



Department  
for Education

# **The Learning into Practice Project**

**External evaluation report**

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# Executive Summary

## About the project

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) were funded under the Department for Education (DfE) Innovation Programme to undertake the Learning into Practice Project (LiPP). The aim was to develop and pilot innovative ways of:

- improving the quality of Serious Case Reviews (SCRs)
- improving the use of SCR in practice

The LiPP was testing a proof of concept – aiming to establish what is needed on an ongoing and sustainable basis to improve the quality and use of SCR in England. The LiPP consisted of four main workstreams:

- developing a mechanism for collating and producing accessible information on practice issues and causes from SCR
- the establishment of a strategic Alliance of national strategic and leadership bodies to consider and implement improvement work, from a national perspective, as a result of SCR findings
- supporting commissioning and conduct of reviews through a set of Quality Markers
- improving lead reviewer expertise through a series of masterclasses

## About the evaluation

The Office for Public Management (OPM) has produced this external evaluation report. The aim of the external evaluation was to explore:

- stakeholder perceptions of the potential for the new mechanisms being developed and tested to achieve improvements in the quality and use of SCR in the future, and in turn, better outcomes for children and families
- what might be needed for these mechanisms to become sustainable and implemented on an ongoing basis

The external evaluation involved 63 qualitative interviews with those involved in LiPP activities; and an online survey aimed at non-participants in the LiPP activities to explore wider views on the proposals. 126 people completed this.

Alongside the external evaluation, the project team conducted an internal evaluation of the LiPP, focussing on describing the mechanisms being tested, and the emerging learning from these.

## Findings

Section 3 of the main report presents the full findings from the external evaluation interviews and surveys. Participants in the evaluation indicated clear support for the ideas that the LiPP was testing, often based on their awareness of significant gaps in terms of using the findings nationally from SCRs to understand practice problems, and identify solutions, as well as issues of the varying quality of SCRs.

Feedback included:

- participants were supportive in general of the aims and results of the collation and analysis, and felt it was a valuable process to extract learning from SCRs locally and nationally, and focus on practice issues and high level themes
- there was support for the concept of having a national Alliance and bringing together professional and leadership bodies from across the child protection sector, and the group wanted the Alliance to play a role in supporting and leading practice rather than scrutinising and judging
- most participants in the evaluation felt the Quality Markers would be useful for commissioning and managing the SCR process, and would appeal to different audiences
- masterclass attendees were very positive about the experience, as the lead reviewer role is often very isolated and lacks ongoing training and development opportunities

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with the project activities. Very few survey respondents indicated disagreement, and the strongest areas they supported were for identifying national trends and better understanding these, with input from practitioners.

**Table 1: Summary of survey findings**

<b>LiPP idea</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents indicating ‘completely’ or ‘to a large extent’ in agreement</b>
National trends about practice problems revealed by SCRs should be routinely identified	88%
These trends could be better understood with input and insight from multi-agency frontline practitioners	81%

Masterclasses should continue to be available for lead reviewers	73%
A National Alliance would be useful to help target improvement action	67%
A set of standardised Quality Markers is needed	67%
The role of lead reviewers should be more professionalised	64%

## Implications and recommendations

The LiPP was a developmental project, providing the space to test different mechanisms and approaches to improve the quality and use of SCRs. The overall message was that improving the quality and use of SCRs should be seen as an ongoing journey. The concepts tested in the project were supported by those involved, and the wider stakeholders consulted via the survey. Much of the work will now need to be taken forward as part of other policy developments, but the project has created momentum for a set of practices that could lead to future improvements.

The original aim of the project was to establish how the different mechanisms being tested should continue in the future. A series of Government announcements in December 2015, including proposed changes to the commissioning of SCRs, and a review of LSCBs, mean that there is considerable scope to further develop the learning that has come from the LiPP. It is imperative that the findings from the LiPP project meaningfully contribute to these developments, building on the groundwork that has been achieved over the last year.

The LiPP has established the important principle that improving the quality and use of SCRs should not be imposed upon the sector – it needs to be a collaborative process involving practitioners, LSCBs, different agencies, families and national level bodies. This wider conversation needs to continue, and build on the appetite in the sector for a variety of different stakeholders to be involved in improving the use and usefulness of SCRs so that they really make a difference.

The LiPP was not designed to continue after the funding period. The evaluation findings reported have not therefore shaped further work on the various workstreams to date. They may do if, in the near future, the LiPP processes and products are drawn on in the changing policy and practice context of SCRs.

# 1. Overview of the LiPP

## 1.1 The LiPP project aims

The NSPCC and the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) were funded under the Department for Education (DfE) Innovation Programme to undertake the Learning into Practice Project (LiPP).<sup>1</sup>

Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) are conducted when a child dies or is seriously harmed; abuse or neglect is known or suspected, and there is cause for concern about how agencies have worked together. At present, SCRs are commissioned and managed by Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs).

The starting point for the project was that Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) have the potential to provide vital information to guide improvements to multi-agency child protection practice. However, this potential is not being fulfilled, the quality of SCRs varies, frontline practitioners are not always aware of them, and agencies do not use the learning from other areas that can come from SCRs.

The aim of the project was to develop and pilot innovative ways of improving the quality of SCRs and improving the use of SCR in practice.

The LiPP was testing a proof of concept, to establish what was needed on an ongoing and sustainable basis to improve the quality and use of SCRs in England.

The project was based on the assumption that there was no single solution to improving the quality and use of SCRs. The aim was to achieve a more systematic approach across the whole process of SCR work at both national and local levels.

The short term outcomes for the LiPP were to develop a set of mechanisms and products to improve the quality and use of SCRs. In the medium term, these would lead to national and local systemic change in the child protection system, and frontline practitioners and managers improving their practice. Longer term outcomes included better value for money in SCRs, and safer families and communities.<sup>2</sup>

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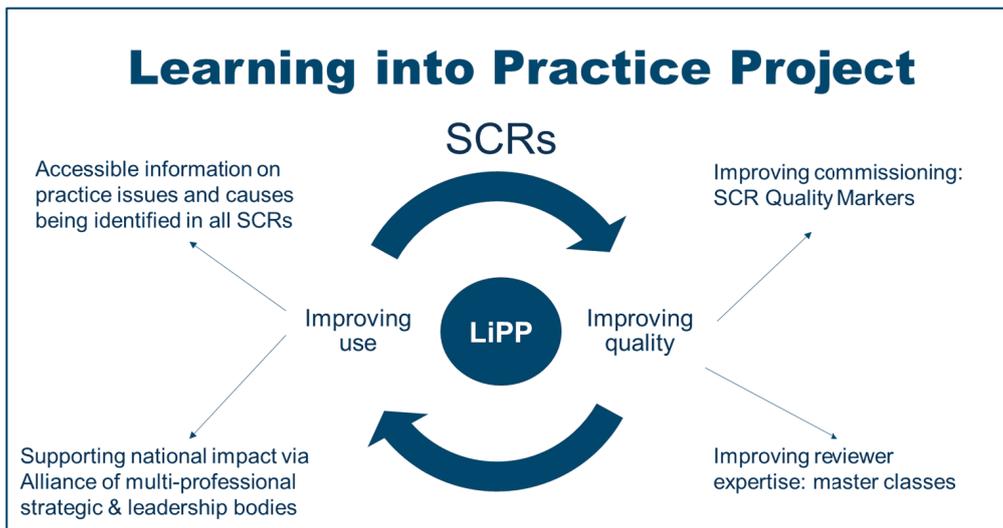
<sup>1</sup> Please note that this report draws on the LiPP descriptions of their activities in order to provide consistency with the internal evaluation report.

<sup>2</sup> The Theory of Change for the LiPP can be found in the Appendix 1.

## 1.2 The LiPP activities

The LiPP consisted of 4 main workstreams. The LiPP was not designed to continue after the funding period. Its uptake was highly dependent on SCR policy which was in a period of extensive change. This limited the extent to which we were able to assess uptake or put forward firm proposals for action and follow-up.

Figure 1: Overview of the LiPP



### 1.2.1 Workstream 1: Collation and synthesis of SCRs

SCR findings could potentially be used to drive improvement in areas other than the ones in which they are conducted. For this potential to be realised, local areas would require timely access to SCR findings, with a focus on practice issues and their causes.

This workstream involved:

- testing a new methodology for collating findings nationally from SCRs, using a test topic of 'inter-professional communication and decision making'
- 3 summits bringing together practitioners from a wide range of agencies to add to the understanding of the practice problems identified from the SCR analysis, and develop ideas about support and solutions to tackle these issues
- workshops in 3 pilot LSCBs examining one topic to explore and understand how the analysis drawn from the national collation of SCRs could be used to change and improve practice

## **1.2.2 Workstream 2: Establishing an Alliance**

There is a range of professional and leadership bodies already in existence whose remit involves the safeguarding and protection of children. However, there is currently no mechanism to enable these bodies to routinely instigate change individually or collectively, in response to practice themes identified through SCRs.

Workstream 2 aimed to form an Alliance of professional and leadership bodies to meet four times throughout the LiPP. The intention was to provide the Alliance with the learning from the collation of SCRs from workstream 1, and ask them to consider how they could tackle some of the practice problems identified through the activities and levers over which they had control.

## **1.2.3 Workstream 3: Improving the quality and commissioning of SCRs**

There is a wealth of experience in the sector, and some research evidence about effective investigation methods across domains, but these have not yet been brought together to provide a consistent understanding of what 'good' looks like in SCRs.

The aim of the workstream was to improve the commissioning of SCRs, as well as supporting commissioners to manage and ensure high quality reviews. This would be achieved through:

- developing a set of quality markers that could support a consistent and robust approach of the whole SCR process, not solely the report
- consulting on the quality markers with the sector
- working with five SCRs to test the quality markers as part of their development, by retrospectively reflecting on the extent to which they had met the quality markers, and identifying what helped or hindered this being achieved

## **1.2.4 Workstream 4: Improving SCR lead reviewer expertise**

SCR lead reviewers have a key role in producing high quality SCRs, which provide a good understanding of practice problems. This quality is significantly influenced by the skills of the lead reviewers that undertake them. At present, individuals can become lead reviewers without any formal training or supervision. There are also limited opportunities for continuing professional development.

The workstream aimed to develop one day masterclasses to help lead reviewers access knowledge that would help them in their roles; and to improve the quality of reviews, starting with a short scoping exercise to establish training needs of lead reviewers.

## 1.3 Existing policy and research context

Conducting SCRs represents a significant investment of time and money across the safeguarding sector. However, there have been concerns for some years in England about the quality of SCR reports, particularly whether they do provide a sound analysis of what happened in a particular case, and the extent to which they influence improvements to practice which would reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents, for example, Rawlings et al, (2014).

The LiPP follows on from a number of developments in the field of SCRs, including:

- a recommendation in the Munro Review of Child Protection (HM Government, 2011) that SCRs should take a systems approach, and the subsequent revision of the statutory guidance Working Together to allow local areas to use these approaches, amongst others
- the establishment of a national panel of independent experts on SCRs in 2013
- Government-funded training courses for SCR reviewers

The wider policy context changed significantly during the year that the LiPP was running. In December 2015, the DfE made the following policy announcements:

- Alan Wood was commissioned to conduct a review into Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), and their role and function in relation to serious case reviews
- the intention to centralise the commissioning of SCR reports. This could mean changes to the way that SCRs are locally commissioned by LSCBs and written by independent reviewers
- a 'What Works Centre' for children's social care: an evidence based resource to support social work practice. This centre would have the mandate to disseminate learning from SCR reports as a central body

## 1.4 Changes to the project's intended outcomes or activities

All 4 workstreams took place as planned, and the main findings section of this report (Section 3) provides further detail of what this meant in practice. There was a change in the set up of the LiPP in the early stages, as The College of Social Work was involved as one of the 3 original partners. The organisation closed in June 2015.

The collation activities in workstream 1 were originally intended to include the development of a common taxonomy for presenting findings. However, the quality of analysis of the reports meant that this was not possible. The lack of consistency in the structure of the reports was instead fed in to the development of the Quality Markers.

One of the workshops for the pilot LSCB originally planned in workstream 1 did not take place due to adverse weather. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to reschedule.

However, there were a number of additions to the main project activities:

- 2 mini-summits held in Leeds and London in January 2016 to share the work on the quality markers and collation of learning from SCR reports; this was for LSCB chairs, board managers, and lead reviewers to provide feedback on the activities, and how they might be used to drive local improvement
- an end-of-project event on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016 which brought key stakeholders from LSCBs and lead reviewers together with guest speakers to discuss the LiPP project in the context of developments in the field of SCRs

It is worth noting that the new policy announcements had a number of implications for the LiPP especially as these were underpinned by an understanding that the quality and use of SCRs needed to be better coordinated on a more ongoing and sustainable basis in the future: the very proof of concept that the LiPP was testing.

The project team identified that as a result of the December 2015 announcements:

- the final audience for the quality markers and the results of the collation might change in light of Alan Wood's LSCBs review
- if SCRs were commissioned centrally, there would be implications for who would use quality markers, and for what purposes
- the findings from the LiPP overall could influence the What Works Centre

## **1.5 The geographical context of the LiPP**

The LiPP operated at different levels strategically, nationally and locally, to engage different stakeholders in testing the different mechanisms:

- the summits for workstream 1 involved practitioners from a range of agencies (including local authorities, health, the police) drawn from across England
- workstream 1 and workstream 3 involved piloting LiPP activities and products in 7 LSCB areas. It was agreed that these would be anonymised
- the Alliance set up for workstream 2 involved strategic professional and leadership bodies with a national remit
- the masterclasses were provided to lead reviewers from across England

## 2. Overview of the evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to focus on the short term outcomes in the Theory of Change for the LiPP (see Appendix 1). This meant:

- exploring stakeholder perceptions of the potential for the new mechanisms being developed and tested to achieve the desired medium- and long-term outcomes
- what might be needed for these mechanisms to become sustainable and implemented on an ongoing basis

The evaluation design involved:

- internal action research activities by SCIE and the NSPCC to describe what was being learnt from the project about the methods for improving the quality and use of SCRs, looking at how each mechanism was implemented
- external activities by OPM, gathering views from stakeholders on how useful the mechanisms are and whether they should be continued

This report presents the findings from OPM's external evaluation activities. The internal evaluation report has been produced separately by SCIE and the NSPCC.

### 2.1 Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions for each workstream are summarised below. The highlighted questions were the focus for the external evaluation, although, in practice, there was some overlap given that the stakeholders were being asked to reflect on how useful the mechanisms were, and what might be needed on an ongoing basis, which inevitably involved questions about the process itself.

#### **Workstream 1: Collation and synthesis**

- What are the effective methods for:
  - collating and presenting practice issues from SCRs?
  - for engaging the sector in further understanding practice issues?
  - for using SCR data to bring about change?
- What are the views of those who have been involved in the project about the usefulness of these methods? And should they be continued?

### **Workstream 2: Establishing an Alliance of professional and leadership bodies**

- what are the effective methods for using SCR data to bring about change?
- what are the views of those involved in the project about the usefulness of the mechanisms developed and whether these should be continued?

### **Workstream 3: Improving the quality and commissioning of SCRs**

- is a set of quality markers useful for improving the quality of SCRs?
- are the quality markers the right ones?
- what has been learnt about common challenges to achieving quality, and how SCR processes can tackle these?
- what format is most useful for presenting quality markers?
- what are the views of those who have been involved in the project, including whether the quality markers should be continued?

### **Workstream 4: Improving SCR lead reviewer expertise**

- have lead reviewers found the masterclasses useful?
- what impact have the masterclasses had on reviewer knowledge?
- what are the views of those involved in the project about what has been developed and whether it should continue?

## **2.2 Evaluation methodology**

The external evaluation methodology involved an initial scoping stage with the internal project team to develop the evaluation plan and division of internal or external activities. Research instruments used are provided in Appendix 2.

### **2.2.1 Interviews**

The external evaluation involved qualitative interviews with some of those involved in LiPP activities. Discussion guides were developed by OPM, and signed off by the LiPP project team.

At each event (summits, mini-summits, masterclasses) participants were asked by the internal evaluation team to fill in a feedback form. Those who had indicated they would be happy to take part in a follow up interview were then contacted by OPM to arrange a mutually convenient time to speak. For workstreams 2 and 3, the internal evaluation team passed on contact details for a small sample of those who had been involved in the work to OPM's evaluation team. The interviews were carried out after LiPP participants had

attended an event, or come to the end of their involvement with a pilot activity, and generally lasted between 30-40 minutes.

Table 2 summarises the engagement with the external evaluation activities for each workstream. In total, 63 interviews were conducted with LiPP participants.

**Table 2: External evaluation activity**

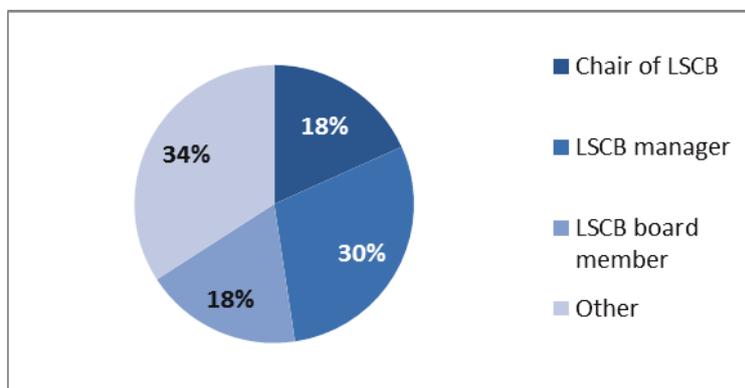
<b>Project activity</b>	<b>Evaluation activity</b>
<b>Workstream 1 – practitioner summit attendees</b>	24 phone interviews conducted with leaders (6), middle managers (11) and frontline practitioners (7) from all three summits – Birmingham (7), Leeds (8), London (9)
<b>Workstream 1 and 3 – mini-summit attendees</b>	10 phone interviews conducted with 4 independent reviewers, 6 LSCB chairs, or board managers from London (6) and Leeds (4)
<b>Workstream 1 – LSCB pilots participants</b>	5 phone interviews – 2 from one workshop, 3 from the other, representing local authorities and health organisations
<b>Workstream 2 – Alliance members</b>	3 phone interviews with Alliance members from a local authority, health and police perspective
<b>Workstream 3 – pilot LSCBs participants</b>	10 interviews with representatives from each of the 5 pilot areas, including 3 of the lead reviewers involved in the development group of the quality markers, 3 LSCB chairs, 3 business managers and one local authority co-ordinator
<b>Workstream 4 – masterclass attendees</b>	11 phone interviews with attendees at all 4 masterclasses. These were all with lead reviewers

## 2.2.2 Survey

The other main evaluation activity involved an online survey which was aimed at non-participants in LiPP activities to explore wider views on the proposed mechanisms.

This included questions on each of the workstreams, and asked respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement, alongside providing space for open comments. The survey was open between 26<sup>th</sup> February and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016 and was disseminated via a list of LSCB managers and lead reviewers held by the Project team, and the Association of Independent LSCB Chairs. The survey was completed by 126 people.

**Figure 2: Survey respondent roles**



Source: LiPP survey, base: all respondents (126)

Those who indicated 'other' included lead reviewers, Clinical Commissioning Group representatives, social workers and representatives from the voluntary sector. 47% of respondents represented a single agency (children's health, social care, education, police, probation or adult health) and the remainder were from LSCBs. 94 respondents had not been involved in any LiPP activities, but 32 had already engaged with either a masterclass, summit, or mini-summit; or filled in a previous survey as part of the project.

Alongside the interviews and survey, members of OPM's evaluation team attended, and presented at, two LiPP project meetings. They also attended a summit and mini-summit for workstream 1 and an Alliance meeting for workstream 2. This helped to strengthen understanding of the project activities and inform the discussion guide design.

### 2.2.3 Analysis

After the phone interviews for each workstream were completed, the data were organised under a thematic framework, based on each of the headings used in the findings section below. The open comments from the surveys were integrated into this thematic analysis.

Given the high percentage of survey respondents who had described their role or agency as 'other', and that some people had completed the survey who were already involved in LiPP activities, it was decided not to run any cross-tabulated survey analysis.

## 2.3 Changes to the evaluation

There were a number of changes to the original evaluation activities:

- scoping document: the external evaluation plan intended to produce a standalone scoping document looking at available data and research relating to the wider context in which LiPP was operating. This did not take place as it would have involved duplicating the work completed by the internal evaluation team to set out a theory of change for each LiPP workstream. Instead, both evaluation teams worked through and refined the evaluation plan to ensure that there was a clear rationale and approach for each workstream evaluation activity in terms of the internal/external divide
- different research methods: the original external evaluation design involved focus groups with Alliance members and allowed for some flexibility to have other group discussions with participants. In practice, phone interviews were conducted in all cases, due to the short timescale between the project activities finishing and the deadline for completion of the evaluation
- workstream 3: the external evaluators had intended to speak to those involved in the pilot at the start of the project and at the end. However, there were indications that this would cause potential confusion with the project activities. Instead, the external evaluators engaged with participants at the end of the pilot activities only
- National Panel: it was not possible for the external evaluation team to arrange interviews with members of the National Panel within the timescales.<sup>3</sup>

Through positive communication between the internal and external evaluation team, the evaluation was still able to engage with people involved in all workstreams

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<sup>3</sup> The National Panel consists of independent experts on SCRs and advises LSCBs about conducting and publishing SCRs. Please note that the LiPP team did engage and consult with the National Panel and attended one of their meetings during the project timescales.

## 3. Findings

This section presents the findings from each workstream drawing on the interview and survey data gathered by the external evaluation team.

### 3.1 Findings from workstream 1

Aim: developing a mechanism for collating and producing accessible information on practice issues and causes from SCRs.

The following activities took place as part of workstream 1:

- 38 recent SCR reports were analysed by the project team. This led to the creation of an A3 grid showing 44 recurring practice issues, and 14 detailed briefings on individual issues. These included issues with the Common Assessment Framework; making referrals to Children’s Social Care, and strategy discussions. These outputs are available at: [www.scie.org.uk/lipp](http://www.scie.org.uk/lipp). The A3 grid is presented in Appendix 3
- 3 summits were held in London, Birmingham and Leeds involving a range of professionals, at different levels of seniority. 194 people attended in total
- 2 pilot workshops took place with two LSCB areas to discuss topics which had arisen from the SCR analysis. Over 25 individuals attended across the two workshops
- part of the agenda for the 2 mini-summits in Leeds and London, with LSCB chairs, board managers and lead reviewers, involved discussing the practice focussed improvement products and provision of feedback on how these might be used to drive local improvement. 57 people attended the mini-summits

#### 3.1.1 Workstream 1: motivations and understandings

The evaluation interviews explored why participants were interested in participating and what they understood about the mechanism being tested prior to their involvement. For summit attendees, motivations included:

- to find out how learning from SCRs could be used more effectively
- to explore learning from SCRs at a national level rather than at a local level
- to learn how to improve the way they used and contributed to SCRs
- to improve sharing and learning on practice issues across all relevant agencies

Participants at the summits mostly understood the role they were expected to play, that is, to be part of a learning and consultation process, and contributing to the themes by adding their own knowledge and expertise to the discussions. However, just over a third

(35%) acknowledged that they had not been clear before the event about what the purpose of the summits would be, or were mistaken in their initial understanding of it, despite the joining instructions and preparatory reading that were sent out. This may be due to the newness of this idea: often, events about SCRs are purely related to dissemination, and do not involve also gathering information from those who attend.

### **3.1.2 Workstream 1: views on the ideas being tested**

#### **Collating national SCR trends**

Workstream 1 was based on the idea that national trends about practice problems in SCRs should be routinely identified. Respondents who were particularly supportive highlighted that the same issues often arise locally, and even if many areas conducted their own local analysis, there was a lack of a national overview of trends. This was seen as a missed opportunity to help address both systemic and practice changes.

The majority of interviewees felt that it was important to look at learning nationally, particularly if it meant areas could learn from one another. There was also agreement that the focus on practice problems, rather than the characteristics of families who are the subject of SCRs, was welcome.

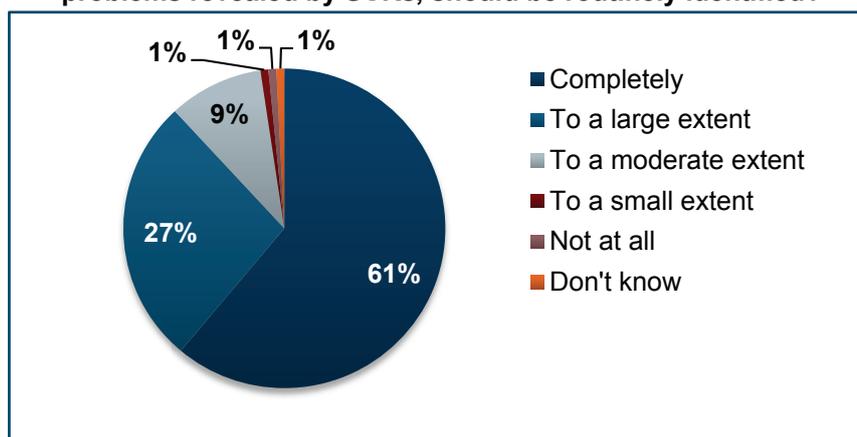
“I share the frustration that there’s such a large volume of activity on SCRs – money spent and lots of reviews... We need to focus on professional practice in a disciplined and structured way.” (LSCB pilot workshop attendee).

Positive feedback on the idea of nationally collating practice issues included:

- the approach highlights the common SCR issues in a more transparent way
- the approach will help to identify common problems and themes within the system and avoid blaming individual practitioners

The survey responses also indicated that 88% of respondents ‘completely’ or ‘to a large extent’ agreed with the idea.

**Figure 3: To what extent do you agree with the proposal that national trends about practice problems revealed by SCRs, should be routinely identified?**



Source: LiPP survey, base: all respondents (126)

Some interviewees and survey respondents did highlight a few concerns about this approach, in particular that:

- this work did not add anything to what had already been done: for example, the NSPCC thematic reviews (although these are focussed on frontline workers, rather than actions for more strategic level audience)
- a few were anxious that individual practitioners could still be blamed, even though the focus of the approach was on looking at underlying organisational or cultural reasons, rather than individual ones:

“I would hate to switch the focus from family to practitioners and just blame practitioners.” (Birmingham summit, Frontline worker)

- a concern from some LSCBs that the analysis could be used negatively to criticise local authorities, and could feed into a view of all practice being poor
- analysis of practice issues should cover all agencies, depending on who was involved in the individual SCRs, including public, private and third sector
- although the LiPP was not focussing on the characteristics of families in the trend analysis, some felt that there should still be some focus on this, as appreciating the barriers to working with some families is directly linked to practice issues:

“You cannot ignore that the dynamics of a family may impact on the way in which practice is implemented. There needs to be some context around this in order to find the practice problems.” (Survey response from summit participant)

### **Supplementing the analysis with input from practitioners**

The rationale behind the summits was to obtain a wider perspective on the issues identified in the SCR analysis, in particular, to supplement data from the SCR reports in identifying blockages and barriers causing the problems, and developing ideas about support and solutions to tackle these issues.

The interviews explored whether people thought that this addition of practitioner expertise and knowledge was an idea they agreed with or not. Many felt that it was hard to argue with the idea of involving frontline practitioners and managers in learning and improvement, and that practitioners often did not have the opportunity to contribute or influence SCR learning.

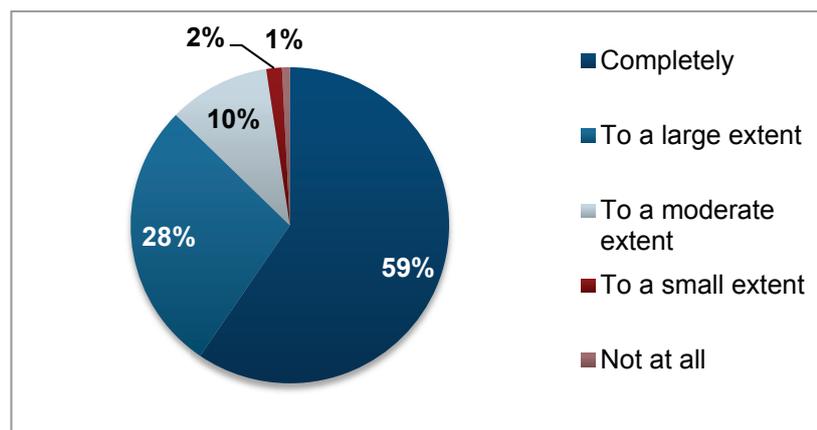
“I think this is the only way we will continue to improve and develop: with input from people in practice we’ll keep learning up-to-date and learning will reflect on-going trends.” (Birmingham summit, Frontline worker)

The main benefits that survey respondents and interviewees identified were that:

- the input of practitioners and managers would help to put the learning from SCR reports in context
- practitioners would have the knowledge to carry out the kind of root-cause analysis being suggested
- involving a range of agencies would allow for more systematic learning across the child protection system
- discussing this in person gives professionals freedom to talk about the issues honestly without fear of local political repercussions
- practitioners often identify immediate ideas to put into practice that reviews do not always cover

87% of survey respondents were also positive about the idea of the addition of practitioner expertise, with only 3% of respondents indicating ‘not at all’ or ‘to a small extent’.

**Figure 4: To what extent do you think that the national trends generated from SCRs could be better understood with input and insight from multi-agency frontline practitioners and managers?**



Source: LiPP survey, base: all respondents (126)

Interviewee and survey respondents suggested a number of caveats, or important principles, for this approach that they wanted to see if this work was to continue:

- the frontline input needs to sit alongside understanding issues at system or strategic level
- any national analysis involving frontline input needs to take into account differences across the country in terms of practice and resources
- practitioners should be encouraged to focus on what professionals did not do, as well as on what they did do
- people should be involved who are currently practising, and therefore striking the right balance between interest and experience

“I was a practitioner, but I haven’t practised for over 20 years. We need to make sure that the practitioners we talk about are the people doing the work right now.” (Leeds mini-summit attendee)

### **3.1.3 Workstream 1: participant views of the products and activities**

Interviewees were asked to reflect on what had worked well and less well about the activities they had participated in as part of workstream 1, bearing in mind that these were new initiatives.

#### **Feedback on the A3 grid and detailed briefings**

The content of the summits was based on the analysis of 38 recent SCRs, presented in the A3 grid. Participants were also sent briefing papers prior to the event of fourteen individual issues, and were asked to select 3 topics that they were interested in discussing.

There was a lot of positive feedback about the grid. It was recognised by some participants that they would not have time to do this sort of analysis themselves, and that it could potentially be a valuable resource for people to identify priorities.

“That A3 you could use in so many ways, because everyone is very different they will pick up on different things.” (LSCB pilot workshop attendee)

Summit participants also found the practice briefings useful, and where they had read these in advance, the case studies and detailed vignettes were seen as being effective in stimulating and guiding discussions. However, it was also clear that not all had engaged with these, as some of the feedback included wanting more of a case study approach to communicate the information beyond the grid.

The majority of the participants also had views on how the A3 grid analysis could be made even more useful:

- the grid needed a clearer typography or classification system
- the spreadsheet could be less complicated if it was condensed further

- although the approach to the analysis aimed to be more specific than previous approaches, some were keen to emphasise that when it comes to learning, the more specific the analysis can be, the more use people will find for it
- the addition of more quantitative information could give the reader a better understanding as to the incidence of new cases with similar practice issues, although the analysis did include the number of times the problem had arisen in the sample of reports
- links should be provided to the original SCRs online so people could read these if they were interested

### **Feedback from summit attendees**

The majority of people interviewed by the external evaluation team reflected that it was very useful to have a mix of agencies present at the summits, as this encouraged different views and perspectives, as well as highlighting common issues across agencies and contexts. Interviewees appreciated:

- the summits creating a safe and open environment where collaborative discussions could take place
- the format and content: most participants found the table discussions to be constructive, and they liked being able to choose topics in advance
- good facilitation: particularly around preventing individuals from taking over the discussion; and effectively summarising and sharing key points

A few participants made recommendations for improvements to the format of the summits:

- have smaller groups at each table to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute
- allow more time to speak about solutions, talking about the reasons behind the problems in the morning, and about the possible solutions in the afternoon
- allow more time for feedback and do this in a way that avoids putting people on the spot with a microphone

The majority of participants did not think that they were able to discuss solutions to the problems in their groups. The most common reasons were:

- mixing frontline practitioners and managers around each table may have meant frontline practitioners did not always feel comfortable discussing solutions, especially if they related to funding or resources issues
- participants may have felt uneasy about being honest about the weaknesses in their services because they did not know where the information would go
- participants focused too much on the problems and barriers in their own context:

“We weren’t particularly encouraged to look at the solutions... They should have dedicated time to that specifically to get more in-depth discussion about solutions.”  
(London summit, Middle manager)

### **Pilot workshops feedback**

The aim of the LSCB workshops was to explore whether the information from the analysis and summits would help LSCBs with their local understanding of the problem and underlying causes.

The small sample of attendees at the LSCB pilot workshops provided some insights to their experiences, and how they might use the learning in their local areas. Participants commented positively on:

- a focus on one theme and having the space to reflect away from their day jobs
- considering an issue from a different perspective, going beyond their immediate local area and individual cases:

“When it’s more generic, you don’t have that emotional attachment, so you are able to look at different factors which allowed you to have more of a conversation.” (LSCB workshop attendee)

- attending a workshop that was independently chaired, as this encouraged more honesty in the discussions
- having more time to explore multi agency perspectives, which was made easier by breaking into small groups
- high quality briefing materials which provided a good way in to exploring the topic:

“It provided a framework and structure to make sense of my thoughts: it enabled me to be quite clear about getting the group together and use the time in a structured way.” (LSCB workshop attendee)

Interviewees also had suggestions for how to improve the workshops in the future. At one of the workshops in particular, it was felt that it was hard to reach solutions for what different agencies could do locally, and, whilst it had been an interesting discussion, it was less clear on how to then apply the learning in practice, or move the work forward from a useful multi-agency discussion into actions. This was largely attributed to not having the right spread of agencies in the room, or people at a senior enough level to take actions forward:

“There wasn’t really a ‘what happens next’ aspect to it, and it wasn’t clear to me what the plan is, who follows it up, who’s delivering and who’s holding to account” (LSCB workshop attendee)

There was also a criticism that people had not engaged with the materials in advance, which had contributed to the lack of focus on next steps as a lot of time was then spent recapping the aims and purpose of the workshop.

### 3.1.4 Workstream 1: Next steps

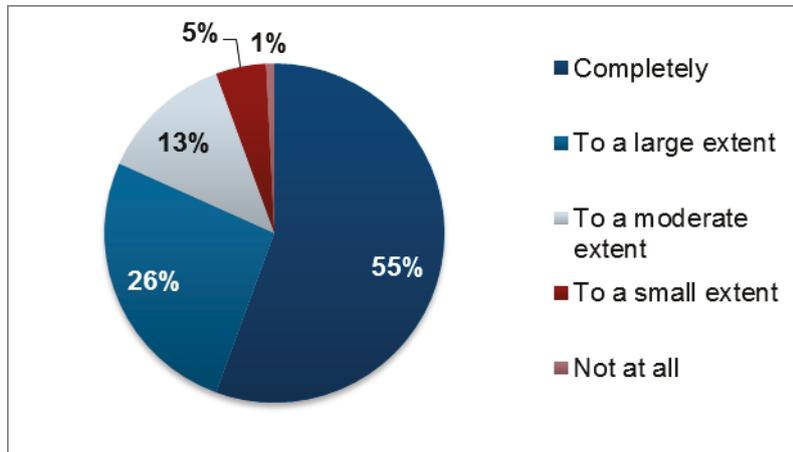
Interviewees and survey respondents were asked to reflect on whether it would be useful to continue to identify national trends in SCRs and sustain the process that had been trialled as part of workstream 1. Summit interviewees supported this proposal, and more than half felt confident that the approach could make a difference to supporting the quality and use of SCRs.

Interviewees who had attended the two mini-summits also saw a role for this routine analysis, as it could help local areas to learn and improve:

“If it is evidenced that things are happening all over the place, it’s more likely that people will take notice.” (London mini-summit attendee)

Survey respondents were largely in support of the proposal, with 81% being ‘completely’ or ‘to a large extent’ in favour.

**Figure 5: To what extent do you feel it would be useful to be able to see trends identified in SCRs, updated continuously as new SCRs are published?**



Source: LiPP survey, base: all respondents (126)

Those who indicated that they were less positive about the workstream activities continuing tended to state that the process had highlighted issues that those in the sector already knew existed. This pointed to a need for a more solution-oriented approach, as highlighted in the feedback in the previous sections, with a positive focus on how other areas might have resolved difficult areas:

“The whole thing left me wanting more. I just kept thinking, so what? What have people actually done?” (London mini-summit attendee)

The main suggestions that participants had in terms of next steps were:

- survey respondents largely indicated that quarterly or half yearly updates would be sufficient as LSCBs would not have enough time to review trends and respond more frequently
- the need for government-level involvement and commitment to the learning that emerged from the process, with resources to support this
- participants at the summits were keen for these to continue, but wanted to make sure they were targeted and communicated in a way to help prevent people using the space to moan and complain
- any outputs from the summits would need to be effectively disseminated to different agencies

The overall sense was that participants had found the work to be worthwhile, and appreciated that it was testing a new approach. However, there was a desire to understand more clearly how areas could apply the analysis and approach locally: for example, to help them explore in more depth whether the same issues existed in their areas, and if so, the underlying reasons for these:

“I think this is a good starting point, and if we can follow the process through that may raise areas that we would or could look at.” (LSCB pilot workshop attendee)

## 3.2 Findings from workstream 2

Aim: the establishment of a strategic Alliance of national professional and leadership bodies of the key agencies involved in multi-agency safeguarding to consider and implement improvement work, from a national perspective, as a result of SCR findings.

Membership of the Alliance built up over the course of the project, and included representation from a range of organisations such as the Association of Directors of Childrens Services (ADCS), The College of Policing, NHS England, the Home Office, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and national charities.

The original intention was for the Alliance to meet four times during the LiPP, but one meeting was postponed until after the findings of Alan Wood’s review were made public, in order to give the Alliance the chance to reflect on them and the implications for the LiPP.

The three Alliance meetings involved introducing the purpose and terms of reference; discussing two topics from the collation of SCRs approach; and reviewing the impact of the Alliance on the work of member organisations.

### **3.2.1 Workstream 2: motivations and understandings**

The external evaluation team interviewed three Alliance members which provided some insight into their experiences of the process.

Those from a local authority and health background were clear that the LiPP was about how to improve the use of learning from SCRs, and had frustrations that this did not happen more routinely at present. They saw the Alliance as an opportunity to have high level conversations about how to improve links between organisations at a more strategic level.

“I wanted to make a contribution to see if there is a different way of doing it. The Alliance is an opportunity to add something different to see how that could support learning.” (Alliance member)

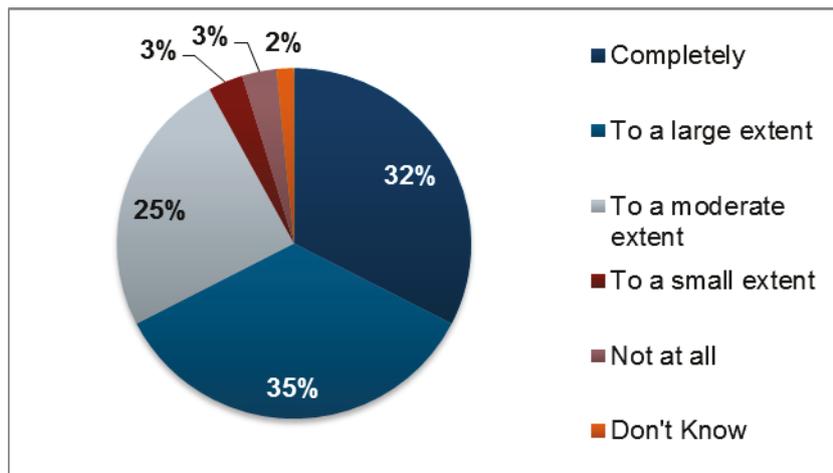
One interviewee felt the Alliance’s aims had been vague, and had attended the first meeting understanding broadly that it was to do with child protection, but without a clear sense of what they were being asked to contribute.

### **3.2.2 Workstream 2: views on the idea being tested**

The interviewees all felt that the idea of an Alliance was a good one that could have a significant impact on learning across child protection. There was also support for the analysis (from workstream 1), as this represented a bottom up approach that national representative bodies could learn from.

The survey asked respondents whether they agreed with the idea of an Alliance in principle. Although there was a positive endorsement for this, with 67% being ‘completely’ or ‘to a large extent’ in support, these figures are slightly lower than for the workstream 1 activities.

**Figure 6: To what extent do you agree that an Alliance of professional and leadership bodies is useful to help target improvement action around trends identified through SCRs?**



Source: LiPP survey, base: all respondents (126)

### 3.2.3 Workstream 2: views of how the Alliance worked in practice

The feedback on the Alliance meetings themselves was largely positive. Participants felt that:

- it was a good learning process, where attendees could speak frankly and freely
- the approach broke down professional barriers as it was an opportunity to understand how each other worked
- the meetings gave people the opportunity to say what they felt, with the small group discussions helping to facilitate this
- the meetings were chaired effectively, balancing the different organisations in the room

Interviewees were able to provide examples of addressing the practice issues identified in the A3 grid and shared at the alliance meeting. One of these related to cultural deference towards the opinions of health professionals. This was described as cases where a paediatrician might indicate that they were happy for a child to be discharged, and how this could be interpreted by other professionals as meaning that the child was not in danger. This had led to the development of a small working group to develop solutions:

“We need to do something around what we say, and what others understand about that. It gets lost in translation.” (Alliance member)

One criticism was that some organisations had not sent senior enough people to represent them. There was a feeling that the Alliance needed to have people with knowledge and leadership, able to advocate on behalf of their organisation, but also having the status to take back actions after the meetings.

Although attendees acknowledged that the Alliance meetings had been exploratory at this stage, they felt there was nothing concrete to feed back to their organisations in terms of actions. This was also linked to different starting points for some organisations, for example, local authorities felt they had already done considerable thinking about how to use SCR findings more effectively, compared to other agencies.

There were some concerns that the Alliance had felt quite separate from other parts of the LiPP activities: for example, not everyone had been given details of the summits, which members could have promoted in their own organisations. There were also some challenges to establishing a cross-sector group working within short timescales: for example, one interviewee felt that the meetings assumed everyone was familiar with current policy developments, and that there was a lack of explanation for these, for example, explaining who Alan Wood was.

### **3.2.4 Workstream 2: next steps**

The intention of the LiPP approach was that professional and leadership bodies were in a good position to tackle some of the systemic issues identified in SCRs, and provide leadership on cultural barriers. The potential for an Alliance was being tested, and there was some confusion among respondents over this aim. Although the Alliance meetings had been valued, participants were keen to emphasise that this was the start of a process, initiating conversations with different organisations, so were more cautious at this stage about longer term potential or impact.

Survey respondents and interviewees were divided on what the next steps should be for the Alliance. Those who did support the Alliance were keen for it not to be a ‘talk shop’. Respondents wanted to ensure that the Alliance was not seen as a tool to monitor and put pressure on local authorities, and instead the focus had to be on good practice and examples, sharing learning and providing assurance.

The main concerns related to how the Alliance could be distinct from other networks operating in the sector – for example, the Association of Independent LSCB Chairs - that were seeking to promote good practice and learning.<sup>4</sup> There were also comments that previous initiatives, such as DfE safeguarding boards, the national safeguarding unit, and C4EO, had not lasted, and the Alliance should reflect on learning from these.

“There is no need to establish a new Alliance as AILC already is a credible independent body with a strong track record of impact in all aspects of SCRs.”

(survey response)

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that the AILC only involves LSCB chairs, whereas the Alliance has representation across different sectors

There was a strong sense that the Alliance's work might have been overtaken by recent Government announcements, and that it should consider any future steps in relation to the development of the What Works Centre.

Feedback in the survey and from the mini-summit interviewees also raised a set of questions and challenges about governance and role, such as:

- what would membership and governance look like beyond the LiPP?
- how would you ensure that people with relevant expertise and knowledge attended?
- would voluntary organisations and those representing families or training bodies be represented in the future?
- what were the intended outcomes of the Alliance and how will it link with LSCBs?
- how would actions from the Alliance be fed back into teaching? What were the links to universities and other professional bodies?
- what role would the Alliance have in bridging the gap between local and national, ensuring that local areas could feed in their knowledge and experience?

"The challenge will be joining local knowledge and nationally identified priorities together so that workers locally do not feel disempowered and 'done to'." (Survey response, non LiPP participant)

### 3.3 Findings from workstream 3

Aim: supporting commissioning and the conduct of reviews through a set of Quality Markers.

Workstream 3 of the LiPP involved the development of a set of SCR Quality Markers (QMs). 5 pilot LSCB areas were involved, and an experienced lead reviewer was selected by the project to lead the SCR in each area, using a different approach or model. They were expected to run their SCRs as they usually would with their chosen methodology.

The 5 lead reviewers formed a development group with members of the LiPP team to develop the QMs. The LiPP team used the QMs at the end to reflect back on the process as a means of both testing the draft QMs and seeing the extent to which the SCRs were meeting them. The 2 mini-summits provided an opportunity for LSCB representatives and lead reviewers to provide feedback on a draft of the QMs.

### 3.3.1 Workstream 3: motivations and understandings

It was apparent that people had wanted to be involved in the LSCB pilots because they were interested in learning how to improve their SCRs, and how to keep them on track. Some interviewees involved were not clear about what their involvement meant in practice, and had expected to be benchmarking their process against the QMs as the review progressed. Therefore, some found it odd that the QMs were only introduced to them at the end of the project:

“I expected more clarity about what the QMs would be, I didn’t expect a final version of course but didn’t know very much about the QMs until the end.” (LSCB representative from a pilot area)

The project development group had a much clearer understanding of the workstream aims, given their closer involvement in the development of the QMs. They also understood that the pilots were supposed to reflect back on the review undertaken using the QMs at the end.

### 3.3.2 Workstream 3: views on the idea

The majority of interviewees felt that a set of quality markers would be a good idea, largely because there was currently limited support available for boards and lead reviewers.

“People don’t want to go back to everything being specified but they do want something – and having it from the point of view of quality and good practice is helpful.” (LSCB pilot participant)

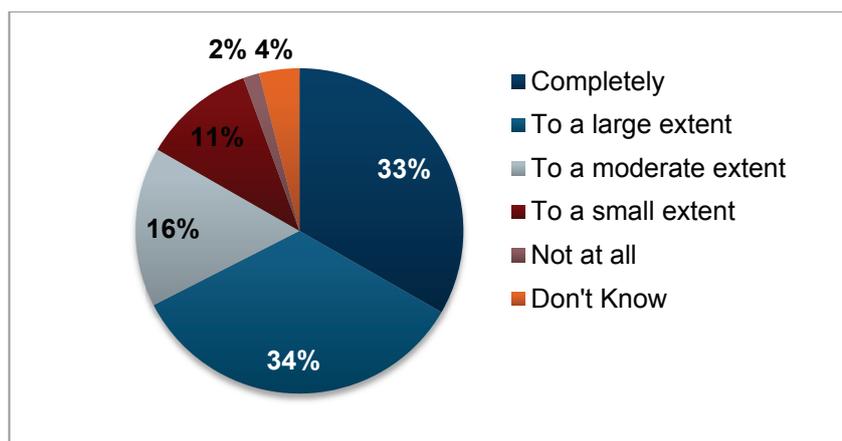
Interviewees referred to the difficulty at present in ensuring consistency across SCRs, given that LSCBs could vary in their cultures and approaches, for example over length, and amount of detail, and that there was, at times, contradictory guidance from within the sector on what was required in SCRs. The main gap was that there is no unified set of standards which sets out what a good or poor review looks like, for commissioners of SCRs to benchmark against:

“There is currently very little guidance on what makes a good SCR...I agree that quality markers would provide a helpful framework.” (Survey response, non LiPP participant)

Nearly all of those interviewed felt that the QMs could be used by multiple audiences, including Board managers, lead reviewers, and anyone conducting retrospective evaluations of the process.

The responses to the survey indicated that 64% were ‘completely’ or ‘to a large extent’ in favour of the idea of quality markers.

**Figure 7: To what extent do you think a set of standardised quality markers for SCRs is needed?**



Source: LiPP survey, base: all respondents (126)

Although participants interviewed in the evaluation were supportive, there were comments in the survey open responses from those who had not been directly involved, about how the QMs might be perceived. These concerns related to clarity on how the QMs would be implemented, how they would be monitored, and by whom. The QMs were intended to support diversity and innovation, but some feared more bureaucracy and box ticking for SCRs that could override lead reviewer and LSCB expertise. They emphasised the importance of retaining enough flexibility so that LSCBs could tailor approaches to their local context.

There were also concerns, among those who had not been directly involved, that QMs could lead to too great an emphasis on process and procedures, rather than improving outcomes for children and families.

“QMs may mean authors concentrate more on the process of producing a good report rather than how the identified improvements can be embedded to make a difference to families' lives.” (Survey response, non LiPP participant)

### **3.3.3 Workstream 3: views on the process**

#### **Quality markers: format and content**

Interviewees were asked to reflect on what they felt worked well about the QMs in terms of their format and content. Positive comments included:

- a logical feel to the 14 QM areas (updated in the final version to 18), and that it was helpful to have the different steps through the review presented
- a clear format which would be accessible to sub groups, Boards, lead reviewers and chairs
- the right amount of detail needed by those commissioning and undertaking SCRs

Participants also highlighted particular sections that they had found very useful, for example, on commissioning, as it was recognised that LSCBs could struggle with this; and on publication, as it was a reminder about the need for accountability and publishing within a relatively short timeline. There were several comments about the section on how to effectively involve families in SCRs recognising that this could be hard to prioritise or do in practice, but that it was of fundamental importance to an effective SCR.

A number of interviewees made suggestions for how the QMs might be improved, and these represent their individual views or perceptions based on sometimes different levels of engagement and understanding with the QMs. In some cases, this feedback related to issues that had already been discussed with the project team, and where there was no consensus, or where participants wanted to see something included in the QMs that was already covered:

- if the QMs were intended for different audiences, include guidance on which markers were relevant for each group
- introduce more of a SMART element in the QMs as recommendations and action plans needed to focus on this more in SCRs themselves
- include some guidance on engagement with the National Panel, as this could be challenging for some
- equal importance and value seemed to be given to each step: indicate priorities if this was appropriate
- the quality markers did not address the issue of proportionality, in terms of what the final product would look like, and the timescale. Could proportionality be a quality marker in its own right?
- include guidance on how to manage the dynamics of a review between the sub group/Chair/Board
- how to troubleshoot difficulties: for example, when agencies might challenge the findings from a SCR report
- include details on how the effectiveness of SCRs might be measured 1-5 years after publication

It was useful to reflect that QMs should be aiming to provide something for everyone, but that people's starting positions would inevitably influence their preferences. For example, for new lead reviewers, there would be a lot that they could engage with, and learn from, the QMs, whereas for more experienced lead reviewers, the QMs might feel very familiar already, and merely serve as an aide memoire during the SCR process.

Some interviewees who had been working in the field for a long time felt that the QMs were not as ground-breaking or high level as they might have expected. However, they still acknowledged the benefits of having a set of QMs in one place.

## The QM development group

The interviewees who had been involved in the QMs project development group, who were also the lead reviewers for the 5 pilot SCRs, found this to be a positive process, and appreciated the space to be able to reflect and learn whilst they were also undertaking a review. There were reports of useful discussions about particular issues - for example, family participation - and amendments were made to the QMs as a result.

The development group also felt there had been enough opportunity to consult at the mini-summits and that this was good timing, given the uncertainty in the sector at the moment, as people were keen to meet and discuss issues. However, they were less clear as to whether this feedback had been adequately taken on board for the future development of the QMs.

The lead reviewers felt that the approach had also been successful in not relating the QMs to one particular methodology for SCRs. Despite their expertise, they all identified things that they would look at differently in the future, even if it was just being reminded of a particular aspect that they had paid less attention to recently.

However, there had been some issues with the timings of the SCRs, and fitting this within the LiPP deadlines which meant that the opportunity for reflection and feedback had been a bit rushed as a result, or could not sensibly be fitted in with the timescales.

### 3.3.4 Workstream 3: next steps

When participants were asked about the next steps for the QMs, and what would help to support their use in the future, many were clear that they would use them at different stages: from initial set up, clarifying expectations, managing quality along the way, and for the report. It was felt that they would be helpful in terms of showing and explaining how lead reviewers had made choices along the way.

They identified that commissioners of reviews, and those involved in managing them would all need to be made aware of the QMs for there to be any significant impact on consistency.

“Our panel that manages the reviewers would need to have these standards, quality markers, in mind and help shift the discussions and focus – and that will bring standardisation to the practice.” (LSCB pilot participant)

There were a number of suggestions on how to achieve this: through training (for example, using existing regional and national groups of Board Chairs, or lead reviewers); writing the QMs into documentation; or including them in legislation.

It was inevitable that there were concerns about the role the QMs would play in a changing policy context if SCRs were centralised, and that they should not end up being

used to criticise local authorities. This also led to questions about where the QMs would sit in the future, and how much it would cost to maintain and update them.

A few participants stressed the importance of ensuring the QMs were a working document:

“They could be really useful. So you have to keep discussing them, keep updating them, make sure that they reflect contemporary developments and policy concerns, and people have the opportunity to feed back about the bits that are useful.” (LSCB pilot participant)

It was also recognised that the QMs themselves should be reviewed in 6 months’ time to see whether they had led to any ongoing or broader changes for those involved.

### 3.4 Findings from workstream 4

Aim: improving lead reviewer expertise through a series of masterclasses.

The LiPP team, in collaboration with 4 subject experts, developed and delivered 4 masterclasses for experienced lead reviewers in February 2016. The key principles behind the classes were that they should:

- introduce knowledge and expertise from another field and give the opportunity to think about its applicability to SCR practice
- focus on key concepts and their relevance rather than providing detailed direction about SCR practice
- be interactive, making use of the knowledge and experience of attendees as well as the trainers

Masterclasses were developed on the following topics:

- using systems thinking and techniques in SCRs to better understand what contributes to good or poor practice (Systems thinking)
- group work and facilitation; getting the best out of groups in the SCR process (Group work)
- disclosure and conducting children’s serious case reviews alongside parallel proceedings (Legal approaches)
- how approaches to qualitative research could support analysis in SCRs (Qualitative research)

Invitations to the masterclasses were sent to a list of 146 lead reviewers. First choices were allocated to everyone, and second choices were offered, if there was space to the most active lead reviewers. 20 people were offered places on each masterclass.

### **3.4.1 Workstream 4: motivations and understandings**

Interviewees were asked to explain their motivations for attending the masterclasses. The majority cited the need to develop their skills, particularly as there is currently very limited provision available for lead reviewers.

Another motivation highlighted by a large number of the interviewees was the opportunities the masterclasses offered for networking and learning from the insights and experiences of others.

“Networking was very important... there was such a variety of background and skills which was very important to access there.” (Systems thinking masterclass attendee)

All interviewees were clear on the purpose of the masterclasses and what was being asked of them. All had received and read the pre-reading or information and found it to be useful. One participant commented, however, that he was not convinced all participants had read the information which could be limiting in that kind of environment.

### **3.4.2 Workstream 4: views on the idea**

The premise of the masterclasses was the idea that the quality of SCRs would benefit from the role of lead reviewers being more professionalised than it currently was. The majority of interviewees agreed strongly with this, largely due to the variation in skills and knowledge that was currently found amongst lead reviewers. There were frequent comments from LSCB representatives about how hard it was to find lead reviewers in the absence of a centrally held list, or any assurance as to quality:

“I want to be working in a model where we decide locally what best meets the needs of the review, and then invite tenders from interested reviewers, so we can choose a reviewer who will best meet those needs.” (Survey response non LiPP participant)

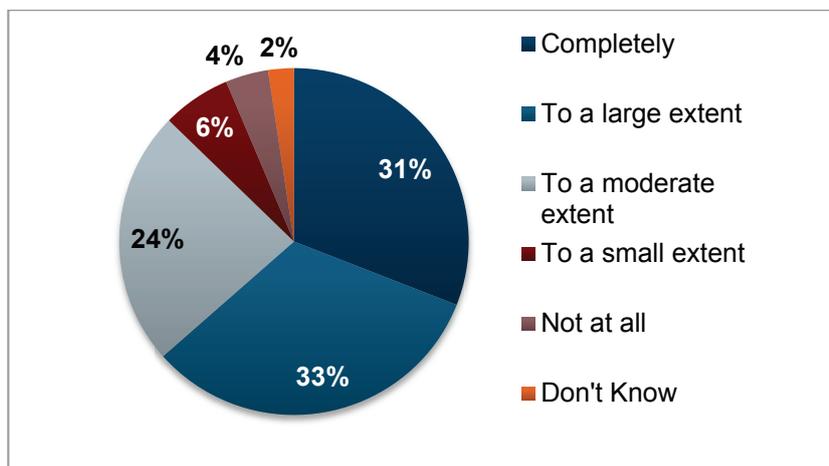
In addition, participants were asked what they thought of the idea that the quality of SCRs would benefit from drawing more systematically on knowledge and expertise from other disciplines or sectors. Most agreed that this was beneficial as long as it had clear relevance to the SCR process, and could focus on the skills required to produce a meaningful review with realistic learning:

“Certainly anything that’s relevant; there’s a lot of academic work that we could draw on that would help us.” (Qualitative Research attendee)

The masterclass idea was also seen as a positive in terms of reducing the isolation in the lead reviewer role, and helping to feel part of a bigger group.

64% of survey respondents agreed with the idea of the reviewer role being more professionalised 'completely' or 'to a large extent'.

**Figure 8: To what extent do you agree with the proposal that the quality of SCRs would benefit from the role of reviewers being more professionalised than it currently is?**



Source: LiPP survey, base: all respondents (126)

There were some concerns expressed about the masterclasses idea. 2 interviewees questioned what was meant by 'professionalisation' and whether it was the correct term to be using. There are currently no minimum standards for the role, and one respondent felt that there should be a greater focus on level of standards with clear expectations about a lead reviewer's experience and competencies:

"I think professionalisation will add to cost and you need to be very clear by what you mean by professionalisation; I'm not sure what having a badge saying 'I am expert reviewer' would add." (Group work and legal approaches attendee)

Some survey respondents highlighted that they did not want to see a cottage industry develop around lead reviewer training, or one organisation providing all the training.

### **3.4.3 Workstream 4: views on how the masterclasses worked in practice**

Interviewees were asked to comment on what they thought about the masterclasses in relation to the format and the content. The feedback was largely positive. Whilst the four masterclasses covered very different topics, there was a common theme across interviewees that the day's activities were useful, informative and enjoyable. Participants also commented on how the facilitators knew their subject and were very competent in the management of the day.

Participants noted how the activities were a good balance between information provision and practical exercises and case studies, particularly in the Group Work and Legal Approaches masterclasses. It was highlighted that the more theoretical or academic masterclasses on Qualitative Research and Systems Thinking were quite complex subjects and might have benefited from more exercises than they had already to demonstrate how they would work in the SCR context. At the same time, the time restraints were noted as a key reason why this might not have happened.

There was some level of disagreement with regard to the length of the masterclasses. While most felt that one day was sufficient to cover the subject others felt that two days would be better, particularly for the Qualitative Research and Systems Thinking classes which would allow for the theory to be put into practice.

“Just a bit more time really particularly for the complex ones like the Systems Approaches; it just felt like a taster session and we wanted more.” (Legal approaches and systems thinking attendee)

One participant noted that it was important to recognise that participants needed to take responsibility for their own learning and development and that, if further time was needed on the subject, that could be done in their own time. This was particularly pertinent when considering that many lead reviewers were self-employed or had senior roles within organisations and might not be able to commit to a two day course:

“There has to be a balance [...] the key thing is to stimulate the discussions and also the participants' responsibility to go away and do some more work.” (Systems thinking masterclass attendee)

For the Systems Thinking and Qualitative Research masterclasses it was felt that information on where to go to do some further reading would have been helpful since they were new concepts for some; and that the advanced reading had not been that accessible for those coming to the topic for the first time:

“I read the article that was sent; it would've been nice to have a 'vital reading and further reading' list.” (Systems thinking masterclass attendee)

When participants were asked how attendance at the masterclass had influenced their skills and knowledge, all agreed that they had had a positive effect. Some had already applied their learning to their practice. Examples of improvements cited included how they would approach a challenge; how they would write a report; how they would communicate with SCR participants; and how it had given them confidence to critically challenge their own practice and speak to others about theirs.

### 3.4.4 Workstream 4: views on next steps

Interviewees were asked to comment on whether they felt masterclasses should continue. All participants felt that having masterclasses available to lead reviewers could form an important element of their skills development. However, many stressed that individuals learn in different ways and that people had differing commitments with regard to their time, so there should be a range of mechanisms on offer. Some survey respondents highlighted that masterclasses should be available to LSCB Board managers, too, as they played a crucial role in delivering a high quality SCR.

Other examples given of what would be useful to help support lead reviewers in the future included:

- annual lead reviewer networking event, to bring together lead reviewers on an annual basis for sharing ideas and facilitating discussions
- Peer Support Group at either national or regional level, to help reduce the isolation some lead reviewers feel and to help share ideas, issues and challenges. This could include a consultation group and ongoing seminars to develop practice
- a mentor to support the first reviews of new lead reviewers
- Competency Framework, so that lead reviewers and commissioners could see what was expected in terms of knowledge, skills and experience
- a mandatory introductory course to conducting an SCR

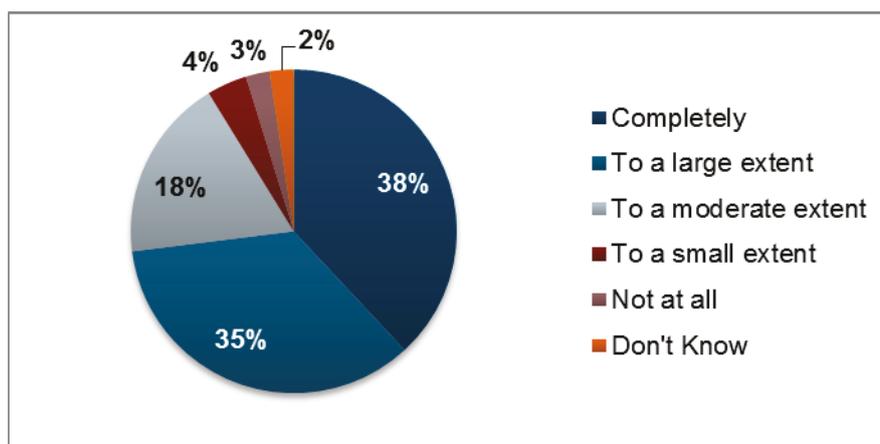
A number of interviewees discussed the value of some form of accreditation process for lead reviewers. Participants contextualised their comments by highlighting how other professions, such as medical and social work professionals, are required to be accredited, go through an annual validation process, or to register with an umbrella body; and how such processes require demonstrable Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in order for individuals to practice. Interviewees argued that the role would benefit from accreditation because it would show commissioners that lead reviewers were developing their skills and knowledge and keeping up to date with good practice:

“I think [accreditation] is really important, to bring this in line with other professional roles...In everything else we do in safeguarding there are standards, but there isn't anything here, there's not much monitoring.” (Systems thinking attendee)

It was recognised that not all lead reviewers had seen the masterclasses as a good opportunity. One interviewee highlighted that an accreditation process might encourage lead reviewers prioritising opportunities for development more in the future.

Survey respondents were largely in support of the masterclasses continuing to be available beyond the LiPP. 73% were 'completely' or 'to a large extent' in support of this.

**Figure 9: To what extent do you think it is important for masterclasses to be available on an ongoing basis to support reviewers in their role?**



Source: LiPP survey, base: all respondents (126)

### 3.5 Summary of evaluation findings

The LiPP provided an opportunity to test with the sector a set of innovative practices to improve the quality of SCRs and their impact on child safeguarding work, and explore what was needed on an ongoing basis to support this. In this respect, the LiPP achieved its short term outcomes, in that the project activities focussed on this dual aspect and put in place four distinct workstreams with previously untested activities

Within the timeframe of the project, the aim was not to assess whether medium and long term outcomes had been achieved: instead, the external evaluation explored the extent to which different stakeholders, regardless of their involvement in the LiPP, felt there was potential for the approaches to lead to changes in the child protection system, and in the longer term, better outcomes for children and families.

The overall message was that improving the quality and use of SCRs should be seen as an ongoing journey. The concepts tested in the project were supported by those involved, and the wider stakeholders consulted via the survey. Much of the work will now need to be taken forward as part of other policy developments, but the project has created momentum for a set of practices that could lead to future improvements. The project team have reflected on the tension between wanting to learn from SCRs, but without contributing to a culture of blame, or a deficit model of practice. The hope is that the LiPP has explored how this can be done, without it needing to be an either/or.

A common concern across all the workstreams was defining how the products and processes from the LiPP could meaningfully be taken forward to lead to changes in practice. This was most pertinent for workstream 1, and the desire to have more time to focus on how to use this type of analysis in their local contexts. Many participants were also keen to see a mechanism for sharing good practice in terms of solutions.

Where respondents were more negative about the LiPP, this often related to cost implications; the risk of increased bureaucracy for SCRs, and the approaches being used to criticise local authorities. The main findings for each workstream are summarised below.

### **Collating and analysing themes from SCRs at a national level:**

- participants were supportive in general of the aims and results of the collation and analysis, and felt it was a valuable process to extract learning from SCRs locally and nationally, and focus on practice issues and high level themes
- supplementing this with data from practitioners at summits was a positive process in terms of providing a deeper understanding of underlying reasons for the problems identified in SCRs. The summits were oversubscribed, which points to the need for more opportunities discussions in a multi-agency environment
- attendees at the LSCB pilot workshops appreciated not only having space to reflect away from their day jobs, but also the high quality of the briefing materials
- there was support for updating the analysis twice a year, or quarterly

### **The national Alliance:**

- there was support for having a national Alliance and bringing together professional and leadership bodies from across the child protection sector
- the group wanted the Alliance to play a role in supporting and leading practice rather than scrutinising and judging
- the Alliance had potential to be more than a network, instead, forming a partnership that could exert influence and lead to change. This would inevitably take time to set up and work effectively
- participants wanted to see the mandate and governance of the Alliance made clearer, particularly in light of the proposed What Works Centre

### **Quality Markers for SCRs:**

- there was support for the quality markers given the present lack of any benchmarks for the quality of SCRs
- most participants in the evaluation felt QMs would be useful for commissioning and managing the process, and would appeal to different audiences
- participants emphasised that QMs should be seen as a support tool, and not used as a compliance mechanism against LSCBs or reviewers
- opinions differed on how detailed the QMs needed to be, but many felt that new reviewers in particular would benefit from having access to them

### **Masterclasses for reviewers:**

- the lead reviewer role was described as being very isolated, and lacking in ongoing training and development opportunities for those involved
- Masterclass attendees were very positive about the experience but reflected that many lead reviewers had chosen not to engage, which suggests that there could be a more effective way of engaging with experienced reviewers, who arguably would still benefit from attending
- there were suggestions that the masterclasses alone were not systematic training, and that they needed to sit alongside other offers, such as peer group support, more formal training, and national accreditation

The external evaluation gathered feedback and ideas for improvement about different elements of the process which participants had engaged with, that have been discussed throughout this findings section. It was apparent that some of the project activities had lacked clarity for participants. For example, summit attendees did not always realise that they were being asked to play an active role in sharing their knowledge and expertise; some LSCB pilot areas were being clear about the retrospective engagement with the QMs; those less closely involved in the LiPP tended to interpret the QMs as being potentially rigid, rather than supporting diversity; and some Alliance members were unclear about the role being tested for the group.

This feedback should be considered alongside the internal evaluation findings to decide how to refine and improve the mechanisms and the way they are described and promoted if they continue in the future. This would help to ensure that stakeholders start their engagement with the project aware of what is being proposed and can usefully participate in the process.

## **4. Limitations of the evaluation and future evaluation**

### **4.1 Reflections on the evaluation approach**

The LiPP took place within a short time frame, and a lot of the project activities happened towards the end of the funded year. This caused a number of issues for the evaluation. Whilst there was ample time to conduct follow up interviews for workstream 1, this was not the case for the remaining workstreams, which resulted in smaller sample sizes. If the timescales had allowed, it would have been preferable to speak to more Alliance members, and allow more time for the participants in workstream 3 to reflect on the process before taking part in an evaluation interview.

The survey was delayed due to other surveys that were going out to a similar audience in the sector at the same time. There was a positive response rate, but it was completed by some people who were already engaged in LiPP activities, and this was a change from the original intention to target non-participants. The survey should be seen as a snapshot at a particular point in time when there was considerable interest (and anxiety) in the sector about the future of LSCBs and commissioning arrangements for SCRs.

### **4.2 The relationship between the internal and external evaluations**

The evaluation had two distinct elements: internal and external. This worked best where both elements could support each other: for example, asking participants in written feedback forms if they would be willing to take part in a further interview about their experiences. Engagement with the external evaluation interviews was high, suggesting that people were happy to share their views after participating. However, there were also challenges with the split between the internal and external evaluations, largely related to the clustering of project activities in the early part of 2016. This made it hard for the external team to fulfil the role of critical friend, and to be kept updated on project activities as they were developing.

### **4.3 Future evaluation**

The future of the LiPP is yet to be determined. The LiPP was not designed to continue after the funding period. The future of LiPP processes and products is highly dependent on SCR policy which is in a period of extensive change. 2 have been established which are useful to take into account in the evaluation of any future SCR improvement work:

- using an action research element helps to build in opportunities for participants to shape and interpret findings as these emerge, rather than solely being subjects of the evaluation. This approach lends itself well to developmental projects
- maintaining an external element so that participants can provide feedback outside of the immediate project team.

## 5. Implications and recommendations for practice

The LiPP was a developmental project, providing the space to test different mechanisms and approaches to improve the quality and use of SCRs. In terms of next steps, the following products from the project will be made available:

- the mapping and briefings based on SCR analysis for use by LSCBs
- quality markers, available as a document and app
- slides from the masterclasses
- internal evaluation report.

As an innovation, the LiPP will not continue in the format that was trialled over the last year as this was never the intention of the project. The LiPP has identified that there are ongoing challenges in ensuring that the time and investment in SCRs produces reports that are accessible and consistent. It is still too often the case that the findings and recommendations are lost in reports, and do not lead to changes in practice beyond the local context; shape services, or lead to better outcomes for children.

It has also highlighted that commissioners and reviewers would like more guidance and support for SCRs, and have a real desire to improve them. In this respect, the LiPP has convincingly made the case that there is a need for an ongoing set of practices and products to improve the quality and use of SCRs, and that these are needed at all levels of the child protection system, and across different agencies.

The original aim of the project was to establish how the different mechanisms being tested should continue in the future. The announcement of proposed changes to the commissioning of SCRs, and the development of the What Works Centre, now mean that there are two potential initiatives that could host or further develop the learning that has come from the LiPP. It is imperative that the findings from the LiPP project meaningfully contribute to these developments, building on the groundwork that has been done over the last year. In practice, this could involve:

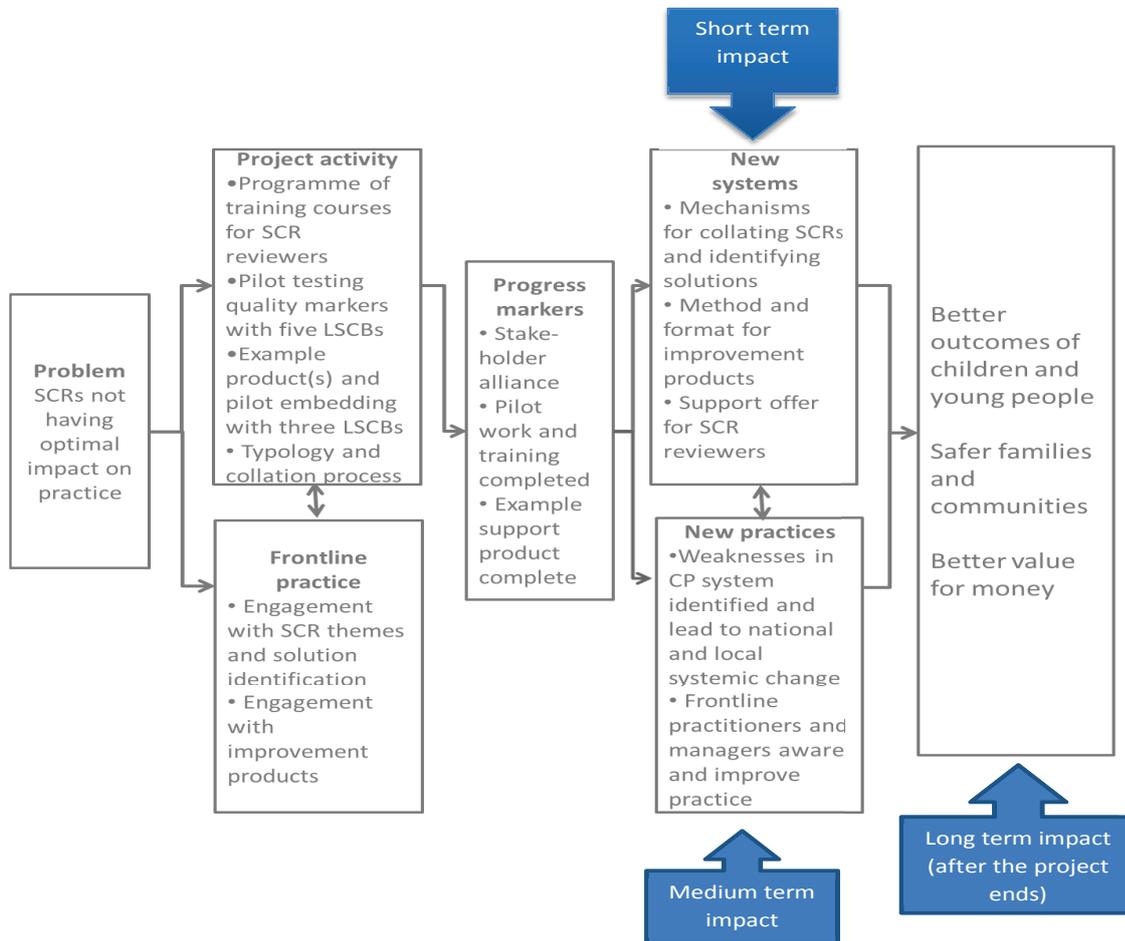
- the Quality Markers being used by a central commissioning body, and/or local commissioners and lead reviewers, to help develop consistency
- the masterclasses contributing to a more comprehensive training and CPD offer for lead reviewers, to build on the need for expertise in methods, skills, and knowledge about SCRs
- the collation methods for SCRs being used by the What Works Centre to continue to unpick the underlying causes of practice problems and share these with local areas to support local improvement activities.

The national Alliance established a need for a partnership at a strategic level that could use different opportunities and levers to react to, and address, SCR findings.

The LiPP has established an important principle that improving the quality and use of SCRs should not be imposed upon the sector: it needs to be a collaborative process involving practitioners, LSCBs, different agencies, families and national level bodies. This wider conversation needs to continue, and build on the appetite in the sector for a variety of different stakeholders to be involved in developing new approaches.

# Appendix 1

## The LiPP Theory of Change



## Appendix 2 – Research instruments

### 2.1 Post Summit Discussion Guide – Alliance

#### Introduction

First of all, thank you for agreeing to take part in a follow up interview. I'm from OPM, an independent research and evaluation organisation, and we're helping to evaluate all the different work streams that make up the Learning into Practice (LiPP) project.

As you are aware, the LiPP project, managed by SCIE and NSPCC, involves working with the sector to improve the quality of Serious Case Reviews and their use in informing practice improvement.

One of the work streams has involved setting up an Alliance of around 15 national bodies who have met during the LiPP project. The intention was that the group would test out a mechanism for the findings from SCRs to inform the work of national strategic and leadership bodies. We hoped that the group would:

- Explore responses and contributions to key themes arising from SCRs, as identified by the LiPP project
- Explore how you, in your role as strategic and leadership bodies, could do to tackle these issue

The aim of this interview is to explore your views about the LiPP project activities and the setting up of the Alliance.

This interview will last around 20-30 minutes.

Everything that you say will be anonymous: nothing will be attributed to you personally in our notes or in the report

#### Questions for participants

- Are you happy for me to record our session to help with the report-writing later in the evaluation process? Recording and transcription will be stored securely at our offices
- Any questions before we begin?

#### About your background

What is your role and which organisation do you work for?

How did you first get involved in the Alliance?

Why were you interested in getting involved?

What was your understanding of the purpose of the Alliance?

## Views on the role of the Alliance

The project had envisaged that the role of the Alliance would be to consider emerging practice issues arising from SCRs, and to think about what your organisations, in their role as strategic and leadership bodies, might be able to do to tackle these issues.

(For interviewer info, summary diagram below)



What are your views on this as an idea?

Do you think the Alliance or another similar body could become an effective mechanism for responding to practice themes identified through SCRs?

## Implications of Wood Review

The government intends that the process of commissioning and publishing SCRs should be managed at national, rather than local, level. The Wood review is focussing on the issues that might arise as a consequence of this change process.

What opportunities and challenges does this present for the Alliance?

What should the Alliance focus on in order to have most impact at this point?

## Operation of the Alliance

Overall functioning

What are your views on the Alliance meetings you attended?

Prompts: what was useful? Less useful? Views on format?

To what extent do you think the Alliance members understood what was being asked of them?

Were people able to freely participate and challenge each other?

Was it the right mixture of organisations in the room?

And the right representatives from those organisations in the room?

If not – what might have worked better?

Responding to SCR analysis

In one of the meetings, you were given the outputs of a collation of SCRs, with the idea that you would think about how your organisations, in your roles as strategic and leadership bodies, could help to tackle the issues identified.

Do you have any views on the format in which the analysis was presented to you at the Alliance meeting?

Prompts: is there anything that could have been improved or done differently? Views on the A3 grid and the briefings, format of the discussion etc.

Did you take any actions back to your organisation as a result of the analysis that was presented to you?

Did you take any actions back to your organisation as a result of your participation in the Alliance more generally?

Do you think it is useful to routinely analyse SCRs for national trends about practice issues (compared to the current focus on characteristics of families)?

Prompts: Establish extent to which they agree with the idea and support it, whether they felt this has been a gap before in the sector.

To what extent do you agree that the addition of practitioner knowledge to further unpack the learning and analysis of these practice issues is a useful exercise?

Prompts: Is it useful for people from different agencies and at different levels to share knowledge and expertise, and identify solutions? What are some of the challenges of this approach?

## Sustainability of this approach to collation and analysis of SCRs

To what extent do you feel it would be useful to be able to see trends, identified in SCRs, updated continuously as new SCRs are published?

The LiPP project team proposes an ongoing cycle in which the collation of SCRs helps to improve the quality of SCRs and in turn the identification of national trends in practice.

What is the best way/s to sustain this cycle of activities?

Prompts: What would practitioners be most receptive to? Who is best placed to deliver these activities?

## Concluding remarks

The LiPP project team appreciates all the input from practitioners to date, and they want to do all they can to ensure that their work leads to a longer term improvement in the quality and use of SCRs.

What role can you see your organisation playing in the future if the Alliance continues?

Do you have any further comments or ideas about the next steps, any alternative ideas, or anything that the LiPP team might have missed?

Thank participant for their time.

## 2.2 Interview guide: SCR Masterclass follow-up

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in a follow up interview. OPM is an independent research organisation, and we are evaluating all the different workstreams that make up the Learning into Practice Project. As you are aware, the LIPP project being run by SCIE and NSPCC involves working with the sector to test a range of ideas for improving the quality and use of learning from Serious Case Reviews, with a view to improving practice.

The masterclass you recently participated in is part of one of the four workstreams aimed at improving the quality of SCRs. In order to evaluate this aspect, we would like your feedback on three areas:

- The idea
- How it worked in practice
- Next steps

The aim of this interview is to explore the masterclasses further with participants to discuss whether you found it useful or not, and whether the approach should be continued.

This interview will last around 20-30 minutes and will ask for your views on the masterclass.

- Capturing, storing and reporting on our findings:
- Everything that you say will be anonymous: nothing will be attributed to you personally in our notes or in the report
- Are you happy for me to record our session to help with the report-writing later in the evaluation process?
- Recording and transcription will be stored securely at our offices
- Any questions before we begin?

### About you

1. Can you please confirm your role and which agency you work for?
  2. What is your professional background
  3. Which masterclass(es) did you attend?
- If attended more than one, ask them to reflect on both during the course of the interview and distinguish where necessary.

## Motivations and expectations

1. What made you want to go to the masterclass?
  - Prompts: Were there particular areas of reviewing that you were struggling with, that you thought the masterclass topics addressed?
  - Was it related to being a relatively new reviewer?
  - Did you think it would improve your CV and appeal to commissioners?
  - Was it related to this being DfE funded and supported training, perhaps perception that this is required or mandatory?
  
2. Before you attended were you clear on the purpose of the masterclass?
  - Did you find the briefing materials and any pre-reading helpful?
    - Prompts: was there any information missing? Could the briefing materials be improved?

## Views on the idea

- As you know, lead reviewers have a key role in producing high quality Serious Case Reviews. There are currently limited opportunities for CPD (continuing professional development) for reviewers. As part of this project, SCIE and NSPCC are proposing that the activity of reviewing needs further professionalization. The masterclasses are being used to test this concept, as a means of introducing knowledge from other fields to support reviewers.
3. How far do you agree that the quality of SCRs would benefit from the role of reviewers being more professionalized than it currently is?
  
  4. What do you think about the idea that the quality of SCRs would benefit from drawing more systematically on knowledge and expertise from other disciplines or sectors?
    - Prompt: encourage to explain answer

## Views on whether the Masterclass worked in practice

We're going to explore in more detail whether you feel the masterclass worked in practice. As you know each LiPP masterclass has focused on sharing expertise from other areas and bodies of knowledge. The aim was to introduce key ideas from a particular field and give SCR reviewers an opportunity to consider their relevance.

1. What was the most helpful aspect of the masterclass?
  - Prompts for both positive and negative: What did you think about the focus on key ideas or concepts from other fields: did that work for you ? Some of the classes introduced quite theoretical ideas, how did you find that? Was there enough input? would you have liked more of a lecture-style class, or did the interactive approach work for you?
2. What was the least helpful aspect of the masterclass?
  - Prompts: how honest and open did you find the discussions? Was there enough time? Were the right people in attendance to ensure sufficient depth of discussion?
3. Was there anything about the masterclass that could be improved?
  - a. Prompts: format, activities, mix of attendees, trainers, location etc
  - b. Do you think the number of attendees at the masterclass was appropriate?
    - Prompt: if not why not?
4. How far do you agree that the approach used in the masterclass was a good way to support the development of skills in lead reviewers?
5. How far do you think key ideas from the different fields were successfully introduced? (maybe tailor this question to the masterclass topic?)
  - Prompt: were the ideas totally new to you? Were they made accessible and if so how was that achieved? How useful or relevant did you find the exercises and discussions in helping you understand the key ideas? Did you find were the ideas covered relevant to SCR practice?
6. Do you think that a one-day format was adequate to cover the material and consider its relevance to SCR practice?
7. What does this type of session add to what is available to lead reviewers already?

## Masterclass impact

1. What impact has the masterclass(es) had on your knowledge?
2. Do you think you will do anything differently in your work as a SCR reviewer as a result of attending the masterclass?
  - a. Was there anything that you discussed that prompted you to think differently about challenges you face in carrying out SCRs and how you might tackle them?

## Sustainability and on-going activity

1. Do you think it is important for masterclasses to be available on an ongoing basis to support lead reviewers in their role?
2. Do you think masterclasses are the best way to support reviewer expertise?
  - Prompts: Are master classes the right starting point? Should a basic, mandatory training and accreditation scheme precede master classes? Would you want to attend masterclasses regularly as a routine means of CPD? Are there other means of support you would welcome?
  - If not, why not?
3. What other activities do you think are necessary to further professionalize the activity of reviewing?

## Concluding remarks

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## 2.3 Interview guide: Improving SCR Commissioning

### Introduction

As you are aware, the LIPP project being run by SCIE and NSPCC involves working with the sector to test a range of ideas for improving the quality and use of learning from Serious Case Reviews, with a view to improving practice.

One of the workstreams has involved the development of a set of 'quality markers' in consultation with key stakeholders in the sector. The assumption has been that these will support commissioners to commission, manage and quality assure high quality reviews.

These quality markers were developed as a result of a proposal that while all reviews will vary, there needs to be a consistent and robust approach to SCRs that is informed by the knowledge base that exists about effective investigations/reviews and organisational learning, and this should cover the whole process, not just the SCR report.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview.

OPM is an independent research organisation, and we are evaluating all the different workstreams that make up the Learning into Practice Project. We are speaking to people who have been involved in the five pilot SCRs. The aim of this interview is to explore the feedback on the quality markers, to discuss whether you find the quality markers useful and how they might be used in the on-going development and improvement of SCRs.

This interview will last around 20-30 minutes and will ask for your views on the quality markers.

- Capturing, storing and reporting on our findings:
- Everything that you say will be anonymous: nothing will be attributed to you personally in our notes or in the report
- Are you happy for me to record our session to help with the report-writing later in the evaluation process?
- Recording and transcription will be stored securely at our offices
- Any questions before we begin?

### About you

1. Can you please confirm your role, which agency you work for, and which SCR pilot you were involved with?

2. Can I confirm that you have received the draft SCR Quality Markers document and have you had a chance to read it?

## Motivations and expectations

3. Did you have any particular expectations regarding the SCR your Board conducted as part of the LiPP project? How aware were you that it was connected with the development of SCR Quality Markers?
  - Prompt: why were you interested in taking part?

## Views on the Quality Markers

- Interviewer note: The sites have all just been running their SCRs as they usually would: there has been no expectation that they have been working to the quality markers. These have been developed as their SCRs have been progressing.
4. Do you think the idea of having a set of Quality Markers for serious case reviews is useful?
    - Prompt: what in particular is it about them that you find useful?
  5. Do you think these Quality Markers are the right ones. Do they cover the right issues?
    - Prompt: is there anything that stands out as being particularly helpful? Any reflections on the different stages?
  6. Is there anything you find particularly unhelpful about them?
    - Prompt: what is it that you find so unhelpful?
  7. Was there anything about the Quality Markers that could be improved?
    - Prompts: style, tone, format, length etc
  8. Does a set of quality markers add anything to the SCR process that already takes place in your local area for setting up, commissioning, managing and quality assuring an SCR?
    - Prompt: Do they complement your current processes? Do or could they fill a gap?

## Sustainability

9. In what ways could or would you use the Quality Markers in the future?

- Prompt: The LiPP team have been thinking that you could use them in the set up of an individual SCR; to support clarity of expectations with the lead reviewer about what you are commissioning; along with course of the SCR to help manage and quality assure the process, and to reflect on the process and any lessons learnt. Why?

10. Do you have any suggestions on how Lead Reviewers / LSCBs could be supported to use the Quality Markers in the future?

- Prompts: any tools, products or information you think would be useful?

11. Overall, how far do you agree that the Quality Markers are an effective tool in supporting a consistent and robust approach to SCRs?

- Prompts: This is about having QMs informed by the knowledge base that exists about effective investigations/reviews and organisational learning – explain this if needed

12. If you think a set of Quality Markers would be useful, what would best support their use consistently across all Boards?

## Concluding remarks

The LiPP project team appreciates all the input from people involved in commissioning and conducting SCRs to date and they want to do all they can to ensure that their work leads to a longer term improvement in the quality and use of SCRs.

13. Do you have any additional comments about the Quality Markers or ideas for next steps?

- Prompts: Anything else that might help to support improving the quality and use of SCRs?

## Additional questions for lead reviewers:

### Process of developing the markers

1. The LiPP project aimed to draw on the expertise of a small group of experienced reviewers in developing the Quality Markers, including yourself. To what extent do you think they were successful?

Prompts: Did you feel actively involved? Do you feel ownership of the markers? How far do you support the end product in full?

2. The goal was for the Quality Markers not to be specific to any particular model or approach. Was this achieved?

Prompts: Did this arise as an issue at any point?

### Process of consulting on the markers

3. The LiPP project held two consultation events on the Quality Markers. Did you attend either or both of those? If yes,

4. How successful did you find the consultation process?

5. What impression did you get of the response?

6. Was the process of responding to the consultation feedback adequate?

### Reflections on using the quality markers retrospectively in the pilot SCRs

7. The Quality Markers have been used to reflect on the SCR you have conducted . How did you find the experience?

- Prompts: In what ways was it novel? It was quite exposing: how did you find this? Did you find it useful?

8. What did you learn from this process for yourself as lead reviewer?

Did you learn anything specific about your SCR or case review practice that you didn't know before?

Has it given you ideas about how you might do things differently in the future?

9. From your discussions in the one-to-ones, do you think reflecting on the SCR using the Quality Markers generated any useful learning for the LSCB who commissioned the review?

## 2.4 Interview guide – summit attendees

### Introduction

As you are aware, the LiPP project being run by SCIE and NSPCC involves working with the sector to test a range of ideas for improving the quality and use of learning from Serious Case Reviews, with a view to improving practice.

One of the workstreams has involved collating practice themes and issues from SCRs nationally, looking specifically at issues around inter-professional communication and decision making. The aim was to show the fine detail of some of these practice issues and understand what is causing them.

At the summit you attended, you all discussed these practice issues, and the aim was to add your knowledge and expertise as practitioners to the problem. The next step is to explore with 3 Local Safeguarding Children Boards how they might put this learning into practice at a local level, to support improvement of SCRs.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in a follow up interview. OPM is an independent research organisation, and we are evaluating the overall Learning into Practice Project. The aim of this interview is to explore further with summit participants whether they felt that this approach was useful or not, and whether it should be continued.

This interview will last around 20-30 minutes

- Please try to keep your answers focussed on the summit that you attended rather than issues within SCRs more broadly.
- Capturing, storing and reporting on our findings:
  - Everything that you say will be anonymous: nothing will be attributed to you personally in our notes or in the report
  - Are you happy for me to record our session to help with the report-writing later in the evaluation process?
  - Recording and transcription will be stored securely at our offices
- Any questions before we begin?

### About you

- Can you tell us what your role is, and which agency you work for?
- Which summit did you attend?

## Motivations and expectations

- What made you want to come along to the summit?
  - Prompts: How did you find out about it?
- What did you think the purpose of the day was?
  - Prompt them to explain what they received in advance, whether they read and understood it
- Were you clear about what role you were expected to play at the summits?
- Note: Interviewees might not be clear about the purpose of the event and may see it as a dissemination event. If this is apparent, explain 'Our understanding was that the summit was focussed on practitioners at all levels adding their knowledge and expertise to the problem that had been analysed across all the SCRs'. Try to explore why they misunderstood this if possible

## Views on the idea itself

- As we explained, the aim of this work was to use practice issues in SCRs as a starting point, and then get additional knowledge and expertise from practitioners at the summits.
- To what extent do you agree that this was a useful exercise?
- Did you find it helpful to receive collated issues from SCRs in this way?
- How did this differ from other summaries of SCRs you might have seen?
- Was it useful to focus on a practice theme in this way?
- What role do you think practitioners should have in identifying solutions to the problems that have been identified in SCRs?
  - Prompt: does collecting data in this way potentially better support practitioners in developing solutions?

## Views on whether this worked in practice

- Thinking back to the table discussions – what worked well in your opinion?
  - Prompts: was there anything that stood out as being particularly useful?
  - Was it helpful to talk to professionals outside your day-to-day context?
- What worked less well?
  - Prompts: how honest and open the discussions were; extent to which they were well matched to the topic being discussed at the table

- Did the discussions at your table help you to unpack the issues around inter-professional communication and decision making?
  - Prompts: What helped you to share your understandings?
  - Was there anything that particularly resonated or contradicted your own experiences?
  - Was there anything that you discussed that prompted you to think differently about challenges you might face in your local area?
- How did the briefing and materials on the SCR practice issues inform your discussions?
  - Prompts: if not, what would have helped you to get more out of the discussions?
- Did your table discussions cover the causes of these issues?
- And did you manage to get on to solutions?
- Overall, how useful did you find the discussions?

## Sustainability and ongoing activity

- Is this a good way to routinely capture learning from SCRs?
  - Prompt: do you think it is important to look at these nationally?
- Is it helpful to share these practice issues with the sector in order to develop your deeper knowledge and understanding of them on an ongoing basis?
- What are the main obstacles to using learning in this way?
- In the future, how would you like to receive this sort of information?
  - Prompt: would you attend summits again in the future? If so how often?
  - Should they be regional or more localised?
  - Is there any way to improve the experience of the summits: could they be organised differently?
- If you couldn't attend summits, how else would you add in your views?
  - Prompts: try to establish whether preference for summits and meetings, or receiving written information, or any other ideas?
- Do you have any confidence that this approach will make a difference to practice?

## Concluding remarks

- Do you have any other comments on what you experienced or ideas for next steps?

## 2.5 Mini Summit, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016, post-summit discussion guide

### Introduction

First of all, thank you for agreeing to take part in a follow up interview. I'm from OPM, an independent research and evaluation organisation and we're helping to evaluate all the different work streams that make up the Learning into Practice (LiPP) project.

As you are aware, the LiPP project, managed by SCIE and NSPCC involves working with the sector to improve the quality of Serious Case Reviews and their use in informing practice improvement.

One of the work streams has involved collating and synthesising practice problems from SCRs, getting input from the sector to add more detail around the reasons for these, and then exploring how to effectively share this learning more widely.

Another of the work streams has been looking at how we might improve the commissioning of SCRs through a series of quality markers.

At the summit you attended, you offered your views on both of these workstreams

The aim of this interview is to explore your views about the LiPP project activities and the most effective way of continuing these in a bit more detail.

This interview will last around 20-30 minutes.

Everything that you say will be anonymous: nothing will be attributed to you personally in our notes or in the report

### Questions for participants

- Are you happy for me to record our session to help with the report-writing later in the evaluation process? Recording and transcription will be stored securely at our offices
- Any questions before we begin?

### About you

What is your role and which LSCB do you work for?

Which summit did you attend?

What made you want to come along to the summit?

Prompt: How did you find out about the summit?

## Collating and analysing practice issues from SCRs nationally

The LiPP project has developed and tested a process that could help the findings of SCRs have a greater impact on improving practice at both local and national levels. The process consists of:

- National collation of SCRs with a detailed focus on practice issues, things that are getting in the way of timely and effective safeguarding work
- The addition of practitioner knowledge, to add detail about the reasons underlying practice problems
- Trends identified in SCR reports are identified on an on-going basis, updated continuously as new SCR reports are published

Do you think it is useful to routinely analyse SCRs for national trends about practice issues, compared to the current focus on characteristics of families?

Prompts: Establish extent to which they agree with the idea and support it, whether they felt this has been a gap before in the sector

To what extent do you agree that the addition of practitioner knowledge to further unpack the learning and analysis of these practice issues is a useful exercise?

Prompts: Is it useful for people from different agencies and at different levels to share knowledge and expertise, and identify solutions? What are some of the challenges of this approach?

To what extent do you think this approach could help local areas learn and improve?

Prompts: How might you take forward discussions on this in your area?

What could you envisage doing differently in your area as a result of this sort of information or analysis?

If less sure: what are some of the challenges of this approach to analysis and collating themes and how might they be addressed?

Do you have any views on the format in which the analysis was presented?

Prompts: is there anything that could have been improved or done differently? Views on the A3 grid and the briefings for the Alliance and LSCB pilots

How could it be made more useful for you?

What do you think of the idea of a national 'Alliance' who could take forward actions relating to national findings of SCRs?

Prompts: To what extent do you think this would be useful on an ongoing basis? Who should be involved? What are some of the challenges that the Alliance might face?

## Sustainability

To what extent do you feel it would be useful to be able to see trends identified in SCRs, updated continually as new SCRs are published?

The LiPP project team proposes an ongoing cycle in which the collation of SCRs helps to improve the quality of SCRs and in turn the identification of national trends in practice. What is the best way/s to sustain this cycle of activities?

Prompts: What would practitioners be most receptive to? Who is best placed to deliver these activities?

What would make it easiest for LSCBs to engage with this work?

Prompts around best way to receive info.

Do you have any confidence that this type of approach to practice learning could make a difference to the quality and use of SCRs in the future?

Prompts: what do you think would help to ensure that it does make a difference?

## SCR Quality Markers

The LiPP project believes that the wealth of experience in the sector, and available research evidence, has also not yet been brought together to give a consistent understanding of what 'good' looks like in SCRs. Whilst understanding that all reviews will vary the proposal has been that there needs to be a consistent and robust approach to SCRs that is informed by the knowledge base that exists about effective investigations or reviews and organisational learning, and this should cover the whole process, not just the SCR report.

To test this concept, LiPP developed a set of quality markers, in consultation with key stakeholders in the sector. The assumption was that these would support commissioners to commission, manage and assure high quality reviews.

What are your views on the value or usefulness of a set of standardised quality markers for SCRs?

Who in your opinion is the intended audience for the SCR quality markers?

What are your general reflections on the way the quality markers have been presented?

Prompt on the structure, and the process broken down into 14 steps. Try to establish whether there's anything they'd like to change or improve?

### Sustainability

How could these quality markers be most effectively used in practice?

What can be done (in terms of support) to ensure they are used effectively? And by who?

What are some potential challenges to the use of quality markers?

Prompt around changes in practice and how quality markers will be updated and communicated as a result

How would you like to see the quality markers used in the future?

### Implications of Wood Review

The government intends that the process of commissioning and publishing SCRs should be managed at national rather than local level. The Wood review is focussing on the issues that may arise as a consequence of this change process.

If the commissioning and publishing of SCRs end up being managed at a national rather than local level, how might this affect how the quality markers are adopted by the sector?

What can the LiPP project do to ensure that the quality markers are still adopted and that routine analysis of practice issues still takes place under a centralised commissioning and publishing model?

### Concluding remarks

The LiPP project team appreciates all the input from practitioners to date and they want to do all they can to ensure that their work leads to a longer-term improvement in the quality and use of SCRs.

Do you have any further comments or ideas about the next steps, any alternative ideas, or anything that the LiPP team might have missed?

Thank participant for their time.

## 2.6 Interview guide: LSCB Pilot Workshop attendees

### Introduction

As you are aware, the LIPP project being run by SCIE and NSPCC involves working with the sector to test a range of ideas for improving the quality and use of learning from Serious Case Reviews, with a view to improving practice.

One of the workstreams has involved collating practice themes and issues from SCRs nationally. At the pilot workshop, you explored how you might respond locally to the learning from this national collation of SCRs, through engaging with an example topic from the analysis of 38 recent reviews. At the workshop, the LiP Project also tested one mechanism for promoting local learning and improvement.

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Examine one test topic which your site had chosen
- Explore and understand, at a local level, how the analysis drawn from the national collation of serious case reviews, with additional information from three practitioner summits, on the above test topic, can be used to change and improve practice. Specifically, to provide feedback to the LiPP team about:
  - Whether the information from the serious case review analysis and summits assisted your local understanding of a problem, local barriers and underlying causes,
  - How you think this information could best be provided to LSCBs in the future, and any tools, products or support you think would be useful,
  - Whether the format of the meeting has been useful for helping you think through the issues, and decide on actions.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in a follow up interview. OPM is an independent research organisation, and we are evaluating all the different workstreams that make up the Learning into Practice Project. The aim of this interview is to explore the pilot workshops further with participants to discuss whether you found the workshop useful or not, and whether it should be continued.

This interview will last around 20-30 minutes and will ask for your views on workshop.

- Capturing, storing and reporting on our findings:
  - Everything that you say will be anonymous: nothing will be attributed to you personally in our notes or in the report
  - Are you happy for me to record our session to help with the report-writing later in the evaluation process?

- Recording and transcription will be stored securely at our offices
- Any questions before we begin?

## About you

- Can you please confirm your role and which agency you work for?
- Which LSCB Pilot workshop did you attend?

## Motivations and expectations

- What made you want to go to the workshop?
  - Prompts: had they been involved in any LiPP activities up to this point?
- What did you think the purpose of the workshop was?
  - Prompt them to explain what they received in advance, whether they read and understood it

## Views on the workshop content

Interviewer to explain: We're interested in whether you thought the workshop activities achieved the workshop aims mentioned earlier.

Discussing the test topic: Referring agencies and CSC disagree about whether cases referred to CSC actually need CSC involvement and this is not resolved (was it the same for each workshop?)

- What did you think about the briefing information on the test topic?
 

Prompts: was there any information missing? Could the briefing materials be improved?
- How did the briefing information on the test topic inform your discussions?
  - Prompts: if not helpful, what would have helped you to get more out of the discussions?
  - Was there anything that stood out as being particularly useful in allowing people to share their knowledge and experience of the test topic?
  - What helped you to think through the issues?
- Did the briefing information from the serious case review analysis and summits make you think differently at all about your local understandings of this problem, for example identifying any local barriers or underlying causes?

- Prompts: Did it help your understanding? Was there anything that stood out as being particularly useful, or that contradicted your own experiences? If not, why not?
- Were you able to discuss solutions and decide on actions?
  - If not, why not? What were the barriers?
- Were you able to discuss how change might happen in practice in your local area?
  - If not, why not? What were the barriers?
- To what extent do you agree that the test topic was a good way to explore how serious case review findings can help LSCBs at a local level?
- Would the workshop session add anything to what your LSCB and subgroups are doing already?
  - Prompt: could sessions like this contribute to ongoing learning from serious case review findings?

## Views on the workshop format

Interviewer to explain: these questions will identify your overall views on the format

- What worked well about the format of the workshop in your opinion?
  - Prompts: Did the session structure promote productive reflection? Were people engaged? Did they understand what they were being asked to do?
- What worked less well overall?
  - Prompts: how honest and open were the discussions? Was there enough time? Were the right people in attendance to ensure sufficient depth of discussion?
- Was there anything about the workshop that could be improved?
  - Prompts: format, activities, mix of attendees, facilitators, location. Or a different approach?

## Sustainability

- Do you think it's useful to routinely analyse SCRs for national trends about practice issues, compared to the current focus on characteristics of families?
- To what extent do you agree that the addition of practitioner knowledge to further unpack the learning and analysis of these practice issues is a useful exercise?
- Are workshops like the one you attended a useful part of this process of collation and analysis of SCR themes?

- How do you see this process, overall, not just the workshop, helping to support improvement/changes at a local level?
- The LiPP project team proposes an ongoing cycle in which the collation of SCRs helps to improve the quality of SCRs and in turn the identification of national trends in practice. What is the best way/s to sustain this cycle of activities?
  - Prompts: What would practitioners be most receptive to? Who is best placed to deliver these activities?
- What would make it easiest for LSCBs to engage with this work?
  - Prompts for best way to receive info

### Ongoing activity

- Do you have any confidence that this overall approach can make a difference to supporting improvement in the quality and use of SCRs either in principle or in practice?
  - What do you think would help to ensure that it does make a difference?
- Would you be interested in staying involved?
  - Prompts: would you attend a workshop again in the future? If so, how often?
  - If not, why not? How could it be made more useful to you?
- If you couldn't attend a workshop – how else would you add in your views?
  - Prompts: try to establish if preference for workshop or meetings, or receiving written information – or any other ideas?
- Do you have any alternative suggestions on how LSCBs could be supported to use analysis from SCRs in the future, and any tools, products or information you think would be useful?

### Concluding remarks

The LiPP project team appreciates all the input from practitioners to date and they want to do all they can to ensure that their work leads to a longer term improvement in the quality and use of SCRs.

- Do you have any other comments on what you experienced or ideas for next steps?

## 2.7 Survey for non-participants

### Introduction

Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) have the potential to provide vital information to guide improvements to multi-agency child protection practice. However, at the moment, this potential is not being fulfilled: the quality of SCRs varies; frontline practitioners are not always aware of them, and agencies do not use the learning from other areas that can come from SCRs. The NSPCC and Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) have been funded under the Department for Education's Innovation Programme to undertake the Learning into Practice Project (LiPP). This involves working with the sector to develop and test ways of:

- Collating and sharing learning about practice arising from SCRs at a national level
- Supporting responses to this learning at a local and national level
- Improving the quality of SCRs.

We hope that this will support the development of further co-ordinated initiatives to improve the quality, and use of, serious case reviews.

OPM is an independent research organisation and we are evaluating the project, focusing on what different stakeholders think about the project, and what activities would be useful on an ongoing basis to continue to improve the quality and use of SCRs. You have been sent this survey because, as part of our evaluation, we want to hear from people who work in the sector, but have not directly taken part in any of the LiPP activities. This is an important part of understanding what is sustainable and how to take forward the work once the DfE funding ends in March 2016.

If you have any questions, need some assistance, or would like to request a paper copy to be sent to you, please contact Louisa Thomson from OPM on 020 7239 7824 or [lthomson@opm.co.uk](mailto:lthomson@opm.co.uk)

This should take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete. Please complete and submit this survey by <DATE>

Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated.

### How to complete this survey

- Please use the buttons at the bottom of the pages to navigate around the survey instead of the buttons across the top of the screen.
- Click in the box that most closely matches your response for each of the questions

asked. If you change your response to a question, your original answer will be deleted. To save your new answer use the 'next' icon at the bottom of the page.

- There are certain questions which, if left blank, will prompt a reminder message asking you to complete the question before moving on to the next section.
- The progress bar at the bottom of the page will let you know how much of the survey you have completed.
- The print button at the bottom of the page will allow you to print out a paper copy of the survey.

About you

<p>What is your role?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair of LSCB</li> <li>• LSCB manager</li> <li>• LSCB Board member</li> <li>• Other (please specify)</li> </ul>	
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<p>If choose 'LSCB Board' member or 'Other'</p> <p>What agency do you work for?</p> <p>Children's health - community</p> <p>Children's health - hospital/acute</p> <p>Children's health - other</p> <p>Children's social care</p> <p>Early years</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Fire and rescue</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Police</p> <p>Probation</p> <p>Adult health</p>	
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<p>Adults social care</p> <p>Other (please specify)</p>	
<p>Which region do you work in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North East</li> <li>• North West</li> <li>• Yorkshire and Humber</li> <li>• East Midlands</li> <li>• West Midlands</li> <li>• London</li> <li>• South East</li> <li>• South West</li> <li>• Eastern</li> <li>• National remit</li> </ul>	
<p>Have you been involved in any of the activities to do with the LiPP so far?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• If yes, please state which</li> </ul>	
<p>1. Collating SCR findings, and responding to them</p> <p>To date Serious Case Review findings have been analysed at a national level every two or three years, and detailed understanding of practice problems has only formed a small part of the analysis, with a greater emphasis instead on understanding the characteristics of families who are the subjects of SCRs.</p> <p>As part of this project, we propose that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The collation of learning from SCR reports focuses on insights into practice problems: things that are getting in the way of timely and effective safeguarding work</li> <li>• Learning from SCR reports is supplemented with input from the sector to add detail about the reasons underlying practice problems.</li> <li>• Trends identified in SCR reports are identified on an on-going basis, updated continually as new SCR reports are published</li> </ul>	

<p>To what extent do you agree with the proposal that national trends about practice problems revealed by SCRs, should be routinely identified?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely</li> <li>• To a large extent</li> <li>• To a moderate extent</li> <li>• To a small extent</li> <li>• Not at all</li> <li>• Don't know</li> </ul> <p>Comments: (free text)</p>	
<p>To what extent do you think that the national trends generated from SCRs could be better understood with input and insight from multi-agency frontline practitioners and managers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely</li> <li>• To a large extent</li> <li>• To a moderate extent</li> <li>• To a small extent</li> <li>• Not at all</li> <li>• Don't know</li> </ul> <p>Comments: (free text)</p>	
<p>To what extent do you feel it would be useful to be able to see trends identified in SCRs, updated continuously as new SCRs are published?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely</li> <li>• To a large extent</li> <li>• To a moderate extent</li> <li>• To a small extent</li> <li>• Not at all</li> <li>• Don't know</li> </ul> <p>Comments: (free text)</p>	

<p>2. Responding to SCR findings at national level</p> <p>To date, there has been no national multi-agency forum to support a strategic response to SCR findings by professional and leadership bodies.</p> <p>We propose that strategic and leadership bodies should meet regularly to discuss how they can take forward the learning from SCRs. As part of this project, we have tested this idea by establishing an Alliance of representatives of professional and leadership bodies comprising organisations such as the Association of Directors of Children’s Services, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Royal College of Nursing, College of Policing and NHS England.</p>	
<p>To what extent do you agree that an Alliance of professional and leadership bodies is useful to help target improvement action around trends identified through SCRs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely</li> <li>• To a large extent</li> <li>• To a moderate extent</li> <li>• To a small extent</li> <li>• Not at all</li> <li>• Don’t know</li> </ul> <p>Comments:</p>	
<p>3. Improving SCR commissioning and quality</p> <p>To date judgements about the quality of SCRs such as Ofsted’s previous evaluations, and more recently, the National Panel of Independent Experts, have tended to focus exclusively on the SCR report. The wealth of experience in the sector, and available research evidence, has also not yet been brought together to give a consistent understanding of what ‘good’ looks like in SCRs. As part of the project, we are proposing that, while all reviews will vary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there needs to be a consistent and robust approach to SCRs that is informed by the knowledge base that exists about effective investigations/reviews and organisational learning, and</li> <li>• this should cover the whole process, not just the SCR report.</li> </ul> <p>To test this concept, we have developed a set of quality markers, in consultation with key stakeholders in the sector. Our assumption is that these will support commissioners to</p>	

commission, manage and assure high quality reviews.	
<p>To what extent do you think a set of standardised quality markers for SCRs are needed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely</li> <li>• To a large extent</li> <li>• To a moderate extent</li> <li>• To a small extent</li> <li>• Not at all</li> <li>• Don't know</li> </ul>	
<p>If you do agree with the need for standardised quality markers, what would best support them being used consistently by all SCR commissioners?</p> <p>Open ended question</p>	
<p>4. Improving the expertise of SCR reviewers</p> <p>SCR lead reviewers have a key role in producing high quality SCRs, which provide a good understanding of practice problems. There are currently limited opportunities for continuing professional development for reviewers. As part of this project, we are proposing that the activity of reviewing needs further professionalization. To begin to test this concept, we have developed a set of master classes that bring knowledge from other domains in, to support reviewers to tackle various aspects of the role that are challenging.</p>	
<p>To what extent do you agree with the proposal that the quality of SCRs would benefit from the role of reviewers being more professionalized than it currently is?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely</li> <li>• To a large extent</li> <li>• To a moderate extent</li> <li>• To a small extent</li> <li>• Not at all</li> <li>• Don't know</li> <li>• Comments: (free text)</li> </ul>	
<p>To what extent do you think it is important for masterclasses to be available on an ongoing basis to support reviewers in their role?</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely</li> <li>• To a large extent</li> <li>• To a moderate extent</li> <li>• To a small extent</li> <li>• Not at all</li> <li>• Don't know</li> <li>• Comments: (free text)</li> </ul>	
<p>As part of this project, we have proposed an ongoing cycle, in which improving the quality of reviews in turn improves the identification of national trends in practice issues through collation of SCRs. We propose that co-ordinated improvement of both of these elements would lead to greater benefits overall.</p>	
<p>To what extent do you agree that there should be a co-ordinated approach to improving the quality of reviews and identification of national trends in SCRs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completely</li> <li>• To a large extent</li> <li>• To a moderate extent</li> <li>• To a small extent</li> <li>• Not at all</li> <li>• Don't know</li> </ul>	
<p>Do you have any views on how the co-ordination of activities would best be achieved?</p> <p>Open text question</p>	
<p>Is there anything else you would like to tell us? Particularly if you think there is anything we've missed, or if you have any alternative ideas about what might work to improve the quality and use of SCRs? (open response)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Now please click 'submit' to send us your response.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thank you for completing this survey.</p>	

## Appendix 3 – The A3 grid

### Learning into Practice: Inter-professional communication and decision making – practice issues identified in 38 serious case reviews

This mapping document gives an overview of practice issues identified through an analysis of 38 Serious Case Reviews (SCRs), published between May 2014 and April 2015. The analysis focused on issues relating to inter-professional communication and decision making.

This document is intended to support managers, senior managers and practitioners by showing common difficulties in inter-professional communication identified in SCR reports. It can be used for self-assessment, to consider whether any of these issues are occurring in your own locality.

More detailed briefings about 14 of these practice issues are available at [www.nspcc.org.uk/lipp](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/lipp) or [www.scie.org.uk/lipp](http://www.scie.org.uk/lipp)

The document works best printed on A3.

This mapping was produced as part of the Learning into Practice Project: a one-year DfE-funded project conducted by NSPCC and SCIE between April 2015 and March 2016

A - Communication about safeguarding within universal services (intra or inter-professional)	B - Early help assessment and services	C - Making a referral	D - Strategy meeting, section 47 investigation or process for rapid response to the unexpected death of a child	E - Assessments	F - Child protection conferences, core groups and Child in Need meetings	G - Ongoing case work and professionals' meetings
<p>Information about a parent known to the GP, which is relevant to safeguarding, is not shared with health professionals working with the child</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problems with information-sharing between professionals</li> <li>a lack of ability of some professionals (e.g. school nurses) to access adult health information</li> </ul>	<p>The Team around the Family (TAF) process is poorly co-ordinated, which inhibits communication</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'drift' in the process created by a lack of a consistent lead professional</li> <li>the process not being led by a professional familiar with the case</li> </ul>	<p>Referring agencies think they are making a referral or requesting action of children's social care (CSC), but CSC thinks they are only receiving information to be logged</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>professionals unfamiliar with referral process using incorrect referral process</li> <li>automatic notifications</li> </ul>	<p>Lack of police involvement in a section 47 investigation leads to insufficient consideration by other agencies that a crime may have been committed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of emphasis on investigative focus</li> <li>key individuals not interviewed</li> </ul>	<p>Children's social care (CSC) not checking with other relevant agencies for information as part of their assessment</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>protocol for only one agency check</li> <li>no clear continuity in professional involvement</li> </ul>	<p>During criminal investigations, police do not share all relevant information at child protection conferences</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>assumptions about what agencies know</li> <li>difficulties of sharing information on live cases</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies running parallel recording systems, with a time lag in updating from one to the other</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>professionals working on systems in isolation</li> <li>professionals unaware of other modes of recording</li> <li>different access levels among professionals to records</li> <li>transitions from paper to electronic recording</li> </ul>
<p>Information relevant to safeguarding is not shared in referrals to antenatal services</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information not shared due to confidentiality issues</li> <li>information given by parents not adequately verified</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies do a CAF because they've been told to, even though they don't agree with this suggestion</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>difficulty in challenging the decisions of another professional</li> </ul>	<p>Referring agencies and CSC disagree about whether cases referred to CSC actually need CSC involvement, and this is not resolved</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>high workloads negatively impact on decision making</li> <li>role of 'call handling' staff</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies interpret input from health about possible causes of injuries as definitive, rather than one of a range of possibilities</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an over-emphasis on medical conclusions as to the cause of injuries</li> <li>the pursuit of categorical explanations</li> </ul>	<p>Probation not checking with CSC as part of their risk assessment for any information relevant to safeguarding children</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>policy may not require multi-disciplinary information gathering</li> </ul>	<p>Police not pursuing a prosecution is interpreted by other agencies as meaning that child protection procedures are not needed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an over-emphasis on criminal proceedings at the expense of other professional opinion</li> </ul>	<p>Non-engagement by parents with substance misuse services not highlighted to other agencies as reason for termination of service</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>assumptions about professional roles</li> <li>overly informal data sharing</li> <li>inconsistent safeguarding practices</li> </ul>
<p>Information about domestic violence incidents known to the police is not shared with health visitors</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problems with information sharing systems</li> <li>information entered by one professional not being seen by another</li> </ul>	<p>A CAF is not used when one is needed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the need for a CAF may not be recognised when the child is perceived as less disadvantaged than others</li> </ul>	<p>The referral process does not convey the level of risk in the case</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>referrals processed as 'for information'</li> <li>subject seen as a young person not a vulnerable child</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies do not proceed with rapid response processes following a child death, inhibiting multi-agency communication</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problems with joint planning</li> <li>a lack of training around rapid response</li> </ul>		<p>Professionals experience the participation of families in conferences as hindering frank exchange of information</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>staff unwilling to share information for fear of upsetting family or inducing aggression</li> </ul>	<p>Professionals in children's and adults' social care do not communicate when needed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a lack of understanding of: roles and responsibilities, modes of information sharing and collaborative working</li> </ul>
<p>Health visitors do not have access to maternal mental health notes, which are held by midwives</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>difficulties in information sharing between health visitor and midwifery services</li> <li>possible lack of contact between services</li> </ul>	<p>No Team Around the Family meetings are held, despite being needed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>multidisciplinary working not embedded</li> <li>services working under different administrative and IT systems</li> </ul>	<p>Repeated attendances at A&amp;E do not trigger referral to children's social care</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>physical health issues taking precedence over child protection concerns</li> <li>a lack of joint working preventing challenge to assessments</li> </ul>	<p>A strategy meeting is not convened when one is needed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information sharing procedures hindering timely action</li> <li>difficulties in challenging decisions when there is disagreement</li> </ul>		<p>School giving a positive portrayal of the child and not sharing concerns at child protection conference</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>education staff wary of sharing concerns in front of family members</li> </ul>	<p>Agency working with a family currently subject of a child protection plan does not pass on safeguarding information to children's social care (CSC)</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of understanding of the role of CSC in the case of a child protection plan</li> </ul>
		<p>Information about young person's sexual activity/sexual health relevant to safeguarding does not trigger referral to children's social care</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>misapplication or a lack of awareness of guidance around disclosures of rape or sexual abuse</li> </ul>	<p>There is no acknowledgement or resolution of conflicting medical opinion on the cause of physical injury to a child</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>inadequate discussion to resolve disagreement</li> <li>cancellation of strategy meetings</li> </ul>		<p>All agencies' views are not given equal weight in child protection conference decision-making</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>challenges to decisions not made through formal escalation processes</li> <li>issues of hierarchy in deference to social care decisions</li> </ul>	<p>Data management system used by GPs does not allow effective receipt of information from CSC about child protection status</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>systems not capable of flagging events like a child protection plan</li> <li>busy schedule limits professional curiosity</li> </ul>
		<p>Bruising to non-mobile babies does not trigger referral to CSC</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discrepancies in child protection practices in out of hours services</li> <li>a lack training for some professionals</li> </ul>	<p>Professionals only consider a narrow range of presenting issues in the strategy meeting</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the absence of a review strategy meeting</li> <li>hierarchy among professionals inhibiting challenge to decisions</li> </ul>		<p>Child protection plans not sufficiently specific or detailed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>goals in the plan lack clarity</li> <li>child protection plan seen as less important than evidence for care proceedings</li> </ul>	<p>The use of euphemistic or misleading language in reports and written records hinders communication</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fears of damaging relationship with family</li> <li>tendency to 'sanitize' difficult situations</li> </ul>
		<p>Children's social care (CSC) do not check with adults' social care for any relevant information at point of referral</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unclear</li> </ul>	<p>Paediatric conclusion on cause of injury is not challenged by other professionals</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unclear</li> </ul>		<p>Children's social care not communicating legal advice to the conference</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>inexperience in workforce around conference process and procedure</li> </ul>	<p>Mutual misunderstandings about who is going to do what following a conversation/plan</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>disagreement about roles and responsibilities in multi-agency working</li> </ul>
		<p>Differences of opinion within an agency prevent a referral being made to children's social care when one is needed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problematic relationships within teams</li> </ul>			<p>Discussion between agencies in child protection conferences lacks purpose</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of access to required information</li> <li>changes of conference chair creating inconsistent processes</li> </ul>	<p>Professionals relying on updates from family members rather than communicating with each other directly</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a potential lack of information sharing between professionals</li> </ul>
					<p>Agencies do not convene a child protection conference when one is needed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of challenge of decisions not to hold conferences</li> </ul>	
					<p>GPs not attending child protection conferences</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>logistical difficulties (timing, location) impede attendance</li> </ul>	
					<p>No Child in Need meetings held, despite being needed</p> <p><b>why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unclear</li> </ul>	

## References

HM Government (2011) *Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report – a child-centred system*. London: Department of Education

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