



September
2009

Dear Colleague

Multi-Agency Referrals to Children's Social Care

This letter is to advise you of changes to safeguarding referral documentation as agreed at the LSCB Board Meeting on 1 July 2009.

Existing Referral Arrangements and CAF Background

All referrals to Children's Social Care (CSC) currently require that the referrer complete a Multi-agency Referral Form and send it to the appropriate Referral and Assessment Team in either East or West District. This process is clearly understood by all agencies and services and is regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.

Regular reviews of multi-agency referrals have identified some inconsistency with regards to the quality, clarity and accuracy of information received. Such inconsistencies can lead to unnecessary delays in appropriate response to referrals whilst details are clarified and further information is obtained.

Additionally, Quality Assurance Unit audits indicate that services to children and young people often overlap prior to referral to Children's Social Care.

The Children Act 2004 established a statutory duty on local authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation between agencies in order to improve children's well-being through the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). The Common Assessment Framework is a nationally standardised approach to conducting an integrated assessment of the needs of a child or young person. It provides a framework for decision making on how needs should best be met and aims to improve early identification of need, ensuring multi-agency action to improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

The approach was first piloted in the Borough from October 2006 to April 2007, and then rolled out across the Borough from April 2008. CAF is increasingly being used to successfully support children and young people in Bromley. CAF is already employed as the referral pathway for the Behaviour and Inclusion Service including referrals for Home Tuition, outreach, Respite, CAMHS via the Core Panel and a number of health services.

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New Arrangements

From 1st October 2009 agencies are asked to submit referrals to Children's Social Care on a Common Assessment Framework Form attached to a Social Care Referral Form. This will replace the Multi-Agency Referral form currently in use.

It is expected that in nearly all instances a CAF will have already been completed prior to a referral being sent to the Referral and Assessment Team. This will have formed part of the assessment process to support early intervention and provides a starting point for specialist assessments and services. The only *exception* to this process is when an urgent and immediate child protection situation arises and it would be unrealistic and unsafe to expect another professional to first complete the CAF.

In order to support and effectively implement this change, each agency is asked to nominate an individual who will lead on the CAF. In education establishments and health settings it is expected that this person will be the existing designated safeguarding lead.

This approach is designed to save practitioner's time as they will not have to repeat the information they will have already recorded on the CAF Form. It will provide CSC with good quality information, which will help them to provide an appropriate response and referral information contained in the CAF will be the basis for an assessment if it is required.

There will be a three month transition phase from the introduction of the process on 1st October. The BSCB will assess the progress of the new arrangements at regular intervals and agencies will be asked to provide feedback to the Board.

I look forward to your ongoing support of our endeavours to ensure that Bromley's children and young people continue to be effectively safeguarded.

Please direct enquires about completing a CAF to the Bromley CAF team on 020 8461 7174. Referral enquiries should be directed to the Referral and Assessment Teams (West) 020 8461 7089/7058 (East) 020 8461 7379/7404.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gillian Pearson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'G'.

Gillian Pearson
Chairperson, Bromley Safeguarding Children Board
Director Children and Young People's Services