

Taking the Lead

Supporting the Lead Professional Role in Tackling
Social Exclusion

This document has been produced by the Social Exclusion Task Force in the Cabinet Office, along with the Department for Work and Pensions; Communities and Local Government; Department for Business Innovation and Skills; Ministry of Justice; Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Families.

This summary document highlights the considerable role lead professionals can play in the lives of socially excluded people. It provides suggestions for how they can strengthen their role and help vulnerable adults into homes and jobs. It also sets out proposed actions for other partners who are able to influence and support the lead professional role.

This document is part of the Socially Excluded Adults Public Service Agreement (PSA 16) work programme (see page 3). It has been produced by Government in response to a new report from the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) on how lead professionals can improve the outcomes of socially excluded adults.

It will be of use if you carry out a lead professional role (see page 4 to check), or if you manage, commission or work with people who do.

INTRODUCTION

Tackling Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a short-hand term for what can happen when people have multiple and complex problems that render them unable to participate in society in the way that most of us take for granted. Their problems prevent them from making the most of the opportunities our society has to offer, and mean they are often unable to contribute themselves.

However, we know that one of the best ways to help people out of exclusion, and to prevent them from becoming excluded in the first place, is to provide them with some of the core foundations of a normal, everyday life. That's why in 2007, the Government set out that one of its top 30 targets would be to increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in homes and jobs.

This target, known as a Public Service Agreement (PSA 16), focuses on the following four at-risk groups:

- Care leavers at age 19
- Adult offenders under probation supervision
- Adults in contact with secondary mental health services and on the Care Programme Approach
- Adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities.

But of course, getting homes and a jobs will only be achieved with the right support from services. And it's not only employment and accommodation support that's needed. Services need to take care of all of a person's needs so that they can hold down a job and home, and are in the best position to get on in life and realise their potential.

Multiple Needs and Multiple Services

Adults with multiple problems need a range of services and can be in contact with several providers. However the most vulnerable people with the greatest needs can benefit less from the support on offer. This may be because they are less able to find out about and access available services and / or because they are less able to engage with and get the most from provision. A key challenge

in delivering PSA 16 is to ensure that all the various needs of vulnerable people are identified and effectively met.

To achieve this it's vital that services work together to provide joined-up support. The likelihood of achieving this is bolstered if one service practitioner guides the client through all the different services he or she may require, and co-ordinates the various providers around that person's needs.

This practitioner, who takes responsibility for ensuring that all of the client's needs are identified and met as fully as possible, is sometimes known as the lead professional. They work with a range of other professionals as necessary and have clear authority to take on the role.

Who is a lead professional?

There are currently named lead professional roles for three of the PSA 16 client groups. These are:

- Personal Advisers working with young people leaving care
- Offender Managers working with offenders under probation supervision
- Care Co-ordinators working with mental health service users

There is currently no named lead professional role for people with learning disabilities and a range of professionals may be playing this role, for example a care manager, advocate, community nurse or social worker.

What is the NatCen report about?

The Government is aware of the significant contribution lead professionals can make to supporting socially excluded people. Specifically, we are clear that they have a major role in helping to support vulnerable people into accommodation and employment.

However, to cultivate and enhance the impact of lead professionals, we wanted to know more about what enables them to deliver effectively for vulnerable groups, and what stands in their way.

Therefore, the seven government departments responsible for PSA 16 (Cabinet Office; Department for Work and Pensions; Communities and Local Government; Department for Business Innovation and

Skills; Ministry of Justice; Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Families) commissioned NatCen to undertake a study looking into what factors enable lead professionals to be successful in delivering PSA16 outcomes. The study aimed to evaluate current lead professional roles that work with the PSA 16 client groups, and to identify opportunities for strengthening these roles to better support vulnerable people into homes and jobs.

The Government welcomes the insights, findings and suggestions in the NatCen report and is keen for it to be used and acted on by as many people as possible. This document outlines the action that the PSA 16 departments would like to see taken to strengthen lead professional practice.

Proposed action to strengthen lead professional practice

The next three pages set out proposed actions to help lead professionals overcome some of the challenges they face and strengthen their support for vulnerable people. There are also proposals for how a range of other partners working with lead professionals can contribute to the effectiveness of these roles and so further improve the outcomes of vulnerable people.

Specifically, proposed actions are made for the following (click on each title to go straight there):

- [Lead professionals](#)
- [Line managers of lead professionals](#)
- [Service managers of lead professional services](#)
- [Commissioners of lead professional services](#)
- [Regional and local partners](#)
- [Central government departments](#)

The central government departments responsible for PSA 16 are committed to all of the proposed actions below. Progress is already being made on implementing the central government actions for which they are responsible. If you require further information and support on implementing any of the proposed actions you may find the Link Up Link In website useful (www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin) or please contact us at SETFpublicenquiries@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk.

PROPOSED ACTION TO STRENGTHEN LEAD PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Lead professionals

- Invest as much time as possible in cultivating positive, trusted relations with service users to maximise the opportunity for assessing and identifying the best way to meet their housing and employment needs.
- Seek opportunities for joint working with other lead professionals, other partners and service users to deliver home and job outcomes for vulnerable adults. In particular consider joint working methods such as information sharing arrangements, and shared person centred planning including case conferencing, and use the Link Up Link In website www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin.
- Seek and take up joint learning opportunities with other lead professionals, other partners and service users; and contribute to sharing good lead professional practice e.g. via the Link Up Link In website www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin.
- Seek clarity on their role as necessary, in particular, on the 'lead' element of the role, competencies and behaviours required, and expectations on delivery of housing and employment outcomes.

Line managers of lead professionals

- Expect, encourage and support lead professionals to engage in effective joint working with other lead professionals, other partners and service users to deliver home and job outcomes for vulnerable adults. In particular consider joint working methods such as information sharing arrangements, and shared person centred planning including case conferencing, and promoting use of the Link Up Link In website www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin.
- Provide lead professionals with regular support and supervision sessions that give an opportunity to discuss challenging cases, and lead professionals' learning and development needs and opportunities.
- Support lead professionals in identifying and taking part in joint learning opportunities with other lead professionals, other partners and service users.

- Contribute to sharing good lead professional practice e.g. via the Link Up Link In website www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin.
- Ensure lead professionals are clear on their role, in particular, on the 'lead' element of the role, competencies and behaviours required, and expectations on delivery of housing and employment outcomes.

Service managers of lead professional services

- Consider how service design can maximise the time lead professionals have for face-to-face contact with service users, for example by minimising lead professionals' administrative work by streamlining processes or covering this work via other roles. This will support lead professionals in cultivating positive, trusted relations with service users which will maximise the opportunity for assessing and identifying the best way to meet their housing and employment needs.
- Ensure performance management processes set clear expectations for lead professionals in contributing to home and job outcomes for vulnerable adults.
- Expect, encourage and support lead professionals to engage in effective joint working with other lead professionals, other partners and service users to deliver home and job outcomes for vulnerable adults – for example by providing contacts to aid networking and joint working.
- Generate joint learning opportunities for lead professionals with other lead professionals, other partners and service users, and support lead professionals to identify and take part in these.
- Contribute to sharing good lead professional practice e.g. via the Link Up Link In website www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin.

Commissioners of lead professional services

- Commission lead professional and other services for vulnerable adults that can demonstrate:
 - » Effective person centred planning, including a clear focus on assessing and meeting housing and employment needs;
 - » Effective joint working with service delivery partners;
 - » Positive learning and development opportunities for staff;
 - » Effective service evaluation involving service users - to support continual improvement.

Regional and local partners

(Deputy Regional Directors of Social Care, Regional Resource Teams, Government Office Locality Managers, Directors of Offender Management, local authorities, Jobcentre Plus districts, probation offices and others)

- Consider and encourage joint learning opportunities between lead professionals. These opportunities could take several forms for example networking events; shared training sessions; job shadowing. They would usefully cover issues common to lead professionals for example: key lead professional competencies; how to access homes and jobs for vulnerable adults; information sharing; methods of effective joint working.
- Consider whether these learning opportunities could also be shared with other professionals and service users. They should bring clarity on roles and expectations, and bring guidance and job descriptions to life.
- Contribute to sharing good lead professional practice e.g. via the Link Up Link In website www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin.

Central government departments

- Strengthen the remits of lead professionals in guidance and role documents. In particular, clarify the 'lead' element of the role, competencies and behaviours required, and expectations on delivery of housing and employment outcomes.
- Use the Link Up Link In website www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin to clarify the role and authority of lead professionals and how their role relates to other professionals; to raise awareness of lead professional training requirements and availability; and to share good lead professional practice.
- Produce and effectively disseminate simple, targeted information sharing guidance for each lead professional role relevant to PSA16.
- Share and promote learning on personalisation of services including person centred planning.

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