



Child Protection Record Keeping Policy

Overview

Well-kept records provide an essential underpinning to good professional practice.

Safeguarding children and promoting their welfare is a whole school task. Ensuring all staff know when and how to record concerns about a child's welfare, however small or apparently insignificant is an essential part of the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) role. Good record keeping is an important part of a school's accountability to children and their families and will assist DSLs in meeting their key responsibility to respond appropriately to welfare concerns about children. Records should be factual, accurate, relevant, up to date and auditable. They should support monitoring, risk-assessment and planning for children and enable informed and timely decisions about any appropriate actions to be taken.

At Westwood with Iford School the Designated Child Protection Lead (DSL) is: Ian Rockey.

The Deputy Lead is: Sally Hannam.

General Principles

1. Good, up to date record keeping of concerns and action taken is essential for two main reasons:
 - It helps schools identify causes for concern at an early stage. Often it is only when a number of seemingly minor issues are taken as a whole that a safeguarding or child protection concern becomes clear;
 - It helps schools monitor and manage their safeguarding practices. Furthermore, in any inspection it will be important to provide evidence of robust and effective safeguarding policy and practice.
2. A record of a concern, suspicion or allegation should be made at the time or as soon as possible after the event. (N.B. It is not advisable to make a written record whilst a child is disclosing abuse, as this may deter the child from speaking).
3. Records should be factual, using the child's own words where a disclosure is made. Professional opinion can be given, but should be supported by stating the facts and observations upon which the opinions are based. (N.B. expressing an opinion as to whether the child is telling the truth is not helpful and can prejudice how a case proceeds).

4. All records should be dated and signed, with the name of the signatory clearly printed, and filed in chronological order.
5. The Wiltshire Model Concern Form Part A pro-forma is to be used for recording information/concerns and a *Safeguarding Overview Sheet* should be used when concerns are logged for the first time.
6. Any handwritten notes made immediately after the event, for example a disclosure, can act as evidence of them having been written at the time in any future court case. Therefore, these should not be destroyed if the details are recorded more formally at a later time, but instead kept securely attached to the child protection concern forms used by the school.
7. The common law of confidentiality, GDPR, Data Protection and Human Rights principles must be adhered to when obtaining, processing or sharing personal or sensitive information or records. In summary, the Data Protection Act requires that records should be accurate, relevant, kept up to date and securely and kept only for the retention period specified by the school for the purpose for which they were made.
8. It is important to make it clear to pupils that any disclosure they make will be treated with sensitivity but may need to be shared with other professionals if it is considered necessary to protect the child or someone else from harm.

How should schools keep child welfare and child protection records?

9. All records of child protection or child welfare concerns, disclosures or allegations are to be treated as sensitive information and should be kept together, securely and separate from the child's general school records. The information should be shared with all those who need to have it, whether to enable them to take appropriate steps to safeguard the pupil or to enable them to carry out their own duties, but it should not be shared wider than that.
10. These records must be stored in a secure (ie locked) easily accessible filing cabinet or cupboard, accessible through the Designated Child Protection Lead, Designated Deputy Lead or Governor.
11. A child protection file will be started for an individual pupil as soon as the school is aware of any child protection concerns about that pupil. This may arise in a number of ways eg:
 - a. If a member of staff raises a concern about the welfare or well-being of a pupil – this should be recorded in writing (see below for guidance)
 - b. If information is forwarded to the school by a previous school attended by the pupil
 - c. If the school is alerted by another agency (eg health; social care) of child protection concerns about that pupil
12. Members of staff should make a written account of any concern they have regarding the welfare or well-being of a pupil, using the school's pro forma. This record should be passed as soon as

possible to the Designated Child Protection Lead who will take appropriate action in accordance with local child protection procedures before the record being placed in the child's Child Protection file. Concerns which initially seem trivial may turn out to be vital pieces of information later, so it is important to give as much detail as possible. A concern raised may not progress further than a conversation with the Designated Teacher, or could lead to matters being heard in court. If there hasn't been a specific incident that causes concern, try to be specific about what it is that is making you feel worried

13. If the Designated Lead makes a referral to Social Care, this should be confirmed in writing in accordance with the Wiltshire Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership's Procedures
14. The pupil's child protection file should contain:
 - Any concerns recorded by staff
 - Any child protection information received from previous schools or other agencies
 - Copy of any referral by the Designated Lead to Social Care
 - In the case of a child on the Child Protection Register, notes of any Child Protection case conferences or Core Group Meetings etc.
 - If any information is removed from a file for any reason, a dated note must be placed in the file indicating who has taken it, why and when.

How long should the child protection record be kept?

15. The school should retain the record for as long as the pupil remains at the school. See para 18 below for guidance on records of school leavers.
16. If the pupil transfers to another school, the school must transfer the child protection file to the next school as set out below.
17. If the pupil is removed from the roll to be home educated, the school must copy the child protection file to the Local Authority covering the area where the child lives.
18. Current guidance from the Records Management Society is that when a pupil with a child protection record reaches statutory school leaving age, the last school attended should keep the child protection file until the pupil's 25th birthday. It should then be shredded.

Who should have access to child protection records or information?

School staff

19. The secure filing system should be easily available to the Designated Lead or their deputy or others as set out at para 10 above. A locked filing cabinet will usually be adequate.

20. It is highly unlikely that all members of staff need to know the details of a case, or that there should be widespread access to the records. Access to, and sharing of, information should be on a need-to-know basis, decided on a case-by-case basis. Consideration must also be given to *what* needs to be shared. Generally speaking, the closer the day-to-day contact with the child, the more likely the need to know an outline of the case. Essentially, if someone receives information *in her/his professional capacity* and the person giving that information *believes* it will be treated securely, and that belief is reasonable, then the recipient of the information will be under a duty to treat it securely.

Pupils and their parents

21. The child who is the subject of a child protection record has a right to access their personal record, unless to do so would affect their health or well-being or that of another person, or would be likely to prejudice an ongoing criminal investigation.
22. Parents (i.e. those with parental responsibility in law) are entitled to see their child's child protection file, on behalf of their child, with the same exceptions as apply to the child's right to access to the records. Note that an older pupil may be entitled to refuse access to their parents. The school should take advice about sharing information with parents if they have particular concerns about doing so. However, it is generally good practice to share all information held, unless there is a valid reason to withhold it, e.g. if to do so would place the child at risk of significant harm. If a parent makes a request to access the records on a child's behalf, this should be done in writing.

Other professionals

23. Child protection information should not ordinarily be shared with agencies other than Social Services, Health, the Police, or the LA – as described in local procedures. Generally, in terms of compliance with the Data Protection Act, obtaining informed consent of the subject would legitimise information sharing, however, this is not always practicable. Information should not be released to solicitors on request – always seek the advice of the LA's legal service in such cases.
24. References by name to children other than the pupil who is the subject of the record should be removed when disclosing records, unless consent is obtained from the individual/s concerned (or their parents/carer on their behalf). Care should be taken to ensure all identifying information is removed from the copy of the record to be shared.
25. If the record to be disclosed contains information about an adult professional, that information can be disclosed if it relates to the performance by that person of their job or other official duties e.g. a reference to a teacher in their teaching role or a school nurse in their nursing role. However, if the reference refers to that individual's private life, it should be removed (unless this relates to a child protection matter which is relevant to the record to be disclosed).

Transfer of Records

26. When a pupil transfers from one school to another, their child protection record (if any) should be forwarded to the new school without delay, separate from their main pupil file. Care must be taken to ensure confidentiality is maintained and the transfer process is as safe as possible.
27. Keep a copy of the child protection file until you have confirmation from the receiving school that they have received it. Once you have this confirmation, your copy should be shredded. You should keep a record of having received confirmation from the receiving school and of the date when you shredded your copy record.
28. If a pupil with a child protection record leaves your school without a forwarding address for home and new school inform your Education Welfare Officer without delay and enquiries will be made. If no contact is received from a new school within 10 school days, inform your EWO and pupil tracking procedures will be instigated if the child's whereabouts are still unknown.

Practice:

Guidance when making a record of a child protection incident or concern

- You won't know when making child protection note, who will eventually have access to it, or when. 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 may need to read your record at some stage in the future.
- Use the School's Pro-forma and fill in as fully as possible. In the case of disclosure, the record should include on a separate sheet:
 - as full an account as possible of what the child said;
 - an account of questions put to the child;
 - time and place of disclosure;
 - who was present at the time of disclosure;
 - the demeanour of the child; where the child was taken and where returned to at the end of disclosure
- You should identify the source of your information e.g. 'Ms Terry, a teaching assistant, told me that...'. Or 'I saw X in the playground at break time...'
- Information should be factual or based on fact. Record what you saw, heard etc. and try not to be vague or woolly (e.g. 'X was crying and rocking' rather than 'X was upset').
- Distinguish clearly between fact and your professional opinion. When recording your professional opinion, make it clear what your opinion is based on (e.g. 'X ran and hid under the table when his mother arrived to take him home, and clung to me when I tried to get him out. He appeared to be frightened.')

- Make a note of what you have done with the information (e.g. 'I consulted the Headteacher, Mr X, and he said he would...')
- Try to avoid specialist jargon (e.g. 'he is on SEN SA+') which someone from another agency would not necessarily understand.

Frequently asked questions

Why is recording important?

We have a statutory duty to promote the well-being and safety of every child who attends our school. This is a whole school task. Since staff have differing roles in school and we observe children in a range of settings and activities throughout the school day. Children may show or tell us that something is wrong in a variety of ways. We all have an important role to play in helping to identify welfare concerns for children and possible indicators of abuse or neglect at an early stage. For some children a "one off" serious incident or concern will come to your attention and you will have no doubt that this you must immediately record and report this. Most often however it is the accumulation of a number of small incidents, events or observations – "the jigsaw" - that provide the evidence that a child is being harmed. It is vital therefore that any concern you have for a child's welfare however small is recorded and passed to the DSL.

What is a "Child Protection Incident / Welfare Concern"?

As a general rule anything that you consider unusual or out of the ordinary for the child constitutes a concern. Mostly these will arise in one or more of the following areas:

- The child's behaviour changes or a particular behaviour is observed
- The child has a physical injury
- The child tells you something has happened to them
- The child's physical presentation
- You receive information from or observe unusual behaviour in a parent

Why can't I just pass on my concern verbally?

It is important that the person who has the concern gives a first-hand account of this so that there is a clear and accurate record of what has been seen, heard etc. A record written by you will ensure that there is no misinterpretation of your concern or that it can be overlooked or forgotten.

How and what do I record?

Our school's Child Protection Incident / Welfare Concern form can be found in the staff room and above the photocopier. If you are in any doubt ask you Designated Child Protection Lead (DSL) (Ian Rocky)

What happens to the record once I've written it?

One of the main purposes of recording is to make sure that the school's Designated Child Protection Lead (DSL) is able to respond properly to concerns for children. The DSL will decide what action is necessary in response to your concern. Actions they take will of course depend on how serious and urgent the concern is. These can range however from a decision to keep a close eye on the child in school to referring the child to Children's Services Social Care so that they can undertake an assessment of the child's safety. The concern form you have completed will be kept by the DSL in a confidential file.

Who will see this? Will parents see my record?

Information relating to children's protection and welfare will be shared on a strict "need to know" basis and in line with Wiltshire Child Protection Procedures that we have a duty to work within. Neither the parent nor the pupil has an automatic right of access to child protection records and usually, the actual record will not be shared with parents. However we ask you to write this in a way that if we were asked to release school records perhaps in a child protection conference or by a Court, the record is a fair and factual account of an incident or event. One of the most common responses by the DSL to concerns raised by staff for children will be to share these with parents with the purpose of working with them to understand and address the issue of concern. The details of your record therefore may be presented verbally to parents. Sometimes your concern will be one of many. If the DSL is worried that talking to parents might create a risk to any staff member's safety they will not do this but seek the advice of colleagues from the LA.

Will the record be destroyed once the issue is addressed or the child leaves school?

No. Past concerns for children and what happened in response to these can be very important information for staff who may have concerns for the child at a later time. The DFE guide us in the retention and transfer of safeguarding records. The DSL is responsible for passing these on under confidential cover to the DSL in the child's new school when the child leaves us. For secondary schools, the records are kept until the child is 25 years old.

What care is needed with informal notes and communications between teachers?

Teachers may well have their own means of recording that serves as a day-to-day working record. There may also be communications between job-share partners. When formal measures are initiated, any record becomes sensitive and should be protectively marked, and treated with the utmost confidence. Practitioners are advised that they must take care to ensure that no sensitive material is communicated by insecure means. This would include email, but also notes left for colleagues.

Date of policy last review: November 2019

Date of next review: November 2020