

Immediate Staff Learning Note v1.1

Early-years record language · Frontline constitutional alignment · 25
September 2026

Frontline purpose

A short route for writing or passing on consequential information without turning an observation, report or concern into greater certainty than the evidence permits.

The five-minute practice

1. What am I observing or receiving?

Name whether this is something you witnessed, a child's signal, somebody else's account, a note, report, interpretation, recommendation or historical record.

2. What am I adding?

Make concern, interpretation and professional judgement visible. Do not let them silently rewrite what was observed or reported.

3. What may be driving my interpretation?

Consider role, purpose, workload, time, previous knowledge, organisational expectation, emotion and the existing direction of travel. This does not presume bias; it keeps judgement answerable.

4. What do I not know?

Preserve uncertainty. Ask what was selected, what was excluded and what materially changed before the information reached you.

5. What needs to happen next?

Record action separately from the evidence and interpretation supporting it. If urgent safeguarding, medical, legal, statutory, supervisory or evidence-preservation action is required, act first.

Before a note leaves your hands

Working rule

Say what you saw. Then make your interpretation visible. Then make the reasoning connecting them answerable.

Keep the route visible

Evidence or observation → interpretation → action

If you received the information from somebody else, preserve that source. Do not write a reported observation as though you witnessed it directly.

Use check words carefully

Settled, distressed, clingy, resistant, calm, withdrawn, resilient, dysregulated, bonded, avoidant and similar terms are not forbidden. They require enough observation, context, source and uncertainty to show what the word is being asked to carry.

Ask the opposite-direction question

Would I require the same evidential standard if this information pointed in the opposite direction? Parity concerns discipline, not equal weight.

Remember what a record is

No record can contain a child. A record contains a representation that can shape what later people notice, ask, believe and do.

When information travels

Every receiving person becomes the next observer at the resolution available to their place in the route. Before summarising or passing information on, ask:

- What exactly have I received?
- What am I adding or removing?
- What will the next observer believe they received from me?
- Has an earlier interpretation begun to appear as new evidence?
- Has an action been mistaken for proof that the interpretation was correct?

Correction must travel

Constitutional rule

A correction that does not travel is not a complete correction. A correction that travels but cannot alter the knowledge it corrects has not completed its epistemic function.

Identify the people, summaries, records and decisions materially affected by the earlier version. A correction need not make every disagreement disappear; it must be capable of changing consequential understanding where reliable evidence warrants it.

Boundary

This is a practice-development resource, not an assessment instrument, legal or clinical direction, safeguarding threshold, substitute for supervision or authority to decide what a child means.