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**Record Keeping Guidance for Pupil Safeguarding/ Child Protection Files**

**Purpose of the Guidance**

The appropriate sharing of information is vital in supporting effective safeguarding practice in schools. One of the key findings common to many Serious Case Reviews is the inadequacy of record keeping. This guide has been produced to help facilitate more efficient and effective record keeping in schools in relation to safeguarding. It is important that schools also refer to the relevant DfE guidance stated in this document to ensure they comply with all statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and the collation and sharing of information.

**General Principles**

* ‘Schools must keep accurate records of all incidents and concerns relating to children and / or members of staff. This allows the relevant professionals to recognise emerging patterns, understand the significance of previous concerns and prevent incidents from being dealt with in isolation’ (NSPCC, 2017).
* ‘Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone’s responsibility**’ (Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), 2018) and all staff must know when and how to report concerns for a child’s welfare.
* ‘It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating’ (KCSIE, 2018). Good record keeping will help the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) fulfil their lead responsibility of safeguarding and child protection and the school to meet its statutory obligations.

**Creation of Records**

* ‘All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing. If in doubt about recording requirements, staff should discuss with the Designated Safeguarding Lead’ (KCSIE, 2018).
* A safeguarding or child protection file should be started for an individual pupil as soon as the school is aware of any relevant concerns. This may arise in a number of ways:
* A member of staff raises a concern about the welfare or well-being of a pupil due to:
	+ The child’s behaviour
	+ The child has a physical injury
	+ The child makes a disclosure or allegation
	+ The child’s physical presentation
	+ Information from or observation/behaviour on the part of a parent
	+ Information from other sources including other children
		- If information is forwarded to the school by a previous school attended by the pupil.
		- If the school is alerted by another agency (e.g. health, social care) of child protection or safeguarding concerns about that pupil.
* A written record of disclosures, concerns, suspicions, or allegations should be made at the time or as soon as possible after the event. Professional judgement needs to be made if it is appropriate to make any notes when a child is making a disclosure.
* Any handwritten notes made immediately after the event, for example, a disclosure, can act as evidence for any future court case. Therefore, these should not be destroyed, even if the details are recorded more formally at a later time. They should be securely attached to the child protection concern forms used by the school. If you use a computerised recording system such as CPOMS you can scan these documents for reference and then keep the original copy as required.
* Records should be factual using the child’s own words, wherever possible, in cases where a disclosure is made. Professional opinion can be given, but needs to be supported by stating the facts and observations upon which the opinions are based.
* All records should be dated and signed with the name of the signatory clearly printed and filed in chronological order. This also applies to any documents which have been witnessed by third parties. The signing in feature of CPOMS acts as the signature as only that member of staff will know their own credentials. All recordings are then automatically time and date stamped. For other computerised recording systems, availability of this feature would need to be checked.
* It is useful to have a standard form for recording information / concerns (see Appendix A for a sample document). This can help ensure essential information is included in a record. Schools may use an electronic version of such documentation and this may be part of a specialist software package to manage safeguarding, child protection and wider welfare issues. All staff (and volunteers as appropriate) should be made aware of this procedure and how to access the system for recording information/concerns.
* All recorded child protection concerns must be passed to the DSL (or deputy, if DSL is unavailable) as soon as possible. The DSL (or deputy) will need to make a professional judgement about what action needs to be taken in accordance with local child protection procedures. When any member of staff adds a concern to CPOMS the system can send an instant alert to a team of staff members as required such as the safeguarding team. The system can be configured to automatically know which staff to alert based on concern type from within the Admin area. Availability of this feature would need to be checked with other computerised recording system.
* **If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children’s social care and/or the police immediately.**

‘If, for any reason, the DSL (or deputy) is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. In these circumstances, any action taken should be shared with the DSL (or deputy) as soon as is practically possible’ (KCSIE 2018).

* It is important to make it clear to pupils that any disclosure they make will be treated sensitively, but may need to be shared with other professionals if it is considered necessary to protect the child or someone else from harm.
* ‘Sharing information is an intrinsic part of any frontline practitioners’ job when working with children and young people. The decisions about how much information to share, with whom and when, can have a profound impact on individuals’ lives’ (Information Sharing, HM Government: 2018). It is important that practitioner should understand the circumstances under which information may be lawfully shared and how should be data managed and therefore must follow the latest statutory guidance.

**The management of safeguarding/child protection files**

**Storage**

* All child protection/safeguarding records are sensitive and confidential so should be kept in a secure (e.g. locked at all times) filing cabinet or in a restricted area of your computer system, separate from other school files and accessible through the DSL, the Deputy DSL and other senior staff in larger schools.
* The pupils’ general school file should be marked in some way (e.g. red star) to indicate that a child protection/safeguarding file exists (such coding must reflect current circumstances). All staff that may need to consult a child’s school file should be made aware of what the symbol means and, to speak to the DSL, if necessary, if they see this symbol and have concerns. For example, if a member of the office staff, who is looking in the main file for a parent’s contact details because of an unexplained absence, might decide to report this to the DSL if they see the indicator, in case the absence is significant.
* If, in exceptional circumstances, information is removed from a file for any reason, a dated note must be placed in the file indicating who has taken it, why and when.

**Information that should be kept in a safeguarding file/CP**

To assist in the management of safeguarding files it is helpful if schools compile these in the following sections

* **Section 1:** Basic details
* **Section 2:** Chronology
* **Section 3:** Attendance Data
* **Section 4:** Cause for Concern forms and requests to staff for monitoring specific aspects of the child’s presentation, behaviour, attendance, etc.
* **Section 5:** Referrals to external agencies, including First Response (for Families in Focus or Children’s Social Care), and outcomes of referrals made
* **Section 6:** In the case of a child subject to a Child Protection Plan, notes of any Child Protection case conference or Core Group meetings and Child Protection Strategy notes
* **Section 7:** Details of professional communications and consultations (Not covered in section 6)
* **Section 8:** Communication with the child/young person, parents, carers and other family members
* **Section 9:** Domestic Abuse Notification information from the police
* **Section 10:** MARAC information
* **Section 11:** Missing Persons Notification information from the police
* **Section 12:** MASH
* **Section 13:** Other Information

**Section 1: Basic Details**

The basic details relating to an individual child are contained in a ‘Front Sheet’ to enable key information to be accessed easily (See Appendix B). Such information is usually available from the child school record found on SIMS or another data management system. It is important that the child’s Unique Pupil Number (UPN), a 13 character code, is recorded, where available, to help distinguish a child’s record from other pupils. When using CPOMS this would be the student overview, and the UPN is included in this information. For other computerised recording systems it is important to check where this information is stored.

**Section 2: Chronology**

A chronology is a list of specific and significant incidents, events and actions relating to a child over a period of time and they are essential in helping understand the concerns for the child in the context of history (See Appendix C). A chronology aids assessments, e.g. providing evidence for an inter-agency referral, and helps in identifying safeguarding patterns and concerns. Key information contained in the chronology should be cross-referenced to any relevant material held within the child’s file. The chronology can act as a summary of key information and therefore it is essential it is kept up to date. Specialist software packages used in safeguarding management can be used to produce chronologies very easily. CPOMS Schools can add their own custom fields such as ‘summary of incident’ so that when they want to run brief ‘front sheet’ summary reports they can do so. Other computerised recording systems may have a similar feature which needs to be investigated.

**Section 3: Attendance Data**

Attendance at school is known to be a key protective factor in safeguarding children and young people. Poor attendance at school may not only be an issue in its own right, but an indicator of other safeguarding concerns e.g. Child Sexual Exploitation, neglect etc. Furthermore, a request for extended leave may be a risk indicator associated with other safeguarding concerns such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage. Attendance printouts and holiday requests may therefore be key pieces of information to be contained in the child’s safeguarding file.

**Section 4: Cause for Concern Forms**

These forms are completed by members of staff and volunteers when they have concerns about a particular child, and may be either physical documents or an electronic version. A sample form can be found in Appendix A. All staff should be reminded on a regular basis how to access and complete forms, and the need not only to record one off serious incidents or concerns, but also smaller issues that when accumulated may provide evidence of harm being caused to a child.

**Section 5: Referral to External Agencies**

This section may include copies of referrals to external or education based services such as: First Response, CAMHS, the school nurse service, Bristol Inclusion Panel, and other external agencies. The section should also include the response to any of these referrals.

**Section 6: Child Protection Documentation**

If a child subject is subject to a Child Protection Plan, notes of any Child Protection case conference, Core Group meetings and Child Protection strategy minutes should be contained in this section. This section should also contain any response made by school in relation to reports submitted to a case conference or other relevant meeting. Where concerns relate to more than one child in the same family at a school, a separate file for each child should be created. Common records, such as child protection conference minutes, should be duplicated for each child’s file as appropriate. Where concerns relate to more than one student, CPOMS schools can add incidents/concerns and files to one of the students but use the ‘linked students’ option to ensure that each pupil has their own version recorded in their own file but the school will only have to upload it once. Other computerised systems may have similar facilities that require investigation.

**Section 7: Professional Communications and Consultations**

Safeguarding files may contain information related to professional communications with other agencies and organisations (not covered in other sections of the safeguarding file). For complex cases this may involve a number of different professionals. This section may therefore be subdivided to reflect this complexity.

**Section 8: Communication with the child/young person, parents, carers and other family members**

This section should include records of discussions, telephone calls and meetings with the child, their parents or carers and other family members. This section should also include any written communication with these parties.

**Section 9: Domestic Abuse Notification Information from the Police**

This section includes information received from the Police, via the Safeguarding in Education Team (SET), in relation to domestic abuse incidents. This information is usually in the format of a notification and sent by email using CJSM. It is being shared with schools to enable them to offer effective support and behaviour management strategies for pupils so that the impact on their education can be minimised. This section should include actions plans and other relevant information.Notificationsshouldnot be stored in CJSM accounts, but transferred to the child’s safeguarding /CP file as soon as possible, with restricted access for those in the setting who need to know. Any safeguarding files containing Domestic Abuse Notifications from the Police must be clearly marked – see Appendix D. CPOMS schools can add a Domestic Abuse category to their system and record any instances appropriately. They can also include the statement from Appendix D in the Summary Line of the Student Overview. Other computerised systems may have a similar feature which needs to be investigated.

**Section 10: Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Information**

MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the **highest risk domestic abuse** cases between representatives of local police, probation, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Reports supplied to the MARAC from the school, via the SET, should be kept in this section, along with the meeting minutes and any notification of actions generated from the MARAC and details of the corresponding responses. Any safeguarding files containing MARAC information from the Police must be clearly marked – see Appendix D. Please note from December 2018 onwards, cases previously discussed at a MARAC will either go directly to the social worker if open to social care, or will be assessed following notification to First Response. Any information submitted to support such a case should be included in this section.

**Section 11: Missing Persons Notification Information from the Police**

This section includes information received from the Police, via the SET, in relation to missing person incidents involving a child or young person who attend the school. Information is usually in the format of a notification and sent by email using CJSM. It is being shared with schools to enable them to offer effective support and behaviour management strategies for pupils, so that the impact on their education can be minimised. This section should include actions plans and other relevant information. Notificationsshouldnot be stored in CJSM accounts, but transferred to the child’s safeguarding /CP file as soon as possible, with restricted access for those in the setting who need to know. Any safeguarding files containing Missing Persons Notifications from the police must be clearly marked – see Appendix D. CPOMS schools can add a Missing Persons category to their system and record any instances appropriately. They can also include the statement from Appendix D in the Summary Line of the Student Overview. Other computerised systems may have a similar feature which needs to be investigated.

**Section 12: MASH Information**

The MASH refers to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub in Bristol. The MASH involves key children’s safeguarding partners, including the local authority children’s services, police and health services. The MASH will help improve the way information is shared about vulnerable children and make better and more timely decisions about their protection or support.

Referrals to First Response that have insufficient information to make an initial decision about the right response will be referred to the MASH. Decision-makers from the key agencies will bring together relevant information and agree the right approach for the child and their family. Schools will be asked to provide written reports for the MASH, therefore any information relating to these requests and subsequent response should be included in this section.

**Section 13: Other Information**

Each safeguarding situation is unique and this is likely to be reflected in any file that is compiled. This section should contain any relevant information not covered in any of the other sections. If this becomes a significant section it could be subdivided as appropriate.

**Access to Child Protection and Safeguarding Files**

**School Staff**

Practitioners should use their judgement when making decisions on what information to share and when to follow organisation procedures or consult with their manager if in doubt. **The most important consideration is whether sharing information is likely to safeguard and protect a child**. Advice on the principles of information sharing can be found in the government guidance, Information Sharing, HM Government: 2018.

**Pupils and Parents**

* A child or young person, who is the subject of a child protection or safeguarding record, has a right to access their personal record, unless to do so would affect their health or well-being or that of another person, or would be likely to prejudice an ongoing criminal investigation.
* Similarly, parents (i.e. those with parental responsibility in law) are entitled to see their child’s child protection file, unless to do so would affect the child’s health wellbeing or that of another person or potentially prejudice an ongoing criminal investigation. In some cases where the child is deemed competent, the pupil may be entitled to refuse access to their parents.
* The school should take legal advice about sharing information with parents if they have particular concerns about doing so, for example if there are queries about parental responsibility.
* Generally it is deemed to be good practice to share all information held, unless there is a valid reason to withhold it, e.g. if to do so would place the child at risk of significant harm. If a parent makes a request to access the records on a child’s behalf, this should be done in writing.
* When a child or parent wishes to see the child’s safeguarding/child protection record, the school should consider any third party information contained within. Any third party information, such as health assessments or social work reports, police notifications and MARAC information is the property of the original agency. Schools should seek permission from these third parties before releasing their information to the child or parent. Consideration should also be given to information supplied by other pupils relevant to a safeguarding concern or the reference by name of a child other than the pupil who is the subject to the record. Such information should be considered on a case by case basis, and if necessary removed from the file before disclosing records, unless consent is obtained from the individual/s concerned (or their parents / carer on their behalf). Care should be taken to ensure all identifying information is removed from the copy of the record to be shared when applicable. CPOMS school staff are able to run reports that have the student/staff names redacted based on legal names. Staff are also able to edit the content to ensure that they can run reports report containing only information that has been consented to be shared. Schools can run the report in a draft view to double check before being provided to the parent/child in the suitable format. Similar facilities may exist in other computerised systems that will need to be confirmed.

**Other professionals**

‘Effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision’ (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018). The effective sharing of information is not only important in the provision of early help where problems are emerging but also the provision of effective child protection services.

* ‘all organisations should have arrangements in place which set out clearly the processes and the principles for sharing information between each other, with other professionals and with the local safeguarding partnership arrangements.
* no professional should assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to keeping a child safe. If a professional has concerns about a child’s welfare and believes they are suffering or likely to suffer harm, then they should share the information with local authority children’s social care’.

**References**

**NSPCC Education: Learning From Case Reviews**

[**https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/education/**](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/education/)

**Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018**

[**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/741314/Keeping\_Children\_Safe\_in\_Education\_\_3\_September\_2018\_14.09.18.pdf**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/741314/Keeping_Children_Safe_in_Education__3_September_2018_14.09.18.pdf)

**Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018**

[**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/729914/Working\_Together\_to\_Safeguard\_Children-2018.pdf**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/729914/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children-2018.pdf)

**Information Sharing:**  **Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers 2018**

[**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/721581/Information\_sharing\_advice\_practitioners\_safeguarding\_services.pdf**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf)

**BSCB Guidance on the Transfer of a Child Protection/Safeguarding File to another Educational Setting**

[**https://bristolsafeguarding.org/media/1162/guidance-on-transfer-info-in-education.pdf**](https://bristolsafeguarding.org/media/1162/guidance-on-transfer-info-in-education.pdf)

**APPENDIX A**

**School Name and Logo**

**Safeguarding Incident/Concern Form**

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| --- | --- |
| **Pupil First Name** | **Pupil Last Name** |
| **Date of Birth**  | **Year Group** |
| **Date of incident/ Concern DD/MM/YY** |
| **Time of incident** |
| **Details of the incident/concern\* (WHO is involved; WHAT has happened; WHERE has the incident taken place: WHEN did it occur)** |
| **Any other relevant information (context – what may have led to the incident , witnesses, immediate action taken)\***  |
| **Action taken\*** |
| **Name of Person completing the form (Please Print)** |
| **Signature of person completing the form****Date DD/MM/YY** |

**\*Continue on a separate sheet if necessary**

**APPENDIX B**

**School Name and Logo**

**Safeguarding Front Sheet**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pupil First Name:**  | **Pupil Last Name:** | **Date of birth:** **DD/MM/YY** |
| **Any other name by which child is known:**  |
| **Unique Pupil Number (UPN)** |
| **Home address:**  | **Current address (if different)**  |
| **Family members i.e. parents / carers / siblings:**  |
| **Name**  | **Relationship**  | **Address**  | **Telephone/ other contact details** |
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| **Date file started:**  |
| **Are records held in school relating to other connected children? (f yes please state)** |
| **Contact details of other professionals**  |
| **Name**  | **Agency**  | **Address**  |
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**APPENDIX C**

**School Name and Logo**

**Safeguarding Chronology**

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| **Name of Pupil:** | **Date of birth:**  |
| **Date** | **Significant event/incident/meeting/****referral** | **Name and signature**  |
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**APPENDIX D**

### Transfer of files containing Domestic Abuse Notifications from Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Should a child, who has domestic abuse notifications recorded on their child protection/safeguarding file, transfer to a school, early years setting, Post 16 or other educational provider, the following statement **must** be sent with the file and **displayed prominently** to ensure staff in the receiving school will be made aware:

**“This file contains Domestic Abuse Notifications that have been shared with a Bristol School, Early Years or Further Education Provider under a joint protocol agreement between Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Bristol Education Providers for the purpose of protecting and supporting children and young people.**

**This information remains the property of Avon and Somerset Constabulary and, as such, must not be shared with any parties without the express permission of the owner. If you need to discuss this further, please contact Bristol Safeguarding Coordination Unit, Tel. 0117 952 9456.”**

1. **Transfer of files containing Missing Persons Notifications from Avon and Somerset Constabulary**

Should a child, who has missing persons notifications recorded on their child protection/safeguarding file, transfer to a school, early years setting, Post 16 or other educational provider, the following statement **must** be sent with the file and **displayed prominently** to ensure staff in the receiving school will be made aware:

**“This file contains Missing Persons Notifications that have been shared with a Bristol School, Early Years or Further Education Provider under a joint protocol agreement between Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Bristol Education Providers for the purpose of protecting and supporting children and young people.**

**This information remains the property of Avon and Somerset Constabulary and, as such, must not be shared with any parties without the express permission of the owner. If you need to discuss this further, please contact Bristol Safeguarding Coordination Unit, Tel. 0117 952 9456”**

1. **Transfer of files containing Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) information**

Should a child, who has MARAC information recorded on their child protection/safeguarding file, transfer to a school, early years setting, Post 16 or other educational provider, the following statement **must** be sent with the file and **displayed prominently** to ensure staff in the receiving school will be made aware

**“This file contains confidential MARAC information, please be aware:**

**Information discussed at MARAC is strictly confidential and must not be disclosed to third parties without the agreement of the MARAC Chair. MARAC information should be kept in the confidential section of files. The perpetrator should not be informed a MARAC has taken place. Therefore it is not appropriate for professionals to mention or include information in relation to MARAC in any reports, unless they are able to do so in an appropriately restricted manner.**

**The MARAC minutes state who was nominated to feedback appropriate information to the victim following the meeting. The victim should not been shown the minutes as they contain confidential information about the perpetrator.”**