



Memorandum of Understanding for Pan Dorset and Somerset Child Death Overview Panel and Child Death Review Process between:

- **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council**
- **NHS Dorset**
- **Dorset Council**
- **NHS Somerset**
- **Somerset Council**

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1: Joint Statement

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council, Dorset Council, NHS Dorset, NHS Somerset and Somerset Council (hereafter referred to as “the partners”) share a common goal to support the Child Death Review Process across the partners’ geographical footprint. This document will refer to Dorset as a geographical area, but implicit in this is that it contains two Councils (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Dorset Council).

Through this Memorandum of Understanding the partners agree to work together to provide high standard child death reviews across Dorset and Somerset. This will benefit our communities by providing key learning from cases locally as well as reporting into the national child mortality database to identify regional and national themes of learning and thus potential advances in service delivery and reduction in child deaths.

This document is not legally binding and cannot constrain any organisation in exercising their respective roles and responsibilities as directed by the Secretary of State.

2: Roles and Responsibilities

The partners, as set out in the Children’s Act 2004, as amended in the Children’s and Social work act 2017 will work together to ensure their statutory requirements are met in relation to Child Death Review arrangements.

Local Child Death Reviews remain the responsibility of the individual county, for example, the local review for a child death of a Somerset child will be the responsibility of the NHS Somerset and Somerset Council. Out of area deaths will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the individual county. This will result in either a joint review between the county where the child died and the county the child resided, or individually, depending on where potential learning lies. Standardised documentation will be used in both Dorset and Somerset alongside the eCDOP IT System which is jointly procured.

The Child Death Review partners for each county will jointly fund the business support required for the child death review arrangements as per the funding arrangements within each county. This will be in the form of Child Death Review co-ordinators (with specialised training), one each in Dorset and Somerset. Each supported as agreed within their counties arrangements and through utilisation of the eCDOP case management system. The business support arrangements will be reviewed annually to ensure it provides efficient and high quality support.

The partners have agreed to work together to oversee the joint Child Death Review arrangements and jointly provide Child Death Overview Panels (CDOPs) as per the Pan Dorset and Somerset CDOP Terms of Reference (Appendix A), which is in keeping with national guidance.

3: Shared Purpose

Our shared purpose is to provide high standard child death reviews and to ensure maximum impact of learning, which is shared in line with agreed governance structures within each geographical footprint in Dorset and Somerset.

We will work together through the Child Death Overview Panel to professionally scrutinise every child death within Dorset and Somerset. We will ensure the voice of the family is heard in the reviews, key learning shared and recommendations made in line with local policy. We will also feed into national networks to share data and help identify potential themes which can only be identified at scale.

4: Our approach to joint working

The partners commit to transparent and open communication between our organisations to oversee joint working.

a) Ways of Working

- Strategic - the partners will work together to support each other in meeting our respective requirements around child death.
- Operational - the partners will develop clear approaches to operational matters around the Child Death Notification, Investigation and Review Processes; working efficiently and effectively to review child deaths in line with statutory guidance.
- Cultural – the partners will seek to promote common values, based on those in the NHS constitution and on constructive behaviours, creating a panel which provides respect for colleagues and a forum for open professional challenge that results in thorough death reviews.

b) the overarching approach to joint working will be characterised by

- Openness and honesty.
- Transparency.
- Understanding of respective statutory roles, duties and powers, recognising the need to work collaboratively as well as individually.
- Engagement on issues of mutual interest and importance, including joint learning and development.
- Early and pro-active information sharing at a local, regional and national level.
- Trust in each other, providing and being open to professional challenge.
- Ambitious for our families and children involved in reviews to focus on the best possible reviews and creating impact from learning.

c) Delivering Joint Priorities

- To maintain an effective working relationship, the partners will maintain regular contact and close working relationships. We will ensure the business support and administrative function for CDOP work together and this is reviewed annually to ensure it is working effectively.
- The Chair will work with the vice chair to ensure the combined panel is functioning in line with its quoracy arrangement and the Pan Dorset and Somerset CDOP terms of reference (appendix a).
- It is expected each county will provide either the chair or the vice chair. Professionals in these roles will work together to ensure reports are submitted as per local governance arrangements, ensuring the CDR coordinators submission of eCDOP data into the national child mortality database.
- Each county will agree to provide professionals at the Child Death Overview Panels as per the CDOP terms of reference to facilitate robust multi agency review of each child death sharing transferable learning across the geographical footprint wherever possible
- Partners will work together to seek assurances where possible of the impact of embedded learning
- The partners will host the CDOP panels central to each county border to minimise travel times.

5. Reviewing the agreement

The terms of reference for the Pan Dorset and Somerset child death overview panel will be reviewed yearly. Last Reviewed: Aug 2023

This Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed April 2025 but may be revised sooner if the need arises and if agreed by all parties.

6: Publication

The Pan Dorset and Somerset Child Death Review arrangements are published by the partners through the publication of this Memorandum of Understanding and the Pan Dorset and Somerset CDOP Terms of Reference, using their own websites as appropriate.

7: Signatories

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