

Record Keeping

Practice Guidance

All records should be:

Timely

Records should be made as soon as possible.

Accurate

If mistakes in information have been recorded, they are unlikely to be questioned by a new worker. The inaccurate information will be perpetuated inadvertently.

At times, information may be gathered in a stressful situation. However, every effort must be made to ensure accuracy. It may be advisable to check the information recorded at a later date.

Factual

It is essential to record the nature and the source of the information.

- ◆ What is said and by whom.
- ◆ What was observed and by whom.

Hearsay and third party information must be clearly recorded as such.

Ethical

All records should be non-judgmental and non-discriminatory. It may be a useful guide to record information with an assumption that the person you are writing about will read it.

The importance of good record keeping is essential for all agencies and not just Local Authorities.

“Good record keeping is essential for Local Authorities so that when they are challenged – as is increasingly likely – they are able to demonstrate that decisions were not taken unlawfully or with maladministration...Defensive record keeping can easily become poor record keeping...This renders decision making opaque and difficult to defend against challenge.”
(Mandelstam, M., 1998, page 163)

From a legal perspective, the Human Rights Act 1998, which came into effect 1st October 2000, brings into English law a distinct and different approach to thinking about rights, responsibilities and remedies. Additionally, courts appear increasingly willing to hold Local Authorities, and individual practitioners, to legal account. In the light of this, it is important to keep detailed records.

Record keeping is an integral part of the professional practice and should assist the process. It is not separate from the process and not an optional extra to be fitted in if time and circumstances allow.

Practitioners must be aware of the Human Rights articles and if they feel that they are possibly contravening any Human Rights article, they must refer to this in written records, including a justification.

For more information regarding the Human Rights Act, refer to the "*Code of Practice*".

Procedure

Whenever a complaint or allegation of abuse is made all agencies should keep clear and accurate records and each agency should identify procedures for incorporating all relevant agency and vulnerable adult's records into a file to record all actions taken. In the case of providers of services these should be available to the commissioners of services and to the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

When Should Information be recorded?

- Records must be kept from the time that a concern, allegation or disclosure is made.
- Each entry must be dated and timed.
- The name of the person recording the information must be written in full. **Do not use initials.**

What to Record

- All entries must provide factual information, for example, times, dates, names of people contacted.
- Avoid expressions of opinion (remember that the person you are writing about may have the right to read what you have said).
- All contact with the vulnerable adult and alleged perpetrator must be recorded.
- Record the exact words the vulnerable adult and alleged perpetrator used.
- Use body maps to illustrate any physical injuries.
- All consultation with a Manager and/or Senior Manager must be recorded.
- When contacting other agencies the questions asked and information received must be recorded.
- If a decision is made not to contact the Police, the details of why this decision was made and on whose authority it was made must be recorded.
- All telephone calls, those received and made in relation to the abuse, must be recorded even if there was no reply to outgoing calls.
- Those who attend Safeguarding Strategy Meetings must be named.
- The decisions taken at all meetings must be recorded.

- It is essential to demonstrate how an assessment of risk, responsibility, rights, autonomy and protection of the vulnerable adult was undertaken.
- If no investigation is to take place, the reasons why and on whose authority this decision was taken must be recorded.

How to Record Information

- All records should be typed.
- If this is not possible, they **must** be written in black ink.
- Any alteration to records must be made by drawing a single line through the word(s).
- Correction fluid must not be used.

Other Documentation

- Any rough notes made during the investigation must be kept with the record.
- Minutes from Safeguarding Strategy Meetings must be kept with the record.
- Minutes from the Case Conference must be kept with the record.
- All Safeguarding plans and reviews must be kept with the record.

Legal Requirements

- Records should not breach a person's legal rights
- All agencies should identify arrangements, consistent with principles of fairness, for making records available to those affected by and subject to the investigation. (See "*No Secrets*" - Section 6.17.)

Service User as Perpetrator

- If the alleged perpetrator is a service user then information about his/her involvement in an Safeguarding Adults investigation, including the outcome of the investigation, should be included on his/her case records. (See "*No Secrets*" - Section 6.18.)

Storing of Information

- All records must be stored in accordance with your own agency's policies with regard to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Standards of Recording

Best practice in recording is based on key principles of partnership, openness and accuracy. Effective recording is part of the total service to the user.