report and summary report
- c. Involved agencies undertaking an Individual Management Review outlining their involvement, key issues and learning
- d. Chronologies of events
- e. Formal reporting to the Safeguarding Adults Board and monitoring implementation across partnerships
- f. Publishing the report in full.

The benefits of this model are:

- g. It is likely to be familiar to partners
- h. Possible greater confidence politically and publicly as it is seen as a tried and tested methodology.
- i. Robust process for multiple, or high profile/serious incidents.

The drawbacks of this model are:

- j. Methodology stems from children's arena so process to adults is not so familiar
- k. Resource intensive
- l. Costly
- m. Can sometimes be perceived as punitive and
- n. Does not always facilitate frontline practitioner input.

### 3. Action Learning Approach

This option is characterised by reflective/action learning approaches, which does not seek to apportion blame, but identify both areas of good practice and those for improvement. This is achieved via close collaborative partnership working, including those involved at the time, in the joint identification and deconstruction of the serious incident(s), its context and recommended developments. There is integral flexibility within this approach which can be adapted, dependent upon the individual circumstances and case complexity.

There are a number of agencies and individuals who have developed specific versions of action learning models, including:

- a. Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)-Learning Together Model
- b. Health and Social Care Advisory Service (HASCAS)
- c. Significant Incident Learning Process (SILP)

Although embodying slight variations, all of the above models are underpinned by action learning principles.

The broad methodology is:

- d. Scoping of review/terms of reference: identification of key agencies/personnel, roles; timeframes:(completion, span of person's

- history); specific areas of focus/exploration
- e. Appointment of facilitator and overview report author
- f. Production/review of relevant evidence, the prevailing procedural guidance, via chronology, summary of events and key issues from designated agencies
- g. Material circulated to attendees of learning event; anticipated attendees to include: members from SAB; frontline staff/line managers; agency report authors; other co-opted experts (where identified); facilitator and/or overview report author
- h. Learning event(s) to consider: what happened and why, areas of good practice, areas for improvement and lessons learnt
- i. Consolidation into an overview report, with: analysis of key issues, lessons and recommendations
- j. Event to consider first draft of the overview report and action plan
- k. Final overview report presented to Safeguarding Adults Board, agree dissemination of learning, monitoring of implementation
- l. Follow up event to consider action plan recommendations
- m. Ongoing monitoring via the Safeguarding Adults Board

The benefits of this model are:

- n. Conclusions can be realised quicker and embedded in learning
- o. Cost effective
- p. Enhances partnership working and collaborative problem solving
- q. Encompasses frontline staff involvement
- r. Learning takes place through the process enhancing learning.

The drawbacks of this model are:

- s. Methodology less familiar to many
- t. Events require effective facilitation
- u. Specific versions such as SCIE Learning Together and SILP are copyrighted

## 4. Individual Agency Review

This model would be relevant when a serious incident identifies just one agency involvement, or one agency learning identified – there are no implications or concerns regarding involvement of other agencies and it is appropriate that lessons are learnt regarding the conduct of an agency and in the absence of the need for a multi-agency review.

Such reviews could be requested by the SAB or if undertaken individually by an agency they should inform the Board they are undertaking an Individual Agency Review with a safeguarding element, in order for the Board to consider any transferable learning across partnerships.

Circumstances when this model might be appropriate:

- a. Serious Incidents
- b. Implications relate to an individual agency but lessons could be shared, applied and learnt across the partnership

- c. Where serious harm and/or abuse was likely to occur, but had been prevented by good practice (positive learning)

The benefits of this model are:

- d. Provides an opportunity for learning from an individual agency
- e. Enables individual agency scrutiny into a specific area
- f. Assists a 'Duty of Candour'

The drawbacks of this model are:

- g. Can be seen as outside the SAR purpose of multi-agency learning
- h. Risks individual agency opposition.

## 5. Peer Review Approach

A peer review approach encompasses a review by one or more people who know the area of business. This approach accords with self-regulation and sector lead improvement programs which is an approach being increasingly used within Adult Social Care.

Peer review methods are used to maintain standards of quality, improve performance, and provide credibility. They provide an opportunity for an objective overview of practice, with potential for alternative approaches and/or recommendations for improved practice.

There are two main models for peer review:

- a. Peers can be identified from constitute professionals/agencies from the Safeguarding Adults Board members or
- b. Peers could be sourced from another area/SAB which could be developed as part of regional reciprocal arrangements, which identify and utilise skills and can enhance reflective practice.

The benefits of this model are:

- c. Increased learning and ownership if peers are from the SAB
- d. Objective, independent perspective
- e. Can be part of reciprocal arrangements across/between partnerships
- f. Cost effective

The drawbacks of this model are:

- g. Capacity issues within partner agencies may restrict availability and responsiveness
- h. Skill and experience issues if SARs are infrequent potential to view peer reviews from members of a Board as not sufficiently independent especially where there is possible political or high profile cases

## 6. Significant Event Analysis/Audit (SEA)

SAE is traditionally a health process to formally analyse incidents that may have implications for patient care. It is an active approach to case analysis which involves the whole team in an open and supportive discussion of selected cases/incidents.

The aim is to improve patient care by responding to incidents and allowing the team to learn from them. The emphasis is on examining underlying systems, rather than directing inappropriate blame at individuals. Such reflective practice is known by several names – significant event analysis, untoward incident analysis, critical event monitoring. The name itself is less important than the process and the outcomes derived from it.

The benefits of this model are:

- a. It is not a new technique – doctors have long discussed cases for educational and professional purposes.
- b. NHS England has published Serious Incident Framework in March 2015

The drawbacks of this model are:

- Seen as a model that relates only to Health.

## 7. Case File Audit (multi or single agency, table top or interactive)

Case file audit can be a powerful driver in improving the quality of front line practice and the management of safeguarding adult cases. The aims of case file audits are to examine records in paper case files/electronic records to establish the quality of practice and identify how practice is being undertaken. Case file audits can be single agency or multi agency.

They can be undertaken in a number of ways:

- a. As a table-top exercise (therefore no input from practitioners)
- b. Interactive with partners and or practitioners.
- c. Interactive with the adult and or their family.
- d. Proactively as suggested in s44 (4) of The Care Act 2014.

The benefits of this model are:

- e. Flexible – in that they can be conducted in many different ways.
- f. Quicker learning can be achieved.

The drawbacks of this model are:

- Learning from some models will only come from written records without relevant context.



## 8. Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) is an investigation methodology used to understand why an incident has occurred. RCA provides a way of looking at incidents to understand the causes of why things go wrong. If we understand the contributory factors and causal factors - the Root Causes- of an incident or outcome, we can put in place corrective measures. By directing corrective measures at the root cause of a problem (and not just at the symptom of the problem) it is believed that the likelihood of the problem reoccurring will be reduced. In this way we can prevent unwanted incidents and outcomes, and also improve the quality and safety of services that are provided. The RCA investigation process can help an organisation, or organisations, to develop an open culture where staff can feel supported to report mistakes and problems in the knowledge this will lead to positive change, not blame.

### General principles of Root Cause Analysis:

- a. RCA is based on the belief that problems are best solved by attempting to correct or eliminate root causes
- b. To be effective, RCA must be performed systematically, with conclusions and causes backed up by evidence
- c. There is usually more than one potential root cause of a problem
- d. To be effective, the root cause analysis & investigation must establish ALL causal relationships between the root cause (s) and the incident, not just the obvious.

### The benefits of this model are:

- e. The methodology is well known and frequently used in the NHS
- f. Focus is on the root cause and not on apportioning blame or fault
- g. Effective for single agency issues especially those related to NHS services.

### The drawbacks of this model are:

- h. Requires skills and knowledge of RCA tools;
- i. Resource intensive

## 9. Thematic Reviews

A thematic review can be undertaken when themes are identified from previous SARs or where several cases have met the SAR criteria and the reviews will be undertaken together as they have a similar theme. Themes may also be identified by the Performance and Quality Assurance Subgroup. A thematic review considers an individual case or a theme as a starting point, but looks at issues raised generally, rather than the details specific to the case.

- a. Findings are collated from involved agencies or previous reviews
- b. The legal framework, risk and communication are considered
- c. An academic literature review is undertaken
- d. Policy documents are reviewed
- e. Interviews are held with practitioners

- f. Multi-agency response is considered

The benefits of this model are:

- g. Increased opportunity for wider learning
- h. Cost effective
- i. Engagement with staff and managers at different levels within organisations

The drawbacks of this model are:

- j. Workloads of those involved may create capacity issues
- k. Resource intensive
- l. Unfamiliar methodology

## Checklist

Whichever model or approach is used, there are a number of key considerations. This checklist has been developed to help SABs undertake successful SARs.

<p><b>Terms of Reference</b> <i>Mandatory</i></p> <p><b>Essential</b></p>	<p>Better outcomes can be achieved if all agencies and individuals address the same questions and issues relevant to the case review being undertaken.</p> <p>Well formulated terms of reference are essential to ensure that the review is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properly scoped</li> <li>• Manageable</li> <li>• Conducted by the appropriate people</li> <li>• Within agreed timeframes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To establish facts of the case</li> <li>– To analyse and evaluate the evidence</li> <li>– To risk assess</li> <li>– Make recommendations</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Ensure the review will answer “<b>THE WHY</b>” question.</p>
<p><b>Interface with other review processes</b> <i>Mandatory</i></p> <p><i>See Appendix</i></p>	<p>Before starting a SAR identify if there is any links to other reviews and identify which takes priority. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHR</li> <li>• Children’s SPR</li> <li>• Serious Further Offence Review (Probation)</li> <li>• Mental Health Review</li> </ul> <p>In addition - Consider previous SAR’s – will a recent SAR reinforce the same learning or is new learning to be identified?</p>

<p><b>Family &amp; significant others involvement</b> <i>Mandatory</i></p>	<p>Identify the degree to which victims/families will be involved in the review and how they will be informed of this review.</p> <p>Victims/families (family members who have played a significant role in the life of the service user) should be notified that the review is taking place. Involvement can be:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal notification only</li> <li>• Inviting them to share their views in writing or through a meeting.</li> </ul> <p>The timing of such notifications is crucial particularly where there are Police Investigations. Under these circumstances, the decision about when to notify needs to be taken in consultation with the police.</p> <p>Victims/families should be offered support.</p>
<p><b>Independent Advocacy</b> <i>Mandatory</i></p>	<p>The local authority must arrange, where necessary, for an independent advocate to support and represent an adult who is the subject of a safeguarding adult review. Where an independent advocate has already been arranged under s67 Care Act or under MCA 2005 then, unless inappropriate, the same advocate should be used.</p> <p>It is critical in this particularly sensitive area that the adult is supported in what may feel a daunting process.</p>
<p><b>Chair</b> <i>Mandatory</i></p>	<p>Each SAR will require a skilled and competent Chair of the panel considering the SAR, receiving IMRs and agreeing the report and recommendations. When identifying who to chair the panel – consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are they independent of the case?</li> <li>• In single agency reviews – are they independent of the single agency that it involves?</li> <li>• Do they need to be independent of the SAB?</li> <li>• What skills, knowledge and expertise do they specifically need?</li> </ul>

<p><b>Panel</b> <b>Mandatory</b></p>	<p>Each SAR should be presented to a panel for scrutiny.</p> <p>The panel should be made up of a minimum of 3 people excluding the chair.</p> <p>They must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent of the IMR authors</li> <li>• Independent of the case</li> <li>• Knowledgeable of the issues/subject area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Practitioner involvement</b> <b>Mandatory</b></p>	<p>Practitioners will be involved in all SAR's – however the level of their involvement can be varied.</p> <p>The following should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing and taking a statement from practitioners for IMR's can result in staff having heightened anxiety.</li> <li>• Practitioners must be offered support throughout a SAR.</li> <li>• Identify how practitioners will be kept regularly updated with the progress of SARs and are informed of the outcome.</li> </ul> <p>Multi agency learning events that involve practitioners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be very positive events – however such events must be skilfully chaired and managed and support should be available to staff throughout the event.</li> <li>• Assist practitioners to contextualize what happened and achieve closure.</li> <li>• Result in quicker and more enhanced learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Experts</b> <b>Optional</b></p>	<p>Consider if an expert is required to help to fully understand the situation and IMR findings.</p> <p>If possible identify which expert will be needed or may be needed at the start of the process. However expert can be called upon at any time during the process.</p>

<p><b>Overview Report &amp; Executive Summary</b> <i>Mandatory</i></p>	<p>An overview report which brings together and analyses the findings of the various reports from agencies in order to identify the learning points and make recommendations for future action must be produced.</p> <p>An Executive Summary may also be commissioned.</p> <p>All reviews of cases meeting the SAR criteria should result in a report which is published and readily available on the SABs website for a minimum of 12 months. Thereafter the report should be made available on request. This is important to demonstrate openness, transparency and candour and to support national sharing of lessons. From the start of the SAR the fact that the report will be published should be taken into consideration. SAR reports should be written in such a way that publication will be likely to harm the welfare of any adult with care and support needs or children involved in the case. Exclusion to this rule would be single agency reviews if individuals can be identified.</p> <p>Final SAR reports should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a sound analysis of what happened in the case, and why, and what needs to happen in order to reduce the risk of recurrence</li> <li>• Be written in plain English and in a way that can be easily understood by professionals and the public alike;</li> <li>• And be suitable for publication without needing to be amended or redacted.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Independent Author</b> <i>Optional</i></p>	<p>In the following situations it may be beneficial to consider an author who is NOT the chair:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very difficult and complex cases to enable the chair to concentrate in chairing</li> <li>• Due to the specialist nature of the subject.</li> <li>• To enable the chair to be from the SAB and be the chair as part of his day to day work.</li> </ul> <p>An independent author must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent of the case</li> <li>• Independent of the organisations involved</li> <li>• Appropriately skilled and competent.</li> </ul> <p>They may also be independent of the SAB.</p>
<p><b>Timescales</b></p>	<p>Wherever possible SARs should be completed within 6-months.</p>

## Interface with other reviews

Review	Precedence
<p><b>Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR)</b></p> <p>Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) were established on a statutory basis under section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004). This provision came into force on 13th April 2011.</p> <p>For further guidance see - Home Office – Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews.</p>	<p>When the definition in section 9 of the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act (2004) is met in that:</p> <p>the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by -</p> <p>(a) a person to whom he was related or with whom he was or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or</p> <p>(b) a member of the same household as himself, held with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death.</p>
<p><b>Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR)</b></p> <p>Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006 sets out the requirement for LSCPs to undertake reviews of serious cases in specified circumstances.</p> <p>For further guidance see – HM Government - Working Together to Safeguard Children - A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 2018</p>	<p>When abuse or neglect is known - or suspected - and either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a child dies</li> <li>• a child is seriously harmed and there are concerns about how organisations or professionals worked together to protect the child</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mental Health Reviews/Suicide Review</b></p>	<p>When a person who is in contact with mental health commits suicide, NHS boards undertake a suicide review to analyse what happened and recognise where anything can be done to make things safer for other people at risk.</p>

<p><b>Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Serious Case Review</b></p> <p>Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 - strengthened by the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (s325-327).</p>	<p>When the main purpose is to examine whether the MAPP arrangements were effectively applied and whether the agencies worked together to do all they reasonably could to manage effectively the risk of further offending in the community.</p>
<p><b>Serious Further Offending Notification and Review Procedures</b></p> <p>Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014</p>	<p>Reviews will be required in any of the following cases:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• any eligible offender who has been charged with murder, manslaughter, other specified offences causing death, rape or assault by penetration, or a sexual offence against a child under 13 years of age (including attempted offences) committed during the current period of management in the community of the offender by the NPS or a CRC; or whilst subject to ROTL. In addition, this will also apply during the 28 day period following conclusion of the management of the case; or</li> <li>• any eligible offender who has been charged with another offence on the SFO qualifying list committed during a period of management by the NPS or a CRC and is or has been assessed as high/very high risk of serious harm during the current sentence (NPS only) or has not received a formal assessment of risk during the current period of management; or</li> <li>• any eligible offender who has been charged with an offence, whether on the SFO list or another offence, committed during a period of community management by the NPS or a CRC, and the provider of probation services or NOMS has identified there are public interest reasons for a review. This may be due to significant media coverage Ministerial interest or where reputational risks to the organisation may arise; or</li> <li>○ if the offender has died and not been charged with an eligible offence but where the police state he/she was the main suspect in relation to the commission of an SFO.</li> </ul>

## **Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR)**

The Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) Programme aims to make improvements to the lives of people with learning disabilities. It clarifies any potentially modifiable factors associated with a person's death, and works to ensure that these are not repeated elsewhere.

All deaths of people with learning disabilities aged 4 years and over will be reviewed, regardless of whether the death was expected or not, the cause of death or the place of death.

The LeDeR programme is using the definition of learning disabilities provided in the 2001 White Paper "Valuing People". For more information see the briefing paper here: [Briefing paper 1 - What do we mean by learning disabilities \(PDF, 607kB\)](#)