



Warwickshire
Safeguarding
Adults Board

Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Warwickshire Safeguarding Adult Board

Think Family Protocol

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1. Acronyms

- WSCP - Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- WSAB - Warwickshire Safeguarding Adults Board
- CSPR - Child Safeguarding Practice Review
- SAR - Safeguarding Adults Review

2. Why This Protocol Matters

The purpose of the protocol is to ensure that practitioners remain mindful of the circumstances affecting the whole family and to uphold a shared responsibility to children and adults when working with individuals.

Practitioners working with adults should notice and respond to the presence of children and young people in the household; particularly where they may be providing care, require support, or are themselves in need of protection. Likewise, practitioners working with children and young people should recognise the needs of adults as service users, including their roles as parents and carers. This holistic approach is essential not only for safeguarding but also for ensuring that appropriate help and support is provided across the family unit.

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 Partnership (WSCP) and

Warwickshire Safeguarding Adult 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 coherent and effective, which will in turn achieve better outcomes for individuals and families.

3. Who This Protocol is For

The Think Family Protocol is designed for all partner organisations working with children, young people, adults, and families across WSCP and WSAB.

It applies to practitioners in health, education, social care, police, voluntary and community services, and any other agency involved in safeguarding and supporting families.

Partners should be aware that the risk of harm to children significantly increases when they live with an adult experiencing one or more of the following vulnerability factors:

- Substance and alcohol misuse
- Learning disabilities
- Domestic and/or sexual abuse
- Parental mental ill-health

These risks are further increased when multiple vulnerability factors are present, or when it involves more than one parent or carer. The presence of a non-affected parent or carer can be a protective factor, helping to mitigate risks.

Adopting a Think Family approach ensures that practitioners build a complete understanding of the family circumstances. Men often remain invisible or overlooked in professional assessments, especially if they do not live with the mother and children. When fathers and partners are not involved, important information can be missed, leading to missed risks, weakened safety planning, and potential harm to children.

This protocol encourages practitioners to identify and respond to these vulnerabilities, at the earliest opportunity, ensuring that support is coordinated across agencies, and that children and adults receive the help they need in a timely and effective manner.

The protocol should be used by:

- Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership agencies
- Practitioners and their managers
- Commissioners
- Organisations working with children, young people, adults and families

4. Benefits of a Think Family Approach

The protocol contributes to ensuring that communities and individuals across Warwickshire are **safe, supported and protected from harm**. It also contributes to improving the **health and wellbeing** of children, young people, adults, carers and families.

The Think Family approach has significant benefits for children, young people, adults, carers, families and for the organisations delivering it.

The benefits include:

- Improved outcomes in safeguarding and the health and wellbeing of families in Warwickshire.
- Better use of resources including finance and time
- Less duplication between organisations and services
- Improved staff morale through collaboration and shared purpose

5. Statutory Duties and Safeguarding Responsibilities

All practitioners who encounter 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 child'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 WSCPs [interagency child safeguarding procedures](#).

Working Together 2023 (p46) states that; 'Practitioners should be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health and care (EHC) plan)
- is a young carer
- is bereaved
- is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including being affected by gangs and county lines and organised crime groups and/or serious violence, including knife crime
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised
- is viewing problematic and/or inappropriate online content (for example, linked to violence), or developing inappropriate relationships online

- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- is suffering from mental ill health
- has returned home to their family from care
- is a privately fostered child
- has a parent or carer in custody
- is missing education, or persistently absent from school, or not in receipt of fulltime education
- has experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of, or has been permanently excluded

Working Together also states that Local Authority Adult Social Care Services; ‘provide services to adults who are themselves responsible for children who may be in need. These services are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. When staff are providing services to adults, they should ask whether there are children in the family and take actions to respond if the children need help or protection from harm. Additional parenting support could be particularly needed where the adults have mental health problems, misuse drugs or alcohol, are in a violent relationship, have complex needs or have learning difficulties.’ (Pg115)

There are a wide range of support services available to adults and advice and information to support people to access these is an important part of working with families. Adult Social Care has duties under the Care Act 2014 to provide advice and information and to undertake assessments and provide support to eligible adults who have needs for care and support. This includes where an adult needs care and support in carrying out their role looking after a child.

Adult Social Care has a statutory duty under section 42 of the Care Act to make enquiries, 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. It is crucial that practitioners engage in meaningful conversations with individuals to ensure safeguarding responses promote involvement, choice, control, and improve quality of life, wellbeing and safety.

Further guidance is available in the [West Midlands Policy and Procedure Adult Safeguarding](#).

6. Our Think Family Principles

WSCP and WSAB have agreed shared Think Family principles to guide multi-agency practice.

These principles are:

- We will make sure that the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults 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 – in line with the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal

7. Working Relationally with Children and Families: Families First in Warwickshire

Warwickshire's Relational Practice Framework represents a collaborative approach to working with children and families by Warwickshire County Council and its partners, supporting the delivery of the county's Families First approach. The principles mirror a Think Family Approach by utilising the strengths of the family:

- Family based decision making through Family Network Meetings
- Communicating with and listening to children, young people and their families to ensure their voice is heard.
- Multi-agency working
- Appreciating whole lives and communities
- Understanding families are experts in their own lives - working **with** families is essential. The '[Pathway to Change](#)' is a valuable tool to support this.

Warwickshire's Relational Practice Framework underpins how practitioners work with children, adults and families across the county. It forms a core part of Warwickshire's [Families First approach](#), ensuring that support is relational, strengths-based and coordinated across services so that families receive help at the earliest opportunity.

Further information on the Family First Partnership Programme can be available on the [Government Website](#).

Relational Practice aligns closely with the Think Family ethos. It promotes a way of working that is:

- **Collaborative** – supporting families to lead their own solutions and build on their strengths.
- **Strengths-based** – recognising and mobilising the capabilities within the wider family network.
- **Multi-agency** – ensuring families do not experience fragmented or duplicated support.
- **Child-centred** – keeping the child’s lived experience central to assessment and planning.
- **Whole-family focused** – understanding the interconnected needs of adults, children, and carers, consistent with Think Family principles.
- This approach is essential to delivering Families First, helping practitioners intervene at the right time, reduce repeat referrals, and support sustainable change for families.

Key elements of Warwickshire’s Relational Practice include:

- **Family Network Meetings:** Supporting safe, sustainable plans that are owned and created by the family.
- **Listening to children, parents and carers:** Ensuring their voices actively shape assessments, plans and decision-making.
- **Working together across agencies:** Sharing responsibility for safeguarding and support, ensuring a joined up response.
- **Appreciating whole lives and communities:** Recognising that community, culture, identity and relationships influence risk, safety and wellbeing.
- **Using the ‘Pathway to Change’:** A practical tool to explore motivation, understand what matters to families, and set achievable, family-led goals.

By embedding Relational Practice throughout the Families First model, Warwickshire strengthens consistency, promotes meaningful family engagement, and ensures the Think Family Protocol is delivered in day to day practice across adults’ and children’s services.

8. Our Commitment to Effective Inter-Agency Working

Successful interagency working puts children and young people at the centre of safeguarding practice. 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.

WSCP and WSAB will commit to:

- Providing strong strategic leadership on Think Family and safeguarding to ensure it maintains a high profile across the partnership
- Ensuring the Think Family Protocol is accessible via partners websites
- Seeking assurance that Think Family practice is co-ordinated, effective and supported by timely information sharing, for example, through audits, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs)
- Seeking assurance that Think Family is embedded in safeguarding training
- Including Think Family in our Annual Reports, Strategic Plans and communications;
- Agreeing a clear resolution process in line with WSCP and WSAB Escalation Policies.

Partner organisations will commit to:

- Actively implement the protocol as a part of the safeguarding arrangements, promoting ownership of it at all levels
- Ensuring necessary staff are aware of the protocol and practice guidance
- Ensuring staff receive training on Think Family where necessary
- Monitor how the Think Family approach is applied in safeguarding practice. Use regular supervision and audits to ensure it is consistently implemented.

9. Embedding the Protocol

Everyone has a responsibility to adopt a Think Family approach within the context of safeguarding both children and adults. This should be monitored through first line management, case and clinical supervision, live case file monitoring, closed case file monitoring and practice reviews for adults and children.

Each agency has a responsibility for establishing and maintaining robust quality assurance systems to monitor compliance with the protocol.

WSCP and WSAB are clear that safeguarding is everyone's business and will seek assurance that Think Family is being actively embedded into safeguarding practice across partner organisations. Through their quality assurance frameworks, WSCP and

WSAB will evaluate whether the approach is coordinated, effective and contributes to positive outcomes for individuals and families.

10. Escalation

Where concerns arise about the effectiveness of multi-agency working or safeguarding responses, practitioners and managers should refer to the WSCP [Escalation Policy](#) and the WSAB [Escalation Policy](#) to ensure timely resolution and accountability.

11. Transition to Adulthood

Warwickshire Safeguarding partners 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 previously identified.

A robust plan of intervention and support should be developed jointly by all relevant agencies, with the involvement of the young person to ensure their voice is central to the process.

Where concerns arise during transition planning, practitioners should refer to the relevant Escalation Policy to ensure timely resolution and accountability.

12. Review of the Protocol

This protocol will be reviewed bi-annually as part of the regular updates to strategic safeguarding plans. The review process will consider learning from audits, case reviews, and feedback from partner agencies to ensure the protocol remains relevant, effective, and embedded in practice.