

the lead professional



Lead professionals take a lead role in the co-ordination of provision for children and young people with additional (including complex) needs.

This means all children and young people who require integrated support from more than one practitioner, will only have to tell their story once.

Background

Every Child Matters: Change for Children (2004) sets out an agenda for integrated frontline services, including the role of the lead professional.

What is the role of a lead professional?

The lead professional performs **three core functions**:

- to act as a single point of contact for the child or family
- to co-ordinate the delivery of the actions agreed
- to reduce overlap and inconsistency in the services received

Many professionals working with children already undertake these functions as part of their job. A lead professional is accountable to their home agency for their delivery of the lead professional functions.

They are not responsible or accountable for the actions of others.

Who should be the lead professional?

A lead professional can be any adult who works with and supports a child or young person. The most important selection criteria, is that they be the best placed to coordinate provision to meet the child's needs, and have a good relationship with them. For example, this means a lead professional could be a teacher, social worker, sports coach, youth worker or even a parent.

What skills and knowledge are required in a lead professional?

Lead professionals need the knowledge, competence and confidence to:

- develop a successful and productive relationship with the child and family, and communicate without jargon
- organise meetings and discussions with different practitioners
- use the Common Assessment Framework and develop support plans based on the outcomes
- co-ordinate the delivery of effective early intervention work and ongoing support
- work in partnership with other practitioners to deliver the support plan

Learning from experience

Evidence from practice suggests that the introduction of a lead professional role is central to effective frontline delivery of integrated children's services. It ensures that professional involvement is optimised, co-ordinated and communicated effectively. Most importantly, it provides a better experience for children, young people and families involved with a range of agencies.

National support

Further guidance for managers and practitioners is available from the Children's Workforce Development Council's website (details in the box below right).

The guidance sets out a broad framework of the responsibilities, skills and knowledge required by a lead professional. It brings together key themes from areas that have helped develop the role including:

- effective practice models
- working solutions and suggestions as to how the role may be developed, implemented and managed in practice

Budget-holding lead professional

16 local authorities piloted a new concept called the budget-holding lead professional between 2006-08. The aim was to test whether better service packages for core groups of children and families could be delivered by giving lead professionals a budget with which to commission services directly from providers.

A national evaluation of the programme will report in winter 2008.

This factsheet is one of a series of integrated working factsheets. For more resources and information visit the Children's Workforce Development Council website www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/lead-professional or the Every Child Matters website www.ecm.gov.uk

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