

Think Family Approach - Practitioner Briefing

Welcome to this briefing to help practitioners and their managers understand the Think Family Approach. The messages in this Briefing are just as important for those working in adult services, where service users could be parents or carers).



What do we mean by 'Think Family' approach? The steps taken by children's and adults' practitioners to identify wider family needs which extend beyond the individual they are supporting. For example, in relation to safeguarding, if you work primarily with adults, you should still consider the safeguarding needs of children, and if you work mostly with children, you should still consider the needs of vulnerable adults. This approach is essential in order to work with families to identify early risk of harm, abuse or problems. Ensuring that services and professionals can provide early help and intervention to support the needs of children and their parents/carers. Ensure that the voices of children and adults are heard and that they have the freedom to be involved in decision making. Be mindful of any children in the household, their ages and the impact the parental mental health may have on those children.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility!

Why work with the whole family?

- To improve outcomes for children/families it is essential to focus on the problems faced by parents & carers which may impact on the whole family.
- Be aware of the needs of each family member and how these may impact on the whole family's wellbeing.
- Share relevant information in a timely and open manner with families in a way they understand
- Communicate with practitioners who can help the child and family and be clear on their roles, responsibilities, actions to be taken and services to be provided.



What should practitioners do?

- The right practitioner at the right time makes referrals, undertakes effective assessments and provides interventions in a timely and effective way.
- Be curious, remain determined and don't be afraid to ask difficult questions (think the unthinkable).
- Consider and be aware of all the factors of everyone in the home, and frequent visitors, such as mental health, domestic abuse, substance misuse, poverty, etc. which may impact upon on the child and all the family.
- Ask service users about their own children and any other children with whom they are involved with.
- Establish who has parental responsibility for the children.
- Do they need support with parenting?
- Actively work with other practitioners to promote a shared understanding of Think Family and Safeguarding, and how they can support service users and their families.
- Never assume somebody else is raising or dealing with an issue.
- Don't work in isolation when making difficult decisions, consult with colleagues, supervisor/manager or safeguarding Named Practitioners for advice.
- Consider the needs of the whole family and be responsive to those needs.
- Think about the family's needs and all practitioners involved with the family to work together.
- Make sure **information is shared** appropriately according to the level of risk and the need for other practitioners to understand any difficulties.
- **Escalate** your concerns to appropriate levels of line management if you are not being listened to or heard.

Team Around the Family (TAF) takes a **Think Family** approach and means the whole family, not just the child is helped to get the best care. TAF helps all the different practitioners and helping a family work better together. The TAF says **who** will help the family, which can include Early Help Workers and staff in community settings like school and health workers.

What are practice principles for TAF?

- A TAF will aim to provide family support and services before things reach crisis point.
- Families, practitioners and services will work in partnership to improve the outcomes for children and help achieve positive long-term change for families.
- Relationships matter, so where possible, one **Lead Practitioner** will support the family through the plan.
- All work should be **strengths based**, which means that the people working with you will help find out and build on what is working well in your family.

A **TAF Plan** is made in partnership, written and agreed by the family and the practitioners helping them. It says what the family and practitioners need to do (and when) to make things better for the child and family. A TAF plan should last between six to nine months. When the TAF Plan is no longer needed it will be closed and the family signposted to further support, if they need it.

A **TAF Meeting** is held every 8-12 weeks to see how things are going for the child and family. It looks at the plan to see how everyone is doing and whether the plan needs to be changed to help things get better. All of the agencies and individuals who can help and support the wellbeing of the child and family should be involved. They will attend meetings and support the TAF Plan. Talk to the **Lead Practitioner** if you think someone else should be involved.

The **Lead Practitioner** leads the TAF and they are usually the worker who can best support the child and family. They could be an early help practitioner, a family support, or someone else, like a worker at a school. They will be the family's point of contact and check on the progress of the TAF plan. The **Lead Practitioner** will ensure that the child and family's views and wishes are heard throughout. They will with the family and other practitioners agree the plan of what needs to change. If things are not going well, the **Lead Practitioner** will talk to the child and family about what will happen next. The **Lead Practitioner** will be helped and supported by their manager and the other practitioners involved in the TAF work.

The Children Act: parents and carers have primary care for Children, however Local Authorities and Multi-Agencies have Specific responsibilities to safeguard children's welfare. The Children Act 1989/2004 identifies specific responsibilities of Local Authorities and all agencies to safeguard and protect children.

Thinking family- is fundamental to safeguard children, children are best looked after within their families where possible and safe to do so.

[Scie.org - guide 30 think child, think parent, think family.](#)

The Care Act 2014; highlights 4 steps to ensure a whole-family approach

One: Think family.

Two: Get the whole picture.

Three: Make a plan that works for everyone.

Four: Check it's working for the whole family.

Further help and advice is available [here](#).

SCIE: [Think child, think parent, think family: a guide to parental mental health and child welfare.](#)
[The context of NHS safeguarding – Think Family](#)
Please access the [Pan Bedfordshire Child Protection Procedures](#)

