

# ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

## Practical Tips

## Engaging with other Professionals

It is increasingly important to provide a coordinated, multi-agency approach when working with individuals and families. People will access a wide range of services throughout their life, and it is important to work together to have a clear understanding of risks, the support that may need and to have a co-ordinated approach to support. For this to be successful and effective, strong communication and engagement with a range of professionals in different agencies and roles is key. This short guide contains some tips and advice to support interprofessional collaboration.

### Joint professional working means:

- working together to support an individual or family,
- working to understand each other's roles and responsibilities,
- being clear about the services and support each can offer, and making referrals to other services when gaps or needs are identified,
- being willing to learn from each other,
- communicating and collaborating as equals,
- planning as a partnership to achieve best practice,
- being respectful to each other, even if we do not agree,
- being committed to working together to ensure the best possible outcomes for the adult, family or child.

### Use of clear language

Different agencies sometimes use different language and terminology, so agree that clear and common language will be used in all communications. Avoid using jargon and acronyms, if possible, but where they are essential, provide an explanation at the beginning of collaboration for those who may be unfamiliar with the terms.

# ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

## Practical Tips

### Clarity about information sharing

If you are sharing information, be clear whether this is being shared for information only, or whether actions or follow up are required. If you are requesting information, be clear about why you need the information, why you are requesting it, and the legal route for doing so.

### Meetings

Multi-agency working frequently means setting up or attending meetings with other professionals. In order to help them go smoothly, the following tips might help:

- Ensure you provide information about why you are inviting someone to a meeting, what the expectations are of them, and what they need to do to prepare. Sending a meeting invitation with no explanation leaves professionals feeling unprepared and unsure of what is expected of them.
- Ensure you ask for any information needed for the meeting well in advance to ensure professionals have time to obtain and share the information.
- If you cannot attend a meeting, contact the organiser in advance and ask whether there is information you can share prior to the meeting.

### Agree outcomes

It is important to identify and agree clear outcomes, so everyone is working towards the same goal. These should include the views of the individual or family where possible.

Whilst not always possible, it is helpful for the individual/family if they have an identified lead professional. The lead professional will be in a vital position for monitoring trends of engagement, sharing information and assisting the individual/family through service navigation. The lead professional may change depending on the circumstances of the case, but the management of risk remains a shared responsibility.

As part of the safeguarding adults process, consideration must also be given to whether the adult may benefit from the support of an independent advocate.

# ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

## Practical Tips

### Recognise key partners

Are there agencies not involved with the individual or family, but should be? Are there gaps in expertise round the table which another professional could fill? Think about who might be missing from the conversation and see how they can be involved.

### Professional challenge

Safeguarding is complex and challenging, and although professionals all want the best outcomes for the individual or family they are working with, they may have different views on how to achieve this. Appropriate challenge and escalation are an essential part of partnership working and professional responsibilities to achieve high standards. In such circumstances, there must be a respectful challenge about the perceived action or inaction taken. Appropriate challenge and escalation are vital to delivering continuous improvement, ensuring both accountability and partnership working as well as for achieving good outcomes.

Resolution of problems and challenges are key to effective multi-agency working, and so the following local resources should be utilised where necessary:

- [4LSAB Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults Escalation Protocol June 2023](#)
- [HIPS Escalation Policy for the Resolution of Professional Disagreement](#)

### Advice for managers

If your organisation offers training, think about how communication and collaboration skills can be included within current training.

Encourage your staff to work with partner agencies where possible and advise that you will be there to support them, as needed.

Using the links above, make sure your staff are aware of the local protocols and encourage discussion within teams about their use.

Make communication and collaboration skills a part of induction, appraisal and supervision.