



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN PARTICIPATING IN A CHILD DEATH REVIEW

FACS Child Death Reviews

When a child who is known to Family and Community Services (FACS) dies, the Serious Case Review unit (SCR) undertakes a review.¹ SCR conducts an independent review with the aim of identifying strengths and issues in practice, in the operational context and in the systems supporting practice. We work to a set of review objectives, and we draw our information from records - KiDS & files - from interviews with key staff, and from relevant research. Staff participation in interviews is voluntary, but the robustness of the report is improved by individual perspectives about our work with the family. We analyse the information and identify key practice issues and key systemic issues impacting on practice. The findings from individual reviews are used to support organisational learning and practice improvement. Recommendations are made at the systemic level - to support local, District, or organisational learning.

Methodology

We are using aspects of the approach to serious reviews developed by Eileen Munro and colleagues. In essence we will be exploring the "why" of key practice and systemic issues as well as the "what" - using the concept of "local rationality" which assumes that decisions were made and approaches adopted because they appeared to be the best decisions that could be made in the circumstances. Interviews with staff focus both on practice at the time and on staff's views about that practice now with the benefit of hindsight. Staff and managers will also be invited to comment on steps that have been taken locally to build on strengths and address issues around the context or practice at the time.

The review team will be aiming to identify with staff 'Key Practice Episodes': points in a case where actions and decisions had a decisive influence on the future direction of the case. Using the concept of 'local rationality', the review team will be interested in how individual practitioners understood their role in the case at the time and their thoughts about the case as it unfolded. Using the concept of 'contributory factors' the review team will ask about the operational environment and what was influencing practice and decision-making at the time. The process provides an opportunity for

¹ Known to FACS includes children and young people who die within three years of being reported to FACS or whose sibling was reported within the same period.



practitioners to reflect on practice and has the potential to contribute to organisational learning.

How should I prepare for a review?

We encourage staff to review records in preparation for the interview, but if you do not have the information at hand to answer any question, it is perfectly acceptable to say so and/or to offer to provide further information later. In addition, if staff do not feel comfortable to answer a question, they are encouraged to say so.

We invite staff to bring to the interview a support person and the reviewers are very happy to accommodate that. The role of the support person is not to respond on behalf of staff, but to assist them in participating. This can include calling for a break and/or commenting if they consider that the interview is not working in the collaborative and constructive way that SCR intends so that the approach can be adapted.

What happens to the review report?

Staff are not identified in the report and are referred to in a de-identified way (e.g. Manager Casework A or Caseworker B). We provide our draft report to the staff interviewed to confirm factual accuracy. We also ask for specific comment on quotes from and/or paraphrasing of the views of individuals, and also any more general comments colleagues would like to make. We usually return to the District for the feedback stage. At this stage you will be guided to the sections of the report where your individual comments have been incorporated. You will be asked to provide written feedback on how your views have been quoted and/or paraphrased and will have the option to speak to the reviewers about their feedback. District Management are also invited to comment on the draft report.

The final version of the report is approved by the Executive Director, Office of the Senior Practitioner (OSP). Depending on the circumstances and type of review, it is then sent to the Deputy Secretary, PSD for comment and then forwarded to the Secretary. Once endorsed, the final version is sent to the District Director and provided to the Minister and the NSW Ombudsman. The NSW Coroner may request a copy of the review.