

## **Practice example: Strategic – Southwark advice and liaison role**

### Background

There had been a number of improvements to joint working between adult mental health and children's services in Southwark. However, there were some enduring concerns around:

- poor communication between the two services about concerns, risks and significant activity
- mutual negative stereotypes between children and families workers and mental health workers
- a lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities
- a failure to understand the professional and legal context in which workers operate.

The London Borough of Southwark and South London and the Maudsley Trust therefore put forward a proposal for a senior member of staff, working across children's and adult mental health services.

### Intended outcomes

It was proposed that the post holder would lead on service development and best practice, working directly with professionals in children's services and adult mental health.

It was intended that this, in turn, would improve:

- identification and multi-agency management of children of parents with mental health problems where there are safeguarding issues
- adult mental health practitioners' management of the needs of children
- Children and Families Social Workers' understanding of the impact of parental mental health on children
- coordination of assessment and work across services.

### Practical actions

A post holder was appointed in May 2009 and jointly funded by the local authority and mental health trust. The post is at Band 8A, or Head of Service level. The post holder works across the Children's Social Care and mental health services, whilst retaining line management responsibilities for the Parental Mental Health in Children's Centres team.

### What actually happened

The role has developed in response to local needs, and focuses on areas such as:

- **Strategy development** – helping to develop new structures and processes to support safe joint working across mental health and children’s services, including taking account of this as services are restructured. Support the ongoing developments regarding a Think Family approach
- **Case consultation** to professionals from adult mental health, including Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), children’s services, midwifery and domestic abuse services, including input to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
- **Safeguarding groups** – attending local Safeguarding Children Board and individual safeguarding groups, such as those attached to hospital maternity services.

### Advice for others

The role needs to be senior enough to have confidence to make decisions regarding information sharing, making referrals and providing clinical/safeguarding advice.

Joint funding is helpful as it promotes ownership from both services.