

# Safeguarding Children Briefing



## NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

### INTRODUCTION

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Tim Loughton MP, has written to all chairs of local safeguarding children boards, and directors of children's services to confirm that the overview report and the executive summary of all new serious case reviews (SCRs) *initiated after the 10<sup>th</sup> June* should be published. The presumption is that all SCRs will be appropriately redacted, anonymised and published in full except where it would affect the welfare of any surviving children and their siblings.

There is no change to the guidance contained in Working Together in respect of Serious Case Reviews initiated prior to 10 June 2010.

This briefing explains the necessary change to the statutory guidance set out in [Chapter 8 of Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2010\)](#) relating to the publication of serious case reviews. In exercising their functions the Kent Safeguarding Children Board and all Board partners must have regard to this new guidance.

### NEW REQUIREMENTS

In addition to this new requirement for SCRs initiated from 19<sup>th</sup> June 2010, the Government has also confirmed its intention that the first SCR overview reports published will be those on the Peter Connelly case. The Government is also committed to ensuring that the SCR overview reports on the recent high-profile cases in Edlington, Shannon Matthews in Kirklees and Khyra Ishaq, in Birmingham will also be published. However no date for publication has yet been set. Executive summaries for two of the SCR's- those for the Ishaq and Matthews cases-have yet to be published. In all these cases, identifying details will be removed.

The presumption will be that both the overview report and the executive summary should be published - anonymised and without identifying details - unless there are compelling reasons relating to the welfare of any children directly concerned in the case for this not to happen. There is an important balance to be struck between transparency and openness and the protection and welfare of individuals.

## CHANGES TO WORKING TOGETHER 2010

It is recognised that the publication of Serious Case Reviews is a sensitive and complex matter. Serious Case Review overview reports contain personal information and it is vitally important that published Serious Case Reviews are appropriately redacted and anonymised to protect the privacy and welfare of vulnerable children and their families. There is an important balance to be struck between transparency and openness so that lessons can be learned, and the protection and welfare of individuals. The Coalition believes that publication to the extent that they are proposing is reasonable and in the greater public interest.

The key purpose of undertaking Serious Case Reviews is to enable lessons to be learned from cases where a child dies or is seriously harmed and abuse or neglect is known, or suspected, to be a factor. In order for these lessons to be learned as widely and thoroughly as possible, professionals need to be able to understand fully what happened in each case, and most importantly, what needs to change in order to reduce the risk of such tragedies happening in the future. Only by publishing Serious Case Reviews will this greater level of transparency and accountability be achieved. The Coalition's aim in publishing SCR overview reports is to restore public confidence and improve transparency in the child protection system, and to ensure that the context in which the events occurred is properly understood so relevant lessons are learnt and applied as widely as possible.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards should publish overview reports of all new SCRs initiated on or after 10 June 2010. Overview reports should be published together with the executive summaries unless there are compelling reasons relating to the welfare of any children directly concerned in the case for this not to happen. Both the overview report and the executive summary should be anonymised and should not contain identifying details. This means preparing SCR overview reports in a form suitable for publication, or redacting them appropriately before publication.

For all new SCRs initiated on or after 10 June 2010, references to publication of the executive summary in [Chapter 8 or Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2010\)](#) and the Flowchart in Chapter 7 should be read as meaning publication of both the overview report and the executive summary. In particular, the fourth bullet point in paragraph 8.44 should be read as referring to publication of the executive summary and the overview report; and the last sentence of paragraph 8.50 should be read as meaning that the IMRs should not be made publicly available (but the overview report should be published). There is no change to the guidance on the content of the executive summary.

SCR overview reports contain personal information relating to surviving children, family members and others. The content of the SCR overview report will be suitably anonymised in order to protect the identity of children, relevant family members and others, and will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 when published. The KSCB will also be mindful of other restrictions on publication of information, for example Court orders, and will take independent advice if in any doubt on compliance with the law.