

Single Assessment Framework for Early Help

Role of Lead Professional

Principle

Lead professionals are required to ensure effective delivery of Children's Workforce services to families. They co-ordinate the work of The Team Around the Child / Young Person / Family (TAC/F).

Definition

A lead professional is a member of the Children's or Adult Workforce who takes the lead to co-ordinate provision for a child, young person and their family. They act as a single point of contact when a range of different agencies are involved, and help to make sure that effective integrated working, information sharing and sound holistic assessment takes place. The lead professional is not a job title or a new role, but a set of functions to be carried out as part of the delivery of integrated support. These functions are to:

1. **Act as a single point of contact for the child or family**, who they can trust and who can engage them in making choices, help them work their way through agency structures / systems and effect change.
2. **Co-ordinate the delivery of the actions agreed by the practitioners involved**, to ensure that children and families receive an effective service

that is regularly reviewed. These actions will be based on the outcome of the assessment, and recorded in a plan.

3. Reduce overlap and inconsistency in the services received.

Skills required to be Lead Professional (see also SAFeh skills competency checklist):

- Work effectively with practitioners from a range of services
- Convene meetings and initiate discussions with relevant practitioners
- Knowledge of local and regional services for children and families
- Understand boundaries of own skills and knowledge
- Strong communication skills; diplomacy; sensitivity
- Establish a successful and trusting relationship with child/family
- Empower child/family to make decisions and challenge when appropriate
- Understand implications of the child's assessment e.g. in relation to risks and protective factors.
- Support and enable child/family to achieve their potential

The Lead Professional will aim to:

- Have an open, honest and trusting relationship with the child, young person and family.
- Develop a successful and productive relationship with the child, young person and family
- Communicate without the use of professional jargon
- Be a central point of contact for the family and other practitioners to liaise with and keep updated.
- Convene meetings and discussions with other practitioners as necessary.
- Co-ordinate the effective delivery of an agreed set of actions which provide a solution focused package of support Co-ordinate a process by which actions will be regularly reviewed and monitored.
- Ensure an alternative LP is identified if they have to leave this role for any reason.
- Keep the Access and Response Team informed about any changes.

- Recommend closing the SAFeh when progress has been made using the Early Help action plan and review, so that the family, child and young person can continue to be supported by universal services.
- Seek support and guidance as appropriate from your own line manager, the First Point team and the Early Help Partnership Officer as appropriate.

Guidelines

1. All practitioners working with children and young people will already have experience of being a professional lead with individual children, in some way, through their day to day job. The role of SAFeh Lead Professional is formalising this arrangement across service and professional boundaries.
2. It requires effective integrated working from all of the professionals within the Children's Workforce, which relies on appropriate information sharing.
3. Lead Professional (LP) roles will be allocated for children and young people who have additional needs that require a package of support from more than one practitioner /agency.
4. The LP role should be assumed by one professional and ideally last for the period of the time that the Early Help action plan is in place.
5. The decision as to who should be LP should be made by the TAC/F including the child, young person and family. In reality it is likely to be the practitioner most involved in the delivery plan, and who has the strongest relationship with the family.
6. Best practice stipulates that the LP should be the same for the length of time the SAFeh is open.

However, this is not always possible and the identified LP can be replaced if the following occurs:

- The LP leaves his or her role
- The LP is on long term sick leave
- The LP is delivering a time limited piece of work and once complete will have no further involvement with the child, young person or family
- The child, young person or family request that the LP be changed

- The LP is unable to continue to offer support when their professional role requires them to pursue legal proceedings.
- 7. The **LP is responsible for handing over this role** to another practitioner except where they are off sick. The Access and Response Team must be notified of any changes.
- 8. The LP should convene review meetings
- 9. Although lead professionals are responsible for co-ordinating the intervention they are **not responsible** for making sure interventions have been carried out as outlined in the action plan or for the quality of those interventions. Accountability for work being carried out with a child, young person or family and/or the quality of the intervention rests with each **practitioners' own organisational management**.
- 10. The **LP is NOT responsible** for ensuring that other practitioners deliver the actions they committed to.
- 11. Any disagreements or complaints about another agencies actions or lack of them should be dealt with through the protocol for non-agreement between agencies.
- 12. The LP should keep the TAC/F members and the First Point team informed and updated with significant changes.

Conclusion

The role of LP formalises the responsibilities across multi agency working, It makes clear to the family and the other practitioners the one professional who has accepted lead responsibility for leading a solution focused and time limited action plan. Everyone then has a responsibility to keep the Lead Professional informed of all changes in circumstances.