

Written Agreement

Guidance of the Use and Completion of Written Agreements

The Purpose of a Written Agreement

The purpose of a Written Agreement is to clearly set out the expectations of a family, and the actions they should undertake to reduce risk and ensure the safety of the child. They are a useful way of communicating concerns with families, and forming an assessment of the parent's capacity to engage and change.

Written Agreements should support families to understand what it is we are worried about, and what we hope to achieve for the child. They are not legally binding, however they are statements of intent; and they do provide a basis for practitioners and families to work together and achieve the changes needed. Where possible, Written Agreements should be negotiated rather than imposed. The more involvement and participation there is in forming the agreement, the more likely the engagement and commitment from the family.

A Good Written Agreement

When writing a Written Agreement, ensure it is balanced, fair, and realistic. For example, in a situation where there is a mother who has been a victim of domestic abuse, and she has experienced coercion and control; would it be appropriate for her to have to ensure the father does not have contact with the child? Use simple language which is easily understood, and do not use acronyms or social work jargon.

When to Use a Written Agreement

A Written Agreement can be used in the following situations:

- Alongside periods of assessment and intervention to outline compliance with living arrangements, and supervisory arrangements with family.
- In response to a newly identified risk, and as evidence of immediate risk management planning.
- Alongside a Child Protection Plan and Child in Need Plan.

A Written Agreement should only be used whilst the child's case is open to Children's Services. If the case is closed, professionals will not be able to monitor and review the effectiveness of the Agreement, and the engagement of the family.



When Not to Use a Written Agreement

Written Agreements should not be used to coerce individuals when they appear reluctant or are refusing to engage; or as an attempt to place control around a situation which is clearly difficult to manage. Also, Written Agreements should not be used when there has been incompliance with previous Written Agreements; and when children have been placed outside of the care of their parents/carers.

Completing a Written Agreement

- Record the Written Agreement using the [Written Agreement](#) template. Ensure you have engaged the family with this process, and gained their views. Remember, there should be meaningful discussions, participation, and negotiation.
- The Written Agreement will make clear the expectations and actions to be undertaken, not just by the family, but also by Children's Services. Actions need to be specific, realistic and achievable, and there should be timescales.
- Make clear the consequences of not complying with the Agreement.
- Set the date you plan to review the family's compliance with the agreement. **The Written Agreement should be reviewed on an ongoing and regular basis, and should involve the engagement of everybody involved.**
- Do make reference to the agreement during home visits and meetings to ensure there is ongoing monitoring and evaluation.