

INTEGRATED PRACTICE

December 2007



Schools Extra

The integrated processes team recently attended conferences for primary and secondary school head teachers.

Feedback at the events was positive and the team was keen to hear how integrated practice is perceived and address some of the issues raised about what it will mean for schools in Hertfordshire.

Below are some of the questions asked during the conference and our answers. The team will continue to work closely with head teachers and, in the meantime, we welcome any questions or feedback you have.

To submit a question email caf-enquiries@hertsc.gov.uk

Communication

Q There seems to be a lack of communication between agencies and, in the past, sharing information between agencies has been a stumbling block. How will integrated practice solve this problem?

A Integrated practice is not just about new 'tools', it is about recognising that all agencies need to work in a more coordinated and open way. The tools which underpin integrated practice will help to facilitate a wider cultural change in the way we share information and communicate with each other. Communication and sharing information is key to the success of integrated practice and will need long term commitment from all agencies at both a strategic and frontline level, to improving practices.

Process

Q How will we know what action should be taken once a CAF has been completed?

A A comprehensive training programme is being delivered across the county to ensure that practitioners know the correct process for carrying out and submitting CAFs. There are also five district CAF managers (one for every two districts) who will develop good practice around the CAF and make sure CAFs are completed and processed consistently and efficiently.

Q If a child is accessing services, do those services travel with the child as they move into secondary school?

A The Lead Professional and other practitioners involved with a child will constantly monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of the services being provided. This may mean that a child accesses the same services throughout their childhood or it may mean that, as they move to secondary school, they begin to access different services.

Q What happens in areas where there is a fast turnover of staff? How do we make sure that we continue to share information and work well together?

A The project team responsible for implementing integrated practice across the county will ensure that processes are in place for services to be delivered in a consistent way. In some organisations there will be specific issues, such as a high turnover of staff, and processes will need to be established to make sure that this does not affect the implementation and continued development of integrated practice.



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Common Assessment Framework

Q What is a CAF and how do we fill one in?

A The Common Assessment Framework is a common process and standard form which covers all aspects of a child's development. Currently, CAF forms are paper-based, but eventually electronic ones will be introduced. CAFs use clear language as they have been designed to be filled out with a child/parent.

Q Will the introduction of the CAF mean yet more of teachers' time is taken up with paperwork?

A CAF forms cover all aspects of a child's development so are comprehensive. However, by investing some time in completing a CAF form at an early stage, it should ensure there is less duplication of effort and paperwork to be completed at a later date.

Q Does a CAF mean that we have to 'prove' that a child needs help?

A The CAF provides a pre-assessment criteria which gives guidance to practitioners on whether it is appropriate for a CAF to be completed for a child. A CAF should ideally be completed as early as possible so that the most appropriate services can be delivered for that child before their needs escalate.

Multi-agency working

Q When we refer a child to social services we don't always get feedback on what help they and their family are getting. Will integrated practice make a difference?

A ContactPoint will allow practitioners to see what services are being provided for a child. Certain details, for example those for sensitive services, may be shielded. ContactPoint will also hold details of who a child's Lead Professional is.

Q How can you make sure 'teams' work well together when there is not time to properly establish a team?

A A clear timescale has been set out for the CAF and Lead Professional role to be in place in seven of Hertfordshire's districts by March 2008, with the remaining three districts by July 2008. ContactPoint will be rolled out in Hertfordshire from Spring 2009. However, we recognise that fully embedding integrated practice into the way we work is going to take time as well as the commitment and dedication of staff from all agencies involved.

Time and resources

Q Who will be a Lead Professional? How are they going to have time to carry out that role at the same time as doing their day job?

A Many practitioners in the children's workforce could be a Lead Professional, with the right support and training. A Lead Professional may be a school nurse, midwife, youth worker, teacher, teaching assistant, substance misuse worker, etc. A child, young person, parent or carer might express a preference for who they would like to be their Lead Professional, which will be balanced against the time constraints and workload of that professional.



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Q Isn't introducing the CAF and Lead Professional asking a lot of an already stretched system?

A Integrated Practice should help to streamline and coordinate the way organisations work together, rather than add to existing workloads. It is anticipated that, once integrated practice is fully embedded, it will actually save professionals time, avoid duplicated effort and – most importantly – ensure that a child has faster and more effective access to the services they need.

Q Is it realistic to try to introduce integrated practice so widely in such a small space of time?

A The CAF has already been trialled in Stevenage and lessons have already been learned around what processes need to be put in place to ensure it is successful. We feel confident that the March 2008 deadline for implementation in seven districts is realistic and we are strongly encouraging all partners to raise any concerns or risks which may jeopardise this deadline with the project team as soon as possible.

Q How will you make sure that everyone knows about the changes and what is expected of them?

A There are a number of communications tools in place, which include a regular e-bulletin, leaflets, publicity articles and a dedicated section on HertsDirect. You can also submit any questions you have about integrated practice to caf-enquiries@hertsc.gov.uk

Q Will being a Lead Professional place too much burden of responsibility on you to ensure a child's needs are met?

A The Lead Professional will not take on the responsibility for the delivery of services to a child. Their role will be more of a coordinating one, so that they are able to feedback progress to the child, their parents/carers. Practitioners will still be responsible for delivering their own services.

Q How will you ensure that there is enough time and space in which to hold/attend meetings?

A Each district will have a MAST which will manage and coordinate the frontline staff carrying out CAFs and the Lead Professional role. They will provide full support to the Team Around the Child and Lead Professional.

Training

Q When will school staff be trained to use the CAF and be a Lead Professional?

A Over the next few weeks we will be working closely with head teachers so that they can identify which staff in their schools should be trained. Once this has been established we can organise a training schedule. As multi-agency working is key to the success of integrated practice, it is important that our training sessions are attended by professionals from a broad range of agencies.

If you have any feedback on this bulletin, please email caf-enquiries@hertsc.gov.uk



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