

The Integrated Review: Experiences of Practice

1 Working with parents

This document is part of the NCB *Integrated Review: Experiences of Practice* series. This series is intended to support practitioners who are reviewing young children's health, learning and development at age two to two-and-a-half.

Overview

The integrated review at age two to two-and-a-half is a valuable opportunity for health practitioners, early years practitioners and parents to reflect on how a child is developing and what might be needed to support their development as they reach school age and beyond. Parents have a fundamental role to play in the integrated review and a starting point for the review should be an acknowledgement that parents know their children best. This should be reflected in the review process and in ongoing relationships with parents.

Research

NCB carried out research in the London Borough of Islington and in Warwickshire in summer 2015. Both authorities had taken part in early pilots of the integrated review. During the research, participants were asked a number of questions about their own experiences of the integrated review and how it is being carried out in their local area. Participants included the leaders and managers of health and early years services, practitioners and parents.

This series of documents is mostly based on the findings of that research, with the intention of illustrating the different ways in which local areas are implementing the review and the experiences of the individuals involved. Where relevant, examples are also drawn from the NCB and ICF GSK implementation study of the integrated review in the five pilot areas (2014).

The Integrated Review: follow-up report on practice in two local authorities:
<http://www.ncb.org.uk/areas-of-activity/early-childhood/resources/integrated-review-at-age-two-to-two-and-a-half>

Implementation study: Integrated Review at two to two-and-a-half years:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-review-at-age-2-implementation-study>

Guidance

A key principle of the integrated review is that it should **engage parents**, particularly those who are disadvantaged:

- The integrated review values active participation from parents both intellectually and emotionally in their child's assessment and in making decisions.

Health and early years practitioners can support this key principle by:

- Being sensitive to the fact that some parents might feel nervous or anxious about a review of their child
- Presenting the review in a way that makes parents feel confident and valued
- Skilfully exploring issues with a caring, not intrusive attitude.
- Presenting the review as a positive opportunity for parents to discuss how their child is developing and what is going well, as well as any worries that they might have.

Guidance is drawn from *The Integrated Review: Supporting Materials for Practitioners* (NCB):
<http://www.ncb.org.uk/areas-of-activity/early-childhood/resources/integrated-review-at-age-two-to-two-and-a-half>

Experiences of practice

The way in which services worked with parents during the integrated review were influenced by the different models adopted in each local area.

- In Islington, parents attend a **joint meeting** with their health visitor and early years practitioner, either their key person or childminder.
- In Warwickshire, parents attend a **separate meeting** with their health visitor, passing on paper-based information from their child's key person or childminder.

In both authorities it was important for health and early years practitioners to use their communication and interpersonal skills to build a relationship with parents before, during and after the review meeting.

Providing information about the review

Both local authorities found it beneficial to provide information and support to parents at all stages of the review process. In Islington, the existing relationships between early years settings and the family meant that early years practitioners could provide information to parents and offer support on the use of the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3™) before the review meeting. During the meeting itself, health practitioners in Warwickshire found it helpful to begin with a positive, balanced description of what the review would involve:

'I start off the review by saying this is about what your child is doing well, and your child's achievements but this is also your opportunity to ask about anything that maybe is worrying you or concerning you. Often you can see them relax at that point.'

Community Nursery Nurse, Warwickshire

An early years practitioner in Warwickshire described how they might need to provide follow-up clarification and support to parents after the review, particularly where there might be

'...a difference of opinion or perhaps a lack of understanding. For example, technical terms, some parents can come back and ask what does this mean.'

Communication skills

Findings from the pilot phase of the integrated review highlighted the importance of practitioners' communication skills, particularly when handling sensitive topics:

'First and foremost, good interpersonal skills so you can get the information you need from parents, and that you

can make them feel relaxed so that if there are other issues they feel willing to talk about them'

Early years lead, pilot site

Warwickshire health practitioners agreed in emphasising the importance of a friendly and positive approach, active listening skills and eye contact during the meeting in order to build a relationship and rapport with parents:

'It is very much about arriving at the house or clinic and establishing a relationship within the first five minutes or so, and that's all about mannerisms, being respectful, and making sure they feel comfortable and at ease.'

Community Nursery Nurse, Warwickshire

Parents' responses

Parents in Islington gave positive feedback both about the experience of the joint integrated review meeting and the contributions of both early years and health professionals to the review:

'I felt completely involved in the meeting. They weren't lecturing us about what he should or shouldn't be doing. All the questions were leading us to talk about him, his development, and his home life... It felt like a two way conversation.'

Parent, Islington

'There was no conflict in what the key worker and the health visitor were saying, though they were saying different things at the same meeting. You do get a comprehensive picture of where he is, what his needs are, what we need to address.'

Parent, Islington

Likewise in Warwickshire, although the review model was based on separate meetings, parents valued the contribution of the paper-based information from the early years setting brought to the health-led review:

'I thought the summary was good. With that bit more information from the nursery, it helped the health visitor know what her progress in nursery was like, what she's been doing, and the stage she was at.'

Warwickshire parent

Further information on working with parents during the integrated review can be found by following the links below.

Guidance on the integrated review, including guidance for health and early years practitioners on building partnership with parents during the review: <http://www.ncb.org.uk/areas-of-activity/early-childhood/resources/integrated-review-at-age-two-to-two-and-a-half>

NCB 'Parents, Early Years and Learning' materials on working with parents are available via the Early Childhood Unit website: <http://www.ncb.org.uk/areas-of-activity/early-childhood>

Toolkit and additional supporting resources for local authorities implementing the integrated review: <http://www.ncb.org.uk/what-we-do/research/our-research/a-z-research-projects/integrated-review-at-2-a-toolkit-for-local-authorities>