



# **Child Protection Records Management Policy**

2019 - 2020

<b>Title</b>	Child Protection Records Management Policy
<b>Summary</b>	Guidance for all stakeholders regarding: Recording, retention and disposal of Child Protection Records  Sharing Child Protection information within school and with other agencies.
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## 1. Introduction/Rationale

The accurate recording of concerns is essential in helping the School identify causes for concern at an early stage, and to help the School monitor and manage its safeguarding practices.

Staff who has a concern about the welfare or safety of a pupil should complete a **Note of Concern** as soon as possible after the incident to ensure an expedient response, and certainly within 24 hours, to maintain the accuracy and content of the report.

The staff member should report the concern to **the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (DT) or Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection (DDT)** immediately.

The DT for Child Protection stores each Note of Concern, along with any other relevant information, such as UNOCINI in the pupil's Child Protection File.

The Child Protection File is separate to the pupil's main school file. The pupil's main school file is marked with a "star" to indicated the presence of separate confidential information.

The Child Protection File contains:

- Chronology of events/ action taken
- All records of concern
- Any notes initially recorded, including in the form of notebooks/diaries<sup>3</sup> which should be kept securely with the child protection file
- Records of discussions and telephone calls (with colleagues, parents and children/young people and other agencies or services)
- Correspondence with other organisations - sent and received
- Referral forms – both for support services and specialist services (irrespective of outcome)
- Formal plans linked to the pupil e.g. child protection plan, child in need plan
- Risk assessments
- Risk Management Plans/ Individual Safety and Support Plans
- School reports to interagency meetings and conferences
- Minutes of interagency meetings e.g. child in need, strategy, child protection conference
- Any other relevant notes/ papers

Any significant event or change which has an impact on the pupil's welfare is also included in the Child Protection File, and noted on the chronology of events/ action taken, even if it seems to be contradictory, such as:

- **Change of circumstances:** changes of carer, address, legal status, school, family circumstances and household composition.
- **Issues for the child:** physical or mental health issues, incidents of abuse, losses, developmental issues, incidents of running away/going missing, incidents re bullying, offending or police involvement.
- **Family issues:** changes in family composition, loss and separation, domestic violence, financial or housing problems, physical or mental health, substance misuse, homelessness, imprisonment, victimisation.
- **Professional involvement:** referrals made, involvement of other agencies, assessments, significant decisions, interventions, social services involvement.

## **2. Allegations Against School Staff**

Where an allegation is made about possible abuse by a member of staff of the school, the procedures set out in DE Circular 2015/13 are followed.

All allegations **are** recorded in the Child Protection Book, which must be retained securely by the Principal. These records should be signed and dated by the Principal on an annual basis. If the Principal is the subject of the concern, the allegation should be reported immediately to the Warden of the Board of Governors, the Designated Governor for Child Protection and the person appointed to be the Lead Individual.

If, on foot of a subsequent investigation by one of the investigating agencies, the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated:

- the record on the staff member's file must be expunged
- the entry in the Record of Child Abuse Complaints struck through with an explanation entered
- the record on the child's file should be noted with the outcome of the investigation, and should stand until the child's D.O.B +30 years.

Unless the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated, the record is retained **indefinitely**.

## **3. Storage of Child Protection Information**

The Child Protection File is separate to the Pupil's School File and is stored securely in a fireproof filing cabinet. The filing cabinet is only accessible to the Designated Teacher and the keys for the filing cabinet are not removed from the premises and are stored in a key safe.

Child Protection Records are not removed from the school premises. In the exceptional situation when the information needs to be removed, such as following a court order, the information is transported securely and a record is kept of when it was removed, by whom, for what purpose, and when it was returned.

The School also records Child Protection information electronically on the C2k system using the Private 6 folder, which the Principal, Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teachers have the only access.

## **4. Sharing Information within the School**

Child Protection information is confidential and often highly sensitive and decisions to share, or not to share, are always be made in the interests of protecting the child if at risk of significant harm.

There is also a duty to protect individuals and, as such, within the school, information is only shared with staff who require access to it in order to work in a safe and informed way with the pupil and family. The DT/DDT records who information is shared with, when, and the reasons for this. All staff should understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the consequences of any breach.

## **5. Sharing Information with Others**

Access to child protection records is on a strict need-to-know basis, and a record is kept to identify who has requested access, when and for what purpose.

Although information must always be shared with other agencies where there is a legal duty to do so e.g. PSNI and Social Services, the PSNI have no automatic right to access data and must complete Form 81, stating the data they require and the specific case to which it relates.

### **Reporting to Board of Governors**

In addition to the annual report to the Board of Governors by the Designated Teacher, Child Protection is a standing agenda item for Education Committee of the Board of Governors. All reports **must be anonymised** in keeping with the principle of confidentiality.

## **6. Transfer of Child Protection Records**

The Designated Teacher is responsible for ensuring that copies of relevant child protection records are transferred to the DT of the receiving school in the most secure and appropriate manner to minimise the risk of any data breach. The data controller, i.e. the school, is accountable for any data breach.

When a child on whom the school holds safeguarding or child protection information leaves the school and the school are unaware of the new school they must notify the Education Welfare Service at the Education Authority who will then attempt to locate the child. Social Services must be informed immediately if the child has a Child Protection Plan or is a Looked After Child. The school must retain the child's child protection records and forward the relevant information to the receiving school when the child has been traced.

When a child whose name is on the Child Protection Register changes school, the school which the child is leaving should inform the receiving school immediately that his/her name is on the Register and pass on contact details for the social worker. The school should then destroy all child protection records on the child supplied by Social Services, including records of case conferences, and should inform the child's Case Co-ordinator in Social Services. The remaining child protection record should be copied, as relevant, to the new school.

## **7. Closure, Retention and Disposal of Child Protection Records**

When a pupil leaves the school or child protection concerns cease to be current or ongoing, and records cease to be of active use other than for reference purposes, the child's individual Child Protection File is closed. The DT consults the School's Disposal of Records Schedule. Closing a file simply means that no further papers can be added. If new concerns arise a new file can be opened and cross-referenced with the previous record.

## 8. Retention of Child Protection Records

In general, child protection records are retained by the school for the following periods

Record	Retention Period
Pupil Child Protection Case Files	DOB + 30 years
The school's confidential Record of Child Abuse Complaints	Indefinitely*
If Social Services inform the school that a child's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register	Maintain a record of this fact and associated documentation from Social Services on the child's file while he/she continues to attend. On transfer, the school should inform the new school and destroy all social services records. The record on the Child Protection File will remain until D.O.B + 30 years.
If Social Services inform the school that a child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register	On transfer to a new school, the school should destroy any child protection records on the child supplied by Social Services, including records of case conferences. The record on the Child Protection File will remain until D.O.B + 30 years.
<b>Complaint against a member of staff</b> Staff members' file Child's Child Protection File Record of Child Abuse Complaints	Indefinitely* unless totally exonerated (see para. 3.16) D.O.B + 30 years Indefinitely*
<b>Complaint to be pursued under the school's disciplinary procedures</b>	
Staff members' file Child's Child Protection File Record of Child Abuse Complaints	5 years D.O.B + 30 years Indefinitely*

