Language guide:
Objective vs subjective

Objective language: Records what was directly observed, heard or reported, without adding personal interpretation, judgement or assumption.

Subjective language: Includes opinions, emotions, labels or guesses that have not been directly observed.

Subjective (avoid)	Objective (use this instead)
"She was clearly lying about what happened."	"The child stated X. This was inconsistent with the observation noted at Y time."
"He was being difficult as usual."	"The child refused to complete the activity and left the room without permission."
"The parent seemed aggressive and scary."	"The parent raised their voice and stood close to staff."
"She was upset because of her home situation."	"The child was crying and said she did not want to go home."
"He was doing the usual boundary-pushing."	"The staff member observed the child entering the bathroom without knocking"
"I think she may have been abused."	"The child disclosed to staff that [exact words]."
"The family is chaotic and unreliable."	"The child has arrived late four times this month and appeared tired and had not eaten."
"She seemed fine after a few minutes."	"The child was distressed for approximately five minutes, then resumed play."

Words/phrases to avoid	Objective alternatives
Seemed, appeared, obviously, clearly	Describe the specific behaviour or statement observed.
Always, never, usually, typical	Describe the specific instance with date and detail.
Difficult, manipulative, attention-seeking	Describe the observed behaviour in neutral terms.
Fine, calm, upset (without detail)	Describe physical signs: facial expression, tone of voice, actions.
I think, I believe, I feel (as fact)	Use: 'The child stated...', 'I observed...', 'Staff noted...'

When you have a professional opinion to record:

Professional judgements are valid and important, but they must be clearly labelled as such and separated from the facts.

Instead of this	Try this
"She was lying."	"In my professional judgement, the account appeared inconsistent because..."
"This is abuse."	"Based on my observations, I have concerns that this may indicate [harm type]."
"The parent is dangerous."	"I observed behaviours that raised concerns about safety. These are documented below."