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**Learning Brief**

**Unidentified Adults**

**What is an unidentified adult?**

The term ‘unidentified adult’ refers to an adult who agencies are not aware of, or not engaging with. They may be living within or staying in a household where children live or with someone who has regular contact with children. This can be in any capacity (such as parent, partner, grandparents, non-family member etc.)

Many case reviews highlight the issue of professionals not identifying and/or assessing key adults, such as fathers, mothers/fathers’ partners, extended family, and friends involved in the care of children who died or suffered harm.

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**How to spot an unidentified adult**

* Does the child refer to another unknown adult in conversation or through play?
* Is there presence of another person at appointments / visits and locations, for example at pick up time/ at school gate?
* 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?
* Is there another adult in the household who ‘removes’ themselves when you arrive?
* Have there been changes in the child’s behaviour or primary carer’s behaviour?
* Are there new adults answering questions being asked at the primary care giver or child?
* Have you noticed changes to the condition of the property?
* Has there been a change in the child’s appearance or demeanour?
* Is there a lack of keeping pre-arranged appointments?

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**What are the risks of not engaging effectively with unidentified adults?**

The risk of not engaging effectively with adults who have regular contact with children or live within the family home includes understanding:

* What the child, child’s main caregiver and other family members might be saying about the ‘unidentified adults’ role within the family
* The positive contribution which they might make to the needs and welfare of the child
* What support they may offer to the family, including caring for the children
* Any risks they might present.

**Resources to support your work in West Sussex**

Unidentified adults have been a feature in several Case Reviews within West Sussex. Here are some resources to support your work and improve your understanding and practice:

* Email the WSSCP at **wsscp@westsussex.gov.uk** to request access to the Professional Log in Zone of the WSSCP website and access the AVOCET serious case review.
* Support your work with Dads and male carers by reading about [**ICON**](https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/icon)and [**Dadpad**](https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/dadpad) and understand the importance of including all carers in your information gathering, assessment and intervention.



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**Tips for Good Practice**

Many practitioners will automatically focus on mothers and take at face value

what they are telling them about the family. Other adults play an important

 role in children’s lives and have a big influence on the children they care for.

Male care givers may not feel as included or involved by professionals,

* In all assessments and conversations ensure the child remains

the focus. Consider the impact of the situation on the child and their safety and wellbeing.

* Regularly ask about who lives in the child’s home, who routinely

cares for or has contact with the child, gain name and date of birth

and document this within the child’s records. If this information is declined then consider this in relation to what you already know about the family, and again document.

* Be Curious and don’t take information at face value. If you have concerns or something doesn’t feel right, ask more questions, and discuss with your manager or with your colleagues.
* During pregnancy and after the birth, ask questions about the child’s father, the mother’s relationships and any other adults that are or will be in contact with the child.
* Be aware that some adults may be known by several different names or alternative spellings. It can be difficult to get parent/carers to talk about their partners’ involvement in their children’s lives.