**Practice Guidance**

**Case Note Policy**



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| **Title:** | **Practice Guidance – Case Note Policy** |
| **Effective From:** | **2nd February 2023** |
| **Practice Guidance – Case Note Policy**  **Contents**   1. **Introduction** 2. **Scope** 3. **Definitions** 4. **Responsibilities, Accountabilities, and Duties** 5. **Further Information** 6. **Policy Compliance** 7. **Supporting Policies** 8. **Monitoring**   **Appendix A – Guidance on Case Notes in EHM / LCS**   1. **Background** 2. **Key Principles** 3. **Introduction**   This policy sets out Children’s Social Care’s commitment to achieving high standards in record keeping and Case Notes within EHM / LCS. The policy will be supported through the delivery of standards, guidance and procedures.  Accurate record keeping is vital to the delivery of our services in an accurate, person centred and accountable manner. It will provide evidence of what we do and why, therefore protecting the not only the person but Children’s Social Care.  By adopting this policy, we aim to ensure that Case Notes are accurate, appropriate, reliable, timely, complete, and accessible whenever they are needed to:   * Help us carry out our business; * Help us to make informed decisions; * Make sure we comply with relevant legislation; * Provide an audit trail to meet business, regulatory and legal requirements; * Meet our lawful obligations for disclosing evidence; * Support Best Practice; * Support continuity and consistency in management and administration; * Make sure we are open, transparent and responsive.   **2.0 Scope**  This policy, together with the associated standards, applies to all case notes within EHM / LCS and other case management systems including those of partner organisations.  This policy applies to all case notes created by Children’s Social Care staff while carrying out their corporate function. Records and documentation created, whether internally and externally funded are also subject to the Council’s wider contractual record keeping requirements. These records may exist in printed or digital form.  It applies to all staff, contractors, consultants and third parties who are given access to our documents and records and information processing facilities.  **3.0 Definitions**  This policy, together with the associated standards, applies to all Case notes created in EHM / LCS or any other case management system used internally or externally by Council staff or its representatives.  Case Notes are defined as: A note made by anyone involved in a live case, that is relevant to the person and is recorded within the individuals case file on the designation case management system.  **4.0 Responsibilities, Accountabilities and Duties**  **All staff, contractors, consultants and third parties** - everyone who is required to make a note in a person’s case file that is relevant to that person.  **5.0 Further information**  For further information about how the Council meets its Information Governance responsibilities and complies with data protection law, or if you wish to contact the Council’s Data Protection Officer please contact:  [Information.governance@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:Information.governance@dudley.gov.uk)  **6.0 Policy Compliance**  If any user is found to have breached this policy, they may be subject to the Council’s disciplinary procedure. If a criminal offence is considered to have been committed further information will be provided.  If you do not understand the implications of this policy or how it may apply to you, seek advice from the Principal Social Worker, Data Protection and Information Governance Manager.  **7.0 Supporting Policies**  A suite of policies informs the Council's workforce how they should practice, use ICT products or service and what controls they need to comply with in.  **For Corporate ICT Policies**  Connect> Support menu>ICT tile>ICT Policies  **For Corporate ICT Briefing Papers**  Connect> Support menu>ICT tile>Strategy > Briefing Papers  **Information Governance Policies**  Connect> Support menu>Information Governance tile> Main Areas of Information Governance>Information Governance Policies and Guidance  **8.0 Monitoring**  The Council will regularly monitor and audit its practices for compliance with this and other policies.  Audit services will be responsible for carrying out regular audits of all Directorates service areas. These will be conducted in accordance with the Head of Audit Service’s Audit Plan.  **Appendix A – Guidance on Case Notes in EHM / LCS**  **1.0 Background to Case Notes**  Case noting has always been an important integral part of social work practice. It is a legal requirement and part of staff’s professional duty. It promotes continuity of care and communication. Research has shown that record-keeping practices have an impact on client outcomes such that poor case notes can result in poor decision-making and adverse client outcomes (see Preston-Shoot 2003, Cumming et al. 2007).  Good social work case notes will protect you, your employer and the person’s record. It is key to accountability to people who use services, to managers, to inspections and audits. They are evidence for court, complaint and investigations. Remember the cardinal rule of case notes: “If it’s not written down, it didn’t happen.”  **2.0 Key principles to good case notes:**   * **Case notes should be ACCURATE**   Good records will contain both facts and opinions but there should be a clear distinction between the two. Otherwise it becomes all too easy to mistake opinion for fact and to leave opinions unsubstantiated. If you are stating a fact, make sure it is accurate and if recording an opinion, make sure it can be backed up with evidence. If there are differences of opinion, make sure these are all recorded so the reading can make a judgement.  Whatever it is you are expressing – fact or opinion – state accurately what is happening, or what you believe, and avoid vagueness wherever you can.   * **Case notes should be APPROPRIATE AND PROPORTIONATE**   Case notes should be professional and respectful. Case notes should only include information that is relevant to the person or the support being provided. They should be a record of all discussions and interactions with the person and persons/services involved in the provision of support including referral information, telephone and email correspondence. They should record any non-attendance, either by the Social Worker or client, at scheduled and agreed meetings or activities. They can also provide evidence that the Social Worker and person have discussed their respective legal and ethical responsibilities.  Case notes are an important record that reflect on you, Dudley Council and most importantly the person you are working with. Do not make disrespectful comments about the person or about colleagues in case notes. Don’t criticise other teams, systems or processes in case notes. You should avoid using jargon and check carefully for spelling mistakes. It is important to remember the person may read their case notes so should only contain information you would be happy for them to read.  Concentrate on writing detailed, factual reports, with opinions being clearly expressed where appropriate, this need not take any longer, in fact may be quicker and easier than vaguely worded, unclear text. 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.   * **Case notes should be TIMELY**   Case notes should be made promptly when things are fresh in your memory. Case notes should be a chronological record of interactions, observations and actions relating to a person.  Leaving a record incomplete can hamper colleagues if they are working with the same person and so may disadvantage the person. Never record a false time and date when recording case notes.   * **Emails SHOULD NEVER BE CUT AND PASTED on to case notes.**   This practise could potentially lead to a breach of data protection as it could place confidential information relating to others in case notes, that may ultimately be disclosed to the service user inappropriately. This will also cause issues with EHM / LCS retention.  Sent or received correspondence should be saved and uploaded to the Document Store in EHM / LCS.  Tailoring the main themes of the email will also keep the records appropriate and proportionate.  From the date this policy was introduced, any case notes which have emails cut and pasted into them will need to be deleted, re-entered and documents stored as appropriate. A call will need to be logged with ICT to get the case note removed.   * **Case notes SHOULD NOT INCLUDE CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION about other persons this is a breach of data protection** * **NEVER CHANGE A CASE NOTE**   A case note is a legal record, so it is illegal to change or amend a case note after the fact. If a change must be made to correct an error or omission, the change can be recorded as a new and separate case note. In addition to outlining the error or omission as part of this new case note, it is advisable to provide an explanation for its earlier absence or inaccuracy.  A case note should never be amended or changed in the light of additional information obtained later. This should always constitute a new case note.  If you inadvertently record information about a third party in the wrong case note in EHM / LCS, then this should be reported to your line manager. You will need to log a call with ICT to have the case note re-indexed to the appropriate record.   * **VISIT CASE NOTES**   The following Visit case notes are an exception to this policy:   * CLA Placement Visit * CP Plan Visit * CIN Visit * IRO Visit to Child   Where any of the above case notes are not accurately recorded and have been identified to be corrected, then ICT will reopen the case note to allow for the amendment to be made. | |
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