

Record Keeping

Good Record Keeping

Good record keeping is an important part of the safeguarding task. Records should use clear, straightforward language, be concise and accurate so that they can be easily understood. They should clearly differentiate between facts, opinion, judgements and hypothesis. A record **must** be kept about a pastoral encounter or relationship as soon as there are concerns that someone has been harmed, is being harmed, or may be harmed. However, you may also wish to keep records about other pastoral relationships that are complex, involve vulnerable individuals or present a higher level of risk; e.g. one to one relationships, where there is a risk of dependency, where an individual lacks mental capacity etc.

When recording personal details and confidential information about individuals, The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) includes some important principles:

Proportionality	avoid bureaucracy and repetition; only record and keep relevant information
Accountability	both to legislation and to the individual – keep records lawful, fair, transparent
Transparency	tell the individual you are keeping a record and why, whenever this is safe (where harm may occur if the individual sees the record always seek advice)
Accessibility	records need to be available only to those who have a proper need to see them
Accuracy	records need to be kept up to date and accurate
Security	records should be stored safe from loss, theft, damage and inappropriate access

Safeguarding records must be included in the parish's privacy notice. Individuals must give their consent to, and be able to see, records being kept about them unless it is unsafe to do so or relates to third parties. (Seek advice from the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser before revealing the identity of a victim to an alleged abuser). Further information on GDPR is available at www.parishresources.org.uk/gdpr/ or www.ico.org.uk

Why keep records?

- To ensure that what happened and when it happened is recorded
- To provide a history of events so that patterns can be identified
- To record and justify the actions of those who work or volunteer for the Church
- To promote accountability
- To provide evidence of safeguarding activity
- To allow for continuity when there is a change of personnel

What should be recorded?

- **Who** is it about? *the names of all key people and any witnesses*
- **What** happened? *use exact words spoken to you and as much factual description as possible*
- **How** did it happen? *e.g. was the bruise caused by a kick, fist, stick*
- **Where** did it take place? *e.g. 'in the vestry', rather than 'at church'*
- **When** did it take place? *give dates and times*
- **Why** did it happen? *Record explanations offered by the people involved not your own theories*
- **What** should happen next? *What are you or others going to do next*

- **Include** *the views/perspective of the child or adult who is vulnerable*
- **Analysis** *the risks that concern you and the things already in place that may help keep the person safe, based on the facts and evidence*
- **Date & Sign**

Facts and professional judgements (analysis) should always be distinguished in the record and it must not be disrespectful to the subjects. In this record, facts, personal opinion and professional judgement are not separated:

Jon Smith's mother came in on Monday 23rd September and claimed that Brian had kicked Jon last week and Jon had a bruise on his thigh. I don't think this happened. Brian and Jon get on well and Mrs Smith seemed to be overwrought and drunk and shouted that she would go to the police.

A more effective record would differentiate between facts and professional judgement, based on evidence:

On Monday 23rd September 2013 a woman came to the youth club at the beginning of the session and told me that Brian King, a youth worker, had kicked her son, a child, named Jon Smith, at the youth club last week. As a result Jon had sustained a large bruise on his thigh. From my reading of the records and discussion with Jill and Peter, the other workers on duty last week, it seems unlikely that this happened at the youth club. There is no record of an incident and Jill and Peter recalled that Jon had been engaged happily in activities with Brian during the evening.

When she came to the youth club on 23rd September Mrs Smith appeared to me to be visibly distressed. I asked her to sit and talk further with me about the alleged incident but she left the youth club shouting "I'll take this further just you wait – the police will be knocking on your door"

Storing records

- Records about safeguarding concerns must be kept for a minimum of 75 years
- Records should only be accessible to those who have a proper need to see them
- Have a plan for access in an emergency when the record holder is absent or when the record holder leaves your church
- Paper files should be kept in a lockable fire proof cabinet
- Electronic files should have some form of encryption (e.g. password protected) and be backed up regularly
- Use hard to guess passwords that include capital letters and numbers
- Take extra care when emailing confidential information – ideally encrypt emails and do not send confidential information to shared email addresses (e.g a family email) unless *all* recipients are entitled to see the information
- When mailing confidential information use online tracking, a signature on receipt and the double envelope safeguard – an inner envelope marked confidential but no classification on the outer envelope.