

INTEGRATED WORKING

BACKGROUND

Improving outcomes for children and young people, so that every child achieves their potential, involves changes to culture and practice across the children's workforce. These new ways of working shift the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children's lives to early intervention and effective prevention. Every Child Matters sets out a children's trust model for whole system change, with integrated frontline delivery, processes, strategy and governance.

Integrated working focuses on enabling and encouraging professionals to work together to adopt common processes to deliver frontline services that are coordinated and built around the needs of children and young people.

INTEGRATED PROCESSES

The delivery of "joined up" frontline services to improve outcomes for children and young people will need to be supported by more integrated processes which drive multi-agency working.

The key integrated processes are:

The Common Assessment Framework(CAF): which is a national, common process for undertaking initial assessments to identify more accurately and efficiently the additional needs of children and young people at risk of poor outcomes, reduce duplication of assessment, helping communication between agencies and co-ordinated actions to meet needs.

- The CAF consists of:
- A simple **pre-assessment checklist** to help practitioners identify children who would benefit from a common assessment
- **A process for undertaking a common assessment**, to help practitioners gather and understand information about the strengths and needs of a child, based on discussions with the child, their family and other practitioners as appropriate
- **A standard form** to help practitioners record, and where appropriate, share with others the findings from the assessment in a manner that is helpful in working with the family to find a response to unmet need.

The CAF will provide an assessment that is common across agencies and services. It will help embed a shared language; support better understanding and communication amongst practitioners; reduce the scale of different assessments and facilitate early intervention. Implementation is taking place between 2006 and 2008.

All children and young people who require integrated support from more than one practitioner should experience a seamless and effective service. This is best delivered when one individual takes the lead to ensure services are co-ordinated, coherent and achieving the desired outcomes.

The **Lead Professional** is not a new role. Instead, they deliver three core functions as part of their work:

- Act as a single point of contact for the child and family
- Co-ordinate the delivery of actions agreed
- Reduce overlap and inconsistency in the service received.

The Lead Professional can be any practitioner from across the children's workforce, providing they possess the required skills and knowledge as the role is defined by the ability to deliver on the above functions rather than belonging to any particular professional or practitioner group.

The Lead Professional will need the competence and confidence to:

- Develop a successful and productive relationship with the child or family and be able to communicate without jargon
- Organise meetings
- Use the common assessment framework
- Co-ordinate the delivery of effective early intervention work
- Work in partnership with other practitioners to deliver the support plan

It is important to note that the Lead Professional is only responsible for and accountable to their agency. They cannot be held accountable for the failure of another agency to deliver services.

Contactpoint is an electronic index of every child in the country and will provide a quick way to find out who else is working with the same child or young person. The purpose of it will be to help improve services to children and young people with a strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention. Currently practitioners can spend days trying to identify who else is working with the same child or unknowingly duplicating work that is already being carried out by another service. **Contactpoint** will contain the following basic information:

- Name, address, gender, date of birth and a unique identifying number
- Name and contact details for: parents/carers, education setting, primary medical practitioner (e.g. GP practice) and any other service working with them.
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Explicit consent will be required to record contact details for sensitive services e.g. mental health/substance abuse services.

Access to **Contactpoint** will be restricted to authorised users who will need it as part of their work. This will include those working in health, education, social care, youth justice and the voluntary sector.

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