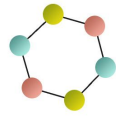


North London

SOCIAL WORK

TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

**Good Practice Guide for
Social Work Practitioners and Students
engaging with
Adult Service Users and Carers**



Below is a non-exhaustive list of points on how service users/carers have told us they would like social workers to interact with them.

1. Timekeeping

- Always try to be punctual.

? Being on time shows respect.

- If you are visiting a service user/carer and are unsure how to find their home, get some location information beforehand.
- If you are going to be late, it is good practice to inform the service user/ carer beforehand and apologise.

? It may not be convenient to them if you are running late so you may need to reschedule.

2. Approach and Attire

2.1. Duration of appointments

- Allow enough time for the visit/contact, especially for the first contact.

? Sufficient time is very important for the assessment, in order to get to know the service user and vice-versa.

2.2. Body language

- Be positive (smile).
- Use eye contact and actively listening.
- Be approachable.
- Be aware of personal space.

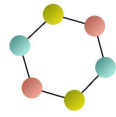
2.3. Mobile phone

- Advise the service user/carer if you need to keep your mobile on for emergencies (don't keep looking at, or be distracted by your mobile phone).



2.4. Whilst in the service user's house

- Ensure you are presentable (dressed appropriately).
- Try not to be obtrusive with expensive items.
- Don't put your personal belonging down without asking the service user/carer where it is acceptable to rest them.



3. Communication

3.1. Preparation

- Inform the service user/carer beforehand who will be visiting them and why.
- Confirm each meeting in writing as well as verbally.
- Check if there are language barriers or communication difficulties.
- Arrange for a translator or family member to be present if required.

3.2. Introductions

- Use an appropriate form of address.
 - Ask the service user/carer how they wish to be addressed.
 - Don't assume you can use the service user/carer's first name unless given permission.
 - Make an effort to pronounce the service user/carer's name correctly and to remember their name.
- Explain your role and the purpose of your contact/visit, eg carer's assessment.

3.3. Proceedings

- Advise the service user/carer if you are going to be writing information down whilst with them; explain what this relates to and why.
- Don't use jargon; keep communication as clear as possible to allow for the clearest understanding.

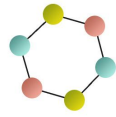
- Allow time for the service user/carer to consider what's been said or decided.
 - Check whether the service user/carer has understood what has been said.
 - Offer to confirm the conversation in writing.
- Explain the next steps.
 - Advise the service user/carer how long it may take to respond.
 - If any action takes longer than predicted, keep the service user/carer informed.

3.4. Contact

- Confirm the contact details of the service user/carer each time you visit or contact them (they may have changed their details in between visits/contact).
- Ask whether it is ok to leave a message on their voicemail/answering machine (the service user/carer may live with other people in their household).
- Check what the best times and days are to contact the service user/carer.
- Provide contact details of the social worker and social work department.

3.5. Understanding and Respecting the SUs/Carers

- Respect for diverse needs of the service user/carer (including cultural, religious, language needs, gender, sexuality and disability).
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- Be open and honest about expectations; people can have unrealistic expectations that cannot be met

3.6. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- Explain with whom their data will be shared within the department and its application with regard to safeguarding policies.

Some things which can help to build positive working relationships include...

- Maintaining continuity by avoiding frequent changes of worker
 - ?** Service users/carers benefit from consistency and knowing they will see the same Social Worker each time. If the social worker is to be changed, inform the service user/carer ahead of time.
- Reading the case file before seeing a service user/carer
- Responding to service user/carer's messages as quickly as possible
- Being open and honest about what you can and cannot do or provide.