

The Role of Partners in Child and Family Assessments and Plans: A Shared Responsibility

1 Sharing information

- Sharing information helps us to build a fuller picture of what is happening in a child and family's life, as no single agency will know the full story
- All practitioners who know the child and family should be involved in the child and family assessment. This includes practitioners from children's and adult services, including specialist services
- Practitioner's views may be different to what the child and family share - any difference of opinion should be explored and analysed so that everyone's views are considered
- Children and families are the experts in their own lives however practitioners may hold important information that parents/carers or children don't feel able to share, e.g. when there are child protection concerns
- Practitioners should provide evidence to support their worries based on:
 - a) What the worrying behaviour is
 - b) How often the worrying behaviour is happening
 - c) Over what timeframe it happens
 - d) How serious the worrying behaviour is
 - e) The impact on the child
- Practitioners should provide evidence of any existing strengths and safety based on:
 - a) What support they are providing that already helps to reduce the worries or meet the child/young person's needs
 - b) What everyday actions they are taking to make life better for the child/young person or keep them safe
 - c) What difference this support is making to the child/young person

During the assessment, if a referral to a support service is needed then we do this in a timely way so that the child/young person or their parents/carers aren't left waiting for support

2 Involvement in meetings

- Practitioners involved in the child and family's life should be invited to and attend any review meetings such as TAFs, Core Groups, Care Team Meetings and Conferences.
- If a practitioner is unable to attend, then we always share information with the family and the lead practitioner beforehand, so they are prepared
- This allows relevant information to be shared in a timely way and for practitioners to contribute to the child's plan
- All practitioners should be strengths-based and solution focused so that the meeting is positive and purposeful

3 Supporting the lead

Practitioners who already have good relationships with the child or their parents/carers can help the lead practitioner by:

- Helping to gather the child or parent/carers views about the worries, what helps and what else they think could help
- Chairing meetings or taking minutes
- Sharing information about important people in the wider family network
- Helping the lead practitioner build a relationship with the child and family, e.g. if there are trust issues or cultural differences

4 Building safety

- Safety is the action that someone takes to keep the child/young person safe when risk or danger is present
- We build safety by having a network of family and practitioners around the child and their parents/carers
- The network's job is to notice the signs when things are getting difficult or risky and step in to help
- Safety is not a one off - we need to be able to demonstrate that the network's actions are keeping the child safe over time

Useful links

[Multi-agency procedure: Assessments](#)

[Multi-agency procedure: Child Protection Conferences](#)

[How we Practice in Durham \(Children's Social Care\)](#)

[Information Sharing Procedure](#) - see 'Information Sharing' sub-folder

[Managing Professional Differences and Mutual Challenge](#) - see 'General' sub-folder

5 Supporting the plan

- The plan is created with the child/young person, their family and practitioners so we are 'working with' rather than 'doing to'
- Practitioners from children's and adult services should have active roles in the child's plan, such as providing direct support or updates on how the plan is progressing
- The support offered should be holistic, address the worries and ensure the child's needs are met
- Specialist practitioners should contribute specific information to inform the assessment and plan
- Practitioners should raise concerns if the child's needs aren't being met or if the risks increase
- When practitioners get stuck, we should go back to exploring strengths as this helps to build relationships and identify solutions

6 A note on language...

- All practitioners should use language that is kind and compassionate - remember that a child can access their files at any time
- This means we speak and write about children and families in the same way we would want someone to write about our own child
- We talk and write about the worries/harm using straightforward, jargon free language that the child and family can understand. This means describing behaviour and its impact rather than using labels
- We talk and write about strengths and safety in as much detail as the worries, so we build on what is already working to inform the plan

Learning Briefing