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See www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

EVERY CHILD MATTERS

The principles behind Every Child Matters underpin many other policies, see especially: Behaviour Policy, Supervision & Health & Safety.

Background

'Every Child Matters' is a government initiative concerned with improving outcomes for all children. The outcomes which have been determined as desirable are as follows;

Being healthy

Staying safe

Enjoying and achieving

Making a positive contribution

Achieving economic well being

NB It does not just involve education but other agencies as well.

Those children who are at risk of poor outcomes are defined as 'children with additional needs' their needs might include

- Disruptive or anti-social behaviour
- Overt parental conflict or lack of parental support/boundaries
- Involvement in or risk of offending
- Poor attendance or exclusion from school
- Experiencing bullying
- Special educational needs
- Disabilities
- Disengagement from education, training or employment post -16
- Poor nutrition
- Ill-health
- Substance misuse
- Anxiety or depression
- Housing issues
- Pregnancy and parenthood

There is then defined a sub group of children whose needs are more significant or complex, these children are

- Children who are the subject of a child protection plan
- Looked after children
- Care leavers
- Children for whom adoption is the plan
- Children with severe and complex special educational needs
- Children with complex disabilities or complex health needs.
- Children diagnosed with significant mental health problems
- Young offenders involved with youth justice services (community and custodial)

The government has established a Common Assessment Framework to ensure that the needs of 'every child matters' are being met, where there is a feeling that they might not be.

This framework does three things –

1. Helps the agency (school or other) to work with child & family to identify need.
2. Provides a structure for recording information
3. Help to get other services (who will be using the same framework) to get involved.

NB You need training to carry out a common assessment.

You should consider doing a CA if:-

- You are concerned about how well a child is progressing. You might be concerned about their health, welfare, behaviour, progress in learning or any other aspect of their well-being. Or they or their parent may have raised a concern with you.
- The needs are unclear, or broader than your service can address
- A common assessment would help identify the needs, and/or get other services to help meet them.

You should not do a CA when:-

- There is no need to do a common assessment for every child you work with. Children who are progressing well. Or have needs that have already been identified, do not need one. Your local authority may have agreed some priorities for common assessment in your area. If you have concerns about more than one child in the same family you should complete a common assessment for each child.
- You do not need to do a common assessment where it is obvious what the needs are or you have already assessed then using your agency's assessment tool, and your service can meet the full range of needs.
- If you are worried that a child may have been harmed or may be at risk of harm, you should follow established LSCB procedures without delay. You should not stop to do a common assessment. If you are unsure what to do, contact your local safeguarding or child protection team.

The CAF is voluntary and should only be undertaken with the consent of the child and/or parent. Further guidance is given in section 5A The Common Assessment Framework for children and young people: Practitioners Guide and see also www.ecm.gov.uk/information on consent and confidentiality.

The Practitioners Guide then summarises the three stage common assessment process.

1. Preparation – Identify whether the child may have additional needs, possibly through using CAF checklist.
2. Discussion – Gather and analyse information on strengths and needs using the CAF.
3. Delivery – Determine and deliver interventions to meet identified needs. Appoint a lead professional if relevant.

This guidance is specific and detailed.

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The Practitioners Guide also provides an Annex of Definitions which summarises in some detail what are the important markers in terms of

a.. A child's development in the areas of

- Health
- Educational & Social Development
- Behavioural Development
- Identity- self esteem, self image & social presentation
- Family & social relationships
- Self-care skills & independence
- Learning

b. Parents & Carers

- Basic Care – Safety & protection
- Emotional, warmth & stability
- Guidance, boundaries & stimulation

c. Family & Environmental

- Family history, functioning & well being
- Wider family
- Housing, employment & finance
- Social & community elements & resources

Including education.

Bromley Council drew up a Children & Young People's Plan in 2006 to go up to 2009 in the first instance, with an annual review built in.

The Local Authority Children's Services are assessed annually by Ofsted to see how they are performing against the objectives of ECM.

This document is instructive as a model of how an organisation assesses its progress. Includes at the end

- Indicators
- Priorities
- Action Plans

There is also reference to National Initiatives.