



**The lead professional is the one practitioner who takes a 'lead role' to ensure that front-line services are co-ordinated, coherent and achieving intended outcomes.**

**This way all children and young people who require integrated support from more than one practitioner should experience a seamless and effective service.**

### Background

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

The statutory guidance on the Children Act 2004 (S10: interagency co-operation and S11: safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children) sets out clear expectations for the implementation of the role.

The Children's Workforce Development Council assumed responsibility for supporting the implementation of the lead professional role from October 2006.

### What is the role of a lead professional?

The lead professional is not a new role. Instead, s/he deliver **three core functions** as part of their work:

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

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 will lead professionals work with?

Lead professionals work with children and young people with additional (including complex) needs who require an integrated package of support from more than one practitioner.

### Who should be the lead professional?

This role can be taken on by different types of practitioners in the children's workforce. This is because the skills and knowledge required to carry out the role are similar, regardless of professional background or job.

### 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

Guidance for managers and practitioners is available from the Children's Workforce Development Council's website: [www.cwdcouncil.org.uk](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk). This was updated in July 2007 and updates the guidance issued in July 2005. It is based on the practice emerging in a number of authorities.

The guides set out a broad framework of the responsibilities, skills and knowledge required in a lead professional and draws together key themes from areas that have developed the role: effective practice models, working solutions, and suggestions as to how the role may be developed, implemented and managed in practice.

### Budget-holding lead professional

Fifteen local authorities are piloting a related concept – that of the budget-holding lead professional.

The aim is 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.

For more resources and information:  
visit the Children's Workforce Development  
Council website: [www.cwdcouncil.org.uk](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk),  
or the Every Child Matters website:  
[www.ecm.gov.uk](http://www.ecm.gov.uk).

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