

Gaining consent - Serious Case Review, Serious Adult Review or a Domestic Homicide Review.

National legislation requires regional safeguarding boards to undertake case reviews in certain circumstances. These reviews are aimed at ensuring that lessons are learnt to help services improve for patients in the future. These reviews are achieved by accessing the medical notes of children, adults or their families. The professionals involved in these cases will often be interviewed as part of this process for additional information that is not in the medical notes. The law says that reviews of this nature will nearly always be published online in a highly anonymous style. Patients may recognise their story if they read the publication but they will not be named.

GMC guidance says GPs should fully participate in these reviews, it details that consent is not always needed as GPs can justify release “in the greater public good” or even if consent is refused. However, it is best practice to have patient consent or for them to know information has been released even if it is without their permission. Very occasionally the professionals around a patient may justify not informing the patient if it is likely to cause further distress or increased risk by attempting to gain consent. The Medical Defense Organisation’s can help professionals with these issues if you need help or support with interpretation of the GMC guidance.

GMC Guidance link: http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/children_guidance_56_63_child_protection.asp

GP practices will sometimes be provided with a signed consent form by the safeguarding board that may have established contact with the family. Alternatively the GP practice themselves may be asked to gain consent to release the medical records.

If you are asked to contact the family to gain consent please use this document as a guide to explain that the process is highly confidential, designed to improve care for other patients in the future, required by law and always anonymous in any publication.

Please contact the safeguarding team if you have further questions.

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