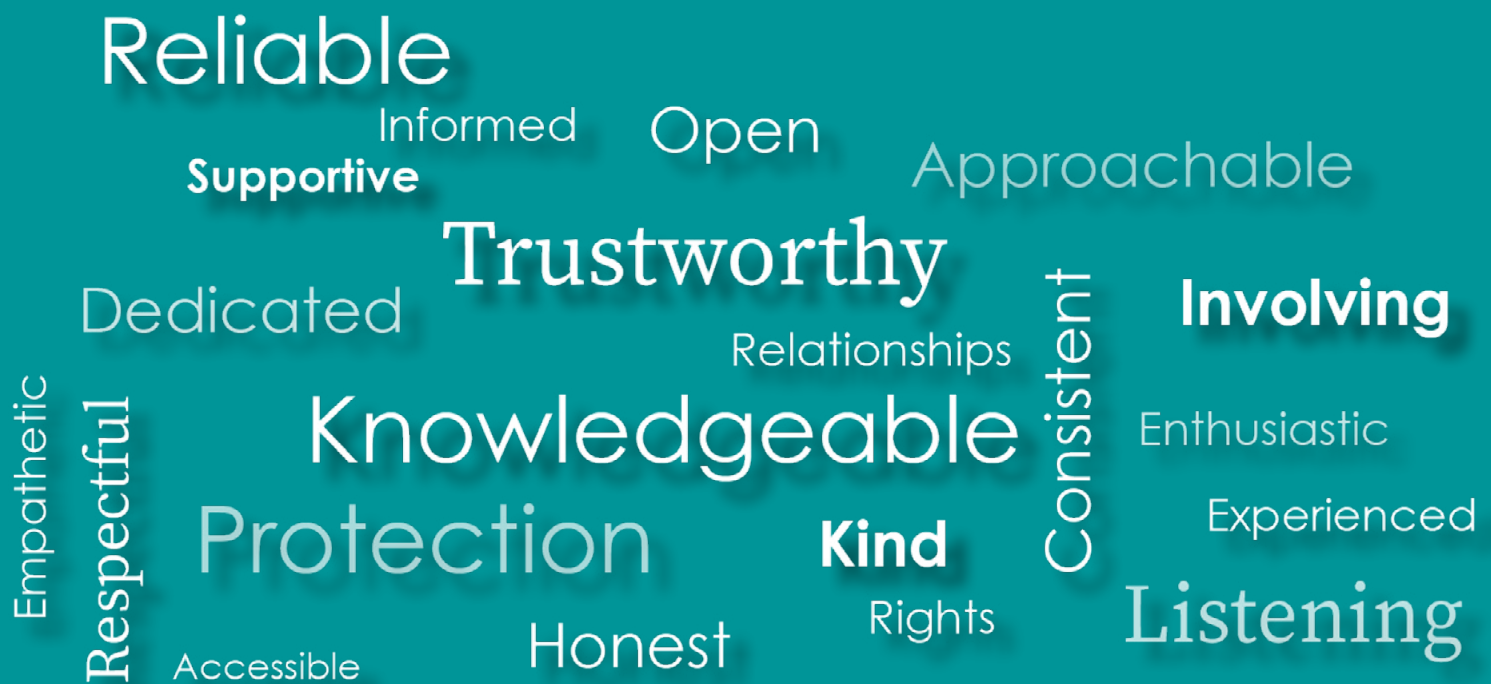


Engaging Families Toolkit



‘ Helping families involves working with them and therefore the quality of the relationship between the family and professionals directly impacts on the effectiveness of help given. Munro 2011 ’

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1.0 What does the Engaging Families Toolkit aim to do?

The Engaging Families Toolkit aims to provide practitioners and managers with guidance to assist the effective engagement of families in the offer of support across all levels of intervention from early help and targeted services through to statutory services. The toolkit builds on research and evidence based practice which is known to work in effectively engaging families in offers of support which aims to promote positive and lasting change for all the family. It provides guidance in recognising, understanding and responding to difficult to engage and risky behaviours which may be encountered when working with children, young people and their Mams, Dads/ Carers.

Critically the toolkit includes a Family Engagement Risk Assessment tool which will be completed by the Lead Professional and or collaboratively with the 'Team around the Family' when the engagement of the family proves difficult. All completed risk assessments will then be discussed and reviewed with the Lead Professionals Line Manager at the earliest opportunity. The Risk Assessment will provide an evidential basis on which to proceed and justify decisions and actions to ensure the wellbeing and or protection of the child/ren is not compromised due to the lack of engagement.

Key Messages

- the quality of the relationship between the worker and the family is what makes the most significant impact on the effectiveness of the engagement;
- persistence of workers to engage the family in the offer of support at the earliest opportunity is critical;
- adopting a 'think family' approach, being mindful that child and parental issues do not sit in isolation;
- families and workers may present barriers to effective engagement;
- families who present with a range of multiple and complex needs require long term support rather than episodic intervention if long term change is to be achieved and maintained;
- practitioners need to adopt an authoritative approach ensuring that the child's needs and outcomes stay in sharp focus:
- the Engaging Families Risk Assessment will provide practitioners and their managers with a framework for managing and minimising risks due to lack of family engagement;

2.0 Why do we need an Engagement Toolkit?

The issue of how to engage families is the key to improving outcomes for children and young people. The current limits on resources and continued increase in care applications underline the importance of effective early help underpinned by positive engagement with families in order to reverse this trend.

Numerous research and evaluations show that developing an effective professional relationship makes a real difference in improving outcomes for service users. No matter how programmes and funding may change, it is the human relationships that are core to the delivery of effective services. Yet too often, they are overlooked. The Munro (2012) review highlighted the importance of professional relationships in improving outcomes for children, young people and their families and the skills and experience of workers in being able to achieve this.

A key feature in many serious case reviews has been the lack of persistence of workers to engage the family in the offer of support as well as the lack of co-operation and/or hostile attitude of a small number of Mams, Dads/Carers. When there are child wellbeing or protection issues, a failure to engage with the family may have serious implications and non-intervention is not an option.

It is now well established that it is important to intervene early if more serious problems are to be avoided later in life (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2001). The risk factors that increase a family's vulnerability are well known and effective services are available to support these families. One of the major barriers to service delivery is that vulnerability increases the likelihood of refusing the offer of services. The more vulnerable families who do engage are also more likely to disengage before positive outcomes are met and sustained (Sanders & Cann, 2002).

Key reports highlighting the need for effective family engagement include:

- Lord Laming (2003) emphasised in his report for the Victoria Climbié enquiry the importance of engaging with the child;
- 'Supporting parents, Safeguarding children', CSCI (2006) state that ensuring parents and carers needs are sufficiently well met is necessary to enable them to effectively meet the needs of their children and therefore engaging with them is imperative to achieve this;
- The executive summary completed by Haringey Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (2008) states that a key issue which compounded the risk to Child A was the limited efforts made by professionals to engage with the child's father in the first stages of intervention.

"Engagement is the basic task of any practitioner but can never be taken for granted and must always be worked for"

Patrick Ayre

3.0 Who is the Engagement toolkit aimed at?


The Engagement Toolkit is aimed at all practitioners working with children, young people and adults who are Mams, Dads/Carers across universal, targeted and specialist services. In line with the County Durham's Strategic Partnership Approach to Early Help 2020-22 the toolkit aims to support the effective engagement of families in the offer of support at the earliest opportunity, from universal and targeted services through to specialist Child Protection services. The toolkit must be used by practitioners alongside their own agencies' policies and procedures including the:-

- County Durham Practice Framework: Single Assessment and Procedure and Practice Guidance (2014); which is currently being reviewed and will be re-launched as the Early Help Assessment in Spring 2022;
- The County Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Child Protection Procedures;
- Protocol for Collaborative Working and Information Sharing between Professionals to Protect Vulnerable Adults and Children (2014).

4.0 What do we mean by 'engagement?'

Effectively engaging families can be split into three stages:

1. the process of first attracting or motivating a family to attend the service for the first time;
2. enabling the family to recognise the benefits, goals and expectations of the service, and
3. building a relationship between the practitioner and the family members and engaging them sufficiently to begin delivering meaningful and beneficial support that is accessible and suitable to the individual and their family.



"It's not just about getting through the front door"

Casey 2012

5.0 Why some practitioners find it difficult to engage

- professionals not having the necessary skills needed to address families' defensiveness and anxieties;
- professionals misunderstanding the practical and emotional difficulties that impact on people's ability to engage;
- lack of time to build meaningful, trusting relationships with all family members;
- professionals' frame of reference;(values, beliefs and attitudes may be different to those of the family and lead to value clashes);
- pressure from the service to engage and make changes within a family quickly;
- approaches engaging Dads/Male Carers in the same way they do Mams which does not work

6.0 Why some families find it difficult to engage

Effective engagement is crucial to work with all families but especially with families with multiple and complex needs, particularly since many of these families have a history of non-engagement and often have actively disengaged (dropped out) or rejected previous support for a range of reasons:

- previous negative experience of agencies;
- experience of intervention as a young person;
- not understanding professionals concerns;
- cultural differences;
- genuine fear - will my children be removed;
- anti-authority stance, dislike or fear of authority figures;
- lack of communication from professionals;
- do not want to have their privacy invaded;
- have something to hide;
- families may have experienced services where their problems have been treated in isolation, so they disengaged because they were overwhelmed by the other needs they face;
- families may have very low aspirations or are daunted by how services present themselves;
- there may be some unidentified needs for example, mental health issues or learning disability, which have previously stopped the family from engaging in support or making progress;
- families may struggle to engage with services because the wider problems they face are not taken into account. For example, appointments might not be kept due to ongoing circumstances which service providers are unaware of;
- individuals may fail to acknowledge their own needs (for example, mental health needs) or to acknowledge the impact that their needs and/or behaviour are having on others. For example, Mam, Dad/Carer with mental health needs may fail to recognise the impact that his/her behaviour is having on his/her child's needs being met;
- a family may have engaged with services and received support in the past, but the support may not have been sustained for a long enough period of time causing the family to regress once the support ceased. This may mean the family is now not motivated to re-engage;
- a chaotic lifestyle (for example, substance misuse, mental health issues/needs, lack of time management skills) may have previously led to missed appointments and being discharged prematurely from a service, leaving the family member feeling de-motivated to try again;

- if a family feels inadequate, stressed or threatened by the service being offered or cannot see its practical benefits they are more likely to avoid participating;
- not understanding what is expected and why;
- resentment of staff changes;
- fear of oppressive judgements (particularly for disabled or substance misusing parents);
- fear of stigmatisation;
- being overwhelmed by emotional pain, depression, anxiety and guilt;
- having nothing to lose, if children have already been removed;
- sometimes when families are most in need of assistance, they do not feel comfortable seeking help;
- a difference of opinion between parents and professionals around the presenting needs of the family;
- a history of not receiving the help when requested by the family and only when identified by a professional;

7.0 Defining and recognising difficult to engage behaviour

Families may present in a number of ways on a continuum from superficial and ineffective engagement to, in a small number of cases, hostility, threats and violence.

Behaviours may include:

Ambivalence: can be displayed when the family are consistently late for planned appointments or they always have an excuse for missing a visit. When discussing an uncomfortable topic such as a worker sharing concerns, the subject will be changed. Ambivalence is a common occurrence and does not necessarily mean it will be difficult to engage with the family. It can occur due to the family being unclear about what is expected of them or poor experiences with previous professionals.

Confrontation: includes provoking arguments, extreme avoidance (not answering the door) and a deep dismissive body language is used.

Avoidance: is very common and something that we all do in our everyday lives. It includes cutting short visits due to other apparent important activities. This is often associated in a lack of trust leading to a “fight” not “flight” situation.

Refusal: when families will not meet with workers or refuse permission for a child to be seen on their own.

Disguised Compliance: some parents may give the appearance of cooperating to avoid raising suspicions and to minimise agency engagement and intervention. Some families may deliberately sabotage efforts to bring about change i.e. missed appointments. This could also be seen when:-

- Mam, Dad/Carer agreeing with professionals regarding changes but put little effort into making changes work;
- change does occur but as a result of external agencies/resources not the Mam, Dad/Carer efforts;
- no significant change at reviews despite significant input (i.e. are interventions resulting in timely, improved outcomes for the children);
- change in one area of functioning is not matched by change in other areas;
- Mam, Dad/Carer will engage with certain aspects of a plan only;
- Mam, Dad/Carer align themselves with certain professionals;
- child's report of issues is in conflict with Mam, Dad/Carer's report;
- mobile families: moving/changing addresses, registering with different GP's, taking children to different A&E departments with non-accidental injuries;
- blocking the worker's way into the home;
- 'stage-managing' visits by restricting workers' sight of and contact with the child;
- using the physical space of the home and objects in rooms – tables, televisions, dogs/other pets – to control where workers or children sit, obscuring views of the child and distracting the worker and stopping them from moving;
- using clothing and substances (such as chocolate) to hide injuries;
- coaching children to suggest all is well;
- dirt and smell used to disgust workers and prevent them from moving towards and touching the child;
- using part of the home to hide abusers and children (e.g. bedrooms, lofts, sheds etc.)



Many Child Protection studies and Serious Case Reviews have highlighted what is commonly known as the 'rule of optimism' where practitioners are reluctant to make negative professional judgements about the Mam, Dad/Carers they are working with. Mam, Dad/Carers may give convincing but false accounts and it is very important that throughout the process of engaging and working with families, workers need to have a degree of caution in their judgements, to maintain what Lord Laming called '**respectful uncertainty**' and '**healthy scepticism**'.

Violence: threatened or actual may only involve a minority of cases but is the most difficult and challenging of hard to engage behaviours to work with. People may have previous experience of getting their way through violence and intimidation.

8.0 What families say they need from services and workers?

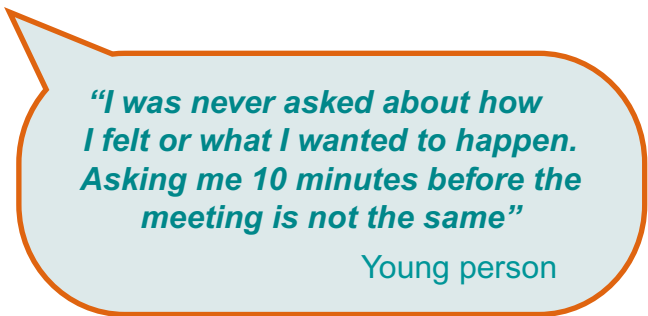
8.1 Mam, Dad/Carers say it helps when workers:-

- communicate openly, are honest, direct, yet sensitive and take time to explain things clearly;
- take the time to listen and make the effort to develop trusting relationship and build rapport;
- are reliable;
- provide services and support which is practical, tailored to particular needs and accessible;
- have an approach which reinforces rather than undermines their parenting capacity;
- focus first on the issues of most importance to the family;
- enable them to be involved in the process from the start;
- are transparent;
- write information down to help remember things;
- hold smaller sized meetings and support family to get to meetings;
- support the family in developing their plan, clearly helping to identify what needs to happen next and help them in setting achievable goals.

8.2 What children and young people say they need from a worker

A review highlighted by Eileen Munro (2011) summarises the key characteristics that children and young people look for in a worker. These are:

- willingness to listen and show empathy, reliability, taking action, respecting confidences, and viewing the child or young person as a whole person and not overly identifying a child with a particular problem; and
- ability to communicate with children of varying abilities and address the emotional needs of children at key points in their lives.



“I was never asked about how I felt or what I wanted to happen. Asking me 10 minutes before the meeting is not the same”

Young person

8.3 The things that Mam, Dad/Carers said did not help:

- professionals making assumptions about what you would like or need to happen next;
- not being kept informed by professionals;
- not feeling listened too or feeling like their point was misunderstood;
- big intimidating meetings where they didn't recognise everyone and didn't know what their roles were;
- not being able to access the information because they didn't have very good reading skills;

9.0 Engagement: What we know works

9.1 Principles for successful and sustained engagement with families

- be child centred;
- the process of engaging and helping families is largely determined by the qualities and skills of the practitioner in building an effective trusting relationship with the family;
- recognises that the most effective relationship to enable change is a 'partnership';
- practitioners and Mam, Dad/Carers being willing to listen to and learn from each other;
- acknowledges that families are the experts in their own lives;
- acknowledges and uses family strengths;
- all families have the potential to change;
- believe that an understanding and honest sharing of issues around safeguarding;
- uses a persistent and proactive approach to engage the family;
- happens where there is support for the whole family;
- requires effective support and supervision for staff, encourages evaluation and self-reflection;

9.2 Strategies and approaches to support family engagement

Working in partnership with the family

Most research indicates that it is the **quality of the relationship between the worker and the family** that makes the most significant impact on the effectiveness of the engagement and support offered to the family and the lasting change it can bring. Evidence suggests that the most effective relationship to enable change is a **partnership** and this can be defined in terms of:-

- Active involvement;
- Shared decision making;
- Complementary expertise;
- Agreement of aims and processes;
- Mutual trust and respect;
- Openness and honesty;
- Clear communication;
- Negotiation

Practitioner Quality and Skills

This model also highlights that the process of helping families is largely determined by the qualities and skills of the practitioner in building an effective trusting partnership with the family and therefore must be the primary focus at the start of any offer of support with a family.

The following personal qualities and skills can help to build trusting relationships with a family:-

Practitioner Qualities	Practitioner Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A non-judgemental attitude • Respectful attitude • An encouraging and empowering approach • Warmth and empathy • Being genuine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening • Prompting and exploring • Responding empathetically • Summarising • Enabling change • Negotiating • Problem solving • Able to reflect

- **Named Lead Worker:** ensuring the family has a single point of contact i.e. Lead Professional known by name, who is responsible for building a trusting relationship with the family and act as a single point of contact for other professionals involved in supporting the family;
- **Use persistent, assertive and proactive approaches** to engage the family: persistent message that you are there to help; persistently challenging parents' behaviour encourages them to take ownership of the issues that need to be addressed, whilst ensuring they are clear about the implications and consequences of their behaviours. Consideration of the timing of challenge and the parental response to that challenge helps avoid any negative impact on children and young people;
- At the first meeting with the family being mindful that this is an introduction and the family's first impression of the worker and the service, this doesn't mean practitioners cannot be challenging or say difficult things but more often than not how we say things matters more to families than what we say;
- **At all times remain 'child centred'**, ensure the child's voice and their wishes and feelings are central throughout. It is imperative that workers ensure that children and young people are actively engaged in the support on offer. The reason for speaking to children and young people is that they are a key source of information to understand the problems they and their families have, and the impact this is having on them and what they feel needs to change. Workers need to consider *'What does the child think needs to change to address their problem?'*
The development of positive relationships with children and young people in the family also allows practitioners to use modelling behaviour; to encourage parents to recognise and mimic positive interactions with their children. Practitioners' ability to interact positively and voluntarily with children and young people ensures that practitioners are able to recognise and evidence the impact of parental support on children and young people;
- Throughout the intervention practitioners must balance the views of the Mams, Dads/Carers with the protection of the child, **keep the child in clear focus;**

- Ensure **non-resident Mam, Dad/Carers** and/or significant others are actively engaged to participate in offers of support; Include Dad's, Step-Dad's, grandparents and siblings rather than over-rely on Mams' views;
- **Be transparent** with families about why engagement is necessary;
- Clearly **set the professional boundaries** of the relationship between practitioners and Mams, Dads/Carers. Setting clear ground rules from the start makes sure that families know where they stand. This assists in developing trust between practitioners and Mams, Dads/Carers and helps secure and maintain parental engagement;
- **The whole family** will be supported e.g. the needs of the Mams, Dads/Carers will be addressed and met as well as the needs of the children;
- **Actively engaging families** in the process from the start asking them what help they need and then responding positively to this;
- Support Mams, Dads/Carers to identify their own solutions to their problems even when they have not been able to fully meet the needs of their children;
- Practitioners use and **model active listening techniques** to hear and understand what Mams, Dads/Carers want and demonstrate you have heard and value what they say;
- Explain to the family that undertaking an assessment of their needs will help to develop a clear plan of support;
- Use the assessment process as an important mechanism for allowing time to get to know Mams, Dads/Carers and the children and understand the issues facing them. Practitioners are able to use the assessment process to make sure they are providing the right services for the families and that all needs/issues have been identified. It also allows practitioners to work in partnership with Mams, Dads/Carer's and children to enable them to set their own targets and goals (another mechanism for helping build trust) and for Mams, Dads/Carers and children to recognise that the service is there to support and work with them to improve outcomes;
- The assessment process also provides practitioners with the opportunity to 'get behind the label' of a family, encouraging them to get to know the Mam's, Dad's/Carer's strengths, weaknesses and issues for themselves. This is important in overcoming any pre-conceptions and encouraging practitioners to focus on positive approaches to working with the families;
- **Start with and build on family strengths:** The focus of engaging and working with families is always to reduce risk but in such a way that builds on family strengths. All families have strengths. A strength based approach occurs when workers place a positive emphasis on resilience and protective factors. This can have the effect of communicating a sense of hope, establishing expectations for success within an individual/ family's capabilities and can promote empowerment and independence.



If workers only focus on the family's problems it can be easy to ignore the fact that it takes a positive approach to be successful. Identifying and using a strength based approach the worker assists the family in identifying their own strengths, needs and

current resources in order to formulate a plan to address their concerns and help them achieve their goals.

- **Display a non-judgemental, respectful attitude** to Mams, Dads/Carers as this is important in building trust; Practitioners achieve this through not criticising Mams, Dads/Carers in a way that is counter-productive to addressing needs. It is also important for practitioners to allow time for Mams, Dads/Carers to give their opinions, avoid being patronising and demonstrating to them that their views are important.
- Helping families to recap the points raised during the visit so the worker can check the families understanding; Misunderstanding can be of great interest to workers as it tells that we have not been clear enough and it also gives the worker a chance to correct misperceptions and provides worker with feedback on their own communication skills which should lead to more effective sessions in the future;
- The package of support offered to families will include coordinated programmes of support from other services such as health or drug / alcohol treatment to meet the needs of different family members;
- **Establishment of a 'Team Around the Family'** (TAF) of key services who can offer support to meet the family's needs in a coherent and coordinated manner; Services may be provided either within general or specialist multi-disciplinary teams, depending on the severity and complexity of the problem, but in all cases should be collaborative and coordinated. A strong focus on developing links with other agencies helps increase family accessibility to other services, also increasing practitioners' awareness of other agencies that could be brought in to help meet the needs of children, young people and families;
- Establish an **agreed Child and Family Plan** that outlines what support is to be offered to the family and by who and tasks to be undertaken by each family member, their family support network (important people to the family) and workers and worker, so that the family know what everyone is doing and why;
- Provide ongoing encouragement to parents throughout the support process, remaining focused on improving outcomes for children and young people. Adopting a positive approach and a **'can do'** attitude even when challenging Mams, Dads/Carers on difficult issues supports the establishment of a good relationship between practitioners and Mams, Dads/Carers;
- Practitioners should recognise that for some Mams, Dads/Carers there might be a willingness to want to make changes, but a lack of self-esteem or confidence in how to achieve this. For other Mams, Dads/Carers, having to deal with some issues may be a daunting prospect. Using skills and qualities such as openness, respect and praise practitioners can support and encourage Mams, Dads/Carers to make positive changes;
- **Provide practical 'hands on' support** to the family to address family issues; Directly supporting the family with practical tasks and challenges and having a hands on approach when necessary; Actions often speak louder than words and demonstrate that you are proactive and you genuinely want to help, always follow up what you have said you will do;

- **Working at flexible times** allowing Mams, Dads/Carers to choose times and venues which suit them, when families are presented with unexpected calls it can make them defensive and angry which is not helpful when the worker may want to help the family think about difficult or challenging issues;
- Be on time, try not to cancel or reschedule appointments;
- Being positive and courteous whilst being clear about concerns and what work needs to take place to achieve change and what support is needed to help the family achieve change;
- Be consistent even when getting a negative response;
- Use a trusted third party to help engage the family, this could be another family member or a professional the family already have a relationship with , do a joint home visit as a way of engaging with the family;
- Telephone contact, including texting if preferred by the family, to speak to parents to arrange an appointment rather than sending an 'official' looking letter;
- Being mindful that some Mams, Dads/Carers are not be able to read letters or appointment invites;
- Being mindful that families may not keep diaries and may require support in remembering appointments;
- Model appropriate behaviour;
- The package of support offered to families could include access to evidence based parenting programme provision; this means both Mam and Dad/Male Carer if possible as often Dads are missed;
- Advocate on behalf of the family or family members;
- Honour the family, recognise and acknowledge progress, using affirmations, even on a simple basis such as thanking them for their time if they have previously declined a visit;
- It is important that practitioners are able to help all family members understand terminology, jargon or actions needed in a way that is not patronising. Presenting information in plain English and at an appropriate level helps practitioners make sure that everyone fully understand the information provided. Practitioners also have a role in presenting difficult information in a sensitive and appropriate way;
- **Establishing a balance of support and challenge;** utilising the range of sanctions and rewards available;
- Reducing the **risk of sanctions** can also be a **reward** in motivating families to change. The worker and the 'Team Around the Family' can support the family to improve their behaviour in order to avoid such actions, often initially through a temporary suspension arrangement with agencies whilst being clear with families about the risks facing them if changes are not made or sustained. Possible sanctions could include a risk of a fine for poor school attendance or risk of eviction from tenancy;

- **Working with the family over an extended period of time** and ensuring ongoing support from a single agency/practitioner when a multi-agency response is no longer required;
- Provide the family with a **seamless service** that evidences that decisions are being made in the best interest of the child;
- Specifically observe parent-child dynamics to assess actual parenting distinct from descriptions of how Mams, Dads/Carers say they parent;
- Make sure exit strategies from service are effective to support their next engagement experience;
- Access existing community resources that have good links with a range of agencies; Contact the VCS Alliance Programme to look for what activities/support is available for families in local communities at https://doitonline.durham.gov.uk/service/VCS_Alliance



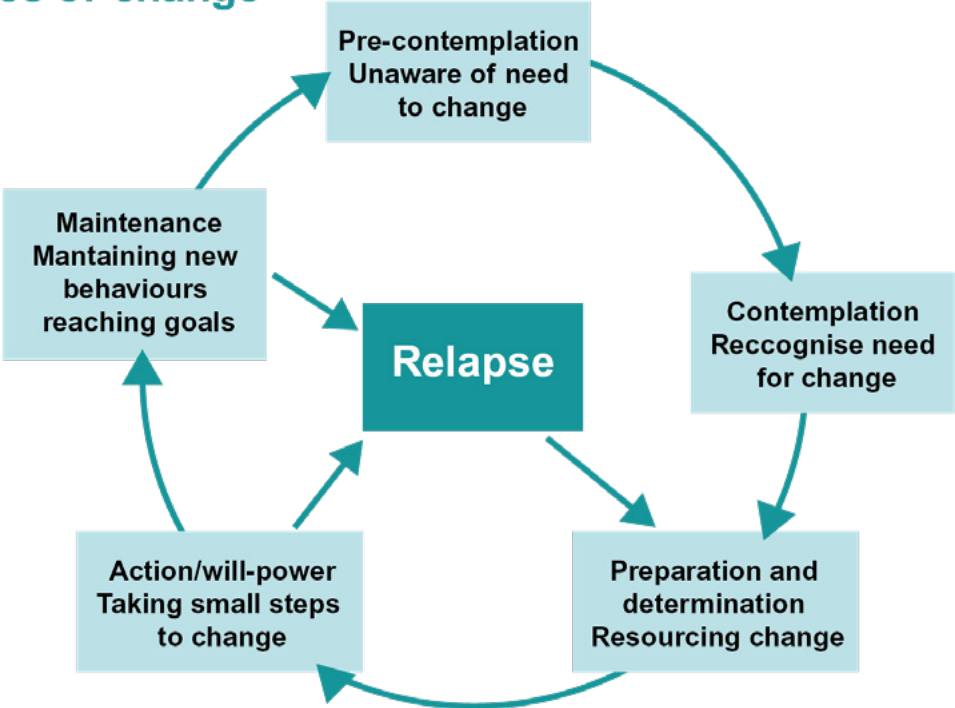
It is important to remember family engagement is not a one off event, i.e. getting through the front door to get the family to consent to being involved and accepting of help and support, it is also about engagement in the ongoing process of working towards positive outcomes for the children, young people, Mams, Dads or Carers.

10.0 Cycle of Change

It is vital that when working with families' that consideration is given to where individuals are on the cycle of change in order assess their willingness to work to achieve and sustain the necessary changes. Capacity to change is made up of motivation and ability, and it is suggested in much research that if either of these is missing, the individual in question will lack the ability to change. **This is a critical element of effective engagement, if strategies are used which are known to work when a an individual is in the 'determination' phase when the individual is still in the 'contemplation' phase, such strategies will likely to be ineffective.**

The use of DiClemente’s model of change (1991) can be helpful to practitioners to understand the change cycle and its application to working with families

Five stages of change



Stage of change	Indicator	Practitioner tasks and strategies
Pre-contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most families are at this stage at the start of the contact with agencies; • Individuals will deny there is a problem and see no need to change. They may present as being defensive/denial/projecting/minimising/blame/depressed/ unaware of the problem; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus efforts to build a trusting relationship with the family; • Raise awareness of the problem and the possibility of change; • Affirm strengths as starting points for change; • Use motivational interviewing strategies to raise awareness and encourage questioning; • Do not give prescriptive advice and avoid confrontation.

Stage of change	Indicator	Practitioner tasks and strategies
<p>Contemplation</p>	<p>At this stage, the individual will acknowledge there is a problem and will explore how to tackle it.</p> <p>They consider change but may need time to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at themselves and come to terms with what they see; • appreciate the child's needs; • count the cost of change; • Identify goals which are meaningful to them. Individuals can be ambivalent and may often feel 'stuck' • They may argue for and against change. • Identify the benefit of change; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the pros and cons of present behaviour as well as the pros and cons of change; • Asserting the belief that change is possible; • Helping family to see that they have the capacity to change; • Exploring the options the family has considered for how they might change; • Consider commitment and capacity to change; • Recognise that each individual may be at a different stage of the change process; • Recognise that different changes may be required from each individual; • Help the individual tip the balance in favour of change;
<p>Determination</p>	<p>At this stage an individual has decided to change and wants to do something about the problem; There is now a window of opportunity for change.</p> <p>At this stage they should be able to express:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real problems and the effect on the child; • Changes they wish to make; • Specific goals to achieve change; • How individuals and professionals will co-operate to achieve the goals; • The rewards of meeting goals; • Consequences if change is not achieved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them identify best actions to take for change; • Identify short and long term goals; • Identify internal and external resources to support change; • Support their motivation for change; • Start to work with the family to develop an agreed family support plan with Child and Family Plan.

Stage of change	Indicator	Practitioner tasks and strategies
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals take steps to change; • They engage in specific actions to bring about change; • This is the point of change, parents use themselves and services. • Family rehearse new thinking, behaviours and relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them to implement the Child and Family Plan and/or Safety Plan where applicable; • Focus on short term goals; • Help them visualise the long term goal; • Reframe when necessary; • Make sure all appointments are kept; • Advocate for the individual and identify available sources of support; • Review progress and any barriers to progress; • Planning for and rehearsing the ways of overcoming challenges and obstacles; • Be mindful of them feeling overwhelmed and consequently disengage so clarity of goals is essential and recognising and praising progress however small (honouring the family).
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This stage is about consolidating changes rehearsing and testing of new skills and coping strategies over time and in different conditions (testing the Safety Plan where applicable); • Sustaining and internalising new behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help individuals identify the possibility of relapse; • Support them to identify their triggers to relapse and develop coping strategies to prevent relapse; • Noticing, acknowledging affirming and celebrating successes (honouring the family); • Reflecting on the difficult challenging journey; • Talk about where the family will go from here, what is the next goal?

10.1 The 'GROW' Model

One model that could be used to set the goals and identify motivation to change is the **GROW** model:-


GROW model		GROW Questions
G	Goal setting includes the initial short term goals and further on the medium and long-term goals;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you want? • What would be the goals from our working together? • What does success look like and feel like for you? • How much influence or control do you have over the goal?
R	Reality checking to explore in full the current situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happens now? • What have you done so far about this? • Who is involved and who else could be involved (Family Support Network)? • What has stopped you so far from achieving this goal (any complicating factors)?
O	Options and alternative strategies or course of action;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could you do? • And what else could you do? • What are the benefits for each option and are there any costs? • Can you think of any risks?
W	Will what will be done, when, by whom, and the WILL to do it. (Motivation to change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will you do? • Will this meet your objective or goal? • Who needs to know, and what is your next step? • What support do you need and who will provide this, think of your Family Support Network?

Listen for “change talk”

*I could try ...
It may work if ...*

Non-change talk

*That would not work
Yes, but it is not*

 Sometimes, insufficient time is spent identifying the “real goal” and the temptation to move to the next step of identifying “the reality” and this can create a sense of rush.

11.0 When engagement is difficult or not working

Where engagement continues to be difficult and workers have not found a way to help the family see the benefits to them of being involved in the support on offer and they are still unwilling to participate, the Lead Professional and/or the 'Team Around the Family' need to re-evaluate the engagement strategy otherwise the impact can be:

- everyone withdraws leaving the child at risk of ongoing poor outcomes and/or unprotected;
- the family is 'punished' by the withholding of some services at the expense of assessing and resolving the situation for the child;
- there is a divide between those who want to appease the parents and those who want to oppose - or everyone colludes.



It is paramount that practitioners adhere to their own organisations policies and procedures to address their own personal safety when working to effectively engage a family e.g. Lone Working Policy. Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership procedures must also be adhered to if at any time concerns are raised over the serious harm to child/ren/ young people or if a crime is being committed.

11.1 Strategies which may be helpful when engagement is difficult or not working

Re-evaluating the engagement strategy and communication techniques needs to begin with reflecting **on what has not worked and on what might work in the future.**

These may include:-

- use a **strength based approach** to identify small signs of positive engagement with a view to building successes. This can be used where there is a level of avoidance by the family to engage. Utilise techniques of being flexible with times and venues to meet and consider the possibility of doing a joint visit/joint contact with someone the family is comfortable with and has confidence in;
- adopt a **balanced approach**: professionals must attain and hold a balanced position and be able to shift that position to reflect changing circumstances for children – there will be times when an optimistic and supportive position should take precedence and others when a more explicit scepticism and mistrusting approach is warranted in;
- **use an authoritative approach** aimed at containing anxiety and ensuring that the child's needs and outcomes stay in sharp focus. "Authoritative practice means that professionals are aware of their professional power, use it judiciously and that they also interact with clients and other professionals with sensitivity, empathy, willingness to listen and negotiate and to engage in partnerships. They respect client autonomy and dignity while recognising their primary responsibility is the protection of children from harm and the promotion of their well-being." It is important that practitioners are clear about what can and cannot be negotiated and try to identify what the resistance is really about and what is working well;

- discuss the issues/concerns with the child, young person and family and identify solutions together (you could use words and pictures to help children understand);
- **continue to be open and honest** with the family about why the offer of support will be beneficial to the family and where required state professional and/or legal authority;
- **use Motivational Interviewing Techniques** to help the family see that change is possible and to non-judgementally develop reasons why change should be tried;
- **seek advice and information from other professionals** known to the family to ascertain a clear picture of any ongoing concerns or progress made with the family and avoid being overly optimistic over changes that have yet to be sustained and retain a clear focus on achieving outcomes for the child;
- listen to the family and demonstrate understanding of what is being said;
- confront uncooperativeness when it arises; **where confrontation** is an issue it is important in these situations that workers are clear about their role and purpose by demonstrating a concern to support the family. However at some point the Mam's, Dad's/Carer's behaviour will have to be challenged safely so they are able to understand that professionals will not give up working with the family. This may require the professional/having to cope with confrontation until co-operation can be achieved;
- where violence is threatened or actual, the practitioner must ensure the child's welfare remains paramount at all times Professionals need to be realistic about the adult's capacity to change and internal health and safety policies must be adhered to as well as seeking legal advice where necessary. Ask yourself if I feel scared what is it like is for the child living in the family. Threats of violence should be challenged by child protection agencies and in dangerous situations professionals should not work alone;
- ensure that Mams, Dads/Carers understand what is required of them and the consequences of not fulfilling these requirements. At the end of each contact it may be helpful to provide a summary of what the purpose has been, what has been done, what is required by whom and when;
- be willing to take appropriate action to protect the child/ren, despite the action giving rise to a feeling of personal failure by the professional in the task of engaging the Mams, Dads/Carers;
- practitioners must ensure they access regular supervision with their manager to ensure that progress or lack of engagement with the family is discussed and addressed;

11.2 Lead Professional Responsibility

Where engagement with a family, for whatever reason, is preventing professionals from working with them it is important for workers to record and assess what area of engagement is difficult to achieve and why.

Practitioners must also consider what impact the family's lack of engagement is having on undertaking an Assessment and/or delivery of the Child and Family Plan,

support and interventions and the potential impact on the wellbeing and protection of the child/ren within the family.

Practitioners identifying an issue arising from concerns about poor access/ engagement should seek to promptly:

- discuss the concerns/issues with their Line Manager;
- ensure all discussions and attempts at engagement are clearly recorded;
- gather information from other services known to the family;
- consider what other agencies need to be informed of the engagement difficulties;
- consider how quickly it is necessary to respond; is there a need for immediate action?
- undertake the Family Engagement Risk Assessment (Appendix 1);
- all multi-agency 'Team Around the Family' may convene with or without family consent or involvement where there is a defensible reason to do so and undertake the Family Engagement Risk Assessment based on shared information across the agencies and professionals involved.



Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Child Protection procedures must be followed where there are concerns over serious harm to children/ young people or if a crime is being committed.

11.3 Completing the Family Engagement Risk Assessment Tool

The Family Engagement Risk Assessment Tool will provide the Lead Professional/ agencies with:

- an evidential basis on which to proceed and justify decisions and actions to ensure wellbeing and or protection of the child/ren is not compromised due to the lack of engagement;
- a platform for future planning;
- a framework for managing and minimising risks;
- a clear idea of what needs to be done by who and by when;
- The Family Engagement Risk Assessment Tool should be undertaken by the Lead Professional and or the 'Team Around the Family' and should be informed by all other agencies/practitioners known to the family, including universal services such as Schools and family GP as well as services known to the adults in the family to ensure a holistic picture is developed;
- Should consider both historic and current information known about all family members. This should include evidence of past non engagement and possible reasons if known;

- Should carefully identify and consider the known risks, vulnerabilities and protective factors (see Appendix 2 for examples) to enable practitioners to have a full and balanced picture of the family's needs keeping a clear focus on the needs of the child/ren;
- The balancing of strengths/past safety and vulnerabilities must be based on significant knowledge and judgement and is not simply an exercise in tallying up 'pluses' and minuses'. Each risk and protective factor must be clearly identified and presented with supporting evidence. The Threshold Guidance Document should be used to support practitioners to articulate the level and severity of concern known and how the lack of engagement with the family may **impact on the child/ren's outcomes and safety**;
- In addition to considering risks, vulnerabilities and protective factors (strengths/safety) which are known and evidenced it is also important that practitioners also use their 'intuitive skills' (essentially derived from their experience) and these can be recorded within the 'grey area' box within the Family Engagement Risk Assessment. Practitioners from a range of different services may have similar gut feelings about the family and these should be recorded and taken into consideration when analysing all information.
- Once completed, the Lead Professional must discuss the outcome with their Line Manager unless the Family Engagement Risk Assessment highlights an elevated risk of significant harm to the child/ren then Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Child Protection procedures must be followed. The role of the Line Manager will be to consider the outcomes of the risk assessment and ensure appropriate next steps are actioned to ensure the family receive the most appropriate response according to their needs. Management oversight and decision making must be recorded on the Family Engagement Risk Assessment;
- The Family Engagement Risk Assessment Flow Chart (Appendix 2) can be used to provide an appropriate pathway;
- The Family Engagement Risk Assessment must be shared with all 'Team Around the Family' members;
- The Family Engagement Risk Assessment should not be a one off assessment but will need to be reviewed at regular intervals which will need to be articulated within the Child and Family Plan and agreed and reviewed by the Lead Professional's Line Manager.

Appendix 1

Family Engagement Risk Assessment

Name of Family/Children

Date of Family Engagement Risk Assessment (dd/mm/yyyy)

Who is involved in Risk Assessment

Name of Practitioner

Name of Manager

Name of Service

Risk and Vulnerability

Historical

'Grey Areas'

Current

'Grey Areas'

Protective/Resilient Factors (Evidenced)

Historical

'Grey Areas'

Current

'Grey Areas'

Analysis/Conclusion

Analysis of the risk and vulnerability factors and the protective and resilient factors known about the family

What needs to happen

Who will do

By when (dd/mm/yyyy)

Review date (dd/mm/yyyy)

What needs to happen

Who will do

By when (dd/mm/yyyy)

Review date (dd/mm/yyyy)

Management oversight

What action

Who will do

By when (dd/mm/yyyy)

Review date (dd/mm/yyyy)

What action

Who will do

By when (dd/mm/yyyy)

Review date (dd/mm/yyyy)

Name of Manager

Signature

Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

**Examples of risk factors include:
Previous abuse or neglect**

- Parental substance misuse
- Domestic abuse
- Known or suspected sex offenders involved with the family
- Known or suspected violent offenders involved with the family
- Persons known or suspected of having physically harmed children and young people previously
- Persons known or suspected of having seriously neglected children and young people previously
- Mental illness or serious mental health problems in caregivers
- Economic and social disadvantage
- Evidence of significant debt
- Young parents
- Parents and carers with physical disabilities
- Parents and carers who have unrealistic expectations of their child

Examples of vulnerabilities include:

- Age
- Prematurity
- Poor attachment
- Early childhood trauma
- Minority status
- Learning difficulties or additional support needs
- Physical disability
- Communication difficulties/impairment
- Isolation
- Frequent episodes in public or substitute care
- Frequent episodes of running away
- Conduct disorder
- Mental health problems
- Substance dependency/misuse
- Self-harm and suicide attempts
- Other high-risk behaviours

Examples of Protective factors

There are protective factors in the lives of almost every child. Where none can be identified this, in itself, must seriously increase concern as to current or future risk.

Examples of protective factors include:

- a time when the child/ren have been kept safe when the worry was present
- emotional maturity and social awareness
- Evidenced personal safety skills (including knowledge of sources of help)
- Strong self esteem
- Evidenced resilience and strong secure attachment
- Evidence of protective adults
- Evidence of support network(s) e.g. supportive peers or supportive relationships or strong social networks
- Demonstrable capacity for change by caregivers and the sustained acceptance of the need to change to protect their child
- Evidence of openness and willingness to cooperate and accept professional intervention

Family Engagement Risk Assessment Pathway Flowchart

