

# PRACTITIONER GUIDE

## Understanding Unidentified Adults

The term 'unidentified adult' is used to describe an individual over the age of 18 who is unknown to or not engaging with agencies, but is involved in the care of a child (from an unborn baby though to a young person up to the age of 18). Other terms frequently used include 'connected adult', 'hidden adult' and 'unseen adult'. These adults may reside in the same household as children or have frequent interactions with children, regardless of their role, for example, a parent, partner, grandparent, family friend, neighbour, babysitter.

### Toolkit

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Partnership's [Understanding Unidentified Adults Toolkit](#) has been developed to help professionals identify and engage with adults who may be having regular contact with children.

The toolkit includes a best practice guide, top tips for identification and engagement, tools to support conversations with families, posters, case studies and general information.

The purpose of the 'top tips' and best practice guide is to increase professionals awareness and to assist in prompting professionals to notice changes, outside of the usual contact.

Remember it may not be appropriate for all professionals to question but to share information with relevant agencies who are working with the child/family.



### Top tips to think about when you next visit a child/ family...

- Does the child refer to another unknown adult in conversation or through play / imitation?
- Is there presence of another person at appointments / visits and locations, for example at the school gate or doctor's appointment?
- Is there physical evidence of another person which contradicts what you were expecting?
- Has someone been introduced as a family member which does not 'fit' with your existing knowledge of the family situation?
- Have there been changes in the child's behaviour or primary carer's behaviour?
- Are there new adults answering questions being directed at the primary care giver or child?
- Is there a lack of keeping pre-arranged appointments?
- Try to understand the family circumstances and consider where there may be reasons why family members may not disclose their circumstances, for example, risk to social housing.

# Understanding Unidentified Adults

## General principles to consider

In all assessments, always put the child's needs before those of an adult. Consider the needs of the child on their own merit, including their lived experience and separately to the needs of any adults within the family home environment.

During pregnancy and after birth, make active enquiries about the child's father, the mother's relationships and any adults in contact with the child.

Identify any new adults who have regular contact with children. Always clarify who the members of a household are each time you visit a family and be aware that some individuals may have a number of aliases or alternative spellings of their name.

It can be difficult to get parent/carers to open up and discuss their partners' involvement in their children's lives. Supervisors should support practitioners to find ways to engage with parent/carers and build trust.

