### Young Carers Pathway for the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Process

#### What is the initiative?
Liverpool’s Adult and Children’s Family Assessment and CAF Pathway (The Pathway)

#### Who runs it?
Liverpool City Council and all adult and children’s agencies, together with Barnardo’s Action With Young Carers

#### Who does it benefit?
The Pathway benefits adults, children and young people in Liverpool with additional needs and allows early identification and intervention from both adult and children’s services. If the additional needs are related to a child taking on caring responsibilities, then The Pathway will steer their case onto the Young Carers Pathway to put in place appropriate support for the young carer and their family.

#### What does it do?
The Pathway brings together adult and children’s assessment processes to allow the early identification of and intervention for young people’s additional needs – some of which may be related to taking on a caring role.

It utilises the CAF used in children’s services and the Adult Services Assessment used in adult services to identify both the child’s and adult’s needs and how these needs can best be met by the provision of a co-ordinated package of support. This is agreed through a Team Around the Family approach which ensures improved outcomes for the whole family. If a child is identified as a young carer, then they are directed onto a specialist Young Carers Pathway that specifies when a young carers’ assessment should be undertaken.

#### When did it start?
2011.

#### Why was it started?
Young carers often need some support to help them thrive and to prevent their caring role from hindering their opportunities in life. Timely support can prevent
crises for them, their family and the person they care for. If young carers are caring for a parent, then the professionals who work with the parent are well placed to identify the needs of the young carer and refer them for support. However, it was evident that many professionals working with adults did not feel confident in doing this.

In Liverpool, parents and children had consistently fed back to professionals that they valued staff who worked inclusively with them and collaboratively with one another. The CAF was cited as a tool that helped professionals work well together while keeping their focus on the family. Liverpool City Council believed it could strengthen the relationship between adult social care and children’s services using the CAF.

A multi-agency Family-Centred Care Group was established to lead on a pilot to develop a new approach to the CAF in one of Mersey Care NHS Trust’s community mental health teams. The learning from this then informed a roll out of the pathway, for practitioners in adult and children’s services across Liverpool to use when identifying young people with additional needs, some of whom could be young carers.

**What are the aims and objectives?**

**Aims:**

- To embed a whole family approach to the needs of children and young people impacted by parental disability.
- To prevent or reduce the amount of excessive or harmful caring undertaken by young carers.
- To clarify the process for assessing and referring young carers.

**Objectives:**

- To improve early identification and interventions for young carers and other children and young people with additional needs.
- To improve collaborative multi-agency working and join up services across adult and children’s agencies.
- To support the workforce to better understand the needs of young carers and children and young people impacted by parental disability.

**How is it funded?**

The Pathway itself is not funded as it is regarded as a process that is an integral part of practitioners’ roles. However, the partnership site which is embedding The Pathway has been funded via the Integrated Interventions programme, managed by Carers Trust with funding provided by the Department for Education towards the delivery of the Government’s Carers Strategy. Carers Trust is a new charity formed by the merger of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Care.

**What has it achieved?**

“[Before] they used to say things like ‘we only work with your mum’, but my mum lives with me so it’s all connected.”

Young carer
“It has made a real difference; it’s all about agencies – schools, adults and children’s services – working together and actually talking to each other. Now we have situations where a parent’s situation has worsened and because we have had all the right people at the CAF meeting, we have a Team Around the Family and can come to decisions together there and then.”

Adult Community Mental Health Nurse

Liverpool City Council has reported an increase in pre-CAFs being undertaken by adult services. It has been noted that the referrals to Action With Young Carers are more appropriate, whereas previously, any child who had a parent with a disability might be referred, rather than a child who had taken on the role of a young carer. The pre-CAF helps agencies to identify children who are impacted by the disability or health conditions of a member of their family, and Action With Young Carers can advise professionals on the most appropriate course of action for individual cases.

Programmes of awareness raising and training have been developed by the partnership and delivered to adult and children’s practitioners. These training sessions have received positive feedback; after the training 96% of staff surveyed were confident they had the skills and competencies required to enable a family centred approach and 98% of respondents agreed that the training increased their knowledge and understanding of the Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board’s guidance on the four levels of need.

Since the delivery of more bespoke training sessions to local authority practitioners and partner agencies, there has been an increase in the number of professionals contacting Action With Young Carers for advice on young carers cases. This indicates that the training has led professionals of all disciplines to acknowledge the responsibility they have to identify young carers and what interventions for the whole family they can contribute to.

How have carers been involved in planning and delivering this work?

The work began by listening to lived experiences and ensuring The Pathway can effectively respond to the needs of families. Young carers were involved in the planning of this work through the consultation carried out by Barnardo’s Keeping the Family in Mind service (part of Action With Young Carers). Young carers said that they really wanted statutory carers’ assessments to be done. As a result, the Young Carers Pathway has been refreshed to make the statutory carer’s assessment stage more explicit.

All young carers are involved in developing their CAF. Each young carer attends CAF meetings and the lead professional of their case meets with them before meetings to give them support and ensure their views are heard by the other professionals involved.

How is the initiative run?

The Pathway provides a framework for adult and children’s practitioners to identify additional need within families and by working collaboratively navigate them to
appropriate support to improve outcomes for the whole family. It brings together the CAF used in children’s services and the Adult Services Assessment to enable the identification of both the child’s and adult’s needs and how these needs can best be met by the provision of a co-ordinated package of support, based on a Team Around the Family approach. Within the overarching Adult and Children’s Family Assessment and CAF Pathway there is a Young Carers Pathway, which is used for children and young people once it is established that they are young carers.

The Pathway is regarded as a process that is an integral part of practitioners’ roles and is embedded through a programme of training. Training sessions for professionals explain the CAF and pre-CAF processes; how to embed the CAF in the practice of children’s, family and adult services; the thresholds for intervention framework delineated by the Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board; how to identify young carers and when to conduct a young carer’s assessment. Action With Young Carers also provides a phone consultancy service for professionals providing advice with individual cases. This improves understanding of the initiatives in practice and ensures cases are dealt with correctly and promptly.

In summary, The Pathway states that when a practitioner identifies a child or young person who is significantly impacted by an adult family member’s ill health or disability and who may also be providing care to them, they should pursue the completion of a CAF for that young person. If at any time practitioners think a child or young person may be at risk of harm, then they should follow the Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board’s procedures.

A pre-CAF is undertaken to determine whether a full CAF and/or young carer’s assessment is necessary. If, after the pre-CAF, a full CAF is thought to be necessary, as the child has additional needs that can’t be met by the adult practitioner, then the CAF process is initiated. Practitioners can contact Careline, Liverpool’s 24/7 contact centre for social care enquiries, who will advise the adult practitioner of whether:

- A CAF is already open and if so the name and contact details of the lead professional for the adult practitioner to make contact with.
- A CAF is not open and needs to be initiated via the CAF Support Team.

Once a CAF has been completed for a young person, a CAF Action Plan can be formulated and put into place. If it is identified that the young person is taking on a significant caring role it may be the case that Action With Young Carers can meet the young carer’s needs alone, and if this is the case then the young carer is referred there. Otherwise, a more comprehensive support package can be put into place. Outcomes of the CAF are shared at Team Around the Family meetings, with the relevant professionals from adult and children’s services.

Young carers who are then supported by Action With Young Carers have access to support, information and advocacy from an allocated Project Worker. Information about the options available to families is provided, including self-directed care and jargon-busting guides to help them to take control of their support. Young carers and their families are encouraged to make a plan for emergencies using the Message in a Bottle tool. These methods empower families to become more in control of their caring situation and more resilient so they may overcome future challenges and require less support from other agencies in the future.

The pathway can be viewed on the Liverpool City Council’s Think Family webpage.
What methods have been particularly effective?

The creation of The Whole Family Approaches Board as a senior steering group for the wider Integrated Interventions work has been effective in guiding the Young Carers Pathway. This group includes the Barnardo’s Keeping the Family in Mind Co-ordinator and had worked together for some time in advance of the implementation of the project.

Liverpool’s Directors of Adults and Children’s Services along with elected members of the council have signed up to the national Memorandum of Understanding for Young Carers (ADASS, ADCS, The Children’s Society 2012). This has firmly placed young carers on the agenda for all services across the city.

Now that professionals are consulting with Action With Young Carers, before automatically referring children who might be performing an excessive amount or inappropriate type of care, the number of inappropriate referrals from the local authority to Action With Young Carers has been cut. This means that children and young people are offered appropriate help sooner.

Have there been any challenges along the way?

There have been several challenges relating to the cuts experienced by Liverpool City Council and its partner agencies. For instance, reorganisation within the local authority led to a delay in the first meeting of the Whole Family Approaches Board due to uncertainty about who would have responsibility for chairing the board. However, as part of the council’s restructure, lead responsibilities have been clarified which has enabled progress.

What hints and tips might help me get started?

- Having a senior group which has the influence and ability to ensure that things get done is very useful to oversee the project. A combination of senior managers who wield influence, and people with experience of services who can steer the group, so that the right things are focused on, is ideal.

- Do not let the excuse “it’s too hard to do” be a barrier. Negative attitudes and a lack of support from some stakeholders can often be overcome by asking everyone “where would we like to be?” Remember that a clear line of sight to where all collaborators want to be can be lost through over-complicated advice that loses its relevance between the training room and the real world.

- Involving the local authority’s CAF Co-ordinator in your pathway work is essential to ensuring successful integration of young carers’ assessments and CAF.

- Provide comprehensive training to support the professionals who will be putting the new pathway into practice. Be prepared to offer a consultation service to professionals so that they can make the most appropriate referrals.
Are there any useful documents or resources that could assist me?

Liverpool’s Adult and Children’s Family Assessment and CAF Pathway can be found on Liverpool City Council’s Think Family webpage.


The Threshold Guidance of the Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board outlines the levels of need which are applied when using the Young Carers Pathway.

A report of the Think Family work in Liverpool shows how the Young Carers Pathway relates to other initiatives.

SCIE’s guide to what makes a successful senior steering group for a project incorporating a Think Family approach.

Barnardo’s Action With Young Carers website.

Where can I get further information?

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