

TO: THE EXECUTIVE
20 MARCH 2012

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT – A REVIEW OF THE COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Director of Children, Young People and Learning

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To determine the Executive's response to the recommendations in the report by the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel's Working Group on "A Review of the Common Assessment Framework, attached as annex 1.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the responses to the recommendations outlined in the supporting information in section 5 of this report are approved.**
- 2.2 **That the members of the working group are thanked for their report.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Working Group has spent considerable time in undertaking research of the Common Assessment Framework and the way it is being implemented in Bracknell Forest. They have met with a number of practitioners across agencies and have reflected their findings in the report. As a result the report provides a thorough scrutiny of the Common Assessment Framework and the recommendations made are informed and merit support.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 N/A

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 The report provides a strong endorsement of the Common Assessment Framework and Members comment on the "critically important contribution it makes to ensuring good "Early Intervention" services are provided by the Council and its partners to help them get the best start in life". Whilst the report made many positive comments, there were areas for development identified and the recommendations made in the report are identified below along with a considered response.
- 5.2 **Working Group Recommendation 1** - In making its decisions over allocation of resources, the Council must recognise the long term return on the investment in Early Intervention, and the real and lasting benefits it has on the lives of children as well as the well-being of the Borough.

This recommendation is agreed. The Council recognises the importance of early intervention, and the potential impact this has on ensuring positive outcomes for the residents in the borough, and the potential to identify value for money and possible savings. The Council is developing an overarching approach to prevention and early

intervention, and within Children, Young People and Learning a Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy is being developed to provide a framework to further develop and embed early intervention. In recognition of the importance of prevention and early intervention the Executive has established £0.5million in an ear marked reserve to fund this work.

- 5.3 **Working Group Recommendation 2** - Continue to stress that Early Intervention is essential, and as soon as a concern appears, a CAF should be started, as part of the Early Intervention process.

This recommendation is agreed. The CAF process details the actions a practitioner should take when they have identified concerns about a child/young person. The CAF training re enforces this process. The role of CAF is identified as a key element of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy.

- 5.4 **Working Group Recommendation 3** - The Council should report to the Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel by mid 2012 on what it has done to thoroughly understand the reasons for schools' dissatisfaction with the CAF process, and how these have been resolved.

Assuming this recommendation means officers it is partially agreed. We have been undertaking an internal review of the CAF and as part of this review we have met with a significant number of our schools to determine their views in relation to the CAF. It should be noted that not all schools are dissatisfied and it is only a small minority that have expressed concerns. We will conclude this work by the end of March and a report will be produced with the findings of the meetings, and possible solutions to the issues raised.

- 5.5 **Working Group Recommendation 4** - Resolve as a matter of urgency the need for schools to share CAF information to assist the transfer of children between schools.

*This recommendation is agreed, **but** must be considered within the context of the legal framework for sharing information lawfully [as per advice from the Borough Solicitor]. The Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy identifies information sharing as a key component of early intervention, and actions have been identified to review the current information sharing protocol, increase training and redistribute the safeguarding cue cards on sharing information. A protocol will be developed in 2012-13 to support information sharing to assist the transfer of children between schools.*

- 5.6 **Working Group Recommendation 5** - Continue to deliver CAF training to everyone who needs it, and take every opportunity to promote and publicise the training opportunities.

This recommendation is agreed. CAF training and assessment skills training are delivered at regular periods throughout the year and currently delivered free of charge. This training is open to the children's workforce including colleagues from the voluntary and community sector. Bespoke training is also offered to individual settings [a recent example is of this being delivered to a school in Bracknell].

- 5.7 **Working Group Recommendation 6** - Provide full time staff support for the CAF coordinator, and organise succession planning for that post.

This recommendation is agreed in principle. In the context of the increased use of the CAF and the developments under the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy we will review how we organise and manage staffing.

- 5.8 **Working Group Recommendation 7** -Continue to look for opportunities to recognise the role and value of the Voluntary sector in assessing children's needs and responding to them.

This recommendation is agreed. The role and contribution of the Voluntary sector is highly valued, and the sector has been responsible for the completion of 18 assessments in the past year January to December 2011. As said in recommendation 5, CAF training is offered free to all and we would encourage colleagues in the voluntary and community sector to access this.

- 5.9 **Working Group Recommendation 8** - Modify the CAF form and guidance to make it clearer that it is an assessment form leading to a possible referral for services.

This recommendation is agreed. CAF training makes this very clear and the fact that CAF is an assessment is stressed at every opportunity. The form and written guidance will ensure this message is clearly presented.

- 5.10 **Working Group Recommendation 9** - Continue to work with all partners in the National Health Service, the schools and elsewhere to better understand why they are not engaging fully with the CAF process and respond appropriately, to achieve more widespread participation.

This recommendation is agreed. This is seen as a continual process and through the Children and Young People's Partnership; the Local Safeguarding Children Board the CAF is continually promoted. The Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy will identify the need for partners to engage in the CAF process and we will continue to monitor participation and identify those partners who are not engaging and the reasons why this is so.

- 5.11 **Working Group Recommendation 10** - Ensure the arrangements for identifying and supporting Lead Professionals are clearly understood and robust. Ensure that the most appropriate person is chosen for each case, and that designation should be reviewed regularly.

This recommendation is agreed. The role of Lead Professional has continued to be a challenge, but responsibilities of the Lead Professional are addressed through the training programme. We will explore further training opportunities to enhance this role, and will review guidance to ensure clarity on this role. The Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy will address the issue of reviewing the CAF and within this the role and designation of the Lead Professional.

- 5.12 **Working Group Recommendation 11** - Revise the protocol to ensure that everyone entering information onto the CAF has prompt and full feedback as to what action has been taken on the case.

*This recommendation is agreed. The CAF training is clear in advising practitioners of the importance of feedback when going through the process. This is not just the responsibility of the CAF process but is the responsibility of **all** partner agencies who are participating in the CAF itself, or in receiving a referral to their service as a result of a CAF being undertaken.*

- 5.13 **Working Group Recommendation 12** - Complete its improvements to review and follow-up arrangements, so as to track impacts, not just for the good handling of cases, but also to demonstrate the value of Early Intervention.

This recommendation is agreed. Much work has already taken place to embed review as part of the CAF process. It will be recommended that a review is undertaken after a 12 week period to consider progress made, then to review at suitable periods after that. The Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy will also address the issue of review as part of an escalation and de-escalation process when children and young people are in need of additional support. It will also address the need for services to provide evidence of the impact on outcomes for children, young people and families, and evidence of effective use of resources and value for money.

- 5.14 **Working Group Recommendation 13** - The CAF form and accompanying guidance should be amended so as to make completion of some parts of the form optional. It can be added to over time by different people.

This recommendation is agreed. The CAF training makes it very clear that all components of the form need not be completed, and that completion of the CAF does not need to be achieved in one sitting. This message will continue to be reinforced through training and in the guidance. We would wish however to encourage practitioners to complete, or work with others to complete the sections as this enables a more holistic assessment of the needs of the child or young person.

- 5.15 **Working Group Recommendation 14** - The CAF form should be modified to more clearly allow for all stages on each case. The form should also provide for designating a different Lead Professional in the future.

This recommendation is agreed. As part of our ongoing CAF review we have been looking at the structure of the form, and have worked closely with schools in particular to identify ways in which it can be modified. In an earlier recommendation the issue of reviews was identified, it is anticipated that the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy and proposed framework will allow for regular reviews to take place, and that within these reviews there is scope to consider the appropriate Lead Professional and the option for designating a different Lead Professional where this is relevant.

- 5.16 **Working Group Recommendation 15** - The CAF form should be available to complete electronically, but not circulated electronically at this stage, this to be reviewed periodically.

This recommendation is accepted with some considerations. The CAF form is already available electronically from the Council's web site, and can be distributed to people electronically on request. There are issues relating to the safe and secure mechanisms for sending the form, and where systems are secure sharing electronically is not an issue. This will be kept under review and options for using technology will be explored thoroughly.

- 5.17 **Working Group Recommendation 16** - Audit the overall outcomes of the CAF process and report these to Overview and Scrutiny on an annual basis.

This recommendation is accepted. CAF as a process is monitored on a quarterly basis via the Shared Processes Group, and there is an annual report produced, which is presented to the Children and Young People's Partnership, and this year will

also be presented to the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Providing a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be added to this schedule.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal provisions are contained within the main body of the report .Issues relating to lawful information sharing and an information sharing protocol, have been expressly addressed at Paragraph 5.5 and Appendix 7 of the report. The Assistant Borough solicitor attended the committee in early December to answer questions on information sharing generally and particularly with schools in advance of the child being admitted to the school roll.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The financial implications arising from this report are expected to be funded from the reserve created to finance invest to save initiatives that focus on early interventions and preventative work

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The recommendations made in the report, and the focus of the CAF within an early intervention framework ensures a focus on vulnerable groups in the borough.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 CAF sits within the overarching approach to prevention and early intervention and as such should be seen within this framework, and not as a stand alone activity. To do so would risk the success of the CAF, and the positive impact of early intervention on children, young people and families.

Other Officers

- 6.5 N/A

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Officers and partner agencies have been consulted as part of the working group's review, and have been consulted on the recommendations.

The Chair of the LSCB has commented on the report as shown below.

The LSCB welcomes the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's valuable review of the CAF and its role in supporting Early Intervention/Help. This review has been very thorough and follows up from the review of Safeguarding undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2011. It provides excellent analysis of the current arrangements and barriers to full implementation. The Executive have agreed with all 16 recommendations which include recognising the importance of investment in Early Intervention for improving children's outcomes and the need to ensure the full engagement of all partners.

Unrestricted

In response to the learning from a Serious Case Review and the Overview and Scrutiny Review report the LSCB Partnership Forum is undertaking a workshop in February which asks senior managers to consider and respond to a number of strategic development areas around CAF and an online questionnaire for frontline staff/volunteers will be undertaken with the results from both exercises feeding into the LSCB and Children and Young Person's Partnership.

This activity supports the requirement on LSCB's to evaluate the effectiveness of early help as identified in the Munro review of child protection as part of its wider remit to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. The LSCB will therefore continue to monitor and audit the impact of the CAF and the ICP process as a key mechanism to support Early Intervention and the engagement of all partners to initiate/contribute to process.

Method of Consultation

7.2 N/A

Representations Received

7.3 N/A

Background Papers

A Review of the Common Assessment Framework – by a working group of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny – January 2012.

Contact for further information

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