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Warwickshire

Think Family Protocol



Warwickshire
Safeguarding
Boards

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1. Purpose of the Protocol

The purpose of the protocol is primarily to ensure that practitioners who work with adults with care and support needs identify where there are children and young people present in the same household and/or acting as carers. This is both to safeguard those children and young people and provide help where needed. A secondary purpose is for practitioners who work with children and young people to recognise the needs of adults with care and support needs as service users ('customers') as well as parents and carers. This is of secondary importance because it is likely to be considered by children's practitioners because their assessment framework includes a domain on parenting.

The protocol requires that practitioners, managers and services working with either adults or children work together to safeguard children, young people, adults, carers and families. This shared responsibility must be at the heart of practice across all partner agencies within Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) and Warwickshire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB). It also means that their views and wishes are listened to and, wherever possible, acted on. This will ensure they experience help and support that is both joined up and effective, which will in turn achieve better outcomes for people.

2. Scope

The protocol is for partner organisations working with children, young people, adults and families within the WSCB and WSAB. Partners should note that the likelihood of risk and harm to children increases when they live with an adult with one of the following vulnerability factors:

- ***Substance misuse;***
- ***Learning disabilities;***
- ***Domestic abuse;***
- ***Parental mental ill-health.***



The risk increases where there is more than one vulnerability factor, or concerns more than one parent. A non-affected partner can be a protective factor.

The protocol should be used by:

- ***Practitioners and their managers;***
- ***Commissioners;***
- ***Organisations working with children, young people, adults and families;***
- ***The WSCB and WSAB.***

3. Business Case

The protocol contributes to ensuring that communities and individuals are safe and protected from harm. It also protects the health and wellbeing of people in Warwickshire. The Think Family approach has significant benefits for children, young people, adults, carers, families and for organisations. They include:

- ***Improved outcomes for children, young people, adults, carers and families including safeguarding, health and wellbeing;***
- ***Better use of resources including finance and time;***
- ***Less duplication between organisations and services;***
- ***Improved staff morale.***

4. The Legal Framework

All practitioners who come into contact with children, their parents or carers, families and pregnant women have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in accordance with section 11 of the Children Act 2004. The children's needs and safety are paramount. Any concerns must be recorded, early help initiated (including by the adult service provider when appropriate) or referred in line with Section 3 of the WSCB interagency child protection procedures '[Making a Child Protection Referral.](#)' Working Together 2015 (p12) states that 'professionals should, in particular, be alert



to the potential need for early help for a child who is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems and domestic violence.’ It also states ‘local authorities provide services to adults who are responsible for children who may be in need. These services are subject to the section 11 duties set out in paragraph 4 of this chapter. When staff are providing services to adults they should ask whether there are children in the family and consider whether the children need help or protection from harm. Children may be at greater risk of harm or be in need of additional help in families where the adults have mental health problems, misuse substances or alcohol, are in a violent relationship, have complex needs or have learning difficulties (p58).’

Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to make enquires, or ask others to make enquiries, when they think an adult in their area with care and support needs may be at risk of abuse or neglect, and where the adult is unable to protect themselves due to those needs for care and support. Adult safeguarding enquiries should be person centred, seek to ascertain and understand the view and wishes of the adult, and to find out what, if any, action may be needed. This applies whether or not the authority is actually providing any care and support services to that adult. It is crucial that practitioners have conversations with people about how we might respond in safeguarding situations in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing and safety. More information is available in the [Multi-agency policy and procedures for the protection of adults with care and support needs in the West Midlands](#).

5. Our Think Family Principles

The WSCB and WSAB have agreed shared Think Family principles. They are:

- ***We will make sure that the safety and well-being of children is paramount;***
- ***We will work together in a multi-agency, holistic, systemic family approach;***



- ***We will provide Early Help to prevent the need for crisis intervention;***
- ***We will support people within their cultural context, ensuring diversity is valued but not used to explain or condone acts of abuse and neglect or to prevent appropriate action;***
- ***We will share information and communicate with partner organisations, parents, carers and children in a timely, appropriate and accessible manner;***
- ***We will involve children, listening to their wishes and feelings, recording their views and ensuring their needs are not marginalised by those of the adults’;***
- ***We will be person-led and outcome-focused, engaging the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing and safety (i.e. Making Safeguarding Personal).***

6. Our Commitment to Successful Inter-Agency Working

Successful interagency working puts children and young people at the centre. It recognises the importance of their family, relationships and environment on their health, wellbeing and aspirations. The partners to this protocol understand that safeguarding is a shared responsibility.

The WSCB and WSAB will:

- ***Provide strong leadership on Think Family and safeguarding at a senior level to ensure it has a high strategic profile;***
- ***Make the Think Family Protocol available on their websites;***
- ***Seek assurance that Think Family in practice is co-ordinated, effective and underpinned by timely information sharing, for example, through audits, SCRs and Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs);***
- ***Seek assurance that Think Family is embedded in safeguarding training;***



- ***Include Think Family in our Annual Reports, Strategic Plans and communications;***
- ***Agree a clear process to resolve issues.***

Partner organisations will:

- ***Actively implement the protocol as a part of the safeguarding arrangements within their own agency by promoting ownership of it at all levels;***
- ***Ensuring all staff are aware of the protocol and practice guidance;***
- ***Ensuring staff receive training on Think Family where necessary;***
- ***Monitoring implementation of Think Family in the context of safeguarding, the compliance by staff and its impact, for example, through line management arrangements and audits.***

7. Using the Protocol

Everyone has a responsibility to take a Think Family approach in the context of safeguarding children and adults. This should be monitored through first line management, case supervision, clinical supervision, live case file monitoring, closed case file monitoring and serious case reviews for adults and children. Each agency has a responsibility for putting in place and maintaining quality assurance systems to monitor compliance.

The WSCB and WSAB will seek assurance that Think Family is put into safeguarding practice by partner organisations. In particular, they will evaluate whether it is co-ordinated and effective in safeguarding people and helping achieve positive outcomes. Both Boards are clear that safeguarding is everyone's business.

8. Managing Risks and Issues

The WSCB and WSAB have escalation processes in place to address issues. The



intention is for issues to be resolved at the earliest stage and by practitioners and their managers themselves. However, managers can escalate unresolved issues using the WSCB and WSAB escalation processes found on their websites.

9. Transition to Adulthood

Partners in the WSCB and WSAB must work together to support young people in transition to adulthood. This is particularly important where young people have ongoing care and support needs or significant safeguarding concerns have been identified and require a robust and seamless plan of intervention and support. Partners in both Safeguarding Boards must plan transition together with the full involvement of the young person.

10. Review of the Protocol

The WSCB and WSAB will review the Think Family protocol as a part of the reviews of their strategic plans.

