

Through the eyes of the family

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Family Voice Norfolk

- Family Voice Norfolk is the parent carer forum for Norfolk.
- We represent the views of parent carers of children and young people aged 0 to 25 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- We do this by attending meetings with the local authority, health and voluntary services, advising on documents and giving presentations.
- All of us who represent Family Voice Norfolk are parent carers ourselves. We gain the views of our members in many ways – through surveys, meetings, phone calls and by organising events at which parent carers can come face-to-face with professionals and exchange views and information.
- We are not an organisation that offers support or advice. We don't campaign publicly. What we do offer is the opportunity for parent carers to have their voices heard by planners and decision makers.



This session
will cover
insight into:

Relationship
building

Listening to
understand

Honest
communication

Relationship building

When meeting a family for the first time...

- what is your priority?
- what would you do first?

Please put your thoughts in the chat

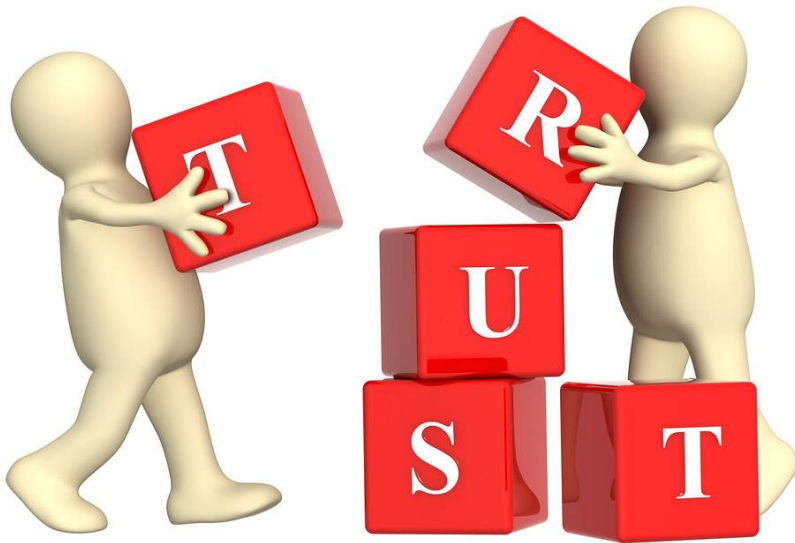


Relationship building

Relationship building is supported by good planning and effective communication.

Before meeting with a family, think about:

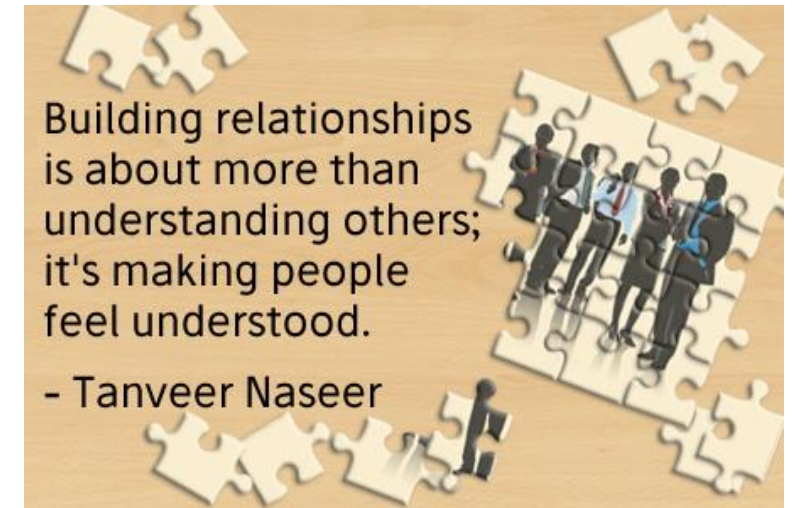
- Where the meeting will take place - is the venue friendly, accessible? Who is on home ground? These all make a difference
- Discussing how long the meeting might last
- What will happen during the meeting - what do you all hope to achieve?
- Accommodating flexibility within the agenda to deal with anything that might arise and have a plan if more time is needed
- Have you ensured that you will not be distracted during the meeting?



Relationships are complicated.

Here are some things to think about...

- As a professional, you are entering the relationship at an advantage - you will already know something about the child or young person and their family. They will probably know nothing about you.
- Your knowledge may have given you an unconscious bias - try to enter the relationship with an open mind
- Remember that most parents/carers will have experienced negative situations regarding their child, think about how you can proactively build a positive relationship
- Be aware of your body language and what message it is sending
- Explain what you are doing, if you are taking notes, explain why and what you are going to do with the notes
- Agree any actions before you leave the meeting



Building relationships
is about more than
understanding others;
it's making people
feel understood.

- Tanveer Naseer

Listening to understand

Think about a time when you have had a conversation and been misunderstood.

- How did you feel?
- What did you do?



Listening to understand

be careful not to fall into the assumption trap!

Don't assume - just because you may have worked with a child or young person with a particular diagnosis, do not assume that any two people will be the same.

Don't assume that families will have the same needs and priorities

We are all different!

- Differences to consider:
 - personalities
 - circumstances
 - experiences
 - challenges
 - motivations
 - aspirations
 - geography

Any one of these might be the most significant for that family and this might change



Listening to understand - exploring...

- Ask the right questions - this is a skill but it is critical if we are to understand
- Frame your questions carefully
- Think!
 - Is it appropriate?
 - Are you asking it at the right time?
 - Are you asking the right person?
 - Are you looking for a particular answer?



Honest communication

- Honest communication can be a bit of a risk for everyone, this is why trusting relationships are so important
- There is a balance to be aware of – both professionals and families will be considering this balance
- Use of language can be critical in these communications, many families will not be familiar with the language that professionals use
- Questions such as ‘what do you need to make this work for you and your child?’ are so much more positive than focusing on difficulties or problems

Important considerations:

- ✓ Both professionals and parents want the best for the child or young person - this needs to be the focus at every meeting, during every communication and every interaction
- ✓ For families of children and young people with SEND, there is a careful balance that needs to be made when talking about strengths. These open conversations come as a result of trusting relationships, these can take time
- ✓ As a professional, you need to follow through with the things that you have said you will do, this will help to build trust
- ✓ Focus on your shared aims
- ✓ You need to be prepared to learn together and work together to share understanding

Any questions?



Are you a member of Family Voice Norfolk?

- You can join as a **parent carer member** if you are the parent, carer or close family to a child or young person aged 0-25 with SEND
- You can join with **associate membership** if you are a practitioner or wider family member wishing to support out work
- You can join with **affiliate membership** as a group or organisation

And we can help you too...

- By reviewing proposed leaflets, letters or flyers and advising on language that will be clear and accessible for families
- By asking our members for comments on topics that are important for your work
- By organising events at which you can speak face-to-face with parent carers and share ideas and views



www.familyvoice.org.uk