

01 Background:

The Children Act (1989/2004) defines parental responsibility as: *“all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child”.*

The legislation is clear that, in the majority of cases, the most effective way of ensuring that children are safeguarded is by working in partnership with parents and carers.

This is reflected by the key principle of the Rochdale Borough Integrated Early Help Strategy which states that *“families are central to defining and addressing the problems that they face and they are key partners in the process”.*

Where there is a concern for a child or young person, practitioners should seek to discuss this in a clear, open and balanced way with parents and seek agreement to an Early Help Assessment or to a referral being made to Children’s Social Care, unless to do so would place the child at increased risk of suffering significant harm. The reason for deciding not to share information or concerns with a parent should always be documented.

Why it matters:

There are cases where it **is not** be appropriate to discuss safeguarding concerns with parents/carers prior to a referral to Children’s Social Care because to do so would place that child, young person or others at increased risk of suffering Significant Harm.

It **would not** be appropriate to share concerns where:

- There is evidence to suggest that involving the parents/carers would impede the Police investigation &/or Section 47 Enquiry
- It is suspected that a parent is involved in the sexual abuse/sexual exploitation of a child
- Organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- Fabricated or induced illness is suspected
- It is not possible to contact parents/carers without causing undue delay
- There is a risk of forced marriage or honour-based violence

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

07

What to do?

Ensure that you are clear at all times whether or not to inform parents about your concerns.

Ensure that you are Familiar with the GM multi-agency safeguarding procedures

Further research:

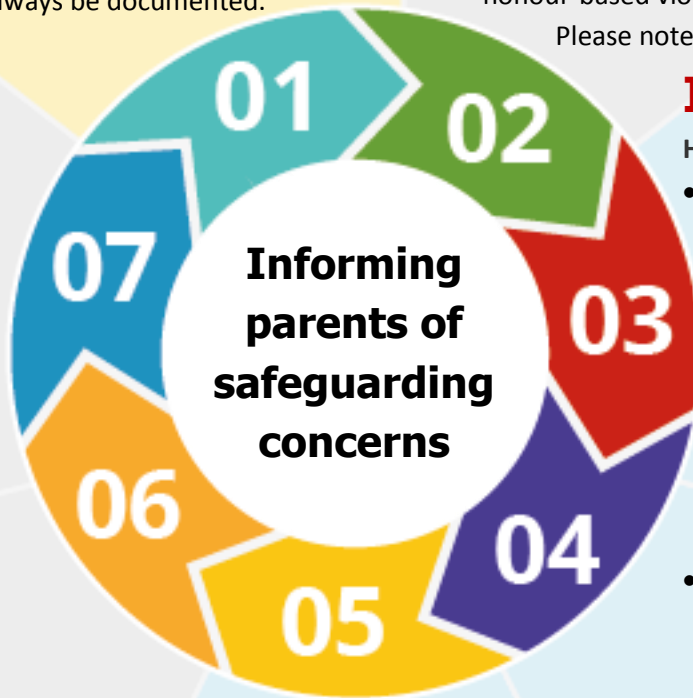
SCIE: Practice issues from serious case reviews

SCIE: Reluctance to share information in the presence of families

Information:

Handling difficult conversations:

- Before having the conversation, make sure you have gathered all the facts. This is particularly important for conversations that may stimulate emotional or defensive responses; collecting the necessary evidence will allow you to discuss the issue in a clear and neutral manner.
- Clarify the exact purpose of the conversation and what the desired outcome is. Consider talking about issues & possible solutions in supervision first.
- If your previous experience of the parent/suggests that they pose a risk, make a full risk assessment & do not see them on your own.
- Consider the parent’s point of view which may be influenced by: bad experience of services, lack of trust, limited or distorted understanding of what is appropriate for children, learning difficulties, cultural and language barriers.
- Consider the impact of your communication style and body language



Informing parents of safeguarding concerns

Questions:

- Am I clear about when to inform parents of safeguarding concerns regarding their children?
- Am I clear when not to?
- Do we always listen to children when they tell us that informing parents will cause harm?

Information:

- If you have identified the need for a difficult conversation, deal with it promptly before the problem escalates. Find an appropriate time and place to deal with the conversation, where you will not be interrupted, overheard or rushed.
- The opening of the conversation will help to shape the direction of the entire meeting. An unhelpful opening that implies blame is likely to make the individual stressed and emotional. Try summarising the problem and inviting collaboration
- Encourage the parent/s to talk and consider Barriers to communication/any additional needs.
- Clarify next steps and check understanding.

06

05

04

02

03

