# Document 12: Guidance for Agencies Completing an Information Report

## Background Information

### The Purpose of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018* provides a useful summary of the purpose of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews:

*“The purpose of reviews of serious child safeguarding cases is to identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. … Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.*

*Reviews should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. They are not conducted to hold individuals, organisations or agencies to account, as there are other processes for that purpose, including through employment law and disciplinary procedures, professional regulation and, in exceptional cases, criminal proceedings. These processes may be carried out alongside reviews or at a later stage.”*

### Definition of a Serious Child Safeguarding Case

*Working Together 2018* defines serious child safeguarding cases as those in which:

* abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected **and**
* the child has died or been seriously harmed.

Serious harm includes (but is not limited to) impairment of physical health **and** serious / long-term impairment of a child’s mental health or intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development (although this is not an exhaustive list). *Working Together 2018* advises that consideration be given to whether impairment is likely to be long-term, even if this is not immediately obvious. Even if a child recovers, serious harm may still have occurred.

Child perpetrators may be the subject of a review, if the definition of a serious child safeguarding case is met.

### What is an Information Report?

Information Reports are designed to analyse an agency’s involvement with the child and family and any themes that have emerged. The aim is to:

* allow agencies to look openly and critically at individual and organisational practice, and the context within which people were working;
* describe actions that have already been taken;
* identify examples of good practice;
* identify any potential learning for the agency or for multi-agency arrangements.

Information Reports are not part of any disciplinary inquiry or process relating to individual practitioners. Any disciplinary action should be conducted in line with agencies established procedures and should be undertaken separately from the review.

## Purpose of this Guidance

This guidance is intended to provide specific guidance to agencies when asked to complete an Information Report for a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. The aim is to ensure a professional standard and consistency across agencies.

### Who Should Complete the Information Report?

Information Reports should be completed by **a senior member of staff who has had no involvement with the case.** This individual should have access to all relevant information and records relating to the case and should be given the opportunity to query facts with staff where necessary.

A Senior Officer within the agency should **quality assure and sign off the report** prior to its submission.

Further advice and support is available from [insert contact details of individual able to provide advice and support].

## How to Complete the Information Report

### The Importance of Answering all Questions

Please make sure you carefully read and complete every question. Failure to respond to all questions is likely to result in the template being returned with a request to fill in outstanding gaps: this will delay the progress of the review and the identification of learning from this case.

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| **Before completing the Information Report template**, it is essential that you read both the ‘Case Summary’ and this guidance. You should regularly refer to both these documents when completing the Information Report Template. In particular, please ensure that you **specifically address the identified ‘Key Lines of Enquiry’ and the ‘Agency Specific Issues’** that are outlined on the Case Summary document. |

Instructions on how to complete the Information Report are included in the report template. Additional information is, however, provided here on Question 2, Question 3.2 and Question 4.

## Question 2: Sources of Evidence

### Documents Used to Compile the Report

Question 2 asks you to list all the documents that were reviewed when putting together the Information Report. This may include paper records or records kept on ICT systems. You should include details of any information that was not available and why.

### Interviews

It is likely that documentary evidence will need to be supplemented by interviews with key staff to clarify ambiguity in the records. If the review of documentation suggests that policies and procedures have not been followed, relevant staff or managers should be interviewed in order to understand the reasons for this.

Staff should, where possible, be interviewed by the person responsible for completing the Information Report. The Information Report should clearly indicate where the information contained within the report has directly resulted from the interview.

It is good practice to notify individuals in writing prior to the interview. It is important that the interview process supports an open, just and learning culture and is not perceived as a disciplinary-type hearing which may intimidate and undermine the confidence of staff. The interviewer should seek to understand practitioners’ and managers’ perspectives and views on what happened and seek to understand why it happened at the time (rather than using hindsight). Interviews should also seek to capture views on the key areas for improvement and the challenges.

A summary of the interview should be compiled and a copy provided to the interviewee. Where there is a disagreement on the content of the summary, this should be resolved where possible or identified and noted. This interview record should not form part of the documentation submitted with the Information Report: instead, it should be used to inform the content of the report.

On completion of each Information Report, there should be a process of feedback and debriefing for the staff involved in the case.

## Question 3.2: Contextual Information

This section aims to capture contextual information relevant to this case that has not been included elsewhere in the Report. This may include information about the agency’s involvement with the victim, perpetrator, family member or any significant others or information about organisational factors that may have influenced events.

### Contextual Information about the Victim, Perpetrator, Family Member or any Significant Others

The individual completing the Information Report will need to decide whether it is relevant to include any contextual background / historical information held by the agency about the victim, perpetrator, family member or any significant others. This will require judgement based on the facts of the case and should be presented **as** **succinctly as possible.**

### Information on the Organisational Contextual Factors

Having reviewed the information in the ‘Chronology of Organisational Changes’ (where completed) and the sources of evidence listed under Question 2, the individual completing the Information Report will need to decide whether additional information on organisational factors is required to understand the case. These should also be included in Section 3.2.

Wherever possible, any assertions should be evidenced by reference to policies, operational practices at that time, professional management judgement or research. The type of information that maybe useful is as follows:

* Volume of work
* Staff turnover and sickness
* Organisational change
* Unallocated cases
* The social and community context
* Management and supervision practice
* Budgetary constraints and allocation of resources
* Training and development

## Question 4: Analysis of Involvement

The individual completing the Information Report will need to critically analyse and evaluate the events that occurred, the decisions made, and the actions taken or not taken. This should relate to both practice and operational management. The aim is to get an understanding not only of what happened but why something either did or did not happen**.**

Consideration should be given to the **‘Key Lines of Enquiry’** and **‘Agency Specific Issues’** highlighted in the ‘Case Summary’ along with the following prompts:

* Were practitioners aware of and sensitive to the needs of the children in their work, and knowledgeable both about potential indicators of abuse or neglect and about what to do if they had concerns about a child’s welfare?
* When, and in what way, were the subject and any siblings’ wishes and feelings ascertained and taken account of when making decisions about the provision of children’s services? Was this information recorded?
* Did the organisation have in place policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and acting on concerns about their welfare?
* What were the key relevant points/opportunities for assessment and decision-making in this case in relation to the child and family? Do assessments and decisions appear to have been reached in an informed and professional way?
* Did actions accord with assessments and decisions made? Were appropriate services offered/provided or relevant enquiries made, in the light of assessments?
* Were there any issues in communication, information sharing or service delivery, between those with responsibilities for work during normal office hours and others providing out of hours services?
* Where relevant, were appropriate Child Protection or Care plans in place, and Child Protection and/or looked after reviewing processes complied with?
* Was practice sensitive to the racial, cultural, linguistic and religious identity and any issues of disability of the child and family, and were they explored and recorded?
* Were senior managers or other organisations and professionals involved at points in the case where they should have been?
* Was the work in this case consistent with each organisation’s and the local area’s policy and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and with wider professional standards?

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| **NOTE: Disclosure of Information Reports**Agencies should be aware that a request may be made by the police or court for disclosure of Information Reports when information is being gathered for a criminal case. If requested, we will not provide a copy of your documents but will, instead, forward your contact details to the Officer seeking disclosure so that direct contact can be made. |