

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

1. Ask the person what their preferred method of communication is.

Do you know how the person prefers to communicate? This will improve the chances of them being able to engage. Consider factors including:

- The person's ability to read and write.
- Language considerations - what is the person's first language? Is it possible to provide information in a different language or format?
- Does the person have a sensory impairment? If so, what support does the person need to help them engage? For example, this could include the use of an interpreter.
- Safety first. For example, if the person is experiencing domestic abuse, is it safe to send a letter to their address? Are there any other risks associated with the address.
- Consider who else the person has in their network. Can they support the relationship you are building with them, e.g., parent, a friend, a relative or a trusted worker.

2. Recognise the extent to which a person's vulnerability may impact on their ability to engage.

Consider factors such as Learning Disability, substance use and capacity. Always consider what you or other agencies know about a person's vulnerability. Consider the extent to which it may impact on the person's ability to engage. Work to challenge assumptions, be curious, 'what else could be happening here'. Factors to think about:

- Learning Disability
- Mental Health
- Substance Misuse
- Capacity
- Historical abuse/trauma
- Previous bad experiences of involvement with services.

3. Use the Mental Capacity Act (MCA)

Remember to use the Mental Capacity Act to empower people to make decisions and support people who may lack the capacity to make some decisions. Remember to consider the extent to which a person's capacity to engage with services may have been affected by threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour.

4. Consider the person's mental capacity to engage but also the consequences of non-engagement.

When considering a person's capacity in relation to engagement it is important to consider whether the person understands the consequences of non-engagement. The risks might relate to areas such as the person's health, access to benefits, offers of care and support.

5. Where possible, identify a lead professional to build up a trusting relationship with the person.

Whilst this may not always be possible, it is really helpful for the person if they have an identified lead worker. The lead worker will be in a vital position for monitoring trends of engagement, sharing information and assisting the person through service navigation. The lead professional may change depending on the circumstances of the case and the management of risk remains a shared responsibility. Coordinating a collective response ensure that support provided is person centred and everyone is involved and kept up to date around next steps.

As part of the safeguarding adults process consideration must also be given to whether the adult may benefit from the support of an independent advocate. Ask the person who they would like agencies to work together and if they have someone that can support them.

6. Don't assume that someone else is dealing with the problem.

When a person's circumstances change, or concerns arise about their lack of engagement, don't presume that other professionals are aware of what you know. Build up good relationships with professionals from other agencies and ensure that information is shared appropriately, using safeguarding procedures if required. Where a Safeguarding Adults Plan is in place, it should be clear how information will be shared between all the agencies involved. Include how concerns will be escalated if the persons lack of engagement continues to be a risk factor.

7. Be careful what you record around engagement or lack of

The language used in your recording can make a big difference. Terms like "failed to attend" and "difficult to engage with" place the emphasis solely on the person, there may be external factors impacting on a person's ability to engage.

Recording of this nature can also affect the way another professional may approach the case.

8. Remember, engagement may fluctuate.

Just because a person has not engaged with services in the past, it does not mean that this will always be the case. This time it might be different. Be tenacious with clients and always let them know that services are available should they need them.

9. Involve the person to Make Safeguarding Personal

The safeguarding adults process should be **person centred** and **outcomes focused**:

- Ask the person – what do they want from the safeguarding process?
- Are we working alongside the person to achieve what they want?
- Talk through risk, what do they understand this to be?
- How do you know if the person understands what we say and what we do?

Throughout the safeguarding process, work with the person and their network so that they feel heard and enabled to make decisions.