

## **Response to GOL Presentation:**

### **Use of the CAF in relation to young people and substance misuse.**

1. The presentation from Government Office for London focussed on the different ways that Local Authorities are delivering the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and achieving integrated working. Both of these are key strands of the Every Child Matters agenda.
2. One of the key points of the presentation was the finding that there are 33 London boroughs and 33 different approaches to delivering this work! As well as having different approaches, GOL observed that there were also differing thresholds, levels of need and triggers for the completion of a CAF and little commonality across borough boundaries.
3. In relation to young people with issues related to substance misuse, there is also confusion about which screening tools should be used by universal services. ONSET, DUST, SAASI and Pastoral Support Plans are all used with these young people and there is a lack of clarity about how all of these fit with the CAF.
4. The numbers of CAFs undertaken in other London boroughs ranges from 50 – to over a 1000. In Haringey we are at the upper end of this with over 1200 CAF referrals completed since the introduction of the format in January 2007. However, this figure needs to be treated with some caution as it is used as both a referral and assessment tool and we have received many more referrals than assessments. Current work is focused on embedding the CAF as the key tool that universal; services use to assess children/young people who may be vulnerable and this is one of the key themes in the JAR action plan.
5. A Pan-London Integrated working and CAF Protocol' is being developed by GOL and is in the final stages of consultation. This is intended to support safeguarding and to promote the well-being of children through a common and consistent approach and appropriate information-sharing across borough boundaries.
6. GOL recommends that the CAF should be completed as an early or the first assessment tool. If further concerns about possible substance misuse emerge during the CAF process then substance misuse screening should be undertaken by a trained worker. This approach is consistent with the use of the CAF in Haringey and the work that is developing through the JAR action plan.

7. In conclusion, the GOL presentation set out high aspirations for the use of the CAF in universal settings as a powerful tool for identifying the needs of children and young people who may be or may become vulnerable. It is not intended to replace specialist screening but should assist in gathering information that might support the decision about whether more specialist screening is needed. It advocates an integrated approach to identifying and intervening in the needs of young people and for services to deliver a joined-up approach that is configured around the needs of the individual. This is entirely consistent with the approach in Haringey. We intend to achieve this through:
- Building the capacity to intervene early to promote positive outcomes for children and young people (AFI 4.1);
  - Developing and publishing a clear set of thresholds that operate across targeted and specialist services that provide guidance on levels of vulnerability and the service required to address these (JAR AFI 2.3.1)
  - Ensuring that the CAF is established as the basis within universal and targeted services for identification and assessment of additional needs and decision making about appropriate intervention (JAR Area For Improvement 4:2);
  - Establishing the role of the Lead Professional (JAR AFI 4:3); and
  - Improving information-sharing (JAR AFI 2.2.3).
8. The JAR action plan is being regularly monitored in relation to every action and a very detailed programme is in place that will ensure that these activities are achieved. A further report could be made available for scrutiny detailing the specific impact of these on young people for whom substance misuse may be an issue. It is suggested that this might best be produced 6 months into the delivery of the JAR plan as this would give time for the major themes to be embedded in practice.

Jan Doust  
Head of Children's Networks  
5<sup>th</sup> April 2009