

North Wales Safeguarding Board

Guidance for Chairs and Minute Takers of Part IV Meetings

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Part One – Guidance for Chairs of Part IV Meetings

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1. Introduction

This guidance relates to the management of allegations of abuse about or against a professional, staff member or volunteer in contact with children and vulnerable adults (or who manage/supervise/influence services). The Part IV process being supplemental to the Part III (AWCPP 2008) processes which should be considered in conjunction with such allegations.

Part IV (AWCPP 2008) Meetings are convened when it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in way that indicates she/he is unsuitable to work with children

This guidance has been written to compliment Part 4 of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 and should be read in conjunction with the procedures.

Minutes of the Part IV meetings could be:

- Used as part of a police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- Used as part of disciplinary action by an employer in respect of the individual
- Subject to a Data Protection Act Request

It is therefore vitally important that the Chair of these meeting is a skilled professional with sufficient experience to provide challenge and rigour to the Part IV process.

Good chairing is important in protecting children and young people and making sure information is shared appropriately to enable attendees to make informed decisions to manage risk effectively

A good chair helps the meeting to run smoothly and efficiently. They will make sure that:

- all the relevant information is shared
- everyone's views are heard
- clear decisions are reached and timescales for actions made
- the meeting starts and finishes on time

2. Preparation

The Chair should:

- Think about the meeting before attendees arrive and ensure familiarisation with the case and all documents
- Ask the following questions in advance of the meeting:
 - Who are most appropriate persons to attend the meeting in order to make decision on behalf of their agency?
 - What will you discuss at it?
 - Do you need to get more information to inform the discussion?

- Do you want to distribute any information in advance of the meeting?

3. Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of a meeting must always be clarified by the Chair at the start of the meeting along with the roles and responsibilities of attendees

The chair must be clear with attendees that the information shared is sensitive and confidential

4. Role of the Chair

The Chair should:

- Clarify the actual allegation(s) in the meeting
- Make sure all information is available to the meeting
- Be responsible for making the agenda clear at the outset for covering all the issues relevant to safety and welfare of the children and for making clear which part of the agenda is being dealt with as the meeting progresses
- Ensure that everyone has expressed their view equally
- Challenge attendees to ensure that opinion is differentiated from fact
- Not be judgemental and remain objective throughout
- Remain a consistent chair for the duration of the investigation where possible
- Ensure when new or additional information is brought to a meeting the Chair highlights this for attendees
- Ensure that the responsible individual for actions is clearly identified with timescales
- Summarise the information shared in the meeting and the decisions made at the meeting
- Ensure the meeting makes the necessary decisions
- Ensure decisions are agreed by all representatives and where there is disagreement the reasons for this should be clearly noted

5. Decision of the Meeting

The Chair should:

- Ensure actions at the end of a strategy meeting will need to be agreed and clarified as part of the ongoing investigation
- Refer to the 'AWCPP 4.3.6.5 – Investigations Outcome Meeting' to identify outcomes for the meeting – i.e. Substantiated or Not Substantiated
- Actions arising from the decision will be clearly documented with timescales and who will be responsible

- Outcome Meeting date to be agreed to ensure actions are completed

6. After the Meeting

The Chair should:

- Check and clarify notes with the minute taker. Make sure there is agreement about discussions and any action that is to be taken (it is also an opportunity to discuss any emotional impact the meeting may have had)
- Review the list of further actions and decisions produced by the minute taker (ensuring that it is clearly marked draft) ideally within one working day
- Once a draft has been completed, check the minutes for accuracy and completeness and make amendments if necessary before signature. This should be done in a timely manner so as not to impact on circulation timescales. This should be agreed by the chair in accordance with their own departmental policies
- Ensure the outcome letter has been typed and sent out in accordance with departmental timescales

Part Two - Minute Takers of Part IV Meetings

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1. Introduction

Part IV (AWCPP 2008) Meetings are convened when it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in way that indicates she/he is unsuitable to work with children

Minutes of these meetings could be:

- Used as part of a police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- Used as part of disciplinary action by an employer in respect of the individual
- Subject to a Data Protection Act Request

It is therefore vitally important that these documents are of a high, consistent quality and are written in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. Minutes are confidential document and should only be sent out to those invited to the meeting

2. Purpose – Why It Is Important?

The purpose of Part IV minutes is to provide an accurate, impartial record of the meeting. Properly constructed minutes provide a record of decisions, reflect dissent where appropriate and contain clear recommendations for future action. They should be clear, concise, impartial and free from any ambiguity and they also serve as source of contemporaneous evidence in judicial or regulatory proceedings.

3. Preparation

Good preparation makes the job of writing minutes of Part IV Meetings faster and more accurate.

Minute takers should:

- Ensure that invitations to the meeting are sent on date of notification and any responses noted. If no response has been received, this should be followed up. Make a note of acceptances, apologies and those not replied and bring to the attention of the chair prior to the meeting as the chair may want to make a decision about whether to progress the meeting or not
- Make sure there is sufficient time in the diary to ensure that a very early 'first draft' can be produced whilst it is fresh in the memory
- Ensure a room is booked and where appropriate inform reception so staff know who to expect
- Arrive for the meeting in plenty of time
- Read previous minutes or papers and speak to the Chair to be familiar with the case and relevant names/spelling of names.
- Make sure the chair has a copy of previous minutes
- Make an attendance sheet in advance to pass around at the start of the meeting

- Remember to use the relevant template to ensure minutes are consistent and has the relevant logo is on the document
- Agree a signal with the chair when further clarification is required

4. During the Part IV Meeting

Minute takers should:

- Sit where they can see and hear everything clearly. It is useful to sit close to the Chair
- Provide the chair with agendas and confidentiality statement
- Draw a map of who is sitting where which will help with identifying people
- Be aware that minutes are not a verbatim recording of proceedings. Discussions should be summarised while always providing enough information to enable a person who was not present at the meeting to fully understand how a decision was reached. It is only necessary to be able to assess the tenor of any discussion, the outcome(s) and the reasons. Try to avoid 'he said, she said' dialogue unless it is relevant to the key agenda points
- Should write in the past tense and the third person, i.e. Mr John Smith advised that he had.....
- Ensure that the decisions of the meeting are clear and recorded accurately
- Ensure that any follow up meetings are agreed and that a note is made of any date, time and venue

5. After the Part IV Meeting

Minute takers should:

- Check and clarify notes with the Chair. Make sure there is agreement about discussions and any action that is to be taken (it is also an opportunity to discuss any emotional impact the meeting may have had)
- 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 one working day to avoid delay. This is the decision for the Chair and may not always be necessary
- Ensure that Part IV minutes always include:
 - Client name, meeting date, time, location
 - Attendance and apologies
 - The background and purpose of the meeting
 - Dates of previous related meetings
 - Decisions
 - Action points, who is to complete them and within what timescales
 - The signature of the chairperson (following approval of the minutes)

- Remember the format for the minutes should be consistent and one agreed template should be used
- Try not to repeat the same words
- The minutes should reflect whether someone left the room or not. This is in order that if decisions are made when key people are out of the room, you can determine who was there and who was not there.
- In the event of a professional difference between attendees this should be minuted sensitively with guidance from the Chair
- Write with objectivity, making it clear the difference between opinion and fact
- Produce a list of further actions and decisions (ensuring that it is clearly marked draft) for the Chair as soon as possible after the meeting (ideally within one working day) using the appropriate template
- Produce a first draft of the minutes for the chair (ideally within one week) using the appropriate template
- Ensure that different versions are clearly labelled
- Remove draft markings once approved by the Chair. Then the final version can be circulated to those invited

6. Distribution

Minute takers should:

- Advise meeting participants that requests for amendments to the minutes should be forwarded directly to the Chair of the meeting for consideration within 3 working days of receipt. After this period approval of the minutes will be presumed.

7. Storage

Minute takers should:

- Retain any document and reports submitted to the meeting along with the minutes and should be kept in accordance with the department policies and procedures. Where supplied as paper copy they should be scanned and saved to the relevant electronic recording system

Appendices

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Appendix 2 - General Hints and Tips

Appendix 3 – Troubleshooting

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Appendix 5 – Jargon Buster

Appendix 6 – Writing with ABC – Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity

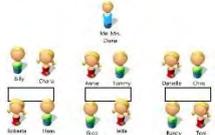
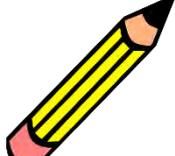
Appendix 7 – A Guide to Punctuation



Agenda for Part IV Meetings

1.	Introductions and Apologies
2.	Nature and details of allegation/concern <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify actual allegation(s) made • Referral source/details • Enquiries made before Part IV meeting
3.	Circumstances of individual under investigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Details • Previous concerns/complaints • Current employment status • Other posts/roles • DBS/PNC • Social Care systems
4.	Information regarding young person making the allegation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate safety • Special needs • Involvement with social care • Are parents aware?
5.	Other Children to be Considered Re: Risk/Safety Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in home • Contact with other children
6.	Decisions re: Investigation Required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police/Criminal • Child Protection Concern/Section 47 • Professional Conduct that requires employment investigation • NFA
7.	Reasons for Above Decision
8.	Other Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • Briefing personnel • Feedback to parents/staff/referrer • Notification of registration bodies • Legal Matters
9.	Support Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child • Individual under investigation
10.	Recommendations and Actions

Appendix 2 - General Hints and Tips

	<p>For common phrases and names etc. create your own abbreviations and short hand to use when taking minutes. This will free you up during the meeting to be able to pay more attention to the discussions taking place</p>
	<p>Use a decent pad of paper for comfortable and easy writing</p>
	<p>Take extra pens with you</p>
	<p>Use a laptop instead of pen and paper if you are faster at typing. This does not have to be word perfect; write using the language you would use if writing by hand. This will also be assisted by using your minutes template, which you can type directly into</p>
	<p>If you don't know everybody well at the meeting, draw the rough seating arrangement that will help when noting who said what, and who has actions against them</p>
	<p>Full names (e.g. Jane Smith) should be used at all times except for reference to other service users (see below)</p>
	<p>The service user who is subject of the meeting should be identified formally using their full name e.g. Jane Smith</p>
	<p>Full names should be used in minutes as they are not future proofed and make it very difficult to identify who is who when reading, particularly if the reader does not have access to any file</p>
	<p>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</p>
	<p>Third parties may request to see the minutes – make sure your record is impartial and factual</p>

	<p>Minutes may be used in evidence in court (when writing imagine saying 'Your Honour' at the end of every sentence)</p>
	<p>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</p>
	<p>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)</p>
	<p>Minutes should be accurate, grammatically correct and concise</p>

Appendix 3 – Troubleshooting

Problem	Solution
You are not sure what the important points are from a long and detailed discussion	Not the fact there was a long discussion on the topic and simply list the main points
You cannot follow the discussion because everyone is talking at one and jumping around between items	It is the responsibility of the Chair to keep the meeting in order, but it is reasonable to ask the group to speak one at a time and ask for clarification on which agenda items they are discussing
You do not know what has been agreed as several different suggestions have been made	As the Chair to clarify what the decision is
An important decision has been made and you want to get it right	Read back the proposal or decision to the group to ensure accuracy

Appendix 4 – List of Helpful Verbs

Acknowledge	Agreed on	Agreed to	Announced
Arranged	Asked for	Asserted	Assured
Believed	Brought up	Complained	Confirmed
Decided	Declared	Described	Detailed
Discussed	Displayed	Emphasised	Explained
Expressed	Guaranteed	Identified	Implemented
Informed	Listed	Maintained	Mentioned
Noted	Observed	Perceived	Predicted
Presented	Promised	Proposed	Recommended
Remarked	Reported	Requested	Reviewing
Said	Settled	Specified	Stated
Stressed	Suggested	Summarised	Understood

Appendix 5 – Jargon Buster

Accommodation	Where you live, home	Accompanying	With
Acquaint yourself with	Find out about, read	Applicant	You
Additional	Extra	Advise	Tell
As a consequence	Because	Beneficial	Useful, Helpful
Commence	Start, Begin	Communicate	Talk, Write, Phone
Comply With	Keep To, Meet	Consequently	So
Determine	Decide, Work out	Disclose	Tell, Show
Documentation	Papers, Documents	During	While
Eligible	Allowed, Qualified	Empower	Allow, Let, Help
Endeavour	Try	Enquiries	Questions
Ensure	Make Sure	Entitlement	Right
Evaluate	Test, Check	Exempt	Free from
Facilitate	Help, Make Possible, Support	Forward	Send
Illustrate	Show, Explain	In Excess Of	More Than
Incorporate	Include	Liaise, Meet	Talk With, Work With
Mandatory	You Must	Notify	Tell Us, Let Us Know
Obtain	Receive	On Request	If You Ask
Outstanding	Unpaid	Particulars	Details, Facts
Per Annum	Per Year	Persons	People
Prior To	Before	Purchase	Buy
Regarding	About	Represent	Stand For
Reside	Live	Should You Wish	If You Wish
Terminate	Stop, End	Vacancies	Jobs

Appendix 6 – Writing with ABC – 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
- 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 and 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.

Appendix 7 – 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 North Wales and is open Monday to Friday.

Comma

- Used to separate items in a list e.g. North Wales has 6 regions, Wrexham, Gwynedd, Anglesey, Conwy, Flintshire and Denbighshire. (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, North Wales Safeguarding Board will be going ahead with their plans to improve their website.
- 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. The North Wales Safeguarding Board 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. the North Wales Safeguarding Board 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 North Wales Safeguarding Board staff handbook.
- Used after a statement to introduce further information, more sharply than a semicolon e.g. North Wales Safeguarding Board 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