

Common Assessment Framework

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a key part of delivering frontline services that are integrated and focused around the needs of children and young people. It is a key component of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme*.

The aim is to identify, at the earliest opportunity, a child or young person's additional needs which are not being met by the universal services they are receiving, and provide timely and co-ordinated support to meet those needs.

The CAF form is a standardised tool used to conduct an assessment of a child or young person's additional needs and helps practitioners to decide how those needs should be met. It is used by practitioners across children's services in England.

What is the CAF?

The CAF has three elements:

- **a simple pre-assessment checklist** to help practitioners identify children or young people who would benefit from a common assessment
- **a process 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 or young person, their family and other practitioners as appropriate

- **a standard form** to help practitioners record and, where appropriate, share with others the findings from the assessment in terms that are helpful in working with the family to find a response to unmet needs

What does the CAF cover?

The CAF has been developed by combining the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* with the main factors used in other assessment frameworks. The three main sections of the CAF are shown in the box below.

1. Development of Child

- Health
 - 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
 - Understanding, reasoning and problem solving
- Progress and achievement in learning
- Participation in learning, education and employment
- Aspirations

2. Parents and Carers

- Basic care, ensuring safety and protection
- Emotional warmth and stability
- Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

3. Family and Environment

- Family history, functioning and well-being
- Wider family
- Housing, employment and financial considerations
- Social & community factors and resources, including education

The CAF provides an assessment process which gives a holistic view of the child or young person's strengths and needs. Practitioners will then be better placed to agree, with the child and family, what support is needed.

What are the benefits of the CAF?

Benefits of the CAF are to:

- provide an assessment that is common across services
- help embed a shared language
- support better understanding amongst practitioners
- reduce the number of different assessments
- facilitate early intervention
- speed up service delivery

How does CAF relate to specialist assessment?

The CAF helps to identify whether specialist assessment is necessary. It provides a generic base of accurate, up-to-date information about the needs of a child which can feed into specialists assessment as and when required. In many areas the CAF has replaced the assessment elements of the *Connexions Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review Framework*. Where there is a need for an immediate specialist assessment, the CAF will not delay that process.

National support

Further guidance for managers and practitioners is available from the Children's Workforce Development Council's website (details in the box below).

Electronic CAF (eCAF)

National eCAF will be a single IT system to support the CAF. It will enable practitioners to work together more effectively across geographic and organisational borders when helping a child or young person. It will enable authorised, trained practitioners from different sectors to create, store and facilitate effective sharing of CAF information to support the delivery of services to improve outcomes for children and young people.

This factsheet is one of a series of integrated working factsheets. For more resources and information, visit the Children's Workforce Development Council website www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/caf or the Every Child Matters website www.ecm.gov.uk