

Guidance for Team around the Family Panels

Report

April 2012

Guidance for Team around the Family Panels

Report

1 Introduction

Services in X Borough have agreed to work more closely together to provide effective, coordinated planning and service delivery for children, young people and families with additional needs.

**The vision for Team around the Family in X Borough is a:
Team around the Family for the benefit of the child - working together with families to overcome challenges and enable children to reach their full potential**

In order to achieve this vision, it is important that practitioners feel supported in making the right decisions when working with a family where there are additional needs, particularly where these needs are complex or entrenched, or where it is difficult to engage them in positive change.

The local Team around the Family Panels will provide this support to practitioners, and therefore indirectly to families, and as such is an integral part of the overall arrangements in X Borough.

Although the overall TAF Guidance includes sections about the TAF Panel, this document offers practitioners and managers contributing to its operation additional information about how to discharge their duties in practice.

It includes sections relating to:

- Objectives of the Panel
- Panel Membership
- The Role of the TAF Coordinator
- The Role of the TAF Panel Chair
- The Responsibilities of TAF Panel Members prior to Ordinary Panel Meetings
- The Nature of Case Discussion at Ordinary Panel Meetings
- Recording of Panel Meeting Findings and Recommendations
- When should the Referring Practitioner / Family Member(s) attend and how can they be supported to participate?
- The Panel's Quality Assurance Role – Extra Ordinary Meetings

2 Objectives of the Team around the Family Panel

The **principal objective** of the Team around the Family Panel in X Borough is to provide a forum for regular multi-agency discussion about how best to support local families with additional needs, in particular:

- Where the family issues are complex.
- Where the family has already been difficult to engage.
- Where it has already been difficult to access the resources required to implement the support plan.
- There is uncertainty about what course of action should be taken with or proposed to the family.
- The indication of need has been compiled remotely, for example 'step down' referrals from specialist services.

The Panel is a place where practitioners can share their concerns with other knowledgeable professionals, with the aim being to identify the most appropriate way forward for the family¹.

A **secondary, but nonetheless important objective** of the Panel is to contribute to the quality assurance of Team around the Family arrangements more widely. These activities are described in detail in Section 10 of this document.

3 Panel Membership

Each Panel will comprise of a group of core members, but there should be flexibility about who else should attend in each case to discuss the needs of

¹ Other families with additional needs can usually be supported by the whole Team around the Family system without reference to the Panel.

individual families, for example because of their involvement with a specific child or young person, or because they have expertise in a specific area that has been identified. The TAF Coordinator will make recommendations in advance of each Panel meeting and will invite additional members as appropriate as part of their core duties.

Core members are likely to be drawn from the following disciplines at a level of management able to commit resources in relation to individual cases:

- Community Nursing
- Voluntary Sector
- Early Years
- Attendance and Wellbeing Service
- Access and Inclusion Services
- Housing (including Strategic Prevention)
- Schools
- Youth Offending / Prevention Services
- Domestic Abuse Services
- Children's Social Services
- Services for Young People
- Police
- Community Safety

Core members are required to attend the Panel regularly and for its whole duration, and to nominate a suitably qualified deputy with delegated responsibility to make decisions / commit resources if this is occasionally not possible. All Panel members should be mindful that failing to attend a meeting will very likely hold up progress not only for the panel itself but also for the families involved.

Additional members of the Panel might be drawn, for example from:

- Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Adult Substance Misuse Services
- Adult Mental Health Services
- Individual Schools

4 The Role of the TAF Coordinator

The TAF Coordinator plays a central role in relation to the whole TAF system in the local area. Their role in relation to TAF Panels includes:

- Responding to initial enquiries and queries and handling all referrals into the Panel.
- Providing advance notice about Panel meetings to all core and additional members, including a schedule of dates for core members to be agreed in advance and at least 1 week's notice for additional members.
- Producing a pack of papers relating to each case to be considered at Panel at least 3 working days before the meeting.
- Making recommendations about whether a referring practitioners and/or family member(s) should attend a Panel meeting.
- Circulation of Panel recommendations and decisions within 3 working days of each meeting to:
 - Panel members (core and additional as appropriate)
 - Referring practitioners or agencies who, in turn, have a responsibility to share these with the family
- Support to the Panel Chair in relation to their duties and responsibilities.
- Providing a point of contact for community-based practitioners and specialist services about requests for Step Up (to specialist services) and Step Down (to Team around the Family arrangements)².
- Making recommendations to be considered by the Chair and Panel, for example about cases that should return to Panel for re-consideration.
- Some limited executive decisions, for example emergency allocation of resources prior to Panel meetings.
- Administration of dedicated TAF Panel resources.

5 The Role of the TAF Panel Chair

Each Panel has a nominated Chair and Vice Chair.

The role of the Chair (and in their absence, the Vice Chair) is to:

- Facilitate family case discussions and keep them on track.
- Ensure the child / young person and their needs are central to discussion.

² More information about what is required for Step Up / Step Down is contained in the general TAF Guidance Document for Practitioners

- Ensure that all Panel members have a voice.
- Assist in the resolution of any conflict / disagreement.
- Ensure the Panel meets as scheduled.
- Ensure that some Panel meetings have time and space to consider wider TAF issues such as quality assurance reviews of the whole pathway.

6 Responsibilities of Panel Members Prior to Ordinary Panel Meetings

The TAF Coordinator will provide Panel members with the following information in relation to each referred family at least 2 working days before each ordinary Panel meeting:

Full TAF Assessment Document
Family Questionnaire(s) where completed
Other attachments to the Assessment Document, for example single agency assessment, step-down documentation

Each family 'pack' will be stapled together or attached together in a way that makes most sense in each case. The full complement of family packs will be sent to all Panel members by first class post or other suitable alternative and in envelopes that are likely to be highly resistant to tearing / accidental opening / spoiling for example plastic envelopes. The full complement of packs for each meeting will be accompanied by a short note confirming whether it is proposed that any referring workers and/or family members will be attending the meeting and also the full extent of family agreement to information sharing³, for example:

All families have agreed to full information sharing.

Most families have agreed to full information sharing. The exception is Family X who have agreed to

Having received the relevant paperwork from the TAF Coordinator and prior to the Panel meeting itself, members must:

- Read and familiarise themselves with the papers, including in particular the TAF assessment and associated documentation (for example: family questionnaire, step down information), and begin to identify the key issues.

³ Note that where consent has not been obtained, the case should not be discussed unless there are child protection concerns.

- Ascertain information that is likely to be relevant to the case discussion in each case, and bring this to the meeting where it can be shared. For example: whether the family or child is known to their service; whether the family or child has accessed their services in the past; any issues or concerns relevant to family members that can be shared.
- Identify what support / resources their agency could offer to each family.

7 The Nature of Case Discussions at Ordinary Panel Meetings

At each ordinary Panel meeting, the agenda will be largely defined by case discussions relating to each family referred to it. Other agenda items should be minimised where possible to ensure that the focus remains on case discussion.

7.1 Facilitation of Case Discussions

Case discussions will be facilitated by the Panel Chair, with support from the TAF Coordinator and Administrator.

As a general rule, it will be helpful to restrict each case discussion to **approximately 30 minutes**, but with some flexibility built in to ensure that more straight forward or more complex cases can be handled appropriately.

Each case discussion should include three elements:

- Hearing and sharing information about the family
- Interpreting the information
- Decision making

Based on the above, a guideline structure for each discussion is suggested below. It is envisaged that the facilitator will be the Chair or Vice Chair of the Panel.

Objective	Facilitator Questions	Contributions
Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are the key strengths and challenges for this family based on the assessment paperwork? ■ What other information can be shared about the family that is relevant to this discussion? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mainly TAF Coordinator who can summarise and draw members' attention to the summary of family strengths and needs in each Assessment ■ All Panel members
Interpreting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is this an appropriate case for Team around the Family? ■ What is the level of need (with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suggestions from TAF Coordinator + Panel discussion if necessary ■ TAF Coordinator / Chair

Objective	Facilitator Questions	Contributions
	<p>reference to Levels 1-5 indicated in the Assessment Paperwork)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What kind of support is indicated here? ■ Are there any specific risks with regard to the child or Key Worker worth noting? 	<p>to draw Panel attention to the windscreen model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All Panel members ■ All Panel members
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does the Panel have any suggestions about specific kinds of support that may be helpful for this family? ■ What specific resources do Panel Members propose should be committed here, including dedicated Panel resources? ■ Does the Panel suggest a particular individual or agency to be responsible for Key Working this family? ■ Does the Panel have any suggestions about timescales, for example for engagement, until review? ■ Does the Panel have any suggestions about how risk should be managed? ■ Does the additional information shared at Panel indicate any increased or decreased levels of need relating to individual domains worth noting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All Panel members ■ All Panel members ■ All Panel members, with advice from the TAF Coordinator ■ All Panel members ■ All Panel members ■ All Panel members

Decision making is by consensus and decisions must be recorded in writing contemporaneously.

This can be done in practice by note taking by the administrator or by recording on a lap top where the screen is projected (for subsequent write up).

The write up must include key elements of both the 'Interpreting' and 'Decision Making' elements of the facilitated case discussion – see Section 8 below for more information.

Before moving on to each new 'case', the Chair should check the recorded decisions and recommendations with Panel members.

7.2 Behaviours and Ground Rules for the Panel Meetings

In order for multi-agency panel meetings to run smoothly it is useful to develop a code of behaviour for all participants. These apply to all those attending the meeting.

- Be aware of time. Be succinct so that everyone can give their input.
- Be sensitive to other people's individual style of communication.
- Use plain English and avoid jargon where possible. If necessary, explain terminology.
- Refrain from gossip – focus on the facts and stick to the Information Sharing Protocol.
- Respect peoples' right to an opinion, even though you may not agree with them.
- If you disagree with someone, you have a right to challenge them respectfully.
- Concentrate on the issue and family being discussed.
- Focus on outcomes and benefits for the child/young person.
- Take responsibility for your own decision to contribute or not contribute.
- Use 'I' and speak for yourself.
- Stay calm and non-defensive.
- Show integrity and confidentiality.
- Present sensitively and clearly your professional opinion about needs, strengths, issues and ways forward, even if this may be uncomfortable for others including in particular families to hear.
- Avoid making judgements about people – you may only be seeing one side of a person.

8 How should General Panel Findings and Recommendations be recorded?

The need to concisely record and communicate Panel findings and recommendations is acknowledged in the Section above.

An example proforma for recording these findings and recommendations is provided below:

Date of Panel Meeting:			
Child / Young Person and Family Name:			
Unique Reference Number:			
Approximate Level of Overall Family Need (from case discussion at Panel):			
1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5			
	Yes or No?	Reason(s) if given	Specifics / next steps
Is Team around the Family an appropriate way forward for this family or is another support more appropriate?	Y/N		
Has the Panel made any suggestion(s) about the kinds of support that might be helpful?	Y/N		
Has the Panel proposed any specific resources or services that should be made available to this family?	Y/N		
Has the Panel made a recommendation about who should be the family's Key Worker?	Y/N		
Has the Panel made a recommendation about who else should participate in the Team around the Family?	Y/N		
Any other Panel recommendations?	Y/N		
Other Relevant Information			

These findings and recommendations should be sent to the referring practitioner and to all Panel members within 3 working days of the Panel meeting. The referring practitioner has a responsibility to inform the family members of the result of the Panel meeting as soon as possible thereafter: this would usually include sharing of the actual document.

Where the Panel recommends that a 'Step Up' referral should be made to a specialist service, the TAF Coordinator in consultation with the family Key

Worker or referring practitioner (where there is one) will need to send the following documents to the relevant service as soon as possible after the end of the Panel meeting:

- The multi-agency referral form, if one is required by the specialist agency, and except in an emergency.
- The completed TAF Panel decision form.
- TAF documents relevant to the child and family, for example: TAF Assessment, Family Support Plan, TAF Review
- The name and contact details of the TAF Key Worker, if there is one.
- Confirmation that the family consents to the referral (unless consent is not required, for example where there are child protection concerns)⁴.

The TAF Coordinator would ordinarily send these documents to the specialist service in an emergency scenario. Where the referral is not urgent, it would usually be the referring practitioner / Key Worker to take responsibility for sending the information.

Where the Panel has considered a 'Step Down' referral from specialist services, the TAF Coordinator will send the completed Panel decision form to the nominated Key Worker and referring agent from specialist services as soon as possible.

9 When should the referring practitioner / family members attend – and how can they be supported to participate?

Whilst it will be usual for case information (including assessments) to be presented to the Panel via the TAF Coordinator, it may occasionally be appropriate for the referring worker or even a family member also to attend, for example:

- Where the needs remain unclear, even after a TAF assessment.
- Where the referring worker believes it will be helpful for the family / themselves to participate in this initial case discussion and to hear from Panel members.

The TAF Coordinator will need to make a judgement about the extent to which it is likely to be helpful for the referring worker and/or family member(s) to attend. They may seek advice from the referring worker and/or the Panel Chair in each case.

⁴ See General TAF Guidance for Practitioners for full information about the process for Step Up / Step Down

Where family members attend, the Panel will pro-actively promote family engagement and involvement at all times.

Family members can be supported in a range of ways, including:

- Referring practitioner to prepare family for attending the meeting, including by explaining the process and what will be discussed (the TAF Coordinator can advise the practitioner here).
- Referring practitioner must attend with the family.
- Panel Chair to warmly welcome the family member(s) and to ensure that the seating is conducive to their participation.
- Panel Chair to ensure that introductions are made initially and that the process is explained in general terms.
- Panel Chair to invite family members to describe in their own words what they think are the family strengths and needs, and what they think needs to change.
- Panel chair to ask family member(s) for their perspective about each issue being discussed.
- Panel Chair to ensure that family member(s) are not bullied during the process, and feel that they have a voice throughout.
- Consideration of any potential conflict of interest across family members and how this should be handled.

10 The Panel's Quality Assurance Role – Extra Ordinary Meetings

The Panel will also consider information presented to it by the TAF Coordinator relating to the overall operation of the Team around the Family pathway in the area, including:

- The number of TAFs commenced, in operation and closed per quarter;
- The nature of and trends in presenting need (for example: by level; by issue; by age group; by district);
- The identification of any gaps or quality issues (including accessibility) relating to relevant local services;
- The take up and quality of key working.
- The progress made or 'distance travelled' by families subject to TAF arrangements;
- Complaints⁵ and compliments.
- The success of engaging with families, including by the Panel.
- Use of the dedicated Panel resource.

⁵ For more information about complaints and the complaints procedures relating to the TAF Pathway, please see the Overall Guidance for Practitioners

- The quality of assessments and any associated training needs.
- The number and type of assessments where the Panel has adapted levels of need in specific domains.
- The number and nature of cases referred to specialist services by the Panel by way of 'Step Up' arrangements, and how they have been addressed.
- The number and nature of cases referred by specialist services to the TAF Panel by way of 'Step Down' arrangements, and how they have been addressed.

This information should be presented by the TAF Coordinator to the TAF Panel at least every 6 months. This may require either a slightly longer Panel session, or another arrangement to be agreed by each Panel in advance.

A report about the operation of the Panel locally should be produced by the TAF Coordinator in advance of the extra-ordinary meeting and sent to Panel members at least 3 working days before the meeting. The contents of the report should be discussed by Panel members and recommendations made and recorded in relation to each element. It may be helpful for Panel members to:

- Be reminded of the contents (by way of a summary presentation)
- Draw out key points – including strengths and issues
- Consider the 'story behind' performance strengths and issues
- Propose ways forward
- Agree ways forward, as appropriate and particularly where these changes can be made at a local level.
- Specifically address complaints.

It will be the responsibility of the Chair to facilitate this conversation and to ensure that the relevant analyses, proposals and decisions are recorded on the day.

These analyses, proposals and decisions should be incorporated into the original report and provide the basis for the Panel Chair's report to the authority-wide TAF Board every 6 months.

Responses to complaints will be agreed and recorded formally and shared with the relevant parties by the Chair within 5 working days of the meeting. If the issue cannot be resolved by the Panel, it should be referred by the Chair to the authority-wide TAF Board.

April 2012