



Partners working together towards Integrated Services

The Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda and Children Act 2004 places a responsibility on those working with children and young people to work together more effectively to improve outcomes. To do this, some standardised ways of working have been developed nationally and need to be adopted locally and used by all agencies and services. These include: Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Information Sharing, and Lead Professional Role. This leaflet gives a brief overview of the information.

The Bolton Child Concern model is a good example of an integrated working process – Bolton is well ahead of many other authorities because we have embedded this into our working practices – it is currently being revised to include the new processes.

Children, young people and families as well as those working with them will benefit from these new ways of working. Children and young people will have a better experience from services as they will have less need to repeat their personal information to different workers. Workers will have a better understanding of services involved with the family and the process will improve practitioners information sharing across organisations.

It is important that all those working with children and young people know when to record information, to share it and to understand the significance of the information shared, and to take appropriate action when needed. Everyone needs to have a clear understanding of when information can and should be shared. Everyone should work within the principles of the Data Protection Act, Human Rights Act and the common law duty of confidentiality, but these should not act as a barrier to sharing information to make sure that children and young people are kept safe and receive the support they need when they need it.

To support information sharing, Bolton has developed the Bolton Child Index which is an IT tool which will give us basic information about a child or young person and also give information about who else is involved with them. This will save time for practitioners as they will know who they should contact and be able to access contact details quickly. It will also show whether or not a Common Assessment has been undertaken. The Government are developing a National Child Index which should be available by the end of December 2008.

The other IT tool which has been developed to support Information Sharing, is an online Service Directory: which provides information and contact details about all services for children, young people and families.

The Common Assessment Process is a practical and simple tool principally to help identify additional support needs that children and young people may have. The CAF has been developed to look holistically at a child. It will identify strengths and needs as well as actions and outcomes and agree a review date. It is to be used as a standard format to record and share information and to access targeted and specialist services when needed. All workers should know about the CAF process and how to complete an assessment for a child or young person, or know who in their service would do this. Practitioner training will be offered to those undertaking CAFs.

The Lead Professional role supports children, young people and families where there is a need for a more complicated package of support that requires co-ordination. Where there is a group of workers involved in providing services, one person, the Lead Professional, will act as the main contact for the family and help to co-ordinate the support. Parents and young people have identified that this is something they would particularly value. There are many people who already undertake this co-ordination role as part of their job and they will continue to do this, for those who are undertaking the role for the first time, training and support will be provided.

More support and information is available from the ISA team:

- Gill Clayton, ISA Project Manager:
Telephone 07789 032119
- Karen Presto, CAF Co-ordinator:
Telephone 01204 331392
- Paul Remic, Information Analyst:
Telephone 01204 334278
- Yvonne Dickenson, Admin Support Officer:
Telephone 01204 331394

or;

www.boltoninformationsharingassessment.org.uk
www.everychildmatters.co.uk

Your questions answered

Q. Is the Bolton Child Index Secure?

A: The Index has been designed and built with security in mind. It will only be available to authorised users within organisations providing services to children and young people, and they will have secure log in and password to access the system. They will be CRB checked, trained and authenticated to use the Index.

Q. Could there be a 'single concern' number to phone where someone has immediate access to info, rather than think through the myriad of people/agencies to contact?

A: There are many practitioners who need access to children's information on a daily basis and this would not be workable. The Index will provide basic information about a child as well as showing who is involved (with contact details) and whether an assessment has already been undertaken. The Index will be most successful and provide time-savings to practitioners when everyone is using it and logging their involvement for others to see.

Q. Will safety alerts be included on the Index?

A. No. By using the information on the Index, practitioners will be able to contact those already involved with a child or young person to find out such information. Alternatively, safety information could be included on a CAF – use the Index first to find out if a CAF exists.

Q. Will the 'Unique Identifier' be a child's UPN (Unique Pupil Number)?

A. No. The Unique Identifier will be a number generated by the system and will not be seen on the index screen.

Q. I don't have access to the Index yet. How do we find out if a CAF has been done or whether others are involved with a child?

A. It is expected that all services that need access to the Index will be able to do so by January 2007, however it will take time to authenticate and train users. In the meantime, facilitated access is provided by the ISA team, by ringing Karen Presto on 01204 331392 or Paul Remic on 01204 334287.

Q. When you fill in a CAF, what do you do with it then?

A. The CAF should be completed with parents/carers/young person. A completed copy should be given to the family/young person, a signed copy kept on file and a copy sent to any agency that you need to pass it on to. This could be for Information Sharing purposes to those involved with the child or young person, or to access additional services. This should be agreed with the family/young person and included on the 'consent' section of the form. In addition, a copy of all CAFs should be sent to the CAF co-ordinator, marked 'private and confidential' to:

1st floor Paderborn House, Civic Centre, Bolton, BL1 1JW.

Q. Where will CAFs be stored?

A. The responsibility for storing the CAF sits with the person who undertakes the assessment. In addition, a paper copy is currently being stored by the CAF co-ordinator at Paderborn House. This is a temporary situation until an electronic system is developed. The CAF co-ordinator uses the information for reporting purposes, to update the Index, to identify process

issues and to monitor quality. No action is taken by the CAF co-ordinator relating to the child or young person, this will be the responsibility of the practitioners involved.

Q. What are the triggers for a CAF meeting?

A. There will be occasions when a Common Assessment identifies additional needs that can be met by the agency undertaking the assessment, or that additional needs are clear and there is a simple and direct method of referral for services to meet that need. In these cases there will be no need to call a meeting. More commonly, the summary and actions identified on a CAF will indicate the need for a co-ordinated multi-agency input. In these cases, a Child or Young Person Action Meeting will be needed. Each individual case will be different, but most often where more than 2 agencies are involved, a meeting will be needed. The meeting will also consider the need for a Lead Professional.

Q. When you have initiated a CAF and a Child/Young Person Action meeting, what should you do when other agencies fail to attend?

A. Using a CAF to assess a child's strengths and needs and identifying possible actions should engage other agencies better than previously. Agencies will have more information and know what is being asked of them. The CAF however will not guarantee access to additional services. As before, escalation or complaints procedures can be implemented.

Q. Once information has been collected on a CAF, how can it be updated?

A. Any updates to the CAF should be added at a Review. This should be done by the person who undertook the assessment, or the Lead Professional. Information should only be added to a CAF, nothing should be removed, the updated CAF will become 'version 2', 'version 3' etc.

Q. What about children who have already undergone a 'specialist' assessment? How are additional services accessed?

A. Any additional services needed would be agreed at a multi-agency meeting or via the Lead Professional. Relevant information already gathered from a 'specialist' assessment can be passed on where appropriate. It is not expected that these children/young people would require a further assessment on a CAF.

Q. How do I find out what other services are out there that could be accessed for a young person?

A. www.Help4me.info is a service directory that provides information and contact details about services for children, young people and families.

Q. How much work will be involved in being a Lead Professional?

A. Some people already undertake this role as a large part of their day to day role (although they may not be called a Lead Professional), so in those cases there will be no increased workload. For others, there may be some additional work co-ordinating others and communicating with families when they take on the LP role. There will be benefits to families in having a single point of contact and a better experience. Practitioners will benefit by contributing to a more co-ordinated service and should spend less time duplicating work.

