

1

Background

The 'think whole family' approach was initially developed in response to the need to consider the impact of parental mental health on the care of their children.

It is now widely recognised as a key approach to effective safeguarding practice with both children and adults.

We need to consider the impact of challenges, on ALL family members, and ensure we look beyond the individual receiving support, be that the adult or child.

This should be embedded in everything we do as practitioners and every day practice.

**THINK ADULT; THINK CHILD;
THINK FAMILY**

2

Why it matters

The think **whole family** approach is aligned to safeguarding practice.

Family means different things to different people.

Families can be dynamic, including an extended network of relatives and friends.

Practitioners should be **curious** and explore the networks and interdependencies between children and adults.

People do not exist in isolation and our approach in Blackpool is to '**think household**' or '**family approach**'.

3

Information

If you primarily work with **adults**, you should consider the needs of **children** and other people in the household.

If you work primarily with **children**, you should consider the needs of others in the family or household, including **adults**. Adult challenges such as parental mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse can impact a parent's capacity to meet the needs of their children.

4

It is essential for professionals working primarily with adults to actively consider the impact on any children, or other adults, being cared for and offer support at the right time.

This may include making safeguarding referrals, or arranging a whole family MDT – early, multi-agency support is key.

5

Parents and carers may experience pressures and strains of looking after someone else.

Practitioners are well placed to reach out and offer support when it is needed. This can include undertaking Carers Assessments; considering young people in the home who may be a Young Carer; and considering the wider family and friends network in respect of 'informal carers'.

Practitioners should also consider signposting families to sources of support, such as [Blackpool Carers Centre](#).

6

What to do

- ✓ Use genograms to explore and identify support networks around the family.
- ✓ Consider the needs of the 'whole family' including challenges such as poverty; drugs and alcohol; domestic abuse; mental health.
- ✓ Check Case Management Systems to identify if any other professionals are involved.

*** Be professionally curious ***
Think the unthinkable

7

Questions to consider

REFLECT on what this might mean to you. How well do you understand the networks of the families you work with?

REVIEW how often your teams are curious about relationships and dynamics of the families you are working with.

THINK FAMILY in every contact that you have.

SHARE information in an appropriate way.

RECORD case notes, including decision-making and plans.

LEARN from Safeguarding Adult Reviews: [Adult V](#)

