

Frequently Asked Questions about the Common Assessment Framework

Question	Answer
<p>What is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)?</p>	<p>The CAF is a shared assessment tool for use across all children’s services and all local areas in England. It aims to help early identification of need and promote co-ordinated service provision.</p>
<p>What does the Common Assessment Framework consist of?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A simple pre-assessment checklist to help practitioners decide who would benefit from a common assessment. We do not anticipate the need for most practitioners trained in the CAF in Barnet to use this tool but it is available. 2. A four-step process (Identify needs early, assess those needs, deliver integrated services and review progress – see FAQ number 9 for more detail) for undertaking a common assessment, to help practitioners gather and understand information about the needs and strengths of the child, based on discussions with the child, their family and other practitioners as appropriate. 3. A standard form to help practitioners record and, where agreed, share with others findings from the assessment in terms that are helpful in working with the family to find a response to unmet needs. <p>Useful web link: www.ecm.gov.uk/caf</p>

Why do we need common assessments?

There are four important reasons:

- To give all practitioners working with children and young people a holistic tool for identifying a child's needs before they reach crisis point and a shared language for discussing and addressing them.
- To ensure important needs are not overlooked and reduce the number of assessments that some children and young people undergo.
- To provide a common structure to record information and facilitate information sharing between practitioners.
- To provide evidence to facilitate requests to involve other agencies, reducing unnecessary referrals and enabling specialist services to focus their resources where they are most needed.

<p>What will the common assessment involve?</p>	<p>Working with the consent of a parent/carer/young person to consider the needs of the child or young person in three key areas ('domains'):</p> <p>Development of child, baby, unborn baby or young person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general health - physical development -speech, language and communications development • Emotional and social development • Behavioural development • Identity, including self-esteem, self-image and social presentation • Family and social relationships • Self-care skills and independence • Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understanding, reasoning and problem solving - participation in learning, education and employment - progress and achievement in learning - aspirations <p>Parents and carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic care, ensuring safety and protection • Emotional warmth and stability • Guidance, boundaries and stimulation <p>Family and environmental factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family history, functioning and well-being • Wider family • Housing, employment and financial considerations • Social & community factors and resources, including education <p>The CAF has been developed by combining the underlying model of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families with the main elements used in other assessment frameworks.</p>
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<p>Which children and young people is the CAF for?</p>	<p>Most children will not need a CAF. The CAF is for children and young people with additional needs involving more than one service. These are children and young people who, according to the judgement of practitioners, require extra support to help them achieve the five ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being healthy • staying safe • enjoying and achieving • making a positive contribution • achieving economic well-being
<p>Who will carry out the assessment?</p>	<p>All practitioners working with children and young people should have an awareness of the CAF and either know how to complete a common assessment themselves or know how to arrange to have one carried out. Everyone working with children should be aware of the sorts of situations that indicate the need for a common assessment.</p> <p>No practitioner will begin a CAF without completing the one-day training course. We expect that the majority of common assessments will be undertaken or arranged by practitioners in services such as early years and community settings (for example children’s centres), schools, youth and health settings. These services are best equipped to identify possible needs in their early stages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In schools common assessments will help tackle a broader range of social and behavioural issues acting as a barrier to learning and attainment. It should be considered for all young people at risk of school exclusion. • In health services common assessments will help midwives and health visitors take a broad view of the issues affecting unborn and new born infants, as part of the national child health promotion programme • In the voluntary sector, common assessment will assist with early identification of need. • Youth and Connexions practitioners will use the CAF process to assess and provide support to young people who may require targeted support in line with the Green Paper ‘Youth Matters’. • The police will also have an important role in identifying children with additional needs and signposting for common assessments.

<p>When should a common assessment be carried out?</p>	<p>A common assessment can be done at any time - on unborn babies, new babies, children or young people. It is designed for use when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is concern about how well a child (or unborn baby) or young person is progressing (this includes particularly vulnerable children and young people such as persistent truants and young runaways); • their needs are unclear, or broader than one service can address on its own; • a child or young person or their parent/carer raises their concerns with you • a common assessment would help identify the needs, and provide a basis for getting other services involved. <p>The decision about whether to do an assessment should be made jointly with the child and/or parent. Children should always be encouraged to discuss the assessment with their parents. If the child is old enough and competent to understand, they may make their own decision.</p>
<p>Should a CAF be completed if it is believed a child is at risk of being abused or neglected?</p>	<p>No. If a child is at risk of being abused or neglected you must follow the London Child Protection procedures and immediately contact the Referral and Assessment Team, Duty social worker tel: 020 8359 4066; email: dutyfrontdesk@barnet.gov.uk. Useful</p> <p>Useful weblink: www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00182/ to download the document 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'</p>
<p>What is the process that should be followed to carry out a common assessment?</p>	<p><u>Step 1: Identify needs early and seek consent</u> This involves identifying whether the child/young person may have additional needs, possibly through using the Pre-Assessment Checklist. It also requires the practitioner to check who else is involved with the child and whether a CAF already exists (using ContactPoint once available and the CAF Team prior to this). Whether to do the assessment is a decision that must be made jointly with the child or young person and/or their parent/carer. A young person over the age of 16, or a child under 16 who has the capacity to understand and make their own</p>

	<p>decisions, may give (or refuse) consent. See the DSCF Guidance on Information Sharing or the CAF Practitioners guidance for more information around gaining consent.</p> <p><u>Step 2: Assessing those needs</u> This involves completing the assessment with the child and family, making use of information already gathered from the child, family or other practitioners, and completing a consent statement. At the end of the discussion the practitioner should understand better the child's strengths, needs, and what can be done to help.</p> <p><u>Step 3: Deliver integrated services</u> This involves agreeing actions that the practitioner's service or the family can deliver, and considering what may be needed from other services. If a number of needs have been identified, requiring support from a range of agencies, then a Team Around the Child Meeting should be formed to help everyone involved plan and coordinate service delivery. A Lead Professional should also be appointed to act as a single point of contact for the family and other agencies involved and to make sure that the action plan is kept on track. Note: the CAF does not give a practitioner the right to guarantee a service from another organisation without consulting that organisation.</p> <p><u>Step 4: Reviewing process</u> This requires that the CAF action plan are monitored and reviewed regularly (every 3 months) to ensure that actions are being kept on track and to identify further actions required. At the end of the review the CAF should either be closed or another review agreed, and the child/family's comments recorded. The CAF Review now forms part of the CAF Form.</p>
<p>What if the family refuses a CAF and I'm still worried about a child but have no evidence of abuse or neglect?</p>	<p>Discuss with your line manager or ring the Children's Social Care consultation line tel: 020 8359 4336 which is open 2 x a week on Tues and Wed mornings.</p>

<p>Will the CAF add a layer of bureaucracy?</p>	<p>No. The CAF will reduce bureaucracy and create a single record. The CAF will save effort by avoiding duplication.</p>
<p>Will the CAF produce records of unnecessary information about children and their parents?</p>	<p>No. The CAF is about trying to understand a child's needs in a holistic way, rather than through lots of different assessments that are not linked. It is not about information gathering for its own sake. Common assessment, in line with established good practice for other established assessments, will operate with the full knowledge and involvement of the child/young person or their parent/carer.</p>
<p>What are the benefits of a CAF?</p>	<p>Benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quicker service provision to children and families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - as a result of earlier identification and more appropriate referrals to specialist services. • Better service provision to children, young people and families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - due to the CAF looking at the whole child rather than the needs of the child from the perspective of one particular agency. • Less repetition and duplication for children, young people and families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - due to the CAF information being shared, with consent, between practitioners. • Better understanding and more effective communication amongst practitioners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - due to the promotion of a common language around the CAF. • Improved service planning and development • Time savings for practitioners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - who will be able to build on existing CAF information rather than collecting it themselves from scratch.
<p>Is there any information about the CAF that I can give to parents/carers and to children and young people?</p>	<p>There are some leaflets about the CAF produced for parents/carers and for children and young people, which can be used by frontline staff who are carrying out a CAF or acting as a lead professional to help them explain the process. http://www.barnet.gov.uk/caf-practitioner-info.htm</p>

Links with other work	
What is the CAF's relationship with specialist assessments?	The CAF does not replace existing statutory assessments completed by social workers, youth offending teams or specialist services.
What is the relationship between the CAF, the lead professional and information sharing?	<p>The CAF, the lead professional and information sharing are all essential for the effective provision of integrated services to children and families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CAF provides a process for identifying needs and bringing services together to meet those needs more swiftly and effectively. • Where a range of needs are identified that require an integrated response, the lead professional coordinates these actions and acts as a single point of contact for the child and family • Effective information sharing then helps practitioners work together to deliver a coherent and relevant service to the child and family.
Where does ContactPoint fit into this picture?	<p>ContactPoint will become the first point of enquiry for the whole Children's Workforce across England. It is a tool to improve information sharing and integrated working between agencies.</p> <p>ContactPoint will record that a CAF has been completed, when it was completed and details of the Lead Professional. ContactPoint will be rolled out in phases across Barnet from the end of 2009.</p>
Will information from the common assessment be held on ContactPoint?	No , the detail of assessments will not be held on ContactPoint but it will help practitioners to find out if a common assessment exists. They will then need to contact the other practitioner(s) and, with the consent of the child, young person or family, access the CAF if appropriate.

<p>What is e CAF?</p>	<p>e CAF is the e-enablement of the CAF process, and it will enable practitioners to electronically record, store and share CAF information securely, with the consent of the child/young person/parent or carer. This will help practitioners to work more effectively across geographic and organisational boundaries. National e CAF will be the e CAF system developed by the government which will be available to local authorities from 2010. There are also other alternative e-CAF solutions on the market.</p>
<p>How will information be kept confidential?</p>	<p>Common assessment information should normally be held and shared only with the informed consent of the child or young person, or their parent or carer. The exception would be if the information gathered led to a concern that the child (or other children) was suffering from or at risk of significant harm (see FAQ number 7)</p>
<p>How can I obtain information about whether a CAF has been completed?</p>	<p>You can do this by asking the child, parent or carer. Alternatively, email your request to e-CAF@barnet.gov.uk. You will be asked for confirmation of your identity and can expect a reply within 24 hours. (Eventually information on whether a CAF exists will be available on ContactPoint).</p>
<p>How do I obtain a copy of the CAF form?</p>	<p>You can download the CAF form from the DfES' Every Child Matters Website www.ecm.gov.uk/caf. This website also provides useful guidance and information about how to complete a CAF. Alternatively, you can download a CAF Form from the CAF Practitioners page on Barnet Online at http://www.barnet.gov.uk/caf-practitioner-info.htm</p>
<p>How do I obtain a copy of an existing CAF?</p>	<p>Find out the name and contact details of the Lead Professional or CAF assessor by e mailing e-CAF@barnet.gov.uk. or contact the CAF Co-ordinator on 020 8359 4405 (You will be asked to verify your identity). Then make contact with the Lead Professional or CAF assessor involved to obtain a copy of the CAF (if child/young person/or parent agree) & arrange to contribute to the multi-agency forum or assessment already in process.</p>

<p>What do I do with a completed CAF form?</p>	<p>Email the completed form to eCAF@barnet.gov.uk. If you are sending the CAF from outside Barnet Council and don't have access to a secure email system, then you should ensure that you password protect the CAF before sending it. (see below about how to do this). The form will be securely stored in a database. If you do not have access to email send the completed-form to the CAF Team, at NLBP (see contact details at side of the page). The form will be scanned on to the database and the original securely destroyed.</p>
<p>How do I password protect a document?</p>	<p>On your computer you need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Click on tools on the menu bar at the top of the page. • Select options from the drop down menu • Select the security tab on the pop up window • Enter in the password to open the document under password to open. • Click OK <p>A warning box will appear, asking you to re-enter your password for confirmation. Remember the password is case sensitive, and if you loose or forget the password, you will not be able to re-open the document</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save the document as normal. • Do not include your password in the email that you send, with a copy of your CAF to e-CAF@barnet.gov.uk, but make sure you contact the CAF Co-ordinator on 020 8359 4405
<p>Who should I contact if I have other questions about the CAF?</p>	<p>Your line manager should be your first point of contact. Alternatively please contact our CAF Co-ordinator, Michaela Carlowe, email: Michaela.carlowe@barnet.gov.uk; tel: 0208 359 4405 ; mobile: 07932 076081</p>

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