



Children's Social Care Briefing Note

Recording: Practice Expectations

'Good case recording is important to demonstrate the accountability of staff...it helps to focus the work of staff and supports effective partnerships with service users and carers. It ensures there is a documented account of the responsible authority's involvement with individual service users, families and carers and assists with continuity when workers are unavailable or change'.

(DfE, The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations – Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review, (2015))

A child's electronic 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) provides an explanation for the reasons why important decisions were made in the child's and/or family' life.

The case record can be key to helping a child understand themselves and their past – especially where the child was unable to live with their parent or other long term carer.

In this briefing you will find information related to the practice expectations of effective and timely record keeping.





A Child's Case Record

The child's case record will usually be developed from notes taken by a social worker / other practitioner in the course of visits and meetings to the child and their family or carers.

Each child must have their own electronic case record from the point of referral to case closure and it is important that the child's case record reflects and reports on the child as an individual.

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

Practitioners are responsible for ensuring **ALL PAPER DOCUMENTS ARE SUCCESSFULLY UPOADED TO TOTALVIEW** (or any other viewing platform used by the service).

Practitioners should not store documents and recordings on their computer desktops.

Practitioners must ensure that all documents, uploaded files (1:1 work, safety plans, s20 agreements, letters etc.) are placed on the child's electronic file and then deleted from their computer desktops within a reasonable timeframe. This is critical – as it ensures that recordings and documents linked to a child's involvement with our service appear electronically and are able to be viewed and considered by all necessary parties. Storing documents on a computer desktop could result in key documents not being accessible to practitioners and members of our service who need to access them or use them in an individual workers absence from work.





Timeliness of Recordings

Within Newcastle Children's Social Care, it is the expectation that the recording of visits, meetings, telephone calls and wider case recordings appear on the child's **file within 5 working days.**

This is to ensure that recordings are completed within a reasonable timeframe and that they are made when practitioners have information fresh in their mind about conversations held, interactions observed and agreements or decisions that have been made.

Where a recording of information is related to a safeguarding concern or risk, it is the expectation that the information is recorded as soon as possible and within 1 working day.

For example, if a Strategy Meeting is held, if a disclosure is made or safety plan put in place for a child or family. Ensuring this information is recorded and available to view on the child's file by practitioners working with the family, including colleagues in EDT is essential to safe information sharing and decision-making practices.





Best Practice Recording

SCIE (Partnership Concept)

Person Centred - Any social care record is written for multiple readers – your manager, professionals in other agencies, perhaps a judge – but the most important reader are the children, young people and families themselves and you need to bear in mind the importance of the record for the child or young person you are working with. Try to make your recording as **person-centred** as any other part of your practice.

Accurate - Whatever it is you are expressing – fact or opinion – state accurately what is happening, or what you believe, and avoid vagueness wherever you can. Saying 'the front room was in a terrible state' may be quicker than saying 'the front room contained 14 bags of rubbish, and I saw 20 empty fast food packages. I also saw what looked like mice droppings in one corner of the room'. Recording in accurate terms like this avoids any possible value judgements and is more helpful to a colleague who might visit and most importantly, will help the individual or family recognise what we are worried about and why.

Real - A challenge in social work recording is vague wording, particularly when aspects of a person's behaviour may be causing them or other people difficulties or concern. So, phrases appear such as 'inappropriate sexual behaviour', which could cover a huge range of things from serious assaults to ill-advised comments. Whilst recording explicitly what the behaviours, concerns or observations are may take longer to record, it will identify precisely what the issue is, enabling a more honest discussion with the person and will ensure clarity.

Timely - Clearly, everything that goes to make up a good social care record is easier to achieve if a record is made promptly, when things are fresh in the memory. Sometimes a delay in timely recording is unavoidable – if so, it is good practice to note that the recording was not done at the time. It is always more transparent to acknowledge when it has been necessary to do so and the reasons why.

No Jargon – There is a lot of jargon in social work, and for someone who is not a social worker or who does not work in the sector it can quickly make what we write incomprehensible or inaccessible. You should try wherever possible to avoid any jargon, or, if you have cause to use jargon make sure you explain what you mean clearly and concisely and remember the wider audience of the report or assessment or recording.



NEWCASTLE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

Evidence based - We are not suggesting here that every observation you make must be backed up by an article in a peer-reviewed journal, but you must make sure that you can substantiate what you're saying. So, if you are stating a fact, be sure that it's an accurate one. If it is an opinion, make sure this can be verified with evidence from what you've seen or heard. Opinions are OK in social work records and you are encouraged to exercise your professional judgement. But that's the key. It must be a professional judgement – based on your professional experience, your knowledge of the individual circumstances, some research evidence – and not just a hunch or an assumption.

Reading the Previous Record - It is vital that social workers read the previous social care record. Clearly, it's important not to be prejudiced by what has been written before: it may contain inaccuracies; things may have changed; and you need to form your own judgements. But you must read what is on the record. Not doing so may mean that you miss potentially crucial information, about a person's history, and about how best to support them.

Succinct - Concentrate on writing detailed, factual reports, with opinions being clearly expressed where appropriate. Make sure you avoid repeating yourself: a point made well once will have more impact than one that is repeated throughout a report or case record.

Holistic – Social workers are responsible for making sure that assessments and case recordings consider a family in a full and rounded way, ensuring recordings are not overly issue specific and take account of the range of information, circumstances and views which contribute to decision making.

IT compliant – As a professional you must ensure that you do all you can to make use of the IT system provided to record appropriately on behalf of those you are working with. (within Newcastle, staff will soon have the opportunity to contribute to working groups to re-design our IT systems and this is your opportunity to contribute your ideas to help to make them more user friendly!)

Professional - Social workers are professionals, and their recording work must reflect that. In order to enhance credibility, casual recording styles – for example using colloquial terms or 'cutting and pasting' from emails instead of tailoring the record for the specific purpose – should be avoided. Your record is an important document which represents yourself, your profession, the organisation you work for and most importantly the client you are working with.

