

Developing Parental Partnership

'A **partnership** is an arrangement where parties, known as partners, agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests' Wikipedia

The purpose of this document is to support the development of partnership working with parent carers in schools and settings.

- **Keep the child at the centre of the process** - Ensure the purpose of the partnership working is the achievement of positive outcomes for the young person.
- **Acknowledge that a parent's anxiety is real** - Whatever the cause of the anxiety a parent is experiencing, this needs to be acknowledged in order to move towards a solution.
- **Agree expectations** - Agree actions and responsibilities. Also agree the appropriate level of communication.
- **Listen** - Make time to listen to parents' views and concerns. Doing this as early as possible can help to stop anxiety building unnecessarily. Remember you are only truly listening if you respond with actions that address the concerns raised.
- **Build Trust** - Ensure you do what you say you're going to do and communicate progress to the parent.
- **Bring people with you** - Respond to where parents are with regards to their understanding and feelings about a situation. Actions and timescales should be agreed by both school and parents.
- **Consistency and clarity of communication** - Ensure information and messages given are well informed and consistent from all school staff and support services.
- **Use Person Centred approaches** -

One Page Profiles - Information held regarding 'Like and admire' and 'Important to' set a positive tone and allow parents to contribute. As well as the parent feeling that their views are valued they can also see that the school knows their child as an individual.

Working/Not Working - This tool collects views from a range of perspectives; Young person, family, school & support services. Views are recorded and shared so all contributions are acknowledged. Agreements can be shared and differences of opinion discussed. Actions can be agreed to ensure a common approach to next steps.

4+1 Questions - This tool offers an opportunity to acknowledge what has been working well but also gives participants in the discussion a way to share their worries about any issue.

Following reflection, the next question is: Given what we know now, what next?

Hold a **Person-Centred Review (PCR)** - A meeting where views can be shared and actions agreed with all contributors. The young person is present so is kept at the centre of the process.

- **Ensure mutual understanding of the Graduated Approach** - Explain to parents the graduated approach to provision as detailed in the Code of Practice. This would aim to facilitate a shared understanding of the appropriate response to an identified need.
- **Diffuse Tension** - Consider that a parent may be anxious about meeting at the school. Always greet parents in a friendly manner - ask them how they are. If possible, meet in a comfortable space (this may be off-site). Offer a cup of tea/coffee/water.
- **Be positive** - When discussing a young person's areas of need, it helps to context these within a profile of strengths and areas for development. Always try to focus on solutions and ways forward.
- **Consider use of Language** - Jargon and acronyms can be barriers. Speak in plain English. Consider how things are phrased. Give clear messages but use phrasing that avoids raising anxiety unnecessarily e.g 'Your child is on the SEND register' may be re-phrased to 'It has been identified that your child has some additional needs which require support'. It is generally more helpful to describe how a difficulty is presenting, rather than labelling or suggesting a diagnosis / identification.
- **Appoint a Parent Champion** - A parent champion can be trained to support communication between parents and school.
- **Understanding the role of support services** - Ensure parents are clear about the different roles of any outside agencies who may be involved with their child. You may wish to share information leaflets for parents when gaining signed consent for involvement.
- **Hard to reach parents** - Particular consideration may need to be given to methods of communication with parents who are difficult to engage. They may respond to a less formal meetings e.g. coffee morning, meeting off-site. You may wish to use Working/Not Working to consult on how parents would like to be engaged e.g parents evening, communication methods etc. Consider timing of meetings so where possible they can correspond with dropping off / picking up their child or avoid working hours.
- **Co-production** - Consultation with parents can ensure that shared information is pertinent and easily accessible. This approach may be beneficial when producing a range of documents e.g SEND information report.