Serious Case Review Quality Markers
Supporting dialogue about the principles of good practice
Quality Marker 15: Improvement action

Quality statement: robust, informed discussion by agencies underpins agreements about what action should be taken in response to the Serious Case Review (SCR) report

Rationale

For an SCR to support improvements, the response of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and member agencies is as important as the report. The response of the LSCB may entail actions in relation to each of its broad statutory functions: to coordinate what is done to safeguard to children and to monitor and challenge the work of member agencies.

The actions of the LSCB can range from the strategic to the immediate and practical. Working out what to do is not necessarily self-evident or straightforward and so requires discussion. Judgements need to be made in light of the urgency of addressing the problems identified, relative to improvement activity already underway. Therefore discussion is required before informed agreement can be reached.

Some improvements require agencies to act collaboratively to achieve them. This will be facilitated by joint discussion of the issues and shared prioritisation of the response. Some improvements will require national action.

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

1. Does the LSCB have a coherent mechanism for managing discussion about the actions needed to respond to the SCR?

2. Is there clear leadership from the chair and key agencies about the need for an open and mutually challenging discussion about what is said in the report about the effectiveness of the safeguarding system and its component parts?

3. Is appropriate time been given to receive and respond to the report (e.g. holding an extraordinary board meeting or other mechanisms)?

4. Is the LSCB being supported to link discussions about the SCR response to the learning and improvement framework and LSCB business plan? For example, is the board being provided with relevant information already identified through its learning and improvement framework?

5. Has the LSCB prioritised its response by linking to the learning and improvement framework and LSCB business plan (note that it can be legitimate to delay, given the priority areas already identified)?

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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' requires that LSCBs agree what action should be taken and produce a response when the SCR is published (HM Government, 2015: 79, 80).

Tackling some common obstacles

- Having a clear, considered process helps to avoid the LSCB response being rushed and at the last minute.

- Allocating sufficient time to enable meaningful discussion at the LSCB meeting can assist in avoiding organisational defensiveness. Some LSCBs arrange extraordinary meetings for the SCR to avoid pressures on busy meeting agendas.

- Where the SCR sub-group or equivalent does most of the discussion and development of the response, there is a need to consider how the LSCB is supported to be actively involved and own the decisions.

- An LSCB learning and improvement framework that is structured to support the integration of learning from different sources and also prioritises and manages that learning will enable an informed discussion about the response.

- Having a model for change management can help LSCBs think more broadly about mechanisms for change beyond training of frontline staff and writing or amending procedures.

- The development of a plan of engagement activities with different audiences ranging from practitioners to strategic leaders can be more effective than more generic dissemination activitie*s*.

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