



Regular Case File Audit: Summary for Practitioners & Managers

January 2019

Background

The Local Safeguarding Children Board Quality Assurance (QA), sub-group is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work carried out by the Board partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to make recommendations about ways this can be improved. It does this through an annual programme of case file audits and scrutiny of multi-agency performance data and inspection reports. The subgroup meets six times a year. Auditors include representatives from NHS organisations, Sussex Police and East Sussex County Council Children Services.

In September 2018 the QA Subgroup completed an audit of five social work cases that had been through the S47 enquiry process or a strategy discussion.

Child protection procedures: Strategy discussions and Section 47 investigations

When there are concerns that a child may be at risk of significant harm, Children's Social Care (CSC) will talk to partner agencies about the child. CSC – together with the Police Child Abuse Investigation team – will decide if the threshold for a child protection investigation (see Section 47 below) has been met. If it has, they will also decide who should carry out the investigation – CSC and the police (joint agency) or the police alone (single agency). This may be done at a Strategy Discussion meeting or as telephone conversations, depending on the nature and urgency of the enquiries.

A Section 47 enquiry means that CSC must carry out an investigation when they have 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. The enquiry will involve an assessment of the child's needs and the ability of those caring for the child to meet them. The aim is to decide whether any action should be taken to safeguard the child. The child's parents/carers will be interviewed, as well as the child (unless the child is too young). The assessment will also include information from the child's school, doctor and other professionals.

Method

Five cases with multi-agency involvement were selected using Children's Services data. Details of cases were gathered including family background, relationships, referral date, assessments and other key information

The audit tool was designed to examine the identification of risk, initial response, direct work, co-ordination, and how professionals listened and responded to the voice of the child. This summary provides a briefing on the findings of that audit.

Strengths in Multi-Agency Practice

The cases all had examples of excellent work: professionals looked beyond the immediate situation to identify the wider safeguarding context and risks, showed creativity and persistence to engage parent and child, and enabled quick effective action and decision making.

In the cases audited, there was evidence of:

- ✓ Clear and detailed recording of analysis and decision making in all five cases.
- ✓ Evidence that the child was seen and their views taken into account in all five cases.
- ✓ good analysis of the broader picture involving a wide range of professionals to provide an effective response to safeguard the child.
- ✓ Very good multi agency communication and co-ordination in four cases.
- ✓ Evidence of good management oversight and decision making in four cases.
- ✓ Sussex Police demonstrated considerable professional curiosity in two cases, identifying an individual who posed a risk when attending a home regarding another matter and considering the wider risks to children they found in the street without a responsible adult.
- ✓ Good outcomes for the child in four of the five cases.

Improvements in individual cases

Three cases were graded Good. One of these cases graded as Good had outstanding features. Two cases were graded Requires Improvement. Both of these cases however, had evidence of very good work and multi-agency liaison.

Auditors graded one case as requires improvement despite evidence of very good work because it was agreed there should have been a S47 enquiry and later a strategy discussion when professionals received information regarding incidents involving the child.

For the other case, auditors agreed this grading because of the avoidable delay in progressing the case to ICPC, however there was recognition that the delay in this case had not impacted upon the safety or outcomes for the child.

Learning Identified

The Fire & Rescue Service can be called upon to carry out a routine home fire safety inspection when there are identified risks or safeguarding concerns as they are more likely to be allowed entry to the home.

- [Home safety visits | East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service - Child Home Safety Advice and Equipment Service Referral Form](#)
- [East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service - Referral for Home Safety Visit](#)

Recommendations for improvement

- The Child's Plan should be updated when a child does not take up the offer of planned support.
- A strategy discussion should be held in cases of teenage domestic abuse.
- When organising a strategy discussion Sussex Police need to be formally invited so that it is quorate.
- The risks to a parent should be considered and explored when a referral regarding a child, also includes details indicating one parent is a perpetrator of domestic abuse.
- Health professionals should ensure that notes are kept up to date so that discussion about a child and risks includes those from Health even if a Health professional is on leave or unable to attend the strategy discussion.

Learning for Practice

The LSCB invite you to discuss some of the issues raised in this case audit in your team meetings or during group supervision. We encourage your responses to be included in your team minutes and forwarded to the safeguarding lead within your organisation.

Points for discussion:

Applying learning

- ✓ What have you/your team learnt from this audit?
- ✓ How might you/your team apply that learning?

Referral for Home Safety Visits?

- ✓ When might you consider making a referral for a Home Safety Visit (for example, alcohol or substance misuse, poor housing conditions, smoking, hoarding)
- ✓ What experience have you had with making home safety visit referrals?

Resources

If you think a child is being harmed or may be at risk of harm, please contact: SPoA (Mon-Friday 8.30am-5pm)

Phone: 01323 464222

Email: 0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.gov.uk or 0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.qcsx.gov.uk



LSCB Multi-Agency Training:

The LSCB offers training for professionals on different aspects of the child protection process. Details of future courses can be found on the East Sussex Learning Portal: www.eastsussexlearningportal.org.uk

Pan Sussex Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

Details of child protection and safeguarding procedures in relation to child protection procedure can be found at:

[4.6 Strategy Discussions | Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual](#)

[4.8 Section 47 Enquiries | Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual](#)