

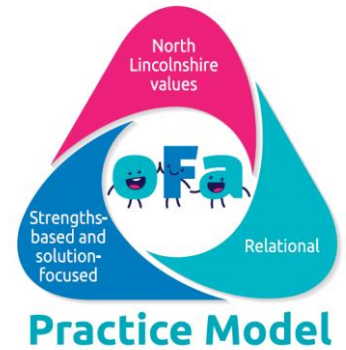
THE ROLE OF THE LEAD PROFESSIONAL



Introduction and context

Through our One Family Approach, we aim to create a system that works for all children and families. The One Family Approach Practice Model provides the framework for how every professional in North Lincolnshire should work with children, young people and families. It is based upon our North Lincolnshire culture, values and beliefs and helps us achieve our ambition to keep children in their families, in their schools and in their communities.

The [Children's Multi-Agency Resilience and Safeguarding \(MARS\) arrangements](#) set out the arrangements for safeguarding partners to work together with other agencies, to identify and respond to the needs of children in North Lincolnshire.



Why are Lead Professionals needed?

Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to support children and families in need. The role of the Lead Professional ultimately prevents families from experiencing harm through coordinating help and support at the earliest point.

In North Lincolnshire, we want children, young people and families to be supported by professionals who are resilient, confident, competent and with authorisation to do what they think is the right thing to do via the fewest best interventions, without escalating or referring children and families on unnecessarily, leading to whole family turnaround.

The role and expectations of the Lead Professional

The Lead Professional:

- undertakes the assessment and facilitates family led planning
- acts as an advocate for the family, recognising parents as partners
- co-ordinates help to address underlying issues
- promotes communication and accountability of the family and other professionals
- takes responsibility for reviewing the plan regularly, enabling and monitoring progress
- makes sure that updates of the plan are shared with the family and professionals
- will be one of the professionals who are working with the family
- is responsible for following up concerns if you are not satisfied with an agency response, including escalating their concerns if they remain dissatisfied

The Lead Professional DOES NOT:

- always have the most contact with the family
- take sole responsibility for administration and coordination – for example, supporting a family to attend a meeting, chairing, taking notes are all tasks that the team around the family who are part of the plan should help with

Who can be a Lead Professional?

The Lead Professional is usually the person who first recognises an emerging need and or who has written the Early Help Assessment, at least until the first initial Early Help Review meeting where a decision can be made jointly with the family as the professional most relevant to the child, young person or family, with the skills to carry out this role.

The person who takes on the role of Lead Professional will vary according to the specific needs of the child and family. Many practitioners in the children's workforce can take on the Lead Professional role, as the skills, competence and knowledge required to carry it out are similar regardless of professional background or role. The role has been defined by the functions and skills, rather than by particular professional or practitioner groupings.

The choice of lead professional for a child or young person should be made by considering the following factors:

- the wishes of the child and family
- the level of trust and relationship with the child and family
- the person and agency with primary responsibility for addressing the child and family's needs
- a clear statutory responsibility to lead on work with the child and family
- a previous or ongoing relationship with the child
- the skills, ability and capacity to provide a coordinating role in relation to other practitioners involved with the child or family

Support for the Lead Professional

It is essential that the other professionals involved with the family, support the Lead Professional in this role, by such means as agreeing to Chair, make notes to update, amend and share the review plan, ensuring that they attend meetings as required and that they provide information and follow through actions as agreed.

In the absence of the Lead Professional i.e. annual leave, short-term sickness and exceptional circumstances, other supporting professionals should continue to support the functions of the Lead Professional where possible to ensure children, young people and families receive seamless support.

In order that the Lead Professional can carry out the role effectively, they must have access to high quality supervision and line management support from their agency, and where appropriate additional training to enable them to make appropriate decisions.

Changing the Lead Professional

Although it is preferable that there is continuity in the person undertaking a Lead Professional role with a child or young person, there will be circumstances where a change in Lead Professional is required. Examples of such situations are:

- Where the identified needs of the child change significantly and it would make sense for a professional from a particular agency to take on the role (for example, where initial needs were health related, but these are resolved, and the major need is then identified as school related)
- Where the allocated Lead Professional is changing role or leaving employment
- Where the current Lead Professional is ceasing involvement with the family. This could be because needs have been identified as complex and a statutory agency has become involved, or because needs have become less complex, and their involvement is no longer necessary
- It could also be because a family stops working with or trusting the service currently providing the Lead Professional role or where the child, young person or parent/carer requests a change of Lead Professional

Useful references

North Lincolnshire Children's MARS website: www.northlincsmars.co.uk

Early Help Assessment Forms and guidance can be found on the Early Help page of the Children's MARS website - <https://www.northlincsmars.co.uk/early-help/>