



Glasgow Public Protection Committees Significant Case Review Protocol

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Glasgow's Vision

Glasgow's citizens have a right to feel safe and protected. All services have a responsibility to ensure adults at risk and children are safe, and their needs are met. Services will work in partnership with adults at risk, children and young people and their families and communities to achieve this. To fulfil this vision, the committees will work to:-

- Ensure strategic leadership and ownership of activity in Glasgow to protect adults at risk, and children and young people
- Improve co-operation between agencies in Glasgow
- Enhance the development and delivery of services in Glasgow

The Adult and Child Protection Committees form the primary strategic planning mechanism for inter-agency public protection work in Glasgow. They are responsible for ensuring that agencies work and act in a co-ordinated way on the prevention, identification and response to abuse. The committees report to the Chief Officers' Group.

Introduction

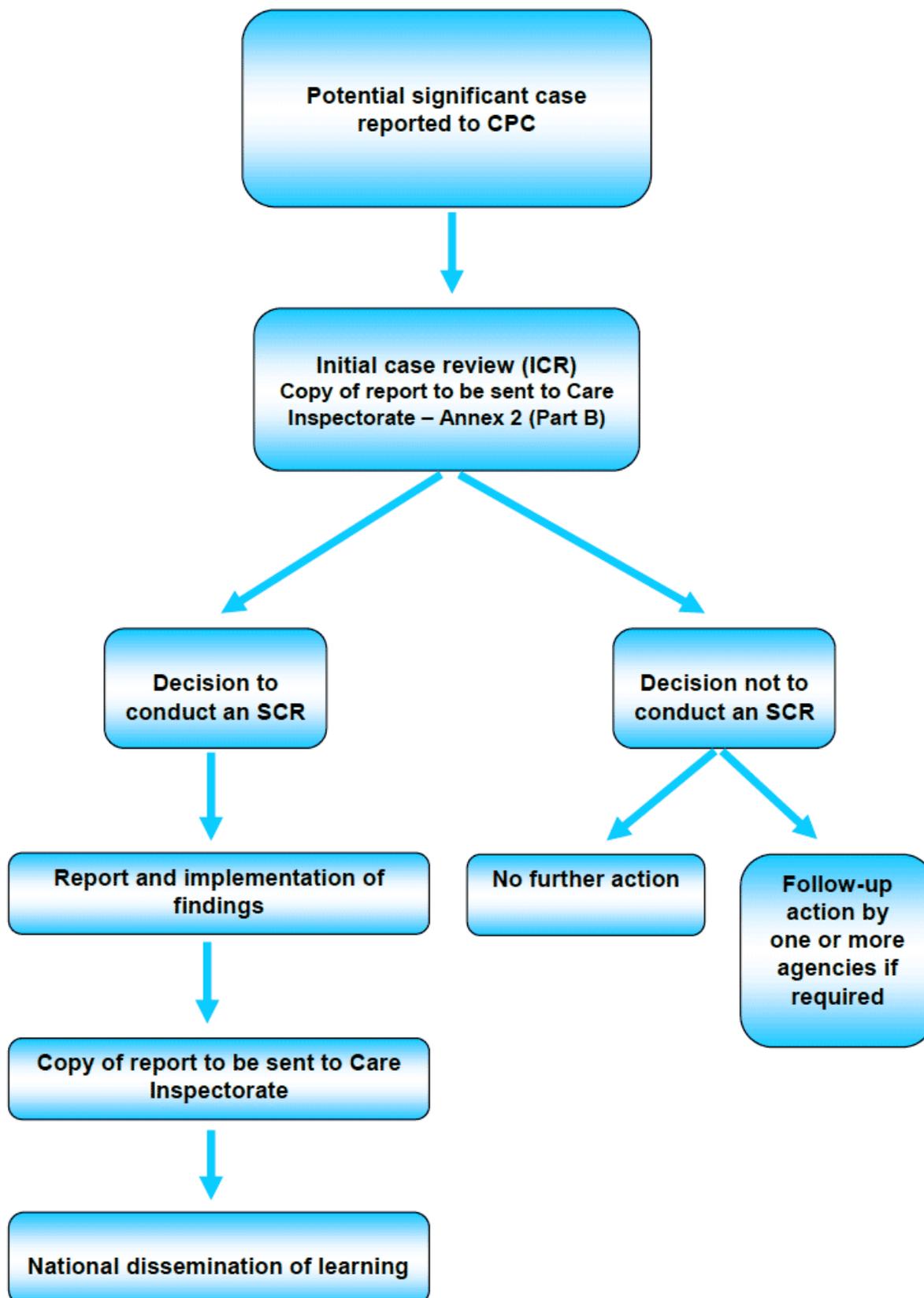
A Significant Case Review (SCR) is a multi-agency process for establishing the facts of a situation where an adult or child has died or been harmed significantly, within an adult or child protection context, in order to learn lessons on how to better protect those at risk in our community. Any agency can ask for a case to be considered for review by the Adult or Child Protection Committee. Concerns raised by families should be addressed through relevant agencies' normal complaints procedures.

SCRs are a critical part of the continuous improvement of practice and processes. The committees are responsible for the commissioning and undertaking of reviews, development of action plans based on the findings of reviews, and overseeing implementation of the action plans.

An SCR is not a process for apportioning blame to either individuals or organisations. The overarching objectives of an SCR are to:-

- identify where learning and improvement needs to take place
- recognise good practice
- identify key learning points, recommend how they are acted upon and state what outcomes are hoped for as a result
- improve inter-agency working
- increase public confidence in services
- ensure transparency and accountability
- identify national implications, where appropriate

Overview of the case review process



Criteria for Significant Case Reviews

A significant case need not be about just one serious incident. In some cases, for example neglect, concerns may be cumulative.

An SCR should be undertaken when a child or adult deemed to be at risk of harm has died and the incident, or accumulation of incidents, gives rise to significant and serious concerns about professional and/or service involvement or lack of involvement, or when a child or adult deemed to be at risk of harm has not died but has sustained significant harm or risk of significant harm and the incident, or accumulation of incidents, gives rise to serious concerns about professional and/or service involvement or lack of involvement and one or more of the following apply:-

- Abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor in the individual's death
- The child is on, or has been on, the Child Protection Register (CPR) or a sibling is on, or has been on, the CPR
- The adult is, or has been, subject to Adult Support and Protection procedures
- The death is by suicide or accidental death
- The death is by alleged murder, culpable homicide, reckless conduct, or an act of violence
- At the time of their death, the child was looked after by, or was receiving aftercare or continuing care, from the local authority
- It is determined that there may be learning to be gained through conducting an SCR

Purpose of Significant Case Reviews

The purpose of an SCR is to:-

- Establish the full circumstances of the death/serious harm of the individual
- Examine and assess the role of all relevant services
- Explore any key practice issues and why they may have arisen
- Establish whether there are lessons to be learned or good practice to be shared about the way in which agencies work individually and collectively to protect individuals
- Identify areas for development, how they are to be acted on and what is expected to change as a result
- Consider whether there are gaps in the system and whether services should be reviewed or developed to address those gaps
- Establish findings which will allow the committee to consider what recommendations need to be made to improve the quality of services

The Significant Case Review Panel

Glasgow's Adult and Child Protection Committees have a Significant Case Review Panel which is chaired by the Chief Social Work Officer, or designated Vice-chair (currently the Assistant Chief Officer for Public Protection and Complex Needs). The panel is comprised of representatives of the Health and Social Care Partnership, GGC NHS, Police Scotland, Education Services, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA). The role of the panel is to oversee, on behalf of the committees, all matters relating to SCRs. Its key responsibilities are to:-

- Examine all evidence available and reach a decision on the level of investigative intervention required, given the circumstances of each case
- Request any additional information necessary in order to reach a decision

- Agree the scope of the investigation
- Appoint lead reviewers
- Appoint a review team
- Advise and agree to appoint or co-opt specific expertise in to the review team to assist with the investigation
- Agree timescales for reporting progress, and provision of intermediary and final reports
- Monitor the progress of the review to ensure actions are undertaken expeditiously and barriers to completion are identified and addressed
- Agree the content of the final report, learning outcomes and recommendations

Decisions available to the panel are:-

- The SCR criteria has been met and a review will be undertaken
- The SCR criteria has not been met, however some other actions may be required to address learning issues arising from the case
- The SCR criteria has not been met, appropriate action has already been taken and therefore no further action is required

The SCR Panel reports details of its decisions and the underpinning reasons to:-

- The relevant protection committee
- The Chief Officers' Group
- The Care Inspectorate

The Significant Case Review Process

Initial Case Review

It may not be apparent immediately that a case is significant and an SCR is required, therefore the panel will conduct an initial case review (ICR). Any agency who wishes a case to be considered for SCR should notify the Lead Officer Public Protection in the first instance. The Lead Officer and Committees' Support Team will then:-

- Notify the committee Chair and SCR Panel Chair that a referral has been made
- Ensure the referring agency has the appropriate documentation and guidance to submit the Initial Case Referral Report

The Initial Case Referral Report includes:-

- A brief description of the case and the basis for referral
- A statement on the current circumstances of the individual and what actions have been or will be taken
- A note of any other formal proceedings underway
- Details of any other agencies involved and the lead contact person for each agency

The Lead Officer and Committees' Support Team will then:-

- Alert other agencies to the receipt of the referral
- Distribute Initial Case Review Report and chronology documentation and guidance
- Advise of timescales for completion of the report (within 14 calendar days)

Should any agency be unable to complete the ICR Report within the requisite 14 calendar days, they must notify the Lead Officer with reasons for the delay. The Initial Case Referral Report and ICR Reports are then considered by the SCR Panel for progression to SCR.

Lead Reviewers

The panel needs to ensure that the lead reviewers and review team, between them, have the necessary skills and competencies to undertake an SCR. The lead reviewers will, in the main, be drawn from committee members or other senior managers in the agencies represented on the committees. The panel can consider using external expertise for all or part of the process in the form of a consultant, professional advisor or 'critical friend'.

The 'National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Conducting a Significant Case Review', Scottish Government (2015) contains a person specification for lead reviewers, which includes the following skills and qualities:-

- No preconceived views of the case/outcome
- A broad knowledge of protecting children/adults at risk of harm
- The ability to interpret and analyse complex multi-agency processes and information
- Logical thinking and ability to map out processes
- An understanding of the context in which services are delivered
- Experience of practice at various levels across an organisation
- Risk assessment and management
- Able to challenge constructively

The responsibilities of the lead reviewers are to:-

- Map the scope of the review and allocate tasks
- Ensure that staff involved in the investigation are aware of the purpose and process of the SCR, and have access to any supports required
- Ensure that, if appropriate, the individual and/or family members are aware of the SCR, its purpose and process, and have access to any supports required
- Co-ordinate interviews and case group discussions
- Ensure the SCR Panel is informed of progress
- Compile a final report which sets out learning points and recommendations for further action

Review Team

It is important to establish a team to support the lead reviewers, and to ensure that each agency's specialist knowledge and issues are understood. No-one should be involved in a review team if they were directly involved in the case. Each member of the review team will be the key contact for their agency, therefore they will need to be able to advise on,

and broker access to, relevant practitioners and information. The skills required in the review team are:-

- A broad knowledge of children's/adults' services
- Investigation skills
- Analytical and evaluation skills
- The ability to consider the wider impacts for practice and service delivery
- The ability to liaise with others and establish good working relationships
- A sensitivity to national and local issues

Case Group

The case group will be comprised of the practitioners and managers who were/are actively involved with the case. During the review process, staff should feel informed and supported by their agency. Each agency must have processes in place to ensure their duty of care is met in this regard.

Consideration must be given to any parallel processes in which staff may be involved relating to the case, for example, disciplinary proceedings.

During the course of the review, concerns may emerge regarding staff conduct in the case. Should this occur, the agency representative on the review team should convey this information to the appropriate manager in their organisation.

Case group members may be interviewed on an individual basis, or as part of a group workshop/discussion. The case group should be:-

- Aware of the purpose and scope of the review
- Informed of the process of the review
- Advised of welfare support available to them
- Informed of the progress of the investigation
- Debriefed on the conclusion and findings of the review before the report is published

Involvement of child/adult/family/carers

The individual/family/carers should be kept informed of the various stages of the review as well as the outcomes, where appropriate. There will be occasions where they are subject to investigation or will otherwise have triggered the SCR. In these instances, information may need to be restricted therefore close collaboration with Police Scotland, COPFS and (for a child) SCRA will be vital.

There may also be cases where families are considering taking legal action against an agency or agencies. This does not fall within the scope or remit of the protection committees or the review team, and should be dealt with by individual agencies under their existing procedures.

Wherever possible, the involvement of the individual and their family/carers should be encouraged. SCR reports should record whether they were informed and/or involved and, if not, the reasons for that decision. The review team should always consider if any additional supports are required to enable individuals/families/carers to understand and participate in the review process, e.g. the use of advocacy services or interpreters, accessibility issues. It may be useful to assign a member of staff as a single point of contact for families throughout the review.

Depending on the particular case and sensitivities, consideration should be given to arrangements for feedback to the family, in particular around the final report, i.e. whether they should receive a copy of the report in advance of publication or whether an oral briefing is more appropriate. This is especially relevant where there is likely to be interest generated within the wider public.

The report

The lead reviewers are responsible for the production of the SCR report. The report should include:-

- An introduction which covers the circumstances that led to the review, the purpose and focus of the review, the time periods considered, the agencies involved, and the extent of the individual's/family's/carers' involvement
- An overview of the case including family background and circumstances, and agency involvement
- A chronology of key events or practice episodes
- A critical analysis of the key circumstances of the case
- Findings/learning points
- Recommendations

If not already included in the report, appendices should be attached which detail review team membership and remit, the multi-agency chronology, and sources of information, e.g. files accessed and people interviewed.

Alongside the full report, an executive summary should also be produced. This provides a brief, anonymised account of the case and agency involvement. Chronologies should not be included. Analysis of the key events has to be sufficient to allow context for the findings and learning points but a balance has to be struck to ensure confidentiality issues are respected.

Using the findings and recommendations of the report, the review team will then draw up an action plan which seeks to address any issues identified, and improve practice, systems and processes across the city.

Dissemination and Publication

For each SCR, the committee - in conjunction with the Chief Officers' Group - should have a dissemination strategy that best serves the public interest and the purpose of improving service delivery. The following points should be considered:-

- Timing
- Involvement of all agencies, including frontline practitioners
- Ensure any identified good practice is shared as part of the learning
- Sharing learning with other committees, the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Government

It is for the committee - with Chief Officers' approval - to decide whether to publish the full report or the executive summary. Factors influencing this decision will be sensitivities and balancing interests in terms of the right to private family life, data protection issues, and the need to increase public confidence in services. If the report contains any identifiable personal information, this should be anonymised before publication. It is imperative that the individual's right to privacy and right to be protected is paramount. The individual and/or family/carers should receive a copy of the report in advance of any publication unless they are subject to any criminal proceedings in respect of the case.

Publication of the report may require to be delayed until the conclusion of criminal or Fatal Accident Inquiry proceedings.

Communications and Media Handling

The SCR report is a document intended for shared learning, and therefore requires a communication strategy. Each SCR should be assessed on its own merits, however the following should be considered when developing a communication strategy:-

- All partner agencies should be involved in the development of the strategy and a lead agency identified
- Each agency should prepare its own press and legal guidance which aligns with the overall strategy
- The strategy must include plans for briefing all relevant persons/organisations, taking account of the sensitivities of the information and data protection legislation
- The method and timing of communication with individuals/families/carers and staff involved in the review

Most agencies will have their own communication officers and any protocols/handling issues should be developed in conjunction with them before the report is made public. The committees should:-

- Agree who will link with the media on behalf of the Chief Officers/committee
- Brief the relevant communications officer(s)
- Approve the wording of any statements to the media

No information about an SCR should be released to the media unless it has been approved by Chief Officers and the relevant committee.

Implementation and Monitoring of Learning

The Adult and Child Protection Committees have a dissemination process which ensures that single- and multi-agency learning outcomes are actioned by the relevant agencies and reported to the committee on a six-monthly basis. The reporting process will be monitored by the Quality Assurance Subgroup. Each agency should have a named lead person within their agency who is responsible for:-

- Prioritising action points/tasks
- Ensuring appropriate action is taken, whether singly or in partnership with other agencies
- Ensuring that six-monthly reports to the committee are completed and forwarded to the Quality Assurance Subgroup in the first instance

The Quality Assurance Subgroup will monitor the contents of the report, the effectiveness of the multi-agency process and the progress of the learning outcomes and report to the committee accordingly.

Governance of Significant Case Reviews

Chief Officers must ensure that their Adult and Child Protection Committees are properly constituted and resourced in order for them to discharge their duties, including SCRs, effectively. Governance of the SCR process and ownership of the final report sit with the Adult and Child Protection Committees, and the SCR Panel manages and has oversight of reviews on their behalf.

The panel should seek to inform all those who have a legitimate interest in the SCR, and consider how much information should be offered to different parties. Each agency should have a named point of contact. During the course of the investigation, information of an extremely sensitive nature which relates to the personal circumstances of individuals and their families/carers will be discussed. All personnel involved with the review must be aware that all such information is confidential to the investigation and should only be discussed or exchanged according to agency confidentiality policies and professional conduct codes.

During the course of an SCR, any evidence of criminal acts or civil negligence which come to the attention of the review team must be reported to the Chair of the committee in the first instance.

Significant Case Reviews and Parallel Investigations

There are a number of other processes that could be running in parallel with an SCR, for example:-

- Criminal investigations and prosecutions
- Fatal Accident Inquiries
- Children's Hearing proceedings
- Significant Case Reviews which cross disciplines
- Significant Case Reviews under Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements
- Significant Case Reviews which cross local authority boundaries

Detailed guidance is provided in [Annex 8](#) and [Annex 9](#) of the National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Conducting a Significant Case Review, Scottish Government (2015). These processes may impact on whether an SCR can be easily progressed or concluded, particularly as criminal investigations always have primacy. To establish what status an SCR (including the ICR) should have relative to other formal investigations, there should be ongoing dialogue with Police Scotland, COPFS, SCRA or other relevant agencies to determine how far and how fast the SCR process can proceed. Good local liaison arrangements are important. Issues to be considered include how to:-

- Link processes
- Avoid witness contamination
- Avoid duplication of activity and information-collection
- Agree decisions to postpone SCRs if a parallel process is running, and wait for the determination of the parallel process.

Where SCRs cross disciplines or local authority boundaries, a collaborative or joint review should be considered. Good communication and liaison is crucial, and any other committee with an interest or involvement in the case should be included as partners in jointly planning and undertaking the review. For cross-border (UK) SCRs, The [National Guidance](#) provides advice and suggestions to facilitate cross-border co-operation.

Regardless of whether or when an SCR takes place, it is important that any obvious areas for improvement of services and practice are addressed as soon as possible. Agencies should assess the circumstances of the case to identify if any immediate actions require to be taken.