



THINK FAMILY GUIDANCE

Version 2

Revision Number	Date Approved by the Board	Change Record	Links to Other Policies	Review Date:
1	First Published August 2016	New joint practice guidance emphasising Think Family approach.	All TSAB policies and procedures Tees safeguarding children policies and procedures	Feb-2018 No change required
2	December 2019	Updated Children's Partnership details. Included reference to professional accountability/curiosity.	All TSAB policies and procedures Tees safeguarding children policies and procedures	December 2021

Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board and Tees Safeguarding Children Partnerships 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. In addition this approach is necessary to promote timely and robust intervention when risks increase and statutory intervention is needed.

Purpose

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 procedures and guidance from the Children Partnerships, the Safeguarding Adults Board or the Local Authorities. However, principles and practice are 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; to 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 two Tees Safeguarding Children Partnerships as best practice.

Definitions

The definition of a child can be found in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) (*a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday*).

Safeguarding duties apply to any adult (over the age of 18) who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local Authority is meeting any of those needs);
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

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 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. 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 child, 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.

Professional Curiosity is a key principle that must be adopted by practitioners to be open minded about the whole family and the support they may or may not be receiving; practitioners should not assume that other professionals are taking responsibility for some aspects of care and support without having a conversation to verify this. 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 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.

Professional Challenge

The Children Partnerships and the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board have procedures in place to support professionals to challenge decisions made by other professionals in relation to children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect. These can be found at [Tees Children Safeguarding Partnership Procedures](#) Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board Inter-Agency Safeguarding Adults [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#).

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 Safeguarding Children Partnership 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.