

What is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)?

[A Briefing Note for practitioners in Children's Services.]

Common Assessment is about:

“Meeting need & getting it right with Children & Young People.”

Put simply, it helps define “good practice” in preventative work with families:

- Working openly with the consent of children, young people and families.
- Sharing information within a team of practitioners to present a shared approach.
- Providing a single lead individual to serve as a contact for the family and coordinate the work.
- Ensuring that different agencies and services are involved as and when appropriate to the needs of the child.
- Empowering children, young people and families by:
 - *Listening to their views.*
 - *Helping them to acknowledge their own strengths and reduce dependency.*
 - *Ensuring their involvement in and ownership of the plans that are made.*

(Systemically, it takes the inter-agency processes which have been tried and tested in **safeguarding** work and promotes their use earlier and at lower levels of need.)

What are the benefits for families? :

- CAF empowers families, involves them and promotes change.
- The needs of children and young people are identified early before they worsen or reach crisis point
- Services can be more appropriately matched to need.
- Coordinated action plans and services promote positive ECM Outcomes.
- One identified practitioner to talk to.

What are the benefits for practitioners? :

- We work together as a group of practitioners, avoiding duplication of effort.
- We develop an understanding of each others role in children's services.
- We develop trust between practitioners and learn to respect each others views.
- Common assessment has the potential to replace single-agency processes and develop a shared language and understanding of need.

What are the potential benefits for children's services in Bradford? :

In Local Authorities where CAF has been implemented and embedded in the day to day practice of all children's practitioners, it has been a proven success: It is popular with practitioners, parents, children and young people, has saved time and resources by avoiding duplication of work and significantly reduced the need for involvement of targeted or specialist support associated with higher levels of need. (National Foundation for Educational Research 2009)

And, finally, where does common assessment 'fit' into the services offered locally to children, young people and their families?

CAF is part of an overall children's service strategy which identifies that :

1. For the majority of children and young people (c. 64%*) their needs will be met within the family and through their involvement with 'universal' services.
2. Fewer children and young people (c. 31%*) will develop additional needs which should be identified early and might be met by the common assessment process.
3. A proportion of children and young people (c. 4%*) will have needs which cannot be met without the provision of local authority services. ("In Need" as defined by the Children Act 1989).
4. Only a small number of children and young people (c. 0.8%*) will require statutory inter- agency involvement via safeguarding services, or will become 'looked after' by the local authority.

* National government statistics 2000

CAF: Meeting Need - Getting it right with Children & Young People

