Becoming a Lead Professional for an Early Help CAF

...being the voice, advocate and coordinator for children with multiple unmet needs

When a child or young person has multiple needs and requires more than one service to help the role of the Lead Professional is created as part of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) early help process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the role of a Lead Professional?</th>
<th>The Lead Professional is not:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act as a single point of contact for the child/family</td>
<td>Expected to be an ‘expert’ on everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower the child/family to make decisions and be heard</td>
<td>Responsible or accountable for the actions of other practitioners or services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep practitioners focused on the child/family</td>
<td>Automatically the person who undertakes the CAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate actions and avoid potential duplication</td>
<td>A job title or a new role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How is the Lead Professional appointed?

The person who undertook the CAF and identified the child’s need for a multi-agency response convenes a Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting, inviting practitioners from relevant services. At the first TAC the team discuss and collectively agree who should take on the role of Lead Professional. The person who convenes the first TAC does not automatically take on the Lead Professional role (although for registration purposes their name will be listed as the Lead Professional until the CAF Team are notified after the first TAC who has taken on that role).

What will help us agree who is best placed to become the Lead Professional? Consider:

- what are the predominant needs? Are they the focus of any services present at the TAC?
- are any services currently responsible (including statutorily) for meeting these needs?
- does anyone have a previous, ongoing or potential relationship with the child and/or family?
- does anyone have a responsibility to be an advocate for the child or young person?
- does the parent/carer or young person wish to be the Lead Professional? Or do they have a preference who should (or shouldn’t) take on this role?
- who has knowledge of local services – or has the capacity and willingness to find out?

If more than one person is suitable agree as a group who should take on the role - taking into account the wishes of the child/family. If no-one volunteers or is willing or able to take on the role then the person who convened the TAC must take a record of this on the TAC Plan and contact their local CAF Coordinator for advice. TAC attendees should discuss this with their line manager.

What if there is disagreement over what help the child/young person needs?

The role of the TAC is to fully understand and discuss the needs of the child/young person. In the majority of cases it will be apparent what services and support they will need. If there is no agreement during the TAC (because, for example, the needs are complex) ensure the dissenting views are recorded. If support for the
child/young person will be delayed due to the difference in opinion the Lead Professional should contact their local CAF Coordinator for advice.

What does the Lead Professional actually do?

- **Ensures the CAF has been registered.** Acts as a point of contact. Convenes TAC meetings and notifies the CAF Team of TAC and Review dates.
- **Listens to the child/young person, understands their worries and wishes and ensures these are heard and shared appropriately.**
- **Convenes a CAF Review when considering closing a CAF.**
- **Escalates concerns to appropriate services – including to children’s social care if there are concerns of significant harm or neglect (any practitioner working with the child/young person has this duty).**
- **Ensures agreed actions and updates are recorded on the TAC Delivery Plan and circulated to all involved.**
- **Ensure the CAF is de-registered (closed) when actions are complete and the child/young person’s needs have been met.**
- **Liaise with practitioners to ensure actions are coordinated and duplication avoided.**

How long do I stay in the Lead Professional role?

The Lead Professional role ends when the TAC (including the child and family) collectively agrees:

- that another practitioner is more suitable for the role.
- it is no longer appropriate for the current Lead Professional to be involved or to act as a coordinator.
- the young person or a family member wishes to take on the role themselves or have a strong preference for another person.
- the Lead Professional feels they can no longer offer the child/family the support they require (e.g. conflict of interest).
- to de-register (close) the CAF as either:
  - outcomes have been met
  - the child/family have moved out of Wiltshire
  - CAF consent is withdrawn
  - the young person reaches 18 years old
  - the case has escalated to ‘Child in Need’ or ‘Child Protection’ within Children’s Social Care. Note that at this point members of the TAC (including the Lead Professional) are expected to continue working with the child/family under the guidance and lead of the allocated social worker.

What do TAC members do?

- Complete all agreed actions that were identified on the TAC Delivery Plan as being their responsibility.
- Help to engage other practitioners to support the child/family.
- Offer to update progress on the TAC Delivery Plan during the TAC meeting – and perhaps offer to take TAC notes of key decisions too.
- Support other TAC members in understanding what services are available and what they offer.
- Offer meeting space.

If you are a manager of someone who has taken on the role of Lead Professional you can best support them by understanding the purpose and functions of the Lead Professional role and offering regular supervision, advice and support.

For more information and guidance:  
[www.wiltshirepathways.org/?CAF](http://www.wiltshirepathways.org/?CAF) and [www.wiltshirescb.org.uk](http://www.wiltshirescb.org.uk) / CAF Helpline 01225 713884 (Mon-Fri 9-5)