

Taking a lead with families – roles and responsibilities of the lead professional

The lead professional holds a key position in the Team Around the Family (TAF). Their role is to act as a single point of contact for the family and other professionals throughout a multi-agency engagement. The lead professional is appointed and supported by a nominated lead agency through a local multi-agency panel, or prior to the initial TAF. The lead agency needs to ensure that practitioners acting as lead professionals have enough capacity to fulfil the role and appropriate training and resources to deliver.

The lead professional is invited, with other partners, to participate in and contribute to the whole family assessment process carried out by the local Family Support Programme. They then work in partnership with the family co-ordinator for the first three months of an intervention, contributing to and supporting the family action plan before taking on the role independently.

It is expected that lead professionals should be respected by partner agencies, irrespective of their professional background and status, and given due respect and support when they are carrying out their duties. Partner agencies need to information share as requested and keep the lead professional informed of any family developments in between TAF meetings that are of interest or concern. TAF members are expected to attend and contribute to TAF meetings whenever possible or submit reports when requested to inform the family action plan.

The lead professional can change during the life of a family intervention when appropriate, as long as there is agreement through the TAF. Families should not be left without a lead at any time in the process of an intervention. It is helpful to remember that support from a professional can only take a family so far. Lead professionals always need to aim to build family resilience and independence remembering that families are joint partners in their own transformation and change.

Key roles and responsibilities of a lead professional are as follows:

- Work with the family support coordinator on a structured handover following the 12 weeks of intensive support.
- Act as a single point of contact for the whole family, building rapport and trust with the family and 'gripping' them through a process of change both supporting and challenging when appropriate.
- Lead a 'single offer' of local coordinated service to families through a Team Around the Family (TAF).
- Coordinate the delivery of a TAF agreed family action plan (see appendix 1). Monitor and review until outcomes are met.
- Attend training regarding the role and integrate into everyday working practice. Develop expertise in working with the whole family rather than just one individual member. Develop confidence in working with partner agencies and taking the lead.
- Either visit or ensure another TAF member visits the family home on a regular basis to support and monitor. Other direct contact may be by telephone. This is estimated that this could be up to one hour of direct contact and one hour of administrative support weekly.
- Continue core service delivery with specific expertise and skills base in working with the family
- Access regular case management and supervision when appropriate. Report any safeguarding concerns immediately in alignment with policies and procedures.
- Coordinate sending out of TAF meeting invitations and agendas, inviting non attendees to provide reports.
- Arrange chairing and minute taking of TAF meetings (see appendix 2). Send a copy of the TAF minutes to the local Family Support Programme Team.
- **Ensure Family Support Programme TAF progress matrix tool is sent to the local Family Support Team to record family progress and to allow payment by result claims to be made. These will be collated for submission to the local multi-agency panel for governance purposes.**
- EITHER: Plan for handover of role in systematic way to another lead agency within the TAF with the agreement of the family and the TAF
OR: Plan for case closure and endings with family when all outcomes are met. Celebrate and review progress made within a closing TAF.

The lead agency/professional - action check list

1. In between Team Around the Family meetings – lead professional	Action taken if necessary	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a good knowledge of the family assessment and the family action plan for the family (see appendix 1). • Carry out a planned handover with the family support team family co-ordinator. • Visit or arrange a TAF visit to the family as directed by the TAF or speak on the telephone. • Provide support and carry out any interventions that are within the remit of your own agency and role. • Be ready to receive phone calls from the family as the single point of contact. • Check that families are receiving the support and intervention detailed in the family action plan from other agencies. • Talk to other agencies if there are concerns around families not being in receipt of promised support. • Check on family progress in relationship to the family action plan. • Motivate and encourage the family towards their short term and long term goal. • Talk through relapse and return to old behaviours. • Challenge when and if necessary. • Agenda any new issues or concerns about the family for discussion by the TAF. • Be ready to receive phone calls from other agencies as the single point of contact. • Liaise with TAF members providing interventions within the family action plan as required. • Express concerns to TAF members if the family concerns escalate. • Be on the alert for any family safeguarding issues - call an emergency TAF if required. • Prepare families ensuring the views of adults, children and young people will be heard within the meeting. • Debrief the family after TAF, meetings ensuring everything is understood and they know what they need to do. • Prepare the family for endings and closure as the intervention comes towards closure. 		

Planning the TAF – lead professional	Action taken if necessary	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the date meets the needs of the whole family to maximise their attendance. • Use family friendly venues whenever possible. Explore different venues that partner agencies may be able to provide. • Take into account the family’s needs, e.g. time of the meeting? is the venue near to the family home and accessible? is there a need for an interpreter or advocate?. • Think about the safety aspect of the venue e.g. is the door accessible to all? lone working? do the family have a history of violence or aggression? if a member of the family leaves the room is there somewhere for them to sit?. • Send out the invitations or reminders at least four weeks in advance (letter templates available on website). • Invite all statutory and voluntary agencies that are part of the TAF providing services or who are able to play an advisory role. • Send the EH assessment and family action plan to any new members of the TAF. • Request reports or a summary of their support to the family, along with apologies from those who are unable to attend. • Set the agenda for the meeting. Be clear about the start and ending times of meeting. • Make a list of those who have been invited and their contact details. • Plan who should chair and take the minutes of the meeting. • Check who has responded and if others need a reminder sent. • Contact invitees to ensure they have received invites and are able to attend or send report. • Check venue and paperwork is ready. 		
Preparing the family for the TAF – lead professional	Action taken if necessary	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the family for the meeting ensuring they know who will be present and why. • Help them to prepare their thoughts and feelings and to reflect on the impact of the interventions they have been receiving. • Discuss any anxieties or what they may perceive as being challenges to being part of the meeting. 		

Chairing the TAF – lead agency manager/lead professional	Action taken if necessary	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce self and role and state the purpose of the meeting. Give apologies for members who cannot attend. • State ground rules ensuring they are visible. Say what will happen if the ground rules are not kept e.g. a meeting break. • Remind members that the agenda will be worked through systematically. • Allow time for family and TAF member introductions, clarifying roles if necessary. • Provide a brief introduction and update on family progress so far. • Allow all family members present to give their views. Clarify and summarise where necessary. • Ask all practitioners working with the family to give an overview of support given and their views on the impact of this support. • Allow the family to respond to these contributions if they wish. • Detail apologies and read reports from non-attending TAF members. • Use ground rules to ensure all members voices are heard. • Acknowledge differences of views and negotiate workable solutions. • Review and celebrate change and progress. Use challenge when and if required. • Ensure any changes to the family action plan are agreed by all and detailed in the minutes. 		
After the TAF – lead professional	Action taken if necessary	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time to debrief family and make sure they understand the meeting content and any agreed actions. • Send out minutes and revised family action plan to all members of the TAF. • Fill in TAF progress matrix and send to the local Family Support Programme Team. <p>Carry on as outlined in 'in between TAF meetings'.</p>		

Appendix 1

From whole family assessment to family action plan

In the Surrey Family Support Programme model, a six week whole family assessment is carried out by the local Family Support Programme (FSP) Team family coordinator. This whole family assessment will have looked at the strengths and needs of all members of the family and helped them to formulate key short-term and long-term family goals.

At the first TAF meeting (held at six weeks), the family and professionals invited formulate a SMART family action plan that details family strengths and needs and the resources and support required to meet those needs. The family action plan will begin to be embedded in the following six weeks, co-ordinated by the FSP Team family coordinator who will support the family to attend appointments and participate in agreed interventions with different agencies.

At the second TAF meeting (12 weeks) the family and professionals will reflect on progress made so far. This will be recorded on the TAF progress matrix. The role of the lead professional will then be handed over to a practitioner from the lead agency who will then be the main point of contact for the family.

It is important that the lead professional has begun to, or already has built trust and rapport with the family. It is helpful for the lead professional to have already visited the family with the FSP family coordinator and explained how they will carry on supporting the whole family towards their short term and long term goals. The handover must be clear to the family and they must have an understanding of the perimeters of the role.

The third TAF (held at 18 weeks) will be the responsibility of the lead professional who needs to prepare the family for the meeting, support them during it and de-brief them afterwards, This should be an empowering and enabling process supporting families to express their thoughts and feelings around the interventions they are receiving and their impact.

The lead professional evaluates family progress in partnership with the family and other TAF partners. They reflect this through filling in the TAF progress matrix and returning it, with the TAF minutes, to their local Family Support Programme Team as soon as possible.

Appendix 2 – Team Around the Family meetings

What is a Team Around the Family meeting?

A Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting is an opportunity for families to be heard and listened to non-judgementally, their strengths acknowledged and their needs or concerns discussed with a view to providing help and support.

Who attends the meeting?

1. Families are the first people to be invited. As many members of the family as possible are asked to attend and will have help from their family coordinator or lead professional to prepare for the meeting and to think about what they want to say or contribute to the meeting.
2. A range of professionals who work with families offering a range of different services are invited according to the family's needs and who is best placed to give them support.

Where and when?

TAF meetings are held in family friendly venues, which are accessible to the family and people working with family. They need to be arranged at a time when families are able to attend.

How should people behave in meetings?

In order for meetings to go smoothly it is helpful to have some ground rules that everyone is committed to keep.

- Follow the chair person's lead.
- Show integrity and confidentiality.
- Be respectful towards other people at all times.
- Use plain everyday English and avoid jargon.
- Listen carefully to everyone's opinion, even if you don't agree with them. You have a right to challenge if it is in a respectful way.
- Focus on outcomes and benefits for the whole family.
- Keep to time – speak briefly and to the point.
- Take time out if necessary – it can be emotional talking through family issues.

Appendix 3 - Lead professional FAQs

Q. Does that mean I'm responsible for this family and everything that happens?

A. You do not take responsibilities away from the other agencies working with the family, they still hold their respective responsibilities.

Q. How long will I need to be the lead professional?

A. The maximum you could be the lead professional for is one year, as that is the maximum time the Team Around the Family (TAF) intervention can run. The TAF can decide to end the intervention earlier if the family's goals have been achieved. We are not asking you to stay involved longer than your service would naturally. As the family progresses we recognise their needs will alter. If we are doing well, families should progress down through specialist, targeted, universal and voluntary services, so it may be appropriate to pass on the lead professional baton to meet the changing needs of the family.

Q. What work do I have to do?

A. For the first 12 weeks you just need to continue as you would normally and attend the TAF meetings that are arranged by the Family Support Programme Team. The family support coordinator will complete the family assessment and form the TAF. You will need to coordinate the third TAF meeting and onwards. This could be just a case of arranging the next meeting at the end of the second TAF and subsequent TAFs.

Q. What is the purpose of the TAF meetings?

A. Each meeting aims for the family to have ownership of their own action plan, to be strengths based, recognising the achievements they have made. The meeting should encourage the family to work with agencies to help them sequence their interventions in a way the family feel will work for them. The meetings allow for the family's plan to be adapted to continue to meet their needs.

Q. Do we have to stick to having TAF meetings every six weeks?

A. TAF meetings need to occur every six weeks in order to manage progress. If an issue arises that needs immediate attention you can call an early meeting.

Q. How should I manage the paperwork?

A. Really it's whatever works well for you. Each TAF meeting will need minutes taken with clear SMART actions to be reviewed at the next meeting. As your role will be to chair the meeting you may want to ask the other members of the TAF to take turns writing the minutes and sending out the action plans. The approach is about being a team and working together. The family's information should be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act. We would appreciate copies of the minutes and plan to be emailed to your local family support team. Contact details can be found on the [Surrey County Council website](#).

Q. How do I manage confidentiality?

A. You will be given a copy of the family's consent form, which specifies which agencies the family are happy to share information about them. If TAF members have concerns of safeguarding or a criminal nature these can be shared without the families consent.

Q. What support do I get?

A. You will receive a lead professional's pack and can participate in the lead professional training. If you have specific queries you can gain advice from the Family Support Team.