



# Record Keeping

## Practice Guidance

Target audience: All staff in Children's Services

Date effective from: February 2018

Date of review: February 2019



**This document should be read in conjunction with Coventry City Council Children's Services Recording Policy.**

[http://coventrychildcare.proceduresonline.com/files/recording\\_policy.pdf](http://coventrychildcare.proceduresonline.com/files/recording_policy.pdf)

It is essential that across Coventry Children's Services we keep up-to-date and accurate records. What is recorded about children, young people, and their families can have a huge impact on what happens to them, with professional judgements and decisions made on the basis of what is recorded. Case recordings can assist social care practitioners in their report writing, can aid duty workers when picking up an issue with a child or family, can be requested as evidence in Care Proceedings, and is an essential part of evidencing practice and accountability. Early help and social care records can also provide children with information about their families, and their life story, that they might not otherwise have.

When visiting a child, young person and/or their family, wherever possible, contemporaneous notes (notes which are written at the time) should be taken. This can help ensure that what is recorded about a child and family is accurate, and that the child and families voice can be heard in assessments, for example using direct quotes.

Social care and early help practitioners need to be aware that note taking can create a barrier to building relationships with children, young people, and their families. Always ensure that you explain why you are taking notes, think about the way in which you position yourself and your body language, and ask children and young people if they are happy for you to take notes (please refer to the Direct Work with Children and Young People Practice Guidance [http://www.proceduresonline.com/coventry/childcare/user\\_controlled\\_lcms\\_area/uploaded\\_files/Direct%20Work%20with%20Children%20and%20Young%20People%20-%20Good%20Practice%20Exemplar.pdf](http://www.proceduresonline.com/coventry/childcare/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Direct%20Work%20with%20Children%20and%20Young%20People%20-%20Good%20Practice%20Exemplar.pdf)). Think about ways in which you could take notes which can empower a family. For example, checking back what they have said, positioning yourself so they can see what you are recording, or using visual methods such as the Signs of Safety mapping tool.

Ensure handwritten notes are stored securely, are scanned and uploaded onto the child's record if required, and are shredded after use. Handwritten notes should be dated and signed.

It is imperative that case recordings are kept up-to-date and that case notes are completed on Protocol as soon as is practically possible. In Coventry, case notes should be completed by the

practitioner who has undertaken the task within two working days, or in line with the relevant statutory guidance. Where work is undertaken to assess whether a child, young person or adult may be at risk of significant harm, or to protect them from this, all relevant information must be recorded, if at all possible, within the same working day, and at the latest within twenty-four hours. Remember that if something is not recorded then it did not happen.

Children, young people and their families have a right to know what is being recorded about them. Practitioners should ensure that they are made aware that records are being created and kept about them, the reasons why we keep these records and how their information may be shared.

All case recordings should be written in clear, plain English and without jargon or abbreviations. It is essential that records can be easily understood and accessible. If there is any doubt in what the terminology that you are using could mean, then you need to define it.

Ensure all recordings are respectful, demonstrating sensitivity to difference in culture, language, ethnicity, race, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and sensory impairment. Avoid language which stereotypes and labels people. If you do use a descriptive word such as 'aggressive', this needs to be supported with evidence and information.

Records need to distinguish between fact, opinion and hearsay. Facts is information that is accurate and direct observations of events. Opinions are views about the significance of information or interpretation of observed behavior. It is important to be clear about the factual basis for any professional opinions that you record. Hearsay is information that has been told to you by others, which is relevant to the case but which you cannot personally verify.

Ensure that the wishes, feelings and views of the children, young people and families that we work with are recorded. Where ever possible this should be recorded in the words of the child, young person or family member. Where your professional opinion differs, record this also and outline where your opinions differ.

It is essential that all practitioners are mindful that a child or young person may one day request to see what has been written about them or their family.