

OBSERVATION AND **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality

Observations about a child should be treated as confidential as they will contain personal information about them.

They must not be left out where they can be seen by others.



Confidentiality means

Not passing on information about the families you are working with.

Early years workers get to know personal information about families they work with from a variety of sources.

It is essential to learn to be discreet when dealing with confidential information.

Confidential information

- Parents' / carers' marital status
- Parents' / carers' employment status
- Financial situation of families
- Medical information
- Court orders concerning the child's contacts with family members or residence
- Suspected child abuse
- Family members who are charged with a criminal offence or are in prison

Rules to remember

- Never give out information about a child or family to anyone unless parents have given permission
- Never discuss confidential information with children present
- Never discuss one set of parents with another
- Take care with casual conversations with friends, colleagues, and families

The Data Protection Act

- Anyone processing personal information or details must register with the Information Commissioner's Office
- This applies to information stored on computer
- It also applies to paper records



Eight principles for data

1. Fairly and lawfully processed
2. Processed for limited purposes
3. Information is adequate, relevant and not excessive
4. Information is accurate
5. Not kept longer than necessary
6. Processed in accordance with subjects' rights
7. Information is kept secure
8. Not transferable to countries without adequate protection

Storage and access

- Information must be stored properly, ideally in a locked cupboard
- Information is only accessed by relevant staff and professionals
- Information is recorded accurately and is updated on a regular basis
- Records are held with the knowledge and consent of parents

The exception to the rule

Although personal information cannot be held or passed on without a parent's consent this rule can be broken if "the safety of the child is believed to be at risk".

In this case it is acceptable to pass on confidential information to the appropriate authorities only.

Activity

Answer the following questions:

1. How do you encourage others to participate in the observation and planning process?
2. How do you ensure your observations are carried out in a consistent way?
3. When and how do you allocate time and resources to support regular observation and assessment?
4. What is your setting's policy on confidentiality?