

Welcome to the 1st issue of the Leicestershire & Rutland Learning Review. The purpose of this newsletter is to give everyone concerned with safeguarding a brief update of 'where are we now'

Issue 1

June 2011

Learning from our Serious Case Reviews. (SCRs)

The primary purpose of a Serious Case Review is for agencies and individuals to learn lessons to improve the way in which they work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Whilst, upon completion, the majority of these cases are published as Executive Summaries on this website <http://www.lrlscb.org/index.htm> occasionally there is a greater need to protect a family's identity so we find alternative ways of sharing the learning. This newsletter is one of the ways in which we achieve this.

We know from our own SCRs there are distinct themes that clearly link into the learning that is being achieved nationally (as shown in the Biennial Studies of SCRs 2003-2009). It concerns us that

45% of SCRs nationally feature babies under one year, who have been significantly injured or died as a result of abuse or neglect. The same lessons from SCRs are re-occurring so the LSCB has decided one focus for us must be safeguarding babies by supporting staff to re-shape their practice when working with children and particularly infants under 12 months.

Relationship between LSCB and Frontline Staff.

Workers, both locally and nationally, report they have not always felt supported or been kept fully informed during the SCR process. Hopefully most practitioners will never be involved in an SCR and we know it can be a difficult experience if they are. We are currently working hard to ensure communication and relationships improve. *An Alternative Type of Review.*

One way to support and involve staff has been

including them in an alternative type of review called a Significant Incident Learning Process (SILP). One SILP is now completed and another is underway. So far the feedback from frontline staff has been extremely positive and line managers have reported the SILP to be a valuable method for learning and re-shaping practice.

A SILP is undertaken when the thresholds for a SCR are not met but a situation or incident has raised significant issues in terms of multi agency working and there are real lessons to be learned to safeguard and protect children. As part of the SILP we hold two Learning Day Events where professionals involved are encouraged to consider what worked well and with hindsight what would have worked better. This learning can then be embedded into practice for the future.

Do you know what the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) does?

Local Safeguarding Children Boards are statutory bodies, therefore across all regions of the country there must be partnership agencies which come together to form members of the Board.

The purpose of the Board is to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the Board to ensure effective safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in that area.

One example of the work of LSCBs is the production of procedures to safeguard children that must be followed by all agencies, these are available on the LSCB website.

You can call us on 0116 2600004

You can email us
lscb@leics.gov.uk

Or Visit the website

<http://www.lrlscb.org/>

The Munro review....

Professor Eileen Munro was commissioned by HM Government to undertake an independent review to improve Child Protection. The review has now been completed which includes recommendations being considered by the Government. Click on the link below for full information.

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/AllPublicationsNoRsg/Page1/CM%208062>

If you have concerns about a child.....

If you are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child you should contact the Local Authority in the area that the child lives.

For Children Living in **Leicestershire** contact:
01163050005 or email childrensduty@leics.gov.uk

For children living in **Rutland** contact
01572 758407 or email dutyteam@rutland.gcsx.gov.uk

For Children in Leicester City contact
0116 2527004 or email DAS.Team@leicester.gov.uk

Out of Office hours for all areas call 0116 2551606

Themes and Implications for practice:

Current research including that of Professor Eileen Munro (2010-2011), Professor Harriet Ward (2010), and findings from the Biennial Studies of SCRs (2003-2009), show us that themes are repeatedly emerging from the findings and learning of SCRs. What has become striking over the last 6 years is that babies under the age of 12 months continue to face acute risk even in child protection cases. Nearly half, (45%) of SCRs nationally feature babies who, despite being known to professionals, are subjected to significant harm or death. The learning from the SCRs shows us there are often similar cultural needs, complexities and high levels of risk within the families of these children which can prove very challenging for practitioners. These would typically include combinations of the following:

- Young, sometimes first time parents who are non or superficially compliant,
- Drug and alcohol issues, domestic abuse, mental health problems, learning difficulties, with little family support.
- Families breaching Written Agreements and presenting collusive relationships.

Such obstacles can swamp practitioners which can lead to:

- Too much focus on parents and the child becoming invisible
- Poor decision making and stuck practice.
- A lack of respectful uncertainty and a prevailing rule of optimism.
- Start Again Syndrome kicks in so valuable information is lost.

What are we doing to help support practitioners?

We know that probably the only time practitioners have come into contact with the LSCB is when a SCR or SILP is being undertaken. Whilst this is one role for the LSCB this is only one tiny part of the work all of our partner agencies enter into and we do know that we need to improve the way we communicate with staff so you know what we do. Restructuring, sometimes as a result of SCRs, has meant a lot of changes and we have identified a real need for supporting practitioners in their practice with the objective of both enhancing professional skills and increasing confidence levels when working with difficult and complex baby cases. We want to reduce the numbers of SCRs and SILPs and be able to highlight the good practice, hard work and commitment of our staff and feed this back to you. We will shortly be introducing a number of innovative initiatives to support our practitioners over the following months. One example includes the provision of workshops, facilitated by experts amongst you, which will directly address themes and common problems facing practitioners and effective ways of working at overcoming barriers, reducing risk and improving outcomes.

Ofsted evaluation of 67 SCRs

Ofsted have been the agency responsible for evaluating all SCRs since 2007. Whilst Professor Eileen Munro has recently recommended that Ofsted should no longer have this responsibility we still feel it is important to highlight the key findings from Ofsted's recent report ('The voice of the child: learning lessons from serious case reviews' -April 2011). Last year Ofsted evaluated 67 national SCRs involving 93 children between 1st April –30th September 2010 and their key findings from these SCRs are summarised as follows:

- *The child was not seen frequently enough by the professionals involved, or was not asked about their views and feelings.*
- *Agencies did not listen to adults who tried to speak on behalf of the child and who had important information to contribute*
- *Parents and carers prevented professionals from seeing and listening to the child.*
- *Practitioners focused too much on the needs of the parents, especially on vulnerable parents, and over looked the implications of the child.*
- *Agencies did not interpret their findings well enough to protect the child.*

A recurring message in these SCRS is the important role of adults who can speak for a child including parents, grandparents, neighbours and members of the public.

Practitioners should:

- *Use direct observation of babies and young children by a range of people and make sense of these observations in relation to risk factors*
- *See children and young people in places that meet their needs eg in places familiar to them.*
- *See children and young people away from their carers*
- *Ensure any assessment of a disabled child identifies any needs plus their protection.*

What's New?

The New Procedures

The L&R LSCB, alongside LeicesterSCB, have worked hard to review all of our local multi-agency policies and procedures, these are now completed. The new version was launched online on 7th June 2011 on both websites.

Joint working with the Safeguarding Adult board

We have learnt that a number of cases cross over between adults and children's services so we are working closely with colleagues from the Safeguarding Adult Board to consider how we can improve the Serious Case Review process and the Significant Incident Learning Process. We are also looking at ways to update and improve the

monitoring of our joint effectiveness as multi-agency safeguarding boards.

Next issue of the Leicestershire and Rutland Learning Review Bulletin is September 2011

If you would particularly like any item to be considered for inclusion please email jane.phillips@leics.gov.uk