

Lead Professional Guidance for Plymouth

This brief guidance is for practitioners who want to find out more about the role of the lead professional and for those who are already carrying out lead professional work. It will assist practitioners in the allocation of the lead professional role for the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

DEFINITION OF THE LEAD PROFESSIONAL

A lead professional is someone who takes the lead to co-ordinate provision and be a single point of contact for a child and their family, when a range of services are involved with the child or family and an integrated response is required.

The lead professional is **not a job title or a new role**, but a set of functions to be carried out as part of the delivery of effective integrated support. These functions are to:

- Act as a single point of contact for the child or family, who they can trust and who can engage them in making choices, navigating their way through the system and effecting change.
- Co-ordinate the delivery of the actions agreed by the practitioners involved, to ensure that the children and families receive an effective service which is regularly reviews. These actions will be based on the outcome of the assessment and recorded in a plan
- Reduce overlap and inconsistency in the services received.

The table below will assist in the allocation of the lead professional.

Child Status	Who should be lead professional?
During the children in need assessment phase - initial and core assessments	Social Worker should be lead professional
For a child who is a looked after child	Social Worker should be lead professional
For a child on the child protection register	Social Worker should be lead professional
For a child subject to a child protection plan	Social Worker should be lead professional
For a child in a residential setting	Social Worker should be lead professional
For a care leaver	Social worker or personal adviser should be lead professional
For a child for whom adoption is a plan	Social Worker should be lead professional
For a child with special educational needs	SENCO should be lead professional
For a child with complex disability or complex health needs	Key Worker should be lead professional
For a child with mental health needs and a (CPA – Care Programme Approach)	Care Co-ordinator should be lead professional
For young people who are open cases to the YOS – apart from those on the child protection register or who are looked after	YOS worker should be lead professional

Criteria for allocating Lead Professional for other cases

For all other cases the following should be taken into account when allocating the most appropriate practitioner to take the role of lead professional.

Considerations	Who should be lead professional?
What are the predominant needs of the child or family	Once these are identified a practitioner from this area of work should be lead professional
Which agency has main responsibility for addressing the child or family's needs including statutory responsibility	Once the main agency has be identified a practitioner from within that service should be lead professional
Does anyone have a previous or potential ongoing relationship with the child or young person	If a practitioner has this previous or potential experience then they should be lead professional
Does anyone have an ongoing responsibility to carry out an advocacy role for the child or young person	If anyone has this responsibility then they should be lead professional

If there is more than one practitioner who meets the above criteria for undertaking the role of lead professional then the multi agency meeting should consider the wishes of the child and their family when deciding who should take on this role. In some cases parents may wish to act as the Lead Professional.

Further Considerations for Line Managers

As there is a potential impact on the workload of a lead professional then all line managers should take the following into consideration and discuss any arising issues with the CAF Coordinator. There is an expectation that the allocation of lead professionals will be fairly distributed between partner agencies, thus reducing the impact on any one single service. It is also the responsibility of line management to identify suitable practitioners within their agency who could complete this role and nominate them for lead practitioner training.

- Who has the skills and knowledge to provide a leadership and coordinating role in relation to other practitioners involved with the child, young person or family
- Who has the ability to draw in and influence universal and specialist services
- Who has an understanding of the surrounding systems which are available to manage and sustain this
- Who has capacity to take on the role

Accountability and conflict resolution

It is important to remember that the line of accountability for a lead professional is through their line management in their home agency, through the Children's Trust and ultimately to the Director for Services for Children and Young People.

In cases were there are instances of conflict between agencies this should be resolved through the multi agency meeting. If this does not resolve the issue then the situation should be brought to the attention of the CAF Coordinator/Locality managers who should act as a broker between agencies, if the situation still persists then the CAF Coordinator can escalate the issue to the CAF Stakeholder Group and ultimately to the Children's Trust Executive.

Resources

The recommendations within this guidance have been taken from the Department of Education and Skills, *Every Child Matters – Change For Children*, The lead professional: Practitioners' Guide and The lead professional: Managers' Guide.