

Serious Case Review Quality Markers

Supporting dialogue about the principles of good practice

Quality Marker 1: Referral

Quality statement: the case is referred for Serious Case Review (SCR) consideration with an appropriate rationale and in a timely manner

Rationale

Individual cases need to be referred to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) if they are to become multi-agency learning opportunities. The statutory guidance allows two sets of circumstances in which a case should be referred for SCR consideration. First, cases where an SCR is required because the case meets the statutory criteria. Second, LSCBs can also select to commission an SCR on cases that do not meet the statutory criteria, but where an SCR is thought likely to produce useful learning for other reasons. This can be linked to local learning priorities. The local learning and improvement framework and the LSCB business plan should set out the priorities for learning in the local area. Given the range of reasons that a case can be referred for SCR consideration, it is important that the rationale is clearly laid out in the referral.

There are many reasons why a rapid referral of serious incidents and tragic outcomes is often beneficial. The more current the practice being reviewed, the more directly applicable the learning, and practitioners are more likely to be available to be involved if the SCR takes place without delay. It also allows any urgent risks to be highlighted and enables any patterns to be seen (e.g. common victims or perpetrators or institutions) and, as in all forms of accident investigation, it is important to address immediate problems that have an unambiguous practical solution. However, the complexity of modern systems and arrangements often defies immediate practical remedy and needs first to be carefully researched.

Other cases legitimately may be identified and referred later, but still be timely.

How might you know if you are meeting this quality marker?

1. Is the rationale for the referral clear, and supported by adequate information?
2. Does the referral state explicitly whether the case met the statutory criteria, or if it was referred for another reason?
3. Are there explanations for any delays in the referral?

Knowledge base

- We have not been able to identify any relevant research base or practice knowledge for this quality statement.

Link to statutory guidance and inspection criteria

- ‘Working together’ (HM Government 2015) provides the statutory framework – relevant sections are: p 72, Regulation 5(1)(e) and (2) of the LSCBs ‘Regulations 2006’ which set out the requirement for LSCBs to undertake reviews of serious cases in specified circumstances; and pp 73–74, which provides guidance regarding timescales for reviews.

Tackling some common obstacles

- Where LSCBs have previously gained useful learning from SCRs they are more likely to refer cases for potential review.
- Where the local learning and improvement framework and priorities are well publicised, agencies will be more inclined to think about referring cases for reasons other than the statutory criteria.
- The clearer and more widely understood are the LSCB expectations regarding the various reasons a case could or should be referred for SCR, the greater the likelihood that appropriate cases will actually be referred, and in a clear and timely manner.

This is one of a set of 18 Quality Markers which aim to support commissioners and reviewers to commission and conduct high quality reviews. Covering the whole process, the quality markers provide a consistent and robust approach to SCRs. They are based predominantly on established principles of effective reviews / investigation as well as SCR practice experience and expertise, and ethical considerations.

The SCR Quality Markers were produced as part of the Learning into Practice Project, a one-year DfE-funded project conducted by NSPCC and SCIE between April 2015 and March 2016. For more information see nspcc.org.uk/lipp or scie.org.uk/lipp