

The Leeds Approach to Think Family, Work Family; Principles and Practice Guidance



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Introduction

The 'Think Family, Work Family' approach adopted in Leeds recognises that often people live as part of families, who provide support for each another. This approach is important in helping to understand the unique circumstances of an adult or child, and the strengths and resources within the family to provide for their needs, but also identifies where additional support may be required.

*To '**Think Family**' means that all staff need to remember that people rarely live in complete isolation and therefore we need to understand the needs of the wider family when we are working with a child, parent or adult.*

*To '**Work Family**' means that all staff and services need to talk more, work together better and make sure that all the people working with children, young people and adults in a family, plan and coordinate their work.*

Purpose of the document

Building on the previous editions this document sets out how services that work with adults and services that work with children and young people can work together better to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk through more joined up support to help families help each other better. This document supports the implementation of the 'Think Family, Work Family' approach developed to improve the support offered to children, young people and adults at risk within the same family, whereby individual needs should be looked at in the context of the whole family, so those who use services are seen not just as individuals but as parents, carers or other family members.

It is intended for all services working with children, young people and adults, and those who work with families.

'Think Family, Work Family' Our Approach

We want Leeds to be a safe city for all and recognise that in order to support families to make changes that are helpful and long lasting we need to work with all members of the family. To achieve this we need to think and work in new ways with families. By understanding and recognising that the needs and desired outcomes of each person in the

family affect each other, we are more likely to affect sustainable change. For this reason Safer Leeds, Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership and Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board, have joined together and are committed to working across agencies, to improve joined up working, the provision of high quality and responsive services which meets the needs of children, young people, adults at risk and families.

Family means different things to different people. We know that different communities and cultures consider family in a different way and this is not static. The understanding and practice of family changes, develops and is often affected by external circumstances and environments. Therefore it is important to explore with individuals what family means to them, and the individuals who make up their family (including blood relatives, extended family or community members).

When working with someone to understand their needs and wishes, it will also be important to understand their family support networks, considering whether other family members are able to provide the appropriate care the person needs, and what the impact of these arrangements might be on them. Family members may have their own care or health needs or need support to carry out their caring role. Consideration of the demands and impact on others will help ensure the arrangements made are sustainable and reflect the support needs of the family. When considering people's family networks, it is important in particular to recognise the role and demands on young carers within the family.

We know that some families have linked complex difficulties in their lives such as learning disabilities, physical disabilities, domestic violence and abuse, mental health conditions, substance or alcohol misuse. Evidence shows that traditional approaches alone cannot make the difference therefore a joined up approach that helps both children and young people and adults is needed to support what is already in place. Some services are already working within a 'Think Family, Work Family' approach and we want to ensure that this is embedded in all services and agencies across the city.

To achieve this, a co-ordinated, cross-agency response will need to:

- Be flexible enough to deal with the complexity and facilitate more cross-agency working for the benefit of children, young people, adults and families
- Value and respect the diversity of children, young people, families and carers with whom we work.
- Recognising individual strength and ability, building on family strengths
- Work in partnerships with families recognising and promoting resilience and helping them to build their capabilities.
- Undertake effective identification of young carers and assessment of their needs
- Identify and support family members with caring responsibilities
- Strive to make services accessible, acceptable, effective and accountable to young people, adults and families with a range of issues
- Consider the timing and timeliness of interventions when prioritising services
- Ensure services improve the identification of children, young people or adults, in need and in need of protection through increased understanding of the impact of one individual's behaviours on another
- Recognise the needs of adults in their own right not just as service users or parents / carers
- Establish clarity about respective roles and responsibilities of relevant agencies

- Ensure that agencies work together to share information, knowledge, skills, resources and responsibility
- Take a holistic approach to assessment and consider the environment, family, cultural and social systems within which individuals live (e.g. housing, finance, employment, relationships)
- Understand the risks to health and wellbeing that occur across generations and manage these risks to reduce their impact
- Recognise how the needs of one individual impact on another
- Understand how the impact of treatment / support for one individual may impact on another.

Working within a Think Family, Work Family approach

When considering any vulnerabilities or risks that they have identified practitioners should consider the support available to the individual and family from extended family and the wider community. Most families would recognise that they have a support network around their family, whether this is; grandparents, friends, faith or community groups and work colleagues. Through these networks, families often receive enough support, advice and help which enables them to overcome day to day difficulties that many people experience. Through these universal or preventative (community based) services, most families thrive.

Some families, however, will experience more complex difficulties in their lives. Depending on the type and complexity of their needs, they may need to get more help from a range of targeted services.

All practitioners should 'Think Family, Work Family' when responding to the needs of families whereby the needs of an individual is potentially impacting on the needs of another. Individuals (children, young people or vulnerable adults) are more susceptible to risk and harm where they are living with another individual who has support needs. Where there are multiple needs (either with one person or more than one person within the family) this risk can increase, although a non-affected partner or the family as a whole can provide a protective factor.

The approach of 'Think Family, Work Family' ensures that the needs of all family members are considered and appropriately responded to. The practitioners checklist (Appendix B) should be used to support continual reflection and ensure a Think Family, Work Family approach in practice.



Our Principles and Standards

Our guiding principles and standards are based on:

- **Safeguarding first** - Everyone has a right to be safeguarded from abuse or neglect. This includes being kept safe by immediate family members, those within their wider community and services working with them. Practitioners have a responsibility to understand the needs of the family, in deciding how to provide support to a child or adult at risk, including making safeguarding referrals as appropriate. See Appendix A with regards to the legislative frameworks which support this.
- **Listening and Communication** – We recognise the importance of good communication and listening well, and are committed to ensuring that practitioners communicate effectively with each other and with families. Individuals will be communicated with in a timely, appropriate and accessible manner that assists them to understand what is happening. They will be listened to, their views, wishes and feelings explored, respected, recorded and considered as part of assessments and support plans.
- **Permanency** - The majority of families want to stay together wherever possible, (although this may be families in widest sense) and we will provide support to do so in the safest and most appropriate way, increasing the opportunities for better outcomes.
- **Right Relationships** - When working with an individual child, young person or adult it is important to think of their relationships with their family and their wider context such as friends and local community. No-one exists in isolation and people can only be properly understood, and only effectively supported by understanding and working with their family and wider networks. Relationships between the worker and the family are also important, as research shows that this relationship is key to making change.
- **Planning** - A holistic approach to planning should include identifying strengths of individuals and the whole family, as well as recognising individual needs. All practitioners should be clear about the outcomes they are aiming to achieve and how their work complements that of other practitioners. Committing to putting the individual needs at the centre and overcoming professional difference brings together and identifies practitioners working with a family towards the same goals. It also ensures that families are being given clear and concise advice and work is not being duplicated or misunderstood.
- **Information sharing and consent** - The need for consent (and the consideration of capacity to consent) to share information should always been considered. By establishing consent to share information early on, practitioners can avoid some of the barriers that may arise later. Clarity of what information will be shared and with whom may provide reassurance and a greater likelihood of their agreement. Practitioners should work within their Information-Sharing Protocols and their own agency procedures, whilst ensuring the sharing of information as appropriate where there are concerns that an adult is at risk or that a child or young person is at risk of or suffering significant harm. Support regarding this can be sought by line managers / safeguarding leads if required.
- **Reducing barriers to effective multi-agency working** - Leeds is committed to a culture of professional challenge where debate and differences of opinion are welcomed. Practitioners should be supported to appropriately challenge clients, families or individuals they are working with, but also other organisations to ensure that the most appropriate plan is put in place to improve outcomes. If any practitioner feels that their concerns about risks are not being heard they will escalate this

through their line management who will discuss and agree a way forward to resolve. It is important that disputes are resolved quickly and in a spirit of partnership working. Practitioners and their managers must give consideration to their own level of accountability for actions / omissions and address barriers through supervision and, where necessary, procedures for resolving professional disagreements

- **Recognising and responding to needs early** - In order to determine the most effective response to emerging concerns about a family or an individual within a family, the [Leeds Early Help Approach \(2014\)](#) supports practitioners to hold multi-agency conversations to explore concerns and potential provision of support. Initial concerns should be discussed with line managers and agency safeguarding leads as appropriate, and then discussed with the appropriate agency that is able to work with you to support the identified need.
- **Restorative Practice and Strength Base Approach** - Restorative Practice and Strength Base Approach are key elements of the Leeds approach to working with children, young people and families. These approaches are underpinned by; values of empathy, respect, honesty, acceptance, responsibility, and mutual accountability and seeks to make change working on the premise that:
 - People are more likely to engage and make positive changes when those in positions of authority work with them rather than do things “to” them or “for” them.
 - Practitioners should look first at what people can do with their skills and their resources and what can the people around them do in their relationships and their communities. People need to be seen as more than just their care needs – they need to be experts and in charge of their own lives.

These approaches are also about those people providing support / care working in equal partnership with those who need it to design and deliver the right services.

- **Supporting Carers** – We recognise the impact caring responsibilities have on individuals and how much this can affect the life and health of the carer themselves, and therefore their needs should also be considered within a ‘Think Family, Work Family’ approach. Practitioners should ask appropriate and relevant questions to identify if there are any family members with additional caring responsibilities.
 - **Adult Carers** - Many carers take on the role of caring without thinking twice, or noticing the effect it has on their own lives because of the close relationship they have with the person they care for. A carer is defined as “a person of any age who, on an unpaid basis, helps to look after a relative, neighbour or friend who could not manage at home without their help. This could be caused by physical or mental ill-health, disability or sensory impairment or substance misuse” (Leeds Carers Strategy 2015 – 2018).

A guiding principal of the [Leeds Carers Strategy](#) is that carers will be respected as expert care partners and will have access to the integrated and personalised services they need to support them in their caring role. This includes identifying and supporting any needs resulting from their caring role.
 - **Young Carers** – A young carer is defined as “a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (of any age, except where that care is provided for payment, pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work)” (Children and Families Act 2014 Section 96). Often in families where parenting capacity is reduced one or more children take on the role of a young carer. In such situations it must be recognised that they too

may have needs which should be assessed, responded to and supported through both the 'Think Family, Work Family' and Early Help approaches in order that they are:

- supported to have equal life chances to their peers
- able to flourish and thrive
- protected from inappropriate caring roles
- able to attend school to achieve and aspire

All practitioners who become aware of a young carer because they are either working directly with the child or with the adult who is being cared for, should assess the needs of the child within that role and respond appropriately adopting the Leeds principles as laid out in the "Leeds Young Carers Strategy".

Support, Supervision and Reflecting on Practice

There is a critical link between good quality regular supervision and good outcomes for children, young people and families. 'Think Family, Work Family' requires practitioners to continually reflect on their practice and seek support from line managers and safeguarding officers as appropriate and in line with agency's supervision policy and procedures.

Summary

The above sets out the principles of the 'Think Family, Work Family' approach. Each agency / organisation must identify how they apply this within the context of their own agency / organisation to achieve the best outcome for the people they support. It is not the expectation that anyone practitioner can meet the needs of the whole family alone, however the best outcomes can be achieved by practitioners and communities working together to support an individual within their family and wider networks. The Organisational Self-Assessment Checklist (Appendix C) can help to embed the 'Think Family, Work Family' approach into practice.

Safeguarding Legislative Framework and Support Contacts

Legislative Framework

- Children and young people - Children Act 1989
- Adults with care and support needs - Health and Social Care Act 2014

Support Contacts

- Children and young people
 - Duty and Advice: 0113 376 0336 - option 3 (Out of office hours call the Children's Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0113 5350600)
 - Family Information Service: 0800 7310640 (Freephone)
 - Families First (for Early Help)
 - [Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership \(LSCP\)](#)
- Adults at Risk
 - Adult Social Care: 0113 222 4401 (Out of hours: 07712 106 378)
 - [Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board](#)
- Police
 - Immediate risk – 999
 - Non immediate risk - 101



'Think Family, Work Family' Practitioner Checklist

'Think Family, Work Family' requires practitioners to continually reflect on practice. The following checklist should be used to support practitioners in ensuring they are taking a 'Think Family, Work Family' approach.

Ask yourself

1. Have I asked who is the family and understood family members roles and relationships to each other	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do I know who else lives in the household / has regular contact	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do I have a picture of the family as a whole	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Have I taken time to understand all the demands on the family	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Have I considered the strengths of the family and what is working well	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Have I considered their resilience to cope with the demands they face	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Have I considered if other family members are in need of support	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Have I considered if other family members are at risk	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Have I explored caring responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Do I know if other practitioners are working with the family	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Have I listened to what support the family want	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Have I explored what their solutions may be	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Have I been open and honest about my concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Have I made assumptions about the family	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Have the family response helped my decision making	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Have I taken my concerns to supervision	<input type="checkbox"/>



'Think Family, Work Family' Organisation Self-Assessment

The 'Think Family, Work Family' approach requires organisations to embed this approach into practice. To support this embedding consider the following questions:

- Are these principles embedded within your organisation?
- Could more be done to promote this approach?

Areas to consider	What is in place now?	What more could be put in place?
1. Policies and procedures		
2. Workforce Development / Training		
3. Assessments for support		
4. Risk Assessments		

5. Supervision arrangements		
6. Audit programmes		
7. Information for service users / members of public		