

Joint communication from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and Department for Education (DfE)

This is a joint note from DfE, on behalf of the Home Office and the Department for Health and Social Care, and the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. It sets out the expectations on the statutory safeguarding partners in relation to serious incident notifications, rapid reviews, serious case reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews in light of coronavirus. It also sets out the DfE's continued child at immediate risk of harm procedures. The changes below have been developed with Home Office and Department for Health and Social Care.

We have reviewed the statutory and non-statutory guidance about serious incident notifications and produced this short note to reflect concerns about capacity to respond to the usual timescales. Learning from serious incidents and a local area's ability to respond at this time remains critical to safeguard the welfare of our children.

Serious Incident Notifications	
Statutory requirement	All serious incident notifications to be sent to the Panel, and by extension the DfE and Ofsted within five working days of the local authority becoming aware of the incident
Emergency measures	The timescale of five working days remains
<p>Understanding any changes in the nature and complexity of serious incidents notified as a result of the current situation will be critical in how Government responds and reacts to support Safeguarding Partners.</p> <p>The duty to provide a notification of all serious child safeguarding incidents within the current timescales (five working days) remains. We are ensuring that the online notification system remains active and available 24 hours a day.</p>	
To note	<p>There is no change in the duty to notify serious child safeguarding incidents which remains with the local authority. As set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, statutory Safeguarding Partners should have local protocols to assist with the decision-making around identifying, notifying and reviewing cases of serious harm to children.</p> <p>Please email any questions around serious incident notifications to: Mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk</p>

Rapid Reviews	
Non-statutory requirement	Rapid reviews should be submitted to the Panel within 15 working days
Emergency measures	15 working days expectation relaxed
<p>We share your need to prioritise the most vulnerable and understand that having a 15-day target for undertaking and reporting a rapid review may not be achievable if partners cannot be drawn together. Timescales, practitioner capacity, and face-to-face dissemination of learning are real challenges.</p> <p>It is important though to understand the context of any serious harm or death to children and so please do focus on getting the key information together and deciding about any further review and timing, and then forward this information when available.</p> <p>We would ask that the rapid review is expedited where there is a child death or serious injury in the context of abuse and neglect, and Covid-19 is a strongly related factor, and where local safeguarding partners think other partnerships could learn from this.</p> <p>Further guidance on undertaking a rapid review can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safeguarding-practice-review-panel-practice-guidance</p>	
To note	<p>We will need to maintain an understanding of where rapid reviews cannot be completed to timescale and information can be emailed to: Mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk.</p>

Serious case reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews	
Statutory requirement	<p>Notifications seven working days in advance of publication date</p> <p>Child safeguarding practice reviews publish within six-months of initiation</p> <p>Serious case reviews to be published by 29 September 2020 (Working Together for caveats)</p>
Emergency measures	Initiation, and pre-publication/publication timings relaxed
<p>We appreciate that resources are needed elsewhere and that a commitment to undertake the more in-depth practice review, and within six-months, may not be possible.</p>	

To note	<p>We would ask safeguarding partners and/or local authorities to inform of us in due course of your decision about initiating and/or publishing a review in the current climate at both the following email addresses:</p> <p>mailbox.cpod@education.gov.uk and mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk</p>
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Children at Immediate Risk of Harm cases

The DfE receives correspondence from practitioners and members of the public alerting us that they believe a child may be at immediate risk of harm. Where we believe a child is at risk of harm, steps are taken to notify the Director of Children's Services in the relevant local authority within 24-hours and ask for assurance from the DCS that the child is safe.

We see this as a business-critical function of the department, and we will ensure that this role is maintained and covered seven-days a week and have contingency plans in place to ensure that no risk is missed.

We will keep the above areas under review and will react appropriately to your views and comments. We want to be as helpful as possible at this time and are here to support you throughout.

Please do contact us with questions or queries relating to this business:

- DfE: mailbox.cpod@education.gov.uk
- The Panel: mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk

The Department also has a dedicated coronavirus helpline for questions or queries:

- DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk
- 0800 046 8687 (between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday; and 10am to 4pm at weekends)