



Talking to Parents About the Hard Issues

As an OOSH provider, your relationship with parents is important and you do not want to ruin a good relationship. However, there are times when you will need to talk to parents/guardians about difficult issues. This could be related to:

- ★ Child's behaviour
- ★ Child protection
- ★ Children's relationships
- ★ Incidents at the centre
- ★ Discussion

Some key things to consider...

IDENTIFY THE APPROPRIATE PERSON TO TALK TO THE PARENT

It is important that all staff is clear about their role in relation to communicating with parents. Often it best for the carer who has the best knowledge of the issue to be involved in the discussion or at the very least complete a written report.

BE PROFESSIONAL

Identify a space with privacy - parents will have different reactions to information presented to them. In most situations you are seeking parent support. Identify the best time and sometimes the end of the day when everyone is tired may not be the ideal time. Respect their feelings and make them feel as comfortable as possible.

PLAN FOR THE MEETING

A good meeting starts with planning – what is the message you want to get across? Write down some notes, stick to the facts for example describe the behaviours you have seen. Include parents in the discussion after all the parent may be able to assist with solutions. Listen to the parents point a view. If is a difficult situation which could be confronting you might want to involve two members of staff so that someone can take notes!



BE HONEST AND DIRECT

At the start of the meeting be clear about the purpose. If you or the service has or intends to take any action present this to the parents clearly. Follow up in writing if necessary. It is good to get the parents to sign what has been agreed. Make sure the parent has a copy.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE CHILD

Be clear with the child about what is going to happen and any action. This is a way to build trust between you and the child. Remember to be fair and consistent with all children.

ASSURE CONFIDENTIALITY

All issues require professionalism and confidentiality – staff needs to be very aware of this and never discuss another child with other parents. Every family has the right to privacy. Gossip can undermine the trust between the family and centre.

Assure the parents of your ongoing support. Keep parents informed of progress and give updates as needed.