

LEARNING METHODOLOGY FRAMEWORK



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1. Introduction

1.1 This Learning Methodology Framework sets out four standard methods of extracting and acting upon learning, which have been endorsed by Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership. This framework is applicable for cases where there are examples of good practice for learning across the partnership, but which may provide scope for learning from which service delivery may be improved, or for cases that ***do not meet the criteria for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review***. The purpose of this framework is:

- to provide standard methodologies to be used where it is judged by the Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership that children's circumstances should be reviewed for learning purposes;
- to use this learning to inform the development of appropriate strategies to improve performance and outcomes for children, young people and their families;
- to provide evidence (in conjunction with other activities of the Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership) of best practice and areas for improvement
- to identify good practice for dissemination across the partnership.

1.2 In some cases, the learning review may be preceded by the statutory rapid review process within 15 days of serious incident notification which will decide whether the circumstances merit a Child Safeguarding Practice Review as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and the overall decision ratified by the Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership

The aim of this 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 children's safety and share any learning appropriately*
- *consider the potential for identifying improvements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*
- *decide what steps they should take next, including whether or not to undertake a child safeguarding practice review (WT2018).*

See GSCP *Serious Incident Notification and Rapid Review guidance* for more details about the process in Gateshead

1. 3 All learning reviews should be conducted in a way which:

- Recognises the complex circumstances in which professionals work together to safeguard children/families;
- Recognises good practice even when there are also areas for improvement;
- Seeks to understand the underlying reasons that led individuals and organisations to act as they did;

- Seeks to understand practice from the viewpoint of the individuals and organisations involved at the time;
- Is transparent about the way data/information is collected and analysed;
- Makes use of relevant research and case evidence to inform the findings;
- Does not prejudice any criminal or care proceedings which may be ongoing. This may mean delays to some aspects of reviews if they are in the public domain.

1.4 The Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership is informed by national and local safeguarding aims and objectives, research and analysis. It is underpinned by ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ (2018). The key principles of this are that:

“Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child’s needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.”

“[A] child-centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of each child. A child centred approach means keeping the child in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families.”

1.5 The first principle encapsulates the importance of multi-agency working, whilst the latter emphasises that the child needs to be the focus of this. Achieving this means that the views and wishes of the child should be considered within the learning activity undertaken with the child and their families/carers.

2. Purpose and Aim

2.1 The purpose of the framework is to enable the Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership and agencies to select the appropriate learning methodology to ensure that the Partnership:

- Learns from reviews and audits to continuously improve;
- Has a planned approach in scrutinising and challenging the quality and effectiveness of their services through self-assessment;
- Has business plans that are informed by need identified by national and local safeguarding data and information;
- Takes a proactive approach to seeking out evidence of good practice, even when there are improvements to be made in the broader multi-agency work around a family.

2.2 In line with recommendations from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (Association of Child Protection Professionals Conference, November 2019), the Gateshead Safeguarding Children is seeking to:

- Focus all reviews on offering positive ways to improve learning and practice;
- Use the collation of reviews to spot themes, trends, and recurring practice issues to help inform local practice;
- Help build the evidence base of what really works;
- Grow the confidence and workforce knowledge through accessible, contemporary and relevant practice learning.

3. Methodologies

For each methodology, it is anticipated that an information gathering exercise will be undertaken across all agencies relevant to the case. The information gathered must be proportionate to the child's circumstances and to the chosen methodology. It may be that the initial choice of methodology changes as further information emerges.

To promote consistency of approach across the GSCP, agencies may also wish to use similar methodologies for learning reviews undertaken within their own agency.

For any learning review, family engagement with the process should be considered from the beginning and throughout. The likely impact of the learning review on the family should be discussed with the professionals that continue to work with them. Professionals still involved may also be able to support the family in understanding the context of the review. It is recognised that some families will not wish to be involved in any way. If the decision is taken to involve the family, then there should be consideration about whether it is appropriate to offer a meeting with someone independent. **It is suggested that the GSCP lay members are well-placed to conduct these meetings.**

Areas to be explored with families could include:

- Their perspective on what professional services or approaches helped them most and if they experienced any good practice;
- Their understanding of why professionals were involved and what support was offered;
- Anything they would have liked to have been done differently;
- Their thoughts around how professionals listened to the child's views and experiences;
- Any recommendations they have about services should work with families in the future.

The Learning and Improvement group will be involved in the planning of all these methodologies by:

- Agreeing the theme/ scope of the review and key lines of enquiry in advance of any information gathering;
- Identify the timescale for the information gathering (including making out of county requests where appropriate);
- Timescale for completion of the report;

- Identify an author (and chair of practitioner events) to conduct the review who should be independent of the circumstances.

The GSCP business manager will co-ordinate information gathering by sending out requests to relevant agencies. It is often useful to hold a briefing to ensure that agencies are clear on the information they are requested to provide. When agencies are responding to requests for information, they will be given the reasons for the review and they will be advised of the key lines of enquiry and scope of the review. Agencies will be asked to keep their information provided relevant to these areas. There will be a clear timescale given for agencies to respond. Agencies will also be asked to identify:

- Good practice;
- Areas where things needed to have been done differently;
- Unexpected practice/issues of note.

The Learning Review Outcomes Form should be used to record the outcome of any of these methodologies. These should be written as succinctly as possible, taking a strengths-based approach and written in a way that all agencies can understand. Any actions should be SMART, with a focus on the multi-agency learning and recommendations that ensure timely implementation of learning. It is good practice to draw on the findings of other learning reviews, research and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Methodology 1 – Desktop Review
<p>A Desktop Review will involve a review of relevant written records.</p> <p>The staff involved in the review will meet to consider the information gathered and identify the learning. If further information is required, then this will be gathered, and a subsequent meeting arranged to discuss the relevance of any new information.</p> <p>The Learning Review Outcomes Form (attached to this document) will be completed by the lead author within the timescale agreed by the Learning and Improvement Group.</p>
Methodology 2 - Practitioner Learning Review
<p>A Practitioner Learning Review will involve a meeting of relevant professionals to reflect on their experiences of working with a family. This type of learning review may be held to specifically explore good practice, in which case the model of an appreciative enquiry may be used.</p> <p>Prior to the event the information already gathered will need to be reviewed and key lines of enquiry for the event should be determined. It may be useful to do this in collaboration with representatives of agencies who will be involved to ensure that any practitioners attending the event will be able to engage with the questions asked. This will also provide an opportunity to explore any gaps in background information or conflicting information. Clarifying these issues</p>

as far as possible in advance will be key to the event being a positive learning experience for those involved.

The planning will also need to determine which staff should be invited. There should be consideration of any potential challenges that may arise and how these can be managed (for example, which level of staff are being invited - managers and/ or frontline practitioners).

Each person invited to the event should be provided with information about why the review is being undertaken and told what to expect at the review (preferably by being sent an agenda). They should be offered the opportunity to speak with the chair in advance if they have any questions, and their own agency should continue to offer appropriate support to the individual.

In advance of the review, the questions for exploration and agenda should be sent out by the chair.

During the review, the chair should set clear ground rules, which should include respecting differing opinions and making it explicit that this an opportunity to reflect on involvement with a family and not a blame exercise. It should also be made clear that this is not a care planning activity.

Areas to be explored during the event are likely to include:

- Practitioners' reflections on their involvement with the child and family;
- Reflections on working relationships with the family;
- Reflections on multi-agency working; any challenges and good practice in this area;
- Any contextual factors that affected work with the family (for example organisational context, policies/ procedures and availability of resources etc);
- Testing out any hypotheses that have emerged by this stage;
- Supervision and support arrangements;
- Any learning that practitioners have gained;
- Discussion about the family's views (if they have shared them).

Following the event, the Learning Review Outcomes Form (attached to this document) will be completed by the lead author and circulated to those involved in the event, giving them an opportunity to comment. A final copy should be sent to the GSCP business manager within the timeframe agreed.

Methodology 3 - Thematic Review

(Each case may have had a learning review in its own right.)

This review is to be used where similar circumstances are identified with several families and it has been agreed by the Learning and Improvement Subgroup that a thematic review could elicit wider learning.

The first stage will be for the lead author to review any background information and confirm the themes for exploration, as well as any differences between the circumstances of the families. The agencies that will be involved in the review should be confirmed.

This type of review may be undertaken using one of, or a combination of, the following:

- An analysis of the background information gathered;
- A learning event of a panel of agencies to discuss the themes;
- A learning event of managers and / or practitioners involved with the families;
- Interviews with practitioners/managers to explore their perspectives.

Any of these activities may also be informed by audits within individual agencies to explore the themes.

As there will be several families involved in this type of review, special care will need to be taken to maintain confidentiality. Additional advice can be sought from the GSCP Business Manager (and Data Protection Officers) around whether and how to involve families in these types of reviews.

The Learning Review Outcomes Form (attached to this document) will be completed by the lead author and circulated to those involved in the review, giving them an opportunity to comment. A final copy should be sent to the Learning and Improvement Subgroup within the timeframe agreed.

Methodology 4 – Single issue review

This review is to be used where a single distinct issue is identified with one or more families and it has been agreed by the Learning and Improvement Subgroup that a review focusing on that issue could elicit learning for partnership agencies.

The lead author will undertake a review of the background information gathered. They may then carry out:

- Additional consultation with practitioners/managers;
- Reviews of additional agency records, policies, protocols or guidance;

Any of these activities may also be informed by audits which explores the theme.

The Learning Review Outcomes Form (attached to this document) will be completed by the lead author and circulated to any people involved in the review, giving them an opportunity to comment. A final copy should be sent to the GSCP Business Manager within the timeframe agreed.

4. Action planning, dissemination of learning and publication

All reviews should result in learning and positive change. All participants have a responsibility to identify any learning and be proactive about making changes in their own agency. At the conclusion of the review, there should be an action plan that reflects the findings and focuses on measuring impact.

The Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership's Learning and Improvement Subgroup will regularly discuss the findings of any reviews to understand any themes that are emerging and agree any partnership activity to further disseminate the learning. Each agency also has a responsibility to embed the learning from reviews within their own agencies to ensure the necessary changes are made for the benefit of families in the future.

Agencies should demonstrate an ongoing commitment to a learning culture and have plans in place to ensure that learning activity is integrated into practice at all levels.

Some of the ways in which individual agencies or the partnership may implement the learning to improve outcomes for children and young people include:

- Learning bulletins
- Workforce development strategies – Training and development plans, supervision policy, recruitment, induction and performance management arrangements
- Single and multi-agency training events
- Opportunities for workplace shadowing
- Individual and group supervision
- Review of policies and guidance for staff
- Awareness campaigns using social media
- Multi-agency practitioner information groups
- Consultation or co-production with service user groups.

Decisions about publication should be made on a case-by-case basis, with the risks and benefits associated with publication being considered at the beginning and throughout the review process.

In many cases publication on the Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership website of the whole report or a summary of the key findings will help raise awareness of the issues and promote learning.

Appendix 1: Learning Review Outcomes Form

Details of family being considered	
Lead Author	
How this review was undertaken	<i>(Set out if this a practitioner event or desktop review etc)</i>
Attendees or people who contributed to this review	
Any people who were unable to contribute	
Date of Practitioner Event or date the review was undertaken	
Synopsis of the case	
<i>(This should be a brief summary of the situation, max 300 words, that provides enough detail for agencies to understand the reasons for the review)</i>	
Findings and key learning points	
<i>(This should be a brief summary, max 300 words, of the key learning points for agencies to easily understand and disseminate – more detailed findings should be captured below)</i>	
Background and summary of agency's involvement	
<i>(Provide details of the circumstances of the family and any additional information that has not been captured in the synopsis)</i>	
Strengths in agencies response or within multi-agency working with the family	
<i>(Set out any strengths that were identified from the review)</i>	
Areas where we would like to do better	
<i>(Set out any learning that will form the basis for the key findings and learning points)</i>	
Any specific actions identified in relation to the family	
<i>(This usually not be necessary, however if it is required then the details here should be brief and make clear the accountability for any actions)</i>	
Any broader learning that has been identified	
<i>(Consider whether there is any overlap with other reviews that have been undertaken or research messages)</i>	
Recommendations	

Action	Person Responsible	Timeframe
<i>(Consider the learning activities set out in the GSCP methodologies for Learning Reviews)</i>		
How this learning will be disseminated and implemented		
<i>(Ensure that as far as possible agencies involved in the Learning Review take a proactive approach to leading any necessary changes within their own agencies. Consider any support from the Learning and Improvement Subgroup to support with wider dissemination)</i>		
Decisions around how the family have been involved or informed of this review		
<i>(Set out how this has been considered throughout the review process, including any risks around publication or family involvement)</i>		