



## Integrated Working Multi Agency Support Teams

# Briefing Paper 3

For practitioners

### Welcome to the third briefing paper on Multi-Agency Support Teams (MASTs).

As you will be aware from the short bulletin issued earlier this month, MASTs are not yet in place; Area and BEST teams, however, continue to offer support as they always have until the MAST Managers and their teams are in place in the early summer. There will inevitably be a period of change when that happens but we hope to keep the impact of this to a minimum by

- keeping colleagues well informed about those changes through MAST Briefing Papers and Bulletins,
- using the time to hold additional events and face-to-face briefings e.g. further CAF briefings for Head Teachers in March 2009;
- preparing MAST Managers thoroughly through an intensive two-week induction and preparation period on appointment and before service delivery starts, and
- ensuring that teams operate consistently across the city in line with the national model for the delivery of front line services (see Briefing Paper 2), locally agreed protocols and the Wolverhampton Supporting Children Model (WSCM).

On pages 3 and 4 of this briefing, there is a A4 copy of the WSCM model – a full size A3 version can be emailed on request as this is easier to read. This is the model that services operate against already in the city but it has been revised diagrammatically to show how MAST's and Children Centres support can be integrated to deliver earlier intervention and preventative work with children, young people and families.

Clearly the use of the CAF is an important process within the model and one that all practitioners should be using if they have concerns about a child or young person, which will often involve or impact on the family. Additionally, schools are required to pro-actively engage with CAF in order to achieve their 'Full Core Offer' status.



Important points to note in relation to working with MASTs are that:

1 They have an early intervention and preventative agenda and will, therefore, often work with groups of young people and fellow professionals as well as on individual cases. Each MAST will have its own action plan, built on data and in consultation with CYP colleagues in each MAST area, which will drive & provide the focus for this earlier intervention and preventative work.

2 MASTs can offer colleagues advice and guidance on whether to raise a CAF or not but it cannot be their decision as to whether one is raised – that has to remain with the professional who raised the initial concern because only they know the child or young person, and the issue, well enough to make that decision and to decide which other two or three key professionals will need to be involved;

3 One of the MAST team may well be one of those key professionals that need to be involved in the team around the child or family, acting in their professional capacity. They may also act as the Lead Professional if they are the most appropriate person for supporting the child, young person or family but they do not have to;

4 If a concern escalates or is persistent, then MASTs should be more closely involved and it may be appropriate that they take on the role of the Lead Professional in many instances, but that should not be presumed. The Lead Professional should always be the person agreed by the team as the most appropriate to the child or family.

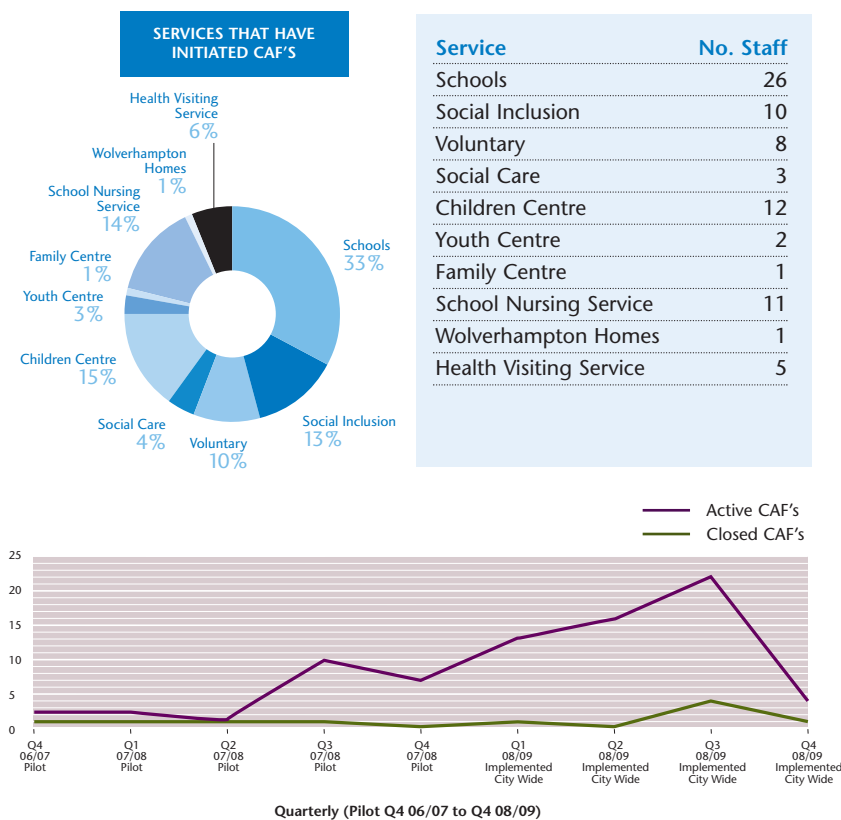
## Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

### Progress on the completed CAF's

We now have 80 CAF's completed. The graph below illustrates the rate of increase in the number of CAF's completed, particularly since CAF went live across the city in January 2008.

The majority of CAF's have been initiated by school based staff, with those in Children Centres, the School Nursing Service and Social Inclusion teams also very active.

### Number of CAF's initiated and completed



### Briefing Paper 4

Sharing information about children, young people and families is essential to ensure that support is focussed appropriately through the CAF process. However, information needs to be shared responsibly. The next Briefing Paper will consider how, when, why and with whom information should be shared in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and families without compromising their well-being.



# Guidance Notes

## Purpose of Model

1. The purpose of this model is to support practitioners in choosing the most appropriate care pathway when they identify children and young people with unmet needs.
2. The WSCM sets out three pathways that may be taken when a child/young person with unmet needs is identified, the pathways are aligned to the threshold levels of need, universal services, targeted support and statutory or specialist services.
- 2.1 It is anticipated that the largest number of children/young people will have their needs met by universal services.
- 2.2 A smaller number of children/young people will require targeted support, this model sets out the assessment, planning and review pathway to be taken, ensuring that needs are identified earlier and addressed on a multi-agency basis using the CAF.
- 2.3 A significantly smaller number of children/young people will require the support of statutory or specialist services and for a number of these children a CAF will have been completed prior to accessing the statutory or specialist service.

## 3. Universal Services

- 3.1 When a child's unmet needs are identified, the service provider concerned will determine if they are able to meet the unmet needs identified without recall to any additional resources beyond their own service. (The pre-CAF checklist will evidence that a multi-agency approach is not required at that time.) If they are able to do this, it is unlikely that a CAF is required, services providers will follow their normal procedures. The pre-assessment checklist completed will be filed in the child/young persons records.
- 3.2 Practitioners are advised to seek advice at this stage from lead officers within their own agency or from a local MAST, particularly if you feel it is considered that outcomes are not being achieved.

## 4. Targeted Support

- 4.1 When a decision is made that the unmet needs cannot be met entirely by a single agency, a CAF will be required, however, the practitioner initiating the CAF must confirm that a CAF does not already exist. If a CAF has been opened, the practitioner will need to contact the named Lead Professional and ask if they can join the existing multi-agency group. The parent(s), child/young persons consent will be required to share information with new members of the multi-agency team in this situation.
- 4.2 When a CAF does not exist, complete the CAF assessment once parental and or, child/young person consent has been given.

- 4.3 You may wish to contact your local MAST who will be able to offer advice and guidance regarding the services to be represented at the multi-agency meeting. The MAST Manager will also advise if it is appropriate for a MAST representative to attend the multi-agency meeting and the role they will take at the meeting.
- 4.4 Hold the multi-agency meeting and agree who the Lead professional will be at the meeting. Agree the review dates for subsequent meetings ensuring that at least one meeting is held within six months. Once the outcomes have been achieved the universal services will continue to provide support for the child/young person.
- 4.5 In a small number of cases, the child/young persons needs will escalate and the Lead professional with the support of the multi-agency team members will need to decide if a referral to Statutory or Specialist services is required. In these situations your local MAST can offer advice and guidance about the most appropriate pathway to take.

## 5. Statutory or Specialist Services

- 5.1 Once a decision has been made to refer to statutory or specialist services if a CAF has been completed for the child/young person a copy of the CAF should be attached to the referral with the parents, child/young person's permission if appropriate. Advice can be sought from a lead officer within your own service or your local MAST if necessary.

## 5.2 Safeguarding

In situations where the child/young persons unmet needs are assessed to be at a child in need level and their **needs do not represent immediate child protection concerns**, practitioners should complete the "Multi-Agency Child in Need referral form" which should be accompanied with a completed CAF. Best practice would suggest that parents are asked to consent to the referral.

- 5.3 Successful intervention at this level will mean that the child/young persons unmet needs will reduce and a decision will need to be made by the statutory or specialist service about where the child/young persons needs are on the threshold model. They may decide to;
  - a) identify a Lead Professional in order that the CAF process can be followed or,
  - b) request that a single agency at universal level continue to support the child/young person

- 5.4 **At any stage a practitioner feels a child/young person is at risk of significant harm, they should refer directly to social care, by telephone (01902 555664/555701), or completing and forwarding the referral form to the Duty and Assessment Team within 24 hours.**