



# Recording case notes in Charity Log

Training Aid 2

## Guide to recording case notes: best practices for defensible and accurate documentation

This guide is designed to support you in accurately recording your work activities in Charity Log. Good case note recording is essential for ensuring clear documentation of interactions, maintaining continuity of support, and enabling smooth handovers. This guide aligns with GDPR compliance and best practices in advocacy, as outlined in the NICE guidelines [NG227] for advocacy services.

### Understanding defensible recording

Defensible recording means documenting interactions in a clear and straightforward way that can stand up to scrutiny. Each note should accurately reflect what happened during the interaction, include all relevant details, and track any necessary follow-up actions. According to GDPR, defensible recording also ensures personal data is handled responsibly, respecting confidentiality and privacy.

Accurate case notes help maintain transparency, support continuity of service, and track progress toward the individual's goals. Following NICE guidelines, particularly section 1.5, "Enabling and Supporting Effective Advocacy," means consistently documenting goals and outcomes.

### Key principles of defensible recording

To ensure your notes are defensible and comply with both GDPR and NICE guidelines, follow these principles:

- **Include relevant information:** Document the date, time, participants, decisions made, and any follow-up actions. This is crucial for compliance and reflects the individual's goals.
- **Record in sequence:** Write entries in the order they occur, separating different interactions for clarity.
- **Focus on facts:** Keep notes objective. Avoid personal opinions or assumptions.
- **Be clear and concise:** Write in a straightforward way so anyone reading the notes can easily understand them.
- **Maintain confidentiality:** Include only necessary information about the individual, ensuring sensitive details are protected.

## How to record client activity in Charity Log

### Separate interactions appropriately

- **Direct client contact:** Document meetings, phone calls, and emails separately. Include details about discussions and decisions related to the individual's needs.
- **Third-party communication:** Record communications with other professionals or family members that relate to the person's situation. Clearly outline the advocacy role in supporting the person's decisions and rights.
- **Email documentation:** Copy and paste emails into the record, including the sender and recipient details for a clear communication record.

### Scenario: Advocate recording an activity

**Client meeting:** Paula attends a meeting with John, his social worker Ann Smith, and a housing officer, Joe Brown.

- **Record entry:** Charity Log generates the date; Paula confirms it matches the meeting date. She includes who attended, the main discussion points, and decisions made, noting John's preference for independent living.
- **Follow-up action:** Paula sets a dated action to check in with John post property visits.

**Client call:** Paula receives a follow-up call from John.

- **Record entry:** Charity Log generates the date; Paula confirms it, records a summary, and sets any follow-up actions.

**Follow-up email to social worker:** Paula emails John's social worker.

- **Record entry:** Paula checks the date, copies the email into John's record, and includes sender and recipient details for clarity and chronology.

### Writing professional and defensible notes

When writing case notes, aim for clarity, brevity, and accuracy. Here are some tips on how to structure your notes effectively:

- Use clear labels for entries: Choose accurate "Contact Type" and "Contact Method" for each interaction then label the entry with the specifics (e.g., "Meeting with client," "Call with social worker").
- Objective language: Avoid subjective wording. Instead of "John seemed upset," use "John expressed concerns about his housing options."
- Include direct quotes: When appropriate, include quotes to accurately capture the person's voice. E.g., "John stated, 'I feel overwhelmed with the options.'"
- Detail action steps: Set dated actions for follow-up and outline next steps (e.g., "Follow up with John after property visits.").

### Example of professional notetaking

**Participants:** Paula (advocate), John (client), Ann Smith (social worker)

- **Entry:** Paula met with John and the social worker to discuss John's housing options. John expressed a preference for independent living and emphasised his desire for a quiet environment. Three potential properties were discussed, with visits scheduled.
- **Action:** Paula to follow up with John post-visits to gather feedback.

## Managing action items

### Choose appropriate action types:

- **Update action:** For updating a previous action, like following up on a meeting.
- **Extra info:** For new information unrelated to previous actions but relevant to the case.
- **Further action:** For setting a new task based on the current interaction.

**Ensure action clarity:** Action items should be detailed enough for someone unfamiliar with the case to understand. For example, "Attend client meeting with social worker to review care plan."

**Timely follow-up:** Set dates for follow-up actions to ensure tasks are completed promptly, especially as the person's goals evolve.

## Uploading documents

Ensure all relevant documents, such as reports or letters, are uploaded to the person's record and linked to the active referral. Keeping all documentation together aids effective advocacy and complies with GDPR guidelines.

## Additional skills and tips for effective notetaking

1. **Reflective practice:** Reflecting on your notes after each interaction can help ensure accuracy and improve future documentation. Ask yourself:
  - "Have I captured all relevant details?"
  - "Is my language clear and factual?"
  - "Does my entry include necessary follow-up actions?"
2. **Quality control checklist:**
  - Is every participant listed?
  - Are follow-up actions clear and dated?
  - Have I avoided subjective language?
  - Is each entry complete and accurate?
3. **Avoiding common pitfalls:**
  - Ambiguity: Use clear descriptions instead of vague terms like "seems fine."
  - Under-documenting: Avoid minimal notes that leave out essential context.
  - Over-documenting: Balance detail with brevity to ensure key points stand out.

4. **Legal implications of documentation:** Understand that poor documentation can affect credibility or lead to legal issues. This reinforces the need for defensible recording and thorough, accurate notes.

## Key takeaways

- **Detail and clarity:** Accurate, detailed, and clear case notes are essential for defensible recording and GDPR compliance.
- **Separate entries:** Record each interaction separately (this does not apply to email chains) to maintain proper chronology and clarity.
- **Action tracking:** Use action prompts and link actions to ensure all tasks are tracked, supporting continuity of support and alignment with the individual's goals.

By adhering to these practices, advocates can strengthen their documentation, ensuring that every record accurately reflects their work and safeguards the rights and preferences of the individuals they support.



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