

Common Assessment Framework makes progress in schools

A large majority of school teachers now have good awareness of how the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used in their school. Most are also able to identify benefits of using CAF for children, families and all the agencies working with them.

In April 2010 NFER's regular Teacher Voice omnibus survey asked a nationally representative sample of just over 1400 teachers in both primary and secondary schools across England about their awareness of the CAF and its potential benefits, who had undertaken responsibility for the lead professional role, and the nature of the challenges of the CAF for schools.



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Who knows about CAF and who undertakes the lead professional role?

Nearly 90 per cent of primary school teachers and three-quarters of all secondary teachers are aware of CAF. Most respondents knew who had undertaken the lead professional role for pupils who had a CAF episode within their school, therefore suggesting that they had direct experience of CAF processes, rather than having awareness from training. Only 2 per cent of all teachers had not heard of the term 'lead professional'.

In most instances, the lead professional was reported as being school based, but around 10 per cent of participating teachers indicated that a non-school based practitioner undertook the role. Of the school-based practitioners who undertook the lead professional role, within primary schools it was most often the headteacher/senior manager (53 per cent) or head of pastoral care/SENCO (49 per cent), where as in secondary schools, it was head of pastoral care/SENCO (55 per cent) or headteacher/senior manager (33 per cent).

What do teachers see as the benefits for the use of CAF?

Of those who were aware of CAF, primary school teachers reported the benefits of CAF as being:

- improved multi-agency communication (53 per cent)
- enhanced communication between schools and families (52 per cent)
- provided a holistic understanding of a child's needs (52 per cent).

Under 20 per cent indicated that they were not aware of any benefits of CAF.

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During 2010, LARC is undertaking its third collaborative research project (LARC3) with 23 authorities. We are building on LARC2 by focusing on CAF process – namely its costs and cost effectiveness, exploring ways to define and demonstrate cost effectiveness, as well as reflecting on the potential costs that the CAF process might help to avoid. For further information about the work of LARC, please visit www.larc-research.org.uk or contact LARC@nfer.ac.uk

Secondary school teachers reported that CAF:

- helped children and young people to receive targeted support for their individual needs (45 per cent)
- improved multi-agency communication (41 per cent)
- supported the early intervention agenda (38 per cent).

Around a third of secondary school teachers were not aware of any benefits of CAF.

What challenges face schools?

When asked about the challenges of CAF for schools, primary school respondents most frequently reported the following:

- time to complete the assessment/form (56 per cent)
- engaging parents in a CAF episode (48 per cent)
- time to arrange a TAC meeting (45 per cent)
- time to attend a TAC meeting (42 per cent).

For secondary schools, the most frequently selected challenges of the CAF for schools were:

- engaging parents in a CAF episode (42 per cent)
- time to complete the assessment/form (41 per cent)
- poor awareness of CAF amongst school staff (40 per cent)
- time to arrange a TAC meeting (39 per cent).

Ten per cent of primary school respondents felt there was a lack of support from the local authority compared to 7 per cent of secondary school respondents. Twenty-four per cent of respondents, from both sectors, indicated that staff had not received training.

About NFER's Teacher Voice

Teacher Voice is NFER's teacher omnibus survey, which runs four times a year with a response from our panel of over 1000 primary and secondary school teachers. The teacher panel represents the whole teaching workforce, from headteachers to newly qualified classroom teachers, drawn from a representative sample of maintained primary and secondary schools in England.

For further information about NFER's work on CAF, visit www.nfer.ac.uk and type 'CAF' in search engine.



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