

# HILLINGDON SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP

## 7-MINUTE BRIEFING

### THINK FAMILY

#### 7. Review

Take a moment to consider the implications of this briefing for you and your team.

- \* How well do you understand the networks of the families you work with?
- \* Are there any family members 'hidden'?
- \* Do you know how to refer to adult/child safeguarding services?

Be curious about the relationships and dynamics of the families you are working with. Think Family in every contact that you have. What are the implications of what you know for others?

#### 1. Introduction

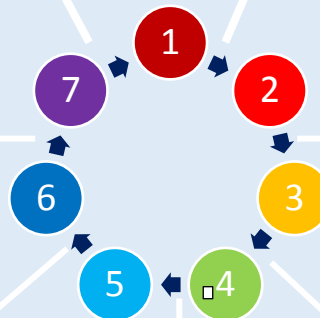
Using a Think Family approach means securing better outcomes for adults, children and families by coordinating the support and delivery of services from all organisations.

None of us exist in isolation and our complexity is best reflected in a whole-family approach.

#### 2. Background

The Think Family approach was developed in response to the need to consider the impact of parental mental health difficulties on children. Over time it's application has expanded and it is now widely recognised as key to effective safeguarding practice with both children and adults.

As practitioners we need to explore and understand family networks in order to be effective. We also need to consider the impact of any difficulties on ALL family members, and ensure we look beyond our primary client.



#### 6. Pressures of Caring

Parents and carers can also experience difficulties that have their root in the stresses and strains associated with looking after another person. Practitioners should consider this as a matter of course and signpost/refer to sources of support as required.

#### 5. Adult Difficulties

It is well understood that adult difficulties impact upon a parent's capacity to meet the needs of children.

Research shows that exposure to parental mental health issues, substance misuse and domestic abuse are particularly harmful for children and young people.

It is essential that professionals who work primarily with adults who have mental health difficulties, misuse substances, or are the victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse actively consider the impact on any children and adults being cared for, and make safeguarding referrals where appropriate.

#### 3. What is Family?

The concept of family means different things to different people. Families can include an extended network of relatives and friends, this is often dynamic. Practitioners should explore the networks of children and adults. This can help to identify sources of support as well as potential risks.

#### 4. Working Together

Early intervention is essential to effective safeguarding. This requires practitioners to consider the wider implications of information known, and to seek support/advice from other agencies where required.

The Think Family approach enables practitioners to work together across the entire continuum of safeguarding work, from intervening early to prevent a difficulty from becoming a risk, to understanding the dynamics in complex safeguarding cases and developing an intervention plan. As professionals we need to recognise and accept the limits of our own expertise, and seek advice when necessary.