

**Questioning**  
**Responsive**  
**Accountable**

***Report of the Children and Young  
People Scrutiny Panel***

***Revisit of the ‘Every Child  
Matters - The Common Assessment  
Framework (CAF)’***

March 2008 - May 2009

The council’s scrutiny panels examine in detail selected areas of the council’s work, responsibilities and policies.

The aim is to find out if there are ways in which the council could be doing things better, and to influence national issues.

This report is the end result of a review into a particular subject. It sums up how the review was carried out, its findings/considerations, conclusions and recommendations for any improvements which could be made.

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT

### **Review of the implementation of recommendations contained within the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel's report on 'Every Child Matters – The Common Assessment Framework'**

What is in this Report	PAGE NO.
➤ Membership of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel – sub group for the review of 'Every Child Matters – The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)' and full panel	1
➤ Introduction	2
➤ The Selection and Scope of the Review	3
➤ The Panel's Findings/Considerations	4
➤ The Panel's Conclusions	7
➤ The Panel's Recommendations	9
➤ Appendices –	
➤ Recommendations from previous report	A
➤ Report from the Service Director, Children, Strategy and Partnerships to Cabinet on 12 September 2007	B

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
PANEL – SUB GROUP FOR THE REVIEW OF ‘EVERY CHILD MATTERS –  
THE COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (CAF)’**

Councillors: Mrs J Bromby (Chair)  
L Cawsey  
M Sidell

Co-opted Member Mr P Bacon (Parent Governor Representative)

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
PANEL**

Councillors: S Wilson (Chair)  
Mrs J Bromby (Vice - Chair)  
L Cawsey  
C Sherwood  
M Sidell  
M Simpson  
D Whiteley

Co-opted Member Mr P Bacon (Parent Governor Representative)  
Mrs A Dunkerley (Parent Governor Representative)  
Mr W Egan (Diocesan Board of Education Representative)  
Mrs W Witter (Diocesan Board of Education Representative)

## **INTRODUCTION**

North Lincolnshire Council's Cabinet (or Executive) is responsible for the leadership, delivery and performance of the services that the council provides alongside its partners. Collectively, the eight councillors who form the Cabinet make important joint decisions on policy, management and operational issues. They have delegated power to make individual decisions on issues within their service area, such as Children's Services and Performance Improvement.

One of the roles of the council's four overview and scrutiny panels is to monitor and review the work of the Cabinet and its members on behalf of the local community, holding them to account for their decisions and policy. The panels also review services or topics within their terms of reference in order to seek improvements. This is usually done through conducting scrutiny reviews and making recommendations to Cabinet.

Following any scrutiny review that recommends changes to existing policy or the implementation of new policy, an action plan is formulated and agreed by the Cabinet that responds to these recommendations. The plan sets out action to be carried out by relevant officers within measurable timeframes, or states why recommendations will not be acted upon. It is recognised as good practice to review the progress of such recommendations after a period of time, to monitor the work being carried out and to ensure the Cabinet is "held to account" for their action. Scrutiny panels can then make further recommendations if they consider it appropriate.

## 1. THE SELECTION AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

In May 2006, the council's Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel was established. All members of the panel agreed that it would be beneficial to familiarise themselves with the 'Every Child Matters' framework, as this would provide them with the knowledge, understanding and foundations upon which to base future scrutiny reviews.

The remit for the panel was to carry out relevant overview and scrutiny functions relating to services being delivered by the council and its partners to achieve the five outcomes of the 'Every Child Matters' framework, namely – improve health, keep safe, enjoyment and achievement, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being for children and young people in North Lincolnshire.

A decision was recently taken by members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel to re-examine previous reports, in order to monitor progress and to ensure the effectiveness of the scrutiny process.

In March 2008 the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel had invited Head Teachers to an event, to assist them with their review of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CaMHS) within North Lincolnshire. It was during this event that many Head Teachers raised their concerns over the use and effectiveness of the Common Assessment Framework.

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel decided at its meeting on 23 June 2008 that a sub group would undertake a revisit of this review. It was agreed, that not only would relevant Service Directors be asked to provide an update, but that it would be beneficial to speak to services/agencies that were dealing with the CAF in everyday work. The sub group was asked to report to the full panel on its findings.

Interviews were held with internal and external witnesses including:-

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Witnesses</b>
18 September 2008 and 20 February 2009	Dave Basker, Head of Safeguarding Practice and Andy Meikle, Service Manager Children and Families
12 November 2008	Rebecca Quigley, Common Assessment Development Coordinator and Andy Lambie, Children In Need Coordinator
26 November 2008	Sarah Glossop, Nurse Specialist, John Berry, Health Visitor, and Chris Tomlinson, Cluster Coordinator, Safeguarding Children All from NHS North Lincolnshire.

## **2. THE PANEL'S FINDINGS/CONSIDERATIONS**

### **2.1 Initial Comments and Observations**

The sub group considered the list of recommendations in response to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel's review carried out in October 2006 (see Appendix A) and agreed on a brief for the revisit.

The council's Head of Safeguarding Practice and Service Manager Children and Families was asked to provide members with an up to date position on progress being made with the implementation of the recommendations from the original review, expand on what had been achieved since, and confirm whether this had proven to be successful.

The panel learned that all of the recommendations had been implemented and that the recommendation to adopt the national CAF within North Lincolnshire had been welcomed. The Council's Common Assessment Development Coordinator and Children In Need Coordinator had re-run CAF training sessions, to suitably equip the practitioners with the knowledge to enable them to transfer to using the national CAF from April 2007. This target had been achieved, with 16 additional support agencies also attending for the training.

It was noted that out of the original agencies involved with the local CAF, only one had not attended the retraining sessions. It was explained that this agency was being taken over by another service and that training would be delivered in due course.

Members were satisfied with the progress made in implementing the recommendations. The panel acknowledged that a great deal of multi-agency working had been utilised in order to achieve the levels of undertaking within all sectors.

#### **North Lincolnshire's current position**

Whilst it was evident that a great deal of work had been achieved the panel was concerned to hear that the general perception from those involved, was that the CAF process was not working as well as it should be.

The Members were advised that practitioners who had attended the training events, left with clear ideas as to what could be achieved and the benefits that the process could deliver to families and children alike. This commitment appeared to diminish once the practitioner returned to the work environment, and it had not been apparent as to why this happened.

#### **Statistics**

An up-to date comparison of figures for CAF's completed was provided to assist with this review and also highlight concerns with the numbers completed, especially over the last couple of years:-

Common Assessments completed By sector	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Health No.</b>	<b>136.5</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Education No.</b>	<b>83.5</b>	<b>87.5</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Other Agencies No.</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>68.5</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>129.5</b>
<b>Total Assessments</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>303.5</b>

Time constraints and workload pressures, lack of evaluation and feedback on completed assessments, the length of time the CAF took to complete, whether the process was giving false hope to the families involved, and finally concerns over the appropriate and inappropriate usage of the CAF were all areas discussed throughout this review. It became apparent from certain discussions that there were reservations that had not been voiced or discussed at a senior management level and that there was a general lack of management accountability within certain sectors.

### **Training**

A great deal of support and respect was extended for the ongoing enthusiasm and efforts of the Common Assessment Development Coordinator and Children In Need Coordinator. They had undertaken the mammoth task of retraining practitioners in the usage of the national CAF and had also engaged and trained several new agencies.

The panel received assurance that following the first meeting of this sub group where the concerns of Head Teachers had been discussed, the Head of Safeguarding Practice had been working closely with schools within North Lincolnshire to provide a full and more simplified understanding of the CAF. He confirmed that 120 further education staff working within the extended schools sector would receive further training, and it was hoped that the positive effects of this would be seen next year. In addition, school cluster programmes had been introduced in some areas. This enabled local schools to work better together to identify the needs of siblings at neighbouring schools.

## **2.2 Interview Evidence**

### **Lines of Communication and Effective Feedback and Evaluation**

Representatives from NHS North Lincolnshire had spoken to the panel about the lack of communication within the CAF process, the lack of evaluation into each of the assessments, how practitioners were not advised of what assistance had been provided to families and whether the efforts had brought positive and successful results for the child and family. The representatives from NHS North Lincolnshire questioned Members as to why no effective feedback and evaluation process had been developed, and added that this had led to the lack of momentum and commitment for many experienced practitioners.

### **The appropriate use of the CAF -**

Members were informed that practitioners often felt forced to use the CAF incorrectly as a referral tool to enable them to gain access to particular services. In addition, other agencies did not recognise the importance of the CAF, with ongoing difficulties being encountered whilst trying to engage with a couple of outside agencies.

It was acknowledged by the Head of Safeguarding Practice that there were problems engaging certain agencies within the CAF process and that this was something that still had to be addressed.

In addition, it was questioned as to whether justification could be given as to why the CAF was not always the most appropriate tool. It was explained that a child's protection was the main priority and that in high-risk cases immediate intervention and referral to Children's and Family Services was necessary. The Head of Safeguarding Practice reaffirmed that in all cases, where a child's protection was the over riding concern, then immediate intervention was necessary and would be the best course of action.

### **The Practitioners Forum**

The Practitioners forum had been introduced after the original review, that took place in October 2006. It's purpose was to provide support and assistance to both professionals and officers of all skills/levels of ability in the use of the CAF process, and provide the opportunity for practitioners to discuss matters, in a less formal work arena, with the Council's Common Assessment Development Coordinator and Children In Need Coordinator.

It became apparent that this provided a welcoming environment for new practitioners. However, the focus was very much on instruction rather than encouragement and empowerment. For those practitioners who were well versed and capable, the forum gave very little benefit and was occasionally perceived as patronising.

### **Performance Monitoring –**

There was uncertainty amongst practitioners as to how the performance targets were decided, who set the figures, whether the agencies had any involvement and whether the figures were negotiable. Concerns were also expressed that often the agencies were not aware of the actual performance target, this only became apparent when they were advised that the target had not been met.

### **3. THE PANEL'S CONCLUSIONS**

There was still the general misconception that completing a CAF would be a long and lengthy process. The council's Head of Safeguarding Practice advised that the CAF had originally been implemented following research and pilot studies. It was held up as a tool that could be completed within 45 minutes to assess a child's needs along the assessment domain. He stated that this was an average estimate of the time.

There were concerns that many practitioners were overcomplicating the process and attempting to address all issues that may affect a child and family rather than focusing on the main reason for referral. Many practitioners did not feel they were able to embark upon such a lengthy process. This was known to be causing specific difficulties throughout Education and Health sectors.

In addition, some agencies were still using their own reports rather than the CAF, specifically those dealing with alcohol and drug misuse within the Adult Mental Health sector. Members were advised that the Service Manager Children and Families was meeting with these agencies, as they were bound by Central Government guidance to use the Common Assessment Framework to identify needs. This was to be monitored to ensure that all agencies complied with Central Government requirements, the guidance and the 'Every Child Matters' agenda which includes the CAF, a key aspect of implementing better outcomes for children.

It was disappointing to find that not all agencies had completed the national CAF training or were fully engaged within the CAF process. Work needed to continue to ensure that this was rectified as soon as possible.

The panel agreed that there was the need for a more effective communication, evaluation and feedback system. This would help keep up the momentum as it would enable practitioners to see the benefits and also positive outcomes that had been achieved through the use of the CAF. The council's Head of Safeguarding Practice re-iterated that this could only be attained once an effective and fully engaged multi agency work practice had been achieved within North Lincolnshire.

Practitioners had asked that consideration be given to two separate forums being arranged. The first under the current format, aimed at the newly trained practitioners, and a second forum aimed specifically at capable practitioners and line managers. Suggestions were also made that the forums be held on a more flexible basis, so as to ensure all agencies were given the opportunity to attend periodically. It was concluded that this could contribute to more effective line management, better relationships and networking opportunities for the services/agencies involved and also provided the opportunity for senior management to discuss what they perceived to be specific problems, how to address them and provide feedback from the practitioners perspective.

In addition, following discussions held with the Common Assessment Development Coordinator and Children In Need Coordinator, and also with representatives from NHS North Lincolnshire it became evident that a training event, specifically aimed at line managers, would be beneficial. It was hoped that this would provide the ideal arena to cover aspects such as two way feedback to establish satisfactory lines of communication between the multi-agencies involved with CAF, to learn what support other agencies could provide, and also to discuss how to provide effective and practical support for practitioners.

The panel agreed that accountable managers should have more significant involvement with the negotiation of achievable and realistic performance targets. It was apparent that this had not been the case within several of the services, especially NHS North Lincolnshire, and that future contact was necessary to agree on suitable target levels.

Throughout the duration of the review, it was apparent that there was a need for a more robust performance monitoring system. The Council's Head of Safeguarding Practice had produced a State of Readiness, action group report that was presented to the Safeguarding Board in September 2008. The report suggested that performance data be provided by all agencies/ services by 30 September 2008. The panel was advised that this had not been achieved and that an action plan had been agreed to roll out an IT format to all agencies involved with the CAF. It was concluded that this would be beneficial to ensure accurate monitoring of the CAF's.

#### **4. THE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based upon the evidence presented and evaluated during the review, as detailed in the panel's findings/considerations and the panels conclusions, the recommendations of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel are as follows:-

- 4.1 that everyone involved throughout this review be thanked for their contributions, and the team within North Lincolnshire Council working on the implementation and ongoing training of the CAF be congratulated on their hard work and ongoing commitment to the process.
- 4.2 that consideration be given to introducing training events/forums specifically designed for line managers, to assist with aspects such as two way feedback, establishment of networking opportunities with all agencies, and to deliver ideas on how to provide effective and practical support for practitioners.
- 4.3 that the Council emphasise to all agencies involved that the CAF is now a key piece of Government guidance within the 'Every Child Matter's' agenda and everyone must be engaged in the service delivery. To ensure that all agencies complete the national CAF training and also that appropriate Senior Management attempt to bring all agencies fully on board, specifically those who have not yet completed the appropriate training.
- 4.4 that lines of communication, feedback to practitioners and evaluation of the process be improved to ensure the ongoing commitment of all practitioners and line managers.
- 4.5 that consideration be given to introducing an additional forum, specifically aimed at capable practitioners and line managers, delivered by senior officers and arranged on a more flexible basis to allow all agencies the opportunity to periodically attend.
- 4.6 that all agencies take responsibility within the target setting process to ensure that performance targets are realistic and achievable.
- 4.7 that in line with the Council's Head of Safeguarding Practice 'State of readiness' report, September 2008, a robust performance monitoring system be introduced and made available to all agencies by January 2010.
- 4.8 that it be noted the panel supports and endorses the school cluster programme, with appointed Head Teacher taking on the role of professional lead and assisting other school's practitioners within the cluster.

## APPENDIX A

### THE ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS REPORT CARRIED OUT IN OCTOBER 2006

Based upon the evidence presented and evaluated during the review, as detailed in the Committee's findings/considerations and the committee's conclusions, the recommendations of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee are as follows:-

- (i) that everyone involved throughout this review be thanked for their contributions, and the team within North Lincolnshire Council working on the implementation of the CAF be congratulated on their hard work and commitment to the process;
- (ii) that the Council transfer from using North Lincolnshire Council's CAF, to the National CAF, whilst still maintaining some of the good practice used by North Lincolnshire as outlined in the report;
- (iii) that the Council emphasise to all agencies involved that the CAF is now statutory, and everyone must be fully engaged in the service delivery;
- (iv) that the Scrutiny Committee re-visits this review on a regular basis to monitor the number of assessments being undertaken and the commitment across the multi-agencies involved.

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

CABINET

**THE NATIONAL COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the actions taken in response to the recommendations of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on Every Child Matters – "A National Common Assessment Framework"

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Following a Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee in October 2006, a review was carried out in relation to Every Child Matters - 'A National Common Assessment Framework' (ECM NCAF).
- 2.2 The purpose and scope of the review was to:
- 2.2.1 establish if the National Common Assessment Framework (NCAF) was being used in North Lincolnshire as part of Every Child Matters (ECM), to achieve the five priority outcomes (Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution and Economic Well Being)
  - 2.2.2 investigate if there is co-ordination between all agencies using the CAF or whether each agency was still using their own assessments
  - 2.2.3 seek views from all agencies using the framework in order to establish if it was working and whether it was a non bureaucratic method for assessing the needs of children and young people
- 2.3 At its meeting on 22 November 2006, Council considered a review report of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee in relation to ECM NCAF. The report was approved by Council and referred to Cabinet for consideration of the

recommendations, with a view to the preparation of an action plan.

2.4 At the cabinet meeting held on 7 December 2006 it was resolved that the recommendations following the review undertaken by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee be approved and adopted. The recommendations were as follows:

2.4.1 that everyone involved throughout this review be thanked for their contributions, and the team within North Lincolnshire Council working on the implementation of the NCAF be congratulated on their hard work and commitment to the process.

2.4.2 that the Council transfer from using North Lincolnshire Council's CAF, to the NCAF, whilst still maintaining some of the good practice used by North Lincolnshire

2.4.3 that the Council emphasise to all agencies involved that the NCAF is now statutory and everyone must be fully engaged in the service delivery

2.4.4 that the Scrutiny Committee revisits this review on a regular basis to monitor the number of assessments being undertaken and the commitment across the multi agencies involved

### **3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1 The recommendations from the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel have been considered and actioned in their entirety.

3.2 In order that there was a smooth transition from using North Lincolnshire Council's CAF to the NCAF, the Common Assessment Development Co-ordinator delivered an intense programme of update sessions from January 2007 to March 2007 to prepare staff for the change. These training and briefing sessions were delivered on a multi agency basis throughout this period.

3.3 Specific support to agencies was and continues to be available via a Common Assessment Development Co-ordinator.

3.4 The NCAF was implemented in North Lincolnshire on 1 April 2007. Two key officers involved in the review and implementation of the NCAF presented an overview to the

Children's Board on 23 July 2007, at which point, officers were thanked for their involvement and commitment to the process.

- 3.5 It is proposed that an overview of the use of the NCAF be submitted to CYP Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis in order to determine the commitment of agencies to the NCAF.

**4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 N/A

**5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

- 5.1 Financial

None

- 5.2 Staffing

None

**6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

- 6.1 Statutory

Use of the NCAF to assess children with additional needs is a statutory requirement.

- 6.2 Environmental and Other

None

**7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Senior Managers including those within partner agencies were consulted widely about the introduction of the NCAF.

**8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That Cabinet note the actions undertaken in response to the recommendations made by Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee following the review in relation to the ECM NCAF.

- 8.2 That Cabinet notes that the use of the NCAF within North Lincolnshire is statutory and that as such all agencies should be fully engaged.

8.3 In order to determine the commitment of agencies to the NCAF and in line with the recommendations of the CYP Scrutiny Committee, an overview of the use of the NCAF be submitted to CYP Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

SERVICE DIRECTOR: CHILDREN, STRATEGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Angel  
Market Place  
Brigg  
North Lincolnshire  
DN20 8LD  
Author: Julie Poole/Denise Hyde  
Date: 17 August 2007

**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report –**

Report of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee  
Recommendations from cabinet – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2006