

Report Title: Update on Common Assessment Framework

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): **N/A**

Report of: **The Director of The Children's Service**

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Information**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 To up date on progress on the implementation of the CAF

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That members note contents of the report and the progress that has been made in preparing for the implementation of the CAF;
- 2.2 Members acknowledge the importance of securing multi-agency commitment to the CAF;
- 2.3 Members receive a report on the implementation of the pilot and the implications for wider rollout of the CAF;

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**3. Executive Summary**

3.1 This report sets out progress to date on preparing for the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). All Local Authorities must have arrangements for the CAF to be in place by 2008. This is part of the overall government strategy to improve outcomes for children as set out in Every Child

Matters and the Change for Children programme. This links a number of related strands, including multi-agency working, role of Lead Professional and the Workforce Development strategy. Locally, these strands will be delivered primarily through the Children's Networks. This report provides an overview of the operation of the CAF within this context and the work that is currently being undertaken to ensure that staff are appropriately trained and prepared to begin implementation through a pilot initiative beginning in April 2006.

#### **4. Reasons for any change in policy or for new policy development (if applicable)**

- 4.1 There is an expectation set out in the Children Act 2004 that all local authorities will implement the CAF by 2008. This does not replace the existing statutory requirements for the assessment of children and young people with complex needs and those at risk of significant harm. However, the implementation of the CAF should lead to an earlier identification of children's needs and, in some cases, the provision of preventative services that may reduce the need for higher levels of service at a later stage.

#### **5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

- 5.1 Every Child Matters - Change for Children 2004  
5.2 Common Assessment Framework 2005  
5.3 Children's Workforce Strategy 2005

## **6. Background**

- 6.1 The Common Assessment Framework is a key element of the DfES change for Children Programme and is intended to be integral to the delivery of the five Every child Matters outcomes.
- 6.2 Currently children in need are subject to a number of different assessment processes. Children who do not meet the threshold for the input of specialist services may not trigger any assessment of need, beyond those in place in universal settings.
- 6.3 The CAF is a national standardised approach to the assessment of the needs of a child or young person. It will promote more effective, earlier identification of children's additional needs and improve multi-agency working.
- 6.4 It should provide a simple, non-bureaucratic process for a holistic assessment of a child's needs, taking account of the individual, family and community, and will reduce the number of assessments that a child or young person in need are subject to.

- 6.5 The assessments will assist in the early identification of need for children and their families who will benefit from family support services, or where a number of services are already involved and better planning and co-ordination of the services will benefit the child and their family.
- 6.6 The CAF will not replace existing assessment arrangements for children with higher levels of need, including those at risk of significant harm. These arrangements will continue to apply and referrals must not be delayed whilst a CAF is undertaken.
- 6.7 The CAF will be used by practitioners in all agencies and will support more effective communication and working together. The CAF will encourage greater sharing of information between practitioners, although there will still be a requirement for consent to be obtained from parents/carers. Information from the CAF will follow the child as they progress and should enable professionals to build up a picture over time.
- 6.8 A CAF Steering Group has been set up to ensure effective implementation in Haringey. This is a multi agency planning group that has been working on the implementation plan. It is anticipated that the implementation plan outline below will be agreed by the next steering group to be held shortly.
- 6.9 It is important to recognise that the CAF is part of the much broader programme of change for children and is linked to a number of other DfES initiatives to support this change. The CAF will be integral to the work of the children's Networks and is also closely linked to the Family Support Strategy, the Workforce Development Strategy and the role of the Lead Professional.

## **7. Description**

- 7.1 In Haringey an assessment within the CAF will be undertaken when:
- there are concerns about a child that mean that she or he will not reach their full potential in relation to one or more of the five outcomes, and
  - it is likely that this cannot be resolved by the practitioner/s already involved, and the child and their family, and
  - an assessment is likely to result in additional services, or additional co-ordination and planning of existing services by a lead professional.
- 7.2 In the early stages of introducing the CAF, it is possible that there could be a large number of children referred who would not be appropriate referrals under existing arrangements. This is not the intention of the CAF and could have the affect of diverting resources away from the children who are most in need. Therefore very careful work is being undertaken to agree threshold criteria for when a CAF will be undertaken. These will be based on level of need and will ensure consistency across agencies, and settings.

- 7.3 The assessment will be undertaken by trained CAF assessors. These will be key practitioners working with children and families. In settings where there is not a trained CAF assessor, arrangements will be in place for the child to access to an assessment in the appropriate setting. The assessors will be provided with specific supervision and support in relation to this work, and consultation from specialist settings and practitioners will be available. Each setting will designate a manager who will act as a CAF co-ordinator who will oversee and monitor this work in their setting. Work is progressing to agree thresholds across agencies, and training for practitioners is being planned.
- 7.4 The implementation of the CAF will be a key priority within the establishment of the three Children's Networks. A panel will be established within each network a to review the assessments, agree Lead Professional responsibility, and make decisions about allocation of resources and services.
- 7.5 The CAF will be piloted within the first Children's Network, due to begin will in April 2006. Initially, this will focus on a small number of settings in order to ensure that thresholds have been appropriately set and consistently applied and staff undertaking the CAF are properly trained, supported and supervised. Progress and issues highlighted within the pilot will be used to inform the timescales for the wider implementation across each of the networks in Haringey.
- 7.6 The implementation plan for the CAF will link closely with developments on Children's Centres and Extended Schools and will reinforce the increasing role of universal settings in supporting vulnerable children and links with targeted and specialist services.

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 The CAF is a statutory requirement and must be fully operational by 2008. Consultation on how this requirement will be implemented will be managed through the consultation forums already in existence. The outcomes from the pilot and will also be used as the basis for wider consultation on implementation across the whole borough.

## **9. Summary and Conclusions**

- 9.1 The implementation of the CAF in Haringey has great potential to improve inter – agency working, and early intervention for children and young people in Haringey. Successful implementation will depend on:
- careful management of the pilot and a staged approach to implementation;
  - the commitment of all partner agencies and awareness raising across all professionals dealing with children, young people and their families;
  - joint multi agency training of staff who will be assessors and practitioners receiving an assessment
  - adequate management and support arrangements for the professionals who will be implementing the CAF;

- robust arrangements for the panel in relation to monitoring and reviewing the quality of the assessments and the impact on outcomes for children and young people; and
- ensuring that the pilot is used as a learning process and the outcomes are disseminated in order to inform the plans for wider implementation.

## **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 That members note the report and the progress that has been made in preparing for the implementation of the CAF;
- 10.2 Members acknowledge the importance of securing multi-agency commitment to the CAF;
- 10.3 Members receive a report on the implementation of the pilot and the implications for wider rollout of the CAF;

## **11. Comments of the Director of Finance**

- 11.1 No financial implications. The expectation is that the implementation of the CAF will be supported by existing resources. In the longer term, the CAF may reduce the need for other types of assessments and enable some resources to be refocused on preventative strategies. It is too early to predict the scale of this.

## **12. Comments of the Head of Legal Services**

- 12.1 No legal implications

## **13. Equalities Implications**

- 13.1 A panel will oversee the implementation of the CAF and will monitor referrals and agree on the allocation of resources. Procedures will be in place to monitor the pattern of referrals and the allocation of resources in relation to equalities indicators.

## **14. Use of Appendices / Tables / Photographs**

- 14.1 N/A