

Fostering

Recording Policy and Guidelines

The Trust Board has granted the Chief Executive of the Sandwell Children's Trust the authority to approve this document.

Recording Policy and Guidelines

Regulations and Standards

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards

[STANDARD 26 - Records](#)

Relevant Chapters

[Access to Records Procedure](#)

[Confidentiality and Information Sharing Procedure](#)

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1. Records Must be Kept on all Children

The child's record is an important source of information for them. It provides information about the sequence of events which brought about children's social care's intervention into their life and (in many instances) the reasons why important decisions were made in the child's and/or family' life. This can be a key feature for a child in understanding themselves and their past – especially where the child was unable to live with their parent/other long term carer.

Each child must have his or her own electronic case record from the point of referral to case closure; audio, video and digital recordings may also be kept.

Where paper files are also kept, information held in electronic records must accurately reflect the corresponding information recorded within paper files.

Records held on paper may extend to more than one volume. Where more than one volume exists, the dates covered by each volume must be clearly recorded on the front cover.

All records, irrespective of whether they are physical or electronic, should be securely kept and electronic messaging (e.g. e-mails) should also be sent in a secure and safe way so as to preserve their confidential and professional nature, (see Section 14, Records Should be Kept Securely).

2. The Design of Records and Forms Must be Approved

Records and forms must be designed to fit their purpose and used consistently across the organisation.

A manager must approve the design of all records and forms before coming into use.

3. Children and their Families Must be Informed about their Records

Children and their families have a right to:

Be informed about the records kept on them and the reasons why;

Their rights to confidentiality; and

To have access to their records.

See Confidentiality and Information Sharing Procedure and Access to Records Procedure.

Information must be provided in a form that children and their families will understand - in their preferred language or method of communication.

4. The Practitioner Primarily Involved Should Complete the Record

The practitioner primarily involved, that is the person who directly observes or witnesses the event that is being recorded or who has participated in the meeting/conversation, must complete records.

Where this is not possible and records are completed or updated by other people, it must be clear from the record which person provided the information being recorded. Preferably the originator should read and sign/endorse the record.

Records of decisions must show who has made the decision and the basis on which it has been made.

See also: Section 11, Records Must be Written in Plain English and Prejudice Must be Avoided and Section 12, Records Must be Clear, Accurate and Adequate.

5. All Relevant Information about Children and their Families must be Recorded

All contacts by e-mail, telephone, visits, meetings or appointments made in relation to children and young people must be recorded, stating who made the contact, who was present and / or seen, the relevant discussions which occurred, actions or decisions taken and by whom; the reasons for taking any decisions should also be recorded.

All other relevant contacts with children, their families, colleagues, professionals or other significant people must be recorded. When recording such contacts, it will be necessary to state who was present and / or seen, the relevant discussions which occurred, actions or decisions taken and by whom; the reasons for taking any decisions should also be recorded.

6. Children and their Families should be Involved in the Recording Process

Children and young people must be routinely involved in the process of gathering and recording information about them.

They should be asked to provide information, express their own views and wishes, and contribute to assessments, reports and to the formulation of plans relating to them, where this is in their best interest.

Generally, they must be asked to give their agreement to the sharing of information about them with others - but there are exceptions.

7. Information about Children and their Families Should Normally be Shared with them

Information obtained about children and their families should be shared with them unless:

Sharing the information would be likely to result in serious harm to the child or another person; or

The information was given in the expectation that it would not be disclosed; or

The information relates to a third party who expressly indicated the information should not be disclosed.

Where information is obtained and recorded which should not be shared with the child concerned for one of the above reasons, it should be placed in the 'Confidential' section of the child's record and the reasons should be recorded after taking advice from a manager.

See also Access to Records Procedure

When sharing a record it is important to record who it was shared with and when. The sharing of all decision-making documents reviews, reports and agreements make it easier for everyone to know what is expected and to work together better.

8. Managers Must Ensure that Confidential Information is Identified

The fostering managers and relevant line managers must monitor confidential information held on the 'Confidential' section of case records, ensuring that the reason for it being considered confidential is valid; if not, it should be available to be shared with the child.

However, before sharing any such information, the manager must take all reasonable steps to consult the originator and take account of their views and wishes. See also Access to Records Procedure.

9. Records Must be Legible, Signed and Dated

Those completing electronic records must show their name and the date when the recording was completed.

If possible, paper records should be typed or handwritten in black ink and all such records must be signed and dated and the pages numbered to assist in a reader being able to follow 'the child's story'.

Any handwritten records must be produced so that readers not familiar with the handwriting of the writer can read the records quickly and easily. It must be possible to distinguish the name and post title or status of the person completing the record. If there is any doubt of the identity of the writer from a signature, the name should be printed.

10. Records Must be Kept up to Date

Records should be updated as information becomes available or as decisions or actions are taken as soon as practicable or, at the latest, within 3 days of the event.

11. Records Must be Written in Plain English and Prejudice Must be Avoided

Records must be written concisely, in plain English and must not contain any expressions that might give offence to any individual or group.

E-mail communication to colleagues and other professionals (that will be included in the record) should always be completed with the same care and attention. The recording should certainly not contain any expressions that might give offence to any individual or group of people on the basis of race, culture, religion, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

Use of technical or professional terms, acronyms and abbreviations must be kept to a minimum; and explained.

See Access to Records Procedure.

12. Records Must be Clear, Accurate and Adequate

Care must be taken to ensure that information contained in records is relevant and accurate and is sufficient to meet legislative responsibilities and the requirements of these procedures.

Every effort must be made to ensure records are factually correct.

Records must distinguish clearly between facts, opinions, assessments, judgements and decisions. Records must also distinguish between firsthand information and information obtained from third parties.

See Confidentiality and Information Sharing Procedure.

13. Managers Must Oversee, Monitor and Review all Records

The overall responsibility for ensuring all records are maintained appropriately rests with managers, although the responsibility can be delegated to other staff as appropriate.

The manager should routinely check samples of records to ensure they are up to date and maintained as required and, if not, that deficiencies are rectified as soon as practicable.

14. Records Should be Kept Securely

All records held on children must be kept securely.

Children's paper files/records should normally be stored in a locked cabinet, or a similar manner, usually in an office which only staff have access to.

These records should not be left unattended when not in their normal location.

All electronic records must be kept securely and comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. This will include arrangements such as:

- Password protection;
- Automatic log out of screens;
- Logging off computers;
- Changing passwords on a regular basis.

Where staff are working in an 'agile' / 'mobile' / 'hot-desking' context, care must be exercised to ensure that records or computers are not left on or overlooked by others.

15. Removal of Records

15.1 Exceptional Occurrence

Records should not normally be taken from the location where they are usually kept.

If it is necessary to remove a record from its normal location, a manager should approve this and should stipulate or agree how long it is necessary to remove the record. The manager must also be satisfied that adequate measures are in place to ensure the security of the record(s) whilst they are removed. For example, records must never be left in unattended vehicles.

The authorisation for a record to be removed must be recorded and those who may have need to see the records should be informed of their removal. The manager must then ensure the record is returned as required/agreed.

Should the situation ever occur where a file / documents are lost or mislaid, this must be reported immediately to the manager and every reasonable effort should be made to obtain their recovery.

16. Use of Computers at Home

Staff using computers at home for work purposes must ensure that they are working within the rules of the 'data protection principles' in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

This applies to staff using laptop computers and mobile devices in the course of their duties.

Should the situation ever occur where a laptop is lost or mislaid, this must be reported immediately to the manager and every reasonable effort should be made to obtain their recovery.