

Spotlight on...

Understanding Unidentified Adults

The term 'Unidentified Adults' refers to an adult who agencies are not aware of, or not engaging with. They could be living within a household where children live or with someone who has regular contact with children. This can be in any capacity (such as parent, partner, grandparents, non-family member etc.)

The risk of not engaging effectively with adults who have regular contact with children or live within the family home includes understanding:

- What the child's main caregiver and other family members might be saying about the 'Unidentified Adults' role within the family
- The positive contribution which they might make to the needs and welfare of the child
- What support they may offer to the family, including caring for children
- Any risks which they might present.



The Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership has developed an online tool kit to help professionals to understand how to identify and engage with adults who may be having regular contact with children. The toolkit includes a best practice guide, top tips for identification and engagement, tools to support conversations with families, posters, case studies and general information.

The purpose of the 'top tips' and best practice guide is to increase professionals awareness and to assist in prompting professional to notice changes, outside of the usual contact. Remember it may not appropriate for all professionals to question but to share information with relevant agencies who are working with the child/family.

Top tips to think about when you next visit a child/ family.... **General Principles to consider**

- Does the child refer to another unknown adult in conversation or through play / imitation?
 - Is there presence of another person at appointments / visits and locations, for example at school gate?
 - Is there physical evidence of another person which contradicts what you were expecting?
 - Has someone been introduced as a family member which does not 'fit' with your existing knowledge of the family situation?
 - Have there been changes in the child's behaviour or primary carer's behaviour?
 - Are there new adults answering questions being directed at the primary care giver or child?
 - Is there a lack of keeping pre-arranged appointments?
 - Try to understand the family circumstances and consider where there may be reasons why family members may not disclose their circumstances e.g. Risk to social housing if it is highlighted a new partner is cohabiting.
- In all assessments, always put the child's needs before those of an adult. Consider the needs of the child on their own merit, including their lived experience and separately to the needs of any adults within the family home environment.
- During pregnancy and after birth, make active enquiries about the child's father, the mother's relationships and any adults in contact with the child.
- Identify any new adults who have regular contact with children. Always clarify who the members of a household are each time you visit a family and be aware that some individuals may have a number of aliases or alternative spellings.
- It can be difficult to get parent/carers to open up and discuss their partners' involvement in their children's lives. Supervisors should support practitioners to find ways to engage with parent/carers and build trust.
- To access the full toolkit, [click here](#).**