**Practice Note for all SCT Practitioners,** Managers **and Staff: Reviews**

Reviews are meetings that are held regularly with children, young people, their parents/carers and professionals to consider the progress of plans that have been developed and updated with them. These meetings are a child centred process that considers whether identified actions created to address needs, manage and reduce risks to children and young people as part of their plan have been progressed to improve their outcomes and secure permanence.

There are different types of reviews that are held depending on the nature of our involvement with the child, young person, family and carers. The map of the Child’s Journey (see Practice Note Child’s Journey) and process maps have been developed to support best practice when planning for statutory reviews processes such as Child in Need, Protection and Looked after Reviews. Some of these reviews are independently chaired by Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers. Other non-statutory review processes such as Team Around the Child Reviews in Early Help are chaired by Practitioners and Managers.

The purpose of this practice note is to outline what is a review and why they are an important part of the processes we follow when working with our families. Next, the note illustrates how using our Practice Framework and Model when reflecting on our review processes strengthens the work that we are undertaking with children, their families and partner agencies. Finally, the note outlines the importance of using reflective spaces such as supervision when considering the plan within reviews is outlined in addition to some good practice points and further reading.

**What is a review?**

A child-centered review is a meeting that considers what difference the help and support identified as part of the child, young person’s plan is making to them and their family. Reviews are part of the processes that we follow when working working with families alongside assessment, plans and updating plans.

Reviews should be a viewed ‘as a process rather than an event’ which means that preparation before, after as well as during the review are equally as important. Using a relationship-based approach with families often results in developing creative ways to support their engagement as part of the review process. By ensuring that reviews are informed by children and young people’s participation, contributions by their families, carers, partner agencies and evidence that quality interventions have taken place ensures that they are meaningful.

**Why are Review’s important?**

Reviews are important because when held regularly and informed by the right information they ensure that we can evaluate whether families are getting the help and support to make a difference to the lives of children and young people.

Children and young people’s participation within their reviews means that their meetings are informed by their views and lived experience which is empowering, enables them to influence decisions that are made about their lives and helps us understand from their perspective if things are making a difference.

When a collaborative approach is adopted within reviews with children, young people, young adults, families, wider network they are inclusive meetings and ensure that a holistic understanding of their needs and risks and the help and support required. It also means that the practitioner, family and partner agencies are clear about their contribution to the plan.

Reviews also consider the work needed to achieve permanence in appropriate timescales for children and young people through parallel planning to prevent drift and delay. Using our Practice Framework and Model helps us to reflect on the quality of the work at this stage of our involvement and ensures that we have a consistent approach when they are held. In doing so, it improves the quality of these meetings and the outcomes for children and young people.

**How does our Practice Framework and Model strengthen the review process?**

Children and young people’s reviews require good management/independent oversight and supervision, need to be informed by work undertaken as part of visits, direct work and intervention and the family’s culture, identity and community. Finally, good partner and partnership working is also required (Practice Note Introduction to the Practice Framework and Model ‘doing wheel’).

When reviews take place using the Practice Framework and Model it supports us to consistently think about what is required prior, during and after the meeting to help to strengthen our intervention and improve outcomes for our children, young people and young adults. It also means that the reviews are tailor made to the individual needs of the child and their family considering their culture and identity which means that a personalised approach to the process and the intervention will be developed.

Understanding the Child’s journey as part of the review process helps us to think about what part of the service the reviews are taking place, how long they have been at this point and their earlier journey through any other services. By thinking about this journey, it helps us to reflect on the child’s experience, the impact, timescales for change and securing permanence.

Using the 3 x basics at the same time, supports us to think about the relevant practice guidance, standards and process maps. Collectively, these basics support us to understand the things that we need to know as part of the review process to progress the child and young person’s plan. This will ensure the practitioner, manager, partner agencies and IRO/CC (where appropriate) understand who is doing what, when and how they are doing it as part of this process. Referring to process maps also help us to reflect on the current and next stages of the child’s journey with the family and their network.

**Preparing for the Review**

Everyone who is involved with the child/young person plays an important role in ensuring that the preparation for the review is appropriate. Updating the plan with the child, young person, family and professionals prior to the review, enables us to discuss and evaluate the quality of the intervention and for them to understand and be included in decisions made about their lives (see Practice Note Updating Plans). It provides us with an opportunity to prepare the child, young person and family for the review by discussing their view about the progress, issues, what they want discussed at the review and as practitioners what we will be saying at the review.

Discussing the report with the child and family before the meeting and providing them with a copy in advance, means that they can see how it will be shared in the review. Children, young people, Parents and carers need to be supported to know what to expect in reviews as this will allow them to think about their contribution, understand what will be achieved and challenge if necessary. Preparing the child, young person, family and carers in this way evidences how we understand that reviews can result in a range of feelings and shows that we are working in a relational, trauma informed and transparent way throughout. Using the hearts of practice to inform our approach is important when talking about how the work with the family has progressed which needs to be captured in the report. Even where the necessary progress has not been made and worries remain, by being clear about these whilst also highlighting strengths shows that we are consistently adopting a balanced approach to our work with families whilst prioritising the needs and risks to the child or young person.

Planning with the family how they can meaningfully engage by making sure that we avoid the use of professional jargon and acronyms to explain processes that are used in practice and use interpreter/advocate, as appropriate.

Children and young people should be encouraged to attend and participate in meetings about them where appropriate and consideration needs to be given to the venue, time, language and communication needs of both them and their family. In relation to children and young people participation at their reviews, considering how the 4 x I’s and how we Involve, Influence, Inform and Invest is important (Practice Note for Child’s Participation and 4 x I’s Strategy document). Practitioners can use this to explore the circumstances from the child and young person’s perspective through verbal, written, observational and behavioural communication which can also be shared at their review (see Practice Note for Voice of the Child).

The child/young person and their family/carers should be visited prior to their review (ideally 2-3 weeks before) to discuss the arrangements for the review and ways in which they can share their views such as:

* Use of the Mind of My Own Tool
* Doing some direct work to share at the review, for example helping a child to bring something to tell people about themselves,
* Supporting the child/young person to write a letter, producing a drawing or a PowerPoint presentation,
* Creating a video blog,
* Doing some preparation with their parents/carers.

In Looked After reviews, this might include the child/young person being supported to chair their own review. Adopting a relationship-based approach throughout ensures we are supporting families to take control of their plan, develop their confidence and offer the necessary support along the way.

Preparatory discussions with the Chair are also important (if they are different to the practitioner involved with the family) to consider any additional needs of the child and/or family, for example if the family has experienced difficulties which need to be sensitively considered as part of adopting a trauma informed approach. Understanding any triggers for the family, developments, quality of relationships that might impact on how the child and the family could engage in the meetings means the Chair will be able to take this into account and make the necessary adjustments to be sensitive to their experience.

In cases where there is a child protection plan or a Looked after children’s plan these preparatory discussions need to take place with the Independent Reviewing Officer or Conference Chair (IRO/CC) prior to the review, as well as carers/parents/professionals. This allows for reviews to be inclusive of everyone’s views and remain child centred.

**During the review**

As reviews are meetings where we need to consistently focus on what difference the work undertaken as part of the plan is making for the child or young person evidencing for example where there is a CIN or CP plan whether the necessary improvements made are sufficient and sustained over a period of time is important By doing this, it will ensure that the outcomes that need to be achieved are more likely to be met.

Where things are working well and where risk and needs have reduced for the child and young person decisions within a review may lead to a consideration of whether a different plan of support is needed or children’s services involvement ceases. If the risks or harm experienced by the child has not reduced, then with the family we will have already discussed what steps might need to be taken to keep them safe. At the same time, reviews are meetings where sensitive and sometimes difficult issues are discussed which can be upsetting for families. By being trauma informed we consider this at every stage of the process to reduce any anxieties for the child and family within the review.

Where there is limited evidence of enough change, the review should discuss and decide about the next steps and clearly record their decisions. Updating the plan with the family prior to the review and discussing the proposed recommendations and possible outcomes ensures that we are being transparent with families about the possibility of this outcome and their rights within the process.

Building, maintaining and sustaining relationships with our children young people and families ensures that they are meaningfully engaged in reviews even though some can be difficult. If there are issues about the quality of engagement of the child, parents and carers, using our heart of practice particularly relationship-based practice helps us to think about what the barrier to engagement might be and how we can work with the family to address it. Holding regular reviews ensures that there is no drift and delay for children, young people and their families.

**Next Steps following the Review.**

Once the review has been completed the practitioner should allow for some space to reflect with the child and family about the review and the minutes and plan that follows. This needs to include how the review felt for them, the main points discussed, what worked well and what could be strengthened helps to improve the review process when it happens again.

Minutes need to be sent to the child, young person (as appropriate), parents/carers in a timely manner and all the other participants in the review process. Practitioners need to ensure that time is spent with the family discussing the outcome of the review as this supports the planning moving forward.

Where the outcome of the review is an amendment to the plan, this needs to be updated with the child, parents, and other agencies/professionals involved. Any new services within the amended plan need to be notified and invited to the next review with an update of their involvement. Work will need to be progressed including any further direct work and intervention with the child and family and this will inform the assessment, plan, updating plan and review as the whole cycle starts again.

**How supervision and other reflective spaces support the Review Process.**

Reflecting upon the quality of review process can help strengthen our work with children, young people, their family and partner agencies. The revised children and young people’s plan and progression needs to be reflected upon as a practitioner and in supervision with the manager. For example, using Intervention Aides can be useful to continuously reflect on how or whether we are making a difference for the child or young person (see Practice Note Intervention Aids). Reflecting on any Practice Reviews within Supervision also supports us to reflect on the quality of the plans, review process, supervision and planning.

Where there are issues about drift and delay or additional risks or needs identified, supervision provides a space to think about the quality of our intervention and identify what might be needed either in terms of the review process, the assessment or plan. Reflective spaces such as supervision are important to strengthen our practice as part of the review process by reflecting on the quality of the relationships developed, our understanding of the child and family’s experiences and the impact of the help and support provided. Using reflective questions within the Practice Framework and Model (see Practice Framework and Model Booklet) to think in more detail about things such as the quality of our intervention thinking about the 3 basics, children and young people’s participation and the quality of relationships with the family and partner agencies is important. Where there might be barriers, identifying and addressing them with families and partner agencies reduces any impact on progressing the work required.

**Good practice points**

* Updating the plan with the child/young person, parents/carers and professionals before the review enables better engagement as part of planning process.
* Securing timely permanence for the child/young person is a key focus and is likely to require that we spend time with the family and their network about a back-up plan should there be increased support needs or risks identified.
* Ensure you have evidenced any direct work, tools or other resources you have used to facilitate the child, young person’s and parent’s participation within their review such as the Mind of My Own App.
* Where the child does not speak English as a first language, ensure we are communicating in their preferred language. The Mind of My Own App can be used to gather information as part of the review process and this can be sent to the IRO/CC and Practitioner.
* Information needs to be discussed and presented in a way that meets the child’s and family’s needs. Be creative in terms of how you gather information and how reviews are completed.
* Personalise recording for reviews to ensure that they are also for the child rather than just written about them. It means that if a child wishes to see their records now or when they are care experienced.
* Use the report to inform the discussion in supervision, the quality of the intervention and the difference being made to the child or young person.

**Further information and reading**

* Practice Notes are available on Children’s Participation, The Practice Framework and Model, Assessments, Plans and Updating Plans.
* The Practice Framework and Model Booklet, Information relating to the Child’s Journey, Participation and KSS
* Practice learning workshops covering areas such as The Voice of the child, Children’s Plans and The Practice Framework and Model will support this area of learning
* Subscribe/use to and access Community Care inform’ and ‘Research in Practice’ for other helpful information about reviews such as: <https://www.ccinform.co.uk/practice-guidance/guide-child-centred-reviews-looked-children-young-people/>

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