

Safeguarding Adults

Chairing and Minute taking of meetings

GUIDANCENOTE SA21

PURPOSE:

This guidance is written to provide and support a consistent standard and approach to minute taking and chairing safeguarding adults meetings. It provides set guidance for staff who chair, organise and record minutes for Safeguarding Adult meetings, held under West Midlands Safeguarding Adults Multi-agency procedures in Telford & Wrekin Council.

The advice covers the following areas:

- The role of the Chair
- Preparation for meetings
- Invitations (this may or may not be part of your role)
- Standard presentation for minutes
- How minutes should be recorded and written up
- Drafting, distribution and storage

Minutes may be defined as a written record of the business transacted at a meeting and constitute the formal record of the meeting. As such, they are an authoritative source of information to meeting participants and for anyone (with suitable consent), including service users, who may wish to review how a Safeguarding alert was responded to.

2. ROLE OF CHAIR

In most cases the Senior Adult Safeguarding Officer will act as the Chair, however another individual with appropriate experience and skills can be appointed.

2.1 To ensure that an accurate and comprehensive record of a meeting is made, the Chair of the meeting has a responsibility to assist the minute taker by communicating with them prior to the meeting with regard to:

- The nature of the investigation
- Date, time and location of the meeting
- Who will be attending and at what times (e.g. the provider may attend the second half, any access needs that a service user may have)
- Instructions around sending invitations and requesting reports
- Items to be included on the agenda

and:

2.3 Setting the items to be included on the agenda. There are three template agendas which can be used:

- **Safeguarding Strategy Meeting Agenda SA6**
- **Safeguarding Case Conference Agenda SA8**
- **Safeguarding Review Meeting Agenda SA10**

2.4 Following the agenda items in sequence and inform the minute taker of any departures from the agreed agenda.

2.5 Making clear introductions and roles at the beginning of each meeting.

2.6 Reading the confidentiality statement and ensuring participants have signed the attendance proforma

2.7 The Chair should ensure that all Professionals at the meeting are advised that:

- Unless specifically requested, opinions and statements will not be attributed to

individuals

- Where lengthy general discussion occurs it is more appropriate to highlight the significant points made (without attribution) unless specifically relevant or requested.

2.8 Providing specific guidance to the minute taker (where necessary) on what to record for a particular agenda item where lengthy discussion has occurred or a complex issue has been discussed. This may also include guidance with regard to full names and job titles

2.9 Stopping the meeting should the minute taker need to clarify points.

2.10 Summarising specific points, decisions or courses of action agreed for each specific agenda item before moving on to the next item

2.11 At the end of the meeting, summarising all the actions agreed throughout the meeting, together with the timescales for action and the name of the person responsible for that action.

2.12 Offering debriefing and support to the minute taker if the content is of a potentially distressing/emotional nature.

2.13 Checking the minutes (once they are written) for accuracy and amend with track changes as necessary within timescales.

3. ROLE OF MINUTE TAKER

In most cases the team administrator from the adult safeguarding team will undertake minuting adult safeguarding meetings however another individual with appropriate experience and skills can undertake this task.

Before The Meeting:

Invitations:

3.1 The Chair should provide the minute taker with details of who to invite and what should be written in the invitations.

3.2 Invitations should be sent out in advance of the meeting within individually agreed timescales. Invitations will be sent by email, with providers, service users and carers having an attached formal letter. When the meeting is set up by phone, a written invitation should always be sent as confirmation. There are invitation templates to be used and amended as necessary depending on the specific case and this can be checked with the Chair.

3.3 It may be necessary to hold the meeting in two parts (with the provider attending the second part). This is particularly important where the Police are present – the information sharing protocol does not allow them to share confidential

information outside the statutory services of the NHS, the Local Authority and the Care Quality Commission.

3.4 Agree venue and book room

3.5 Prepare self (read previous minutes, papers & speak to the Chair). This will aid understanding of the case which will help with the minutes.

3.6 **Monitoring Attendance:**

The minute taker should monitor the apologies and confirmations and feed this back to the Chair regularly. The minute taker may need to cancel the meeting and rearrange the meeting if the Chair decides there is inadequate attendance or key agencies are unable to attend.

3.7 **Receipt of Reports:**

The invitation should also include a request for any necessary reports/information and should always be requested from people invited but unable to attend. Reports should arrive at least 5 working days prior to the meeting. Reports should be saved electronically in the relevant case file and also in the paper files .

3.8 **Preparation before the meeting:**

The minute taker should:

- At the direction of the Chair prepare and bring the paper file to the meeting
- Ensure they have their own copy of the minutes of the last meeting to refer to. It is often useful to photocopy several extra copies to take to the meeting in case any attendees need them.
- Print off an attendance sheet to take to the meeting.
- Prepare the laptop to be used and back up paper and pens!

3.9 **At The Meeting**

At the meeting, the minute taker should:

- Ensure an attendance sheet is distributed, completed fully and collected at the end of the meeting
- Distribute agendas to attendees
- Ensure that copies of any reports or other relevant information presented at the meetings are retained by the minute taker and filed.
- If appropriate, reports should be photocopied for each attendee and distributed at the beginning of the meeting and collected back at the end of the meeting.
- The minute taker should sit next to the Chair.
- During introductions, it is helpful if the minute taker draws a rough plan of who is sitting where in order to know and record who is speaking during the meeting.

3.10 What to record:

Templates for completion of Safeguarding Adults minutes is available in the local supporting guidance . This includes templates for Strategy, case conference and review meetings. Minutes should provide a reflection of the meeting as a whole and accurately record what was discussed, the opinions of others and the outcomes.

Minutes should include:

- Attendance and Apologies
- Background & purpose of the meeting
- Items discussed as per the agreed agenda
- Decisions reached
- Reasons for the decisions being taken
- Action points, who is to complete them and within what timescales
- When people entered/left the meeting at times other than the beginning or end

3.11 How to record:

- Full names (e.g. Jane Smith) should be used at all times except for service users (see below).
- In first reference to service users, initials should be used and where available, any identifying information (e.g. Care First ID number or their date of birth) should be included. E.g. Mr T.P (CF61111) Thereafter initials can be used regarding their role e.g. AAR – Adult at risk
- Where people not present at the meeting are referred to by name they should be identified formally including name, their role and the organisation they represent e.g. Sarah Jones (Care manager, ACS).
- The minute taker should stop the chair if there is any lack of clarity
- Minutes should not (as far as possible) be a verbatim record of proceedings – discussions should be summarised. Minutes must be sufficient to reflect the substantive points of debate; and brief enough to be accessible and easily read. They should enable a person who was not present at the meeting to fully understand how a decision was reached.
- Minutes should be written in the past tense and the third person e.g. Jane Smith provided a summary of the recent Inspection of the care home...
- Minutes should be written in plain, easily understood language. Jargon and abbreviations should be avoided or if used defined in brackets e.g. CPA (Care Programme Approach).
- Minutes should be accurate, grammatically correct and concise from first draft presented to Chair .
- Minutes should be consistent in their form and content.

- Wherever possible, record points, not every individual contribution (e.g. “there was a discussion about X’s mental capacity and it was decided that an assessment was needed to clarify this”). Where there is doubt about what to record, the Chair of the meeting should be consulted.
- The minutes ideally should focus on points made for and against a proposal or idea and the reasons to support these points.
- If agreed by the Chair, written reports can be attached as a copy to the minutes, thus saving the need for a further written précis of the report.

3.12 After the meeting

Drafting

- If actions from the meeting are urgent, action points can be drafted and forwarded to the Chair as soon as possible after the meeting and distributed within three working days to avoid delay. This could include the protection plan and immediate actions to be undertaken. This is the decision for the Chair and may not always be necessary.
- The full minutes should be drafted and forwarded to the Chair for approval within five working days after the meeting. An email should be sent to the Chair with the draft minutes ready for checking.
- The Chair should read and amend the minutes using track changes and return the final draft to the minute taker. Minutes should be marked ‘draft’ until they have been approved by the Chair.

Distribution:

- The final copy of minutes signed off by the Chair should be marked as final and sent out within 10 working days of the meeting
- Minutes are confidential and should only be sent out to attendees present at the meeting and to those who sent their apologies. If the meeting is in two parts (e.g. the provider attends for the second part of the meeting) then they should only receive the section relevant to them.
- Minutes should always be sent out according to Telford & Wrekin Council data protection policy. Password protect all minutes circulated by email and mark any posted minutes as confidential. Sending minutes to attendees from external organisations (outside Telford & Wrekin Council) should be by secure email or post
- If agreed by the Chair reports presented at the meeting should be sent out to attendees with the minutes
- Meeting participants should be advised that requests for amendments to the minutes should be forwarded directly to the Chair of the meeting for consideration within 5 working days of their circulation. After this period approval of the minutes will be presumed.

Storage:

- Minutes should be retained in accordance with Telford & Wrekin Council case file recording policy.

- Final versions of documents and reports considered at meetings should be retained with the minutes when it is necessary to have access to them in order to understand the minutes. Where supplied as paper copy they should be scanned and saved to the appropriate case file using EDM .
- Initial drafts of minutes should be retained, as a copy of minute takers original notes in safeguarding file for the AAR

Appendix1 USEFUL TIPS

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't try to write everything down – it's impossible and not useful. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concentrate on WHAT has been decided and WHO is going to do it. These |

are the most important things to have records of.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't worry about producing the perfect minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel free to point out to the Chair/meeting that is impossible to take minutes if everyone is talking at once and not following the relevant item.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it's not clear what decision has been made, ask the Chair to clarify this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is a particularly important or controversial decision it can be useful to check what you are writing down with the meeting. For example; 'so the meeting wants it minuted that we have agreed to apply to the Court of Protection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is a long discussion, try to pick out the main points and just list them. For example; 'There was a discussion about funding and the following points were made...' •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever possible, record points, not every individual contribution (e.g. <i>"there was a discussion about X's mental capacity and it was decided that an assessment was needed to clarify this"</i>).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is doubt about what to record, the Chair of the meeting should be consulted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to be objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a disagreement developed during a meeting then a brief statement would be sufficient instead of itemising the whole debate. The minutes could read: - <i>"A full and frank discussion took place during which various views and opinions were expressed."</i> Although this does not specify who was in disagreement or what was said it does acknowledge the fact that a discussion took place. If a decision was reached then that could be added to the end of the sentence. • Try to keep readability-Minutes should be clearly laid out, visually appealing, and easy to read. Long paragraphs should be replaced by concise point-form summaries. Word processing features (bolding, underlining, bullet points etc.) should be used to highlight key points and decisions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record points, not people. The minute-taker's focus is on the ideas, arguments and facts being presented not on the individuals present.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes should be free of offensive or inappropriate language, even if such language was used at a meeting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They should not include subjective interpretations of the mood of the meeting or that one in which comments were made. Phrases like “<i>There was a heated discussion,</i>” “<i>The presentation was very motivational,</i>” or “<i>Mr. Davenport was emphatic</i>” do not belong in minutes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They should not include subjective interpretations of the mood of the meeting or the tone in which comments were made. Phrases like “<i>There was a heated discussion,</i>” “<i>The presentation was very motivational,</i>” or “<i>Mr. Davenport was emphatic</i>” do not belong in minutes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The document should be clean and objective and try to keep a logical flow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes across the organisation should share the same general look and style, and should comply with content and format standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full names (e.g. Jane Smith) should be used at all times except for reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to other service users (see below).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service user who is subject of the meeting should be identified formally using their full name e.g. Jane Smith. Any other service user, not the subject
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> of the meeting should be identified using initials and dob e.g. ‘Mr/Miss TP – 1/1/1800’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person alleged to have caused harm – should be identified using initials (but full details should be recorded on the file)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where people not present at the meeting are referred to by name they should Minutes should be accurate, grammatically correct and concise – see
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be identified formally including name, their role and the organisation they represent e.g. Sarah Jones, Care manager, Acacia Care Home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service user and family may ask to see the minutes – make sure your record is impartial and factual (e.g. don’t write ‘Carers say Mrs Smith is a difficult woman’ – even if they did say it)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minutes may be used in evidence in court (when writing imagine saying 'Your Honour' at the end of every sentence)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minutes should be written in the past tense and the third person e.g. Jane Smith (Inspector, Care Quality Commission (CQC) provided a summary of the recent Inspection of the care home
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minutes should be written in plain, easily understood language. Jargon and abbreviations should be avoided or if used defined in brackets e.g. CPA (Care Programme Approach)

Appendix 2

Writing with ABA – Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity and a guide to punctuation

Accuracy

This means that you are responsible for what you put in your documents and you

should check facts to make sure they are accurate. You should also ensure that your spelling is correct.

It also means that you should use the right words – often these are the simpler words that cannot be misunderstood.

Good punctuation will also aid the accuracy of your text – read it aloud to check that you have punctuated correctly.

Brevity

This concerns two things – sentence length and word length.

Because of the way we are taught to read, the brain does not make sense of a sentence until it sees a full stop. Therefore, if the sentence is a long one, a person will probably have to re-read it a number of times to fully understand it.

To avoid long sentences look to linking words like ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘which’, ‘therefore’ as well as commas. Delete the linking word and try to make two shorter sentences.

Most sentences should contain just one idea. The average sentence length should be between 15 and 20 words – but try to vary the length, otherwise the text will become too jerky.

Try to cut out waffle.

E.g., use ‘normally’ rather than ‘in the normal course of our procedure’

Aim to be precise:

e.g. rather than saying ‘we are hoping that this will happen in the next two or three weeks’ say ‘this should happen within 21 days’.

We also need to ensure brevity in paragraphing – one topic per paragraph.

Clarity

This means avoiding ambiguity and being definite about facts. Avoid the use of jargon. Check that the progression is logical. Start by making the topic and purpose clear and finish by making it clear what happens next. Check the text for ambiguity from the reader’s point of view. Avoid the use of a passive clause.

Paragraphs & Signposting

Good paragraphing is vital for clear and easy reading.

Short paragraphs, one with theme, are easier to read than long ones. It is easier for the reader to concentrate on one aspect of a subject at a time than a long paragraph that mixes different aspects.

Each paragraph should begin with a short statement of its theme. This ‘signpost’ should point out the topic of the paragraph and show how it relates to earlier ones.

Full stop

Ends a sentence. The only real opportunity for the eye to stop long enough to absorb the information that went before. Used to separate statements between which there is no real relation. Do not use *and* to combine separate ideas, as in *Two Trees care Home is situated in Newport and is open Monday to Friday.*

Comma

- Used to separate items in a list e.g. *NHS Shropshire has offices in Shrewsbury, Telford, Bridgnorth and Oswestry* . (NB no comma before the *and*)
 - Used to separate a list of adjectives e.g. *The building is modern, spacious and bright*.
 - Used in pairs to mark information this inessential, but may add detail e.g. *The building which is named after Thomas Telford , stands on the Staffordshire Business Park*. The commas act like brackets. If you remove the information between the commas, the sentence still makes sense. Try this to make sure you have the commas in the right place.
 - Where there is natural pause when the passage is read e.g. *Having secured the necessary funds, CCG Telford will be going ahead with their plans to improve facilities in Newport* .
- If a sentence contains more than two commas, it is probably too long.

Semicolon

- Used to separate phrases or lengthy items in a list e.g. *Telford & Wrekin has considered tenders from Brown and Wilson; Merryweather and Gibbs; Harley and Pinchbeck and Peter Fairbrother*.
- Used to link small sentences which are closely connected but where *and* is not used e.g. *Telford and Wrekin council was delighted with the public response; it surpassed its wildest expectations*

Colon

- Introduces a list (often preceded by the word *following*) e.g. *Please find enclosed the following items: your contract, an occupational health form and a Telford & Wrekin staff handbook*.
- Used after a statement to introduce further information, more sharply than a semicolon e.g. *SATH was delighted with the funding: it means the hospital can remain open*.

Dash

Used in pairs to mark the beginning and ending of an interruption in a sentence e.g. *The Building – which is named after Thomas Telford – stands on the Staffordshire Business Park*

Apostrophe

- Used to show possession e.g. *The Trust's policy*. That is *the policy of the Trust*. When in doubt, reverse the two words and insert *of the* (does it still make sense?).

However, pronouns are accepted from this rule e.g. *ours, yours, theirs, its*. They do not contain an apostrophe (see the examples below).

The apostrophe always comes at the end of a word, so in plural words it comes after the 's' e.g. *The managers' offices*.

- Used to show there is one or more letters missing e.g. *don't, can't, isn't*. Be particularly careful with *its/it's*. With an apostrophe, this means *it is*, so you wouldn't use an apostrophe in: *The house has not lost its original charm*.

- It is not necessary to add an apostrophe before *s* in figures e.g. *1990s* or after abbreviations e.g. *MPs, PhDs*