

Persistent themes in safeguarding practice



THE CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEW PANEL

Learning from child safeguarding reviews

Safeguarding reviews repeatedly identify familiar challenges in practice and across the wider safeguarding system. These persistent themes bring together national learning to support reflection, professional judgement and practical action.

These themes are not new. Their continued presence in safeguarding reviews makes them particularly important.

They require attention from practitioners, managers, leaders and safeguarding partnerships.



Understanding the child, family and risk

1

The child's lived experience

Understand what day-to-day life is really like for the child, not just what is seen, recorded or reported.

2

Understanding the whole family

Understand how adult needs, family relationships and changing circumstances affect each child's lived experience, safety and wellbeing.

3

Naming and understanding harm

Clearly identify and describe the harm experienced by the child, not just the risks or concerns.

4

Understanding and responding to risk

Recognise how risk changes over time by identifying patterns, cumulative harm and changing circumstances.

5

Information sharing and triangulation

Bring together information from different sources to build a fuller understanding of the child's circumstances and experiences.

Responding, decision-making and practice



6

Positive and skilled engagement with families

Build trust, understand barriers and adapt your approach, while maintaining professional curiosity and respectful challenge.

7

Consent and responding when it is absent

A lack of consent does not remove the responsibility to assess risk, share information lawfully and take action to safeguard the child.

8

When cases become stuck

Stop and review when concerns persist, progress cannot be evidenced or existing interventions are not improving the child's life.

9

Stepping back safely

Reduce or end support only when there is evidence of sustained change, reduced risk and improved outcomes for the child.

10

Culture, leadership and practice conditions

Create the conditions for confident professional judgement, reflective supervision and constructive challenge.

Pause and reflect

- What is life like for this child day to day?
- What might we be missing?
- What has changed, and what evidence do we have?
- Are we considering concerns together and over time?
- Is professional involvement improving outcomes for the child?
- What action, challenge or escalation is needed next?

Explore all 10 persistent themes

Access learning from safeguarding reviews, practice insights and reflective questions to support discussion, supervision and decision-making.

childsafeguarding.independent-panel.uk/persistent-themes



Scan the QR code to explore the themes