
Case Notes, Written Records and Correspondence Policy

Turas Training

Approval date:

Revision date:

1. Statement

- 1.1. TURAS is committed to best practice regarding case note recording, the production of written statements, and written communications on behalf of the organisation / service users.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To provide staff with guidelines for good note keeping, and processes for clear written communications both internally and externally. This policy includes:
 - 2.1.1. Guidelines for taking case notes
 - 2.1.2. Guidelines for making a written statement
 - 2.1.3. Guidelines for letter writing and writing emails for internal and external bodies.

3. Scope

- 3.1. The policy outlines the procedures to be undertaken by all staff and volunteers in all formal communications and records.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1. It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that:
 - 4.1.1. Staff are provided with adequate time and resources, and a suitable environment to document case notes and write correspondences. This will be part of the daily/weekly work schedule. Staff will be provided with, on average, (number of hours) per week for completing case notes and correspondence.
 - 4.1.2. Staff are provided with training in writing case notes and correspondence as required.
 - 4.1.3. Managers must approve all correspondence to external agencies.
 - 4.1.4. All files are audited no less than annually.
- 4.2. It is the responsibility of staff to ensure that:
 - 4.2.1. Case notes and correspondence are written to the professional standards as described in this policy.

5. Principles

- 5.1. TURAS believes that 'shoddy' records = 'shoddy' care. It is therefore vital that information is carefully and professionally recorded.
- 5.2. To be effective workers, project staff must master not only the art of helping service users, but also the skill of writing about them and the services provided for them.
- 5.3. Employees represent the organisation on all external communication, so it is vital that external communications are of a standard that best represents the organisation, and the needs of the service users.
- 5.4. Staff are personally answerable under law for everything they write / don't write.
- 5.5. Service users are legally entitled to view any written records that relate to them and this should be born in mind when writing any records. For further reference see Data Protection Policy.
- 5.6. Anything written should be easily understood by all who may potentially read the document, including service users to whom it refers.
- 5.7. All case notes and statements should be non-judgemental and factual.
- 5.8. Staff are responsible for ensuring that all correspondence and records are of a high standard in relation to spelling, punctuation and grammar. If a staff member is unsure of correct usage in relation to any of these points they should use computer tools such as spell check or should obtain the advice of a team member or manager.

6. General Information

- 6.1. TURAS uses the following written records:

Internal:

 - 6.1.1. Case notes
 - 6.1.2. Care plans and care-plan reviews
 - 6.1.3. Risk-assessments and safety management plans
 - 6.1.4. Day book

- 6.1.5. Incident reports
- 6.1.6. Investigation reports
- 6.1.7. Meeting minutes
- 6.1.8. Feedback and review forms
- 6.1.9. Individual Learning Plans
- 6.1.10. Internal emails
- 6.1.11. ECASS (Salesforce Reports and Notes)
- 6.1.12. Intranet - Server

External:

- 6.1.13. Letters to other organisations
- 6.1.14. Referral forms
- 6.1.15. External emails
- 6.1.16. Website
- 6.1.17. Social Media Accounts

7. Case Notes

- 7.1. Case notes: are kept in the service user files or on the computerised client management system (CMS – ECASS/Salesforce) or the client file for all service users being key-worked or case-managed within the organisation
 - 7.1.1. Case notes should be entered by any staff member who has undertaken a significant piece of work with the service or only by the key-worker/case-manager.
 - 7.1.2. Where there is more than one staff member entering information, all entries should be initialled and dated.
- 7.2. Case notes should record; phone calls, meeting outcomes, decisions, worker actions, actions of external agencies and agreements related to the service user, as well as service user progression/regression and other facts that are considered important by the service user or worker.
- 7.3. Case notes must be written based on observation / evidence and should be written following the guidelines below.

8. Good Practice in Record Keeping

- 8.1. Written records should be clear and brief.
 - 8.1.1. All records should be written in a way that the service user is able to understand.
 - 8.1.2. Records should include only essential and relevant details.
 - 8.1.3. Records should use complete sentences.
- 8.2. Written records should be timely. Where possible, they should be recorded shortly after the event. Case notes should also be recorded regularly, staff should aim to complete no less than weekly.
- 8.3. Written records should be accurate and complete. Records should be clear, unambiguous and include the date (Day/Month/Year).
- 8.4. Events should be described sequentially.
- 8.5. Where notes have been made in a written form and used in a meeting (i.e. case meeting) these should include the printed name and signature of the persons completing the records.
- 8.6. Any alterations should be made by striking a line through the incorrect information and initialling and dating. The use of correction fluid is not permitted.
- 8.7. Records must be objective and factual and describe what is observed / evidenced. If an incident has not been observed, but is relevant to service user care, then it must be clearly stated i.e. 'the service user reports that.....' If for some reason a more subjective statement needs to be made, the recorder should acknowledge this as a subjective opinion.
- 8.8. Where possible, records should use the service users own words.
- 8.9. Written records should be readable and written legibly, preferably in black or blue ink.
- 8.10. The following common errors in record keeping should be avoided:
 - 8.10.1. Dates, times and signatures omitted.
 - 8.10.2. Illegible handwriting.
 - 8.10.3. Ambiguous abbreviations. Abbreviation should not be used unless approved in advance by management.
 - 8.10.4. Phone calls not recorded.

- 8.10.5. Use of correction fluid.
- 8.10.6. Completion of records many days after the event.
- 8.10.7. Unprofessional terminology, colloquialisms, jargon and clichés.
- 8.10.8. Opinions mixed with facts.
- 8.10.9. Lack of detail / too much detail.

9. Guidelines on Writing Statements

- 9.1. A statement may include written information related to:
 - 9.1.1. An incident involving service users / family members / staff
 - 9.1.2. An accident involving service users / family members / staff
 - 9.1.3. A complaint
 - 9.1.4. A disciplinary issue
 - 9.1.5. An alleged criminal offence
- 9.2. The purpose of a written statement is to build up a factual picture of events surrounding the actions above. The statement may be requested by management in relation to any investigation or legal process.
- 9.3. How to write a statement:
 - 9.3.1. A statement should be written as close to the event as possible.
 - 9.3.2. Ensure you have access to all relevant records.
 - 9.3.3. Begin with full names, work address, position and grade, location at the time of the incident or allegation, name of employer at the time of the incident or allegation.
 - 9.3.4. Confirm the date (including day of the week e.g. Wednesday 10th March 2010), time and location of the event in question.
 - 9.3.5. Give full name of any person(s) involved.
 - 9.3.6. Give a full detail of the sequence of events in chronological order.
 - 9.3.7. Do not express opinion or hearsay, but only facts.
 - 9.3.8. State whether what you have described is your actual memory of the incident, or whether you have relied on records made at the time, or a combination of both.
 - 9.3.9. Text should be concise whilst containing all relevant information.
 - 9.3.10. Text should avoid jargon and abbreviations.
 - 9.3.11. Statements should be legible, preferably typed, and be checked by a manager before being signed and dated.
 - 9.3.12. Completed statements should be kept on file by management.

10. Guidelines for Letter Writing and Writing Emails.

- 10.1. Writing letters to external agencies:
 - 10.1.1. As far as possible, service users should write letters themselves, or be encouraged to participate in writing a letter with the member of staff.
 - 10.1.2. All written communication to external agencies should be written in a clear and concise format (see templates attached for examples).
 - 10.1.3. All letters to external organisations advocating on behalf of a services user, or as part of the normal day to day work of the role should be written on letter headed paper, and signed by the relevant worker / manager.
 - 10.1.4. In all cases, letters in relation to service users will be written in accordance with the provisions of the Confidentiality Policy.
 - 10.1.5. All letters should be sighted and approved by the manager prior to being sent.
 - 10.1.6. All letters in relation to external organisations that represent the wider views of the organisation, and are in relation to complaints, interagency issues, or any other issues that is not a normal part of the day to day work of the role should be written on letter headed paper, and signed by the manager.
 - 10.1.7. A copy of all written correspondence related to a service user should be kept in the service users file.
 - 10.1.8. While the following information may not be appropriate for all occasions, a general letter of support for a service user should include:

- 10.1.8.1. The relationship with the service user. This may also include the reason for you or your agencies involvement with the service user.
 - 10.1.8.2. The support or assistance your service has been providing to the service users including the length of time s/he has been involved in the service
 - 10.1.8.3. The reason for the correspondence clearly outlined. All correspondence should only include facts known to the organisation. Opinions (unless based on presented facts) and hearsay can not be supported by the organisation.
 - 10.1.8.4. Any additional information you consider appropriate.
- 10.2. Writing emails
- 10.2.1. Emails sent to internal staff and to external agencies should be consistent with standards outlined in the Internet and Email Policy.

11. Guidelines on Service User File

- 11.1. Service users files should contain the following:
 - 11.1.1. Formal assessment of the service user (name assessment used).
 - 11.1.2. Risk assessment and safety management plan
 - 11.1.3. Care plan, which should be written as described in the Assessment and Care Planning Policy.
 - 11.1.4. Careful documentation of any accidents / incidents as described in the Incident Reporting Policy.
 - 11.1.5. Case notes, including actions taken by the staff member in relation to the service user.
 - 11.1.6. Copies of any letters sent in relation to the service user.

Appendix 1 – Example Template Letters

1.1 Letter to court

Please note that the following are examples only, and do not represent the only way to put a letter together on behalf of a service user. Different structures that follow the principles outlined in this policy are perfectly acceptable.

(Print letter on company letterhead or standard paper)

Date

To the Honourable Judge Presiding / Solicitor, as relevant

Re: service user's full name and D.O.B

I am aware that ... *(service user's name)* is attending before you today on the charge/s of ... *(state charge, this is useful in case you have been provided with incorrect information)*.

I have worked in the capacity of... *(Briefly describe the professional relationship, provide a one line description of the service, and how long you have worked in this capacity with the person)*.

Throughout this period of engagement ... *(provide positive and truthful information on the following: engagement, commitment to programme or service, ability to attend appointments, progress in support plan, general willingness and motivation for change)*.

A care plan is in place ... *(describe future care plan actions that may be hindered by a custodial sentence)*.

Furthermore ... *(add further character descriptions and/or examples of the person's behaviour and/or history supporting the above testimonial, this may include the impact on the wider family and children etc)*.

Yours faithfully,

Name

Position

1.2 Referral Letter

Note that most service may have a referral form that they use for referrals. In such circumstances, it will not be necessary to complete a referral letter.

(Print letter on company letterhead or standard paper)

Date

To _____

Re: Service user's full name, D.O.B and address if appropriate

I have worked with *(name of service user)* in the capacity of ... *(state if you are the case manager, if not state your role and which agency in acting in this case management role)*.

I am aware that ... (*service user's name*) feels that they would benefit from (*outline what they hope to achieve as a result of the referral and why you think this would be a benefit to them. It is useful here to underline that this is the service user's statement, but one that you support*)

A care plan is in place ... (*briefly describe successes achieved so far, and how the referral is consistent with care*).

As a referral service we are happy to (*describe the continues support you can provide to the service user should be worked with by this agency, if you are not in a position to continue working with the individual this should be stated*).

Yours faithfully,

Name

Position

1.3 Letter Seeking Care Plan Engagement

(*Print letter on company letterhead or standard paper*)

Date

To _____

Re: Service user's full name, D.O.B and address if appropriate

I am writing from _____ (*service name*) to inform you that I am currently acting as a case manager for _____ (*service user name*.) _____ (*service user name*) has given their consent for me to share the following information with you; a copy of the consent to share information is attached.

The role of the case manager involves completing a comprehensive needs assessment with the service user, developing an effective care plan, and supporting the service user in implementing the plan. This includes identifying key supports, initiating interagency work on behalf of the service user and undertaking formal care plan reviews.

Your service was identified through the care planning process as (*playing a role in the service users care plan, or a service which could play a useful in the care plan*). (*Identify the role that can be played by this service, or summarise what the care plan states them as already providing and the goals etc, if this has already been agreed or noted. It is important to ensure that you are not making presumptions if there has been no prior contact with the service*).

To progress this.....(*this may include; confirmation of the existing care plan goals, a case meeting to discuss the goals and actions, phone conversation etc*).

If you have any questions or queries I would be more than happy to discuss these with you at your convenience, please contact me on the (*enter phone number*).

Yours faithfully,

Name

Position