

A black and white photograph of three people sitting at a table. On the left is a young man with glasses wearing a light-colored t-shirt. In the center is a woman with glasses wearing a patterned cardigan over a dark top. On the right is a man with glasses wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. They are all looking at a tablet computer held by the woman in the center. In the background, there is a mosaic mirror and a doorway.

Working with families

What do your staff need to know and do?

In partnership with:

Contents

Introduction	3
Background: Research with families	4
What do your staff need to know and do	7
1. Understand the importance of partnership working and instilling a family, person centred approach	7
2. Establish and maintain positive relationships with families	10
3. Maintain open communication with families and review how you work with them	12
4. Actively encourage people who need care and support to maintain family relationships and/or social contacts and networks	14
Sample training session	16

Introduction

The families of people who need care and support play a vital role in adult social care services. This could be in policy development and implementation, care planning, recruitment and learning and development.

However, lots of employers have a culture that sees families as a problem and difficult to work with.

Recent reports, such as 'Valuing People' (Department of Health, 2001) and an 'Independent report into the future care of people with learning disabilities' (Stephen Bubb, 2014), call for employers to work better with families.

This guide explains what skills and knowledge adult social care staff need to do this.

It's useful for managers or those in learning and development roles, such as HR, training staff and learning providers.

It gives 'Things you need to know' and 'Things you need to do' to set some guidelines about what learning and development around 'working with families' might look like. This can help you design or commission training and give you some tips about how you can better work with families.

There's also a sample training session at the back, designed by the Avenues Group, which includes a session plan, facilitator notes, handouts and activities.

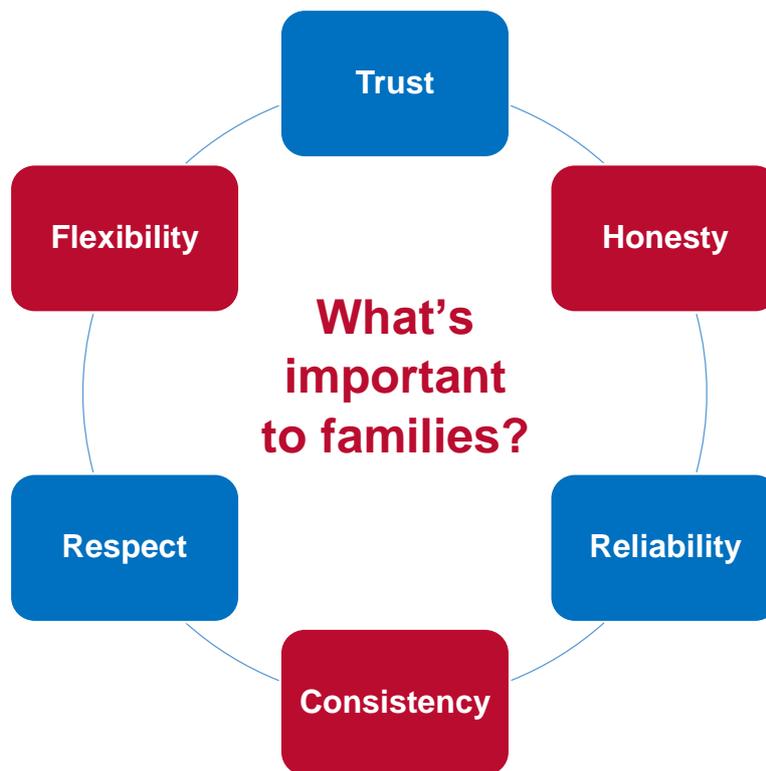
The guide's based on research that the Avenues Group did with people who need care and support and their families.



Background: research with families

The Avenues Group did research with people who need care and support and their families, about what they wanted to see when working with staff. They got survey responses from 93 families and did a focus group.

Families told them the six most important things to them are:



Families also told them:

"I would like to be involved in decisions that affect my family member's care and support"

"I would like to hear about the successes of my family member"

"I like to be involved in choosing the organisation which supports my family member"

"I like to be involved in choosing who supports my family member on a day to day basis"



Understand that parents just want to know what's happening. If a suggestion isn't going to work, that's ok, but tell us why. Be open to explaining your decisions.

Family member

Some families have had a **positive experience** working with staff, and suggested ways to do this. They said:

We have trust, admiration and gratitude for our son's support.



[They] make us feel welcome when we visit.

A good use of modern technology like texting and email is useful.



Unfortunately, some others had a **negative experience**.



I rarely hear support staff talk about the importance of communicating with families.

As a parent I needed to push for involvement in my son's life, as support workers are often resistant and appear to want to cut us off from our son, who we have a good relationship with.



They used the findings from this research to identify four key aims that any learning and development about 'working with families' should cover. The aims are:

- 1** To understand the importance of partnership working and instilling a family, person centred approach
- 2** To establish and maintain positive relationships with families
- 3** To maintain open communication with families and review how you work with them
- 4** To actively encourage people who need care and support to maintain family relationships and/or social contacts and networks



What do your staff need to know and do?

This framework explains what your staff need to know and do to work effectively with families.

It can help you design and deliver learning and development to develop your staff. You can tweak and build on the content to tailor it to your organisation, the people you support and their families.

Aim 1: To understand the importance of partnership working and instilling a family, person centred approach.	
Things you need to know	Things you need to do
What you need to do when you first start working with and supporting families.	<p>Get off to a good start by making and maintaining early contact with family members, using their preferred method of communication e.g. email, phone and/or text messaging.</p> <p>Visit family members to understand their needs, worries and issues.</p> <p>Invite family members to visit where their relative lives to reassure them.</p> <p>Involve family members throughout the process of their relative moving (where appropriate). Be mindful that there may be occasions when this isn't possible or you're asked not to.</p> <p>Understand and respect their knowledge of their loved ones and use this information to plan effective care and support.</p>

<p>Understand the values of your organisation, its policies and procedures, and how they support a partnership approach with families.</p>	<p>Role model dignity, respect, empathy and compassion with all interactions with families.</p> <p>Interact with families in a way that respects their culture, experiences and expertise.</p> <p>Adapt your attitude and behaviours to support families.</p> <p>Explore and address your own unconscious bias when working with and supporting families.</p> <p>Understand relevant policies and procedures that support a partnership approach with families, and discuss any that don't address the needs of the families.</p>
<p>Understand the principles and practice of person-centred planning when working with and supporting families.</p>	<p>Treat every individual and family member as a person and provide support that's tailored to their needs and preferences.</p> <p>Involve families in creating and reviewing their relative's person-centred plan.</p> <p>Analyse the contribution made by families to the care and support of individuals.</p> <p>Get feedback from families on how staff express your workplace values in practice, and use this to shape, change and improve the quality of support.</p> <p>Understand the factors that may affect the level of involvement required or requested by different family members and/or the person who needs care and support.</p>

	<p>Support families to understand person-centred approaches and agreed ways of working.</p> <p>Write a 'one page profile' for people who need care and support, key family members and yourself, and share this with each other and team members.</p>
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Aim 2: To establish and maintain positive relationships with families.

Things you need to know	Things you need to do
The importance of getting to know each other.	<p>Interact and communicate with families in a way that reflects the organisations and family member's values.</p> <p>Clarify the organisation's, your own and the role of others in the support provided.</p> <p>Work with families to identify the support that they might need, and signpost them to accessible information, resources and independent advice.</p> <p>Make family members feel welcome when they visit their loved one.</p> <p>Recognise and value the role that a family member can have in the care and support of the individual.</p> <p>Understand that what one family or family member sees and identifies as 'normal' may not be the same for others.</p> <p>Understand what support and advice families might need e.g. benefits, rents and tenancy support for their family member.</p>
How to be actively involved when working with and supporting families.	<p>Agree and adopt appropriate methods of communication for 'keeping in touch' with families, bearing in mind the wishes of the person who needs care and support.</p> <p>Agree with families the level of involvement that they require in providing care and support.</p>

	<p>Respond to requests, messages and information from families promptly and in a professional manner.</p>
<p>The importance of addressing concerns, dilemmas and conflicts that may arise.</p>	<p>Take family member concerns seriously, and be mindful not to take them personally.</p> <p>Plan ways to manage risks associated with sharing care and support.</p> <p>Agree with families the process for addressing concerns and/or conflicts that may arise.</p> <p>Explain the importance of choice, involvement and capacity assessment of the person who needs care and support, to their families.</p> <p>Follow the organisation's policies and procedures when dealing with grievances and complaints.</p> <p>Listen to and act upon concerns, grievances and complaints.</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to turn worries and concerns into actions.</p> <p>Be open to explaining your reasoning about how you and why you're providing the care and support in the way that you are.</p>

Aim 3: To maintain open communication with families and review how you work with them.

Things you need to know	Things you need to do
The agreed process for reviewing partnership working with families.	<p>Follow the agreed processes, and encourage the individual and the family members to participate in reviewing them.</p> <p>Understand the formal and informal processes for reviewing support with families, remembering this may be different for different members of the same family.</p>
How to provide feedback to family members.	<p>Provide constructive feedback in a way that doesn't damage the relationship with the family.</p> <p>Listen to and act upon decisions agreed.</p> <p>Do what you say you will do in the agreed timescales.</p>
How to share success.	Understand the importance of sharing successes with family members, whilst respecting their required level of involvement, and the agreed methods of communication.
Planning for the future.	<p>Understand the wishes of family members and the person who needs care and support, to plan future needs and aspirations. Use appropriate organisational policies, procedures and documentation to record future planning.</p> <p>Be confident in your own skills and knowledge to challenge decisions if it's not in the best interest of the person who needs care and support, particularly when they have the capacity to consent, and/or it is not supported by the relevant legal framework.</p>

<p>Organisational requirements for recording of information.</p>	<p>Understand and comply with the organisation policy and procedures in regards to methods of recording information.</p> <p>Process all information in an accurate and timely manner.</p>
<p>General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and how they apply when providing support.</p>	<p>Follow the legal framework and organisational policy, procedures that relate to the GDPR.</p>
<p>The process agreed with families.</p>	<p>Understand the level, type, method and frequency for recording information that meets the needs of family members.</p> <p>Carry out a review with family members on an agreed timescale, to ensure the exchange of information still meet the needs.</p> <p>Ensure that all information is current and up to date.</p>

Aim 4: To actively encourage people who need care and support to maintain family relationships and/or social contacts and networks

Things you need to know	Things you need to do
<p>The importance of engaging with, and supporting a person's relationship with family members and other people in their social network.</p>	<p>Support the person who needs care and support to be actively engaged with families, professionals and other social contacts.</p> <p>Actively support friendships and family contact.</p> <p>Identify and develop opportunities for engagement and social inclusion.</p> <p>Ensure goals relating to family involvement and social inclusion are documented, communicated and acted upon clearly and concisely.</p> <p>Ensure that any decisions made are in the best interest of the person who needs care and support, which may not necessarily be the best interest of the family.</p> <p>Follow the correct process relating to capacity assessment, for example the Mental Capacity Act.</p> <p>Communicate and liaise with key people who are involved in the circle of support for the individual.</p>
<p>The link between engagement, relationships, activity and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Identify activities a person likes and create opportunities for continued or new involvement.</p>

	<p>Support the individual, family and social networks to spend time together in a way that benefits them.</p> <p>Support and encourage personal achievement.</p> <p>Involve family members in developing Health Action Plans, and to keep them informed of any unplanned health interventions in a timely manner.</p>
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Sample training session

The Avenues Group, funded by Skills for Care, has developed this sample training session. It's based on training for adult social care organisations who support people with a learning disability and/or autistic people. However, it might also be useful for other services.

We recommend that family members are involved in planning the session and take part in it.

You can tweak and build on the content to tailor it to the size of the group, and the expectations of your organisation, the people you support and their families.

It's important that the trainer or facilitator has a good understanding of person-centred approaches and can explain the Mental Capacity Act as and when it's appropriate to the group discussions.

You can deliver it as a one day event, or break it down into bite-sized sessions. Each session has handouts and activities which you can download and print off.

[Download the full day session plan here.](#)

[Download a zip file of the session plan, exercises and activities here.](#)

Or download the individual modules here.

Session plan	Handouts and activities for the session
<u>Introduction and ice breaker</u> (30 minutes)	<u>Handout 1: Training programme</u> <u>Exercise 1: If you... cards</u>
<u>Session 1: The importance of successful relationships</u> (45 minutes)	<u>Exercise 2: What's important to me cards</u>
<u>Session 2: The importance of good and effective communication</u> (60 minutes)	<u>Exercise 3a: Active listening skills (delegates copy)</u> <u>Exercise 3a: Active listening skills (facilitators copy)</u> <u>Exercise 3b: Active listening skills</u>
<u>Session 3: Dealing with difficult situations and/ or conflict</u> (60 minutes)	<u>Handout 2: Route cause analysis</u>
<u>Session 4: Turning worries into actions</u> (90 minutes)	<u>Handout 3a: Facilitator notes</u> <u>Handout 3b: Case study</u> <u>Handout 4: Delivering good customer service</u>

[Session 5: Planning for success
\(30 minutes\)](#)

[Handout 5: One page profiles](#)
[Handout 6: Keeping in touch circle](#)
[Handout 7: What will be different?](#)
[Handout 8: Reflective learning log](#)

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