

Title of paper:	Common Assessment Framework.	
Report to:	Nottingham Children's Partnership Board	
Date:	12/06/2013	
Relevant Director:	Dr Tim O'Neill	Wards affected: All
Contact Officer(s) and contact details:	Viv McCrossen Head of Service, Family Community Teams (Central) Viv.McCrossen@nottinghamcity.gov.uk	
Other officers who have provided input:		
Relevant Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) objectives(s):		
Stronger safeguarding – With a key focus on ensuring that there are high standards of safeguarding across all agencies and that the Partnership takes a pro-active approach to the elimination of domestic violence.		x
Healthy living – With a key focus on increasing the proportion of children and young people who have a healthy weight.		x
Reducing substance misuse – Partnership work to lessen the impact on children of parental drug and alcohol misuse and to reduce drug and alcohol misuse amongst children and young people.		x
Raising attainment – Raising the attainment levels and increasing engagement in employment, education and training.		x
Improving attendance – Improving rates of attendance at both Primary and Secondary as a key foundation of improving outcomes.		x
Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):		
<u>Family Support Strategy and the CAF</u>		
<p>The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a fundamental component within Nottingham Children's Partnership Strategy and Pathway and to delivering the Partnership's agreed family support priorities.</p> <p>A review across the partnership of the implementation of the Family Support Strategy is to be undertaken this summer, which will include a Self Assessment Review (SAR) to establish across the partnership how successfully the Strategy has been embedded in achieving the Strategies 5 delivery priorities. The SAR will have a specific CAF focus on how these priorities have been achieved.</p>		
<u>CAF and Regulatory Frameworks / National Guidance</u>		
<p>The CAF also has a key role in supporting evidence within the <i>Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children</i> including the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide evidence of the impact and analysis of CAF assessment activity over the last 12 months and • provide evidence of any quality assurance activity, multi-agency and single agency case audits over the six months prior to inspection, and action plans in relation to early help 		

The CAF is also identified as key within the *Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance 2013* to ensuring the identification of children and families who would benefit from early help, the effective assessment of the need for early help and the provision of effective early help services.

A series of work streams within NCC Children and Families Directorate have been set up to support inspection readiness and one of these, led by Viv McCrossen centres specifically around Assessment and the CAF.

Nottingham Children's Partnership CAF Toolkit

Nottingham Children's Partnership issued a comprehensive CAF Toolkit in January 2012 to provide front line practitioners with information to promote and enable best practice principles in the delivery of the CAF.

The Toolkit also outlined the processes for registering a CAF with CAF Central Records once initiated, and also the process for recording any changes in regards to the Lead Professional and when a CAF has closed.

CAF Central Records Data

CAF data available through CAF Central Records identifies that 758 CAFs were initiated during 2012 -13. This was down from the previous year of 2011-12 when 1100 CAFs were initiated. The figure is however greater than achieved in the preceding years for 2010-11 (567) and 2009-10 (527).

The reports from CAF Central Records that are currently generated are a series of individual reports that include CAF initiation by reason, initiation by agency, closure reason and average length of CAF.

CAF Outcome Data

In regards to outcomes at the point of CAF closure there has been a marked increase in the proportion of these closing due to needs being met.

For cases closed during 2012/13, 55% were due to their needs being met compared with 38% closed with needs met during 2009/10.

Similarly the number of CAFs that have closed due to escalation to Children's Social Care has decreased from 23% in 2009/10 to 16% in 2012/13.

Recommendations:

1	Self Assessment Review: To undertake Family Support Strategy Implementation Self Assessment Review (SAR) across the Nottingham Children's Partnership and report findings to the Nottingham Children's Partnership Board and other Boards as appropriate.
2	Data Cleansing: To undertake data cleaning across the partnership in respect of CAF Central Records.
3	CAF Reporting: To re-establish performance reporting to the Nottingham Children's Partnership in relation to CAF analysis and impact data, including the introduction of more "fit for purpose" reports as agreed by the Board.
4	e-CAF Solution: To establish a partnership working group to scope an e-CAF solution, develop a high level specification and present recommendations to the Board.

1. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

(Explanatory detail and background to the recommendations)

Recommendation 1: Self Assessment Review

Extensive and effective use of the CAF across the partnership is essential to successfully achieving the delivery priorities of the Family Support Strategy and all partners meeting their roles and responsibilities within it. It also has a clear and fundamental role in supporting the achievement of inspection outcomes. The intention is to shape the Self Assessment Review around the CAF and frame the questions in a manner that enables the findings to be easily analysed and reported upon, and bring these findings back to the Board with a set of recommendations for future action.

Recommendation 2: Data Cleansing.

The spike during 2011-12 is linked to the Disabled Children's Thematic Inspection that occurred during this year. During this period, there was a focus and promotional drive to ensure all CAFs were accurately recorded on the system and what their status was. This would indicate that the number of CAFs recorded during the last year does reflect the actual number and we are likely to be under-reporting the real volume undertaken.

The accuracy of CAF Central would not be just confined to the initiation phase of the CAF, but also changes during the process or when the CAF has been closed. Whilst CAF Central Records indicates that the vast majority of CAFs have been open for less than a year, there are a number on the system that are indicating that they have been for a period of two years or more.

Given the inspection requirements for Local Authority Arrangements for the protection of children requiring data on those who have been the subject of a CAF in the three months prior to inspection and the evidence and impact of CAF activity in the last 12 months, there is a need to undertake a cleansing exercise to ensure the validity of the existing data and to ensure there is no under-reporting.

Recommendation 3: CAF Reporting.

There is a need to re-energise CAF Reporting to the Board to raise its profile and importance. The effect of a reduced profile is likely to diminish its usage and / or reduce the engagement with CAF Central Records which results in both under-reporting and inaccurate data on those that are. It also means that the effectiveness of the CAF in achieving positive outcomes is not showcased as it should be.

The data inputted during the process needs development. Currently only the primary reason for initiation is captured. There is capacity within the system to capture other secondary factors and reasons for initiation. Capturing only the primary reason limits our understanding of what the needs are and consequently effects how we can respond to them in future planning, commissioning and delivery.

There is also a need to refine how the reports are presented. They are presented as a series of individual reports that have no fluidity to them in terms of having a clear thread. Only a very limited number are agency specific, principally about how many they have initiated. The Lead Professional is for example not recorded by which agency they are from; they are only recorded by name.

The reports in their current form provide only a limited and partial understanding of the CAF picture. An initial request to have this developed has been put together by the work stream group for Assessment and CAF. The request has focused on the need for greater interface between reports to ensure a greater and more coherent picture of activity and impact can be reported on.

Recommendation 4: e-CAF

CAF Central Records was only ever conceived as an interim position as a vehicle for capturing CAF activity at a partnership level. The information only contains basic details around the circumstances of the CAF and the data that it contains is only immediately accessible by a limited number of individuals.

The e-enablement of the Common Assessment Framework (e-CAF) will allow a CAF Form to be generated, and to enable ongoing and completed assessments to be stored centrally but shared electronically between practitioners who have been granted appropriate access. As an e-enabled system it will support many of the aims of the CAF, overcoming the operational barriers to its use, through providing secure sharing of CAF between agencies without having to e-mail or fax paper copies, providing better management reporting, and increase efficiency as it provides practitioner self service.

The right e-CAF solution for Nottingham Children's Partnership needs input from all the key partners. To achieve this it is proposed that a partner working group be established to produce a high level specification. This specification would then be taken to the Nottingham Children's Partnership and other Boards, as appropriate, to be presented and agreed.

2. RISKS

(Risk to the CYPP, risk involved in undertaking the activity and risk involved in not undertaking the activity)

The risks with not undertaking the activity are in respect of the Self Assessment Review, we would not be able to understand how successfully we have been as a partnership with implementing the delivery priorities of the strategy within specific regard to the CAF. We would consequently not then be able to put in any necessary actions to address the issues identified.

The risk with not undertaking the data cleansing is that it would mean that the information that we would present to support inspections would be inaccurate.

The risk in not undertaking revision and re-establishment of the CAF reporting is that it will not fully evidence the impact of CAF activity within the City and it will not allow partners a clear perspective on their agency engagement within that process. It will restrict analytical capacity to improve planning, commissioning and delivery at both a partnership and agency level.

The risk in not undertaking the e-CAF solution recommendation is that the partnership will only have in place what was intended to be an interim position in regards to capturing CAF activity, which only provides a limited insight into CAF at both an operational and performance level.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are financial implications in regards to establishing an e-CAF solution. The specific cost of this would be dependent upon the specification produced through the working group.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

5. CLIENT GROUP

(Groups of children, young people or carers who are being discussed in the report)

All children, young people and families who, as identified within the Family Support Pathway levels of needs, would benefit from having a CAF in place.

6. IMPACT ON EQUALITIES ISSUES

(A brief description on how many minority groups are being engaged in the proposal and how their needs are being met: This section includes traveller and refugee families. The themes of the Shadow Boards – children and young people; parents and carers; equalities issues and the voluntary and community sector should be considered here.

The development of a more robust set of reporting data in respect of CAF will enable greater understanding and analysis of equalities issues. The interface between reports would be able to identify initiation and closure reasons by a range of demographic domains, for example are CAF closures as a result of lack of engagement or withdrawing consent disproportionate within particular groups or those with specific needs. The reports in their current form are currently unable to describe this.

7. OUTCOMES AND PRIORITIES AFFECTED

(Briefly state which of the CYPP objectives and priorities will be affected)

The effective usage of the CAF as enabling early intervention and preventing problems that integrates services makes them accessible and inclusive to meet all the Family Support Pathway Need indicators means that it affects all the CYPP objectives.

8. CONTACT DETAILS

Viv McCrossen
Head of Service, Family Community Teams (Central)
Viv.McCrossen@nottinghamcity.gov.uk