

## Learning Together: Piloting a new approach for case reviews in adult safeguarding

Achieving sector-led accountability and improvement in adult safeguarding requires that LSABs and member agencies have a good understanding of their organisational performance. Case reviews and serious case reviews provide a critical means of gaining detailed feedback about current strengths and emerging difficulties.

The methodology known as a 'systems approach' has been specifically designed to really get behind why things are not going well. Based in the engineering and health sectors, the systems approach has been promoted by the Munro review as the methodology for organisational learning in child welfare. SCIE has led developments of this approach in multi-agency child protection with the Learning Together model. In response to interest from the adult safeguarding sector, we are now piloting Learning Together in adult safeguarding case reviews.

### The pilots

The Learning Together model is being piloted by:

- Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board
- Cornwall Foundation Mental Health Trust
- Hampshire Safeguarding Adults Board
- West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board

In each area, an experienced Learning Together reviewer is working alongside local safeguarding leads, to conduct the review and to mentor the local staff. This way, the commissioning boards/trust get a review conducted by skilled professionals using well-researched methods, and they also develop the local capacity to conduct future reviews using the SCIE methodology.

### How it works

Learning Together has three elements at the heart of its methodology.

- Reconstructing how professionals saw the case at the time: speaking to staff to get their perspective on the case as it unfolded, and why they chose the actions they took
- Identifying and analysing key practice episodes, and the contributory factors behind them: looking at significant periods and aspects of the case, the practice that occurred, and the factors that influenced the work the professionals did
- Interpreting the broader significance: analysing the ways in which what happened reflects wider issues in the system

Through individual conversations with staff (and where appropriate with users and families), and joint meetings of all the key professionals involved in a case, the reviewers build up an iterative, and truly multi-disciplinary, analysis. It looks at what

happened, what practice and organisational factors lay behind the events, and what the events show us about health and care systems, and how they can be improved. The learning is then presented to commissioning SABs in the form of a report with several key findings.

### **Learning Together and adult safeguarding**

Learning Together is fundamentally about how organisations learn from incidents. Much of this will be similar between organisations that support adults, and those that support children. But introducing Learning Together to the adult sector has already highlighted areas that will generate important new learning:

- Working with providers: to a greater extent than the children's sector, case reviews involve provider organisations, and the pilots will explore how to engage providers in a shared attempt to identify more effective approaches to safeguarding
- Questions of capacity: much adult safeguarding work hinges on questions of users' mental capacity, and how professionals use the Mental Capacity Act. We're expecting this to feature in the findings that emerge
- Culture of case reviews: adult safeguarding has always made less use of case reviews, and we look forward to seeing how Learning Together operates in a sector where there is less history of traditional case review methods, but also a weaker mandate to engage in reviews at all

### **Engaging the sector**

As we've planned the pilots, SCIE has worked with safeguarding networks, the Department of Health, and a wider group of SABs to inform the pilots' development. We are keen to continue this, through a reference group of safeguarding experts who can learn how the pilots are progressing, but also help identify the key practice issues in adult safeguarding case reviews.

This is an important period in adult safeguarding, as *Caring for Our Future* seeks to strengthen the role of safeguarding services. Learning Together can play a part in making sure that we work as effectively as we can to keep adults at risk safe. If you are interested in being part of a reference group, or would simply like to know more about what we are doing, please do contact Dr. Sheila Fish, Senior Research Analyst - [sheila.fish@scie.org.uk](mailto:sheila.fish@scie.org.uk) - or Hugh Constant, Practice Development Manager - [hugh.constant@scie.org.uk](mailto:hugh.constant@scie.org.uk) .