

## SCHOOLS FORUM – 17 July 2014

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| <b>Title of paper:</b>  | <b>Effective Early Assessment for Children in School</b>  |
| <b>Director(s)/<br/>Corporate Director(s):</b>  | <b>Dr. Tim O’Neill</b>  |
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| <b>Other colleagues who<br/>have provided input:</b>  |   |
| <b>Summary</b>  |   |
| <p>This report outlines the proposal for investment on a joint strategic approach and model of delivery to support the greater shift in early help that ensures children are both safe and well, and are able to achieve their full potential.</p> <p>There is a need to secure more effective early help in the city. Areas for improvement in the system include early and timely identification and assessment of vulnerable, and potentially vulnerable, children and families, and the access to effective integrated interventions and early support across schools, the Local Authority and other partners. Further strengthening and embedding of the usage of CAF as the main recording tool for early assessment is crucial to achieving this aim.</p> <p>In the current financial climate all partners need to work together to support children by using budgets more effectively. The Local Authority seeks to strengthen current activity by expanding partnership working with schools and to secure further business opportunities.</p> |   |
| <b>Recommendation(s):</b>   |   |
| <b>1</b>  | To note: It is the Local Authority’s intention to establish locality based CAF partnership resource via Early Help Development Specialist roles, to support schools with CAF activity with a focus on increasing both the quantity and quality of CAF assessments and plans to enable the delivery of effective and timely interventions. |
| <b>2</b>  | Schools Forum to match-fund the local authority’s investment of £0.160m to enable a CAF partnership resource across the city as identified above, with the required managerial and administrative support for two years.  |
| <b>3</b>  | To establish a joint task and finish group to identify and deliver a strategic approach to further develop and strengthen early help in schools.  |

### **1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

Early Help is essential to improving outcomes for children and families in Nottingham and supporting inspection outcomes in both Ofsted inspection frameworks for both the Local Authority and schools.

This report outlines an opportunity to align inspection criteria in the strategic development, for both the Local Authority and schools, for a joint initiative on a systematic approach to the delivery of early help and CAF to support with wider family issues and to increase attendance and reduce exclusion rates.

Early Help is a key element of the new Ofsted inspection framework '*for services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers*' and has greater focus on the effectiveness of help offered to children and families, not just in responding to cases of abuse or neglect, but in providing early help to improve the wellbeing of children.

There are a number of key criteria within the framework that by undertaking the recommendations would support including:

- Children and families are offered help when needs and/or concerns are first identified and, as a consequence of the early help offered, children's circumstances improve.
- Information-sharing between agencies and professionals is timely.
- The interface between early help and statutory child protection work is clearly and effectively defined.
- Thresholds are understood by partners, consistently applied, well embedded, reviewed and updated regularly.
- That children and young people receive help that is timely and proportionate to risk
- Be able to demonstrate as a result of early help, children's circumstances improve and the need for specialist services is lessened / avoided

Similarly, the recommendations would also support the framework for school inspection judgement – 'The behaviour and safety of pupils at the school', most notably the areas which consider:

- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school
- The extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Pupils' attitude to learning.
- Pupils' behaviour in school environment; towards, and respect for, other young people and adults.
- That all pupils' have an equal and a fair chance to thrive and learn in an atmosphere of respect and dignity.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality at school and in lessons.
- Pupils' feel safe and their ability to assess and manage risk appropriately and to keep themselves safe.

Early Help is a shared responsibility and local arrangements between the Local Authority and schools will strengthen the ability to identify and record the early help needed by children and families. Schools are in a unique position due to the universal nature of the setting to identify those children who are potentially vulnerable at the earliest opportunity.

## **2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)**

The Local Authority is challenged on a number of risks and issues, significantly there is less investment available; there's an increase in the number of children going into care and there are issues in attendance and behaviour in our schools.

The Local Authority strategically and operationally continues to provide investment in the usage of CAF as the main recording tool for early assessment as prioritised in the Family Support Strategy and Family Support Pathway. The Local Authority invests in the ongoing monitoring and reporting of partnership CAF activity.

## **CAF Performance Reports**

The use of the CAF in the delivery of effective early help was identified as a strength in the recent Ofsted inspection.

The latest CAF partnership performance report, 4 April 2014, shows there are more CAFs open than at any point in the last five years. The number of CAFs currently open is 1452. This is higher than the number of CAFs open at the end of any previous financial year. 574 CAFs were initiated in 2010/11 compared to 982 YTD 2013/14. This is an increase of 71% since the launch of the Family Support Strategy in 2011.

CAF initiation trends show that Primary and Secondary schools are the second and third highest initiators of CAF in the city.

Since the launch of the Family Support Strategy, the subsequent years' performance data shows there has been a decrease in the numbers initiated by both Secondary and Primary schools. Although schools remain in the top three initiators, Secondary schools initiated 119 in 2011/12 compared to 81 in 2013/14; Primary schools initiated 195 in 2011/12 compared to 168 in 2013/14. Overall the number of CAFs initiated across the partnership is increasing, from 864 in 2012/13 compared to 982 in 2013/14.

Combined outcome data for Primary and Secondary schools shows that 696 CAFs have been initiated and closed in the years 2010/2014. The data shows that the three key reasons for schools initiating a CAF are: behavioural issues (32.6%); emotional needs (15.2%) and parenting support (7.6%).

Further outcome data shows the proportion of cases closed with the needs met across the partnership is higher than ever before. 475 closed with needs met in 2013/14, representing 50.96% compared to 36.88% in 2010/11. Comparatively, schools data shows an increase in the overall percentage of CAFs closed with needs met and is higher than the partnership, 38.25% in 2010/11 and 51.11% YTD in 2013-14.

There is an increase of CAFs closed due to needs met where behavioural issues were the initiation reason. 56.60% of CAFs were closed due to needs met by schools in 2010/14 compared with the overall Partnership percentage of 50.49% for the same period.

There is an increase of CAFs closed due to needs met where emotional needs were the initiation reason. 53% of CAFs were closed due to needs met by schools in 2011/14 compared to the overall Partnership percentage of 48.01% for the same period.

There's an increase of CAFs closed where parenting support was the initiation reason. 56.60% of CAFs were closed due to needs met by schools closed in 2011/14 compared to the overall Partnership percentage of 50.68% for the same period.

## **Family Support Strategy Self Assessment Review and CAF**

Schools were the main respondent to the Family Support Strategy Self Assessment Review, with 26 schools out of 46 agencies responding. The self assessment survey was distributed to Head Teachers and strategic partners in the summer of 2013.

The responses to the self assessment by partner agencies and schools demonstrated a good strategic commitment to the usage of CAF.

69.23% of schools were confident in ensuring CAF is used as the main recording tool to assess needs and determine an intervention plan so broader needs are addressed. 19.23% were very confident, 3.84% were unconfident and 7.69% were not confident at all. Compared to partnership responses, 65% of those that responded were either confident or very confident that they are using CAF as the main tool for intervening early and preventing problems.

80.76% of schools said they understood the aims and ambitions of the Family Support Strategy fairly well, with 15.38% of schools saying they understood the aims and ambitions really well. One school responded saying not understood. Compared to partnership responses, 80% responded that they had an understanding of the Family Support Strategy's aims and ambitions, fairly well or really well.

The recent Ofsted inspection highlighted that the quality of CAF assessments and plans were variable. This is reflected in the Family Support Strategy self assessment review by the responses from both schools and partner agencies to the quality assurance question and consequently highlighted as an area for improvement.

7.6% of schools said their school had a quality assurance process and system in place to audit CAF activity; 65.38% do not have a quality assurance process in place and 26.92% do not know. Compared to partnership responses, 15% said they had a quality assurance process and system in place for their CAF activity, 57% said that they did not and 28% reported that they did not know.

80.76% of schools were confident that their workforce has the capacity and skills to engage with vulnerable children and families, with 15.38% saying they were very confident and 3.84% not confident at all.

Other key findings from the SAR include:

- 69.23% of schools were confident that the workforce is equipped to work better together, identify problems early and share information through CAF. 19.23% were very confident, 3.84% were unconfident and 7.69% were not confident at all.
- 61.53% of schools said CAF is fairly effective when supporting transition stages for children, with 15.38% saying it CAF is very effective. 3.84% (1) of schools said CAF is very ineffective at transition stages and 11.53% fairly ineffective.
- 73.07% of schools said they mostly successfully gain consent; with 11.53% always gaining consent and 11.53% partly successfully gaining consent (1 blank).

Schools have evidenced in the self assessment review that there's a good strategic commitment to the Family Support Strategy and usage of CAF. Whilst outcome data and performance reports show that both Primary and Secondary schools remain amongst the highest contributors to the numbers of CAFs initiated, operationally the numbers are decreasing. The challenge is to re-invigorate and continue to drive up the number of CAFs initiated by schools, as well as across the partnership. At the same time improve the quality of CAF assessments and intervention plans.

### **Family Support Workers in Schools**

There is already strong evidence that demonstrates the positioning of roles and functions within school settings that aid the early identification of potentially / vulnerable children to achieve positive outcomes.

Since the initiation of the family support workers in school project, 16 schools have now purchased workers to be based in school. The family support worker role is to work with school colleagues to identify children who would benefit from an intervention.

In the period from Oct 2011 – Sept 2012, prior to the project, those Primary schools who have since purchased an FSW, accounted for 7% of CAFs initiated by ALL Primary schools.

Since the launch of the project these Primary schools now account for 25% of CAFs initiated by all Primary schools.

The number of CAFs initiated by all Primary schools between the periods Oct 2011 – Sept 2012 and Oct 2012 – May 2014 has increased by 49%.

Over the same periods the number of CAFs initiated by those schools who have purchased an FSW, has increased by 400.

In the period Oct 2012 to May 2014 closed CAFs across all schools for needs met is 43% and escalation to Social Care is 35%.

In schools with an FSW the figures are needs met 60% and escalation to Social Care is 20 %.

Very positive feedback has been received from schools and FSWs:-

- Better relationships and improved communications within school and with other agencies
- Early intervention avoiding full social care involvement
- Relationships built quicker with children & their families
- Barriers greatly reduced with FSW being part of school team

To strengthen schools CAF activity and early identification of emerging issues for vulnerable children and families at the earliest opportunity, the Local Authority is proposing the establishment of Early Help Development Specialist roles to specifically provide support to schools to co-ordinate and quality assure the initiation of CAFs and the contribution to improved outcomes in behaviour, attendance and attainment. The Local Authority's commitment to the establishment of the proposed posts is to maximise on available budgets/funding as well as seek additional funding opportunities within the Schools Forum.

It is proposed to set up a task and finish group with strategic representation from schools and the Local Authority to identify and scope the appropriate use of funding to support CAF usage, quality assurance and performance; and for this group to agree investment options and provide recommendations for a model of delivery.

The new Ofsted Framework specifically refers to the achievement and progress of children who qualify for additional support which can be provided through pupil premium funding.

Local evidence indicates that using pupil premium funding to engage hard to reach parents through the provision of family support workers is effective where this leads to improved outcomes for children.

A key strategic link is the review of alternative provision, which is currently a separate strand of work, in the future will align.

The Local Authority has identified £0.160 towards the proposal over two years.

### **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

No further investment specific forum funding to enhance early help services.

### **4. OUTCOMES/DELIVERABLES**

The proposal contributes to a range of agendas and indicators:

- The identification of issues and the opportunity to intervene early, to build resilience in families; delivering 'earlier support, stronger families'.
- Greater emphasis on improving attitudes, behaviour, attendance and attainment rates for children and young people.
- Arrangements for broader safeguarding issues effectively strengthened in schools and reassurance for leadership and governance.
- Reduce the number of children and families needing costly, specialist services.
- Increase the number of CAFs initiated and engagement with the CAF process.
- Increase the quality of CAF assessments and intervention plans.
- Increase integration and partnership working between schools, the Local Authority and partner agencies and professionals.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)**

5.1 This report seeks Schools Forums approval to fund recommendations 1 to 3 outlined in this report. Funding of £0.160m is required to support this proposal and would require funding from the Statutory School Reserve in 2014/15.

5.2 Approval of this commitment from the SSR will be included in the 2013/14 Outturn Report.

### **6. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS)**

### **7. OBSERVATIONS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FAMILY COMMUNITY TEAMS**

### **8. HR ISSUES**

It is understood that initially a Task and Finish group is to be established to determine what approach and resource will be required moving forward. Therefore detail on workforce implications i.e. new posts to be created, grades, contract types etc... will need to be considered at the appropriate time.

Should the proposal be agreed to create any permanent or temporary fixed term posts, and the posts are new, then the relevant Job Descriptions and JEQ'S will need to be produced and evaluated. The relevant recruitment must be conducted through the appropriate processes.

Management will need to consider the nature of the contract if funding is time limited, and if to be on a fixed-term arrangement, awareness of potential costs in any exit arrangement such as redundancy compensation will need to be budgeted for.

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24<sup>th</sup> April 2014

**9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Has the equality impact been assessed?

Not needed (report does not contain proposals or financial decisions)   
No   
Yes – Equality Impact Assessment attached

Due regard should be given to the equality implications identified in the EIA.

**10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION**

CAF Partnership Report

Family Support Strategy Review

**11. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

Ofsted - Framework for the Inspection of children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

Ofsted - Framework for school inspection