



Norfolk Safeguarding  
Children Partnership

## Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership: Learning from Case Reviews, Key themes and 'Practice Standards' THEMATIC LEARNING FRAMEWORK

### Background and context

Norfolk has commissioned a number of SCRs and SPRs under the statutory guidance set out in [Working Together](#) 2013/2015 and 2018, respectively. It is crucial that the Board makes sense of the learning so we can plan, action and evidence improvement within a clear structure.

The case review process, includes regular review and analysis of the recommendations from the reports. Over the years, we have pulled together a Thematic Learning Framework, to enable us to think about the recurring issues and barriers to effective working together. This has moved us from a position where we are looking at over 100 individual and sometimes repetitive recommendations to a point where we can think about SMART actions to move us forward on a continuous journey of learning and improvement.

The Thematic Learning Framework has been adopted by the Adult Safeguarding Board and the Countywide Community Safety Partnership in their work on safeguarding adult reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews.

### Thematic Learning Framework



At the heart of all learning is the child or young person, understanding their experience, what they expect from the adults in their lives and how this aligns with the Norfolk vision, i.e. that all children are loved, valued and respected, happy, healthy and safe and have high aspirations for their future. The central focus is that all learning is child centred and we need to be anchored to the premise that we are working to get the best outcomes for children: remembering what it is like to be a child in Norfolk and asking ourselves what can and should they expect from the adults in their lives who should be keeping them safe.

The thematic learning framework, focuses on four key learning areas:

1. **Professional curiosity** – how can the NSCP encourage and support appropriate curiosity with families, and between professionals?
2. **Information Sharing and Fora for discussion** – how can the NSCP ensure that we use opportunities for discussion effectively, include all relevant parties, act promptly and clearly; and share information well?
3. **Collaborative Working, Decision making and Planning** – how can the NSCP improve timely and collaborative planning and get strong and shared decisions?
4. **Leadership: Ownership, Accountability and Management Grip** – how does the NSCP give effective leadership and champion better safeguarding, locating clear accountability?

Sitting underneath everything we do is the recognition that safeguarding requires people at all levels to manage risk and uncertainty.

Following a thematic Serious Case Review, published in January 2020 (Case AF), Norfolk has committed to a cultural shift by developing trauma informed leadership and practice. The framework should therefore be looked at through a trauma informed lens, recognising that safeguarding is a human business and these cases deal in human suffering therefore having a profound emotional impact on everyone involved.

*It is important to be clear about the context within which safeguarding work takes place. It is a context that features high volume, restricted resources, the sadness of the human condition and the impact that this has on children's lives. It is work that is saturated with a plethora of legislation, policy, targets, performance indicators, inspection and criticism. It is an imperfect system that requires politicians, policy makers, leaders and the media to share the responsibilities for what gets side lined or truncated. There are hard choices to make but the consequences belong to all.*

The themes identified in the learning framework need to consider the reasons why learning may be inhibited in terms of: professional curiosity; where and how we share information; the

ways we work together to make decisions, plan, intervene and share responsibility; and the role our strategic leaders play in containing the workforce.

While this framework attempts to distil the recurring challenges around effective safeguarding, we recognise that the themes will cross over and interlink, for example effective communication and information sharing is intrinsic to collaborative working and the ability to be professionally curious and reflective is dependent on management support and organisational culture.

More specifically, under each of the four quadrants we have started developing headline outcomes that we need to work towards to assure ourselves that Norfolk safeguarding arrangements are co-ordinated and effective. We use this framework to review our approach to practice standards, with reference to our Threshold Guide and multi-agency commitment to working within the Signs of Safety framework. The detail of these headline outcomes is included below.

## **KEY THEMES:**

Analysis of the recommendations show additional themes linked to specific and recurring safeguarding issues and/or areas of practice.

### **Recurring safeguarding issues:**

- Neglect
- Mental health (child and family)
- Working with men and fathers
- Domestic Abuse
- Parent/carer consent and engagement

### **Recurring areas of practice**

- Information-sharing
- Disseminating learning from SCRs
- Quality of engagement with children and young people
- Quality of referrals to CSC and feedback mechanisms
- Early Help practice
- Core standards for supervision
- Use of historical information in assessments and professional curiosity
- Challenge and Escalation
- Communication between agencies

## **Learning in Practice**

The NSCP Safeguarding, Intelligence and Performance Co-ordinator works with members of the SPRG to:

- Gather evidence that any agency specific recommendation has been implemented and if not, establish and address any barriers to improvement
- Shape the high level actions that will help Norfolk to achieve SMART outcomes against each quadrant of learning, including identifying owners

The Head of NSCP Business Delivery ensures that at the point of commission all Lead Reviewers are aware of this framework and can contribute to supporting its development by:

- Acknowledging any current work being undertaken to improve practice
- Alerting the NSCP/statutory partners to any case/child specific learning and/or the need to review the framework as learning from case reviews emerge

The NSCP Chair also works with Chairs of other partnership boards, including Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance (CYP SA), Adults, Community Safety Partnership (responsible for DHRs) and MAPPA to ensure that our combined learning is managed strategically.

### **Recommendations and the Composite Action Plan**

Historically, we published an action plan and summary PowerPoint alongside the report as part of a comprehensive publication plan, including press statements from the NSCP Chair. With the revised approach to learning, the NSCP has agreed that the benefit of having a more coherent approach to learning outweighs the risks of not addressing each individual recommendation in isolation. In order to ensure learning translates to actions and improvement, we:

- Include specific recommendations in relevant strategies, e.g. Neglect and Protecting Babies, and ensure that all recommendations have a 'home' where actions can be taken forward
- Follow up single agency recommendations and the way they disseminate learning to their staff through the Section 11 self assessment process.
- Maintain a Composite Action Plan where all recommendations are logged against the themes for monitoring purposes

We are committed to honouring the child/ren subject to review as individuals, and we use these cases as windows on the safeguarding system to narrate how we can improve. Our approach to publication ensures that the press statement recognises the children's unique experiences and how the system has learned from them.

## **Dissemination of Learning**

SPRG has also suggested that we consider ways to promote the thematic learning, both as a coherent framework as well as focusing on specific areas of concern. The NSCP Business Unit organises CSPR roadshows across the county whenever a review is published to take the learning directly to the frontline and middle management. Local CSPRs are also shared with all training providers through its workforce development subgroup.

## **Practice Standards: Outcomes & Evidence Expected**

### **1. PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY AND PRACTICE**

- 1.1 Practice is child centred and recognises the children and young people we work with as unique individuals, drawing on a trauma informed and resilience oriented approach that recognises the impact of adversity on the child and the family
- 1.2 Multi-agency assessments are analytical, of a high quality, and make full use of all the child/family's history
- 1.3 Parents and carers, including less visible parents, are fully involved with safeguarding and child protection processes, and issues of PR and consent are routinely explored, with particularly recognition of the role of fathers
- 1.4 The workforce is highly skilled and trained to recognise, address and challenge non-engagement and/or disguised compliance
- 1.5 Practice takes account of the impact of different types of abuse, both emotional and physical, and addresses the needs of the child

### **2. INFORMATION-SHARING AND FORA FOR DISCUSSION**

- 2.1 Engagement with children and young people is effective and professionals build positive relationships with children and young people, helping them to feel safe
- 2.2 Norfolk has effective systems in place to track concerns within agencies, with records including all relevant information and all relevant information is shared between agencies
- 2.3 Appropriate professionals are engaged in decision-making within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and other multi-agency discussions, in particular health partners
- 2.4 Information recorded in assessments and agency records is high quality and shared with children, family and the multi-agency partnership in a timely manner
- 2.5 Practitioners from all agencies understand the difference between consultations and referrals and feel confident in contacting the Children's Advice and Duty Service. Feedback on contacts and referrals is provided in a timely way

### **3. COLLABORATIVE WORKING AND DECISION-MAKING**

- 3.1 Professionals are confident to challenge one another and be challenged within the multi-agency arena in order to achieve the best outcomes for the child
- 3.2 Norfolk applies consistent thresholds and there is a clear rationale in each case for why decisions have been made, leading to appropriate and timely referrals for intervention
- 3.3 Significant case decisions in respect of safeguarding are made jointly across agencies and supported by multi-agency planning to best meet the needs of the child
- 3.4 Norfolk's Early Help offer is well established and includes robust mechanisms for proactive review and challenge to ensure cases do not drift

### **4. OWNERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY: LEADERSHIP IN POLICY & PRACTICE**

- 4.1 All agencies understand and follow national guidance in relation to information sharing when working with children and families
- 4.2 Staff supervision is of a high quality and provided to all frontline staff working with children and families
- 4.3 Joint Agency Group Supervision is used routinely to establish a community of practice where professionals build and model trusting, respectful relationships underpinned by a shared understanding of the child/ren's needs, good communication and clarity about roles, responsibilities,
- 4.4 Practitioners and managers are able to confidently exercise sound professional judgement in order to safeguard vulnerable children and young people
- 4.5 Policies and procedures are in place to support all staff in achieving positive outcomes for children
- 4.6 All agencies are aware of, promote and follow NSCP policies
- 4.7 Robust processes and arrangements are in place to ensure that the actions from CSPRs are completed and that learning is shared and embedded across the children's workforce