



# Lewisham Information Sharing and Assessment

working together to achieve better outcomes for children

practitioners handbook



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## The National Framework

“The key is to ensure children receive services at the first onset of problems, and to prevent any child slipping through the net. We will do this by improving information sharing between agencies to ensure all local authorities have a list of children in their area, the services each child has had contact with, and the contact details of the relevant professionals who work with them. The Government will remove the legislative barriers to better information sharing, and the technical barriers to electronic information sharing through developing a single unique identity number and common data standards on the recording of information.”

**Every Child Matters, Government Green Paper on Children’s Services, September 2003**

The Government’s Green Paper, ‘Every Child Matters’, outlines plans to maximise every child’s life chances and opportunities from birth to 18 years.

The vision set out in the paper is that all agencies involved with children and young people – social services, education, health and criminal justice – should share information, bring their separate procedures into line, learn from each other and work together.

The paper sets out a framework which aims to improve the delivery of services to children and young people in need, and ensure that they receive appropriate support at an earlier stage. The paper builds on

existing plans to strengthen universal services that will support every child to develop their full potential.

Local authorities are now required to create mechanisms to ensure that Information Sharing and Assessment supports the delivery of their local preventative strategy. This will mean that professionals can ensure that children are getting their entitlement to community services. Existing legislation, as well as the new duties that practitioners will be placed under in The Children Bill, make it clear that information should be shared when a practitioner is concerned about the wellbeing of a particular child.

“We want to put children at the heart of our policies, and to organise services around their needs“

**Every Child Matters, Government Green Paper on Children’s Services, September 2003**

## Lewisham Information Sharing & Assessment

The aim of LISA is to improve information sharing and joint working between all agencies working with children assessed to be vulnerable, due to concerns about e.g. underachievement, harm or risk of offending.

It will achieve this through the provision of a shared electronic system which allows practitioners to log their concerns, identify other practitioners involved with a child and services via the service directory to meet the needs of the child.

### How will this help?

Agencies who share information can quickly identify whether other practitioners are involved, enabling them to work together to identify services for the child/young person. They will also be able to monitor children's progress more effectively.

Information can be shared at key transitional stages e.g. when children change schools, when there is a family problem affecting the child or when families move to another authority.

The outcomes will not be easily measurable at this stage but the benefits will be:-

- earlier intervention to identify vulnerable children
- better use of staff resources leading to reduced cost and ultimately better outcomes for children
- bringing together knowledge/expertise of resources available

- informing long term service planning
- helping to track vulnerable but mobile children
- sharing information with other agencies locally and nationally
- establishment of a common assessment process between agencies leading to reduced duplication of processes

A range of support tools have been developed for professionals. These are:

- the Toolkit – detailing the processes that should be followed;
- the Service Directory – listing information on local service providers; and
- Information Sharing Protocol and agreements – providing information about how to share information legally between agencies.

These tools can be accessed online at [www.childreninlewisham.co.uk](http://www.childreninlewisham.co.uk)

The Central Team of Professional Advisors are also available to offer advice and consultation to agencies on a day to day basis. This will include discussion in relation to thresholds for activating referrals to specialist agencies or child protection referrals to Social Care & Health. It will also include support and training on the IT system.

## What is a vulnerable child?

Vulnerable children are ‘disadvantaged children who would benefit from extra help from public agencies in order to make the best of their life chances.’ (Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, DOH 2000)

Children in Need are those children:

- unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services.
- whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired without provision of services.
- are disabled.

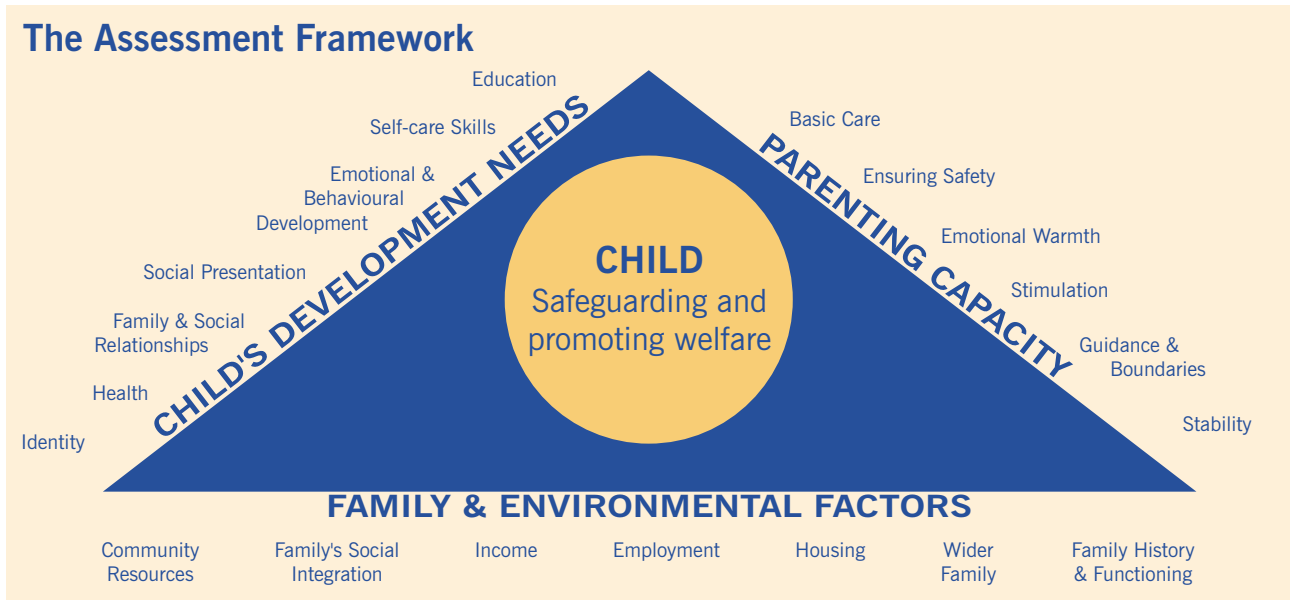
(Children Act 1989 S2, S17)

## The identification of vulnerable Children in Need.

The Assessment Framework can be used to help identify a child in need under the Children Act 1989. Practitioners will need to consider:

- Their developmental progress
- The ability of their parent/carer to meet their needs and promote their development
- Any environmental factors that help or get in the way of their development

## Lewisham Information Sharing & Assessment (continued)...



### Level 1: Universal

Represents children whose needs are being adequately met by their parents/carers, extended family and within their community. Therefore most children/young people under this level are unlikely to become involved with LISA. However children may also move through the various levels should their circumstances change.

### Level 2: Vulnerable

Where information suggests that difficulties within the family, or external environment is having an adverse affect on a child/young person's health or development.

Many concerns about children/young people can be reduced at this stage by linking need to services and accessing these

appropriately, giving advice, providing information support advocacy, or referring to another agency.

### Level 3: Complex

Situations where a child/young person's health or development is being impaired, or there is a high risk of impairment. Early intervention may include a family support meeting to discuss what support/services is needed and a plan made.

### Level 4: Acute

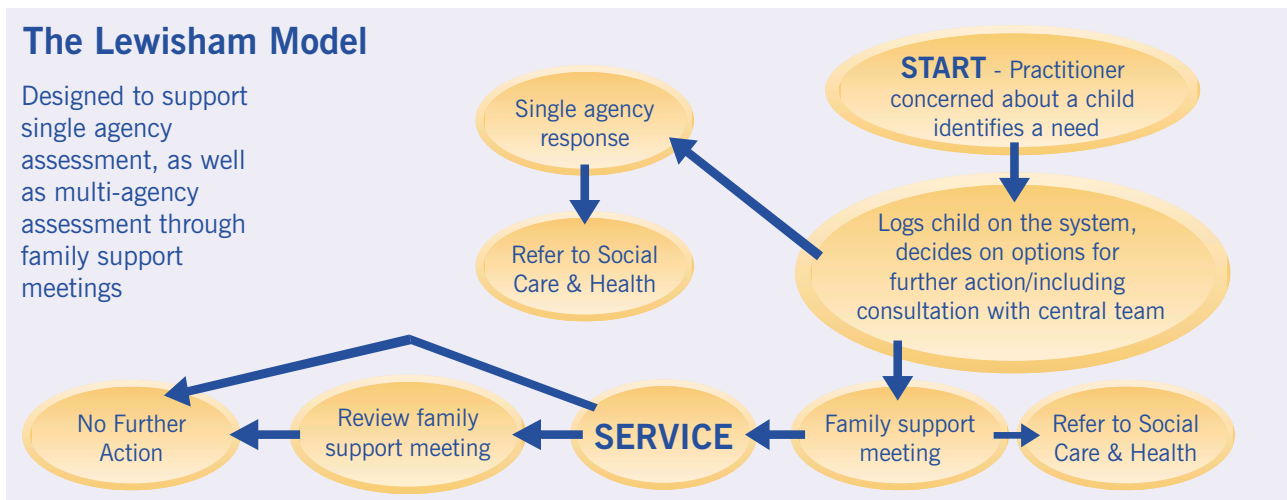
Households where the child/young person is experiencing significant harm or there is a likelihood of significant harm due to complex issues, an open Social Care & Health record already exists.

“The Children Bill will introduce a duty on local authorities to ensure robust partnership arrangements with other local agencies to improve the well being of children in the area.”

## How does LISA work in Lewisham?

LISA aims to support agencies to share information and joint working. Therefore, in order for LISA to achieve its aims, it is paramount that all agencies involved have a

shared commitment to working together to improve the delivery of services to children and young people.



### The Lewisham flowchart.

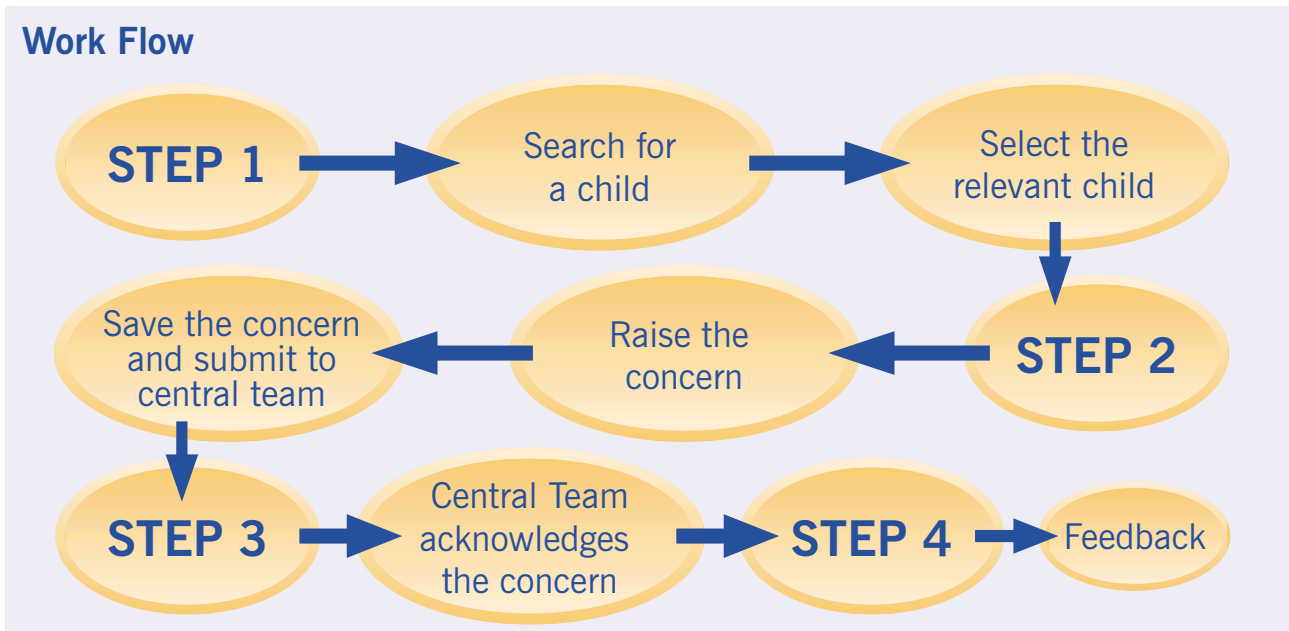
- If a professional (for example a health visitor) identifies a concern about a child, their service/agency should discuss the concern with the child's parent/carer and a plan of action agreed between them. If the plan is successful, there will be no need for further action as the concern will have been resolved within the agency in which it was raised. This should then be logged on the electronic system.
- There may, however, be occasions when more in-depth discussion will be required. At this point, the professional will log the concern onto the system. Continuing with the example of the health visitor, they will be able to access details of other professionals who may already be involved with that child or others in the family. The expectation is that they will then make direct contact with the other professionals and decide whether a Family Support Meeting may be necessary.

- A Family Support Meeting is designed to clarify concerns and consider a plan for supporting the child/young person and their family.  
*Advice and assistance to arrange a Family Support Meeting can be discussed with the Central Team.*  
If a meeting is held, the parents will be invited. A lead professional will be identified and a plan of support for the child will be agreed. A record of the decisions will be circulated to all parties including the LISA Project Co-ordinator.
- The decisions may be reviewed at a second meeting where further decisions can be made if continued support is needed. Progress against the plan will be monitored and support maintained until no longer necessary.  
Training on use of the system, the role of the Lead Professional & chairing meetings will be provided.

## How does the LISA ICT system work?

The diagram below explains the basic work flow and process but further practical training will be provided by the LISA central team to practitioners once the new system is

available. As a Practitioner you will be expected to have logged the concern onto system first, before support is given to the young person.



### Information accessed on the system

LISA is a secure well maintained system, which will only hold basic information about children and young people who have been identified as needing help and support from relevant agencies. This information will consist of the child's name, address, date of birth, gender and reference number.

The system will also show the name of the person holding parental responsibility for the child as well as contact details for all practitioners working with the individual child.

### Security Issues

All information put onto the system is secure and only seen by specific people. Only users who have been trained to use the system will have access to the system. All new users will be provided with log-in names and

passwords. Users will be able to use secure messaging and send emails within the system and all actions on the system will be monitored and audited by the central team.

### Service Directory

A LISA Service Directory will also be available on the system which will contain accurate, current and relevant information about other local providers of services to children/young people. It outlines a range of information such as the name and contact details of services, charges, opening times, accessibility, geographical areas served etc.

All services will be able to update their entry regularly to ensure the directory remains up-to-date. If you have any comments on the directory, please pass them to the LISA team or email: [Lisa@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Lisa@lewisham.gov.uk).



## Frequently Asked Question's

### 1. What is the legal framework for sharing information about children or young people?

Information can be shared under the Data Protection Act 1998, Children Act 1989 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Data Protection Act 1998 regulates the handling of personal information and requires that information must be: obtained and processed fairly and lawfully, processed for limited purposes, accurate and relevant, held for no longer than necessary, kept secure and only disclosed in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

The Children Act 1989 gives local authorities wide ranging responsibilities toward children in need, and there is a presumption of working in partnership with parents. There is also a presumption that agencies will work together and share information if it is thought to be in the best interest of the child. The Act also places a duty on local authorities to investigate and share information where a child in their area is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates, under Article 8, the respect for private and family life, home or correspondence. Article 8 is a qualified right insofar as it can be subject to restrictions in the public interest, providing such restrictions are clear and meet the test of proportionality. The rights of the child will therefore always be given priority over the rights of an adult under the Human Rights Act.

### 2. Do I require a parent or carer's consent before sharing information about a child or young person? (see consent forms)

A child or young person under the age of 18 may validly consent to the sharing of information concerning themselves, so long as they have sufficient understanding to do so. Where a child does not have the capacity to consent, you should seek the agreement of the parent or carer, as long as this does not pose additional risk to the child. In general, it is the duty of professionals, whether they are involved with adults or children, to place the needs of the child first.

Should a parent refuse to give consent to share information about their child who has been identified as vulnerable, the professionals involved may legitimately exchange information to safeguard the child, protect his/her health or morals, protect the rights and freedoms of others or prevent disorder or crime.

### 3. How secure is the information stored online?

Access to online information will be limited to assigned agencies involved. Each of the partner agencies will nominate a designated officer who will take responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this. In some cases it is expected that the representative will be the person designated as the Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 1998.

## Frequently Asked Question's (continued)...

### **4. How will LISA make a difference in Lewisham?**

This model will involve all relevant agencies at an earlier stage with the child/young person. It is a multi-agency approach to sharing information at the earliest stages of concern. It should minimise the cases of children/young people and families being passed between agencies, minimise duplication of assessments and service provision and reduce the number of inappropriate referrals to Social Care & Health. This should support the development of a common assessment framework and referral and thus improve the ability of agencies to work together effectively.

### **5. Will LISA improve on existing procedures or introduce new working systems ?**

LISA is being introduced with the aim of building on and improving processes and practices already in place. It is not about developing an entirely new system, rather focusing on joining up and improving mechanisms for information exchange between existing systems. LISA is promoting the Family Support Model which has the potential to create a multi-disciplinary support structure around children and their families which is beneficial to all involved.

### **6. How is a family support meeting run?**

The chair should ensure that the purpose and process of the meeting is discussed in advance and that the parent/carer (child/young person where appropriate) is invited and fully prepared.

Practitioners who have been working with the child/young person and their family will be invited to attend. The person raising the concern will chair the meeting, facilitating discussion between all involved. A brief plan, outlining the concerns and action identified to resolve these, including referral to specialist services will be recorded and distributed to those involved, together with the central team. A review of the plan will take place at the agreed time and the child monitored until support is no longer necessary.

### **7. What does setting up a Family Support Meeting involve?**

Ideally the agency that identified the child or logged the concern will be in a good position to proceed in setting up the Family Support Meeting. However, if support and advice is required the Central Team can provide assistance as necessary. Whoever takes the lead should ensure that the purpose and process of the meeting is discussed in advance and that the parent is fully prepared.

The parent should also be informed that relevant information will be shared with other services if it is agreed that it will benefit the child and family.

### **8. How do I inform parents about LISA and seek their consent?**

Practitioners have found that most parents/carers want what is best for their child and have therefore welcomed support. Professional Advisors can provide a guidance when seeking consent.



## Parent/Carer agreement to share Information

All parents in the borough were sent a leaflet providing information about Lewisham Information Sharing & Assessment. The leaflet explains what Information is held on children between 0-18 years old and how and with whom that information can be shared, together with your rights to access that information.

The person sharing this form with you will have already discussed the reason why they want to share information concerning your child. You will therefore know that it is because they feel your child would benefit from additional support or services. As we want to ensure that you are fully informed we would be grateful if you could sign this form after reading its content.

I am the parent/carers holding Parental Responsibility for

.....

I agree / do not agree that personal information can be Shared between agencies and professionals working with

.....

Signature of parent/carers

.....

Signature of professional/worker

.....

Agency

.....

Date signatures obtained

.....

Copies to child/young person and LISA Co-ordinator





## Young Persons agreement to share information

You should have been provided with a Children and Young Person leaflet about Lewisham Information Sharing & Assessment (LISA). The leaflet explains what information is held on children between birth to 18 years old and why and with whom that information can be shared, together with your rights to see that information.

The person sharing this form with you will have already discussed the reason why they want to share information about you and how they believe you might benefit from additional support or services.

As we want to ensure that you are fully informed we would be grateful if you could sign this form stating your agreement after reading its content.

I agree/do not agree that personal information about me can be shared between agencies and professionals working with me

Signature

.....

Signature of professional/worker

.....

Agency

.....

Date signatures obtained

.....

Copies to child/young person and LISA Co-ordinator





**For translation contact:**

Tercüme için temas ediniz:  
Pour la traduction, entrez en contact svp:  
செய்திமொழித் தொடர்புக்கு:  
LIÊN LẠC KHI CÓ NHU CẦU THÔNG DỊCH:  
Controkha troogmada:  
翻译请联络:  
Për një përkthim kontaktojeni:  
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ترجمے کے لئے رابطہ:  
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