1. Seven Principles of Family Sensitive Practice

These principles were originally developed as part of a CAMHS Get Together FaST initiative. We believe they have a broad relevance. Originally they applied to the relationship between workers and families, however, some of these principles could also be applied to relationships between workers.

Family and 'System' Inclusive

Involve as many relevant family members as practicable within a contact. 'Inclusivity' also involves appreciating the family as a system balancing individuals' needs with the family's needs as a group. Failure of some family members to attend should not be a bar to receiving services, but service providers should continue attempting to engage all relevant family members and service providers or care givers.

Respect

All family members should experience contact with an agency as predominantly respectful, i.e. acknowledging and valuing family members' humanity, time, personal sense of agency, expertise and priorities as well as their particular cultural values and mores relating to gender, socioeconomic or specific ethnic issues.

Openness and Honesty

All dealings with families should be as direct, open and honest (transparent) as is practicable, acknowledging that confidentiality, privacy, duty of care and broader protective issues may be particular obstacles to implementing this principle from time to time.

Information

Provide clear and detailed information to families regarding the nature of the service, options, consent needed and any likely consequences or limitations of the service.

Collaboration

Strive to develop a sense of partnership with families using an agreed-to agenda and an open democratic approach as much as possible. Also acknowledge any hierarchy of specific expertise, technical knowledge and relationship structure that will limit and shape the enactment of this principle.

Empowerment

The intention in any clinical relationship should be to promote all family members' personal sense of agency, decision making and choice in keeping with their developmental, physical and intellectual competencies. This intention should incorporate the responsibilities family members have as: children, siblings, parents or care givers.

Understanding Subjective Experiences

Workers need to be able to understand and accept families' subjective experience of being referred to or receiving clinical services. These experiences may sometimes be traumatic. Some social and also some personal responses associated with attending services are stigmatising, shameful and blaming.