

TOP TIPS

for professionals when working with brothers and sisters

A sibling or 'brother and/or sister' relationship is likely to last longer than any other relationship in our lives. This does not matter if the relationship is between full brother and/or sister, half brother and/or sister, step brother and/or sister, or foster brother and/or sister. When this relationship is disrupted, or not maintained, the impact on brother and/or sister groups can be considerable.

The FJYPB have developed some top tips for professionals when working with brothers and/or sister groups.

1

- Stop using the word 'sibling'. Use brother, sister or the word that the child is familiar with.

2

- Ask the child or young person whom they consider their brother(s) and/or sister(s) to be.

3

Listen to the voice of each child individually. Children within the same family may have a different view.

4

Make your decision based on what you think would be best for each individual child.

5

Professionals need to see brother and/or sister relationships as being as important as a parent or grandparent relationship, whether it be full brother and/or sister, half-brother and/or sister, step brother and/or sister or foster brother and/or sister.

6

Give children in the same family the choice to speak to you separately.

7

Not all brothers and sisters may want to be seen at the same place. If you have to see them all in one session find a place that is acceptable and comfortable for all.

8

If appropriate, it is important to keep brothers and/or sisters together or to maintain a good level of contact during family breakdown.

9

Encourage parents to give consideration to the brother and/or sister relationship when completing the Parenting Plan and encourage them to make provision for siblings to share contact.

10

Professionals should give consideration to the brother and/or sister relationship when preparing reports.

11

Remember that a child or young person may not always have a healthy or safe relationship with their brother or sister. Consider both individual and combined needs.

12

Consider the relationships for children and young people with brother(s) and/or sister(s) who are not involved in the court proceedings and the potential impact upon these relationships of the decisions made by the court.

13

Explain what the impact of the decision made will have not only on the children who are subject to the proceedings, but on all of their brothers and sisters too – what will happen going forward?