

Report of the Deputy Director of Children’s Services: Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services

Report to Children’s Services Scrutiny Board

Date: 17th January 2013

Subject: Progress report on the remodelling of the CAF and the objectives to be achieved by this

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| Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-In? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 To update the board on progress made over the past 12 months and outline plans to develop CAF in future.

2.0 Background information

2.1 Many changes have impacted on CAF activity over the past twelve months.

2.2 A trail of the National Electronic Common Assessment was undertaken in the West of the city in 2011 with a view to full implementation. When the decommissioning of the national system was announced in December 2011, work began to explore alternative arrangements.

2.3 A consultation on a proposed medium term solution requiring changes to forms and processes, began in November 2011 and implementation began in May, and over 1000 staff have attended updates and briefings on the new process and forms, with very positive evaluations.

2.4 The new process was externally evaluated by Dr Mark Peel, who undertook early research in North Lincolnshire, which led to the first iteration of what would become CAF, and was latterly retained by the DoH as an academic advisor around the development of the CAF. He concluded the following,

“My brief involvement with CAF in Leeds has profoundly impressed me. This is, in my opinion, a highly effective and efficient CAF system. Well managed and well based. What is important now is that the new CAF system is given time to become embedded within practice, and that all involved more clearly understand that the value of CAF is not calculated in terms of the NUMBER of children assessed, but rather that those children who need CAF are assessed at the right time, that the assessment is of good quality and that needs discovered are met effectively in a joined up way.

The CAF system in Leeds is something that all involved should be rightly proud of and, in my opinion is one of the best examples of effective, ‘joined-up’ multi-agency assessment in operation.”

- 2.5 Primary Schools, Early Years, High Schools and Health continue to initiate the majority of CAFs on school age children. Many other agencies are also regularly involved including youth services, voluntary sector organisations, education services and appropriate adult services such as housing, health and drugs services.
- 2.6 The majority of episodes are still completed because needs have been successfully met and parent rating show the majority of parents continue to rate the CAF very positively. Evaluation comments from parents and young people further support this.
- 2.7 Services attend on average 80% of meetings they are invited to and those meetings are timely with a 95% success rate against agreed criteria in September.
- 2.8 Early start teams integrating Health and Early years are seeing a reduction in CAF activity as they can now coordinate effectively using their joint case management.
- 2.9 The guidance and support meetings in clusters which offer families early help within their local communities, are effective in offering early support which has often reduced the need for other interventions. These groups are increasing using a Common Internal Record, CAF documentation designed to support CAF best practice from an earlier stage of single agency intervention.

3.0 Main issues

- 3.1 After an optimistic response to the new CAF process, numbers in August and September were lower than the previous year. Activity is therefore being focussed on identifying that the right families receive CAF intervention at the right time.
- 3.2 As a part of the change process we further embedded the use of the Common Internal Record (CIR) as a precursor to CAF to be used when intervention is single agency. This activity has greatly increased but this is not currently captured centrally.
- 3.3 Guidance and support meetings are increasingly using the CIR. The opportunity for holding centrally the relevant data from this documentation is being explored.

- 3.4 A recent quality assurance exercise demonstrated that the quality of some assessments requires work, this may be due to using new forms that people are not yet familiar with as well as an ongoing need for workforce development.
- 3.5 Needs identified remain similar over time but now new adult need codes have been added, an analysis of these needs will be required in all reports.
- 3.6 The introduction of the Family CAF now needs to be rolled out across the city with appropriate guidance and training.
- 3.7 The Family CAF should now be used by Family Intervention Services to allow them to be more visible in their activity with families.
- 3.8 Recent sessions with the voluntary and community sector have been undertaken as their activity has fallen year on year.
- 3.9 There remains a perception, which has to continue to be addressed, amongst people who have not engaged with the new CAF process, that CAF is still overly time consuming and duplicates activity.
- 3.10 Some agencies, because of their out dated perceptions, still feel they do not have capacity to undertake CAF activity.
- 3.11 Further work with agencies who use their own assessment paperwork is planned to enable them to utilise CAF for their plans and reviews.
- 3.12 Once common assessment activity is registered with the central team, there can be issues in the timeliness of receiving all the relevant documentation from practitioners.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 A significant amount of consultation was undertaken across the whole of the Children Leeds partnership in order to establish agreement for the new CAF processes.
- 4.1.2 Continuing engagement is maintained with practitioners and managers as ongoing training is delivered by the Integrated Processes Team and information is captured through the team's daily help line which is used by TSL's, managers, practitioners and the public to request and comment on information relating to CAF processes.
- 4.1.3 Comments from parents regarding the process are regularly captured on forms and therefore also inform future developments.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 This work will help the council to achieve its ambition to be the best city in the UK and ensure that as a city work takes place to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity.

4.2.2 Equality and diversity has been considered in completing this report and where an issue has been identified it has been highlighted in this evidence.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 This work will assist in achieving outcomes and priorities as defined in the Children and Young Peoples Plan 2011-15 and the Child Friendly City Priority Plan.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 There are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no additional legal implications.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The risks related to Integrated Processes activity are managed through the Targeted Services Leadership who receive regular reports on all activity.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Several actions have been taken to ensure that CAF activity is undertaken effectively and targeted as appropriate to the right level of need being identified.

5.2 CAF training is now delivered by the Integrated Processes Team (IPT) to allow more flexibility in delivery of training and integration of key messages from an improved quality assurance process.

5.3 Several sessions are being planned to reduce waiting lists. Priority services are being targeted to ensure accessibility to CAF across the city. Communication and publicity on training is now undertaken with clusters through the targeted services leaders.

5.4 Data on training will be analysed for the next quarterly report to identify where there may be issues and how successfully those trained in the last 12 months engage in CAF activity. This will also allow follow up to those agencies trained but not undertaking activity.

5.5 Data on requests for involvement of Children's Social Work Service (CSWS) is being analysed to identify what CAF activity has been undertaken before a request is made. Follow up challenge and support is offered to agencies who have not undertaken an assessment before making a request. Data suggests a steady improvement of CAF activity at this higher level of need.

5.6 Targeted Services leaders (TSLs) are now employed in the vast majority of clusters across the city and are central to following up those CSWS requests when the

service feel families would benefit more from CAF activity. These cases are now being monitored through the targeted services leaders to ensure support for families.

- 5.7 Guidance and support groups are being targeted with information and support to encourage them to adopt CAF/CIR forms as their routine paperwork as are other priority services. This will increase the visibility and accountability of services interventions with families.
- 5.8 Work with the Family Intervention Services to promote the use of the new CAF forms for multi-agency delivery plans will increase the visibility and accountability of service delivery to those targeted families. A number of CAFs will be registered during October. Further plans to ensure more seamless integration of forms will be fully costed by the end of the year.
- 5.9 Leaders in clusters have been given relevant data to compare the level of preventative activity through CAF, with the number of requests for service to CSWS. Analysis will focus on improving the understanding of how this data relates to appropriate early responses to need.
- 5.10 The new CAF process allows more robust monitoring of the timeliness of receiving documentation for cases registered as requiring a CAF.
- 5.11 The Families First Leeds programme is building on existing Children's Services architecture to further embed CAF as a central mechanism for coordinating activity to support vulnerable families. This ensures better accountability and integration of adult and children's services.
- 5.12 The Integrated Processes Service is expanding, having lost capacity over the previous two year period, to ensure additional support for practitioners and families engaged in the CAF processes.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) are invited to note the contents of this report.

Background documents