




Adapting the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)...the Sligo / Leitrim and Limerick Experiences

Child and Family Research Centre Conference
Protecting Children through Family Support

The creation of a new space

- Meeting the needs of families ‘requires new and highly innovative forms of organisation...*What matters most is the network of relationships and the creation of new spaces for conversation between people (including parents)*’

Regan, Thorpe, Chant & Hyde, 2004



Self identified needs, provided by non-stigmatising services

“The closer services are to providing for the self-assessed needs of families and children ... the more likely they are to be accessed ... This requires making available non-stigmatising, multiple access points. Services also need to make full use of collaborative cross-referrals.”

The Agenda for Children's Services

Office of the Minister for Children & Dept of Health and Children

December 2007

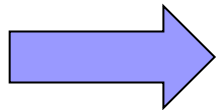
The North Lincolnshire Experience: the CAF

- Began 1997
- Influential on the integration agenda
- Piloted 1998-2000
- Presently being implemented in England & Wales
- Reduced the number of child protection cases and children in care



North Lincs: starting point -1998

- Multiple assessments and no service
- Any anxiety goes to Children's Services (social work)
- Lack of consistency in who receives a service
- Different thresholds for services
- Inter-agency and professional rivalries



Work with Ward & Peel on the

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ASSESSMENT PROJECT



Policy and Legislative Framework

- UN Convention on the Rights on the Child (1989)
- Child Care Act (1991)
- Children's Act (2001)
- The Developmental Welfare State, NESCC (2005)
- Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999, 2010)
- Primary Care – A New Direction (2001)
- Report on the Youth Justice Review (2005)
- Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Agenda for Children's Services (2007)
- Strategic Framework for strengths based Youth Work in Limerick City (2010)
- HSE Family Support Plan (2009)
- Limerick Regeneration Master Plan (2009)

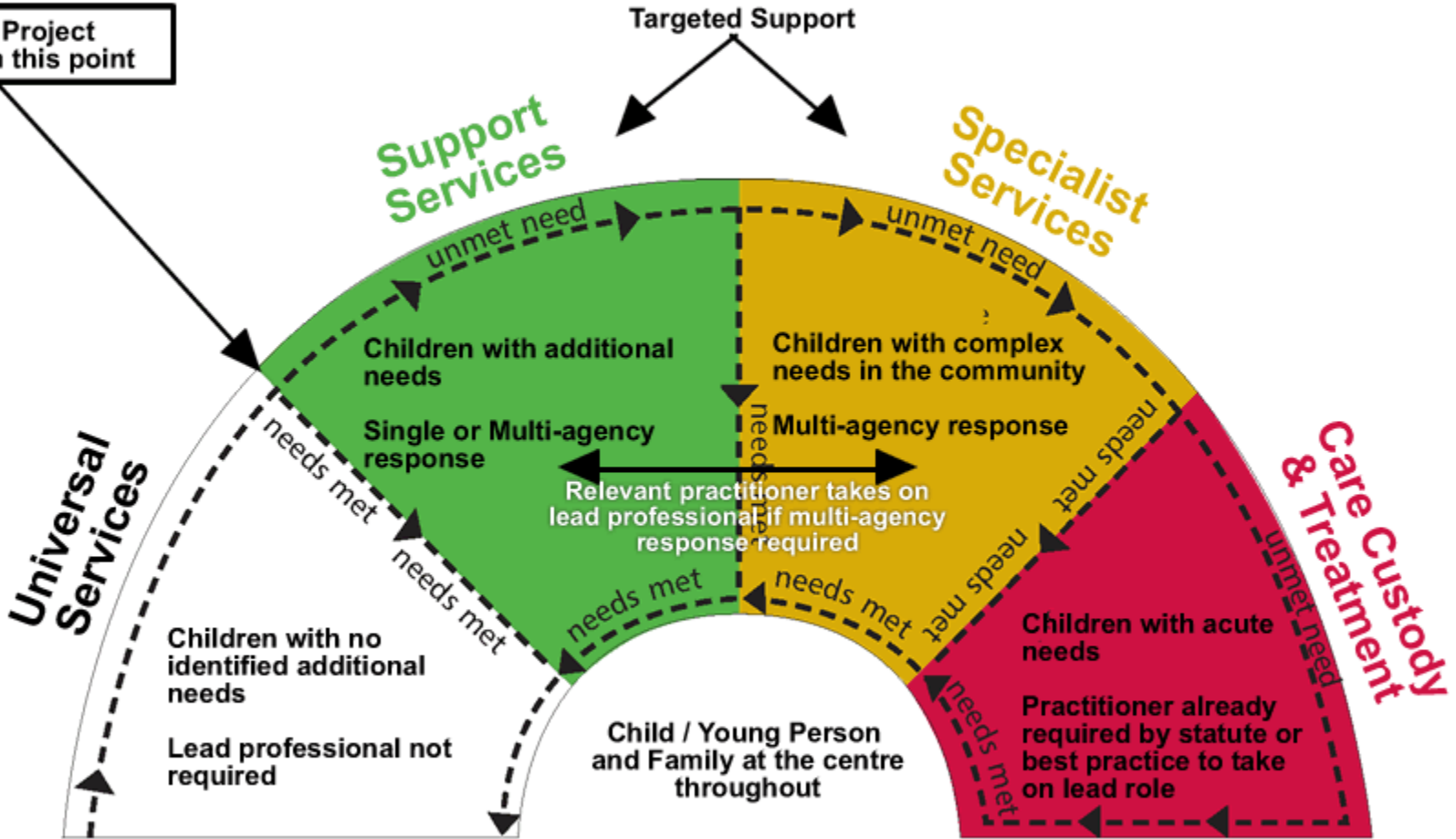
Why integrated working?

The Agenda for Children's Services: a policy handbook (2007)

The 7 National Service Outcomes for Children in Ireland

- healthy, both physically and mentally
- supported in active learning
- safe from accidental and intentional harm
- economically secure
- secure in the immediate and wider physical environment
- part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community
- included and participating in society

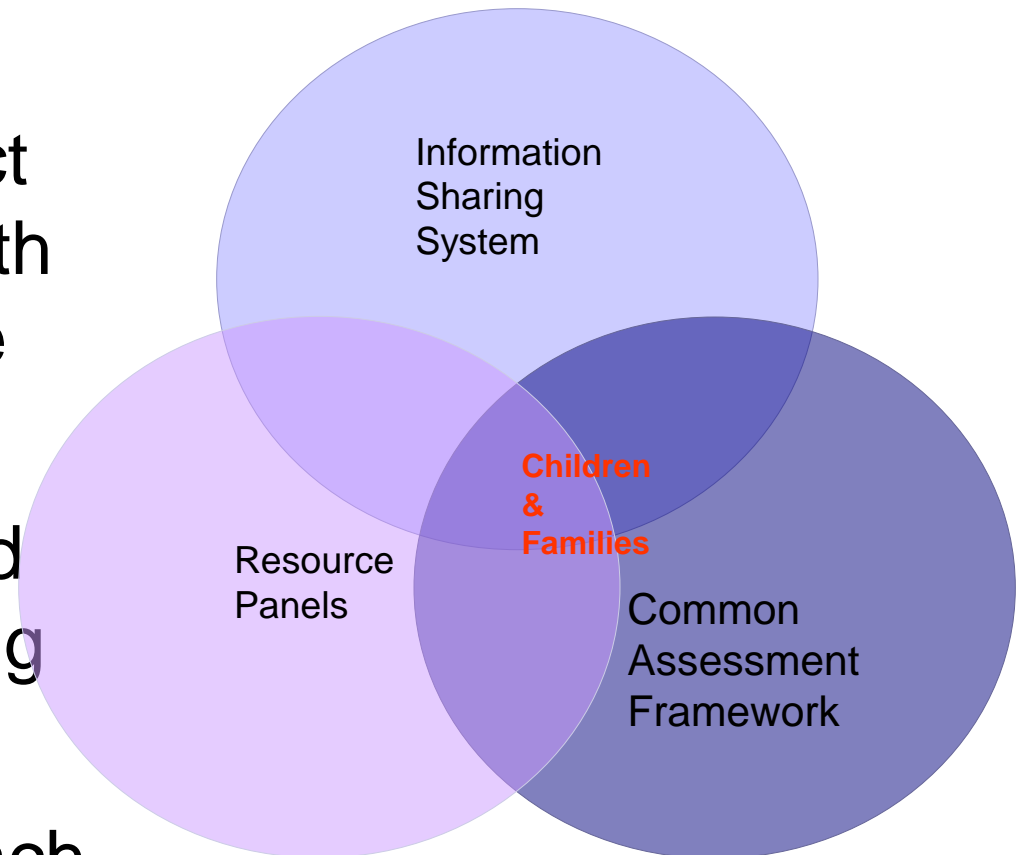
LANS Project
CAF from this point



Dependent on child and young person's needs, this process can be accessed at any level. Ongoing assessment of the child's or young person's needs will result in the child or young person moving through the range of service provision in any direction.

LANs – What is it?

- Child welfare project initially across Health Education & Justice
- Promotes integrated co-ordinated working
- Partnership approach



What is ION / CAF?

A process:

- Initiated by anyone who works with children and families, resulting in **an inter-agency** response for children and their families who may be in need of support
- Which responds to needs at **an early stage**
- Which is **family led** – the consent of the family is required at every stage in the process

'My World' Triangle



CAF ION and LANS

My World Triangle - 3 domains

- How I grow & develop (health & development)
- What I need from people who look after me (parenting capacity)
- My wider world (community & environment)

Holistic tool, that looks at the child in the context of the family and their community

The potential for use of ION - Northwest research

- In Donegal & S/L/WC: 168 of 259 **65%**
- In Donegal : 97 of 156 **62%**
- In Sligo : 71 of 103 **69%**

*In a regional study in 2006 of 13 Initial assessments from late 2005, it was estimated that **54%** would have been appropriate for pre-referral assistance*

Background to ION & LANS

Identification of Need (ION)

- Research and development phase 2005 – 2009
- Pilot initiative 2009 – 2010
- Mainstreamed January 2011
- Managed by HSE Children & Families Committee with Working Groups in each county
- Evaluation conducted by NUI Galway Children and Families Research Centre

Limerick Assessment of Need System (LANS)

- Established in Sept 2009
- It covers Limerick City
- A project of the Limerick City CSC, managed by the HSE; LANS steering group
- Evaluation conducted by SMCI Consultants

CAF & ION– key principles


Working with the family:

- assisted by a practitioner who knows them and **whom they trust**
 - who engage in a **holistic appraisal** of their lives; the family, their community, their environment
 - are heard and privileged **as experts**
-
- Based on simplicity – matches **needs to services**
 - **Any service** can activate a referral




CAF & ION– key principles

- **Child-centred** and rooted in child development
- Builds on **strengths** as well as identifying difficulties
- **Inter-agency** in approach to and provision of services
- **Continuing process**, not a single event
- Doesn't displace existing work - carried out in parallel with **other actions and services**
- Framework is grounded in **evidence based knowledge**



The process – key stages

- Lead practitioner makes referral
- Social work / ION / CAF check conducted
- Lead practitioner encourages parent to ‘tell their story’ – completes ION /CAF record form
- Inter-agency meeting convened reflecting particular needs of family
- A number of meetings may be required depending on complexity
- Process ends when needs of child have been met



Strengths – parents

- Easier access to services
- *‘Less knocking on doors’*
- Control of the process divested to parent
- Informality and warmth of process
- Strengths based positive approach
- Client centred
- Clear outcomes – definite improvement in situation
- In absence – limited options




The voice of parents

'It has been fantastic, I'd recommend it to anybody. Put plain and simple, it's...what I want, if I don't want to do something they suggest, it doesn't get done, which I think a lot of other people would feel better about, instead of...we're going to do this, we're going to do that and you have no choice about it'




The voice of parents

‘Without ION, you have to go to all the different agencies, tell the same story, fill out forms – there was a huge paper trail on [my child]... but with all the paper on him there was still no solution. There was nobody that had a complete file on him (until ION).’



Strengths – agencies

- Fosters ethos that well being of children and families everybody's business
- Non-stigmatising option
- In absence – referrals would be with SW or limited single-agency response
- Collective responsibility
- Delivers support services effectively
- Independent chairing
- Increased trust and acceptance of each other's assessments



Strengths – agencies

- Formalises good practice with structure and framework –inter-agency working
- Senior personnel involvement and follow-through of agencies
- Ownership of tool and process shared
- Solutions based on more ‘rounded view’ of situation
- Clear outcomes for children and families
- Good framework for sharing information at an earlier stage in the child’s life



Agency perspectives

- *‘There is an honour about it [the ION process] - once you leave the room, you do what you were asked to do’*
- *‘Making daily life better for families is what counts – it is not rocket science’*
- *‘The ION is really good at taking the pebble out of your shoe – quick successes – issues that have hung over families for ages. Cannot tackle large issues unless pebbles sorted first of all’*




Contributing success factors

- Senior management buy-in – cross sectoral
- Winning hearts and minds
- Identification of champions
- Inter-agency training
- Continuous adaptation of the model
- Working within existing structures



Challenges

- Greater involvement of young people
- Embedding CAF across the sectors - huge constituency
- Meeting training needs and demands
- Practical concerns – which children for CAF etc.
- Changing the culture – parents as partners
- Engagement in early intervention in context of pressure on resources
- Integration with existing statutory assessment processes



In summary - CAF and ION

A network of all services which have contact with children and families, united by

- a common, holistic understanding of needs (a common language and way of recording)
- and agreed ways of cooperating to meet them (common processes and structures)