

East Ayrshire Adult Protection Committee

**Acting
against
harm**



Supporting the Well-being of Staff during Learning Reviews

Reference for Managers and Staff involved in Learning Reviews

We know that involvement in a learning review can be a very difficult and stressful experience for staff. This, coupled with the emotional demands of the job, can impact on the wellbeing of staff. In recognition of the importance of supporting staff during learning reviews, we have applied a trauma informed approach to the process that will be undertaken, with the aim of supporting the wellbeing of those participating in the learning review.

A trauma-informed approach acknowledges that trauma can affect not only the adults we are working with but also those who work with them.

By applying the 5 key principles of a trauma-informed approach during the Learning Review Processes this will work towards supporting staff wellbeing

- **Safety:** Creating an environment where staff feel physically and emotionally safe.
- **Trust:** Encouraging open communication and transparency to promote a culture of trust.
- **Empowerment:** Empowering staff to make decisions about the review and their own self-care.
- **Choice:** Recognising individual needs and preferences and encouraging individuals to take an active role in shaping their own wellbeing strategies.

- **Collaboration:** Fostering collaboration and respect amongst staff, teams, and the wider community. Acknowledging and valuing diverse skills, backgrounds, and experiences (Bewell 2023).

We have suggested some approaches and actions that managers and reviewers can take, to enable consideration of staff wellbeing during the process under the 5 principles. The guidance contains some suggested recommendations, and is not exhaustive in all that could be considered. The current culture of your service, agency or team may have already implemented a trauma informed approach in supporting staff wellbeing, or for other services this guidance may be helpful in reviewing and discussing together as a team prior to commencement.

Safety

The death or serious harm of a child or adult is a distressing event for everyone. The circumstances are often tragic and distressing. It can be difficult for staff who have been involved with the adult or the adult's family to learn of the nature of the child or adult's death and have to revisit this as an opportunity for learning. This can cause stress through emotional labour in terms of managing our own feelings while also being exposed to the needs and distress of others. There can be a risk of secondary exposure to traumatic events through hearing about them and therefore considering how we can create a physical and emotional environment that is safe is paramount.

We cannot progress with our learning if we do not care for ourselves, and each other, throughout this process. Guidance in how to improve professional and psychological safety for staff participating in reviews would/could include:

- Managers of staff participating in reviews taking a responsibility to check in with their staff as to their personal and professional well-being prior to engaging with a review. Any staff under occupational health monitoring or intervention in relation to work place issues or strain/stress/trauma should be prioritised to have a supportive discussion with regarding their involvement.
- It is recommended that staff are advised who they can communicate personal or professional issues to that may have an impact on their well-being during the process. Identifying 'who' that would be for the staff within your service/agency, and advising them formally prior to taking part, creates safety in highlighting to staff they do not have to hold concerns on their own.
- Staff should have a means of communicating any difficulties in participating in the review that is safe for staff regardless of role or agency. Creating a mechanism for staff to highlight challenges at the start of a learning review and detailing this mechanism in correspondence prior to the review creates a culture of care and safety.
- Staff should be made aware of support available and/or formal staff wellbeing services if they need to access support. If distress is in relation to the content or experience associated with the learning review, as employers we have a

duty of care to care for our staff. There are various signposting options or referral mechanisms for staff experiencing distress within their service role.

- A trauma walkthrough of the learning review process within the scope of your role may be helpful to identify what could help create safety for staff in your agency/service
- A safe environment could include: having a 'breakout room' for staff to utilise should they need a break; agreeing moments to pause from the process throughout the session in advance; not conducting staff sessions on teams as they may feel more disconnected from others; holding review sessions where there are other staff available to connect with peers.
- Managers who are aware of staff who may be more vulnerable participating in a learning review, are recommended to have a 'check-in' to discuss in advance their participation and what their needs would be to allow safety.
- Focus groups are recommended to be attended by at least one member of staff who is trained to provide peer support or psychological first aid should any staff require support.
- Including 'check-in's' and checking-out' as part of your standard opening and ending of focus group can build a containing culture where individuals are valued for how they are feeling as people, before and at the end, of the focus group/meeting.

Trust

In order to develop trust, having meaningful conversations with staff goes a long way. Mitigating fear of the unknown or uncertainty surrounding the process can be supported with regular communications to staff being open, honest and clear in staff briefings. If staff know what to expect, and is communicated during working hours, this will be experienced with improved safety and trust in the process.

It is important that staff are kept informed as to:

- Why the review has been requested
- What it aims to achieve
- What is expected of staff involved
- How long the review will take, as far as can be predicted.
- How they can be supported to reflect on the case
- How they can contribute to learning

After each meeting, the learning review team will prepare an update for the learning review panel which will be shared. The learning review panel will discuss and agree learning to be shared via staff briefings following each meeting. If for any reason an update is not available, staff and managers should be advised of when they will next receive communication from the review panel.

The Adult Protection Committee will seek ongoing lived-experience from staff as to how these communications are experienced throughout the review; to allow feedback and adapt from our learning during the process. By encouraging staff to feedback their experience of the learning review by engagement and making modification based on their experience – signals we value their experience and we hope to develop a culture of trust with our staff in supporting them through learning reviews.

It is anticipated that staff can develop trust within the process in relation to how outcomes are reported following the learning review when:

- Staff are knowledgeable as to the formalised outcomes and having had those communicated with them in a timely manner.
- Reports are anonymised and identifiers are only known to the learning review panel, review team and the lead reviewer will not be identified.
- Staff are communicated via the review team as to their findings in a supportive and confidential process. The CPC/APC, via Improvement or Learning Development subgroups, will support briefing sessions for staff to ensure staff are aware of the findings and recommendations of the review and have the opportunity to reflect on their own practice.

If the report is proposed to be published to support national learning, the report will be written in a way that the publication won't harm the welfare of anyone involved in the case and in consideration of the impact of publication on family members, children and others affected by the case. The timing of publication will have due regard to any ongoing legal proceedings or parallel reviews. Staff will be informed of anticipated publications in advance.

Empowerment

Staff will be empowered to have some ownership of the process, by having space to feedback their learning and reflections, and make decisions as to their own self-care. Staff can be supported via a trauma walkthrough of the learning review process as well as being provided the means to give regular feedback on how they are experiencing communication throughout the learning review.

We recommend enabling staff to consider what support they identify as being required at early stages of the learning review is recommended. It can be helpful to ask staff 'what are your needs that you'd like us to consider as part of this process? What support do you need but might not have felt empowered to ask for previously?'

There will always be a Learning Review Team which acts as a steering group to link between the Independent Reviewer, Learning Review Panel (overseeing the progress of the review) and the staff and agencies involved in the case. One of their roles is to be available, alongside the Lead Reviewer, to empower staff and managers to participate in reflections and learning to inform the review and to answer any questions from staff about the process.

Choice and Self Care

A learning review can be psychologically demanding for some. Some staff may need to take active steps to manage their mental wellbeing. Highlighting choice and self-care to staff as part of the process when together may be helpful in supporting a culture that is protective of staff wellbeing

- Can participants have some choice as to where the focus group meet and when based on other demands of their work role?
- Staff should be prompted to think about what would best support their self-care during the review.
- Open communication encouraging staff to consider their self-care needs can be helpful with others sharing or reflecting on their own practice may destigmatise the utility of being mindful of this, as part of the work roles we have to perform daily.
- Giving choice as to opportunities for additional supervision where this would be considered helpful.
- We would recommend that staff leading sessions highlight this prior to sessions taking place, and remind staff of trauma informed practices they have already implemented in their work role or as part of other processes.
- Advising staff of resources that can support self-care can be helpful to have at hand. Some examples can be found at the end of this guidance.
- Staff participating in reviews are recommended to table self-care conversations within their peer support network, supervisor, professional or management 1-2-1 and to advise managers how they are caring for their wellbeing during the process.
- Asking staff what 'choices' they hope to be consulted on during the process is recommended.
- Ask participants directly "what conditions do you need to support you in your role?"

Collaboration

The review will take a participative approach, as such staff and managers will be involved in focus groups which will provide a safe space to share their reflections. The Learning Review Team will support the Independent Reviewer to set up reflective focus groups with frontline staff and will support in critically analysing information gathered, offering advice and support to staff and the independent reviewer.

The Learning Review Team will be made up of Senior Managers who have expertise in relation to the services involved or where their specialist knowledge can contribute to reflections on the case. For example, where a review involved an adult who has died by suicide, the suicide prevention lead would form part of the learning review team. Where possible, those involved in the Learning Review Team will not have not had any direct involvement with the child or adult who is the subject of the review.

Two multi-agency staff meetings will be convened by representatives of the Adult

Protection Committee at the start and end of the review process. This will share the terms of reference at the beginning of the review and findings and recommendations at the end. On completion of the review, staff will be made aware of the content and recommendations.

How should I Respond to Staff reporting Wellbeing Issues?

If you are made aware of a colleague who requires wellbeing support, and they report difficulties managing the emotional experience associated with their workplace role, a supportive conversation with the individual can be very powerful. Checking in with the individual whether they need to or would want to consider seeking support from a peer supporter, their professional supervisor, line manager, or whether they feel that accessing formal Wellbeing services would be helpful/required.

How to Access Staff Support/Wellbeing Services across the Agencies

South Ayrshire Council and HSCP can access the following Staff Wellbeing supports -

Online Staff Wellbeing Hub for the organisation_- [Be Well: Live Well](#)

The organisation's Wellbeing Hub contains many supports and resources for staff to access, including a Wellbeing Directory, Wellbeing Calendar and -

Mental Health First Aid Network - bewelllivewell@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

South Ayrshire Council have a Mental Health First Aid Network that staff can access to receive support and information. All support will be completely confidential, unless there are concerns about self and/or others, and can be delivered either over the phone, online, or in person. Staff able to reach out to any first aider of their choosing and a chat will be arranged at a time that suits both.

Vivup:Yourcare - [Vivup](#)

Confidential support when you need it most – **Tel: 0330 380 0658**

Resources and support include Counselling 24/7, In the moment support – when staff need it (phone support), Your care dashboard with self-assessments for health and wellbeing.

Able Futures - [Able Futures](#)

Tel: 0800 321 3137 - This service is available to all Council employees to provide support, advice and guidance to those who are living with mental health difficulties.

PAM Group - [PAM Group](#) or Tel: 01925 227 000

Staff can access the PAM Group Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) As a proactive occupational health provider, PAM can help support employees with their physical and mental health. They also provide free, confidential support.

Staff Wellbeing Events and Training - [Be Well: Live Well](#)

These are a combination of preventative sessions for wellbeing, which are holistic to help support staff to maintain good mental health while building connections, and mental health sessions. We also offer Scottish Mental Health First Aid training, Trauma training and Taking Action for Whole Health and Wellbeing Workshops.

Health staff are directed to Care Support: Email: StaffCare@aapct.scot.nhs.uk or telephone 07824 596511. Referrals to Peer Support can also be made through this mailbox.

Staff Psychology: Self referrals for Psychology can be sent to Clinical_StaffWellbeingPsychologyServices@aapct.scot.nhs.uk

Spiritual Care Team: Email: aa.spiritualcare@aapct.scot.nhs.uk or telephone 01563 825988

Better Health Hub: Email: aa-uhb.betterhealthhub@aapct.scot.nhs.uk or/ telephone 01563 825611

Medical Peer Support: Email: aa.medicalpeersupport@aapct.scot.nhs.uk Open to all Consultants and SAS Doctors across the hospital sites.

Police are directed to their intranet site which offers advice and guidance to officers needing support. There are links and contact details to third sector agencies along with support that can be offered from staff associations. Police also have wellbeing champions in each division who are trained to be a confidential listening service and can signpost officers to the correct support channels. Officers can self-refer or be referred to TRIM (Trauma Risk Management) following traumatic incidents. This offers a wide range of support services. There is also access to police Employee Assistance Program which offers confidential counselling sessions. The police also routinely offer lifeline Scotland sessions to enable staff to be mental health informed.

Should staff need any additional support this should be offered through their usual line management arrangements. Staff should be offered a choice of supports as necessary by their agencies.

Line managers should take care of their own wellbeing so they can be in a good position to support staff. Managers should check in with those involved in the learning review, ask staff how they are doing and have open conversations about wellbeing and stress. Line Managers are recommended to complete the [Protecting the psychological wellbeing of staff and teams for managers and team leaders | Turas | Learn](#)

If Staff experience any challenges in accessing support that their line manager is unable to resolve, we advise that this should be highlighted to the Learning Review Panel, via the Learning Review Team.

Peer Support

Evidence shows that being supported by peers during difficult work events or experiences has a significant protective factor to wellbeing. Although the usual

confidentiality rules apply with regard to information sharing appropriate to usual workplace role, staff are encouraged to discuss the case and process with their team, manager and other colleagues and professionals involved in the case. This helps develop a culture of mutual support. It may be helpful to agree triad peer support within some service groups or staff to ensure 'checking in' of each other can be organised in advance, and utilised when required.

Where there is an ongoing police investigation however there may be **additional information sharing restrictions**. Information sharing protocols may change as legal proceedings progress, seek advice from a representative of the Learning Review Team or the Senior Officer ASP as required if you need clarification as to what you are able to discuss within a supportive setting such as peer support.

Accessible Training to Support Staff Wellbeing

If staff in service are unable to identify how to enact self-care and take care of themselves – there is a helpful online learning module for staff that can be accessed via the TURAS platform for health and social care staff. [Staff wellbeing : taking care of yourself | Turas | Learn.](#)

Learning Review Senior Leaders may want to consider staff training in Psychological First Aid. NHS and Health and Social Care can access this via Turas: [Psychological first aid | Turas | Learn](#) This module may also be suitable for staff who can provide first aid to colleagues that may require support following challenging reviews. Staff participating in learning reviews are encouraged to offer peer support to each other in terms of the process, impact of process and develop a culture of team support.

If staff from within NHS or HSCP wish to attend training to become a Peer Supporter within their agency/service, please indicate your interest to your line manager for further discussion.

Feedback

We would be grateful for any feedback specific to this guidance so we can continue to develop this in line with a trauma informed approach, and ensure that any positive learning from applying this or other guidance to the process is shared for future learning review teams and staff participating in the process.

Formal feedback can be sent via this MS form link
<https://forms.office.com/e/Drd48HT6C2>

or by emailing

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