



Safeguarding Adults Services

A Guide to Minute Taking

(This guidance and standards is just an idea to get started. Being clear on what is needed can build confidence and save time. This guidance encourages being brief, but gives a checklist of what to make sure you include)

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Safeguarding Strategy & Protection Planning Meetings

PREPARATION

Appendix 1 - Note Takers preparation form

- Plan your time beforehand so that you are able to produce a very early 'first draft' soon after the meeting whilst your memory is clear
- Read previous minutes, papers & speak to the Chair beforehand to familiarise yourself with the case. A case Scenario will aid understanding which will help with the minutes. See *Appendix 2 - Case Scenario* - see also *Appendix 3 - Sample Minutes taken from the case scenario*
- You should agree with the Chair a signal if there is any lack of clarity or you need a moment to catch up

DURING THE MEETING

- You should ideally sit next to the Chair
- Set out agendas with confidentiality statement
- Make a note of acceptances, apologies and those not replied
- Familiarise yourself with the names/details of those that attend (a map of who's sitting where will help you minute the meeting)
- Follow the template when taking the minutes (if you notice you don't have some required information i.e. category of abuse, ensure the Chair knows you need this clarified)
- Let the Chair know if you are having difficulties
- If agreed by the Chair, make use of reports provided to the meeting (you wont need to repeat this information)
- Ensure that any follow up meetings are agreed and that a note is made of any date, time and likely venue mentioned for clarity with the Chair

How can the Chairperson help you?

To ensure that an accurate and comprehensive record of a meeting is made, the Chair of the meeting has a responsibility to assist the officer taking the minutes by:

- Agreeing the items/issues to be discussed at the meeting.
- Following these items in sequence and informing the minute taker of any departures from the agreed agenda.
- Summarise specific points, decisions or courses of action agreed during the meeting
- Where necessary, and in agreement with those present, providing specific guidance to the minute taker on what to record for a particular item where lengthy discussion has occurred or a complex issue has been discussed.
- Taking time to review the minutes when they are drafted if there were any points you were unclear about.

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

AND

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

CORE THINGS TO RECORD WITHIN THE MINUTES

- The essential facts of the case i.e. name, dob etc
- Invitees, Attendees, Also Invited, Apologies and Confidentiality Statement
- The purpose of the meeting
- Any breaks in the meeting and anyone leaving or joining the meeting
- A list of reports available to the meeting
- Record the nature of the adult's participation in the process and their views/wishes
- The views of families/parents/carers
- Assessment on the risk of continuing significant harm and the need for a protection plan with information outlining the reasons
- The outline protection plan, or plan for support
- Name of Keyworker or lead professional, if the adult continues to have a Protection Plan
- Members of the Core Group if the adult continues to have a Protection Plan and date of first meeting
- Date of Protection Plan review meeting

SO, WHAT EXACTLY SHOULD YOU WRITE DOWN?

One of the most difficult things about taking minutes is knowing what to write down and what to leave out. Keep these three central points in mind:-

- Don't try to write everything down – it's impossible and not useful.
- Concentrate on WHAT has been decided and WHO is going to do it. These are the most important things to have records of.
- Don't worry about producing the perfect minutes – it's not a test or a competition.

Some common problems

There are some things that make every minute-taker's life difficult. Here are some of the most common problems: –

- It is difficult to know exactly what *has* been agreed. No one is sticking to the point and lots of different suggestions are being made about what to do.
- The discussion jumps from one item to another before any of them are finished.
- Everyone is talking at once, and you can't follow the discussion.
- There is a long, confusing discussion and you don't know which bits are important to get down.

Some solutions

- If a meeting is well run it makes taking minutes much easier. It's the Chair's job to keep the meeting in order – but they can only do this with the co-operation of everyone at the meeting.
- One idea is to discuss and agree together some guidelines by which you'll run your meetings - for example no interruptions, putting your hand up if you want to talk, keeping to the item under discussion.
- 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.
- If it's not clear what decision has been made, ask the Chair to clarify this.
- 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
- 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...'
- 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.

Try to be objective

If a disagreement developed during a meeting then a brief statement would be sufficient instead of itemising the whole debate. The minutes could read: - "**A full and frank discussion took place during which various views and opinions were expressed.** 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.

Record points, not people. The minute-taker's focus is on the ideas, arguments and facts being presented not on the individuals present. Minutes should be free of offensive or inappropriate language, even if such language was used at a meeting. They should not include subjective interpretations of the mood of the meeting or the tone in which comments were made. Phrases like "*There was a heated discussion,*" "*The presentation was very motivational,*" or "*Mr. Davenport was emphatic*" do not belong in minutes. The document should be clean and objective.

Try to be consistent

Minutes across the organization should share the same general look and style, and should comply with content and format standards, which have been approved as a policy of the organization.

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.

Try to keep a logical flow:

Minutes should be logically organized, even if the meeting itself was fragmented and confusing. If the group addresses an issue/item sporadically throughout the meeting, all events that relate to the same item should be grouped in one place

OTHER USEFUL TIPS:

- Full names (e.g. Jane Smith) should be used at all times except for reference to other service users (see below).
- 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 of the meeting should be identified using initials and dob e.g. 'Mr/Miss TP – 1/1/1800'
- Alleged perpetrator – should be identified using initials (but full details should be recorded on the file)
- 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, Acacia Care Home
- 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)
- Minutes may be used in evidence in court (when writing imagine saying 'Your Honour' at the end of every sentence)
- 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
- 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) – see *Appendix 4 – Jargon alternatives*
- Minutes should be accurate, grammatically correct and concise – see *Appendix 5 – ABC*

AFTER THE MEETING

- Debrief with the Chair to check and clarify notes. Make sure you both agree and are clear about the discussions and any action that is to be taken (it is also an opportunity to discuss any emotional impact the meeting may have had on you)
- 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 is the decision for the Chair and may not always be necessary.
- Produce a first draft for the Chair as soon as possible after the meeting (ideally within one working day) using the appropriate template and typed back in Ariel font 12 (subheadings are Trebuchet 14 bold)
- Minutes should be marked 'draft' until they have been approved by the Chair. Once approved the Chair will produce a before and after version of the minutes for any learning y the officer taking the minutes
- The full minutes should be drafted and forwarded to the Chair for approval ideally within one working day but no later than 5 working days, so the minutes can be circulated within the target of 10 working days
- Retain hand written notes of the meeting until final version has been agreed by the Chair and participants

Learning lessons from the comments of the Chairs amendments to your draft:

- Don't just accept tracked changes (if used); you won't necessarily see and learn from patterns of feedback given to you
- Keep a note of areas that you are asked to change, to share with your supervisor
- Also take note of any areas where you notice that different Chairs ask for different things – this might be a 'style' thing, or might need checking out with them where you spot any inconsistency in message back to you about what is required

DISTRIBUTION

- 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 professionals/service user and their family attends for the second part of the meeting) then they should only receive the section relevant to them. Make sure it is clear on the minutes at the beginning of the second part of the meeting that ‘the service provider was informed that professionals had already been in discussion’. Two separate minute templates should be used.
- Delegates should not send copies of the minutes to non attendees without first consulting with the Chair
- Reports presented at the meeting should be sent out to attendees with the minutes (this should be checked with the Chair first).
- 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 7 working days of their circulation. After this period approval of the minutes will be presumed. Minor amendments will be attached to the minutes and raised at the next meeting or if no further meetings are being held, the request for amendment to be circulated as appropriate.

STORAGE

- 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 electronic file.

Remember you are providing a service for the Chair. It is the Chair of the meeting that “owns” the minutes

Note Takers Preparation Sheet

(It may be beneficial to complete a preparation form for each meeting)

Date of meeting:

Type of meeting:

Venue:	Time:
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Chairperson:

Tasks. What needs to be done before the meeting? (refer to data collection requirements)	Date Task completed
Review previous minutes	
For Strategy, Planning Meetings - Speak with Chair beforehand to gain an understanding of the case and to agree arrangements during the meeting	
Confirm invite list/send out SAFE5 for Planning Meeting	
For all meetings	
Check room booking, location and time	
Keep a list of attendees, apologies, also invited on the table below	
Print relevant papers for the meeting	
Draft minutes and email Chair	
Distribute minutes	
Update Databases (ERIC)	

For Strategy, Planning Meetings Confirmation of SU/Family members attendance (who and what time)
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Record Responses:

Name	Confirmation of attendance Y/N	Apologies Y/N	Deputies/Representatives Or Report submitted Y/N

Dates of future meetings:

Any additional information:

Case Scenario as told to note-taker by Chair

Strategy meeting – held on 4/8/10 at Gloucestershire Area Office

The manager of Sunny Villas Care Home (Neta Powell) reported an incident to Adult Help Desk on 3/8/10. A cleaner at the home (April Smith), told the manager that she saw a care worker on day shift (Michelle Post) pinching the face of a resident (Nelly Tunes) hard and calling her 'a dirty cow'. This happened on the morning of 3/8/10. Mrs Tunes is a 90 year old with a diagnosis of dementia. April Smith said that Michelle Post twisted Mrs Tunes' face until she cried. Subsequently pinch marks and bruising were observed and recorded by Mrs Tunes' GP.

The area team advised the home manager to contact the police. The manager has done so. Before any investigations into the incident begin, a strategy meeting, involving the police, home manager, and social worker is held the following day, chaired by the Team Manager. CQC inspector, Sam Biggins, cannot attend.



Gloucestershire

COUNTY COUNCIL

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS STRATEGY/DISCUSSION MEETING (SAFE2)

(To be completed within 5 days of Safeguarding Adults Decision/Threshold being made)

CONCERNING: Date of Birth:

HELD ON:

Type of meeting : Formal Telephone

Present:

William Tell	Team Manager, Glos. Area Office
Annette Freeman	Social Worker, as above
DS Sandy Shore	Police Officer, Gloucestershire Police
Neta Powell	Home Manager, Sunny Villas Care Home

Apologies:

Sam Biggins	Regulation inspector, CQ C
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Also invited:

Confidentiality Statement:

The Chair advised that this Planning Meeting was being convened under Gloucestershire County Council's multi agency Safeguarding Adults Policy & Procedures and reminded everyone that the proceedings were confidential. The issues discussed are confidential to the members of the meeting and the agencies they represent. They will only be shared in the best interests of the vulnerable adult. Minutes of the meeting are circulated on the strict understanding that they will be kept confidential and stored securely.

NB: when you sign the attendance sheet, you are signing up to the above confidentiality statement.

Purpose of the Meeting

William Tell explained the need for confidentiality.

Today's meeting has been convened to discuss an incident that occurred on 3/8/10 against a service user residing at Sunny Villas Care Home. An interim Protection Plan will be formulated to minimise the risk to Mrs Tunes.

Summary of the allegation(s)

An incident was reported to the Adult Help Desk on 3/8/10 regarding service user Mrs Nelly Tunes. A cleaner at the Sunny Villas Care Home, AP, witnessed a care worker, MP,

pinching and twisting Mrs Tunes' face and calling her a 'dirty cow'. The care homes GP has seen the bruising and Neta Powell was advised to call the police.

Summary of actions taken and input from other agencies

Background details of Mrs Tunes

- Became a resident of Sunny Villas Care Home – April 1989
- Main carer of Mrs Tunes was her husband who died in January 1989
- It became increasingly difficult for Mrs Tunes to live by herself at home
- Mrs Tunes has 4 children but they do not live locally
- Mrs Tunes has been diagnosed with moderate dementia and has limited sight
- At her last review, carried out on 27th July 2010, Mrs Tunes was found to be happy
- Mrs Tunes is still in a confused state, very weepy and holds her face

Report on the incident

- AP came to see her in a distressed state. She explained how she had witnessed MP pinching and twisting Mrs Tunes' face and calling her names
- Neta told AP to make notes of the incident
- Neta contacted Adult Help Desk. She was advised by William Tell that the police be called
- MP was suspended immediately and asked to leave the premises
- MP has worked at the care home for 18 months; she has good references and worked well with other residents; there have not been any other complaints

DS Sandy Shore reported that the police had no relevant information on MP

Views of vulnerable adult/family/carers/Perpetrator

Summary of risks identified

- There are no immediate risks to Mrs Tunes as the carer has been suspended
- MP will be arrested; if she calls the home, Annette Freeman to notify her that the police are now dealing with the incident and they will contact her, Annette Freeman is not to discuss the incident with her further.
- If staff ask any questions Annette Freeman should advise them that MP has been suspended and if any further witnesses come forward to then contact the police again

Capacity Issues

- It was agreed that Mrs Tunes did not have capacity
- The incident would be dealt with under the Mental Capacity Act, as it was a criminal offence
- Photographs would be taken of Mrs Tunes' injuries; this will be carried out at the care home to cause minimal stress

Any other background information

- No other relevant background information

Outcomes/Conclusions

Interim support and Safeguarding Plan for the vulnerable adult

Action	By Whom	By When
Physical	Carer pinched Mrs Tunes' face	Carer suspended pending

		police investigation
Psychological	Carer calling Mrs Tunes names	As above

Action Plan for Agencies

Action	By Whom	By When
1.	A statement will be needed from the consultant psychologist to confirm lack of capacity	Annette Freeman
2.	Statements needed from AP (main witness) and Annette Freeman (1 st disclosure)	Police
3.	Annette Freeman to note any comments made by MP	Annette Freeman
4.	Annette Freeman to give DS sandy Shore MP's details	Annette Freeman
5.	Crime scene investigators to contact Annette Freeman regarding photographing injuries	Police
6.	Annette Freeman to make a note of this in her statement	Re: action 5

Reports presented at the meeting:

- i.
- ii.
- iii.

Date Minutes sent out :

This information should be shared with relevant professionals and the alleged victim, family, advocate, carers as appropriate, following the discussion/assessment meeting. If the referrer was not involved in the discussion/assessment meeting, the nominated person should appraise them with the outcome within the limits of confidentiality and in line with Safeguarding Adults Information Sharing agreement.

Signed:

Jargon Alternatives

Hard Words	Plain English
accommodation	where you live, home
accompanying	with
acquaint yourself with	find out about, read
applicant	you
additional	extra
advise	tell
as a consequence of	because
beneficial	helpful, useful
by mean of	by
commence	start, begin
communicate	<i>Be specific</i> – talk, write, phone
comply with	keep to, meet
consequently	so
concerning	about, on
determine	decide, work out
disclose	tell, show
documentation	papers, documents
during which time	while
eligible	allowed, qualified
empower	allow, let or help
endeavour	try
enquiries	question
ensure	make sure
entitlement	right
evaluate	test, check
exempt from	free from
facilitate	help, make possible or support
for the duration of	during, while
forward	send
illustrate	show, explain
in accordance with	under, keeping to
in case of	if
in conjunction with	and, with
in excess of	more than
in respect of	for
in the event of	if
incorporate	include
local authority	council
liaise	meet, talk with, work with

(it is) mandatory	you must
notify	tell us, let us know
obtain	receive
on receipt	when we / you get
on request	if you ask
outstanding	unpaid
particulars	details, facts
per annum	a year
persons	people
prior to	before
procure	get, obtain, arrange
provisions	rules, terms, goods
purchase	buy
qualify for	can get, be able to get
referred to as	called
regarding	about
represent	show, stand for
reside	live
should you wish	if you wish
statutory	legal, by law
(the) tenant	you, the person
terminate	stop, end
vacancies	jobs
whilst	while

Writing with ABA – Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity

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’.

Avoid complicated words – a list of alternative words can be found at appendix 4

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.

A Guide to Punctuation

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 *Sanger House is situated in Gloucester and is open Monday to Friday.*

Comma

- Used to separate items in a list e.g. *NHS Gloucestershire has offices in Gloucester, Cheltenham, Highnam and Cirencester.* (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 Frederick Sanger, stands on the Gloucester 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, NHS Gloucestershire will be going ahead with their plans to improve facilities in the North Cotswolds.*

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. *NHS Gloucestershire 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. *NHS Gloucestershire 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 NHS Gloucestershire staff handbook.*
- Used after a statement to introduce further information, more sharply than a semicolon e.g. *NHS Gloucestershire 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 Frederick Sanger – stands on the Gloucester 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*