

**Date: - September 2022**

## **Auditing of Child Protection and Confidential Files**

**Auditing your setting's record keeping and maintenance of files is much more than 'best practice'. KCSiE 2022 makes clear what actions should and must be taken to keep children safe. This includes the management and maintenance of child protection files and includes information required to be shared during transition and transfer of school placement. Whilst KCSiE is not a statutory document for Childcare providers the Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (September 2021) states *childcare providers may also find it helpful to refer to this guidance.***

Does the quality of your record keeping allow you to demonstrate to others your effective safeguarding practice? But more importantly does it keep the children and young people safe and afford them the provision to ensure they are able to thrive and fully engage with their education and learning opportunities?

**Background:** Case reviews have identified the importance of good record keeping in safeguarding children, and the need to ensure the transfer of information between providers is effective.

Designated Safeguarding Leads and others in the setting (see below) need to be confident that they keep careful records in relation to children of concern. One way to do this is for a setting to conduct an audit of a sample of child protection, confidential files each year.

### **Who will complete the audits?**

**Childminders** – will be responsible for auditing their own files.

**Pre-schools** - Designated Safeguarding lead and the named person responsible for safeguarding on the management committee and/or the nominated individual (Ofsted).

**Day Nursery** – Two individuals who may comprise of the designated safeguarding lead, Manager, the nominated individual (Ofsted) or another member of the senior leadership team who doesn't have a safeguarding role.

**Responsibilities:** Safeguarding and protecting children from abuse and harm is everyone's responsibility. However, those in leadership roles, such as the manager, nominated individual (Ofsted) members of the setting's senior leadership team and those with designated safeguarding responsibilities, have a duty to ensure all children are kept safe and free from harm as detailed in:

- HM Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
- DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 in particular:  
Part One and Part Two at paragraphs 68 to 76, 115 to 123. and as set out in Annex C with particular attention to pages 164 to 168. (See above as this document is not statutory for Early Years Providers)
- Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Inter-agency Safeguarding Children Procedures and Guidance
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

**Purpose:** The aim of the audit is to learn how effective the settings record keeping is in relation to children with child protection/ safeguarding concerns – potentially the most vulnerable children in the setting. Lessons from the audit can then be fed back to all staff to improve future practice and ensure all actions are taken to keep children safe.

This NCC Child Protection and Confidential File Audit Toolkit provides you with the information, guidance and resources to ensure you maintain a focus on every child's individual safeguarding journey and keep them safe through high quality and seamless transition and transfer arrangements.

We do not require you to provide the LA or the NSCP with a completed copy of your audit, it is for you, your leadership team, management committee to adopt and use to maintain oversight of how you keep children safe through their journey in the setting.

**Sample:** Clearly the more files that you examine, the fuller the picture you will have of the processes in your setting. However, this needs to be balanced against the time demands of an audit. We recommend that where possible you audit one file from each of the following age groups 0-2, 2-3, 3-4 years. It is also reasonable to take a proportionate approach; if audits regularly show widespread good practice, then fewer files may need to be examined in the future. If, however, the audit reveals gaps in practice this will indicate the need not only for training and guidance but also more careful monitoring.

**Confidentiality:** *Material in child protection and confidential files is often of a very sensitive nature and the highest standards of confidentiality are required by anyone reading these files. Those other than the designated Safeguarding lead are not required to read through all the child protection, confidential file content but should only read and check sufficient information to ensure the process of creating a file, the recording and maintenance of information and follow up actions are of a quality standard that meets with the requirements as described in DFE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' published September 2022 and the settings own child protection policy.*

**Summary and outcomes:** The audit checklist below provides a framework to review the settings record keeping, recording and management of the child protection or confidential file. It will also ensure that staff and the designated safeguarding lead are carrying out the responsibilities placed on them in the statutory guidance for the early years foundation stage (2021) and identify any gaps that require action. Any identified gaps should be addressed as a matter of urgency to keep children safe.

The responsibility for record keeping in-line with local and national guidance rests with the setting and the designated safeguarding lead as does the self- evaluation. However, settings are encouraged to contact the early years quality attainment team for advice where this is felt to be helpful.

**NOTE:** Paper files or electronic recording management systems for Safeguarding should be audited using the same questions.

## References:

HM Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021-

[Statutory guidance overview: Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education)

Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership website-

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscp](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscp)

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Interagency Safeguarding Children Procedures Resolving Professional Disagreements (Escalation Procedure)

[https://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p\\_conflict\\_res.html](https://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p_conflict_res.html)

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**Child Protection or Confidential/Concerns File Audit**

**Date:** .....

**Setting:** .....

**Auditors: (names)**.....

This checklist will support an audit of a child protection or confidential/ concern files and help to identify key issues to be addressed.

	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Follow up action/further information (by whom and by when)</b>
<p>Does the child’s main file have a clear marker on it to indicate that a concern file is also held? (We recommend that a clear red C be written on the top right-hand corner of the main file or symbol which is clarified in your setting child protection policy). This alerts any member of staff that there is a separate confidential/concern file.</p>		
<p>Was all confidential information transferred from the main child’s file to the child protection/confidential file when it was opened?  (Check there are no confidential documents still in the main file)</p>		
<p>Does the child protection/confidential file have an up-to-date and accurate ‘Front Sheet’ giving basic factual information about the child and family? See Appendix A  If using an electronic system, check all information is completed in each section and remains current for the child and family.</p>		
<p>Does the file have a running chronology of events/concerns that is kept up to date? See Appendix A</p>		

	Yes/No	Follow up action/further information (by whom and by when)
<p>Does every recording in the file have a signature of the person who wrote the entry and is timed, dated?</p> <p>Has this been added to the Chronology by the person who has received the information?</p> <p>Has the Designated Safeguarding Lead acknowledged sight of the recording?</p> <p>Has the Designated Safeguarding Lead documented what actions they have taken to address the incident/ concerns or disclosure?</p>		
<p>Have injuries to the child been noted by the setting including existing injuries and those which happen in the setting.</p> <p>Did staff use the body map and recording form and were the records clear?</p>		
<p>Where applicable, have any additional written notes been kept and been added to the file in their original format?</p>		
<p>Have telephone calls and discussions with other agencies (police, health, social care, early help) been recorded on the Chronology?</p> <p>Is it clear from these notes what action is to be taken and by whom and by when?</p>		
<p>Is there recorded evidence that setting staff and Designated Safeguarding Lead have reflected on the information they have about a child of concern, discussed it appropriately with others and then taken <b>appropriate</b> action in a timely manner and in line with the Pathway to Provision and the settings safeguarding procedures.</p> <p>Is there evidence to demonstrate that the Designated Safeguarding Lead has spoken with the parents, or a family member?</p> <p>Actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion with parents, offering support, guidance, and signposting to services</li> <li>• Sharing information with others</li> <li>• Completing an EHAF</li> <li>• Referring to Children’s Centres</li> <li>• Referring to another agency</li> <li>• Making a referral to MASH</li> <li>• Making a referral to Early Help</li> <li>• Discussing the case with their EYST or EYQIA</li> </ul>		

	Yes/No	Follow up action/further information (by whom and by when)
<p>If a telephone referral was made to the MASH, was the referral confirmed in writing, by the referrer, within 24 hours as per the interagency procedures and guidance?</p> <p>If the referral didn't meet the threshold and was not accepted by MASH, is there evidence of a discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead around what further actions are necessary?</p>		
<p>Where setting staff consider that there is conflict of professional opinion, is there evidence of appropriate escalation to resolve the conflict?</p> <p>(See Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Procedures: Resolving Professional Disagreements)  <a href="http://proceduresonline.com">Resolving Professional Disagreements (Escalation Procedure) (proceduresonline.com)</a></p>		
<p><b>Receiving a child protection / confidential file</b></p>		
<p>When a child protection/confidential file is received from another setting does the Designated Safeguarding Lead review the file and request any information to fill the gaps that they identify from relevant agencies involved with the child and their family?</p> <p>Is there evidence that the Designated Safeguarding Leads from both settings have discussed and shared key child protection/safeguarding information? Best practice would be to either meet face to face or virtually.</p> <p>Has the Designated Safeguarding Lead recorded what information was shared, including any actions agreed as part of the child's transfer?</p> <p>Have any required plans, assessments including risk assessments been put in place to ensure all areas of vulnerability are supported?</p> <p>Has the SENCO been involved and informed of all children who may need additional support to address their SEND.</p>		

	Yes/No	Follow up action/further information (by whom and by when)
<p><b>Transferring a child protection / confidential file</b></p> <p>When a child leaves a setting, it is good practice as described in KCSiE 2022 that the Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure the child protection file is transferred to the new setting as soon as possible, and within 5 days of a child leaving or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term.</p> <p>Best practice would be to either meet face to face or virtually with the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the new setting to share information to support a seamless effective transition.</p> <p>During the transition process, have all actions been taken to promote the ‘best interests of the child’ and promote their well-being and safety?</p> <p>Where your setting has transferred a child protection/confidential file, is there a record/receipt to show that the file was received?</p>		
<p><b>Receiving or transferring a child protection/confidential file</b></p> <p>Has the child’s voice been heard as part of their transition process?</p> <p>Have the child’s parents/carers been involved in decision making and informed of the support available?</p>		
<p><b>Summarise your findings here. Add the actions identified, and how you’re going to address these.</b></p>		

	Yes/No	Follow up action/further information (by whom and by when)
<p>Date actions completed: __ __ / __ __ / __ __</p>		