

# Making a summary and action plan

This is a very short chapter but it contains information that will be important for the children and families that you see.

When you have finished your assessment and considered the treatment possibilities that are available, you will need to make a summary and a plan of action. This is sometimes called a formulation. Ideally, this is written down, but often lack of time will mean this is not possible. You should, all the same, make a summary in your mind of all the relevant information you have gathered and of the action you have decided to take.

## 3.1. Making a summary

You first need to decide whether the lives of the child and/or family members are being affected by the problem. Is the child's functioning at home or at school impaired by the problem? If the child is eating and sleeping well, getting on reasonably well with other family members, making progress at school and has friends whom he enjoys seeing, then there probably is no reason for concern. The mother may all the same have anxieties about the child and may well need reassurance, perhaps repeated reassurance, but the child does not need treatment.

If, however, the lives of the child and/or family members are being affected by the child's developmental progress, behaviour or emotional life, then you do need to make a summary and action plan. You need to include in your summary the following.

- The nature and extent of the problem or problems (often more than one of these is present):
  - developmental or intellectual
  - habit disorders
  - emotional disorders
  - behaviour problems
  - self-harm
  - mental health difficulties arising from chronic physical illness or disability
  - physical symptoms without physical cause
  - severe mental disorders, especially psychoses
  - drug use disorders, alcohol and drug dependency.
- The possible causes of the problems or problems:
  - genetic
  - physical
  - stresses arising from the environment (from the world in which the child is currently living), especially within the family or at school:

- a traumatic or damaging experiences that have happened to the child in the past
- b an interaction between any or all of the aforementioned possible causes. This is easily the most common situation.

Next, from your knowledge of the problem and of the possible causes in this particular child, try to understand how the problem has arisen, what is maintaining it, and what is most likely to help.

### 3.1.1 Example of a summary

#### Case 3.1

Raghu is an 8-year-old boy who has been suffering from headaches for 6 months. Having heard his mother's story and examined him, it is extremely unlikely there is a physical cause for his headaches. They do not sound like migraine. There are no obvious stresses at home or at school but he is under terrible pressure to do as well as his 10-year-old sister. He is probably not quite as bright as she is. It is likely that the headaches are stress-related and that the situation could be helped by making his parents more aware of the reasons he is experiencing them.

### 3.2 Example of an action plan

Raghu can probably best be helped by:

- a talk with his mother about the way some children experience pain when they are stressed and that some stress happens when children feel that their parents are disappointed in them
- asking him whether he feels he is not doing as well as his sister at school even though he is trying very hard
- asking his mother whether she thinks it is possible that he is comparing himself with his bright sister
- asking his mother and father to help Raghu to understand that they are really pleased with him, even though he is not doing as well as his sister
- activities that either his mother or father could do with him that he really likes and which are not stressful for him.

If at all possible, check on the effect of your intervention. If your intervention has not been effective, reconsider your summary and action plan and consider trying to help in other ways.