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Our Partners



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Young London Matters



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR LONDON

Mobility and Young London

Integrated Working Without Boundaries - The London
Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Protocol



ALDCS

Association of London
Directors of Children's
Services

Making Every
London Child Matter

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Foreword

I am delighted to present *Integrated Working Without Boundaries - The London Common Assessment Framework Protocol*. It is the result of a phenomenal effort over many months by many people who work with children and young people in London.

On behalf of DCSF and Government Office London (GOL), I would like to congratulate everyone involved for their commitment to and development of this very significant work. Particular thanks go to Patrick Leeson for his continued leadership as chair of the Mobility and Young London Board.

The 'CAF Protocol' is particularly important to London. It demonstrates London authorities' commitment and passion to identify and support children and young people in need at the earliest stage. Further it represents the willingness of London authorities and partners to adapt local systems and processes and to ensure that the safety of children and young people is paramount. The Protocol marks another significant step forward for the region in terms of pan-London collaboration.

Our next task - no mean feat - is to ensure the Protocol is successfully implemented across the capital. I look forward to being part of this and I feel sure that the Children and Learner's Division at GOL will work closely with local areas to provide any support that is required. I look forward to hearing about the difference this work makes for children, young people, their families and carers and I hope too that it supports our continued ambition for professional collaboration in meeting the needs of children and young people.



Jacky Tiotto
Director for Children and Learners,
Government Office for London



Foreword

Integrated Working Without Boundaries - the London Common Assessment Framework Protocol is the most recent protocol that has been developed by the Mobility Project Board to support cross-borough working in the capital. Once implemented, the Protocol will help to improve the way services respond to children and young people receiving services in more than one borough.

The Protocol represents an agreement by local authorities and partners delivering children's services to set in place minimum standards when working together to support all children, young people and families with identified additional needs. Directors of every London borough have made the commitment to adopting the minimum standards within the Protocol. These will become effective from 1st September 2009 and their impact will be evaluated by the end of 2010.

Over a thousand professionals have contributed to this work - a mixture of those managing and delivering children and young people's services, policy leaders and key regional stakeholder groups. I would like to thank all of them for giving their time and expertise so generously. My particular thanks go to:

- DCSF policy teams, the Metropolitan Police, Youth Justice Board (YJB), National Treatment Agency (NTA), Teenage Pregnancy Unit, Together 4 Children and National Strategies for their significant contribution in ensuring the accuracy of the Protocol;
- Directors of Children's Services and colleagues from the London boroughs of Lambeth, Camden, Wandsworth and Merton, for providing our good practice examples seconding team members to develop this work;
- Directors of Children's Services and colleagues from the London boroughs of Richmond, Kingston, Croydon, Islington, Newham, Sutton, the City of London and Hackney, whose staff members worked in the core project teams that enabled the successful delivery of this work;
- the pan-London Integrated Working Network who have been the reference group for this project;
- the Government Office for London and the Mobility and Young London Board for managing the development of this work; and
- Young London Matters and Capital Ambition for funding the programme.

As chair of the Mobility and Young London Board, I am grateful for outstanding partnership work that has underpinned this work. It is yet another example of the commitment and pride London's local areas have in finding collaborative solutions to deliver the very best services for children, young people and families in London. I look forward to continued successful partnership working and to seeing the improved outcomes for young people that I'm certain will be brought about by this work.



Patrick Leeson
Strategic Director of Learning and Children's Services,
Kingston upon Thames



Statements of Support

The following statements of support were made by key partners of the Mobility and Young London Board who endorse this Protocol and its annexes.

DCSF is pleased to support this Protocol, which offers clear advice and support for practitioners. It builds on the CAF guidance published by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and promotes the importance of a consistent approach to CAF practice. We welcome the focus and energy the Mobility and Young London Board, the Association of London Directors of Children's Services and their partners have brought to its development

Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009

It is really important that the CAF is used systematically both to identify young people early on at risk of teenage pregnancy and to provide support for those that become teenage parents. They will frequently have urgent support needs in relation to parenting issues, learning and contraception to prevent further unwanted pregnancies and accommodation issues.

Teenage Pregnancy Unit, 2009

The Youth Justice Board supports the underlying aims of the Protocol which are to affirm the importance of the CAF process in preventative work and clarifying its relationship with specialist youth crime assessment tools. The YJB also supports the protocol aims in embedding aligned preventative approaches in London and encouraging integrated work with YOT crime prevention programmes and interventions.

Youth Justice Board, 2009



Mobility and Young London

The Context

Integrated Working Without Boundaries – The London Common Assessment Framework Protocol is one in a series of reports produced as a response to the London-specific problems outlined in the *Mobility and Young London* report (GOL, 2007).

Mobility and Young London showed that for children and young people in London, mobility between boroughs causes significant and complex challenges not replicated to the same extent across the country. It also highlighted the impact of mobility on those delivering services in the capital. The report set about improving London's service response to those who receive services in more than one area by asking local areas to work together to tackle the challenges this can present. It advocates the development and implementation of protocols to engender an approach based on responsibility, negotiation and co-operation between local authorities in the capital.

This Protocol is part of that approach - part of a series covering specific issues relating to mobility in London, providing practical solutions to address the issues practitioners, children, young people and families face on a day to day basis.

Titles include:

- Mobility and Young London (GOL, 2007)
- Attendance, Exclusions and Off-Rolling Passport (GOL, 2008)
- Children in Care Health Passport: Promoting the emotional health and well being of London's children in care (GOL, 2009)
- The London Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative Provision, (GOL, 2009)



The Protocol

The effective safeguarding and promotion of children's wellbeing requires clarity between neighbouring boroughs about:

- a) relative roles and responsibilities in the identification of children's needs; and
- b) an integrated assessment process using a common framework, which enables consistency across boroughs and appropriate sharing of information.

The London Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Protocol sets out a coordinated approach to integrated working and using the Common Assessment Framework across local authority boundaries in London. It sets out minimum standards for local authorities about providing support for the identified additional needs of children, young people and families living outside of that authority.

The London CAF has been developed with reference to the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDW) guidance, which can be accessed at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Integrated working without boundaries

This Protocol represents an agreement by local authorities and partners delivering children's services to set in place minimum standards for all children, young people and families with identified additional needs who may require support outside the borough where they live.

It also represents an agreement to:

- work collaboratively;
- compromise when required;
- be flexible with regard to current strategies;
- ensure children and young people remain at the heart of any engagement, support and intervention.

The Protocol is split into 4 sections:

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Key standards underpinning the Protocol
- Section 3: How the Protocol works
- Section 4: Annexes



Section 1: The Protocol

This Protocol contains guidance for practitioners in terms of harmonising operational practice and developing cross-borough arrangements.

It sets out key practice standards that:

- reflect expert views on effective practice and application of the CAF and key themes within the CAF;
- are based on emerging and emerging DCSF guidelines; and
- will support children's services in cross-agency and cross-border working in order to overcome traditional boundaries, helping children and young people achieve improved outcomes and fulfill their potential.

Development of the Protocol

The Protocol has been developed in consultation with the following organisations and policy teams:

- ALDCS;
- representatives from 33 London local authorities (including CAF and Integrated Working leads, Team Around the Child Heads of Service and schools);
- London Children's Safeguarding Board;
- NHS London;
- Metropolitan Police;
- DCSF IISAM group & IW team (CAF, National eCAF, Integrated Working, ICS, Information Sharing);
- DCSF, Department for Health, and Government Office for London policy leads for Substance Misuse, Youth, Youth Offending, Teenage Pregnancy, CAMHS, Behaviour and Attendance, Exclusions and Early Years;
- London Youth Justice Board; and
- government field force teams including Training and Development Agency, Children's Workforce Development Council, Together 4 Children and National Strategies.

Benefits of the Protocol

The Implementation of the Protocol will lead to the following key benefits:

- children and young people's experiences of the CAF process will be the same regardless of which authorities are involved;
- improved planning of service provision meeting the needs of all residents (i.e. including those that are for example educated in other authorities);
- greater clarity when working across authorities to deliver services;
- greater clarity for practitioners on the transfer of information when a child/young person moves to another area;
- the requirement of multi-agency high end intensive support will be reduced; and
- all practitioners working with children and young people in London will understand how to:
 - engage with the CAF process for mobile children; and
 - access cross-border services.



Section 2: Key standards underpinning the Protocol

This Protocol recognises the extensive investment that London local authorities have already made in developing and implementing CAF locally and the attempts that have been made through local partnership to overcome challenging operational environments.

The London CAF Protocol is not an attempt to replace those local programmes. It has been developed to ensure that a child or young person's address MUST NOT act as a barrier to services. The child or young person should experience a seamless response whether accessing services in or out of the authority in which they live.

The following 6 standards have been identified as minimum requirements for enabling effective cross-borough working. ALL Local authorities are required to sign up to and uphold them.

Where supplementary guidance is provided in relation to standards, this offers all local authorities and their partners good practice on key delivery areas.

The Standards¹

Standard 1

The systems and processes identified in Annex 1 'The CAF Process' will be used for cross-authority working when the common assessment process is begun.¹

Standard 2

The London Continuum of Need, identified in Annex 2(a), should act as a minimum standard for identifying additional needs for out of authority children or young people .

Standard 3

Where a child/young person has additional unmet needs a common assessment should be undertaken, except in cases of child protection where practitioners should follow the Local Safeguarding Children Procedures.

Supplementary guidance

The interface of the CAF with other assessments identified in Annex 3 offers all professionals working with children young people and families an effective guide as to when a common assessment should be used and when a specialist assessment should be used. The interfaces referred to in this annex offer a starting point - additional interfaces will be addressed over time.

¹ The practice Standards have been developed through consultation with London practitioners and stakeholders and regional and national policy leads listed in section 1.

Standard 4

Systems and processes for securely sharing information across authority boundaries and services need to be clearly and consistently understood and adopted by practitioners and shared when necessary to support joint working in the seamless provision of services to all children and young people.

Supplementary guidance

Annex 4 offers a good practice guide to sharing information securely.

Standard 5

Information Sharing Protocols - all agencies working with children young people and families will share information in accordance with the HM Government Information Sharing Guidance for Practitioners and Managers (Oct 2008). Annex 5 outlines why Information Sharing Protocols are not required for sharing of CAF information.

Standard 6

The use and application of the CAF should be underpinned by a robust Quality Assurance Framework, ensuring that the CAF is applied to a high and consistent standard in all environments.

Supplementary guidance

Currently there are neither national, nor in many cases, local standards and criteria by which the CAF is quality assured. Annex 6 offers London local authorities a practical CAF Quality Assurance Framework that they may choose to adopt. Please note when a cross -authority CAF is being audited it would be good practice to engage the lead CAF contact from any involved authorities as part of the audit process. The assurance process used by a local authority/Children's Trust should be shared when necessary to support the seamless provision of services to all children and young people.



Section 3: How to Use the Protocol

This Protocol offers a minimum set of standards to operate across borough boundaries and agency boundaries. Through its 6 accompanying annexes, the protocol offers a practical source of information, advice and guidance for practitioners working with children, young people and their families using the CAF process and working across borough boundaries. This Protocol should also be considered in conjunction with the Pan-London Child Protection Procedures (www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/).

Who should use the Protocol?

This Protocol is intended for use by any practitioner and operational line manager in any sector when supporting a child or young person through a common assessment which involves cross-border working.

Senior managers and CAF managers will ensure that principles supporting this Protocol feature as part of the local training and development of all staff engaged in delivering a common assessment.

Governance and review

The Protocol will be reviewed periodically via the Mobility and Young London Board, to ensure continued fitness for purpose and to take account of changing government Policy. This role will be reviewed through the lifetime of the Mobility and Young London Board. The Board will report to the London Children and Young People's Partnership through the Board chair.

Arbitration procedures

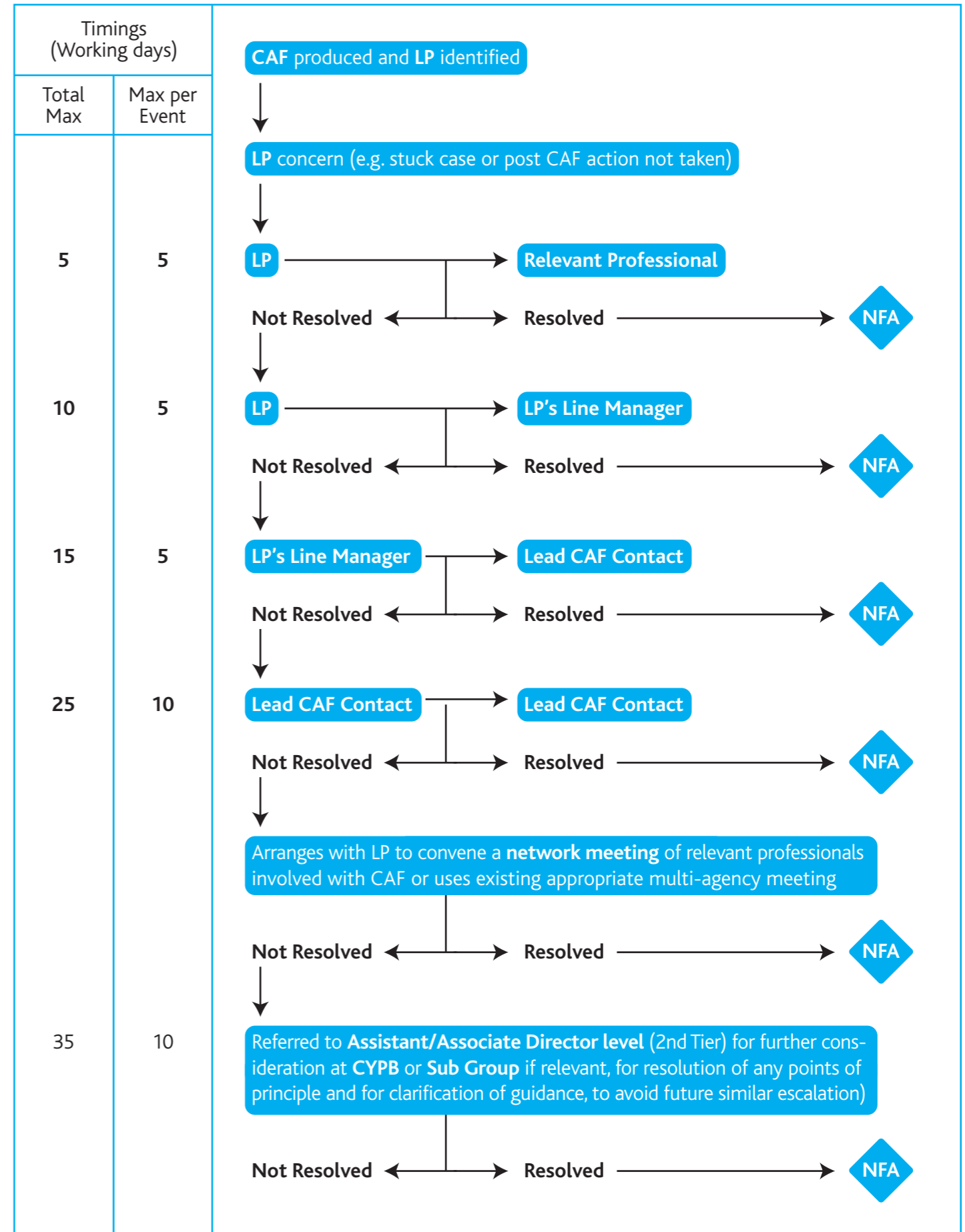
In exceptional cases where two or more local authorities cannot reach a common agreement on how support will be provided for a child, young person or family across authority boundaries, it may be necessary to involve an arbitrator in order to meet the additional needs that are identified. Escalation procedures and arbitration will remain under the auspices of local authorities/Children's Trusts. Diagram 1 outlines the arbitration procedures.

When will this protocol be operational?

The Protocol will be operational from 1st September 2009.



Diagram 1: Flow chart on resolution of professional differences



Section 4: Annexes

Annex 1: The Common Assessment Framework Process

Supports practitioners to work together across boundaries using the CAF to address the needs of children and young people. It sets out minimum requirements that practitioners should follow when taking part in common assessment processes.

Annex 2 (a): The London Continuum of Need (CAF Thresholds)

Outlines common risk triggers for beginning a common assessment and introduces the *London Continuum of Need* model.

Annex 2 (b): The London Continuum of Need Descriptors

Sets out risk and resilience charts, which have been developed to support the London Continuum of Need (annex 2a).

Annex 3: The Common Assessment Framework Interface With Other Assessments

Outlines regional guidance for managers and practitioners relating to the interface between the CAF and other key assessment/referral tools and key interventions.

Annex 4: Sharing Information Securely

Provides regional guidance for sharing information securely, drawing from DCSF and Information Commissioner guidance on information sharing requirements.

Annex 5: Information Sharing Protocols

Sets out the use of information sharing protocols within the CAF.

Annex 6: The Quality Assurance Framework

Outlines a CAF quality assurance framework that can be implemented to monitor the quality of the CAF process and help to improve outcomes for children and young people.



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