



## **Education and Young People's Services Directorate**

# **GUIDELINES FOR SAFEGUARDING RECORD KEEPING IN EDUCATION SETTINGS**

**November 2016**

# Contents

These guidelines are for Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) working within Education Settings. This guidance considers areas of practice with exemplar forms as appropriate. The forms are also available electronically from your Area Education Safeguarding Adviser or the [Kent Education Learning and Skills Information \(KELSI\) website](#)

**These Guidelines were initially approved by the KSCB Safeguarding in Education Sub Group in 2009 following a recommended action from a serious case review. They have been reviewed on an annual basis since then.**

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# 1 Introduction:

- 1.1 The EYPS Education Safeguarding Team has produced these guidelines for Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) in education settings to assist them in establishing and maintaining record keeping systems that support effective safeguarding practice. The importance of good, clear child welfare and child protection record keeping has been repeatedly highlighted in many Serious Case Reviews, including the 2013 high profile enquiry into the death of Daniel Pelka.
- 1.2 The statutory guidance for schools and colleges “Keeping Children Safe in Education” most recently published in September 2016, highlights that a key task of the DSL is to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals (p.60). The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (EYFS) 2014 also identifies the needs for early years providers to maintain safeguarding records.
- 1.3 As part of their “Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills’ handbook (2016) Ofsted will be looking for evidence that *‘written records are made in an appropriate and timely way and are held securely where adults working with children or learners are concerned about their safety or welfare. Those records are shared appropriately and, where necessary, with consent’* (p.7). They will also look to ensure that records of any referrals *‘are retained and there is evidence that any agreed action following the referral has been taken promptly to protect the child or learner from further harm’* (p.7). DSLs should be aware of *‘any risks associated with children and learners offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, self-harming, going missing, being vulnerable to radicalisation or being sexually exploited’* are known by the adults who care for them and shared with the local authority children’s social care service or other relevant agency. There should be evidence that plans and help is in place to reduce risks and should also be evidence that risks are kept under regular review (p.8).
- 1.4 Promoting the welfare of and safeguarding children is a whole setting task. Ensuring all members of staff know when and how to record concerns for a child’s welfare, however small or apparently insignificant is an essential part of the DSL role. Good record keeping is an important part of a school’s accountability to children and their families and will assist DSLs in meeting their key responsibility to respond appropriately to welfare concerns for children. Records should be factually accurate, relevant, up to date and auditable. They should support monitoring, risk-assessment and planning for children and enable informed and timely referrals to be made when necessary. A well maintained chronology is a fundamental part of good record keeping. Schools/settings should also ensure records clearly document the decision making of the DSL, as well as any justifications for these decisions.

## 2 Establishing a standard recording process and approach

- 2.1 The use of a standard “welfare concern” form for all staff irrespective of their role and an aide memoire to assist in its completion is strongly recommended. The exemplar (Appendix i) is designed to enable the setting logo to be inserted and it is suggested that this is photocopied onto coloured paper to promote familiarisation and shared ownership of the “concern form” (in these guidelines known “the green form”). The form and aide memoire must be easily accessible to all staff and depending on the size and type of setting should be available in a range of settings for example, the staff room, school/setting office, Headteachers, DSL’s, Managers, Pastoral care staff offices.
- 2.2 DSLs may find it helpful to use a whole staff meeting to introduce the form to staff. Ideally this should be in the context of a safeguarding training / raising awareness session. Where this is not possible, meetings of each staff group e.g. teaching, classroom assistant, mid-day supervision etc. should be used. These meetings will provide an opportunity to remind staff of their safeguarding responsibilities and the expectations on them to report and record concerns. Staff meetings can be a useful forum for clarifying what you as the DSL would view as a “welfare concern”. The aide memoire may be used to help with staff briefings.
- 2.3 Some staff groups may already have a range of methods for recording information about children e.g. group/class-based notebooks or diaries. It is however important that all members of staff are aware that welfare concerns about children should be recorded and kept centrally by DSLs and use of other systems (such as group/class notebooks) run the risk of essential information being lost. See section 4 for further guidance.
- 2.4 In schools/settings where there is a lead DSL who is supported by deputy DSLs (e.g. an appropriate member of staff who has accessed training to the same level as the lead DSL) then there should be a clear system for ensuring that welfare concerns are managed appropriately to prevent duplication and avoid complacency. Examples of this could include the lead DSL being the main point of contact and staff should only speak with a deputy DSL if the lead is not available, or for larger schools/settings they may consider asking sites/year groups/departments to report to a deputy DSL with then having regular and formally recorded meetings between the lead and any deputies. The lead DSL will however need to ensure they maintain a clear oversight of all safeguarding concerns (see section 12).
- 2.5 Lead DSLs may find it helpful to formally meet on a regular basis with any deputy DSLs and/or other pastoral staff to ensure information sharing takes place. An example of how schools/settings could record this is included in appendix vi.
- 2.6 It is acknowledged that many schools and settings employ a range of “para professional” staff who hold specific pastoral care responsibilities (such as

pupil welfare managers, Family Liaison Officers, Parental Support Advisers etc.) and may have their own systems for recording their ongoing work with children and their families. It is especially important that DSLs are aware of these systems and establish clear processes for sharing information accordingly. In some cases it will be appropriate for pastoral care staff to provide copies of their records for inclusion in children's safeguarding / child protection files. If such records are shared with the DSL, for example as part of staff meetings or informal conversations etc. then this should be formally recorded by the DSL. In all cases where safeguarding incidents or events arise, pastoral care staff must be aware of the need to complete the "welfare concern" form and pass information formally to the DSL.

- 2.7 If other members of staff are involved with supporting children and families in situations which may affect the welfare of children, and keep their own records and details of actions, then these records must be cross referenced and formally recorded by the lead DSL.
- 2.8 Staff should be encouraged to be mindful of the possibility that records may be shared with others at some stage and in exceptional cases, the possibility that they may become evidence in court proceedings. It is therefore essential that Headteachers/Managers and DSLs ensure that such processes are in place and that all members of staff are trained and supervised appropriately in carrying out these arrangements.
- 2.9 It is vital that DSLs notify staff of how they as the safeguarding lead will respond to reported and recorded concerns. 'Keeping children safe in education' 2016 identifies that if members of staff are in doubt about recording requirements, then they should discuss this with the DSL (p.8). Members of staff also need to feel empowered to seek clarification on why concerns have not been reported to the statutory agencies, and it should be made aware that if concerns remain, then a consultation should be sought with the Area Safeguarding Adviser.

### **3 Recording Aide Memoire for staff**

- 3.1 Safeguarding children is a whole school/setting task. All members of staff have an essential role to play in helping to identify welfare concerns and possible indicators of abuse or neglect at an early stage. For some children a "one off" serious incident or concern may occur and you will have no doubt that this must be immediately recorded and reported. Most often however, it is the accumulation of a number of small incidents, events or observations that provide the evidence of harm being caused to a child. It is therefore vital that any concerns members of staff have for a child's welfare, however small, are recorded and passed to the DSL. **All** concerns must be recorded on the Safeguarding Concerns form (Appendix i). If you or your members of staff are in any doubt, then consult with your Area Safeguarding Adviser.

### 3.2 What is a “welfare concern”?

Concerns may arise in one or more of the following areas:

- 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 of behaviour of a parent

### 3.3 What do we record?

Using the safeguarding form, ensure:

- The form is dated in full (day, month and year), signed and the member of staffs details are legible
- The incident / event / observation of concern is described clearly and concisely
- This is written using straightforward language and fact and opinion are differentiated
- If recording a disclosure, the child’s own words are recorded and any questions staff may have asked are included
- Physical marks and injuries are recorded with sufficient detail on a body map where appropriate. School staff should not take photos of injuries. Taking photos of images can be traumatic and distressing for children, and indeed staff. If photos of injuries are required for evidence purposes then this should be done by the Police.
- Any action the DSL has taken
- Oversight of the lead DSL

### 3.4 How to record actions taken in response to staff concerns?

When a welfare concern form is passed to the DSL it is important that it is checked to ensure it is sufficiently detailed and has been dated and signed by the staff member who has reported the concern. If a body map has been completed or there are any other documents referred to in the record, schools should ensure that these are attached, and where appropriate are also dated and signed.

3.5 It is important that DSLs make a record of the action taken and decision making in response to every welfare concern form. The level of detail of this record will clearly depend on the nature and seriousness of the concern but may include:

- Requests to staff for monitoring specific aspects of the child’s presentation, behaviour, attendance etc.

- Discussions and telephone calls (with colleagues, parents and children / young people and other agencies or services)
  - Professional consultations
  - Letters or emails etc. sent and received
  - Referral forms (both for external and education-based services)
- 3.6 A selection of exemplars (Appendices ii, iii, iv & v) can be used for your school/setting record. As with the Welfare concern form, these can be personalised to your school/setting by inserting the school name and logo.

## 4 When and how to start safeguarding / child protection records

- 4.1 Once a welfare concern has been passed to the DSL and a record has been made of the action taken and/or decision making, then these documents will require storage in a separate child protection / safeguarding filing system. **This is regardless of whether formal child protection procedures have been initiated.** For some children, this single record will be the only concern held for them over their time in school or the setting. For others, further information will be brought to you often from a variety of sources over time.
- 4.2 An effective method for storing single or infrequent records of concerns is to file these in alphabetically divided ring binder files. It may be helpful for larger / busier schools/settings to use separate files for each year group. This system is particularly recommended for Primary schools and Early Years settings since this will assist you at the end of the Academic Year with meeting your responsibility to transfer records when children leave the school/setting.
- 4.3 A stand-alone individual file for a child must be started when:
- Concerns for the child and consequently records of these and actions in school/setting are increasing
  - The child has been referred to Specialist Children's Services
  - You have been made aware of the involvement of Specialist Children's Services with the child / family and are contributing to multi agency assessments
- 4.4 It is recommended that DSLs ensure that a number of blank files are made available in preparation, so that record keeping can be appropriate from the beginning.
- 4.5 Where concerns relate to more than one child from the same family, then a separate file for each child should be created. Common records e.g. child protection conference minutes should be duplicated for each file where appropriate.
- 4.6 When an individual file is started it is helpful to use the front sheet (Appendix ii) to enable key information to be easily accessed. It is also recommended

that the child's general record is marked in some way to indicate the presence of a separate confidential file. A coloured sticker (such as below) is one means of doing this.



## 5 What records should be included in a child's safeguarding file?

5.1 Keeping children safe in education 2016 (p. 8) identifies that 'All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing'. Therefore records included within a child's safeguarding file may include the following:

- All school/setting welfare concern forms
- Any notes initially recorded in the form of notebooks or diaries
- Records of discussions, telephone calls and meetings (with colleagues, other agencies or services, parents and children / young people)
- Records of school/setting decision making, as well as action taken and appropriate justifications
- Professional consultations
- Letters sent and received
- Print outs of emails or other electronic communications sent and received
- Referral forms (both for external and education-based services)
- Minutes of meetings (copies for each child as appropriate)
- Formal plans linked to the child (e.g. Child Protection Plan)

5.2 In cases where information is held in this variety of formats it may be helpful to use a ring binder file and organise this on a 'modular' basis for ease of reference i.e. sections titled:

- School/Setting records
- Letters
- Multi-agency records
- Health

## 6 Chronologies

6.1 The importance of understanding concerns for a child in the context of history, time-lines and other known information cannot be underestimated. Chronologies are central to this process and it is **strongly recommended** that these are completed on an ongoing basis as the case progresses. In addition to aiding assessment, a chronology will serve as an important record of school/settings actions and when attached to an Inter Agency Referral form can provide evidence for the reason for the referral.

- 6.2 A chronology should list specific and significant incidents, events and actions taken in relation to the child and where appropriate their family, with a brief explanation or cross-reference to the relevant record within the file.
- 6.3 A chronology is most helpfully stored at the front of a child's safeguarding file alongside the front sheet where it can be quickly accessed and viewed. It should be kept up to date. An exemplar can be found in Appendix iii.

## **7 Storage of records**

- 7.1 Child protection records must be kept separate from all other records relating to that child. Child protection records should be stored in a locked cabinet preferably within the DSL's office with access only to those with direct child protection responsibility for children. It is essential to ensure that the school/settings Leadership Team know the arrangements for access to records in the absence of the DSLs. This should form part of the school/settings child protection policy in respect of how welfare concerns for children will be managed if the DSL is not available.
- 7.2 If any electronic systems are used by the school/setting to store and transfer any child protection files, then this must always take place in accordance with the key principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. Further information on information governance and records management can be accessed on Kelsi: [www.kelsi.org.uk/school-management/data-and-reporting/access-to-information](http://www.kelsi.org.uk/school-management/data-and-reporting/access-to-information)
- 7.3 For Early Year providers, the EYFS 2014 section 3.69 (p.29) states that records must be easily accessible and available. If the provider has prior agreement from Ofsted or the childminder agency with which they are registered, then these records may be kept securely off the premises.

## **8 Sharing information**

- 8.1 All information held by the school/setting should be shared with Specialist Children's Services, police and health professionals as appropriate, where there is a concern that a child is at risk of significant harm. Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 authorises all agencies to share information in these circumstances. Early Help is now part of the KSCB Eligibility Criteria and there should have a protocol for sharing information on lower level concerns that is consistent with statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.
- 8.2 On occasions where safeguarding concerns exist for a child in the context of a family situation and siblings attend other schools or settings, it may be appropriate for the DSL to consult on a confidential basis with the DSL from another school/setting to share and jointly consider concerns. If in any doubt about the appropriateness of this process, advice can be sought from your Area Safeguarding Adviser.

- 8.3 Further guidance is available in the document “Information sharing –advice for safeguarding practitioners published in March 2015”  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice)

## **9 Data Protection**

- 9.1 Records relating to child protection are exempt information under the Education (School Records) Regulation 1989. They can be kept on computer and are exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.
- 9.2 Neither the parent nor the child has an automatic right of access to child protection records. It is however best practice to share information written by staff unless there is a valid reason to withhold it. If an application is made to see the whole record, advice should be sought from your Area Safeguarding Adviser or Area Education Officer (AEO), and the child’s social worker if they have one. All third party information should be removed, or consent sought for its disclosure from source.
- 9.3 Cases of alleged abuse that result in court proceedings may require the school/setting to disclose their records, either through the police or social services. Records (suitably anonymised) may also be requested for use in disciplinary proceedings.
- 9.4 In all court cases, a requesting solicitor or other third party should be advised that a Witness Summons or Subpoena should be obtained. In these situations the advice of your Area Safeguarding Adviser and/or legal department should be sought.

## **10 Transfer of safeguarding / child protection records**

- 10.1 When children transfer from your school/setting and records of child protection/welfare concerns have been kept, they must be sent to the receiving school/setting DSL. The transfer of safeguarding records should be secure and arranged separately from the main child file, in line with DfE guidance, and must be transferred under confidential cover.
- 10.2 DSLs must ensure that child protection files are transferred to new school/setting/college as soon as possible as part of transition. This is essential as part of the transition arrangements to enable receiving schools/settings to make appropriate safeguarding, risk management and resource decisions.
- 10.3 A confirmation of receipt of the child protection files by the receiving school/setting should be obtained by the transferring school/setting. This could include the transferring DSL arranging to physically deliver the records in person to the receiving school DSL and/or acquiring written confirmation of their receipt by the receiving school.

- 10.3 If the child is subject of a child protection plan or there are other ongoing concerns at the time of transfer, then it is strongly recommended that the transferring DSL arrange to meet with the receiving DSL in person to ensure there is effective transition and handover of information.
- 10.4 Child protection files should always be kept by the current education setting which the child attends. Transferring schools/settings do not need to keep copies of child protection files, but if they do they must be kept in accordance with data retention (see section 11). In cases where there may be ongoing involvement from transferring schools/settings, for example if any siblings still attend your school/setting, then DSLs may wish to take copies of chronologies etc. if appropriate.
- 10.5 If a child who is subject of a child protection plan leaves your school/setting and you are unaware of the name of the child's new education placement, then you should contact the child's key worker from Specialist Children's Services to discuss how records should be transferred.
- 10.6 Where records of child protection/welfare concerns have been kept, and details of the receiving establishment are not known, schools/settings should follow the Missing Children Procedure in conjunction with the ELS Inclusion Service. Schools should also use the 'Lost Pupil Database' section of the 'School to School' secure data transfer service, which can be used to track missing children and trace previous schools.
- 10.7 It is the responsibility of the transferring school/setting to ensure that child protection files are sent to the receiving school/setting. However DSLs in receiving schools/settings should always seek to proactively ensure that positive communications are in place with any feeder schools/settings at transition to check that child protection files have been sent.
- 10.8 If there are any ongoing safeguarding concerns about a new pupil and the receiving school/setting has not been sent any safeguarding files, then the DSL must be proactive in making contact with the DSL at the previous school/setting.
- 10.9 If DSLs have any concerns about receiving safeguarding records/files or obtaining receipts from other educational settings, then they should consult with their Area Safeguarding Adviser within the Education Safeguarding Team.

## **11 Retention of child protection records**

- 11.1 Current guidance from the Records Management Society is that when a child with a child protection record reaches statutory school leaving age, the last school/setting attended should keep the child protection file until the child's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. Following this, the file should then be shredded and a record should be kept of this having been done including the date, and why.

## **12 Good practice for keeping an overview of safeguarding activity**

- 12.1 As stated within 'Keeping children safe in education' 2016 (p.8) the DSL should keep all cases (including early help) under constant review and give consideration to making a referral to children's social care or following LSCB escalation procedures if the child's situation does not appear to be improving.
- 12.2 DSLs should keep a list of children within the setting who are:
- Known to early help
  - Child in Need
  - Children who are subject to a Child Protection plan
  - Children in Care
- 12.3 Such a list can be used to ensure that all relevant members of staff are clear about which agencies are involved with which children. This will also enable staff to cross reference any other concerns as they arise, such as behavioural issues.
- 12.3 This list can also be anonymized as evidence to demonstrate that DSLs have a clear understanding and oversight of children with multi-agency plans within the setting.

## **13 Appendices**

- i) Welfare Incident / Concern Form - 'The Green Form'**
- ii) Sample Safeguarding Record – Front Sheet**
- iii) Chronology of Events**
- iv) DSL record of Action / Contacts**
- v) DSL detailed record of Actions/Decisions/Meetings**
- vi) Record of DSL meetings**
- vii) Frequently Asked Questions**
- viii) Distinguishing fact and opinion**
- ix) Education Safeguarding Team Contact Information**

# Appendix i: Welfare Incident/ Concern form 'The Green Form'

SCHOOL/SETTING NAME

SCHOOL/SETTING LOGO

## SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT / CONCERN FORM

Pupil/Child name	Date of birth and Year Group/Class
Name and position of person completing form (please print)	
Date of incident /concern: (DD MM YY)	
Incident / concern (who what where when)*	
Any other relevant information (witnesses, immediate action taken)*	
Signature: (name of member of staff)	Date form completed (DD MM YY):
Role:	
Action taken (including reasons for decisions) and Outcomes* <b>(NB – this section is only to be completed by DSL)</b>	
Signature of DSL	Date (DD MM YY)
Signature of Lead DSL (if appropriate)	Date (DD MM YY)

\*Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

# Appendix ii: Sample Safeguarding Record Front Sheet

SCHOOL/SETTING NAME

SCHOOL/SETTING LOGO

## SAFEGUARDING RECORD FRONT SHEET

Pupil/Child name:		Date of birth:	
Any other name by which child is known:			
Home address:		Current address (if different)	
Telephone no:			
<b>Family members i.e. parents / carers / siblings:</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>School details</b>
Date file started: (DD MM YY)			
Are records held in school/setting relating to other connected children?			
<b>Contact details of other professionals</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Address</b>	



# Appendix iv: Record of Actions/Contacts

SCHOOL/SETTING NAME

SCHOOL/SETTING LOGO

## DSL SAFEGUARDING RECORD OF ACTION / CONTACTS

PUPIL/CHILD NAME:		
DATE (DD MM YY)	DETAILS	SIGNATURE

# Appendix v: Record of Actions/Decisions

SCHOOL/SETTING NAME

SCHOOL/SETTING LOGO

## DSLs DETAILED RECORD OF ACTION/DECISIONS

<b>PUPIL/CHILD NAME:</b>	
<b>DATE (DD MM YY)</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>
<b>Signature</b>	

# Appendix vi: Record of DSL Meetings

SCHOOL/SETTING NAME

SCHOOL/SETTING LOGO

Official Record of DSL Meetings (To be kept by Lead DSL)

<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>			
<b>PRESENT: (DSLs name and role)</b>			
<b>CHILD</b>	<b>CONCERN/UPDATE</b>	<b>ACTION TO BE TAKEN</b>	<b>WHO WILL TAKE ACTION AND DATE TO BE COMPLETED</b>
<b>OTHER ISSUES DISCUSSED:</b>			
<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING: (DD MM YY)</b>			

# Appendix vii: Safeguarding and Recording Frequently Asked Questions

## Why is recording important?

We have a statutory duty to promote the well-being and safety of every child who attends our school. This is a whole school/setting task. Since members of staff have differing roles we observe children in a range of settings and activities throughout the day. Children may show or tell us that something is wrong in a variety of ways. We all have an important role to play in helping to identify welfare concerns for children and possible indicators of abuse or neglect at an early stage. For some children a “one off” serious incident or concern will come to your attention and you will have no doubt that this you must immediately record and report this. Most often however it is the accumulation of a number of small incidents, events or observations – “the jigsaw” - that provide the evidence that a child is being harmed. It is vital therefore that any concern you have for a child’s welfare *however small* is recorded and passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

## What is a “welfare concern”?

As a general rule anything that you consider unusual or out of the ordinary for the child constitutes a concern. Mostly these will arise in one or more of the following areas:

- The child’s behaviour changes or a particular behaviour is observed
- The child has a physical injury
- The child tells you something has happened to them
- The child’s physical presentation
- You receive information from or observe unusual behaviour in a parent

## Why can’t I just pass on my concern verbally?

It is important that the person who has the concern gives a first hand account of this so that there is a clear and accurate record of what has been seen, heard etc. A record written by you will ensure that there is no misinterpretation of your concern or that it can be overlooked or forgotten.

## How and what do I record?

Our school/setting’s welfare concern form is a **green A4 sheet** (*amend as appropriate*) that can be found in the **staff room** (*amend as appropriate*). There is also an aide memoire that will guide you in completing this. If you are in any doubt, about recording then please speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). (**Names, contact details**)

### **What happens to the record once I've written it?**

One of the main purposes of recording is to make sure that the DSL is able to respond properly to concerns for children. The DSL will decide what action is necessary in response to your concern. Actions they take will of course depend on how serious and urgent the concern is. These can range however from a decision to keep a close eye on the child, to referring the child to Specialist Children's Services so that they can undertake an assessment of the child's safety. The concern form you have completed will be kept by the DSL in a confidential file.

### **Who will see this? Will parents see my record?**

Information relating to children's welfare will be shared on a strict "need to know" basis and in line with Kent County Council's Safeguarding Children Procedure that we have a duty to work within.

Neither the parent nor the child has an automatic right of access to child protection records and in most cases, the actual record will not be shared with parents. However we ask you to write this in a way that if we were asked to release school records perhaps by a Court, the record is a fair and factual account of an incident or event.

One of the most common responses by the DSL to concerns raised by staff for children will be to share these with parents with the purpose of working with them to understand and address the issue of concern. The details of your record therefore may be presented verbally to parents. Sometimes your concern will be one of many. If the DSL is worried that talking to parents might create a risk to any member of staffs safety they will not do this but seek the advice of colleagues in Education and Specialist Children's Services.

### **Will the record be destroyed once the issue is addressed or the child leaves school?**

No. Past concerns for children and what happened in response to these can be very important information for staff who may have concerns for the child at a later time. The DfE guide us in the retention and transfer of safeguarding records. The DSL is responsible for passing these on under confidential cover to the DSL in the child's new school/setting when the child leaves us. For secondary schools, the records are kept until the child is 25 years old.

## Appendix viii: Distinguishing fact and opinion

Consider each of the statements below. For each one decide whether it is a *fact* or an *opinion*.

Have a go at rewriting one statement that contains an opinion in a way that makes the difference between fact and opinion clear.

1. Being unemployed is depressing Mrs Bloggs.
2. Alan said his mother smacked him.
3. On the last contact visit the living room was not safe for the children.
4. The clothing in which Mr. Smith had dressed the baby was not appropriate.
5. Foster Care is not appropriate for Ian
6. Jenny is a very contented child.

## Distinguishing fact and opinion (answers)

### 1. Being unemployed is depressing Mrs. Bloggs.

This is an opinion. A possible rewrite could be:

**Mrs. Bloggs appears depressed. She is....(list her symptoms e.g. tearful, tired, listless, relationship with the children). This change in Mrs Bloggs has been noticeable since she lost her job and I think unemployment may be the main reason that she feels the way she does.**

### 2. Alan said his mother smacked him.

This as written is a factual statement. However, it is important to know *who* Alan said this to. If he reported to a member of staff that his mother smacked him, one would expect a more detailed explanation to follow this statement, including what Alan said in his own words and what action the staff member has taken since.

### 3. On the last contact visit the living room was not safe for the children.

This is an opinion. It could be rewritten in the following way:

**When I visited the family to talk about the children's attendance I did not think that it was safe to leave them in the living room. There were dirty syringes and other sharp objects within their reach. I therefore phoned their social worker.**

### 4. The clothing in which Mr. Smith had dressed the baby was not appropriate.

This is an opinion. It could be rewritten in the following way:

**I did not think that the clothing Mr. Smith had dressed the baby in was appropriate because it was a cold November morning and the baby was dressed in only a tee – shirt and shorts to be taken out in her pram with only a thin blanket to cover her.**

### 5. Foster Care is not appropriate for Ian.

Again this is an opinion. A possible rewrite could be:

**I do not think that foster care is appropriate for Ian. This is his sixth placement in five weeks and all his previous placements with foster carers have broken down. Ian has told me that he feels that he is being disloyal to his mother by living in a family and he would like to be placed in a residential home. Although I have talked at length with him about this he remains consistent in his view and his behaviour appears to be directed at ending the placement.**

## **6. Jenny is a very contented child.**

This statement is written as if it is a fact. However it is clearly an opinion. What is meant by the phrase *very contented*? Would we all understand it in the same way and would we all agree on the difference between a contented and very contented child?

It would be more helpful to give description of Jenny's behaviour and appearance.