

## **"A Need, Not a Want"**

*A co-produced resource about engaging with families*

This checklist has been co-produced by family carers in the Black Country whose relative has a severe learning disability. It summarises seven key action points from a short film they co-produced. Professionals and organisations working with people who have severe learning disabilities should use this as an audit tool to review and improve the way they engage with families and provide opportunities for families to input into strategic planning.

### **How to use this checklist**

**This checklist should be completed after viewing the co-produced film - 'A Need, Not a Want'**

**Access it here:** [A need, not a want: A co-produced resource about engaging with families - Challenging Behaviour Foundation](#)



Use this checklist regularly to reflect on the way you engage with family carers, to shape the way your service develops. Be honest when reviewing the way your service works and be open to positive changes. Family Carers have many answers and solutions, their input can be a great asset to you.

If you are interested in a reflective and practical course to improve practice around family centred approaches, please see [CBF Training Workshops Brochure 2024 \(challengingbehaviour.org.uk\)](#)



Key principles and top tips from Family Carers to support positive engagement and co-production		We do this consistently and I am confident our service users would agree.	We sometimes do this, but it could be improved.	We do not do this currently but would like to learn how to.
<b>1. Listen to families</b>	<b>Valued</b> – Family carers need to know that their contributions are valued and listened to, even if they challenge the usual process.			
	<b>Work with, not against</b> – Families are often fighting for their relatives basic needs to be met, but they can be made to feel like they are asking for luxuries. This can cause barriers.			
<b>2. Flexible</b>	<b>Time</b> – Caring for a relative with complex needs means families time is limited. Services need to be flexible in how much time is needed, how often and when. Tailor this to suit family carers, be adaptable.			
	<b>Communication</b> – Offer alternative methods of communication and engagement. Family carers may not want to attend half-day meetings but may prefer to contribute in writing or via a phone call. Ask – and offer a range of options.			
<b>3. Consistent</b>	<b>Trust</b> – Engagement works best when there are consistent staff members, who families know and trust to act and follow up on their input.			
	<b>Trauma</b> – It can be distressing and traumatic for families to tell their story repeatedly. Consistent staffing avoids the need for this.			
<b>4. Reasonable</b>	<b>Reasonable requests</b> – Avoid making unreasonable demands of family carers, think of ways they can contribute which aren't intimidating and don't impact too much on their busy lives.			
<b>5. Proactive</b>	<b>Proactive, not reactive</b> – Provide opportunities for families to feed in regularly, at all levels, including when things are going well. Don't wait for a crisis before asking what is needed! Regular contact helps to nip problems in the bud.			
<b>6. Clear</b>	<b>Avoid jargon</b> – Complex language can be off-putting and makes families feel they don't know enough to contribute.			
	<b>Clear, accessible processes</b> – Embed processes for engaging with families in the work culture. Offer regular opportunities for families to input and ensure information is accessible. Reach out to them – don't expect them to look for it!			
<b>7. Reciprocal</b>	<b>Feedback</b> – Families need to know that it is worth engaging, it is really important to update them on progress and actions resulting from their input.			