



## **Education and Young People's Services Directorate**

# **GUIDELINES FOR SAFEGUARDING RECORD KEEPING IN SCHOOLS**

**June 2015**

# Contents

These guidelines include the following areas of practice with exemplar forms as appropriate. The forms are also available electronically from your Area Education Safeguarding Adviser or the Kent Education Learning and Skills Information website

<http://www.kelsi.org.uk/support-for-children-and-young-people/child-protection-and-safeguarding/safeguarding-policies-and-guidance>

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**These Guidelines were approved by the KSCB Safeguarding in Education Sub Group in 2009 following a recommended action from a serious case review. They have been reviewed on an annual basis since then.**

## **1 Introduction:**

- 1.1 The EYPS Education Safeguarding Team has produced these guidelines for staff in schools with Designated Child Protection responsibility to assist them in establishing and maintaining record keeping systems that support effective safeguarding practice. The importance of good, clear child welfare and child protection record keeping has been repeatedly highlighted in many Serious Case Reviews, including the 2013 high profile enquiry into the death of Daniel Pelka. The document “Keeping Children Safe in Education” most recently published in March 2015 highlights the area of record keeping as a key task of the school’s Designated Safeguarding Lead or DSL (previously referred to in Kent Settings as the DCPC)
- 1.2 Promoting the welfare of and safeguarding children is a whole school task. Ensuring all staff know when and how to record concerns for a child’s welfare, however small or apparently insignificant is an essential part of the DSL 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 for children. Records should be factually accurate, relevant, up to date and auditable. They should support monitoring, risk-assessment and planning for children and enable informed and timely referrals to be made when necessary. A well maintained chronology is a fundamental part of good record keeping.

## **2 Establishing a standard school recording process**

- 2.1 The use of a standard “welfare concern” form for all staff irrespective of their role in school and an aide memoire to assist in its completion is strongly recommended. The exemplar (Appendix i) is designed to enable the school logo to be inserted and it is suggested that this is photocopied onto coloured paper to promote familiarisation and shared ownership of the school’s “concern form” (in these guidelines “the green form”). The form and aide memoire must be easily accessible to all staff and depending on the size and type of school should be available in a range of settings for example, the staff room, school office, Headteacher’s /DSL’s / Pastoral care staff offices.
- 2.2 You may find it helpful to use a whole staff meeting to introduce the form to staff. Ideally this should be in the context of a safeguarding training / raising awareness session. Where this is not possible, meetings of each

staff group e.g. teaching, classroom assistant, mid day supervision, domestic should be used. These meetings will provide an opportunity to remind staff of their safeguarding responsibilities and the expectations on them to report and record concerns. Some staff groups may already have a range of methods for recording information about children e.g. class-based notebooks or diaries. Meetings can be a useful forum for clarifying what you as the school's DSL would view as a "welfare concern". The aide memoire may be used to help with staff briefings.

- 2.3 It is acknowledged that many schools employ a range of "para professional" staff who hold specific pastoral care responsibilities and may have their own systems for recording their ongoing work with children and their families. It is especially important that DSLs are aware of these systems and establish processes for sharing information. In some cases it may be appropriate for pastoral care staff to provide copies of their records for inclusion in children's safeguarding / child protection files. In all cases where specific incidents or events arise, pastoral care staff must be aware of the need to complete the school's "welfare concern" form.
- 2.4 Staff should be guided in recording to be mindful of the possibility that this may be shared with others at some stage and in exceptional cases, the possibility that they may become evidence in court proceedings. It is therefore essential that Headteachers and DSLs ensure that such processes are in place and that staff are supervised appropriately in carrying out these arrangements.
- 2.5 It is also vital that Headteachers / DSLs notify staff of how they will respond to reported / recorded concerns. Staff need to feel empowered to seek clarification on why concerns have not been reported to the statutory agencies and if concerns remain then a consultation should be sought with your Area Safeguarding Adviser.

### **3. Recording Aide Memoire for staff**

- 3.1 Safeguarding children is a whole school task. All staff have an important role to play in helping to identify welfare concerns and possible indicators of abuse or neglect at an early stage. For some children a "one off" serious incident or concern may occur and you will have no doubt that this must be immediately recorded and reported. Most often however it is the accumulation of a number of small incidents, events or observations that provide the evidence of harm being caused to a child. It is vital therefore that any concern you have for a child's welfare however small is recorded and passed to the DSL. All concerns must be recorded on the Safeguarding Concerns form (Appendix i) which is included in the Appendices. If you are in any doubt, consult .....

### **3.2 What is a “welfare concern”?**

Concerns may arise in one or more of the following areas:

- The child’s behaviour
- The child has a physical injury
- The child makes a disclosure or allegation
- The child’s physical presentation
- Information from or observation of behaviour of a parent

### **3.3 What do I record?**

Using the safeguarding form ensure

- This is dated, signed and your details are legible
- The incident / event / observation of concern is described clearly and concisely
- This is written using straightforward language and fact and opinion are differentiated.
- If recording a disclosure, the child’s own words are recorded and any questions you may have asked are included
- Physical marks and injuries are recorded on a body map where appropriate
- Any action you have taken

### **3.4 How to record actions taken in response to staff concerns**

When a welfare concern form is passed to you it is important that you check this is sufficiently detailed and has been dated and signed by the staff member who has reported the concern. If a body map has been completed or there are any other documents referred to in the record ensure these are attached and where appropriate are also dated and signed.

3.5 It is important that you make a record of the action you take in response to every welfare concern form passed to you. The level of detail of this record will clearly depend on the nature and seriousness of the concern but may include

- Requests to staff for monitoring specific aspects of the child’s presentation, behaviour, attendance etc
- Discussions and telephone calls (with colleagues, parents and children / young people and other agencies or services)
- Professional consultations

- Letters sent and received
  - Referral forms (both for external and education-based services)
- 3.6 Either of the two exemplars (Appendices ii & iii) can be used for your record. As with the Welfare concern form these can be personalised to your school by inserting the school name and logo.
- 4 When and how to start safeguarding / child protection records**
- 4.1 Once a welfare concern has been passed to you and you have made a record of the action you have taken in response to this, these documents require storage in a separate child protection / safeguarding filing system. **This is regardless of whether formal child protection procedures have been initiated.** For some children this single record will be the only concern you hold for them over their time in school. For others, further information will be brought to you often from a variety of sources over time.
- 4.2 An effective method for storing single or infrequent records of concerns is to file these in alphabetically divided ring binder files. It may be helpful for larger / busier schools to use separate files for each Year group. This system is particularly recommended for Primary schools since this will assist you at the end of the Academic Year with meeting your responsibility to transfer records when children leave the school.
- 4.3 A stand-alone individual file for a child must be started when
- Concerns for the child and consequently records of these and actions in school are increasing
  - The child has been referred to Specialist Children's Services
  - You have been made aware of the involvement of Specialist Children's Services with the child / family and are contributing to multi agency assessments
- 4.4 Where concerns relate to more than one child from the same family at the school a separate file for each child should be created. Common records e.g child protection conference minutes should be duplicated for each file where appropriate.
- 4.5 When an individual file is started it is helpful to use the front sheet (Appendix iv) to enable key information to be easily accessed. It is also recommended that the pupil's general school record is marked in some

way to indicate the presence of a separate confidential file. A coloured sticker is one means of doing this.



## **5 What records should be included in a child's safeguarding file?**

- All school welfare concern forms
- Any notes initially recorded in the form of notebooks or diaries
- Records of discussions, telephone calls and meetings (with colleagues, other agencies or services, parents and children / young people)
- Professional consultations
- Letters sent and received
- Referral forms (both for external and education-based services).
- Minutes of meetings (copies for each child as appropriate)
- Formal plans linked to the child (e.g. Child Protection Plan)

5.1 In cases where information is held in this variety of formats it may be helpful to use a ring binder file and organise this on a 'modular' basis for ease of reference i.e. sections titled

- School records
- Letters
- Multi agency records
- Health

## **6 Chronologies**

6.1 The importance of understanding concerns for a child in the context of history, time-lines and other known information cannot be underestimated. Chronologies are central to this process and it is strongly recommended that these are completed on an ongoing basis as the case progresses. In addition to aiding assessment, a chronology will serve as an important record of school actions and when attached to an Inter Agency Referral form can provide evidence for the reason for the referral.

6.2 A chronology should list specific and significant incidents, events and actions taken in relation to the child and where appropriate their family, with a brief explanation or cross-reference to the relevant record within the file.



- 6.3 A chronology is most helpfully stored at the front of a child's safeguarding file alongside the front sheet where it can be quickly accessed and viewed. It should be kept up to date. An exemplar can be found in Appendix v.

## **7 Storage of records**

- 7.1 Child protection records must be kept separate from all other records relating to that pupil in school. Child protection records should be stored in a locked cabinet preferably within the DSL's office with access only to those with direct child protection responsibility for pupils. It is essential to ensure that the school's Leadership Team know the arrangements for access to records in the absence of the DSL from school. This should form part of the school's general child protection policy in respect of how welfare concerns for children will be managed if the DSL is not available.

## **8 Sharing information**

- 8.1 All information held by the school should be shared with Specialist Children's Services, police and health professionals as appropriate, where there is a concern that a child is at risk of significant harm. Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 authorises all agencies to share information in these circumstances. Early Help is now part of the KSCB Eligibility Criteria and there should have a protocol for sharing information on lower level concerns that is consistent with statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.
- 8.2 On occasions where safeguarding concerns exist for a child in the context of a family situation and siblings attend other schools, it may be appropriate for the DSL to consult on a confidential basis with the DSL from another school to share and jointly consider concerns. If in any doubt about the appropriateness of this process, advice can be sought from your Area Safeguarding Adviser.
- 8.3 Further guidance is available in the document "Information sharing – advice for safeguarding practitioners published in March 2015" [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice)

## **9 Data Protection**

- 9.1 Records relating to child protection are exempt information under the Education (School Records) Regulation 1989. They can be kept on computer and are exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.

- 9.2 Neither the parent nor the pupil has an automatic right of access to child protection records. It is however best practice to share information written by school staff unless there is a valid reason to withhold it. If an application is made to see the whole record, advice should be sought from your Area Safeguarding Adviser or Area Education Officer, and the child's social worker if they have one. All third party information should be removed, or consent sought for its disclosure from source.
- 9.3 Cases of alleged abuse that result in court proceedings may require the school to disclose their records, either through the police or social services. Records (suitably anonymised) may also be requested for use in disciplinary proceedings.
- 9.4 In all court cases, a requesting solicitor or other third party should be advised that a Witness Summons or Subpoena should be obtained. In these situations the advice of your Area Safeguarding Adviser and/or legal department should be sought.

## **10 Transfer of Safeguarding / child protection records**

- 10.1 When children transfer from your school and records of child protection/welfare concerns have been kept, these sent to the receiving school as soon as possible. The transfer of safeguarding records should be arranged separately from the main pupil file in line with DfE guidance. It is recommended that these are passed directly to the DSL in the receiving school.
- 10.2 If the child is subject of a child protection plan at the time of transfer it is strongly recommended that you speak to the DSL of the receiving school and arrange for the records to be transferred under confidential cover.
- 10.3 If a child who is subject of a child protection plan leaves your school and you are unaware of the name of the child's new education placement you should contact the child's key worker from Specialist Children's Services to discuss how records should be transferred.
- 10.4 Where records of child protection/welfare concerns have been kept, and details of the receiving establishment are not known, schools should follow the Missing Children Procedure in conjunction with the ELS Inclusion Service. Schools should also use the 'Lost Pupil Database' section of the 'School to School' secure data transfer service, which can be used to track missing children and trace previous schools.

## **11 Retention of child protection records**

- 11.1 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 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. It should then be shredded (and a record kept of this having been done, date, and why)

## **12 Appendices:**

- i) Safeguarding Incident / Concern Form**
- ii) DCPC record of Action / Contacts**
- iii) DCPC detailed record of Action**
- iv) Safeguarding Record – Front Sheet**
- v) Chronology of Events**
- vi) Frequently Asked Questions**
- vii) Contact List for Children's Safeguards Unit**

# 'THE GREEN FORM'

Appendix i

SCHOOL NAME

SCHOOL LOGO

## SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT / CONCERN FORM

|  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Pupil name</b>  | <b>Date of birth and Year Group</b>   |
| <b>Name and position of person completing form (please print)</b>          |                                       |
| <b>Date of incident /concern:<br/>dd.mm.yy</b>                             |                                       |
| <b>Incident / concern (who what where when)*</b>                           |                                       |
| <b>Any other relevant information (witnesses, immediate action taken)*</b> |                                       |
| <b>Action taken*</b>   |                                       |
| <b>Signature</b>   | <b>Date form completed (dd mm yy)</b> |

\*Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

Appendix ii  
SCHOOL NAME

SCHOOL LOGO

**DSL SAFEGUARDING RECORD OF ACTION / CONTACTS**

| PUPIL NAME: |         |           |
|-------------|---------|-----------|
| DATE        | DETAILS | SIGNATURE |
|             |         |           |
|             |         |           |
|             |         |           |
|             |         |           |
|             |         |           |

Appendix iii  
SCHOOL NAME

SCHOOL LOGO

**DSL DETAILED RECORD OF ACTION**

|                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>PUPIL NAME:</b> |                |
| <b>DATE</b>        | <b>DETAILS</b> |
|                    |                |
| <b>Signature</b>   |                |

**SAFEGUARDING RECORD FRONT SHEET**

|   |                     |                                       |                       |
|---|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Pupil name:</b>  |                     | <b>Date of birth:</b>                 |                       |
| <b>Any other name by which child is known:</b>                          |                     |                                       |                       |
| <b>Home address:</b>  |                     | <b>Current address (if different)</b> |                       |
| <b>Telephone no:</b>  |                     |                                       |                       |
| <b>Family members i.e. parents / carers / siblings:</b>                 |                     |                                       |                       |
| <b>Name</b>   | <b>Relationship</b> | <b>Address</b>                        | <b>School details</b> |
|   |                     |                                       |                       |
|   |                     |                                       |                       |
|   |                     |                                       |                       |
|   |                     |                                       |                       |
| <b>Date file started:</b>   |                     |                                       |                       |
| <b>Are records held in school relating to other connected children?</b> |                     |                                       |                       |
| <b>Contact details of other professionals</b>                           |                     |                                       |                       |
| <b>Name</b>   | <b>Agency</b>       | <b>Address</b>                        |                       |
|   |                     |                                       |                       |
|   |                     |                                       |                       |
|   |                     |                                       |                       |

**CHRONOLOGY**

| <b>Pupil Name:</b> |                         | <b>Date of birth</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>DATE</b>        | <b>INCIDENT / EVENT</b> | <b>Signature</b>     |
|                    |                         |                      |
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## **Safeguarding and recording**

### **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 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 “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 welfare concern form is a green A4 sheet that can be found in the staff room. There is also an aide memoire that will guide you in completing this. If you are in any doubt ask .....

### **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 Safeguarding Lead 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 Specialist Children's Services 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 welfare will be shared on a strict "need to know" basis and in line with Kent County Council's Safeguarding Children Procedure 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 in most cases, 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 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 in Education and Specialist Children's Services.

### **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.

### Distinguishing fact and opinion

Consider each of the statements below. For each one decide whether it is a *fact* or an *opinion*.

Have a go at rewriting one statement that contains an opinion in a way that makes the difference between fact and opinion clear.

1. Being unemployed is depressing Mrs A.
2. Alan said his mother smacked him.
3. On the last contact visit the living room was not safe for the children.
4. The clothing in which Mrs Smith had dressed the baby was not appropriate.
5. Foster Care is not appropriate for Ian
6. Jenny is a very contented child.

### Distinguishing fact and opinion (answers)

#### 1. Being unemployed is depressing Mrs A.

This is an opinion. A possible rewrite could be:

**Mrs A appears depressed. She is...list her symptoms... (e.g. tearful, tired, listless, relationship with the children). This change in Mrs A has been noticeable since she lost her job and I think unemployment may be the main reason that she feels the way she does.**

#### 2. Alan said his mother smacked him.

This as written is a factual statement. However, it is important to know **who** Alan said this to. If he reported to a member of staff that his mother smacked him, one would expect a more detailed explanation to follow this statement, including what Alan said in his own words and what action the staff member has taken since.

#### 3. On the last contact visit the living room was not safe for the children.

This is an opinion. It could be rewritten in the following way:

When I visited the family to talk about the children's attendance I did not think that it was safe to leave them in the living room. There were dirty syringes and other sharp objects within their reach. I therefore phoned their social worker.

**4. The clothing in which Mrs Smith had dressed the baby was not appropriate.**

This is an opinion. It could be rewritten in the following way:

I did not think that the clothing Mrs Smith had dressed the baby in was appropriate because it was a cold November morning and the baby was dressed in only a tee – shirt and shorts to be taken out in her pram with only a thin blanket to cover her.

**5. Foster Care is not appropriate for Ian.**

Again this is an opinion. A possible rewrite could be:

I do not think that foster care is appropriate for Ian. This is his sixth placement in five weeks and all his previous placements with foster carers have broken down. Ian has told me that he feels that he is being disloyal to his mother by living in a family and he would like to be placed in a residential home. Although I have talked at length with him about this he remains consistent in his view and his behaviour appears to be directed at ending the placement.

**6. Jenny is a very contented child.**

This statement is written as if it is a fact. However it is clearly an opinion. What is meant by the phrase *very contented*? Would we all understand it in the same way and would we all agree on the difference between a contented and very contented child?

It would be more helpful to give description of Jenny's behaviour and appearance.

June 2015 (Ref HW)



