

The importance of obtaining consent

Good working relationships with families are based on trust, your relationships will be enhanced by having open conversations about consent with your families.

The vast majority of work completed by Children's Social Care is based on consent of parents and carers and we want the process of engaging with our services to be participative from the outset. We know from research and our practice experience that most often, families who feel that they are part of the solution tend to be more motivated and interventions are more likely to result in a positive outcome.

Overriding consent

If you have assessed that there is a reason for overriding consent, please ensure that you provide a clear written rationale behind this decision, focus on the impact on the child.

Once we receive a request for support and you have decided to override consent, we will review this decision and may require further information to help us decide. We will be clear about what needs to happen next.

Consent is required for all requests for support at level 2 and 3 and for the vast majority of requests for support at level 4 of the CON.

What families tell us

Families tell us they value open and honest relationships, they want to hear what they are doing well as well as professionals being honest about what worries them, they will often share the same worries as you.

Families want to feel part of the plan going forward, discuss together what support could work well and be honest about what some of those challenges will be, be realistic about what can be achieved in a short timescale.

Consenting to what

Ensure parents are clear that they are consenting to all of the points below before a request for support is made.

- Sharing information with partners
- Requesting information from partners
- Assessment (Early Help or C and F)
- Intervention – (statutory, CFW, universal services etc)

Families have a legal right to privacy and therefore consent must be gained for all Level 2 and 3 requests as well as most level 4 requests for support.

Who can provide consent?

Consent to request support should be provided by those with parental responsibility (PR), who are named on the birth certificate, or have acquired PR through marriage or another legal process. Partners of parents will usually not have parental responsibility; consent will need to come from the parent.



Top tips on consent for partner agencies

Have you and your team seen the myth busting guide to information sharing?

How are you approaching the topic of consent with your families?



Discuss in your teams what works and what doesn't in gaining consent.

Safeguarding

Even in situations when you have immediate safeguarding concerns and you assess the requirement for child(ren) to be seen by a Social Worker and / or a medical professional that same day, you should still be informing the family that you are contacting Children's Social Care. The exception being when you feel that informing the parents / carers would place the child at immediate risk of significant harm.

If you have not obtained consent, please lay out your rationale. Be prepared to explain this rationale to an Early Help Officer or Social Worker who will provide professional challenge if the reasons are not clear.

Key principles on consent

Prior to completing a Request for Support form online the family should know that you are completing this document and you should have their agreement. The family should fully understand what it is that you are requesting, the reason behind it and what it is that you hope will be achieved through the involvement of children's services.