**Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership**

**Rapid Review Panel Protocol**

**and Referral Pathway**

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# **Background and Legislation**

A Rapid Review is often the first step of the process for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review, in Tower Hamlets the Rapid Review meeting is conducted as a learning workshop as well as decision-making forum.

## **Purpose of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews**

Working Together 2018 Sets out:

“The purpose of reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, at both local and national level, is to identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning is relevant locally, but it has a wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families and for the government and policymakers. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.

“Reviews should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. They are not conducted to hold individuals, organisations, or agencies to account, as there are other processes for that purpose, including through employment law and disciplinary procedures, professional regulation and, in exceptional cases, criminal proceedings. These processes may be carried out alongside reviews or at a later stage. Employers should consider whether any disciplinary action should be taken against practitioners whose conduct and/or practice falls below acceptable standards and should refer to their regulatory body as appropriate”

## **The National Panel and Local Safeguarding Partners**

The National Panel are an independent panel commissioning reviews of serious child safeguarding cases. They advise national and local reviews to focus on improving learning, professional practice and outcomes for children. Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel works with the Department for Education. Click [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/child-safeguarding-practice-review-panel) for more information. Working Together 2018 sets out:

“The responsibility for how the system learns the lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents lies at a national level with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the Panel) and at local level with the safeguarding partners.”

“The Panel is responsible for identifying and overseeing the review of serious child safeguarding cases which, in its view, raise issues that are complex or of national importance. The Panel should also maintain oversight of the system of national and local reviews and how effectively it is operating.”

## **A Serious Incident**

A Serious Incident what will trigger a Rapid Review.

As set out in Working Together 2018:

**“A Serious child safeguarding cases are those in which:**

**• abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and**

**• the child has died or been seriously harmed”**

## **Serious Harm**

“Serious harm includes (but is not limited to) serious and/or long-term impairment of a child’s mental health or intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. It should also cover impairment of physical health. This is not an exhaustive list. When making decisions, judgment should be exercised in cases where impairment is likely to be long-term, even if this is not immediately certain. Even if a child recovers, including from a one-off incident, serious harm may still have occurred.”

To review the full Working Together 2018 please click [here](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf) and see from page 84 for Rapid Review and CSPR Guidance.

## **Serious Incident Notification**

A serious Incident Notification is the trigger point for any Rapid Review of CSPR, if a Serious Incident has occurred (see above) a Serious Incident Notification will be made by the Local Authority to the Department for Education and from that point the THSCP has 15 days to Rapid Review a case and provide a decision for Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

# **THSCP Rapid Review Panel**

As published in the THSCP arrangements the overall aims of Rapid Reviews are Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews are:

* To improve the safeguarding of children and young people where possible within Tower Hamlets through review of local processes, procedures and cases.
* To support the delivery of high-quality services through identification of areas for improvement.
* To strengthen through proportionate candour and constructive challenge the safeguarding partnership to deliver an integrated and comprehensive offer for children and young people

The Rapid Review Panel is a multi-agency partnership group of the THSCP tasked with considering cases that have hit a Serious Incident Notification Threshold. The THSCP will conduct a CSPR when a child is seriously harmed or dies because of abuse or neglect and the Threshold is met. But meeting the criteria does not mean that safeguarding partners must automatically carry out a CSPR. This will be taken into consideration in the event that there is already a CSPR open containing the same themes.

When the criteria for a CSPR is not met but there are possible learning / key issues arising from the case, actions for agencies will be added to the ‘Statutory Review Action Plan’, which is where all actions from Rapid Reviews or CSPRs are kept and monitored. The Action Plan sits under a parallel group called the Rapid Review Working Group with the sole responsibility of ensuring actions are completed and embedded.

When the criteria for a CSPR is met, the THSCP Executive will recommend the methodology which will be decided on a case-by-case base.

The final decision about conducting a CSPR lies with the THSCP Executive Group, which consists of the three named statutory partners. The National Panel is notified of the THSCPs final decision.

# **Membership of the Rapid Review Panel**

The Rapid Review Panel consists of the following professionals*:*

* Head of Service for Quality Assurance, Children’s Social Care (Chair)
* Public Protection Unit, Metropolitan Police
* Designated Doctor for Safeguarding, Tower Hamlets ICB
* Designated Nurse for Safeguarding ICB
* Named GP, Tower Hamlets ICB
* Education Safeguarding Service
* Lead Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children, Barts
* Named Safeguarding Professional, ELFT
* THSCP Manager (non-voting member, policy support)
* THSCP Co-ordinator (non-voting member, business support)

Other partners are invited on a case-by-case basis and this may include:

* Adults Services
* Housing
* Voluntary Sector
* Youth Offending Services
* Early Help
* School/education provision

The Rapid Review Panel meets within 10 days of a Serious Incident Notification being made to the Department for Education.

Individual agencies have a collective statutory responsibility to action the business of the THSCP / Rapid Review Panel and an individual responsibility for meeting their own statutory duties and responsibilities. Members must have strategic oversight and understanding of performance in their agency.

Where a member of the Rapid Review has a conflict of interest in respect of any cases they must declare this and the implications considered. When a Child Safeguarding Practice Review is commissioned, a substitute member for the group must always be agreed.

Administration of the Rapid Review is undertaken by the THSCP Business Unit. This will include:

* Completing relevant administrative support to update papers/action plans in conjunction with the Rapid Review Chair.
* Setting up the Rapid Review Panel within the timescales.
* Sending out the agenda and supporting papers in advance of the meeting.
* Sending out and ensuring agency check forms have been completed.
* Maintaining an up-to-date list of members and their contact details.
* Completing a Decision Sheet containing the outline of the meeting.

# **The Rapid Review Process High Level Overview**

See below the flowchart of the 15 day Rapid Review Process.

# **The Rapid Review Process Detailed Breakdown**

1. Any professional can refer a case to the Rapid Review Panel for consideration when it’s felt that the circumstances might meet the threshold for a Serious Incident Notification or a Child Safeguarding Practice Review.
2. Professionals should always follow internal processes for discussing cases of concern with their manager and safeguarding lead. They should make their referral via their agency safeguarding lead/education safeguarding service. In situations where there are a number of different agencies involved, the responsibility for making a referral lies with the agency that first identified the concerns.
3. Where a case does not meet the threshold for a CSPR but the professional is concerned about how services worked together to ensure a child’s welfare and / or safety, the case should still be referred to the Rapid Review Panel in light of conducting a possible multi-agency review to ensure lessons are learnt and shared across the partnership.
4. Parents and members of the community can also make referrals to the Rapid Review Panel if they are concerned about how services worked together to ensure a child’s welfare and / or safety.
5. Professionals are required to complete a referral form available from the THSCP Business Unit - [THSCP@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:THSCP@towerhamlets.gov.uk) at the earliest opportunity and send to the THSCP business unit.
6. The referral form will be sent to the Head of Quality Assurance in the Local Authority who arranges a three-way discussion between Local Authority - Head of Quality Assurance, Health - Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children – Tower Hamlets and Police - Det. Supt Public Protection to review the threshold of Serious Incident Notification.
7. If the Serious Incident Notification threshold is not met, then the referrer (if a professional) will receive a letter advising on next steps. The Rapid Review Chair may ask for assurance from the agency or for the referrer review any lessons learnt with any other agencies involved and feed this back.
8. If the Serious Incident Notification is met a Rapid Review will take place within 10 days and decision will be made within 15 days of the notification.
9. The Rapid Review Panel is be set up and the referral form reviewed to ensure all the relevant agencies are invited.
10. All agencies are sent an agency check form and are given 5-8 working days to complete the form on behalf of their agency, outlining all contact that agency has had with the child and family.
11. Agency Checks ensure that the Rapid Review Panel have all of the necessary information to be able to make a recommendation about the case. The form should contain a history of the services involvement with the family and should draw out areas of good practice, any areas of improvement and any learning that can be taken from the case.
12. When completing the agency check form partners should consider
    * “What went well?
    * “What could have worked better?”
    * “How could a similar incident be prevented in the future?”
    * “What are the themes of this case and are they coming up in other cases?”
13. The form is read by all agencies and should therefore not be copied from case notes and should not contain acronyms.
14. The agency check forms are sent to the THSCP Business Unit where they are quality assured, forms may be sent back if information is missing, or analysis has not been complete.
15. Once quality assured all agency check forms are sent out to the Rapid Review Panel.
16. The panel meets, where an overview of the case is given by the Chair, each agency will present their agency check form. The panel discusses key themes and key areas identified for learning.
17. The panel decides if the threshold for CSPR has been met, then takes a vote on whether they will recommend that a CSPR should go ahead.
18. The THSCP Manager or Coordinator will write up the Decision sheet, which outlines conversations from the panel, key themes, areas identified for learning and if the case has been recommended for CSPR.
19. The decision sheet is then sent to the THSCP Executive where the three named statutory partners are asked to consider the decision, if in agreement they will sign the decision sheet off. If not in agreement, then a meeting with the Rapid Review Chair will take place and decisions reviewed.
20. Once the decision sheet has been signed off, the THSCP Executive sends this to the National Panel where the decision is reviewed, and the Panel may advise on the recommendation.
21. If the decision is taken to initiate a Child Safeguarding Practice Review all agencies involved are required to take part.
22. In the case where multiple Serious Incidents Notifications are made within a small window of time the Business Unit will liaise with the national panel on timelines to make the quality of the review’s priority.
23. Under no circumstances will Rapid Reviews for different cases be held back-to-back or on the same day.
24. The chair of the Executive has ultimate responsibility for decision making and any escalations should be reviewed by them.

# **Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)/Joint Agency Review(JAR) Meeting:**

All cases reviewed by CDOP/JAR should consider if a referral to the Rapid Review Panel is warranted. A referral to the Rapid Review should be made within a week of the case being discussed by the CDOP/JAR.

# **Implementing the Learning**

* A log is kept with all Rapid Review and Child Safeguarding Practice Review Themes. A separate log is also kept for themes from cases considered at Serious Incident Notification.
* As detailed above a statutory review action plan is kept with all actions from Rapid Review and Child Safeguarding Practice Review detailed actions and this is held under the Rapid Review Working Group.
* The THSCP Manager and Co-ordinator visits agencies to present on the key themes and findings from reviews.
* THSCP holds a conference each November Safeguarding Month on the Rapid Review Process and case themes.
* After each CSPR a learning workshop is held with all partners at publication stage.
* Bulletins with key learning from cases is sent out to all partners.
* One year after a CSPR is published a partnership workshop is held to review the implementation of learning.