



**safeguarding
adults at risk**
a cumbria partnership

Guidance Paper 2

Record Keeping

September 2013

Cumbria Safeguarding Adults Board

Guidance Paper 2

Record Keeping

Good record keeping is a fundamental part of good practice. It is particularly important to make clear and detailed written and/or electronic records when abuse or neglect is alleged or witnessed and it is important to be as accurate as possible.

General Advice

Individual organisations will have their own recording/filing system which all staff should be familiar with and follow - this guidance should be used in addition to this rather than instead of.

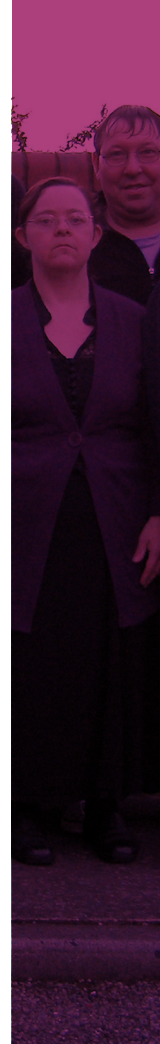
- This guidance relates to all information recorded in relation to safeguarding adults work. It applies to records entered on computer, as well as those written on paper.
- It contains basic general principles.
- All practice, including recording, must reflect the requirements of the Human Rights Act and the Data Protection Act and organisational guidance on compliance with this legislation.

The purpose of recording is to:

- comply with legislative requirements
- demonstrate that statutory and policy requirements have been met
- provide evidence of work that has been undertaken
- demonstrate accountability in decision making
- give an account for service users of their history, significant issues or events and their involvement with services
- help workers to make decisions in assessment, care planning, reviewing and evaluation
- allow monitoring of change
- enable workers to measure whether or not goals or aims are achieved
- provide a reference and reminder for the practitioner
- communicate information about a case to other workers
- show how decisions have been reached and in what order
- enable managers to monitor quality of service

Content of Records

- Whilst containing all essential information, records should be as concise as possible and avoid duplication.
- They should contain only sufficient information to enable the reader to understand the significant points of the case.
- They should clearly distinguish between different types of information and indicate their source :
 - o what has been observed by the worker
 - o what has been said by the adult at risk or others
 - o information from other sources, e.g. documents, letters, records of other agencies, telephone conversations
 - o the worker's opinion, judgement or analysis
 - o the worker's recommendations or plan
 - o descriptions of action taken



Records must be:

Timely

- All records should be completed and placed on file within 48 hours of a contact, communication or event.
- If harm or injury has occurred, or potential harm or risk is identified, records must be completed the following working day, and any rough notes held on file until the record can be updated.

Accurate

- If significant information is not known this must be indicated and the missing information completed as soon as possible.
- Estimated dates, ages or times should be indicated.
- Names and addresses must be spelled correctly.
- The word order of names, the name the service user prefers and any other names they have been known by must be checked.
- The full names of family members must be asked for, not inferred from other names in the family.
- People referred to must be clearly identified. If a name other than the name on the person's birth or marriage certificate name is used, then this must be explained so that the reader can understand who is being referred to.
- Each record entry must be dated with the date of recording and signed by the author. If the question of whether the recording was made contemporaneously may be an issue (e.g. in later Court proceedings), the time of recording should also be noted.
- The author's name must be printed the first time it appears, and every time if the signature is illegible. When the line manager had read a record, this must be confirmed by their name, designation and signature.
- All sources of information and messages must be clearly recorded with dates and (if required) times of receipt.
- What was said by an adult at risk or other person must be clearly attributed to them. Actual words should be indicated in quotation marks.

Full

- Dates and times of significant events must be recorded.
- The record of each contact must indicate, as relevant :
 - the type of contact
 - the purpose of the contact
 - who was present and who was seen
 - who was expected to be present but was not
 - the significant points of what was said and by whom
 - the author's observations of significant actions, behaviour or interaction between people present
 - the outcome
 - any actions (including plans or decisions) which were required as a result of the contact
- Records must include:
 - details of the information obtained, its sources and the process by which it was obtained
 - analysis or assessment of the information, including consideration of the needs of the people involved, any risk factors and the range of options available, and the reasons which lead to the conclusions drawn or decisions reached
 - an account of the decisions taken and the person(s) responsible
 - Copies of all correspondence and key documents must always be placed on the file. The service user's views and involvement in the decisions taken, along with any disagreements, must be recorded.

Concise and Relevant

- The information recorded must relate directly to the tasks being undertaken.
- Information should only be recorded if it is significant for:
 - o the outcome
 - o the current or future needs of the service user or
 - o the needs of those whose lives affect them, or
 - o the provision of evidence of involvement (e.g. for legal claims), or
 - o management of the work undertaken with or for the adult at risk
- Negative or derogatory descriptions or personal feelings about individuals must not be recorded.

Clearly understandable

- All records must be written as if they will be read by the service user, regardless of whether or not the service user wishes to do so.
- Language used should be clear and understandable, without jargon or technical terms. If these are essential they should be explained
- Abbreviations or sets of initials should be avoided, or if they are used, they must be explained in full the first time they are used.
- The person writing the record and any other persons signing the record must be identified beside the signature by printing full name, job title and location at the end of the first record. After this the signature can be used alone, unless it is not clear, in which case the full name must also be printed.
- People referred to in the record must be identified in full the first time they are mentioned, and it must be clear who they are thereafter.

Presentation and Layout

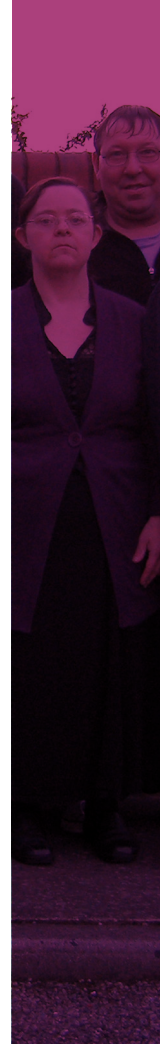
- Paper records should be typed.
- Each record where decisions are made or action planned should include a brief summary of action or recommendations
- Rough notes, working notes should only be kept on file until they can be entered in the record, and should then be removed
- All records relating to Safeguarding Adults work must be stored in the confidential section of the service users file or on any computer based system in operation

Style

- Many different styles of writing are permissible, and there is no one “correct” style. It is important that records communicate clearly what the author intended. It is also important to write so that the adult concerned will understand what is written.
- The meaning must be clear, note form or bullet points are acceptable.
- Recording should be in a reasonably formal style, and casual or colloquial expressions should be avoided. A more formal style will be necessary in some circumstances, e.g. court reports or Safeguarding Meeting notes.

Records should therefore:

- be written in plain and straightforward language
- contain explanations of any technical terms or abbreviations
- avoid unnecessary detail
- highlight significant points



Information from Other Sources

Information may be recorded which is gained from:

Conversation or discussion in person or by telephone

- The person providing the information must be named and identified. The date (and if required, time) when the information was provided must be recorded. The reasons for seeking or providing the information should be recorded.
- The content of the discussion should be summarised, with significant points highlighted, and fact distinguished from opinion. Any actual words quoted should be indicated by quotation marks.
- Inappropriate, or abusive language should also be entered in quotation marks.

Correspondence by letter, fax, email

- Paper communications should be filed in the appropriate place in the file, or scanned and uploaded onto the electronic record and referred to in the running records under the date of receipt.
- Printouts of email correspondence should be included if it is relevant only to the service user.

Supervision discussions

- Case discussions in supervision should be entered on the appropriate supervision record and placed on file in the appropriate place in the running record.
- Advice given by the line manager outside formal supervision should if possible be recorded on the appropriate supervision form. It is likely that in many cases this will not be practicable, and so a summary of the discussion should be made in the running record as soon as possible and countersigned by the line manager.
- Supervision records should be referred to in the running record under the date of discussion

The Data Protection Principles

The 8 Principles contained within the Data Protection Act, 1998 can be summarised as follows :

1. Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully
2. Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful processes, and shall not be processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes
3. Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which they are processed
4. Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
5. Personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes
6. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under the Act
7. Appropriate technical and organizational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of data, accidental loss of, damage or destruction to personal data
8. Personal data shall not be transferred to a country outside the European Economic Area unless that country has adequate protection for subjects of data

When writing and maintaining any records relating to allegations of abuse and neglect you should consider the following:

- In some circumstances it would not be appropriate to be taking notes at the time the allegation is being made. Make a written report as soon as possible afterwards. Try to remember what the person said, using their own words and phrases;
- In some circumstances it may be possible to take notes at the time the disclosure is being made. Try and note down what the person actually says, using their own words and phrases;

- In your written report factual information should be clearly separated from expression of opinion;
- Use a pen or biro with black ink if you possibly can;
- Sign, date and time your report;
- Be aware that your report may be required later as part of a legal action or disciplinary procedure or litigation claim;
- During the investigation phase it is particularly important that notes are kept on all interviews/telephone calls/information gathered;
- In all recording, proper consideration must be given to the requirements of the Data Protection legislation;

A note from the Police and Crown Prosecution Service regarding record keeping and 'Third Party Material':

All agencies need to be aware that where there is a criminal prosecution the Police and CPS are required to check whether there is any material that is not in the possession of the Police which may have relevance to the case. For example, health and/or social work records may contain information which is either of evidential value or may be undermining to the prosecution. If this material is of evidential value, the Police may need to take further statements. If the material is undermining or may be of assistance to the defence case, the prosecution team will need access to the material, which may then need to be disclosed to the defence.

If the owner of that material does not consent to this, a court order will have to be sought for disclosure.

With this in mind, it is essential that staff in all organizations maintain accurate records at all times.