

Appendix 1
Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee 26th January 2012
Briefing
CAF Action Plan Update January 2012

Introduction

This is an up date report on the CAF action plan report presented to the Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee a year ago in January 2011. The action plan had been developed in November 2010 and all actions were implemented effectively.

This report will also provide an up date on further developments in relation to the CAF in the last year. This has been a challenging year across the service and there have been significant developments in working arrangements supporting CAF assessment practice, and the work of the CAF team.

Up dates specific to the November 2010 Action Plan

The particular issues highlighted for action in 2010 had been

- Consideration and evaluation of the numbers of CAF's undertaken and presented to the CAF panel that resulted in no additional service allocation
- Concerns about the Framework - i data base and whether the reports provide the right information about CAF activity
- The back log of CAF's waiting to be reviewed by the CAF manager and the delays in a number of CAF's then getting to the CAF panel for consideration.

Progress in relation to each of these concerns is outlined below.

Consideration and evaluation of the numbers of CAF's undertaken and presented to the CAF panel that resulted in no additional service allocation

- This remains at below 20% of all CAFs received. This had been as high as 30% when the action plan was first agreed.
- We are now more consistent in ensuring that development work takes place with assessors if there are issues about information provided in the CAF. This has been mainly an issue in schools and we have used the SENCO forum to raise specific areas of concern about CAF practice.
- In addition we have delivered new CAF training for all settings that has been well attended and has had good evaluation and feedback from all participants.
- The Head of Inclusion has also undertaken training in some of the schools who were experiencing difficulties in relation to CAF work.

Concerns about the Framework - i data base and whether the reports provide the right information about CAF activity

- We have developed better use of the available reports and data analysis that does allow us to evaluate CAF activity.
- We are now beginning to use reports available in First Response and the Safeguarding and Support Service to ensure that effective comparisons can be made.

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The back log of CAF's waiting to be reviewed by the CAF manager and the delays in a number of CAF's then getting to the CAF panel for consideration.

- Most significantly we have operated without a backlog at all since May of last year. All CAFs are now reviewed by a member of the CAF team when they are received and presented to panel as soon as all relevant information has been explored and gathered.

2011 developments in CAF panel arrangements, CAF assessment practice and the CAF team.

CAF panel arrangements

Panel arrangements have been reviewed through the Integrated Working Implementation group, and the more recent Family Support and Parenting planning group, and through a workshop with SENCOs in May 2011. In addition we have reviewed arrangements with partners in health and are piloting some new arrangements in relation to the CAF and Speech and Language services. This has resulted in

- piloting using a shorter format for Speech and language assessments for the under 5's – the outcome of this pilot will be reviewed later this month
- Continuing to use the full CAF format for all other CAF assessments until the outcome of this pilot has been considered
- SLT for the under 5's is now direct to SLT from health visitor
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that CAFs for Family Support can be considered out side panel when urgent and services including Child in need nursery placements can be made in between panels so that services can be accessed without delay
- In addition we have agreed arrangements that where children may be at risk of exclusion CAF decisions can be also be made in between panel and then considered more fully at the next CAF panel
- SENCO's have attended panel and have given feedback about arrangements through the SENCO forum, in the main this has been positive and has lead to a better understanding of panel arrangements and decision making on the part of SENCOs
- Feedback about the value of using the CAF in school settings has continued to be more positive.

In addition new arrangements for the delivery of Children's Centre services have provided an opportunity to consider how to improve CAF practice in early years and we are developing a model for regular cluster meetings, bringing all key partners together to ensure that information about vulnerable children and their families is shared effectively, and feeds supports good assessment practice. We anticipate that once this is established we will be able to adjust panel arrangements for the under 5's as necessary.

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CAF assessment practice

CAF assessor training has been delivered twice a term since January 2011 for two days for 15 participants. This training has included training in effective assessment practice as well as working as a lead Professional and Team around the Child practice.

This training has been well attended by staff in universal settings including, Children's Centres, schools, health visiting teams, the voluntary sector providers and targeted services such as family support.

The training means that the identification of vulnerable children and quality of assessments continues to improve.

CAF team developments

The CAF team has now developed as staff previously based in Children and Families have moved into the team as Family Support Workers. This has meant that we have been able to ensure timely responses to CAFs as the team receives them, with more capacity to gather relevant information and screen assessments. In addition the FSW's carry cases and work jointly with First Response in providing immediate Family Support that can prevent the need for children to come into care, and contribute to assessments that will mean a swift step down from the First Response Team. Feedback has been very positive about the work of the team and we are reviewing capacity and team arrangements to ensure that this area of work can be developed further.

The team is made up of 4.5 Family Support Workers, the CAF manager and CAF administrator. A full time FSW will typically working with up to 7 family support cases at any one time, which may include a case that involves visiting the family 3 or 4 times a week. At the same time they will be co-ordinating the information gathering and screening of up to 8 or 9 CAFs pre panel. We are reviewing impact, training and staff development needs on an on going basis so that we establish a flexible and responsive service within the team. Key strengths at this point are

- Good CAF knowledge transferred from the existing CAF manager to CAF FSWs
- Strong working relationships between the CAF team manager and the managers in the First Response team, ensuring effective decision making and working together
- The team is based in Station Road allowing for a duty system that means that FSW's can undertake joint work with the First Response and Safeguarding Service as the need arises
- Good standard of skills and knowledge within the team who have previously been involved in contributing to court based parenting assessments. This means that they are experienced and able to respond to complex cases and ensure effective joint working and planning.

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The CAF team will continue to work closely with colleagues in First Response, Safeguarding and Support, and the other Family Support teams to ensure a timely and response to need. As well as working with universal settings to support the early identification of need and support good CAF assessment practice.