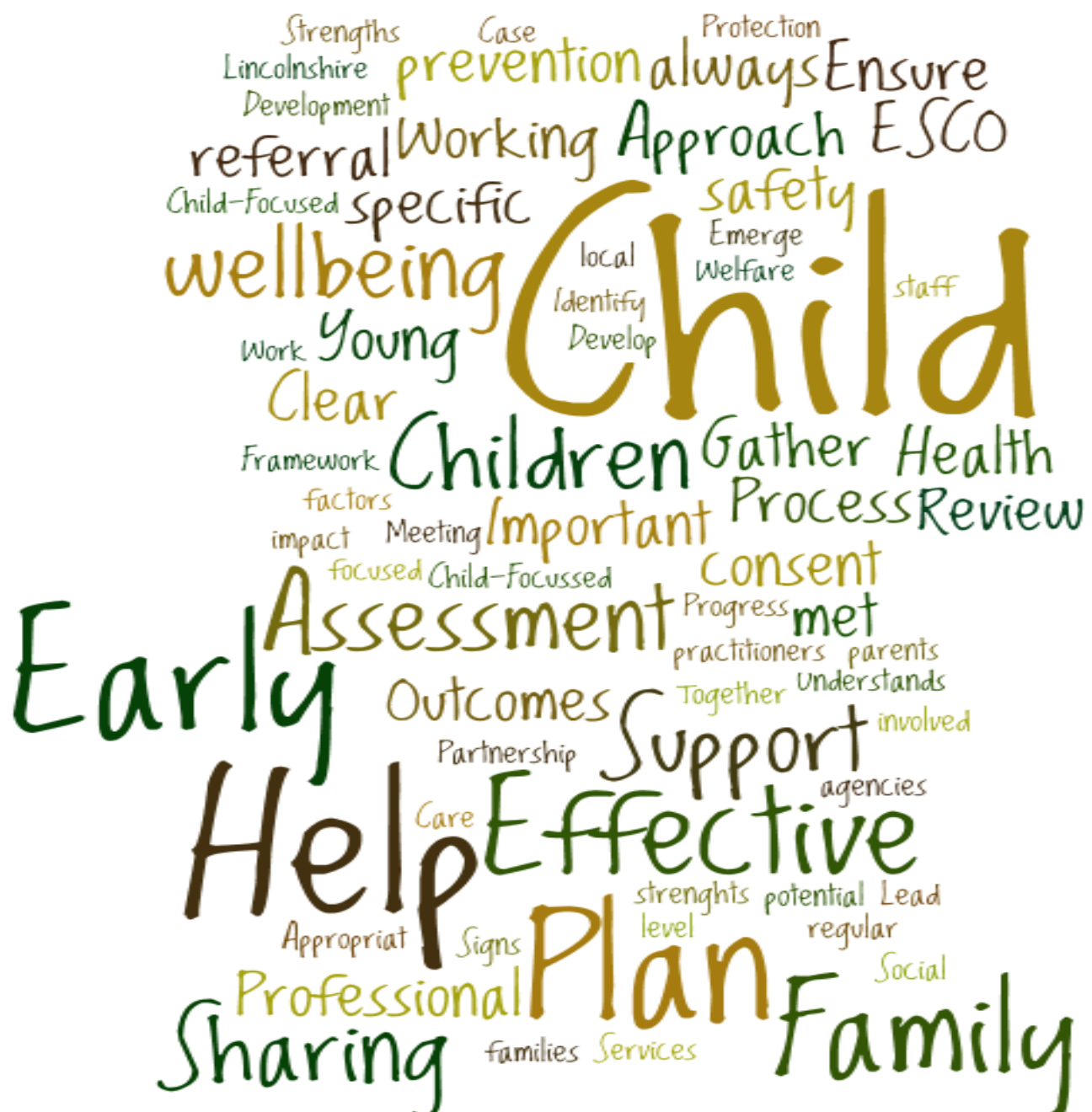


**Team Around the Child (TAC) in Lincolnshire**

**Annual Report**

**April 2015 to March 2016**



## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding Team Around the Child (TAC) in Lincolnshire, in order to highlight achievements and identify areas for development. It will describe the multi-agency work being done by professionals and agencies within Lincolnshire in order to support children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity.

## Introduction

### **What is Team Around the Child (TAC)?**

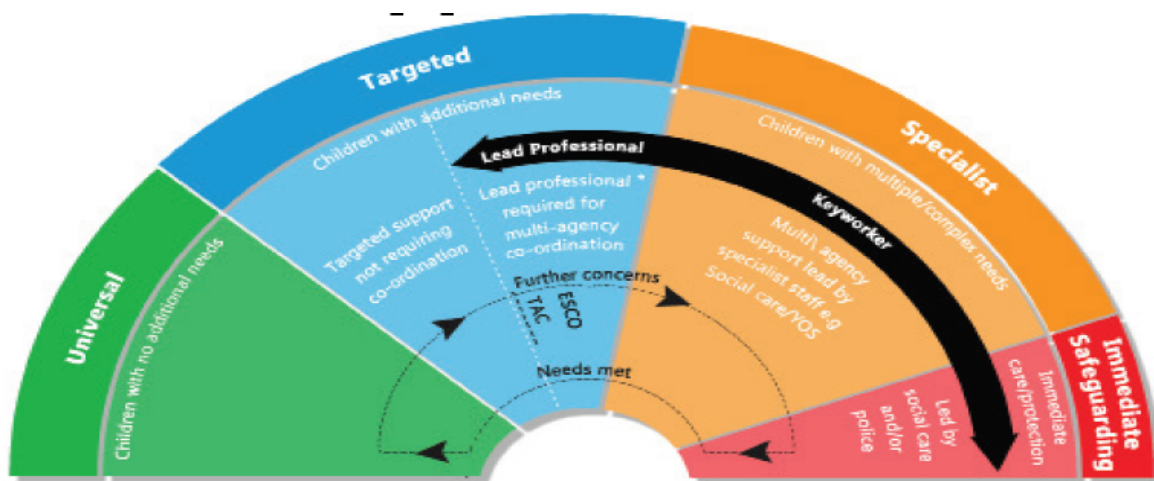
TAC is Lincolnshire's multi-agency methodology for the provision of co-ordinated support to children, young people and families within an **Early Help** arena. It is based around a sound assessment and planning framework which is in use by a variety of agencies across the county and is employed in similar format throughout the country. It aims to help with the early identification of unmet needs of children and young people, and promote a co-ordinated multi-agency response to meet them.

TAC can be used to support children and young people between 0–19 years, including unborn babies, and can also be used with consent up to the age of 24 where a young person has a learning difficulty or disability.

There are four main stages in setting up a TAC

- Early identification of needs
- Assessing strengths and needs in a consistent and methodical framework
- Developing and delivering an integrated services
- Reviewing and refining the support arrangements

TAC is part of Lincolnshire's safeguarding continuum:



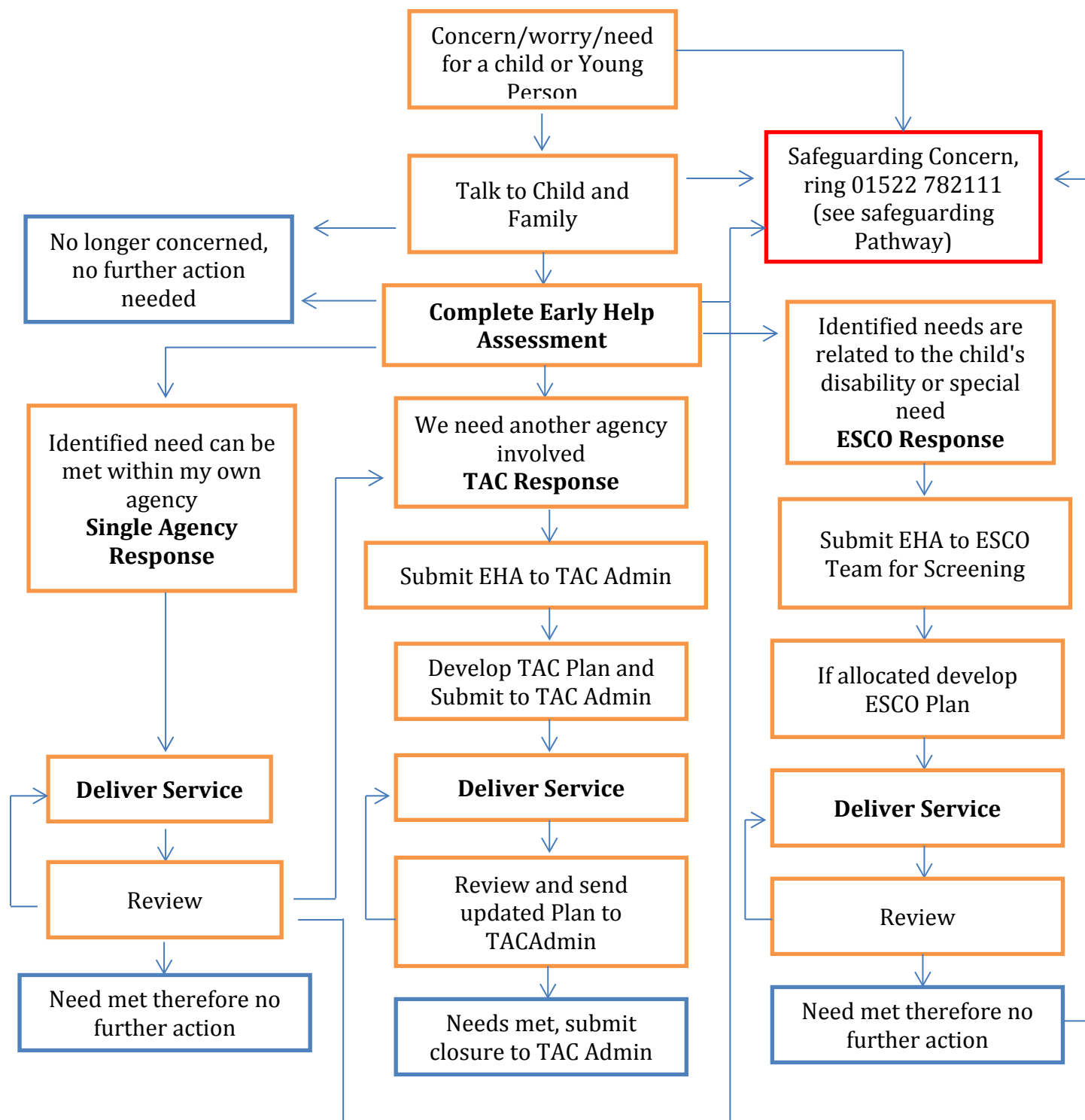
**Early Help** is the term used to describe arrangements and services that identify the need for help for children and families as soon as the problems start to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) identifies the critical features of effective Early Help as:

- ☐ A multi-disciplinary approach that brings a range of professional skills and expertise to bear through a "team around the child" approach
- ☐ A relationship with a trusted lead professional who can engage with the child and their family, and coordinate the support needed from other agencies
- ☐ Practice that empowers families and helps them to develop the capacity to resolve their own problems
- ☐ A holistic approach that addresses the children's needs in the wider family context
- ☐ Simple, streamlined referral and assessment process

## Early Help Pathway

This is taken from the LSCB publication 'Meeting the Needs of Children in Lincolnshire—A Shared Responsibility'



## **Background**

### **National Context**

This report is written in the context of the Government Guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2013. This Guidance is very clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; and that a child-centered, multi-agency approach to Early Help is most effective in improving children's lives.

***"Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years"***

[Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2013\)](#)

### **Local Context**

Team Around the Child (TAC) is Lincolnshire's agreed and well-established process for Early Help.

In the last 3 years there have been significant developments within Early Help and TAC.

In 2013, two significant cases in Lincolnshire, prompted the LSCB to undertake a multi-agency audit of a sample of TAC cases. This audit report was completed in June 2013; and it highlighted that there was some good practice with regard to the provision of Early Help Services, but that the use of paperwork was inconsistent. Moreover, the existing templates were not conducive to good recording practice. Another issue of concern was that Lead Professionals in Educational settings are not receiving adequate supervision, nor management oversight of cases.

This report was presented to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership in August 2013.

In response to this report, LCC Children's Services created a Team Manager and Practice Supervisor post in order to increase capacity to effect changes and improvements to TAC systems and processes.

The Team Manager sought feedback regarding TAC from a sample of School Headteachers and Agency Partners. This feedback and performance data was used to identify the following issues:

- Schools, Academies and some other agencies were sometimes unclear about services available for children, young people and families within TAC.
- Schools, Academies, some other agencies were often dissatisfied with the support available to lead professionals.
- TAC processes were complicated, confusing and not widely understood.
- TAC paperwork was used inconsistently, and professionals needed more support regarding assessment and planning.

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership also created a multi-agency Early Help Steering Group to drive forward improvements to paperwork and processes. This resulted in a new, simplified Early Help Assessment (EHA), and an improved TAC Handbook being developed and launched in April 2014.

Lincolnshire Schools Forum was consulted regarding the issues raised by schools and academies, who have been consistently the largest sector leading TACs in Lincolnshire. They agreed to work in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council to jointly fund a new Team of Early Help Consultants to support and challenge TAC Lead Professionals. The first four Early Help Consultants came into post during April and May 2014; and four more have been recruited in April 2015.

Finally, TAC Administrators were moved under central management, and given a slightly revised remit regarding monitoring TAC cases.

During the past year the service has continued to develop in line with needs identified, and feedback from Lead Professionals. The amount of workshops and development sessions has increased; and TAC Forums have been established to enable partners to share information and celebrate good practice.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The TAC Team is a central team supporting practitioners and agencies across all services working with children, young people and families at an early help level. It is unique to Lincolnshire, and consists of a Team Manager, 8 Early Help Consultants, a Senior TAC Administrator, and 7 TAC Administrators.

**TAC Administrators** give information regarding the TAC process, and services available in the area. They receive Early Help Assessments, TAC Plans, and TAC Closure summaries and ensure these are recorded on the child's file. They monitor TACs, request the relevant paperwork from Lead Professionals, and provide data, such as the data used within this report.

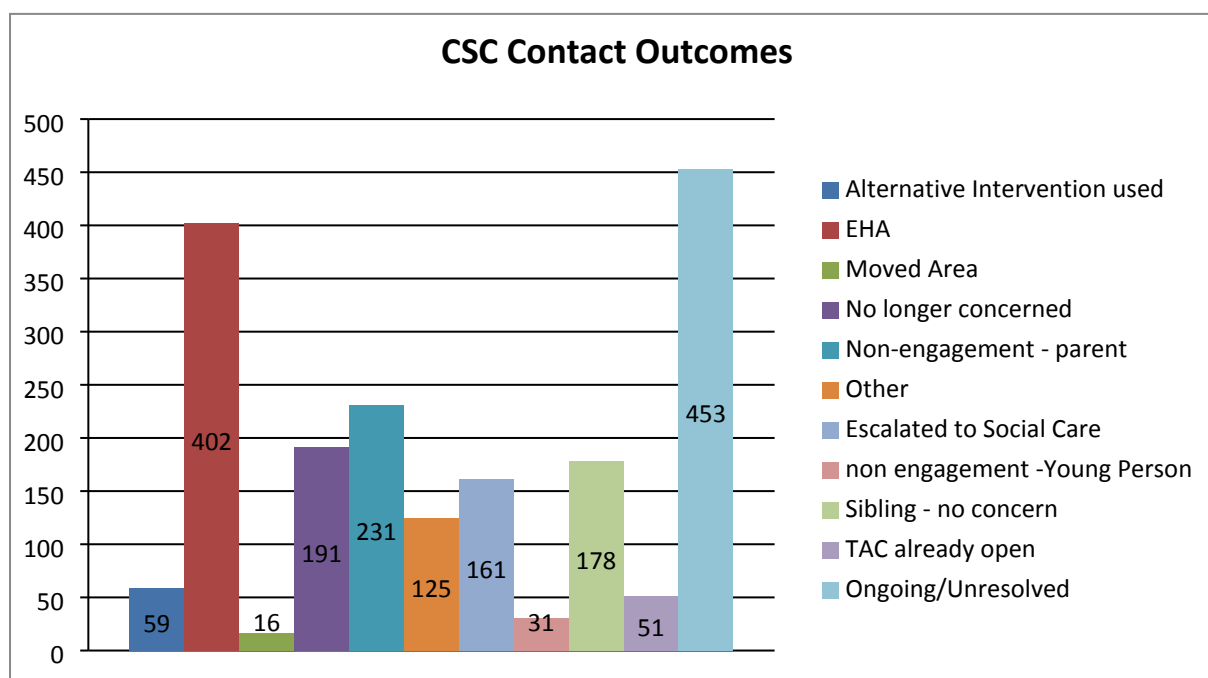
**Early Help Consultants** offer support, advice and guidance to Lead Professionals from any agency across Lincolnshire. They support with skills and knowledge around assessment, analysis and planning via the Signs of Safety Methodology. This can be via bespoke briefing sessions, multi-agency events and forums, or one to one guidance. They help Lead Professionals map cases and come up with actions to improve the quality and effectiveness of TACs.

In addition, they quality assure a sample of 50 cases per month in order to identify individual and common themes for development or sharing of good practice. For the education sector, they also provide case supervision for individual TAC cases.

This report provides a summary of the work of this Team, and the Lead Professionals they support.

## Contacts to Customer Service Centre

The Team monitors all calls to the Lincolnshire County Council Customer Service Centre (CSC), where callers are advised to complete Early Help Assessments. This could be where they have phoned for advice on a case; or where they have made a referral to Children's Social Care, but the case has not met the threshold for Social Care intervention. Callers are contacted and asked what actions they have taken to follow the advice given. The total number of these cases dealt with in 2015/16 was 1898, which is an 11% increase from last year. These cases are then categorized according to the action taken:

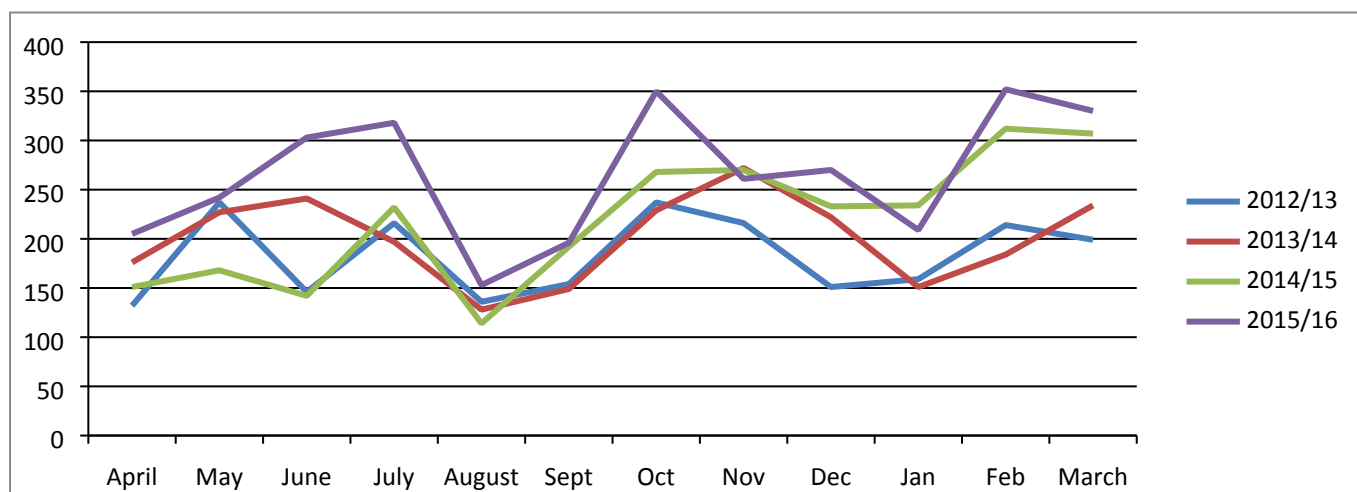


Cases are classed as resolved when an EHA has been submitted, the case has been accepted by Social Care, or the needs have been met in some other way, for example by the referring agency themselves. Cases are classed as unresolved when no action has been taken after a minimum of 2 contacts. In these instances the Safeguarding Lead for the agency concerned is copied into the final email to make them aware of their responsibilities.

During the year 79% of cases were resolved, compared to 78% last year.

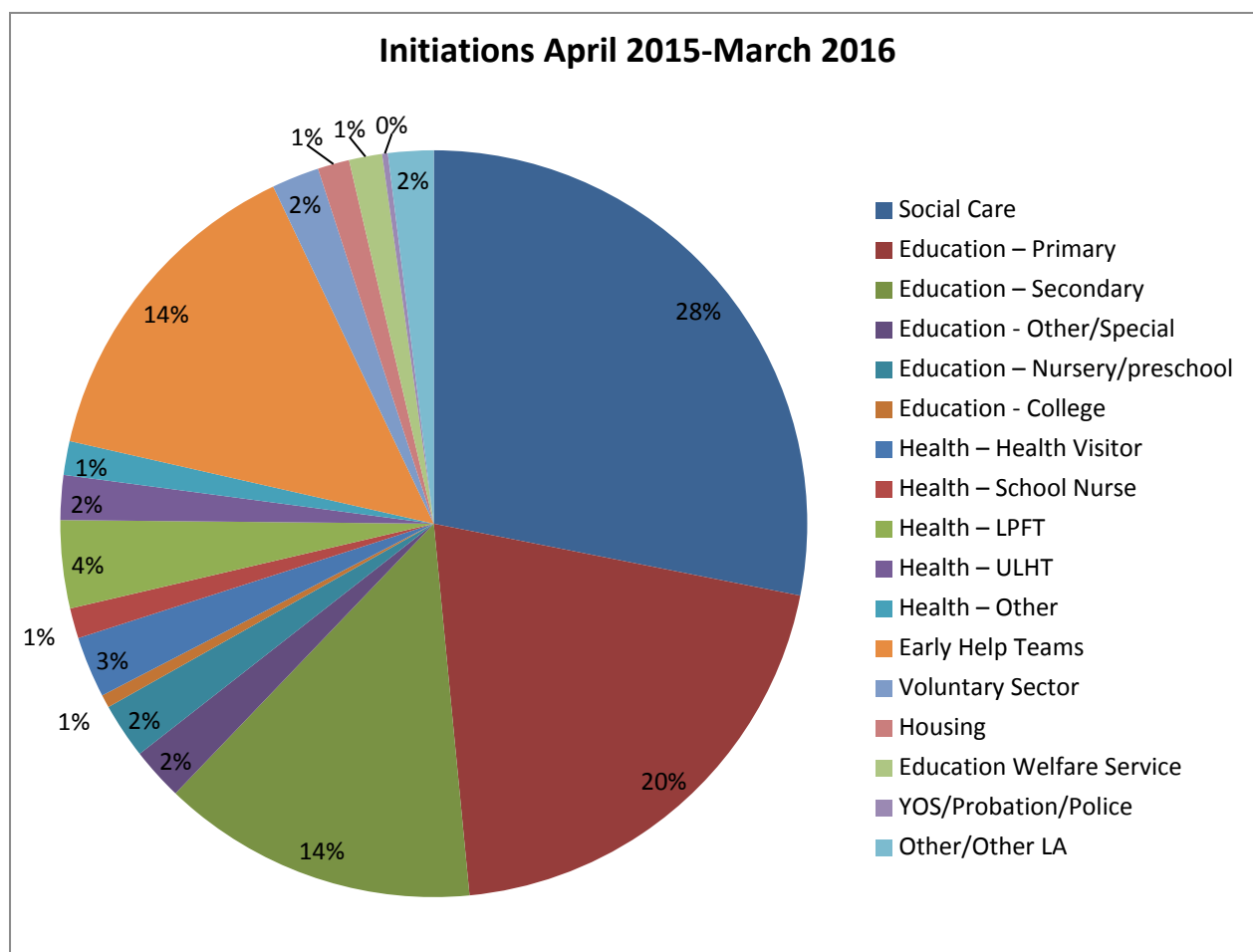
## TAC Initiations

TAC initiations are logged and monitored once a Lead Professional has gained consent from the young person or family, completed an Early Help Assessment with them, and sent it to the TAC Administrators. Initiations continue to increase compared to previous years, as illustrated below.



Total initiations for 2015-16 were 3208, compared to 2632 in the previous year. This is an 18% increase in a year. The trajectory for the coming year predicts a further increase. Patterns of initiations throughout the year tend to fluctuate around school holidays, with a dip in August each year.

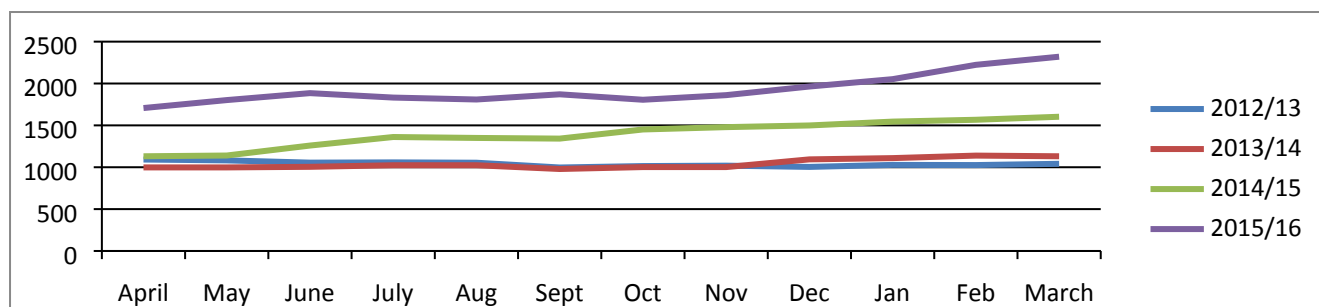
Transfer from Social Care to TAC is increasing gradually, which means that the Local Authority is now the highest initiating agency of TAC, 43% compared to 36% last year.





## Open TACs

The following graph shows the number of open TACs within Lincolnshire since 2012.

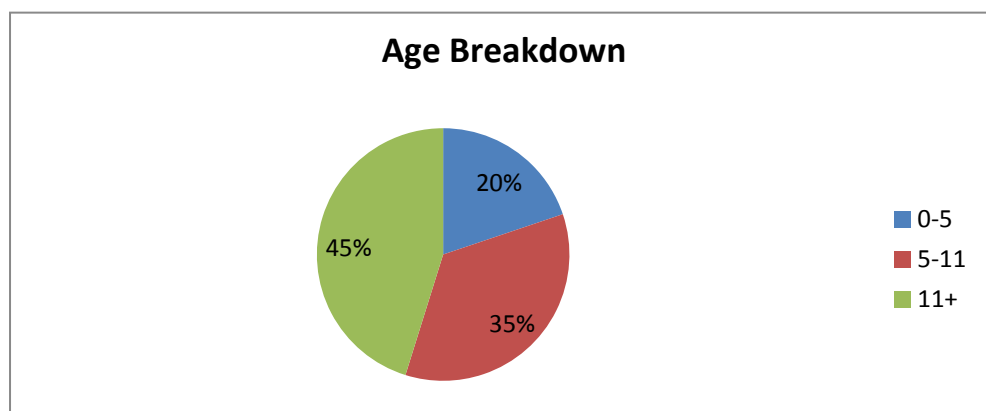


From 2012 to 2014, the numbers of TACs open at any one time remained fairly stable, around 1000 cases. Following the simplification of the process, and the development of the central TAC Team, numbers have steadily increased, despite better data cleansing and validation. The number of open TACs at the end of March 2016 was 2320. When compared to previous years, this represents a 31% increase within a year; and the number of TACs open is more than double the position 2 years ago (1131, March 2014). Numbers continue to rise at a steady rate, meaning more children, young people and families are receiving coordinated, multi-agency early help.

The balance of agencies leading TACs has traditionally remained relatively consistent. However, this year has seen a significant increase for Education, from leading 50% of TACs, to leading 65%. The representation of Health, and other agencies has declined as shown below.

Lead Professional Agency	2015	2016
Education (Primary, Secondary, Nursery, Pre-school)	50%	65%
Health (LPFT, ULHT, LCHS, CCG)	13%	10%
Early Help Teams (LCC)	23%	22%
Others (Housing, YOS/Probation/Voluntary/Other)	14%	3%

The age breakdown of open TACs is shown below:



**"Through the practitioner interviews an almost unanimous finding is that the Early Help Assessment is easy to complete, the language used is conducive to working with children and families and the use of Signs of Safety (SOS) methodology has been a huge improvement."**

***LSCB Early Help Audit Report July 2015***

## **Advice Support and Guidance**

During the year, the Early Help Consultants have provided ad hoc support and advice to Lead Professionals on 2454 occasions. When compared to last year, this represents a 3% increase. This is in addition to Case Supervisions for Schools and Academies, and Quality Assurance visits. The periods before, and immediately after school holidays continue to be busy.

### **Samples of Feedback**

In March 2016, Lead Professionals were asked for feedback on the services provided by the TAC Team. 117 responses were received. Of these, only 5 had not used any of the support on offer. The feedback on the advice and guidance given was positive, both with regard to TAC Administration, and Early Help Consultants.

**"I asked EHC for support when case working and found the experience very useful in terms of having another opinion and ideas on how to progress the case when it drifted."**

**"I use the TAC Admin for advice and always find them really helpful and supportive."**

**"The TAC Admin Team are easy to contact and are helpful"**

The main elements of support that have been found most useful are:

**"help to move things forward"**

**"queries answered promptly"**

**"gathering new information and updates"**

**"not made to feel that I am asking a 'silly' question"**

### **Case Supervisions**

The provision of case supervision is a service provided only to schools and academies within Lincolnshire, or where a school is leading a TAC for a Lincolnshire child. The case supervision sessions are delivered on a one to one basis for the Lead Professional, but can include other staff if this is deemed to be beneficial to the case. The supervisions are recorded and clear direction is given in order to improve outcomes for the child or young person concerned.

The table below shows the numbers of schools and academies taking up this service as of March 2016, with a comparison to last year.

Supervision Uptake	Schools with an open TAC		Schools accessing Supervisions		Percentage
	March 2015	March 2016	March 2015	March 2016	March 2016
Boston/South Holland	48	57	15	20	35%
Lincoln/West Lindsey	55	63	56	41	65%
North/South Kesteven	61	79	20	23	29%
East Lindsey	47	52	24	27	52%
TOTAL	211	251	115	111	44%



The number of schools with open TACs has increased from 211 in March 2015, to 251 in March 2016. The overall take up rate for supervision is 44%, representing a reduction of 4 schools since last year. However, the service has received positive feedback such as:

**"Case supervision can be crucial, especially if as Lead Professional you are unsure how to take a particular case forward. The expertise from the Early Help Consultants is very useful and supportive."**

**"...invaluable in terms of moving things forward and ensuring that interests and needs of child remain central."**

When asked to scale the quality of supervision received on a scale of 0 to 10, out of 48 respondents the average scale was 8.75.

**"My EHC always offers support via email and during case supervision which enables a good working relationship and support network for myself as Lead Professional."**

**"Excellent service. All experience positive"**

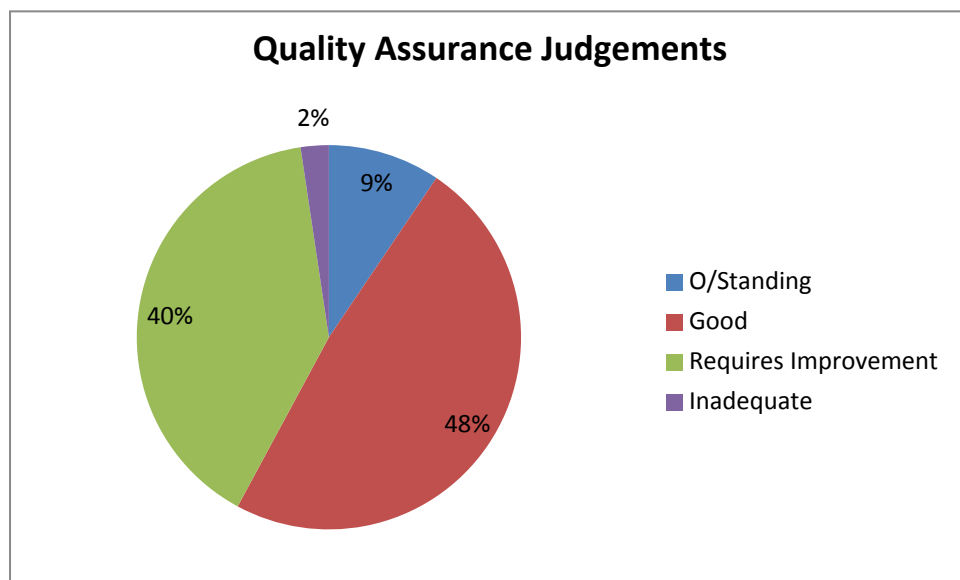
**"Case supervision gives me peace of mind."**

**"Case supervision is really valuable. Please can I have some more!"**

### **Quality Assurance**

During the year, 259 cases were quality assured. The QA visit to the Lead Professional looked at the quality of early identification, assessment, planning, review, management oversight and closure (if applicable). The cases were then graded as inadequate, requiring improvement, good or outstanding. All cases had an improvement plan put in place by the Lead Professional, with support if required from the Early Help Consultant. For inadequate cases this was done within 48 hours, and managers or Safeguarding Leads were notified.

The outcomes of the QA visits are shown below:



Compared to last year, outstanding cases have increased from 8% to 10%; and inadequate cases have reduced from 18% to 2%. This is evidence of quality improvement in the journeys of children and young people through TAC.

## Key Themes Identified

**Voice of the Child** – the collection of voice of the child has improved significantly this year. Lead Professionals are increasingly using creative and innovative methods to really listen to children, as shown below. However, children influencing their own TACs is still an area for development.



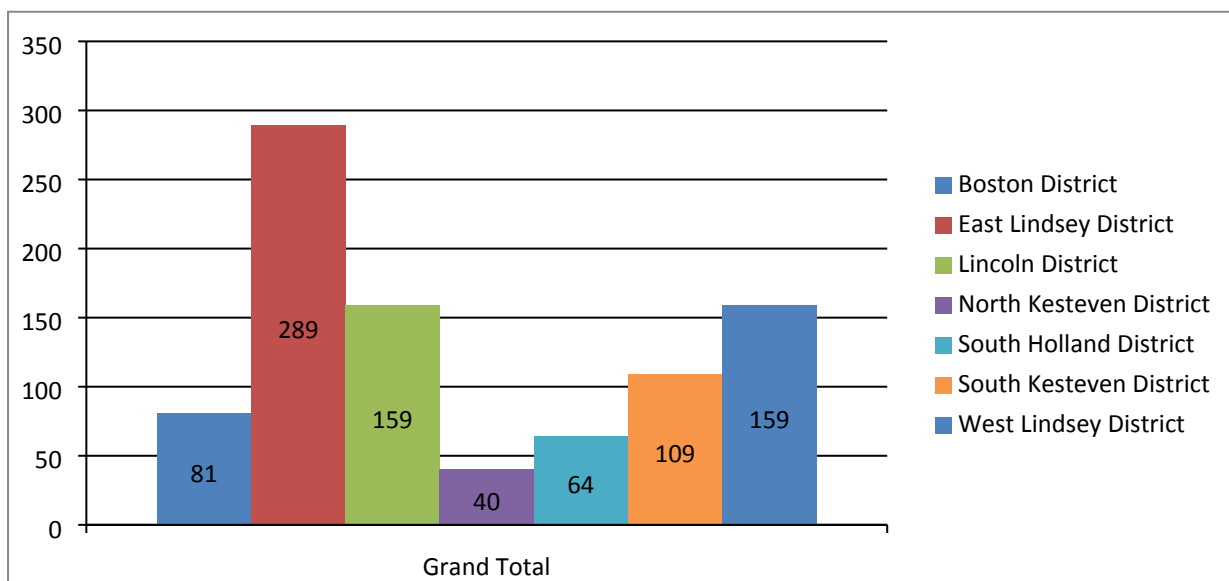
Picture reproduced with thanks to Alison Russell and Gainsborough Parish Church C.E. Primary School

**Signs of Safety** – where this is used it has added significant value to the TAC in all areas of the process. It is beginning to be used across many agencies, and the TAC Team are supporting further developments.



## Interface with Social Care

In 2015-2016 901 cases transferred from Social Care into TAC, representing 18% of cases closing to Social Care in that period.



113 stepped up into Social Care from TAC.

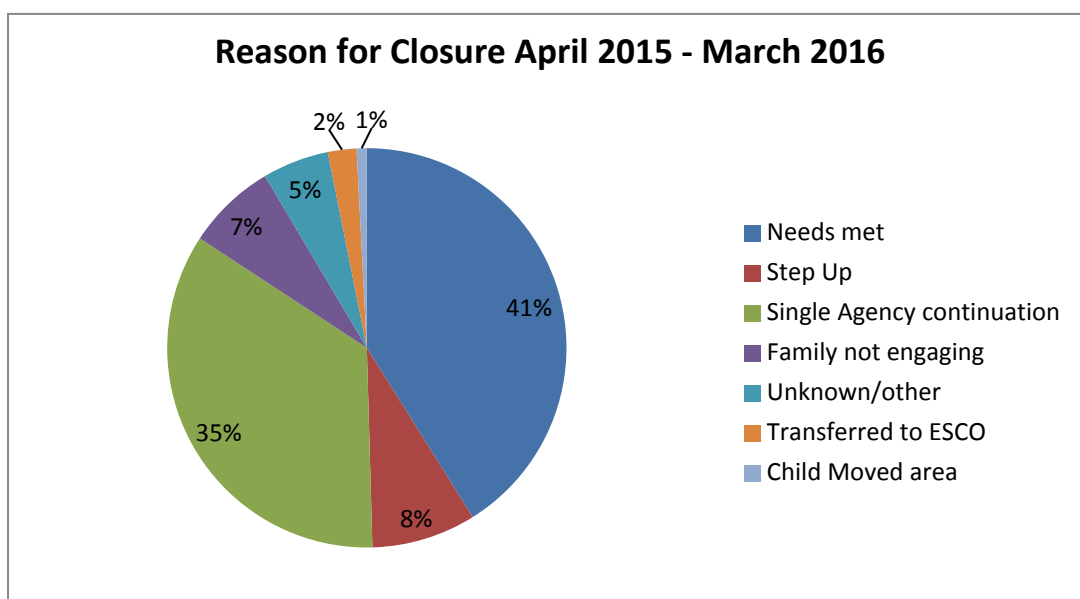
## Closures

Closure forms for TACs are submitted to the TAC Admin Team, and these are analysed. Children, young people and families should always participate in the decision to end a TAC, and their voices are recorded.

1338 cases were closed during the year, compared to 1354 last year.

Of these, 76% (compared to 67% last year) had the needs of the child either fully met, or reduced so that a single service only could support. This is good evidence of the effectiveness of TAC.

Only 97 cases closed because the family did not fully engage in the process, this is less than 116 last year.



## Comments from children, young people and families about their experiences of TAC

It's genuinely been life changing.

TAC has helped to calm child down and has helped child about worrying about stuff that may never happen. Child and brother and sister have a better relationship

It's given us the opportunity to put routines and structures place to help him communicate and connect with us more.

If I have a problem with my brother or sister I will tell mum, step dad or granddad

I now feel much happier

It's made things better at home. I talk to mummy now. I used to write in a book. I've got a happy and a bad book. I don't need to write in my bad book anymore. (He was smiling!)

My behaviour has got way better. Not being aggressive with mum... Starting to understand about my feelings more which means I'm calmer...

**The L.S.C.B. Report in July 2015 also stated:**

**"Parents have expressed an overall positive experience of Early Help and TAC, saying that the EH assessment is easy to understand and ensures both them and their child/ren get to express their worries and concerns in a simple yet effective way."**

## Update on Last Year's Priorities

- ✓ **Further development of the Signs of Safety Methodology within Early Help**
  - Signs of Safety is a framework and approach to assessing and supporting the needs of children, young people and families. Lead Professionals requested further development opportunities, and a desire to move TAC processes further towards full implementation of the Signs of Safety Framework.
  - We have therefore amended the Early Help Assessment, and TAC Planning paperwork to respond to this; and have included more guidance around the Signs of Safety Framework. We have supported Lead Professionals in both individual and group development sessions in order to increase their skills and confidence. This has been well received, and professionals now showcase their work at TAC Forums and other events.
- ✓ **Continued increase in number of cases transferring from Social Care to TAC**
  - Data tells us that numbers of cases transferred to TAC from Social Care continue to increase gradually. This is a continued priority for the coming year.
- ✓ **Increased support for schools, academies, and other agencies/sectors not initiating TACs**
  - Lead Professionals tell us that one of the main barriers to supporting children via TAC is their confidence. They worry about 'missing something' and 'getting the process right'. They tell us that when they are supported in their first TAC, they then see how they can use it to the benefit of others they work with. The Early Help Consultants have worked with agencies, teams, and individual practitioners who have not done TACs previously or recently, to support them and overcome any worries or barriers. This has shown a particular success with schools where there are 40 more schools with open TACs than at the same time last year; an increase of 16%.
- ✓ **Increased support to Pre-Birth TACs**
  - National evidence shows that a significant number of children at risk of poor outcomes can be identified prior to birth, and that pregnancy is a window of opportunity to work with families to increase their readiness for parenthood. Lincolnshire LSCB reviewed its Pre-Birth Protocol, and identified that there was significant scope for improvement in the use of TAC for unborn children who are vulnerable. The Early Help Consultants have undertaken briefing sessions with midwives, and have offered increased support to all TACs opened prior to birth. The number of pre-birth TACs are still relatively low, but have increased significantly as shown below:

✓ Area	✓ 2014/15	✓ 2015/16
✓ Boston/South Holland	✓ 5	✓ 18
✓ East Lindsey	✓ 4	✓ 10
✓ Lincoln/West Lindsey	✓ 11	✓ 22
✓ North and South Kesteven	✓ 3	✓ 12
✓ Total	✓ 23	✓ 62

- ✓ **Quality Assurance of all TACs open for over 12 months**

Whilst there is no optimum time for the length of TAC arrangements, the LSCB audit identified that sometimes cases can 'drift' with little progress being made. We have therefore targeted cases open over 12 months for QA visits. These have resulted in improvement plans being put in place where needed.

✓ **Increased quantity and quality of information available in written format and on the TAC website**

The TAC Team is constantly responding to requests for information and guidance, and updating its publications and website accordingly. This year we have responded to requests for more information on Signs of Safety; further simplification of some of the TAC paperwork; and answers to frequently asked questions.

✓ **Further collection of feedback from stakeholders in order to inform future priorities**

In March 2016, Lead Professionals were asked for feedback on the services provided by the TAC Team. 117 responses were received. In the main the feedback was positive, but constructive feedback on areas for development was received as follows:

- More briefings on new TAC planning paperwork would be useful.
- Sometimes email responses could be quicker.
- Sometimes Lead Professionals are asked for paperwork when case has been closed
- The Quality Assurance process can be stressful.
- It feels difficult for Lead Professionals to be quality assured on the whole TAC journey, rather than just their part in it.


**Priorities for the Coming Year**

- Increased workshops and learning opportunities, particularly with regard to Signs of Safety Practice, use of Appreciative Inquiry, and outcome-based planning.
- Increased opportunities for partners to offer peer support and share their good practice.
- Increased support to the Voluntary Sector in order to increase their participation in TAC.
- Increased support to 0 to 5 services in order to increase their participation in TAC.
- Development of the Quality Assurance model in line with feedback from Lead Professionals.
- Increased quantity and quality of written and website materials.
- Develop and extend skills and good practice in young people and families leading their own TACs, and using family support networks.


**For more information and to access all the TAC Paperwork  
please visit our website: [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/tac](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/tac)**

**You are here:** Home > Practitioners > Team Around the Child (TAC)


## Early Help and Team Around the Child (TAC)




**Forms and Documents**  
Completed a TAC before or  
require meeting templates




**Contacts**  
Contact information for all TAC  
Administrators and Early Help  
Consultants.




**Concerns for a Child**  
Early Help Pathway



**Schools and Academies**  
Information on how to access  
education specific services.



**Early Help and TAC**  
Early Help and TAC Information  
and guidance.



**TAC Handbook**  
This is a step by step guide  
through the TAC process.



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