

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SERVICE

Recording Policy

POLICY INFORMATION SHEET

Name of Document	Recording Policy
Reference Number	CYP/CC/02
Service area	Children and Families Services, People Directorate.
Target Audience	All staff in Children and Families Services
Forum Policy/Procedure/Strategy was approved	Children and Families Services Senior Leadership Team (CiN Divisional Manager via email)
Date policy is effective from	March 2021
Date review due	March 2023
Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory (all named staff must adhere to guidance) • Optional (procedures and practice can vary between teams) 	Mandatory
Location of Document	tri.x – Halton Children’s Services Online Procedures
Related document(s)	Child in Need Procedures Pan Cheshire Child Protection Procedures Fostering Procedures Adoption procedures Children in Care Procedures Children with Disabilities Policy and Procedures Children Act 1989/2004 Data Protection Act 2018 Freedom of Information Act 2000 Caldicott Principles Working Together to Safeguard Children
Superseded document(s)	Recording Policy 2006, 2012, 2018
Responsible officer(s)	Divisional Manager, Children in Need
Any other relevant information	

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy applies to all information and documentation held by Children and Family Services about service users within manual and electronic case records.
- 1.2 The purpose of a case record/file is to:
- Provide a primary record of involvement with service users.
 - Provide information about staff working practice
 - Provide management information
 - Be a source of evidence in inquiries and complaints
 - Records key events for the child
 - Records significant decisions
- 1.3 The benefits of good case recording are that it:
- Supports effective partnerships
 - Makes staff accountable
 - Focuses involvement
 - Ensures continuity when workers change or are unavailable
 - Assists management oversight

2. Definitions

- 2.1 The case file is an electronic file, which contains information about the individual or family. The case file can contain a number of volumes stretching across a number of years and/or transfers between teams.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Contemporaneous Notes

It is acknowledged that when workers are visiting families and taking phone calls they may take some hand written notes. These do not form part of the primary/official record and should be destroyed once the electronic record is completed. **All case recording must be recorded on Eclipse within 5 working days.**

- 2.2 The case file should provide a written account of the work with an individual or family which details:
- Individual contacts with the child, young person, members of their family and professionals.
 - The work to be done and its objectives
 - Procedures and processes followed
 - The assessment of need
 - The plan of intervention
 - The timing, process and outcomes of reviews

3. Case recording standards

- 3.1 All case recording will be in plain language (avoiding professional or bureaucratic jargon) that is easily understood.
- 3.2 Arrangements will be made on an individual basis for case record/observations to be available in an appropriate format for individual service users (e.g. other languages, tapes, large print).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

Support to facilitate communication might be needed for children with disabilities or for children where English is not their first language. Where the use of communication aids or an interpreter is dispensed the reasons for doing so must be recorded on the case file.

- 3.3 Case recording should reflect a partnership with service users and their views should be incorporated in the record.
- 3.4 The case file is made up of confidential documents. Service users consent to information sharing should be obtained before any information contained in the record is disclosed.
- 3.5 The only exception to this is child protection enquiries when information may be shared without consent in order to protect the child.
- 3.6 Records should be accurate, succinct and factually based.
- 3.7 All case recording will reflect the Council's commitment to anti oppressive practice.
- 3.8 **Day to day records must be recorded in Eclipse within 5 working days** of the contact (except in the case of Child Protection Investigation where the recording should be entered within 1 working day).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

- All contacts must be recorded - even if no access/no response to the individual is gained.
- If a visit is made involving more than one professional whose actions are recorded in the same case file, it should be agreed prior to the visit who will be completing the record of the visit. Duplicate records should **not** be completed, as the record of the visit should be a complete account of actions taken and the reasons for them.
- If the visit is in relation to statutory responsibilities or Section 47/safeguarding actions it must be the responsible social worker who completes the record.
- If a referral is made to another agency for additional services, the purpose of the referral must be recorded on the case notes.

- 3.9 Day to day case case notes should be kept in chronological sequence.
- 3.10 Day to day case notes/forms will usually indicate
 - The type of contact

- Purpose and outcome of visits.
- Who was seen and spoken to.
- Some brief detail and refer to other documents for further explanation.
- If a video record of an interview was made, its existence must be noted on the case record/observation .
- In some circumstances (e.g. child protection enquiries) it will be necessary to keep more detailed case notes with any documents attached to the case notes.

3.11 All types of contact should be recorded on the electronic case record on Eclipse. This includes phone contact, home visits, letter and messages (including e-mail) relevant to the case.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

The time and date of all events should be recorded on the electronic case record. The names of all children and adults present during the visit should be recorded. The case holding social worker must ensure the child and parent records are kept up to date, this includes current address and email to ensure any correspondence is delivered to the correct recipient.

3.12 A transfer summary on Eclipse should be completed at the point of transfer to another worker or team. The transfer summary should detail:

- The reason for involvement
- The assessment, plan, actions undertaken

The transfer of responsibility should be recorded on the case notes.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

When a child is a care leaver and is receiving continued services from both Children's and Adult Services the child's file will remain open.

3.13 A closing summary should be completed when the case has been approved for closure. This should contain:

- The reason for involvement in the case
- Actions undertaken and outcomes achieved
- Other professional's involvement in the case and their views
- Details of who will provide continuing support to the child and family.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

- Service users' access to records should be promoted from the start of involvement.
- Service users should contribute to assessments and plans and their views recorded.
- There should be recorded in the case notes how assessments and plans were shared with the service user.

4. E-mail

4.1 E-mail is often used now where previously communications would have taken place using paper documentation. E-mails may therefore document case decisions and business activities and in doing so become essential records of those transactions.

E-mail records therefore need to be managed under the Directorate's records management system like any other record.

4.2 Every member of staff is responsible for:

- Ensuring e-mail addresses are correct and up to date.
- Creation of e-mail records which are specific and relevant to their business purpose and which do not include personal comment or identifying details of children to whom the record will not apply.
- Identifying e-mails and their attachments that are appropriate for retention to be included within the case notes on Eclipse, because of their business function or content. This is a responsibility for both the sender and the recipient of an e-mail communication.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

E-mails sent to and received from Legal Services must be uploaded as case notes with legal attachments in Eclipse. Please note they are covered by 'client privilege and as such should not be disclosed to other parties.

4.3 Only records pertinent to the individual child to whom the case file applies should be included. There should not be reference to other children and there should not be reference to personal issues concerning the sender or recipient of the e-mail.

4.4 The e-mail record must include the transmission data that identifies the sender and the recipient(s) and the date and time the message was sent and/or received.

4.5 If an e-mail communication contains attachments and it is determined that the communication is a part of the case documentation, the attachments must also be included as an attachment the case notes on Eclipse as they are a related item that provides context for the message.

4.6 If an e-mail is sent back and forth and the most recent communication has the entire sequence of correspondence, it is only necessary to keep the final communication (including the previous communications and replies) as long as it also contains attachments and other data such as the sender, receivers, date, and time, that are necessary for a complete record.

4.7 Further guidance on the use of Directorate e-mail is included in the Acceptable Use Policy on the Intranet.

5. Case file standards

5.1 Every child has their own electronic record on Eclipse. There may also be a paper file in existence prior to electronic records being kept.

5.2 An electronic file will be created once a referral has been accepted and work has commenced with the service user.

5.3 Documents such as birth certificates or Court Orders should be scanned onto Eclipse.

6. Procedure for closing cases

- 6.1 Where Social Worker recommendation following assessment is for No Further Action, the completed assessment will be submitted to the Manager for authorisation.
- 6.2 There must be a visit undertaken to the family and the child seen, prior to closure i.e. within 2 weeks of the closure date.
- 6.3 In authorising an assessment the manager is confirming agreement to close off Children's Social Care involvement.
- 6.4 The Social Worker will complete the closing summary on Eclipse, and submit to the Principal Manager / Practice Lead for authorisation.
- 6.5 The Admin officer is to send out letters to parents and professionals as requested by the Social Worker
- 6.6 An open case must NOT be closed off on Eclipse until the Manager has authorised case closure. The Principal Manager /Practice Lead must ensure the following has been completed:
 - Up to date chronology
 - Genogram
 - Closure summary
 - All case recordings up to date
 - All documents authorised and closed
 - A visit undertaken within 2 weeks of closure
 - Closure letter sent

7. Storage

- 7.1 Paper files retrieved from archive should be stored in a locked filing cabinet except when being worked on by the worker.
- 7.2 No files or paperwork should be left unsecured on desks at times when the office is closed.
- 7.3 Removal of files from the office must be authorised by the worker's line manager. The worker must ensure the safety and security of removed files at all times.

8. Retention and disposal

FILE	RETENTION PERIOD
Looked After Child	75 years after their 18 th birthday
Looked After Child Deceased before 18 th birthday	35 years from date of death
Privately Fostered Child	75 years after their 18 th birthday
Adoption	100 years (All Adoption enquiries will be retained for 10 years)
Adopted Child Deceased before 18 th birthday	100 years
Adopted Child Deceased after 18 th birthday	15 years from date of death
Adopters	25 years from date of closure
Deceased adopters/withdrawn without child being placed	10 years
Foster Carers	35 years after have ceased to foster
Child Protection – all case files of children subject to s47 enquiries, whether or not they subsequently become subject of a child protection plan.	35 years from date of closure
Child Protection Unit	Review when the youngest child in the family reaches 18 years of age so file contains only relevant documentation. Retain for 35 years from closure
All other Children's Social Care files	10 years from date of closure
SEND	35 years from date of closure
Adults who pose a risk to children	Permanently
CPR Missing Persons Records	1 year from date of notification
Financial	7 years

9. Manager's responsibilities

- 9.1 Managers will record management oversight and advice they give or decisions they make on the case notes.
- 9.2 Managers will approve and authorise all assessments for example Child Protection and Child in Care plans and court reports.

10. Access to records

Please refer to Halton Borough Council's [Subject Access Requests Policy](#)

- 10.1 Information from records may be provided in response to statutory enquiries from other agencies only if the subject of the enquiry has provided written consent to the enquiring agency for the information to be disclosed.
- 10.2 Information provided in response to statutory enquiries must be approved by a Manager. If the name of any person other than the subject of the enquiry is to be

disclosed within this information, consultation must first take place with Legal Services. This applies whether a third party is a child or an adult.

- 10.3 A guardian acting for a child in court proceedings may access the child's record and make any copies required of documents contained within it by authority of the court. A record should be kept of the documents the Guardian requires copying.

Appendix 1: Confidentiality of data

Caldicott and Data Protection Principles

The Caldicott principles and Data Protection principles can be complicated; this appendix is intended as a guide and is in no way a definitive statement of the law or of Council policy.

The Caldicott recommendations are similar to those outlined in the Data Protection Act 1998 and both reinforce the importance of confidentiality. There are eight Data Protection and six Caldicott principles for handling personal information.

All children, young people and carers who come into contact with us expect that their personal information will not be disclosed without their permission except in the most exceptional circumstances.

What Can you Do to Keep Information Confidential?

Ensure that you have read and understood the Directorate's Information Security Policy.

Ensure that documentation held on file relates only to that person.

A Panel agenda listing all children being considered by the Panel should be amended to list just each child whose file it will be on.

Ensure that all the information written is relevant for the person's file that it will be held on.

It is everybody's responsibility to ensure that information is treated as confidential and kept secure.

Further details of the Data Protection Act and the Caldicott good practice principles are available via the Intranet.