

Checklist- communicating with families with SEND

Accurate, Compassionate, Timely. If we get the basics right, we can better support and reassure families with SEND.

Applies to all communication

- Before you get in touch - how does the family prefer to be contacted? What times work best if calling? Make it easier for them.
- Do you understand their access requirements?
- Have you got all the information you need to hand?
- Are you being consistent? If you say you will do something or call back, make sure you do.
- Are you being honest? Let them know if something has gone wrong and work together for a solution.
- Are you certain you know the answer? If not, it's okay to say 'I don't know. I can find out for you'. Just make sure to follow this up.
- Have you explained everything fully? Don't assume a person understands everything you mention. For example acronyms, or how to use Herts FX. Double check they are clear on any actions they should take.
- Are you getting the tone right? This is the tone and voice we aim for www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/SENDtoneandvoice.

Specific to verbal communication (on the phone, in person):

- If phoning, does the family know to expect your call?
- Have you introduced yourself and where you are calling from? Personalise and be specific.
- Have you been reassuring? Even if there is no update, check in - keep the lines open.
- Are you being patient? Parent carers may be overwhelmed, fatigued or have their own SEND needs.
- Are you allowing time to really listen? You may be the first/last point of contact in a short or very long journey for the family – don't rush, allow them time to vent.
- Are you building trust? This takes time, build a relationship with the family - keeping the child at the heart of the conversation.

Specific to written communication (emails, letters or messages):

- Have you named the child? Personalise, the family may have more than one child with SEND.
- Have you named your service? Be specific, the child may be under the care of more than one team.
- Have you checked that date/time/venue is included if it's about a meeting/appointment? Don't miss the details.
- Have you put full contact details within your correspondence? Make it easier for the family.
- Is there a named person signing off? Personalise – make sure your auto signature is on and up to date on your emails.

- If you are emailing have you added all the attachments you have mentioned? Double-check.
- Have you been clear about timeframes? Include them where you can. This gives families a realistic expectation of how long things take, so they know when is appropriate to chase up with you.
- Have you answered all of their questions? Check you haven't missed anything in your response.
- What else could help? Go the extra mile e.g. parking information, details on what to expect, links to additional support that may be relevant.