

Recording concerns and creating an individual safeguarding file: thinking about good practice.

In order to think about good recording practice for safeguarding, we reviewed the paperwork which childminders most often use to capture concerns (Pacey and Morton Michel paperwork), we thought about apps, looked at the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership advice 'Record Keeping Guidance for Pupil Safeguarding/Child Protection Files' and consulted with Enhanced Provision Placement Officers and EP childminders.

What do we mean by 'concerns'?

Here we are talking about safeguarding concerns, rather than concerns about a child's development. Of course safeguarding concerns could be having an impact on development and you might well be concerned about both.

- A safeguarding concern could be about the **physical safety** and supervision of a child at home, for example: you notice children arrive in the back of a van with no car seats; a parent mentions their two year old fell off a top bunk; when leaving your house, a child runs up the street, away from the parent.
- A safeguarding concern could be about the **care of the child**, for example; you had to draw the parent's attention to an aspect of the child's health that you feel has not been given appropriate medical attention; an underage person is sent to pick up a child; a child or parent or someone else says something that does not sit right with you.
- A safeguarding concern may be an aspect of the **child's behaviour** which is giving you cause for concern: a child is very aggressive to other children; a child is listless and does not engage in play.

A 'cause for concern', in other words, a 'safeguarding concern' should be recorded. Even though the concern may not warrant a referral to First Response you should have a conversation with the parent and how the concern could be remedied or prevented from happening again. You should log what was discussed and ask the parent to sign. The signed log, describing what happened and your ensuing conversation, not only provides further clarification; it also protects you against some accusation, at a later date, that you never told the parent about your concerns - this can happen! It can be difficult to be so upfront with parents, but in the long run it is for the better, because it creates the right professional boundaries. When confronting an issue, it can help to have made it clear from the outset that you are duty-bound to ask for a signature following a significant incident or conversation and that this transparency is to the parents' benefit.

N.B. Although you work in partnership with parents and communicate concerns, you might not always feel it is appropriate or necessary to get parents to sign the *Record of Concerns* **on every occasion**, such as in the case of recording lower level concerns

about the quality of care – dirty bottle, inadequate clothing, slightly grubby, seem to arrive hungry, for instance. This is not to avoid transparency, but rather to be sensitive to parents who might lack confidence and feel undermined by repeatedly signing a log of perceived criticism of their parenting ability. This is a matter of professional judgement - low level concerns might not require a parent's signature on every occasion.

What should I put in a *Record of Concern*?

When you record your concern it will be helpful to bear these prompts in mind

- Date and time of concern
- A brief description of what prompted your concern. What have you seen or heard?
- Were there any witnesses or other people present at the time
- What action did you take? What did you say to the parent/carer with Parental responsibility?
- When you talked to the adult with parental responsibility what was their response?

Some general advice

Recorded concerns which do not meet the threshold for referral to First Response, but which are nevertheless safeguarding concerns, can help to provide an overview. You might see an emerging pattern or an accumulation of concern that reaches a threshold, at which point you decide that you need to liaise with another professional or make a referral. If you know that there are other professionals working with a child or the child's siblings, such as school teachers, you can liaise if you have safeguarding concerns – consideration of confidentiality should not be a barrier to information-sharing when there are safeguarding concerns.

When deciding whether or not you need to make a note of an incident or something that was said, it is wise to 'forward - think'. Predicting or having a sense of when something may turn out to be significant in the future comes with experience. Your recording may be needed for, for example: an Enhanced Provision review; a multi- agency review; a child protection investigation; as evidence in care proceedings; or as evidence for the police in a criminal prosecution.

Good recording practice can provide protection for you in your professional role. Childminders who collect children may decide to carry the *Pre-existing Injuries Record* in the car so that they get the parent's signature at the start of a session, at the point when a pre-existing injury is noticed and discussed. To give another example; an incident occurs at a toddler group when you intervene to protect your minded child. Being aware that this can make you vulnerable to an allegation, you decide to make a note of what happened and what was said. Another example: a parent makes a

passing, critical comment about some aspect of your care. You make a note of the discussion and what was decided.

There are two other types of record which may feed into your *Cause for Concern Record*:

- your *Accident and Incident Record*, which is for something (but not necessarily a concern) which happens while the child is in your care and
- the *Pre - Existing Injuries Record*, for injuries or marks with which the child already has when they arrive at your setting (again, it does not have to be a concern).

Can I use Pacey or Morton Michel *Cause for Concern Record*?

Be aware that Morton Michel's *Causes for Concern* paperwork allows you to put one child on one side of the page and a different child on the other side! Not recommended! Just keep a page for one child.

In Pacey's *Record of Concerns* you have the option to give the parent a carbon copy. This is helpful. Morton Michel does not provide a carbon copy, although you could take a photo or photocopy the record to share with the parents.

With both Pacey and Morton Michel's paperwork on *Record of Concerns* you have the option to tear out the sheet and create a separate safeguarding file. This is helpful if you need to create an individual safeguarding file on a child

Some Enhanced Provision childminders use a combination of their own rolling document on concerns (such as a Word document on the laptop, using a separate one for each child, of course) and additionally, a book with carbon copies to share more significant concerns with a parent and get a signature. Enhanced Provision childminders have a higher instance of concerns and you may feel that you have no need to keep a rolling document, in other words, you may feel that the Pacey or Morton Michel *Record of Concern* is sufficient for occasional use.

What about using an app to record concerns?

The childminders we consulted made the following comments.

“There isn't really a place to record concerns in Kinderly”

“Baby's Days is good but I use it more for recording learning – it is difficult to explain why I don't use it to record concerns. I use a book which Enhanced Provision has given me with a carbon copy so I can give a copy to parents. A piece of paper is more immediate. Baby's Days does have a section for recording concerns but it is just a blank page without prompts.”

“I posted one child's record in Tapestry to the wrong parent! So that's why I am careful to use a carbon- copied book for concerns.”

“What would happen to the information if the app went out of commission?”

“I would have to print out something from the app to create a safeguarding file. It is easier for me to keep a Word document on my lap top, which is quick and easy and password protected.”

What can we learn from KBSP advice to schools on safeguarding files?

We are advised by Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership to start a safeguarding or child protection file for **an individual child** when we become aware of any concerns: in other words you do **not** need a safeguarding file for all children.

A safeguarding file is basically your noted concerns, plus additional information. Any handwritten notes, drawings, texts, signed parental notes, medical records; anything that could be relevant and might be needed for evidence should be kept in the child's safeguarding file. Records should always be dated, a safeguarding file should be kept confidentially and securely, and KBSP also advises that the safeguarding file should follow this basic order, as a helpful guideline (remember this is for schools).

- Basic details about the child DOB, etc (If a child has a social worker or another professional working with the family you could keep a name and contact here).
- Chronology of key events or incidents (Pacey or Morton Michel *Causes for Concern* sheets, kept in date order, would show the timeline of events, as would a dated, rolling, Microsoft Word document ,or hand- written document)
- Attendance (which can be a cause for concern)
- Causes for concern.
- Referrals to other agencies - First Response/ Families in Focus/ information which you passed directly to a social worker or other professional, such as a Placement Officer
- Any reports/minutes from multi- agency meetings and any communications with other professional about concerns
- Any communications with the child or parents.
- Other information

Transferring a safeguarding file

Creating an individual safeguarding allows for transfer of the safeguarding file to another setting. The KBSP '*Guidance on the Transfer of a Child Protection Safeguarding File to another Educational Setting* says:

“At times of transition, it is an opportunity for careful, proactive planning and sharing of information”. The KBSP advice says that the safeguarding file should always be:

- transferred separately from the educational file
- securely transferred by hand or recorded delivery
- receipted - a receipt should be obtained from the receiving setting

- could contain just one concern or could be an extensive file (it does not have to have reached the threshold of referral to First Response to be have become a 'safeguarding file')
- a copy should be retained by original setting
- kept up to date by the DSL (that is the childminder)

Additionally, KPSP guidance tells us that the receiving setting should be informed within five days of the child being transferred that a safeguarding file exists; if a social worker is involved, that should be clear on file ; if the file contains a report from a third party/agency then the owner of that report should be aware of the transfer.

Do parents have to give consent for the transfer of a safeguarding file?

In general parents are entitled to see the safeguarding file if they have parental responsibility, but there are instances when a safeguarding file should not be shown, as in the case of domestic abuse and putting some an adult or a child at risk. Consent is not needed (because it is a safeguarding file) but in general it is courtesy to inform parents of the transfer.*

**This information is not in the KBSP guidance document, but it is something on which we took advice.*

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