

# CHILDREN AND ADULTS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 MAY 2010

## COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

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### Summary

This report provides an overview of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process which supports early intervention and prevents the need for higher levels of service. The report also updates Members on its use across Medway to support vulnerable children and families and will be accompanied by a presentation at the meeting.

### 1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a key component in the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme. The aim of the CAF is to help identify, at the earliest opportunity, children and young people's additional needs that are not being met by the universal services and then, through a Lead Professional, provide co-ordinated multi-agency support to meet those needs. A common assessment can only be undertaken with consent from the family and helps practitioners gather information and understand the strengths and needs of a child or young person to support early intervention.

1.2 The Medway Children and Young People's Plan 2009-2011 includes in Section 1: Safe and Cared For, commitments to:

- ensure all partner agencies are signed up to and are using the common assessment framework (CAF) as a multi-agency assessment and planning tool, supported by practical materials, to better identify needs and to intervene in a targeted and timely way;
- begin to re-commission early intervention and preventative services, to meet or narrow gaps, including those identified as a result of CAFs

In Section 2: Making our Plans for Children and Young People Happen:

- From 2009 (and with the exception of where there is a safeguarding concern, for which we have different emergency procedures) the CAF is the only assessment tool, which should be used to access multi-agency support for a child and their family

CAF is also an identified priority of the Parenting and Family Support Partnership Board of the Medway Children's Trust.

## **2. Progress to date**

CAF is a national standard integrated process. The CAF process is now used throughout the whole Medway area.

### **2.1 Training**

Three levels of free, multi-agency training; CAF Awareness, CAF Assessor and CAF Lead Professional, have been offered since October 2009 to anyone who works (either paid or voluntary) with children or young people in Medway. Staff have attended from a range of services including infant, junior, primary and secondary schools children's centres, pre-schools, health, housing associations, youth service, Connexions, police, Medway Ethnic Minority Forum, Youth Inclusion Panel, Wisdom Hospice, Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) and voluntary groups. A training session was also provided for Members in January 2010.

### **2.2 Support**

Day to day support is available from the CAF Co-ordinator for anyone who wants advice about CAF, particularly when they are starting the process for the first time. The CAF Champions, a group of practitioners and managers experienced in the use of CAF also provide valuable advice and support at a more local level.

CAF Lead Professionals meetings were introduced in July 2009. These meetings give everyone who is a Lead Professional an opportunity to share good practice and information, meet others who have taken on this role and encourage peer mentoring.

### **2.3 Promotion**

In October 2009, the Medway Young Inspectors carried out survey work with staff, young people and parents and established that there was a very low level of awareness of CAF in Medway. They have agreed to repeat the survey work in 2010 to track progress.

Funding was secured from the Preventative Fund to produce Medway leaflets and posters to promote CAF and to support the training programme. Work was undertaken with the Young Commissioners and subsequently three types of leaflets have been produced; for parents and carers, primary school age children and secondary school age young people. These leaflets and posters are being distributed widely throughout the area.

After consultation with the Medway Ethnic Minority Forum (MEMF) team it was decided that translated versions of the leaflets would not be printed. Instead, it is planned that "spoken" versions of the information will be recorded in English and the top 10 languages used in Medway and made available on the Medway Children's Trust website: [www.medwaychildrenstrust.co.uk/](http://www.medwaychildrenstrust.co.uk/)

It was noted that the majority of CAFs registered in Medway had been undertaken for white, British children and young people. In response, MEMF staff are working with the CAF Co-ordinator on a project to promote awareness of CAF throughout minority communities in Medway.

## 2.4 CAFs

Since the pilot started in 2006, 339 CAFs have been registered as follows:

<b>Quarter</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
January - March		13	16	46	39
April - June		11	8	49	14
July - September		3	14	30	
October - December	12	21	9	54	
<b>Annual Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Total - 2006 to April 2010</b>	<b>339</b>				

## 3. Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>
Low use of CAF process	If partners do not engage fully with the process	Increase understanding of CAF, continue training and support and promotion through CAF Co-ordinator and CAF Champions
Low practitioner attendance at CAF multi-agency team around the child meetings	It is difficult to provide effective co-ordinated support for children and young people if a full range of practitioners and services do not attend meetings to draw up and implement CAF delivery plans.	Reiteration of need to engage with CAF process across partners by all senior leaders in the Children's Trust. Regular updates to the CT board.
Management of appropriate referrals	Practitioners need to know when to refer to Social Care due to safeguarding concerns.	CAF training to highlight issue and practitioners to have awareness of safeguarding thresholds

## 4. Implications for looked after children

There are no direct implications for Looked After Children. CAF supports early intervention and may well prevent the need for a child/young person to be looked after.

## 5. Financial and legal implications

There are no financial or legal implications that arise from this report.

## **7. Recommendations**

7.1 Members comment on and note the report.

### **Lead officer contact**

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### **Background papers**

Nil