

The Principles of Good Practice in Partnership

Fifteen essential principles for working in partnership are identified in *The Challenge of Partnership in Child Protection* (Department of Health 1995) :

- Treat all family members as you would wish to be treated, with dignity and respect.
- Ensure that family members know that the child's safety and welfare must be given first priority, but that each of them has a right to a courteous, caring and professionally competent service.
- Take care not to infringe privacy any more than is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child.
- Be clear with yourself and with family members about your power to intervene, and the purpose of your professional involvement at each stage.
- Be aware of the effects on family members of the power you have as a professional, and the impact of what you say and do.
- Respect confidentiality of family members and your observations about them, unless they give permission for the information to be passed to others or it is essential to do so to protect the child.
- Listen to the concerns of the children and their families, and take care to learn about their understanding, fears and wishes before arriving at your own explanations and plans.
- Learn about and consider children within their family relationships and communities, including their cultural and religious contexts, and their place within their own families.
- Consider the strengths and potential of family members, as well as their weaknesses, problems and limitations.
- Ensure that children, families and other carers know their responsibilities and rights, including the right to services, and their right to refuse services and any consequences of doing so.
- Use plain, jargon-free, language appropriate to the age and culture of each person. Explain unavoidable technical and professional terms.
- Be open and honest about your concerns and responsibilities, plans and limitations, without being defensive.
- Allow children and families time to take in and understand concerns and processes. A balance needs to be found between appropriate speed and the needs of people who may need extra time in which to communicate.
- Take care to distinguish between personal feelings, values, prejudices and beliefs, and professional roles and responsibilities, and ensure that you have good supervision to check that you are doing so.
- If a mistake or misinterpretation has been made, or you are unable to keep to an agreement, provide an explanation. Always acknowledge the distress experienced by adults and children and do all you can to keep it to a minimum.