Robust Record Keeping & Referrals

A Guide (including Checklist)

Effective record keeping:

Keeping clear, accurate, and timely records is essential for safeguarding. Records should be factual, concise, and include dates, times, and key details. They must be stored securely and only shared with the appropriate individuals. Good record keeping ensures concerns are tracked, patterns are identified, and appropriate action is taken to protect children. If in doubt, always record and report.

Using correct language when referring:

The language used in safeguarding records and risk assessments is crucial, as it shapes how concerns are understood, communicated, and acted upon. Clarity, neutrality, and precision ensure assessments are accurate, objective, and effective. Avoid assumptions, opinions, or emotive terms, and use direct quotes where possible. Risk perception is influenced by emotions, so it is essential to reflect the likelihood and impact of harm using appropriate language that evidences probability. For example: "I believe that, on the balance of probability, this person is likely to be at risk of significant harm because...".

Describing risk probability:

Using clear and precise language when assessing risk is essential. Very unlikely refers to an event that could happen but is almost certain not to. Possible means an event could happen, while suspected indicates there is evidence suggesting something has happened or may happen. Likely means it is more probable than not, and almost certain refers to something that will happen unless action is taken. Choosing the right term ensures accurate risk assessment and appropriate safeguarding responses.

Referrals for children:

Threshold documents define when a child or vulnerable individual is at risk and when intervention is necessary, helping professionals decide if further investigation or a formal response is required. Each local authority has its own threshold document, sometimes called a Continuum of Needs Matrix or Threshold Matrix, outlining criteria for when concerns demand action. These documents specify indicators, such as signs of abuse, neglect, or harm, that trigger the need for further action, like referrals to social services or the police. Effective record keeping is essential for tracking concerns and ensuring appropriate safeguarding responses.

Toolkits:

Contextual safeguarding neighbourhood assessment framework

Assessing parents capacity to change

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ROBUST RECORD KEEPING CHECKLIST
FOR ALL THOSE WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

- Details of whom is completing the record of concern – full name, date, time recording, department ☐

- Record the legal name of the person of concern and Date Of Birth ☐

- Note the date & time of the incident (in chronological order) ☐

- Where did the incident take place? ☐

- How and to whom was the concern raised (eg. by caregiver, professional, service user) ☐

- Factual description of the concern (use bullet points) ☐

- Quote exact words said by anyone involved ☐

- Was anyone else involved/witnessed the concern? ☐

- Complete a body map (if injury seen, disclosed or suspected) and describe injuries in detail) ☐

- What actions have/will be taken and why? ☐

- Avoid jargon/acronyms/judgements/assumptions ☐

- Submit as soon as possible and inform the DSL/Manager you have done so ☐

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Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; everyone has a duty of care to protect children from harm.