

# ENGAGING FAMILIES AND DEVELOPING TRUST

# Signs of engagement

- **High rates of attendance at sessions**
- **Completion of homework or tasks**

Providing daily or weekly homework provides a good opportunity to track engagement .

- **Emotional involvement in sessions**

When parents are involved, energetic and actively participating in sessions

- **Progress is being made towards goals**

Families are engaged in the process

(Cunningham and Henggeler 1999)



# Introductions

- **Introductions** are everything. As Karen Treisman stated 'you don't a second chance for a first impression'
- You can make introductions better by using pictures, avatars and introduction letters to support a positive start.
- Share some information about yourself (appropriate and not too much. Research shows that oversharing stops engagement).
- Use humour
- Contract for your first meeting, where and when you will meet, what will happen in the meeting.



**Before making contact:**

What does the referral tell you about the current issue and family ecology?

What additional information do you need at this stage?

None.

**TOP TIPS:**

- Invite partnership
- Be brief and straightforward
- Be warm and engaging
- Avoid too much information
- Prepare before calling

**Telephone the parents to introduce yourself and arrange a first meeting:**

Do you have time to talk?

YES  NO

Can we spend a little time introducing each other and arranging a first meeting?

YES  NO

Share with the parent what to expect in the first meeting e.g. venue, length of time, who will attend, content. Any comments?

What time/date would work best for a first meeting?

What could get in the way of this meeting taking place?

Do you know how to get to the location of the meeting?

YES  NO

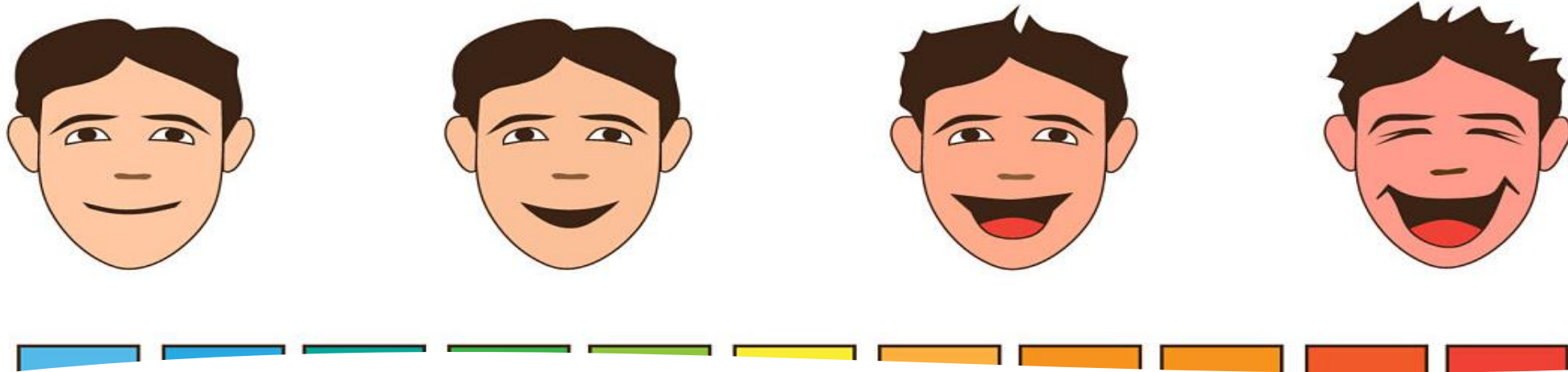
What do you know about the referral? How do you feel about it?

What were you hoping I would be able to help with?

What would be useful for you to know about me and what my service does at this stage?

Are there any urgent issues that I can help you with now?

Summarise key points from the telephone call. Any comments?



## The Family Voice

- Remember Karen Treisman's **voice work** and trauma informed practice. [Safe Hands Thinking Minds | Relational and developmental trauma in children](#)
- Consider the **importance of language** and finding the right approach for the family.
- This might mean being quieter for some families and louder for others. Humor may engage families and not others.
- Treating each family as unique and understanding one approach will not fit every family is crucial in your success.
- Avoid the trap 'If you only have a hammer everything becomes a nail' .



# ASSET BASED AND STRENGTH FOCUSED APPROACH

Identify what the family are good at already, these strengths can be used to solve other problem.

Celebrate strengths and wins

When there are wins or parents use a skill that works, then help them identify what they did well and so they know what to do again.



# Strength Focused Language

Think about the impact of language. We often say things as professionals without always considering the meaning or the impact of the term. We need to use more strength focused language. When we use critical language we need up to five positive affirmations to balance the impact (GOTTMAN 1994). Due to the impact of critical language we need to be conscious and take responsibility for what we say and how we say it.

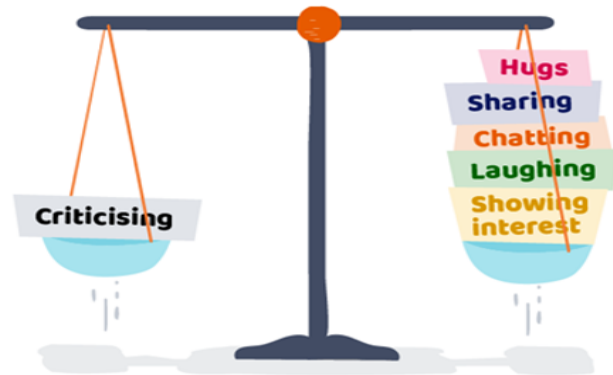


Image from One plus one



Language that  
Cares.docx

Read this  
document  
for further  
information.

## LANGUAGE TRAPS

### I'm Old School, I just say it as it is'

Can really mean anything but sometimes means that it is ok to use critical language and it can feel adversarial and blaming. This approach doesn't challenge constructs but can embed the issue more and impact engagement. 'Be curious not furious' (Karen Treisman).

### Manipulative

Karen Treisman stated 'we are all manipulative', manipulation is normal however we are critical of those that are simply acting in human way.

### Disguised compliance

Often used to describe a parent who is not doing as the practitioner has asked. The term disguised compliance makes it feel that the parents are or aren't doing is purposeful and the family don't want change and are hiding this. This can make everyone become helpless and hopeless about the family and believe change cannot happen. Disguised compliance is critical of the family and potentially stops us as practitioners taking responsibility for lack of engagement and alignment. We need to wonder why? Are there **constructs or barriers that we don't understand** that makes this really hard for this parent. For example the parents may not be able to get their child to school because it causes arguments in the home and this impacts on their relationship. They agree in the moment with plans but the reality is that its too hard or they don't have the skills to carry out what the practitioner has planned. Remember 'brains in pain cannot learn' (Karen Treisman). Many parents that we work with will have experienced trauma so what may seem simple to us could be impossible to the parents we work with.

# “You are the strategy”

(Karen Treisman)

“Sympathy is easy. You have sympathy for starving children swatting at flies on the late-night commercials. Sympathy is easy because it comes from a position of power.

Empathy is getting down on your knees and looking someone else in the eye, and realising that you could be them, and that all that separates you is luck.”

*Dennis Lehane*

Why and how we listen to children, young people, and their families within our work. (approx. 30 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akKM-LYNKkA>

## Empathy is...

seeing with the eyes of another,  
listening with the ears of another,  
and feeling with the heart of another.



“Therapist empathy increases clients trust and feelings of being understood (Johnson and Matross 1977), is often rated by clients as one of the most helpful treatment related experiences (Rorty, Yager and Rosotto, 1993)”

“Empathy has no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It’s simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of ‘You’re not alone.’”

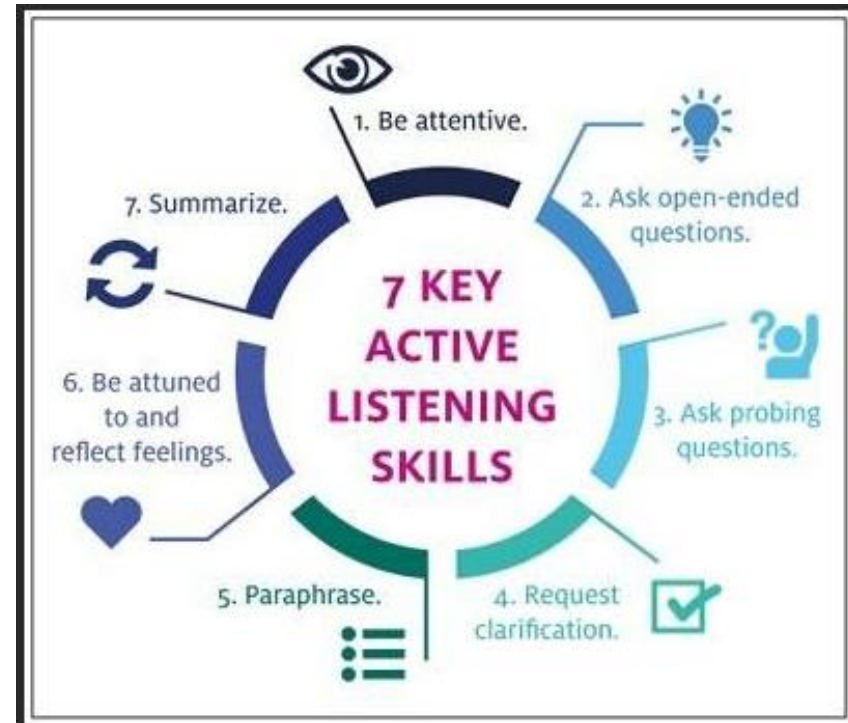
- Brené Brown, PhD





# VOICE OF THE CHILD

- It's important to hear everyone's voice including listening to children.
- If you LISTEN, You can gain a great insight to family life.
- Tools- You have been given a bag of resources for collating the voice of the child. Your locality will also have a large selection
- Get creative, use paint, paper, figures. These can also work for adults.
- Attend Karen Treisman Training or review slides.
- Complete genograms with children.
- Trust with the entire family is necessary to be able to get a true picture.
- Everything in this document will support gaining trust.
- LISTEN to the families hopes and dreams. This is an important part of building trust.



Short film clips demonstrating resources and activities to support direct work with children and young people linked with the three themes of 'all about me', 'My team', and 'wishes and feelings' (3 x 5-minute clips = 15 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHRBS0eYRhw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XxHI1Ogqqc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTozVZnDgIc>

# WATCH

Lunch bowl video link:

<https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/f2ce4d5f-d814-46ff-be16-60142bcf246c>

# The Salford Standards for Listening to Children, Young People and Families.

We asked you what was important when working with services and we have created 'Salford Standards' based on what you said.

We are asking all workers to adopt these standards when working with families.

# READ

Link to the briefing on the SSCP website and document embedded:

<https://safeguardingchildren.salford.gov.uk/media/1290/7mb-the-salford-standards-for-listening.pdf>

I will be respectful, honest and reliable with the children, young people, parents and carers I work with.

“ Respect: being treated well. ”

I will listen to what is important to you - your thoughts, feelings and wishes.

“ Listen and show you're listening. ”

I won't ask you what you have already told other workers unless I need to understand more that I can't find out by reading the information that I already have.

“ I feel like a newborn baby having to start again repeating myself... if your worker changes they should know basic information. ”

I will listen to your views, wishes and feelings and make sure that this is central to everything I do.

“ Being heard - listened to ”

I'll check back with you to make sure I have understood what you said.

“ It's good to be listened to, and when they double check, I know they have heard what I said. ”

I will make sure that your views and voice are loud and clear in anything I write

“ Talk to us, take us seriously. ”

I will always introduce myself and explain my purpose in a way that you can understand - I am here to help keep you safe and well and the best you can be.

“ When I met my current worker she was bubbly, hopeful, and approachable and I knew that she was interested in me and my life. ”

I will let you know if what you tell me needs to be shared with anyone else.

“ Trust is really important, when it's broken I won't share stuff with that person again. ”

What you communicate to me will be shown in your records and assessments through direct quotes (what you say) and observations (what I see) and reflect your wishes and feelings.

“ Better understanding through sharing what you already know. ”

# Be a Partner not an expert!

- You don't need to be the expert. Sometimes it can feel good and can feel like it might create change quicker. However evidence shows this change isn't sustainable as the family don't understand what has created the change.
- Being a partner means you support the family to make decisions for themselves and create goals and plans for change.
- Being a partner means you have a voice in the partnership. You have knowledge, training and experience that you bring to the table.
- Being a partner means that you may need to wobble constructs – for example a family wanting a Neurodevelopmental referral. You may need to gain alignment that behavioural approached need to be exhausted first.



## BE HELPFUL

Meet in places that suit the family , meet at the family home. Having sessions at home allows often means that parents are more comfortable and relaxed.

When **meetings** need to be held in the office it takes away a lot of worry if you share a photo or a video if the office space or even the route from the bus stop.



This is the bus stop nearest our office – you can get the number 56 to this bus stop

The TAF will take place in our meeting room on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup>

You Can pick where you want to sit and who you would like to sit near.

People will make notes, you can also make notes. I'll bring a note pad for you. Normally people make notes so they don't forget things, I know it may seem strange.

The meeting room is on the ground floor – I'll meet you at reception

This is reception – I'll be here at 11 am. WE can have a coffee first if you would like?

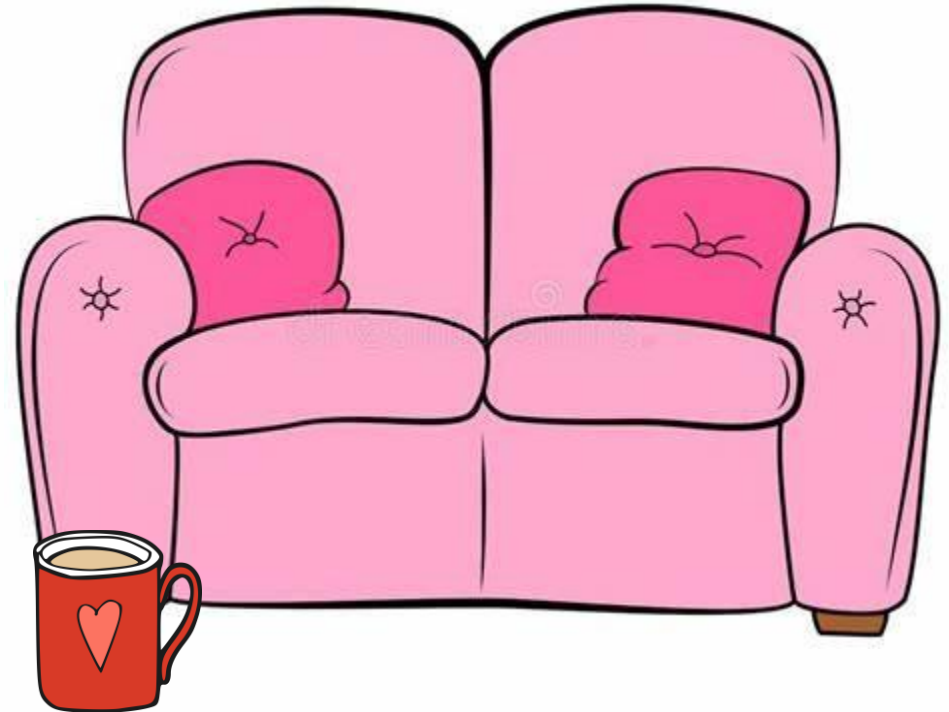
# Physical Environment

## Make the space welcoming

- Offer a drink
- Make it calming and regulating
- Provide fidgets (even for adults)
- Ensure the room is private, being interrupted may mean that you lose an opportunity for trust.
- Some people like to stand or have room to move

## Virtual

- Is there ease of access for the family (device, internet)
- Virtual should meet the family's needs not professionals.
- Offer to be with them in person even if it is a virtual meeting.





This genogram was completed by a 5 year old girl it showed her family and her next door neighbours all connected which reflected the importance of the neighbours in her life at that time.

## COMPLETE GENOGRAMS

with parents and children. Using resources flip chart , figures , stones , markers. This approach works for adults too. Visual Genograms allow conversation to take place and a greater understanding of the relationships will be achieved.

A genogram is not a family tree, we complete genograms to understand relationships, supports, risks, trauma, abuse , conflict and much more. Attend the Early Help Genogram Training .

**Genograms allow trust to develop and should be developed in partnership with the family members.**

## Assessment of social Support

TYPE OF SUPPORT	QUESTION TO ASK CAREGIVER	Person Identified
Instrumental	1. If you needed a lift who would you ask?	
	2. If you needed to borrow money who would you ask?	
	3. If you needed child care, who would you ask?	
	4. If you needed food or clothing, who would you call?	
Emotional	1. If you needed someone to listen, who would you ask?	
	2. Who would you call in an emergency with the kids?	
	3. Who is your shoulder to cry on?	
	4. Who do you share good news with?	
Appraisal	1. If you needed a second opinion who would you ask?	
	2. Whose opinion do you value?	
	3. Who has given you good advice?	
Informational	1. If you needed information about something like school or the community who would you ask?	
	2. Who can tell you where to go for financial help	
	3. Who would know where there are good kids activities	

Support Person	Special competences	Limitation

Specific Need	Possible person	Pros of using them	Cons of using them	Reciprocal help for this person	Difficulty selecting this person

## Social support resource

This resource is a useful addition to the genogram. By identifying social supports at the earliest point you are more likely to get a true reflection of who is supportive and why.

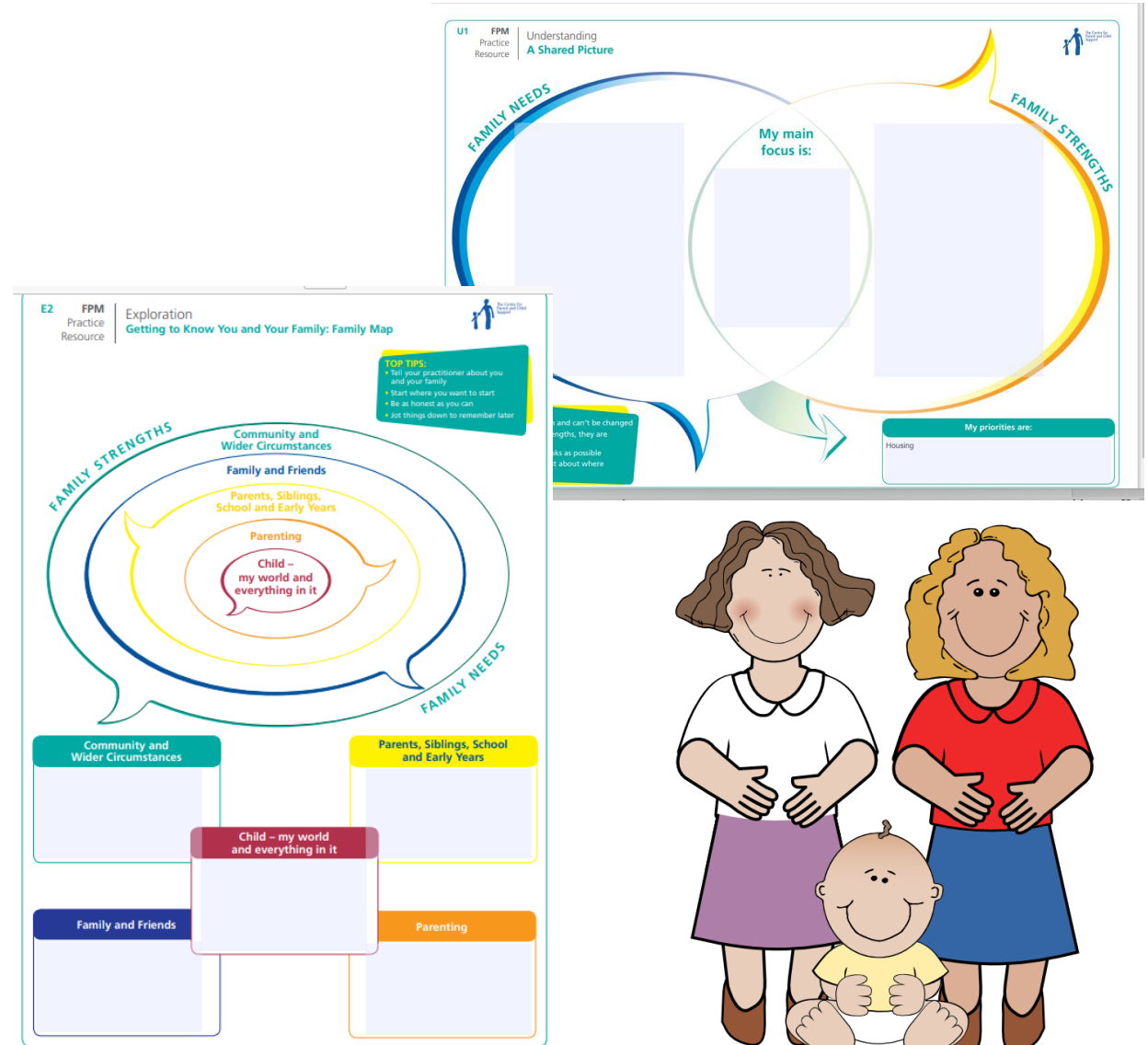
In a time of crisis people are less able to identify strengths in their supports and it is more likely that you will hear 'I have nobody'.

Having good social supports reducing isolation and improves mental wellbeing.



# Explore and be curious

- These tools are a necessary and useful part of getting to know and understand the family.
- **Being able to listen and understand that a family is unique will allow partnership to develop and trust in the practitioner – parent relationship.**
- Use flipchart so the family are part of the process. E2 is based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and allows us to understand the strengths and needs surrounding a child. An asset based or strength-based approach allows us to recognise strengths and support a family to use these in other areas that may be a struggle. For example, a parents may use granny for childcare when they are at work or to go out but not at the early signs of mental health decline. We can also help the family prioritise the next steps through these tools. Having open conversations and sometimes asking the hard questions we can create Spontaneous change, but we can really develop our relationships that will allow us to guide the family through change

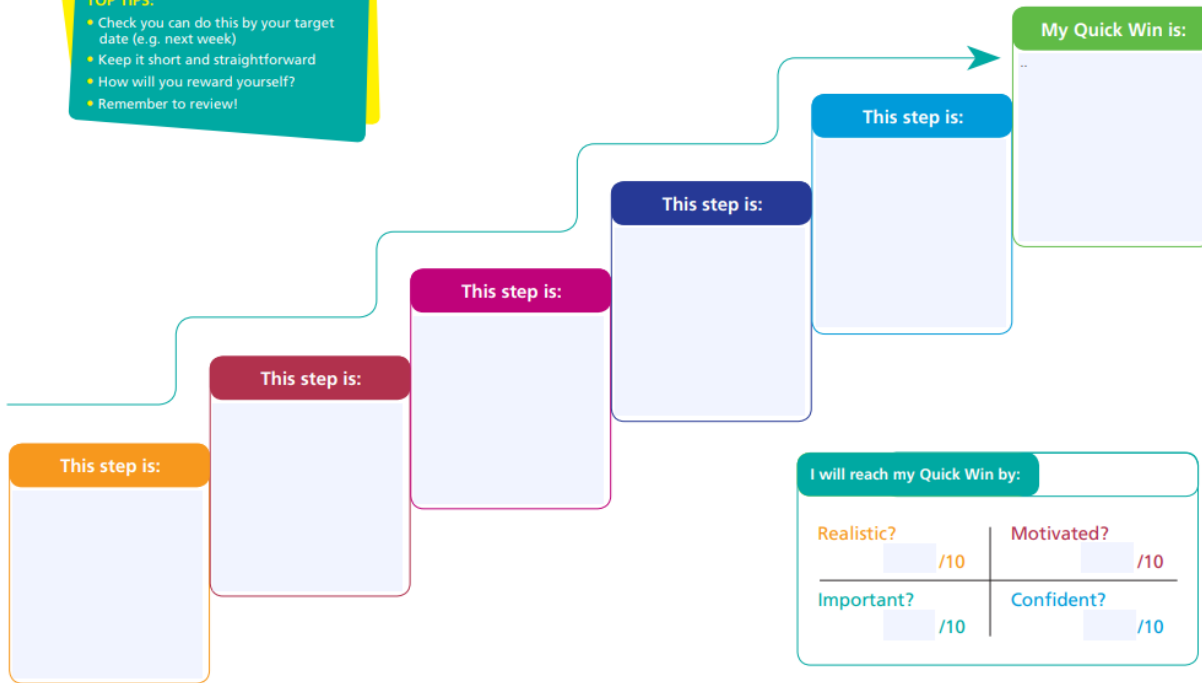






TOP TIPS:

- Check you can do this by your target date (e.g. next week)
- Keep it short and straightforward
- How will you reward yourself?
- Remember to review!



# QUICK WINS

## FPM TOOL

It's never too early for a quick win. **Creating a feeling of action is known to improve engagement and alignment.** It also allows you to understand the parents and recognise some of their struggles. Quick win should be achievable small wins. They can be broken down using this FPM resource or by simply asking 'what's one small thing you could do differently?'. You should ensure they are well set up and that you check on how it worked, what went well and what were the struggles.

Celebrate wins together, identify what worked so they know for the next time.

# Perspective Taking

What would you do if you were in their shoes?

If you had their life experiences would capacity for change be easy?

Think of things you have tried to change such as going on a diet or exercising consistently. Is change easy?

There may be times you feel frustrated by choices families or parents make. Take some time to wear their shoes and it may change your perspective. It may mean that you review your work or plans.

Taking perspective will strengthen your partnership.

**WATCH** – ‘THERE SHE GOES’ ON BBC I-PLAYER. This is comedy that tells the story of a family navigating life with a child with a chromosomal disorder. It shows their experiences of working with services, the impact of the birth of their child on their mental health, substance use and parental conflict.



# Increase Hope

- If we presume that families are doing the best they can, with what they have it means we can feel more hopeful about the family and step away from blame.
- ‘I’m wondering if you’re feeling hopeless (or frustrated or disappointed) because you have tried so many things in the past that haven’t worked. Would you be willing to try something with me that might be more in line with what you want’.
- You can ask the miracle question to increase hope- ‘ what would a miracle look like’ , ‘ If you had a magic wand’?
- All discussions should be in an atmospheres of negotiation, respect and choice. What will be best for the parent and family. Roll with resistance, acknowledge and explore the parent’s reluctance. This may help you problem solve with the parent.
- Support increasing parent’s motivation and confidence by remaining strength focused, reframing things in a solvable way, using praise, modelling praise and showing genuine warmth to the caregiver.
- Be careful talking too much about problems and weaknesses, make sure you give at least one piece of positive feedback about what they are doing/ Use strengths to lever change.

(MST ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO INCREASE HOPE AND URGENCY)



# MISSED APPOINTMENTS

- When a family cancels **the first** session make sure you book in the next session straight away. Start to consider if engagement is an issue.
- After the **second** missed session start to consider what the barriers might be. Listen and don't presume.
- Contact the family and query if there is any problem with meeting? How can you make it easier for them. Create some **agreed goals**.
- If a **third meeting** is cancelled speak to the referrer again and create a plan around how to engage the family.
- **Keep in contact** with the family. If there is no phone contact, then write an engaging letter.
- If you have lost engagement to a **disagreement** or upset, then follow up quickly with a text and let them know a time you will call them in the next few days if you don't hear from them. Let them know that they can call you at any time. This text opens the communication channel with them and lets them know that you are happy to keep meeting with them.
- Sometimes we think it is best to leave parents to have a breathing time, or we want to avoid people because of the difficulties however this is likely to mean that there will be no resolution and engagement will be impacted.
- Recognising an engagement issue prevents case drift. We can ensure that families receiving support and we can **evidence** lack of engagement supporting escalation if needed.



# Setting Goals

- Supporting parents to create goals is vital to engagement and partnership.
- All discussions should be in an atmosphere of negotiation, respect and choice
- Practitioners, parents and partner agencies should work in partnership.
- Goals can Create hopeful conversations
- Stage goals what is the ideal and what is realistic in 1 month then 6 months .
- Review goals, scale goals and celebrate wins

## HOW TO MAKE SMARTER GOALS

CREATED BY ADARINGADVENTURE.COM

Lots of people talk about making SMART goals. But that leaves out two critical considerations. So to help you shoot for the stars, here is the SMARTER system. And remember, whatever your goal is, make sure it is fun chasing it. We don't have long on this planet and we should be enjoying what we do, not sacrificing time now for something that may or may not happen in the future.

S	M	A	R	T	E	R
<b>Specific.</b> Your goals need to be clear and easily understood. "Get in shape" isn't specific. "Lose 10lbs is". "Make more money" isn't specific. "Earn \$500k by December 1st" is.	<b>Measurable.</b> Your goals must be quantifiable. It's important to be able to track your progress. Without the ability to do so you can easily lose heart and focus.	<b>Action-oriented.</b> Goals have to involve action otherwise they are just dreams and wishes. When you set your goals, also determine next steps so you know how to start making progress.	<b>Realistic.</b> Has anyone done it? If so you know it's possible. Even if "no", everything was once done for the first time. And others will have achieved elements of the goal, so study them. Just don't set goals that are physiologically impossible.	<b>Timebound.</b> Your goals must have a timeline. If you want to achieve your goal "someday" then you'll always wait to start tomorrow. But if you give yourself a deadline then you'll make the most of each minute.	<b>Ecological.</b> Your goals have to be relevant to the big picture. There's no point in setting goals that may damage your health or relationships with loved ones.	<b>Rewarding.</b> Ask yourself "Why am I doing this?" This is the part where you HAVE to know what your values are. Know what motivates you and keeps you driving forward if and when things get tough.

# Planning interventions

- Like everything interventions should be developed in partnership. You and the Family can discuss the options and negotiate the best way forward.
- You can also weigh up the pros and cons of the strategy. This can help to determine if the intervention might work for the Family or not.
- Buy in from the family is important as the family need to be aligned with the plan or they will be less likely to succeed and remain engaged.
- An onward referral to another service is not always the best/only option.

Consider the PROS and CONS of each side of the strategy to determine if the intervention might work and be effective for you or not		
<i>Example: Parent is considering the choice to call the parent of her child's best friend to help supervise and monitor him or not to do anything at all, because her son will think she is stupid and may get angry with her.</i>		
CHOICE 1	PROS	CONS
<b>To ask</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I will have someone to help take some load off me.</li> <li>- I can offer to help with her son and then we can both have support</li> <li>- I will know where my son is, and what he is doing when he leaves the house and goes to their home . This will increase my supervision and monitoring of him.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- She might say no</li> <li>- My son will think I am being stupid and will call me names and get mad.</li> </ul>
CHOICE 2	PROS	CONS
<b>NOT to ask</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is easy not to ask and to do nothing</li> <li>- I wont have to hear my son complain</li> <li>- It wont work anyway , I wont have to worry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If I don't ask , I wont know if she will say yes or no</li> <li>- If I don't ask , I wont know where is he is and what he is doing,</li> <li>- He could get into more trouble and that would bring more trouble for the family.</li> </ul>

# SET HOMEWORK

- Change needs continuous effort
- Don't be afraid to call it homework because it gives the message that it needs done in the parent's own time before they see you again. If a family doesn't like the term, you can call it tasks or anything that suits.
- Planning a homework should be done in partnership with parents. We can ask things like what's a small thing you can do differently this week.
- Practice works and the more families practice new techniques and skills the more likely they are to stick. Home-work is important for long term sustainability.
- Always check in with the homework; did you do it? how did it work? when will you do it again?
- If parents haven't completed homework, explore what the barriers are to doing that. What made it hard? Adapt and change the homework but don't give up because it gives the message that it needs done in the parent's own time before the next time they see you.
- When parents do something well, praise them to allow them to feel success. Plan for how they can use this and think about what may get in the way of this going forward



# Sustaining changes

Sustaining changes can be a challenge. Often when we have successes, we forget to equip parents for the fact that things can go wrong.

When things go wrong people can become hopeless and presume that all is lost.

- Prepare and trouble shoot for what could go wrong
- Have open conversations
- Normalise it by naming it something like a 'wobble'. When you have made a change there is no reason this can't last long term
- Create a wobble plan that includes use of social supports
- Often Families don't need re-referred that just need a nudge back in the right direction , and some one to support the nudge.

## WOBBLE PLAN

You can keep positive changes going long term by knowing what has worked. There may be WOBBLES along the way. This plan will help you recognise what has worked, how to identify a wobble and what to do to get back on track.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

WHAT HAS WORKED TO CREATE CHANGE?

IDENTIFY 3 THINGS THAT EACH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE DONE THAT HAS CREATED CHANGE:

PARENTS/ CARERS	CHILD	SCHOOL	OTHER

Identify what might be most likely slip or stop

Identify first signs of a wobble. What will you be thinking or feeling?

What thought can you replace it with?

Identify other signs things may be about to wobble

Identify who can help you best and who is a back up in case they aren't available.

What do they need to do or say?

What are your top three actions to get back on track:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## WOBBLES ARE NORMAL

Remember changing a behaviour is hard work and takes time. It may feel like things have gone back to the start at times. If you identify this as quickly as possible and make sure you are continuing to put everything in place (that worked) you will be able to get things back on track much quicker.