

1. Information sharing

There is evidence that some professionals are still reluctant to share information. If you have concerns that could impact on the safety of a child, it is your duty to share this information with the relevant agencies.

2. Challenging decisions if you do not agree

If you make a referral or are involved in a meeting where you do not agree with the decisions made and feel this creates a risk for a child, then you must challenge that decision at the time. If you are still not happy with the decisions, please refer to the [Professional Curiosity and Escalations](#) documentation on the [West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership website](#).

3. Using the language of safeguarding

When making referrals or taking part in meetings, it is crucial that everyone is using a common language to understand the concerns and level of concern. Please use the [West Sussex Continuum of Need / Threshold Guidance](#) when explaining your concerns and what you think needs to happen.

4. Share factually accurate information

Ensure you are clear whether you are sharing something you have observed yourself or if it is information that has been passed to you, but not seen the evidence yourself. For example, a parent tells you their child has a medical condition or that a family member is not allowed to have access to a child, but they have not shared any paperwork that verifies this information. When sharing this information, you should be clear that this information was reported to you, but you have not seen any evidence to confirm this is the case. Alternatively, you may have seen some evidence and come to conclusions about what is happening for that child. In this situation it is important that you are clear about what you know as fact and what is your opinion.

5. The importance of historic information

While we want to give children and families a chance to make a new start, understanding previous issues and support should be used to inform decision making. If you are aware of anything from the past that may impact on the safety of children or the decision-making process, then this should be passed on. Don't assume someone else already knows. This is also crucial in the process of supporting a child to transition from your setting to a new setting or school – passing this information to the new provider will support them in keeping this child safe. If you are unsure where a child is now attending, please contact the Family Information Service who may be able to support in passing the information on. If a child you are worried about leaves your setting and you do not know where they are now, you must contact the [Integrated Front Door](#).

6. Do not make assumptions

It is important not to assume other professionals have the same knowledge you do. If additional information comes to your attention, act on it. If a social worker is involved, make contact to update them. It is better to hear information more than once than to miss something crucial.

Do not assume they are being seen or supported by another professional – ask the question and, if you are not happy with the answer, keep pursuing.

To make sure that children and families are given the support they need, it is important that professionals understand their lived experience. If there is missing information, then someone will need to find out more to inform planning.

7. Professional respect and understanding

As a professional, you have a wealth of knowledge that you can draw on to share with families – such as safer sleep, supporting children’s eating, toileting as well as understanding and managing their emotions. Sharing advice and guidance with families is part of your role in an early years setting and can support families to meet their child’s needs effectively. Having a good understanding of the professional role of others who work with families supports good planning and integrated working. If you’re not sure what others do and the support they can offer or are providing to a family, then ask. There have been changes to the way services are offered since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, so it’s important to understand these changes and not assume that if particular services have been provided in the past, that they are still happening now.

All professionals that are involved with you and with children and families should be given professional respect and courtesy. If you are talking to other professionals, listen carefully to them and make sure that they listen to you. Your views and opinions are important so make sure your voice is heard – the information you hold might make the difference for a child.

8. How we talk to parents about making referrals makes a difference

Often, in the way we talk about referrals, we express this as a last resort or a sign of failure. Using this language can make it hard for families to be willing to engage in the services that are available to support them. Talking to parents and saying “I’m worried, this is why I’m worried and I’m going to talk to a team who can get access for support for you” is a much more positive message to give to the family and may lead to an improved outcome.