



Education Safeguarding Service Guidance

Safeguarding Children - Information and Record Keeping

The purpose of this document is to enable the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure that all safeguarding information is stored in a safe and appropriate manner but is also accessible to the DSL and any Deputy DSLs. It is in addition to the Education Safeguarding Service model Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

DfE guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* highlights the importance of children receiving the right help at the right time and that research and serious case reviews have repeatedly shown the dangers of failing to take effective action; and cites poor record keeping as an example of poor practice. High quality contemporaneous record keeping is essential in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Isolated records of safeguarding concerns (e.g. green forms) submitted by staff to the DSL, which do not lead to other processes and the generation of additional documentation (e.g. early help assessments or referrals to Children's Social Care) do not necessitate the DSL opening a separate safeguarding file. The DSL should ensure they record their response to every record of concern (e.g. completing the reverse side of green forms) and then store the record securely, either in the child's separately named section of a 'green form' storage file or within an electronic recording system if the school/setting has adopted such a system. All such records should be the subject of ongoing monitoring by the DSL to ensure that concerns are not escalating in seriousness or forming an accumulated pattern that may necessitate further action such as the provision of early help or referral to Children's Social Care.

A separate individual child's safeguarding file should be opened when a significant number of records of concern have been submitted; and/or as soon as additional documentation is generated, e.g. written correspondence with parents or other agencies, early help assessments, referrals to Children's Social Care.

This document seeks to answer the following questions:

- What kind of information should be recorded?
- How should notes and reports be made?
- Where should safeguarding information be stored?
- Who should have access to safeguarding information?
- How long should safeguarding information be retained for?
- What should happen to the information when a child leaves the school/setting?
- What would an auditor look for in a good safeguarding file?

1.0 What kind of information should be recorded?

- 1.1 If a referral is made to MASH or the Police, a completed Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) should be submitted to MASH within 24 hours. The school/setting should retain a copy, which should be stored securely in the child's individual child protection file. Copies should not be sent to the Education Safeguarding Service unless there is a specific reason for doing so.
- 1.2 Safeguarding includes taking effective action to promote a child's welfare at the earliest possible opportunity. By no means all safeguarding issues or action taken to promote a child's welfare will be deemed child protection concerns or activities. If those principles are embedded in the culture of a school or setting, a large proportion of records of safeguarding concerns will not be child protection concerns as such and will not necessitate a child protection referral. If concerns are identified and acted upon early, most are likely to be addressed through pastoral care arrangements and early help processes. However, full and robust records must be made of all concerns. Assumptions should not be made by staff that their observations or concerns are not serious enough to warrant recording; or do or do not constitute child protection issues.

A record should be made of any observation, comment by a child, overheard conversation, hearsay and 'nagging doubt' that might constitute a safeguarding issue. All staff should be expected to make a record of any such concern using a green form or the school/setting's chosen safeguarding recording system. Such observations/concerns may not appear to an individual member of staff to be very significant in isolation but must be submitted to a DSL, who is best placed to consider them alongside and in the context of other information known about the child, i.e. to form a 'jigsaw' picture of the child's circumstances and lived experience and determine the appropriate response.

- 1.3 If a separate safeguarding file is opened for an individual child, the file should have a front sheet, which should contain the child's full name, date of birth, address and information about family members (use cream 'Form B'). For example, if John Smith has a sister called Jane Brown, it should be made clear on the file what their relationship is. It would also be good practice to cross-reference files when more than one child in a family has an individual safeguarding file. If any piece of information is lifted from a file for some reason, a note should be placed in the file indicating where the information is and who has it.
- 1.4 To help with the continuity of a case it is also good practice to include a Key Events/Chronology Sheet in the front of the file (use white 'Form A').

Examples of key events that should be included in a chronology are:

- Date safeguarding file started
- Date when any safeguarding concern record (e.g. a green form) is added to the file
- Dates of any referrals, including referrals to the MASH; and dates when copies of MARFs are added to the file
- Dates of outcome reports

- Dates when minutes of any child protection conference are placed on file both initial and review conferences
- Dates when minutes of any other meetings are placed on file, e.g. early help meetings, strategy meetings, core group meetings, child in need meetings, child looked after meetings
- Dates of all correspondence including Emails and letters
- Date when any school reports are submitted
- Dates of any absences from school – authorised, unauthorised and unexplained (a record of action taken should be included in the file)
- Monitoring records (see 5.4)
- Dates of all face to face and telephone discussions with partner agencies/ colleagues/ parents

Please also see the appendix 'Guidance for compiling chronologies'

- 1.5 If more than one safeguarding file exists in relation to an individual child, this should be noted on each file. Also, each file should be dated and should indicate how many volumes there are, e.g. 'January 2018, Vol. 1 of 3'.

2.0 How should safeguarding records be made?

- 2.1 It is impossible to say, at the time of creating a safeguarding record, who will eventually have access to it, or when or for what purpose. It may be consulted months or even years after it was written. Always bear in mind that someone who is a complete stranger to you and your school/setting may need to read your record at some stage in the future. Therefore records should always be made with an expectation that parents/carers may see them, they may be appended to a safeguarding referral to Children's Social Care, they may be read in multi-agency safeguarding meetings about the child and – in occasional circumstances – they may be submitted as written evidence in Court proceedings. A court may direct that school records including safeguarding records are disclosed in Court proceedings, meaning that all parties including parents/carers will then have access to them.

- 2.2 Handwritten safeguarding records (including records of incidents and disclosures) should be clearly legible and written in black ink. All records must contain the following:

- Name and date of birth of the child concerned (create separate records for each child who is the subject of a concern, e.g. where more than one child is involved in an incident and that gives rise to concern about more than one child)
- Date and time of the record being made
- Printed name & signature of person making the record
- Job title of person making the record
- A factual account of what happened and the location where the incident took place (include the actual words spoken by the child or any adult involved *in quotation marks* here if possible)
- A note of any other people involved or who were present and may have witnessed the incident giving rise to concern

- The professional opinion of the member of staff creating the record based on their factual account (e.g. 'Sam ran and hid under the table when his mother arrived to take him home and clung to me when I tried to encourage him to come out. *He appeared to be frightened.*')
- Time and date information was passed to DSL; and time and date when DSL received or first read the information
- DSL analysis of the concern, including contextualisation with other information already known
- Any advice sought and from whom
- Action taken including any referrals; and any future plans, e.g. monitoring and review
- Any other agencies consulted or informed

2.3 Try to avoid specialist jargon (e.g. 'he is at level 2') which someone from another agency would not necessarily understand.

2.4 A continuation sheet can be used for any section of the record. Indicate on the form that a continuation sheet is attached. On the continuation sheet identify the name of the child, date of the concern being recorded and signature of person making the record.

NOTE: Records must be made as soon as possible, and certainly on the same day of the incident giving rise to concern.

It is IMPORTANT that all safeguarding records are:

- Factual, clearly recording what was seen, smelled and heard
- Record children's words using quotation marks where possible
- Contemporaneous

2.5 Upon receipt of a safeguarding record, the DSL should first check that it is legible, compliant with this guidance and defensible. If it is not, it is important that the DSL ensures that the member of staff amends the record or completes a replacement record that meets the required standard with minimal delay.

2.6 The DSL must then record their analysis of the record submitted to them and the actions taken as a result, e.g. ask staff to monitor the child's welfare, speak to parents, discuss with colleague DSL's, take external advice, initiate an early help process, consult MASH, submit a referral. If the school/setting uses green forms, this will be accomplished by completing the reverse side of the form. If the DSL is using a secure database for child protection records they should ensure the record is completed including information as above.

2.6 Reports for child protection conferences, core groups etc. should follow the same principles and guidance as stated above.

3.0 Where should safeguarding information be stored?

- 3.1 The safeguarding file should contain all reports, notes and correspondence referring to the child. It should be kept in one secure place, e.g. a locked filing cabinet in the Head's/ DSL's office. However, the filing cabinet must also be accessible to Deputy DSL's in the absence of the Head or DSL. Files on extended family members should be cross-referenced.
- 3.2 A note or symbol (e.g. a blue star) should be placed on the cover of the school file for the child, indicating that there is a safeguarding file relating to the child. All staff who may need to consult a child's school file should be made aware of what the symbol means and who to consult if they see it.

4.0 Who should have access to safeguarding information?

- 4.1 Access to information on a child's safeguarding file should be on a need-to-know basis, i.e. only the information necessary should be shared with the staff who need to have it in order for them to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and keep her/him safe. The DSL must decide what can be shared on a case-by-case basis. The confidentiality of the child and family should be respected as far as possible but the welfare of the child is paramount. It would be unlikely that every member of staff needs to know the details of a safeguarding case. Generally speaking, the closer the day-to-day contact with the child, the more likely the need to know an outline of the case.
- 4.2 It is good practice to share any school report to a safeguarding meeting, e.g. a child protection conference, with the parent(s) before the meeting takes place. All information must be shared with Children's Social Care Services and/or the Police, as appropriate, where there is concern that a child is at risk of significant harm.
- 4.3 Confidential information such as safeguarding information about a child can be shared with the active consent of the subject, i.e. the child if they are of an age to give or withhold consent or, if the child is too young to consent, a parent or other adult with parental responsibility. Where there is evidence of significant harm or a likelihood of significant harm, information can be shared with statutory agencies, i.e. Children's Social Care and the Police, without consent. Safeguarding information should otherwise not be disclosed to other agencies or third parties without consent, a Court order, in conjunction with a legitimate Police investigation or when a clear lawful basis for sharing exists. In relation to Police investigations, a letter of request should be obtained from a Police officer of no lower rank than Sergeant (i.e. an officer with supervisory/ managerial responsibility) before access to records is provided. Original records should not be taken off school/setting premises by third parties except subject to a Court order. Where there is a dispute or any doubt, it is best to seek legal advice or advice from the Education Safeguarding Service.

5.0 Monitoring the child

- 5.1 If a child is made the subject of a Child Protection Plan, the DSL must be informed immediately if she/he was not in attendance at the child protection conference.

- 5.2 If the school/setting is required to monitor a child as part of any safeguarding process, the school/setting should seek clarity about what needs to be monitored and should ask for that to be confirmed in writing, for instance in a child protection, child in need or early help plan. Monitoring may include attendance, punctuality, hygiene, physical presentation including dress, emotional wellbeing, behaviour, curriculum engagement etc. All staff who have direct contact with the child should be informed about what they need to monitor although it may not be appropriate to tell any or all of those staff that the monitoring is part of a child protection or other formal plan. The DSL should determine what level of information staff require in order to undertake the monitoring required. Staff should record any observations or concerns in relation to monitoring using the school/setting's chosen safeguarding recording system (e.g. green forms).
- 5.3 The DSL should report about monitoring requirements to review child protection conferences, core groups, child in need meetings, early help meetings etc with reference to safeguarding records completed as in paragraph 5.2.

6.0 How long should safeguarding information be retained for?

- 6.1 The Children's Social Care Service will retain any information shared with that service for many years.
- 6.2 When a child moves to another school/setting, there is no need to retain a copy of any records in the safeguarding file unless, in the opinion of the DSL, there are exceptional reasons for doing so, such as the records falling within the scope of the IICSA. Reasons for retaining information would also include the need to refer to copies of some documents in order to prepare a report for an upcoming child protection conference or a statement of evidence as part of Court proceedings. Any such copies retained should be destroyed as soon as the reason for retaining them has passed.
- 6.3 Individual safeguarding files should be maintained for children who are siblings and may live in the same household. Copies of any reports generated by the school/setting that refer to more than one child in a family should be placed on each of the individual files for any children who are subjects of the report. Documents received by the school/setting that relate to more than one child in a family or household (e.g. minutes of child protection conferences, core group or child in need meetings) can be placed on one child's file only but must be copied and placed on siblings' files when the first child moves to another school.

7.0 What should happen to the information when a child leaves the school/setting?

- 7.1 When a child moves to another school/setting, the safeguarding file should be transferred securely in full under separate cover from the child's general school/setting record file. It should be marked '*Confidential, Addressee Only*', and should be addressed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead of the receiving school/setting. A receipt should be obtained and retained. These arrangements apply to all children (i.e. anybody under 18 years) attending a school or education

setting including an FE College. All safeguarding records relating to a child should be retained at the last school/setting attended before the child's 18th birthday until the child's 25th birthday.

NB records relating to safeguarding allegations against any adult that works with children must be retained indefinitely until further notice and must not be destroyed as they may be required by the IICSA.

7.2 All safeguarding records relating to a child must be transferred to the next school/setting attended as described in paragraph 7.1. That includes one-off or isolated concerns that may not have led to referrals to statutory services or any formal child protection action, e.g. a single green form or electronically recorded concern. Information shared with or referred to Children's Social Care Services will be forwarded to another Local Authority's Children's Social Care Services team in the event that the child moves while still subject of a child protection plan.

7.3 If a child leaves the school/setting without notice of their destination school/setting, the standard procedures for reporting a child missing education to the Local Authority must be followed. If a child is the subject a Child Protection Plan, the key worker and Independent Reviewing Officer (chair of the child protection conference) must be informed immediately. If the child does not have a child protection plan but there are current child protection concerns that have already been referred to Children's Social Care Services, the allocated social worker must be informed. In their absence, the duty social worker in the relevant team must be informed. If the referral is still being processed by the MASH, a social worker in the MASH must be informed.

8.0 Auditing child protection files held by the school/setting

8.1 The DSL should, as good practice, undertake a periodic audit of the school/setting's safeguarding files to ensure that robust records are being maintained in accordance with statutory guidance and this guidance.

8.2 The audit should ensure that all of the following are in place:

- The file is cross-referenced with siblings or other family members who are also pupils at the school/setting, as appropriate.
- A note or symbol on the child's general school record file indicating that the DSL holds a safeguarding file in respect of the child.
- A front sheet containing the child's name, address, date of birth, names of all family members, home address and contact number of key professionals in external agencies, e.g. social worker, early help officer, CAMHS practitioner, YJS practitioner.
- A chronology highlighting all key events as in paragraph 1.4 of this guidance.
- The file is cross-referenced to any additional files, as appropriate.

- All records and notes in the file are either written in black ink and legible handwriting; or are typed; or are contained in the school/setting's chosen electronic record system.
- All records are defensible, i.e. they will not be vulnerable to legitimate parental complaint or censure when scrutinised by external agencies or within any Court proceedings. Legitimate parental complaint would be in relation to safeguarding records that contain pejorative comments about a child or parent; badly written/illegible records; or spurious records including false or malicious records or non-safeguarding issues being recorded using the school's safeguarding record form/system.
- Each individual record will inform and support appropriate safeguarding action for as long after the record was written as is necessary, i.e. the record clearly tells the story of the concern/incident/disclosure.
- Every record of concern contains the name and date of birth of the child it is about.
- Every record of concern contains the signature, printed name and job title of the member of staff submitting the record; and the names and job titles of all members of staff involved in or present during the observation/incident/disclosure.
- Every record of concern contains the time and date (including year) when it was written; and the time, date (including year) and place of the recorded observation/incident/disclosure that took place.
- Every record of concern contains a factual account of the observation/incident/disclosure.
- There is evidence of professional opinion and analysis both by staff recording concerns and the DSL.
- Every record of concern contains a note of the action taken; and with whom information was shared.

APPENDIX

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR COMPILING CHRONOLOGIES **(WSCB 2008 – awaiting new guidance from Warwickshire Safeguarding)**

1. Introduction

- ★ A chronology is a succinct summary and overview of the significant dates and events in a child's life.
- ★ A significant event is an incident that impacts on the child's safety and welfare, circumstances or home environment. This will involve inevitably a professional decision and / or judgement based upon the child and family's individual circumstances.
- ★ A chronology provides a sequential story of significant events in a family's history whilst inter-weaving information about emotional and / or relationship difficulties.
- ★ It contributes to an emerging picture based on fact and interaction of a case, ie current information is understood in the context of previous information and helps inform professional judgement through a consideration of the patterns and relationship of the events and changes in the chronology.
- ★ It should be used as an analytical tool to help understand the impact both immediate and cumulative of events and changes on a child or young person's developmental progress.
- ★ The relevance / significance of an event can change over time. An historical event which appeared insignificant or irrelevant may become highly relevant and significant in the light of further information of more recent origin.

2. Guidelines

- 2.1 Children and young people are most effectively safeguarded if professionals work together and share information. Single factors in themselves are often perceived to be relatively harmless. However, if they multiply and compound one another, the consequences can be serious, and on occasions, devastating.
- 2.2 Professional judgement is required to decide on the relevance for a particular child / family of an event.
- 2.3 Information recorded in a chronology should be relevant and succinct so as not to be lost in a mass of insignificant and irrelevant events.
- 2.4 Chronologies are not only a means of organising and merging information. They enable practitioners to gain a more accurate picture of the whole case and highlight gaps and missing details that require further assessment and identification.

- 2.5 A chronology for a child, young person may start with events that occurred prior to his or her birth if of significance.
- 2.6 Chronologies should accurately reflect family circumstances, recording both positive and negative factors.

3. Multi-Agency Child Protection Chronology

- 3.1 It provides a mechanism through which information can be systematically shared and merged, and enables agencies to identify the history of a family, providing invaluable information about a child's life experience.
- 3.2 It can reveal risks, concerns, patterns and themes, strengths and weaknesses within a family, and can identify previous periods of professional involvement / support and the effectiveness / failure of previous intervention. It informs the overall assessment regarding the care-givers ability and motivation to change.
- 3.3 The chronology is only one means of collating information and will need supplementing by reports that draw out messages from the chronology, ensure facts are agreed and the overall pattern seen.

4. Significant Information / Events

There are a number of key events or incidents which should be recorded and depending upon the nature of the risks and harm, these may vary from case to case.

Examples include:-

- ★ Contacts or referrals about the child / family.
- ★ Assessments undertaken.
- ★ Strategy discussions / meetings and Child Protection Conferences.
- ★ Child Protection record enquiries and Section 47 Investigations.
- ★ Non-accidental injury and significant injury or neglect events.
- ★ Attendance / admittance to hospital.
- ★ Births, deaths, serious illness of both adults and children.
- ★ House moves.
- ★ Changes in family composition, including new partners, separations, non-family members moving into family home.
- ★ Criminal proceedings and outcomes.

- ★ Civil proceedings involving family.
- ★ Change in school, school attendance, school exclusions.
- ★ Change in GP.
- ★ Self referrals and any referrals to other agencies / teams.
- ★ Court proceedings and changes in legal status, including periods when child became Looked After by the Local Authority.
- ★ Police logs detailing relevant incidents at family home or in relation to family members, such as reported incidents of domestic violence, drunken behaviour of carers.
- ★ Child abscondences / missing from home.
- ★ Attempted suicide or overdose of child, young person or family member.
- ★ Support offered to family.
- ★ Events showing capacity of family to work in partnership and engage with professionals.
- ★ Frequent presence of unknown adults.
- ★ Any event in the child's life deemed to have a significant affect on them, such as separation from main carer leading to poor attachment.

5. Format for Recording Chronology (Using Template Provided by WSCB)

The format for sharing information will be as follows:-

Date	The date of the episode or event.
Name	The individual(s) involved in the episode or event.
Source	The Agency or individual sharing the information.
Episode/ Event	The significant piece of information.
Outcome	Any action taken in response to the event or episode.

6. Process for Updating the Chronology

- 6.1 The chronology will be started at the Strategy Discussion / meeting when a decision is made whether or not to initiate a child protection investigation. If a child is made subject to a Child Protection Plan following a Child Protection Conference, one of the requirements of the plan will be to keep the chronology up to date.
- 6.2 The chronology will be updated at the start of each core group meeting and recorded in the core group minutes on the agreed format by the key worker
- 6.3 The Operations Manager in the Children's Social Care Team is responsible for ensuring that chronologies are maintained and kept up to date and details added to the child's computerised record as well as included in the social worker's report to the Child Protection Review Conference.