Finding Serious Case Reviews

What is a Serious Case Review (SCR)?

In England, Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) conduct a review of any “serious case”. A case is a “serious case” if abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected, and if a child has died or been seriously harmed and where there is concern about how agencies have worked together to safeguard that child. SCRs are conducted in accordance with guidance published as chapter 4 of the 2013 publication Working together to safeguard children (http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/w/working%20together.pdf).

The Serious Case Review Panel (https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/serious-case-review-panel) is a national panel of independent experts who advise LCSBs about conducting and publishing SCRs.

The NSPCC have information about Serious Case Reviews at http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/england/serious-case-reviews/.

In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, there are different arrangements, and the NSPCC has information at are links to more information at http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/.

For Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) reviews, which are for cases involving sexual or violent offenders, please see below under “Finding serious case reviews”.

Publication of SCRs

The guidance states, in relation to publication of reports:

“All reviews of cases meeting the SCR criteria should result in a report which is published and readily accessible on the LSCB’s website for a minimum of 12 months. Thereafter the report should be made available on request.” (Working together to safeguard children, p. 71)

This suggests that SCRs are easy to find. However, LSCBs must consider, when publishing SCRs, how to manage the impact of the report on the child and the family, and must comply with the Data Protection Act and any court orders. They must also send the report to the national panel of independent experts one week before publication, so that the panel can advise if the report should not be published.

In my (limited) experience, reviews seem to be available only in edited or redacted form, or only as summaries. This is perhaps explained by the presence of court orders or legal proceedings, of data protection issues, or of guidance from the national panel.
Finding SCRs

Names of subjects
Legal and other issues may mean that names of children and families are removed. This may make it difficult to find a specific report. If you cannot find it by name of child, try searching by name of place.

NSPCC Library Catalogue
LCSBs are asked to submit published reports to the NSPCC for inclusion in a national repository of SCRs, which was set up in late 2013. The repository forms part of the NSPCC’s Library catalogue. There is a link to the National Case Review Repository at http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/england/serious-case-reviews/ (scroll down), and links to reviews published in 2014 and 2015.

Social Care Online
Some SCRs are indexed in Social Care Online. Doing an Advanced search for the subject term serious case reviews seems to find many, and searching for relevant search terms will find particular ones.

LSCB websites
Otherwise you should be able to locate a report via the website of the LSCB in question. You can find the LSCB website by following links from the appropriate local authority or by a web search.

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MAPPAs exist to assess and manage the risks posed by sexual or violent offenders and are described at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa--2.

An SCR published after an investigation into the case of Georgia Williams, murdered by Jamie Reynolds in Shropshire, was produced by West Midlands MAPPA in October 2015. When I looked on 16th October I could not find it in Social Care Online or via the NSPCC. I found it on the West Midlands Police MAPPA website, via a Google search for Georgia Williams’ name and the phrase serious case review.

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