

The Family Approach Toolkit



What is a family approach?

A family approach requires an understanding of the key 'family' structure and composition as well as being alert to wider family issues that may have a bearing on the overall wellbeing of the family as well as any specific individuals an agency is working with.

Services that take a whole family approach can benefit from establishing how the needs of other family members affect their principal 'client' and how meeting those needs might benefit their client. So, if you are working with a child in a family, it is important to be aware of the needs of their parent / carers, or any other family members, and how they may impact on the safety and wellbeing of the child. Similarly if you are working with an adult, it is important to consider how their needs may impact on their partner / family, including whether there are others who act in a care role for that adult, and / or whether that adult has a caring or parental role for any children in the family and / or other adults.

If you have concerns about an adult or a child within a family setting, whom is not your principal 'client', you should contact the relevant local services and provide details of your concern. Local contact details are found in the toolkit.

Why is it important?

The aims of this approach include:

- Identifying families with the greatest need to provide the right support at the earliest opportunity;
- As far as possible, address the range of needs within a family through accurate identification and co-ordination of a family wide response;
- Strengthen the capacity of family members to provide care and support to each other.



Surveying the family context may highlight specific actions to address wider needs. This can include working with other agencies to identify, refer and plan how the needs of family members can be met. This may require co-ordination of activity by a range of providers.

There are no hard and fast rules about 'how much' of a whole family approach is appropriate in any given family. That depends on the range of outcomes to be achieved guided by professional judgement and the wishes of the family.

It is important to note that whilst work under a family approach is undertaken, agencies should not be distracted from their core tasks. Neither should it lead to a lack of vigilance with respect to safeguarding concerns which must still be dealt with according to local procedures.

It is essential that the family is engaged in and consents to any intervention that seeks to meet wider family needs as a key objective of the approach involves enabling families to find and implement their own solutions when appropriate.

How do I use this toolkit?

The Family Approach toolkit provides professionals from across the adults and children's sectors in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton with a range of short guides and information on a number of issues that affect children, adults and their families. It also provides details on local referral routes and contact numbers.

The toolkit is web-based to allow ease of access for all professionals across the area, and enable regular updates. Please do visit the toolkit regularly to be made aware of new material.

We welcome your feedback on the content already available and suggestions for new material. This toolkit has been designed to assist professionals in their daily work and therefore should be informed by the people that use it.

ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

Short Guide Series