

Title of paper:	Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Family Support Strategy.	
Report to:	Nottingham Children's Partnership Board	
Date:	15/11/2013	
Relevant Director:	Dr Tim O'Neill	Wards affected: All
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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):

This report provides an update on the recommendations and actions of the paper presented to the Children's Partnership Board relating to CAF on the 26th June.

Family Support Strategy Self Assessment Review

At the meeting on the 26th June, it was agreed that a Self Assessment Review (SAR) be undertaken across the partnership to review the implementation of the Family Support Strategy's delivery priorities and to theme this around the usage of the CAF to further understand its delivery and impact within early help.

The SAR has now been completed and received 46 responses (26 from Schools and 20 from other strategic partners).

Analysis has identified that there is a degree of confidence across the partnership in meeting the key delivery priorities within the strategy, however the majority of those respondents describe themselves as confident as opposed to very confident.

The spread across the different delivery priorities where agencies have rated themselves as very confident in delivering those priorities ranges from 2% to 19%.

Headline findings include that 80% of those that responded were either confident or very confident and that they are using CAF as the main tool for intervening early and preventing problems (delivery priority 1).

Also, 82% of those responding were either confident or very confident that the CAF is effective in equipping their workforce to better integrate services with partners. (delivery priority 2).

In addition to this, 88% of respondents are either confident or very confident that their workforce, through the CAF, has the capacity and skills to engage vulnerable children and families (delivery priority 3).

The SAR has also identified that 71% of respondents are either confident or very confident that the Family Support Pathway is embedded into the day to day practice of their respective services (delivery priority 4). However only 2% (1 agency) of respondents described themselves as very confident in this regard.

In regards to how well the aims and ambitions of the Family Support Strategy are understood across partners, the overwhelming majority (91%) responded that they had an understanding of its aims and ambitions, however only 16% of respondents stated that they understood them really well.

CAF Data Cleansing

It was agreed at the Board meeting on the 26th June for a data cleansing exercise to be undertaken of the CAFs currently open on CAF Central Records to ensure that the data presented a true and accurate reflection of CAF usage and impact across the city. Undertaking this was also seen as necessary as part of preparing for any forthcoming Ofsted *inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers*.

The total number of CAFs required to be cleansed was 1600. To undertake this, 2.5 FTE casual workers have been employed. They have in the past 8 weeks, cleansed just 1200 of the records. Of those 1200, just over 600 have been able to be closed. If this pattern continues it would indicate that half of the cases appearing on the system as open did not need to be.

This period of cleansing does not come significantly after the last period of data cleansing undertaken in 2011 in preparation for a Disabled Children's Thematic Inspection. It is apparent that a more sustainable and efficient process needs to be put in place for the ongoing maintenance of accurate information.

The recurring issues identified are principally about not providing required updates either at closure or at key points during the live process, often this is about not updating in regards to the identified lead professional for the case. This has made the tracking of cases for cleansing more difficult a process. School transition points have also been identified as a recurring point where the changing circumstances are not properly updated.

CAF Reporting

It was agreed at the Board meeting on the 26th June, that there was a need to re-establish performance reporting in regards to the CAF. It was also agreed that there was a need to review the existing performance reports available and develop a new set of reports that had greater focus on outcomes and impact.

The current CAF reports provided stand alone information on CAF initiations, CAF initiations by agency, CAF closure reasons.

The current number of initiation reasons for partners to choose for a CAF on Central Records is 40. These are a combination of process and need. In regards to the needs, there is also a degree of overlap within them.

Currently only one reason for initiation is placed on the system. The system would have capacity to record more than one, but retain the status of which one had the primary need.

A new set of reports have been developed that are able to provide analysis on more than one element or factor that is then better able to provide a more comprehensive understanding of need by agency and demographic and how this relates to outcome.

e-CAF

It was agreed at the Board meeting on the 26th June that exploration should be given to the development of an e-CAF solution, given that CAF central record was only considered an interim position and is limited in terms of information and access.

An initial scoping meeting involving a number of partners took place on the 6th November including representation from Health, Schools and NCC who are the three main initiators of CAF within the city.

The initial scoping of what would be expected from a system would be that it would preferably be an online single live system that was accessible to all partners, that it would be able to hold the physical CAF form and would allow practitioners to update. It would also be required to be able to extract partnership and individual service performance reports and have the ability to track progress on cases.

Discussion also covered issues regarding availability of funding to support developments and where across the partnership this could be possibly accessed. Consideration was also given to what support and resource would be required to progress the developments.

Recommendations:

1	<p>Self Assessment Review:</p> <p>A) To incorporate the qualitative and quantitative findings of the SAR into the review and action planning of the Family Support Strategy and Pathway</p> <p>B) That the CAF QA toolkit is promoted again across the partnership for use, given the large level of “no” and “don’t know” responses as to whether the respective organisations had a QA process in place for CAF.</p>
2	<p>Data Cleansing:</p> <p>To produce quarterly reports for individual agencies to monitor their engagement with CAF central records.</p>
3	<p>CAF Reporting:</p> <p>A) To report to the Board on performance using new performance measures.</p> <p>B) To change the initiation reasons to correspond to the Family Support Strategy and Pathway areas of need and to supplement these with the Family Support Pathway need indicators.</p>
4	<p>e-CAF Solution:</p> <p>For the partnership working group to scope an e-CAF solution, develop a high level specification and present recommendations to the Board.</p>

1. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

Recommendation 1: Self Assessment Review

To collate the qualitative and quantitative findings of the SAR and incorporate them into action planning process for the review of the Family Support Strategy and Pathway in 2014.

This would need to include consideration of the findings whilst the majority of those responding had a level of understanding of the aims and ambitions of the strategy and confidence in delivering its priorities, this was often a partial rather than a complete or full understanding or confidence. It can be concluded from this, that the strategy is yet to be fully embedded. Actions to address this need to be placed in the subsequent review of the strategy.

A more immediate action is recommended in response to the question about existing quality assurance processes for CAF within organisations. Only 15% of responses identified that there was an existing QA process in place that they knew of.

There is a CAF QA framework available on the Children's Partnership website in the CAF section. It is recommended that this is again actively promoted to all partners.

Recommendation 2: Data Cleansing.

The proposed development of an e-CAF solution that enables more efficient partner self service and access will provide a longer term solution to ensuring the maintenance of accurate CAF information.

This however needs to run alongside an interim solution to prevent the need for cleansing on the scale that is currently been undertaken and not without a degree of cost and time.

There is a need for greater, more frequent and ongoing information regarding CAF usage to be disseminated to organisations so that they are able to see the current position of their CAF and to be able to respond where it is identified that this is not accurate.

Given the number of organisations that could be responsible for initiating the CAF (this is particularly due to number of individual schools rather than other partner organisations), there is not the resource available centrally to produce individual reports for each organisation.

It would be possible to send a quarterly report from which individual organisations would be able to extract their own individual CAF data. This would not give personalised data, but provide information on CAFs open and closed by their respective agencies during that period. This would be able to be checked against their own CAF data (as identified in the SAR the majority of organisations have their own recording system to be able to compare to).

To avoid the issue of the lead professional not being recorded, it would be recommended that the person who initiated the CAF has the status as lead professional on the system until the status changes. The cleansing has identified that often the lead professional identity

remains blank, due to the person initiating stating they are not going to be the lead professional.

The final recommendation is that we currently only record the initiation and closure stages of the CAF process. The current Ofsted inspection requirements request data for completed CAF assessments. The data we are able to currently provide does not marry with those requirements. Also the data cleansing identified a number of cases where the initiated CAF did not proceed to full CAF Assessment completion and delivery of a plan of interventions.

Recommendation 3: CAF Reporting.

To introduce a new set of CAF performance reports that are able to more fully understand need and outcome and have these replace the previous reports.

The proposed new measures are:

- Initiation reason by agency: this would help to further understand how and where need is identified and how that changes dependent upon organisation.
- Initiation reason by outcomes: this would further help to understand what needs we are successfully addressing and which we are not.
- Outcome by agency: this would provide individual organisations with better knowledge of the impact that their work with the CAF process is having

It also recommended that we introduce new measures that better understand need and outcome by demographic to better understand and identify possible issues regarding disproportionality. These would be:

- Initiation reason by ethnicity.
- Initiation reason by age.
- Outcome by ethnicity.
- Outcome by age.

In regards to the current reasons available for initiating CAF there are 40 in total which are a combination of process and need. Where the needs are generalised it gives little context to what the actual issue is so limits understanding of what the need is.

The needs also do not correspond to the need indicators within the Family Support Strategy Pathway.

It would be recommended that the initiation reasons available for selection are changed to reflect the 13 areas of need within the Family Support Pathway so that an understanding of need reflects the language of our *strategic* understanding of need.

Given the breadth of indicators that the areas of need cover, it is also recommended that in the initiation phase we capture the particular indicator within the primary need so as to then enable a more detailed understanding of what that need is.

There are also currently 20 reasons for closure available on CAF Central Records which are essentially variations on needs being met, cases being escalated into specialist services, or lack of engagement. It is also recommended that where these are able, that they should be combined and reduced as this is similarly having an impact upon producing meaningful outcome reports as it is spreading the data too thinly.

Recommendation 4: e-CAF

The partnership working group have established the basic scope and principles of what would be required from an e-CAF solution and what financial and resource factors need to be considered in order to realise this.

It is recommended that further work is to be done through the partnership working group to establish a business case for an e-CAF solution that incorporates any financial and resources implications and solutions.

2. RISKS

The risks with not using the qualitative and quantitative findings from Self Assessment Review to inform the review of the Family Support Strategy is that identified barriers to its full implementation will not be accounted for or addressed.

The risk in respect of data cleansing not providing more frequent information that can provide agency specific data regarding their use of the CAF is that it increases the likelihood of the data becoming inaccurate and resulting in another large scale, costly and time consuming data cleansing exercise.

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

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

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

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

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