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Background

The "Think Family" approach emphasises the importance of considering the needs of the entire family when working with children and vulnerable families.

It encourages professionals to look beyond the individual they are supporting and recognise the interconnectivity with the needs of family members.

In Lancashire, 'Think Family' focuses on working with the whole family unit to identify and build upon their strengths, aiming to foster positive changes.

It is a strengths-based approach and is central to Lancashire's vision of delivering excellent outcomes for children, young people and families.

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Why it matters

Adopting a "Think Family" approach is crucial because it helps identify and address issues that may affect the entire family unit. By understanding the broader context, professionals can provide more effective interventions, prevent crises, and promote long-term well-being.

This approach recognises individuals do not exist in isolation & the needs of parents and children are often interconnected. For instance, parents with complex needs, such as mental health issues, substance misuse, or involvement with the criminal justice system, can significantly impact their ability to care for their children.

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Information

The "Think Family" approach involves several key principles:

- **Holistic Assessment:** Evaluating the needs of all family members, not just the child receiving direct support.
- **Integrated Services:** Coordinating support across different services and agencies to ensure a seamless and collaborative multi-agency response.
- **Early Intervention:** Identifying and addressing issues early to prevent escalation and reduce the need for more intensive interventions later.

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- **Shared Responsibility:** Recognising safeguarding is everyone's responsibility & effective communication & collaboration are essential.
- **Strengths-Based Approach:** Focusing on the strengths & resources within the family to empower & support them in overcoming challenges & barriers.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Being aware of & respecting the cultural backgrounds & values of the families being supported.

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Professional Curiosity

Professional curiosity is critical to the 'Think Family' approach.

- It involves being inquisitive & open-minded when working with families.
- It means not taking things at face value & being willing and able to ask probing questions to understand the underlying issues.

Professional curiosity ensures the Think Family approach is implemented effectively, by fostering an environment where questions are encouraged, remaining determined and assumptions are challenged, this can include thinking the unthinkable.

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What to do

- **Conduct Comprehensive Assessments:** Include all family members in assessments, consider their needs & circumstances.
- **Collaborate with Other Agencies:** Work closely with other professionals and services to provide coordinated support.
- **Maintain Open Communication:** Ensure information is shared appropriately and all relevant parties are kept informed and families are involved in the decision-making process.

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Questions to consider

& Useful resources

How are you ensuring that the needs of the entire family are considered when providing support to an individual?

[Lancashire Family Safeguarding](#)

[Families at risk review](#)

[Think Family](#)

[Think Family Video](#)

[Think Family – NHS Safeguarding](#)

[Family Advocacy Services](#)

[Lancashire Carers Service](#)

[Professional Curiosity: Guidance for Practitioners](#)

