

1 Minute Guide for Social Workers

Etiquette in Writing a Court Statement

This guide will help you to prepare a statement for court, looking at how your statement should look to provide the best evidence, it will not tell you what content to include as every child is different and cannot be prescribed.

Content is important, as is our presentation, often the first contact other professionals attending court will have with us, is through our statements. A well-presented statement can therefore be as important as a first impression, it can convey confidence and provide security in our knowledge of the family.

Formatting our statements is never something we look forward to, but getting this right helps us to present in the right way. Knowing how to format your work makes it easier for others to reference and navigate. For example, when we should and should not use capitals (upper and lower case). This note will also give general tips on presentation.

Remember, if you have administrative support needs to discuss these with your manager and it may assist them to have sight of this briefing if you require additional support.

If you have any queries, you can also access support via you Manager, Case Progression Officers and Legal Services.

General Tips

1. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are really important, so remember to proofread before submitting it. Ask someone else to proofread if this helps you.
2. Try and avoid repetition, if you want to refer the reader back to something you have already said, use cross referencing to do this.
3. Do not swap from the past to the present tense and vice versa. Be consistent. If you are recounting historical events, use the past tense.

If you are analysing the needs of the child and going through the welfare checklist, use the present tense.

4. Try and keep your sentences short and to the point, avoid using the word 'however' repeatedly and don't confuse 'however' with 'but'.
5. When you talk about your Department, always refer to it as – the Local Authority. Always use the term - the Local Authority.

6. Remember statements don't need to be complicated, try and keep them simple, only reference theories and research if you are prepared to be cross examined on these. Write with confidence and believe in yourself, remember you are the expert.

Dates

Keep references consistent e.g.

1.4.20

1/4/20

01/04/20

01/04/2020

The first – 1.4.20 – is preferred but whatever you do, be consistent.

Give the full date – do not leave out the year. Please don't put 'the' before the date.

Parents Names

Although we likely call the parents by their first names, and we will continue to do this when interacting with them face to face. In our statements and when giving evidence we need to use their title – Mr / Mrs / Ms / Miss.

Try and make them aware of this before they attend court, so they are supported to know what to expect.

The same applies to references to other professionals.

A common error we see in statements is the way people write Mr and Mrs, by adding a dot, for example Mr. Jones. The correct way to write this would be Mr Jones, no dot is needed.

Quoting someone

This needs to be to the point, please use:

Ms Smith said that ...

Ms Smith stated that ...

Ms Smith told me that ...

Ms Smith notified me that ...

Please do not use the term 'shared'

TERMS TO BE USED OR NOT USED

Avoid the overuse of capitals. See the table below as a guide for terms to be used and whether they are upper or lower case.

YES	NO
care order	Care Order Care order Full Care Order full care order
child arrangements order	child arrangement order Child Arrangements Order
child assessment order	Child Assessment Order CAO
Child Protection Conference	child protection conference CP Conference CPC
Child Protection Plan	child protection plan CP Plan CPP
Children's Guardian	children's guardian Children's guardian children's Guardian
Children's Services	children's Services Children's services
Children's Social Care	children's social care Children's social care children's Social Care Social Care Social care
Core Group Meeting	core group meeting Core Group meeting CGM
court	Use if referring to 'a court'
Court	Use if referring to 'the Court'
emergency protection order	Emergency Protection Order EP order

	EP Order
father	Father
foster carer	Foster Carer Foster carer foster Carer
Health Visitor	health visitor HV
Hospital hospital	Upper case if referring to the name of a hospital e.g Luton and Dunstable Hospital Lower case if referring to a hospital e.g going to hospital / taken to hospital
in respect of	in respect to
interim care order	Interim Care Order ICO Interim Care order
key worker	Key Worker Key worker key Worker
Local Authority	LA local Authority Local authority
Local Authority's	Local Authorities Local Authorities'
maternal grandparents	Maternal Grandparents Maternal grandparents MGP's MGPs maternal GPs
mother	Mother
parental responsibility	Parental Responsibility PR
paternal grandparents	Paternal Grandparents Paternal grandparents PGP's PGPs paternal GPs

Police	police
Probation Probation Officer	probation Probation officer probation Officer
Review Child Protection Conference	Review CPC Review CP Conference RCPC CPR
Social Services	Social services SS
Social Worker	social worker Social worker social Worker
special guardian	Special Guardian Special guardian special Guardian
special guardianship order	Special Guardianship Order SG order SGO
Strategy Meeting	strategy meeting Strat meeting SM
supervision order	Supervision Order Supervision order