

Evidence Gathering Kit

Bring records, events and unanswered questions into one clearer picture.

For: Individuals, families, professionals and teams organising a difficult situation.

1. Define the question

- Write the question you need to answer in one sentence. Name the date range and the people or service involved.
- Describe what a useful output would look like. Keep questions separate from conclusions.

2. Preserve and index the originals

- Keep originals unchanged. Work from a separate copy and record where each item came from.
- Give every item a unique source ID. Record its title, author if known, date received, file location and any missing pages.
- Only collect material you may lawfully access. Share the minimum necessary information through an agreed secure route.

3. Build the chronology

- Record the event date and the record date separately. Do not silently fill a missing date.
- Describe each event neutrally and link it to a source ID and page or section.
- Mark each entry as sourced fact, reported account, inference or unresolved. Two copies of the same account are not independent confirmation.

4. Keep uncertainty visible

- Log contradictory accounts side by side. State what would help resolve the difference.
- List missing records, the reason they matter and the person who can request or check them.
- Record alternative explanations and evidence that challenges your preferred account.

Check your preparation

Use this checklist before sharing the pack or making the next decision. Record unresolved items; do not tick them off by assumption.

- ☐ The question and scope are clear.
- ☐ Originals are preserved and working copies are identified.
- ☐ Every important chronology entry points to a source.
- ☐ Event dates and record dates are separated.
- ☐ Facts, accounts and inferences are labelled.
- ☐ Missing material and contradictory accounts remain visible.
- ☐ The next check has an owner and a due date.

Editable templates included

Source inventory: Source ID, Title or filename, Origin or author, Record date, Date received, Original location, Working copy location, Pages or completeness, Access or sharing restrictions, Notes

Chronology: Entry ID, Event date and time, Date certainty, Record date, Neutral event description, Source ID, Page or section, Evidence label: fact/account/inference/unresolved, Contradiction or gap, Next check, Owner, Due date

Gaps and contradictions log: Issue ID, Question or gap, Account A and source, Account B and source, Why it matters, Alternative explanation, Evidence needed, Owner, Due date, Status, Resolution and supporting source

How to use the templates

Open the CSV file in Excel, Google Sheets or another spreadsheet app. Keep one item per row. Use a clear source reference and mark uncertainty. Save a dated working version; preserve the original material separately.

Scope and boundaries

These are general preparation tools. They do not certify compliance, decide legal merits or replace clinical, safeguarding or professional judgement. Use the appropriate authorised route for urgent risk. Only collect and share material you may lawfully access.

When independent support adds value

Independent support can test the chronology, challenge alternative explanations and agree the scope of further verification.

Download this kit and its editable files at <https://orvia.org.uk/resources/evidence-kit>

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