



Most families know they have a support network around their family, whether this is grandparents, friends and the local GP or community groups. Through this network, families receive enough support, advice and sometimes help which enables them to overcome the usual day to day difficulties that people experience.

Some families, however, will experience more complex difficulties in their lives. Depending on the type and complexity of their difficulties, they may need to get more help from services provided by public sector organisations. These organisations should step in and work alongside the support that is already in place.

A small minority of families will need help to cope with risks presented to the safety of some or all members of their family. When this happens, specialist services will need to work alongside the support that is already in place.

## **Think Family approach**

When several services are involved in supporting families, the Think Family approach puts the child's needs at the centre and overcomes professional difference. This way of thinking brings together all the professionals working with a family who are then coordinated by one Lead Professional.

- The Lead Professional will ensure everyone is working to the same goals and shares information relating to family members. It also ensures that families are being given clear advice and work is not being duplicated or confused.
- There will be one Family Plan agreed with the family so that all professionals are clear about the outcomes they are aiming to achieve and how their work complements each other.

## **The Team Around the Family**

This is a generic term used to describe the group of professionals, volunteers and members of the wider family who are involved. It must include family members working alongside professionals. The Team Around the Family could just be the Lead Professional and the family. However it is likely that it will include a group of others as well.

The Team Around the Family works through regular meeting set up and chaired by the Lead Professional to coordinate the work agreed in the Family Plan. The Family Plan will be reviewed, its impact monitored, changes made as required, to achieve the outcomes for the family.

All practitioners working with children, young people and adults should have an awareness of the Think Family approach and the processes that support this. All practitioners who have not yet attended training are encouraged to do so.

## **Lead professional**

A lead professional co-ordinates the work with the family and make it easier for them to know who to communicate with. The Lead Professional role is for the whole family and aims to ensure the provision of holistic support to meet the individual needs of all children, young people and adults within the family. In some setting and services, a professional linked to a child or adult is known as a keyworker or caseworker. This means that they are the designated professional from that service for the named individual and does not mean that they are necessarily the Lead Professional for the whole family.

## **A single co-ordinated family plan**

The Family Plan has been designed to enable the Team Around the Family to identify if the work they are doing has been successful. Clarity around what we want to achieve helps the 'team around the family' work towards a common aim. It also helps us to understand what is realistic for the family and know when the work is completed.

In Cambridgeshire there is a shared 'outcomes framework' which provides targets for the five main outcomes. Professionals can use this when completing their family plans. The Early Help Hub will use this framework to draft an initial Family Support Plan where a non Cambridgeshire County Council Lead professional has been identified.

The plan will be recorded in our case recording system for Children's Services. Non-Council professionals have access to this system, [LiquidLogic](#).