

Gathering information – the visit:

Practitioners gather information by visiting the parent, child or young person.

- Make an appointment with the child and their parents to complete the common assessment. This should require no more than one or two visits. Visits should *normally* be in the home as the common assessment requires practitioners to understand the families home environment. *However*, it may not always be advisable to visit at home, for example, if a young person feels uncomfortable with the idea of a home visit. In those circumstances, practitioners should make a professional judgement as to the best place for an assessment visit, based on the views and wishes of the child/young person and/or the parent.

During assessment visits practitioners should:

- seek to build a working partnership with the child, or family, being clear about the nature and goals of the assessment and issues of consent and confidentiality. This includes providing the information-sharing leaflets “*Understanding Common Assessment, Information for Parents and Carers*” and if appropriate the *Young Persons Leaflet* (hyperlink to copy of leaflets) and explaining it to the family, and a version of the assessment form to clarify the structure of the process.
- be aware that families (including those members who have parental responsibility) may not agree between themselves about the child’s needs and solutions
- work with the child and/or their parent/carer to understand the issues and maintain a focus on solutions
- conduct the interview in a child-centred way, e.g. in a way that means the child and parent and carer are likely to feel more secure and confident and where practitioners have a more direct opportunity to observe behaviour in context
- ensure agreement as to what information is to be recorded on the assessment. This may mean some negotiation to ensure the main issues are captured whilst allowing the family priorities and perspective to be clear
- obtain written consent for the storage and appropriate sharing of information. This can be done on the handwritten notes captured during the visit. Some practitioners summarise information at the end of a visit and capture the signature at this point, others prefer to type notes and make a second visit

Practitioners need to:

- Listen to and take account of the range of views from the family members
- Observe responses and non-verbal communications as part of the process
- Focus on areas of strength as well as need – what does this family do well?

- Seek advice if they are worried about a child's welfare or their own safety
- Be honest about their assessment of strengths and needs .