

# SAFEGUARDING & PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK GUIDANCE

## Version 1



# Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board and Tees Safeguarding Children Boards Practice Guidance

## Introduction

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable members of the community whatever their age is a shared responsibility. Commitment by agencies to a 'Think Family' approach is essential in providing support early to help families care for their loved ones and reduce the chances of harm to children or adults at risk of abuse or neglect (hereafter referred to as the adult). In addition this approach is necessary to promote timely and robust intervention when risks increase and statutory intervention is needed.

## Purpose and status of this document

The principles and practice of early intervention and statutory intervention when risks increase are well established *within* both adults and children's services. This document will not therefore repeat procedure and guidance from the individual Boards and Local Authorities. However principles and practice is less well established *between* adults and children's services. The purpose of this document is to promote consideration of the needs of all family members by all practitioners. In short it aims to prompt practitioners to think outside their immediate area of work group, and work across the ages and across services. This requires practitioners to:

- View any contact as an opportunity to provide joined up services
- Look at the whole family
- Build on family strengths
- Provide support tailored to need.

This document is endorsed by the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board and the four Tees Safeguarding Children Boards as best practice. Where a practitioner decides not to adopt this practice they must be prepared to justify that decision.

## Definitions

The definition of a child can be found in [Working Together to Safeguard Children and Families 2015](#) (*a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday*). The definition of an adult at risk of abuse or neglect can be found on the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board [website](#).

## Background

It is well established that the needs of children and adults are usually best met within their own families. However, there are a number of situations in which a family can have additional needs:

- Where children are being cared for by an adult with care and support needs themselves the child's needs and those of the adult can only be understood and addressed by assessing *each* individual *and* the family as a whole
- Where an adult (without care and support needs) is a carer for both an adult with needs and for a child or children, the carers need for support and their ability to effectively and consistently meet the needs of all those they care for must be considered
- It is also important that wider families are considered such as grandparents who may not be living with a child but where there may be significant contact
- The needs of families where children are carers for an adult should also be considered, including assessing the needs of the young carer.

Unfortunately children can be abused or fatally harmed by adults who have care and support needs, and adults are also susceptible to abuse from children as well as other adults. Providing support early to families may reduce the risk of serious harm, however when serious or significant harm is suspected or known it is vital that immediate and decisive action is taken in line with [safeguarding adults](#) and/or [safeguarding children](#) procedures.

## Early help

### **An opportunity to provide joined up services**

Contact with any service, adult or children, should offer an open door into a broader system of joined up support. Practitioners should see any moment of engagement with a family member as an opportunity to identify need in the wider family and direct support, referring to those services that can offer help. Liaising with other professionals working with the family is important and consent should be sought for this. It is only when a full picture of the family is gained that effective assessment and planning can occur. Adults and children's workers will bring their separate expertise and professional experience. Joint working can therefore significantly increase the skills and knowledge available to support a family. It is a shared responsibility of all involved to address the needs of the individual members and the family as a whole.

### **Look at the whole family**

All practitioners should consider the needs of the whole family including those of Young Carers, taking into account family circumstances and responsibilities. Viewing existing contacts as a chance to identify risk, refer to colleagues in other services and target support helps prevent problems escalating and potentially limits harm.

### **Build on family strengths**

Strong families improve the life chances of individual family members. A strengths based approach builds families capacity to deal with present and future problems as well as supporting them to take responsibility for their own lives and their own choices.

### **Provide support tailored to need**

Tailored, and importantly, coordinated packages of care and support are much more likely to be acceptable to families and individuals. Families know most about their own circumstances and should be helped to shape their own package of support and care. Adults and, where appropriate, children should be supported to make decisions about their own lives. Sometimes families may require challenge to raise their expectations for themselves, their families or their children.

### **Escalating concerns - Significant harm**

Where any practitioner has concerns that the risk to a child or an adult with care and support needs or to both is increasing they should follow either the [Tees LSCBs Procedures](#) or Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board Inter-Agency Safeguarding Adults [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) or indeed both. Where the decision is to refer the child to social care explicit consideration should be given to referring the adult also and vice versa. Where the professionals' decision is that this is not required the rationale for this decision should be recorded in the records. The professional should consider consulting with either the professional in their agency designated to provide advice or with social care.

August 2016