

01 Background

The Children and Families assessment uses SMART planning to help achieve better outcomes for children. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely, and the model has been used to make sure that goals are achieved which make a difference to children's lives.

Evidence from serious case reviews suggests that where serious issues have been known to services the accompanying plans have often been vague, non-measurable and have lacked direction, making them difficult to apply or measure and leaving professionals unsure of the expectations of them.

07 Questions to consider

Are we clear what SMART, outcome focused plans are like?

Are we clear what the goal is? Are the parents? Is the child?

What if the parents disagree? Overtly? Covertly?

Why it matters 02

Objectives that are SMART are more likely to be achieved, which helps to avoid drift in cases. When objectives are SMART, they become clear expectations, where it is obvious who is meant to do what, which helps engage focus, action, feedback and learning. These plans should be based on the desired outcomes for the child, so it is clear when the goal has been achieved, or when the plan is not achieving the goal.

They are also easier to understand for families and children. They can be a very helpful check to the question 'is the plan working to make life better for the child?' In order to answer this question, the child's view must be sought and listened to.

03 Information

Using a SMART approach to planning, the focus must remain on what needs to change for the child/young person, as well as how quickly that change needs to happen. The capacity for parents to change also impacts on this, and identifying blocks to change early is helpful.

04 What to do

When creating a SMART plan, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is our plan clear about the outcome for the child? And, is the plan clear about what we are trying to achieve?
2. Does it have as much detail as possible including details on who, why, where, which or what?
3. Does the plan say how we measure each part?
4. Does the plan clearly show who is responsible for each part?
5. Is the plan appropriate and realistic in respect of the needs of the child?

05

6. Are the expectations in the plan appropriate and realistic in regards to the capacity of the family?

7. Does the plan address the risks and the needs of the child?

8. Has the child had their say about the plan?

9. Have the parents had their say about the plan?

06

10. Does the plan clearly show when we expect each stage to be completed?

11. Is the child involved and review planned?

12. Does everyone know what change is needed and how this impact will be evidenced in review?

