

Building Relationships 7 Minute Briefing

1. Background

[Working Together to safeguard Children 2023](#) has identified that “successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working between parents / carers and the practitioners working with them.” In Salford we invite practitioners from all agencies to adopt a “doing with” rather than a “doing to” approach by encouraging workers to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of children and families by seeing the world as they see it.

2. Why Build Relationships?

It is far more likely that changes will be made and sustained if you can meet a family where they are, setting off from their starting point and walking alongside them as a partner rather than attempting to drag them along to meet the end goal of your service requirements. If you can act as a collaborator and show the family that you will listen to what they are saying and actively involve them in creating plans to change, rather than dictating what should happen, it is more likely that the family will take ownership of the plans they have created and have a vested interest in sticking to the plan to make it work.

3. Working in Partnership

Every aspect of intervention with a family is underpinned by partnership and good relationships. These are the building blocks of sustained engagement. Being seen as an “expert” can create a power imbalance. Working in partnership allows all voices to be heard equally. Families feel that they are listened to and their voices are important. They feel part of a team and that there is empathy for their situation.

4. Why families may not engage

- Mistrust of professionals due to previous negative experiences
- Fear of having children taken away, feeling threatened
- Unidentified needs e.g. mental health, trauma, learning disability, neurodivergence, alcohol or substance misuse
- Language barriers or cultural differences
- Fear of judgement
- Disagree that there is a need for intervention

5. Trauma informed practice aims to:

- Create physically and emotionally safe spaces
- Work transparently and establish trust
- Give people choice and control
- Help people to heal and develop healthy coping strategies
- Work in collaboration, respecting others’ experiences
- Create a culture of compassion within our organisations

6. Strengths based language

Consider how the language that you use may affect the families you work with. Certain words and phrases may appear to be critical. Especially consider this when making notes on the family's record. For example, using a phrase such as "disguised compliance" may imply a certain level of deception on the part of the parents, when in fact they may have agreed to do something in the moment that they are not able to achieve, perhaps because of barriers that have not been fully explored by exercising professional curiosity.

7. Resources

[creating-strength-based-partnerships-with-families-in-salford-june-2024.pdf](#)

[7mb-professional-curiosity-final-with-survey-link.pdf](#)

[7-mb-cultural-consciousness-final.pdf](#)

[7mb-parental-mental-health-final-v2.pdf](#)

[7-mb-think-family-nov-2024.pdf](#)

[Think Family | Partners in Salford.](#)

Additional Information: Published March 2025

Visit: <https://safeguardingchildren.salford.gov.uk/>

Email: SSCP@salford.gov.uk
