

## **Exceptional Circumstances – Significant Harm and Putting Others at Risk of Harm:**

If at any time in the course of undertaking an assessment a practitioner considers that a baby, child or young person is at risk of significant harm, they must follow the Leeds Safeguarding Childrens Board procedures in the normal way.

Similarly, children or young people putting others at risk of harm e.g. by their threatening behaviour, should be dealt with immediately using established procedures from within your own agency.

### ***The implementation of CAF does not change this procedure.***

The Children Act 1989, (s.47), introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. The local authority has a duty to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where it has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. If a practitioner is not sure whether a child may be at risk of significant harm, advice can be sought from the local Children and Young People's Social Care Team without having to make a formal referral. Such a discussion, where the family's details are anonymised, would take place to determine whether the social care team manager felt a particular situation or incident was serious enough to warrant a referral to Social Care. Informal, anonymised discussions along these lines *do not constitute a formal referral to Social Care Services*, as this would be made via the normal referral route i.e. the Contact Centre (Tel:0845 1254113).

Practitioners who have concerns about significant harm during the course of a common assessment need not complete their assessment before contacting Social Services as any delay could potentially be damaging for the child or young person.

**Always seek advice and consult a specialist. If in doubt ask.**

### **When not to use a CAF:**

If another agency has already initiated a CA very recently it is likely to be more appropriate to wait for the results of that CA rather than start another.

There will be instances where a child/young person has additional needs but a CA is not the best way to address these. This could be because a single solution is identifiable or a simpler option is available.

Other examples include:

#### **A. Where a child has additional needs but these can be met within your own agency**

Examples:

- a child in primary school may need extra help with some aspects of the curriculum. A teaching assistant is available to support the child. The CAF is not required to obtain the extra support needed.
- A child on a health visitor's caseload is developing normally apart from some concerns about hearing. The health visitor refers to Audiology service – no need to complete a common assessment.

**B. Where a child has additional needs but the family have arranged their own provision and you are confident this is sufficient.**

Examples:

- A midwife is concerned about the housing conditions of a young pregnant woman after she has split up with her boyfriend. The young woman's wider family eventually offer her accommodation with them which is appropriate to meet her and her baby's needs. The CAF is not required to meet the housing needs.
- A parent who is unwell needs help with regular childcare of baby twins in order to rest and recuperate. Grandparents and aunt step in to provide regular input overnight and at weekends. The CAF is not required.

**C. Where the child's additional needs clearly require some sort of specialist intervention.**

In some circumstances, completion of a common assessment may actually delay or conflict with meeting the child's needs. This could include where it is obvious some sort of specialist intervention is needed or there is a degree of urgency. Examples:

- Where a mother with depression makes threats to harm herself or her children
- Where a child or young person is taking drugs requiring a specialist drugs assessment
- Where a child or young person has physical signs of non-accidental injury

**D. When a child or young person is already subject to a statutory order or Safeguarding plan and a multi-agency care plan is already in existence.**

Examples:

- Where a child is subject to a Care Order and is 'Looked After'
- Where a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- Where a child is involved in criminal behaviour and has been made subject to an order.