# 10.17 Handling Paper Records Out of the Office

# Policy statement

With home, mobile and flexible working in place across the council officers need to be aware of the potential risk when transporting paper records (or hard copy materials) e.g. case files and documents containing personal or other confidential data.

When paper records are taken out of the office environment, or created off-site, we must make sure that appropriate safeguards are put in place to ensure the necessary protection of the information. Information must only be removed from the office environment, or created off site when it is absolutely necessary to do so.

**Core elements for Children Centre Staff**

All children centre staff should adhere to the corporate Handling Paper Records Out of the Office Policy which is available on the intranet and as a hard copy within each Children Centre. The core elements of the policy that Children Centre staff are likely to engage with are:

* Registration Forms
* Assessments
* Meetings

Staff should return all documents to a secure location at the end of their working day. This does not have to be the original storage site of the documents. For example, if a member of staff works across multiple locations and they have removed documents from a centre to take to a meeting at another centre, the documents can be secured at another site overnight and be collected the next day. This will enable staff working across multiple locations to utilise their time effectively and not always s have to return to a central point at the end of the day. If documents are secured at another site they must be returned to their original location within 24 hours (next day).

**Principles to be adopted**

Line management approval must be obtained before personal or other confidential data contained within paper records is taken off-site. The approval request must provide details of the personal or other confidential data proposed to be taken off-site, the necessity for doing so and the relevant times.

Approval form is shown at:

* only the minimum amount of data necessary for the job in hand should be removed. Where possible, data should be anonymised. See the council’s Anonymisation Policy
* when in transit from one location to another, records should be transported in a way that mitigates the risks of theft or loss. For example:
* do not leave bags or cases containing paper records visible in a car. If it is unavoidable to leave paper records in a car, eg whilst filling up with petrol, then lock them in the boot of your car
* do not leave paper records unattended in the car for longer than is absolutely necessary. E.g. it would not necessarily be seen to be appropriate to leave paper records in the boot of your car whilst you carry out a large food shop on your way home from work, or visit a restaurant or pub before heading home. It would however be viewed as acceptable to leave them locked in the boot of your car whilst collecting a child from nursery or after school care. Paper records should always be secured at home at the end of your working day
* when travelling on public transport keep the paper records close by at all times. Paper records should not be left in luggage racks or storage areas, as this increases the possibility of theft or of the item being left behind
* do not carry paper records ‘loosely’ as this increases the risk of dropping or losing them, use a file or folder to ensure they are secure
* paper records should be transported in a separate container to that of any laptop, electronic device or personal effects
* whilst off-site, and / or temporarily in the home of an officer, paper records containing personal or other confidential data that are not being actively worked on must be kept secure and separate from any valuable items such as laptops
* paper records taken out of the office should be returned to the place of work as soon as possible. They should not be kept out of the office for any longer than is necessary to complete the job in hand.

Transferring documents out of the office should be treated as a priority of care, points noted above are the key elements, the corporate policy for Paper Records – Secure Handling and Transit Policy should be adhered to as a matter of practice.

**Reviewed April 2016**