

Integrated Working Guidance CAF Practice

For managers and staff working with Children & Young People in the Bradford District

This is one of a family of Integrated Working Guidance developed for managers and staff working with children and young people in the Bradford District. It sets out guidance to implement CAF and Integrated Working processes centred on the needs of children and young people. It will help practitioners to organise multi agency activity and service provision in a coordinated manner to ensure that children and young people achieve improved Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes



For all CAF forms and Integrated Working Guidance,
go to: www.bradford.gov.uk/caf
For the CAF Helpdesk: 01274 437902
Email: cafhelppdesk@bradford.gov.uk

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THE COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (CAF)

INTRODUCTION

This guidance for the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is for practitioners working with children and young people in the Bradford District. It has been developed from the DfE guidance and research findings from the national Pilot Authorities as well as learning from the experiences of practitioners and managers who have piloted the CAF process in Bradford.

Preventative services for children and young people will as far as possible be delivered locally, organised on the basis of the 5 Constituencies divided up into 14 smaller Localities across the district. The management of Services for Children and Young People in Bradford is organised to reflect this new way of working. Schools and all partner agencies that provide services to children and young people are committed to this approach of working in Localities. This is in line with the “Big Idea” of local joined up services focused on prevention in the Bradford Children and Young People’s Plan.

This Guidance has been developed in consultation with partner agencies and will be further amended as the infrastructure of locality working and the support arrangements structures for integrated working are developed.

The CAF process is a key component in the Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme and is supported by the Children Act 2004 and the accompanying statutory guidance “Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children”. (HM Government 2006).

Every agency working with children, young people and their families in Bradford is required to use the CAF process and to implement this guidance.

The aim of the CAF process is to promote early identification of “additional needs” for vulnerable children and young people and the provision of appropriate help and support so that they can achieve improved progress against the Every Child Matters outcomes:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Well Being

The CAF process is designed to promote early intervention with children and young people for whom there are concerns and who have unmet additional needs. It helps practitioners assess the needs of children and young people consistently and to co-ordinate the support required from partner agencies into one plan, with a Lead Practitioner as the single point of contact between the family and those providing the support. The processes in each agency for gathering information, planning, and providing

appropriate support to meet the needs of an individual family are integrated into one process.

1. **PRINCIPLES OF THE CAF**

The principles of the CAF have been informed by the best working practices of existing assessment frameworks and reinforce a way of working which is child centred, systematic and holistic.

- The CAF is designed to provide an integrated cross agency frontline process to improve outcomes for children/young people and their families. The key components of this integrated process are:

The Common assessment Framework – a standard baseline assessment.

The Lead Practitioner role – a single point of contact for children, young people and their families.

Information Sharing – better information sharing between different agencies and practitioners.

A Central Register of All CAFs in the district held by the Integrated Working Team.

Multi-Agency Working – All partner agencies working together to safeguard and promote children's welfare.

- Work with the consent of parents and young people to share information with partner agencies and provide an integrated response.
- Work in partnership with children, young people and their families in the assessment, action planning and review process, respecting their views of the needs of the child/young person and what they think needs to change.
- Involve children, young people and their families in decisions that affect them unless it is not safe or appropriate to do so.
- Use a solution focused approach to support and reinforce the family's strengths to build on what the family do well and to achieve clearly stated outcomes.
- Develop a common language and understanding of need and vulnerability with families and between partner agencies, to promote a better knowledge of a child/young persons developmental needs and who is best placed to meet these needs.



2. **WHEN TO COMPLETE A CAF**

A CAF can be used whenever a child/young person appears to have additional needs that are unmet resulting in poor progress against the Every Child Matters outcomes.

This may include situations where a Practitioner has,

- Observed a significant feature in a child/young person's appearance, demeanour or behaviour.
- Where a Practitioner knows of a significant event in the child's life which may be having an adverse effect on the child's well-being.
- Where there may be indications of parental substance misuse, domestic violence and parental physical or mental health issues.

The following list, though not exhaustive, are examples of a child/young person's circumstances where unmet additional needs may be a factor resulting in poor progress against the Every Child Matters outcomes. (For more examples refer to p.4 and 5 of 'The Common Assessment Framework for children and young people: Supporting Tools'.

- The child is missing developmental milestones or making slower progress than expected at school, regularly missing medical appointments and is behind with immunisations.
- Insecure attachments between child and parent resulting in inadequate parenting.
- Lack of routines and clearly defined boundaries likely to result in the child's development being impaired.
- Not receiving adequate support in making successful transitions from primary to secondary school.

- Presenting challenging or aggressive behaviour, abusing/misusing substances or committing offences.
- Experiencing physical or mental ill health or disability (either their own or their parents).
- Exposed to substance abuse/misuse, violence or crime within the family.
- Undertaking caring responsibilities.
- Bereaved or experiencing family breakdown.
- Bullying or are bullied themselves.
- Disadvantaged on the grounds of race, gender, religious belief or disability.
- Homeless (or being threatened with eviction), and those living in temporary accommodation.
- Becoming a teenage mother/father or the child of teenage parents.
- Truantly persistently.
- Unable to make the transition to post-16 services.

Completing a CAF will help practitioners to assess the child/young person in a systematic and holistic way so that help, support and assistance can be targeted to resolve early difficulties to prevent them becoming a crisis.

The CAF is intended to avoid, duplication, and through the selection of a Lead Practitioner as a single point of contact, the unnecessary distress for the child/young person and/or the family of having to repeat the same information to a number of different multi-agency practitioners.

To create successful early interventions, initial assessments by all agencies need to be systematic, detailed and holistic. The CAF process performs this function. The information in a CAF transfers to existing specialist assessments that then build on the information contained in the CAF. The CAF will eventually replace existing initial frameworks for assessing children/young people's needs.

Some areas are already using the nationally designed CAF forms to assess children/young people's needs to provide support and services based on Integrated Working principles.

3. **THE STEP DOWN PROCESS**

Step down (specialist agency disengaging) to non-specialist agencies (universal and targeted services)

Where the threshold for a specialist agency is no longer met for intervention, the Team Around the Child (TAC) process needs to be implemented both to empower the family and to prevent unnecessary re-engagement; each service has its own process; all are required to deliver the following:

Process for Specialist Services

1. Step Down information provided by the specialist service will take the place of the CAF assessment. It will **always** contain the core information required to register a potential CAF:
 - consent from the family for the information to be shared
 - holistic view of the child's needs
 - reason for specialist involvement and rationale for disengaging
 - strengths of the child and family, successful intervention methods and reasons for them, summarised
 - needs that have not been met by their intervention agreed by the family and the agency
 - those needs that the family want to work on
 - family preferences for an Lead Professional (LP), if any
2. Specialist service shares this information document with the CAF Register to be registered as a Potential CAF.
3. Specialist service identify, contact and liaise with practitioner/managers of agencies that will continue to work with the family, to ensure that they have the relevant step-down information and that one of these coordinate the TAC – possibly the LP preference identified by the family.
4. In some but not all situations, specialist services hold a closing meeting (e.g. final Looked After Child/Child Protection/Child In Need Review). In those situations, this meeting can be considered the TAC and the plan arising from that meeting can become the CAF Action plan.

Process for other Services

There is no requirement to undertake an assessment.

The Step-down information, containing the learning from the specialist intervention, takes the place of the CAF assessment. It is a different document from each service; all will always contain the core information for a CAF (as above).

1. One service takes the responsibility for coordinating the TAC; this is likely to be the identified preferred Lead professional.
2. Each service involved commits to contributing to the TAC and the CAF action plan as required.
3. Possible decisions arising from the TAC:
 - Whether further TAC intervention is required, if not the 'potential' CAF is closed.

- If ongoing support required, confirm or review Lead Professional (LP) and CAF Action Plan
4. LP records the CAF Action Plan and informs the CAF Register.
 5. Minimum outcome from a Step Down TAC is that learning from the specialist intervention is shared and the child and their family know who to go to without having to tell their story again.

Operating Principles

1. The specialist service will determine when the child no longer meets the threshold for their service.
2. In all situations where a family wants a step-down TAC meeting, the involved and/or relevant agencies will honour that request.

Specialist Services Documents that take the place of the CAF assessment:

1. **Youth Offending Service (YOS):** ASSET and ONSET (YOS assessment documents)
2. **Children’s Social Care (CSC):** ICS (CSC electronic record) closing summary.
3. **Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS):** Work completed letter usually written to the family, copied to GP and referrer.
4. **Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service:** The CAF equivalent document in the process of SEN disengagement is the Transition/SEN Review

4. THE PRE-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

The pre-assessment checklist forms part of the CAF and is useful when the practitioner is unclear about whether a more detailed assessment is needed. This can be done in discussion with the family and/or child or young person and helps to build a collaborative relationship with the family. It also makes sure that all areas of a child/young person’s life are considered.

If at any stage you are concerned that a child or young person is suffering, or is at risk of suffering from Significant Harm, you need to follow the Bradford Safeguarding Children’s Board Procedures.

5. COMPLETING A CAF

The broad threshold for completing a CAF is when a child or young person has additional needs and progress against the Every Child Matters outcomes is a cause for concern.

Completing the CAF process with the family and/or child or young person is a means of building rapport and trust and makes sure that a holistic picture of the child or young person's life are considered.

A decision to complete a CAF should be made in consultation with parents, and where appropriate with the young person. Each agency in Bradford will provide administrative support for the CAF process and arrangements for the supervision of practitioners. Practitioners will receive support and guidance to complete a CAF assessment through these arrangements.

Once a decision is reached to complete a CAF, the practitioner needs to check the CAF Register via the CAF Administration team to see if a CAF already exists. If a CAF is already open the practitioner will need to liaise with the Lead Practitioner as an opportunity to contribute to the CAF. If a CAF has previously existed but is now closed the practitioner will need to complete a CAF form as a new CAF episode and register it with the CAF Administration Team. There may be information in the previous CAF that would help with the current assessment.

The "[Thresholds of Need](#)" has replaced the "Matrix of Need" and can be used as a reference to assist practitioners in identifying the different levels of need to guide their decision making to engage in a more effective multi agency response.

The CAF and Integrated Working Team operate a Helpdesk, e-mail and dedicated telephone number to assist with any queries that may arise.

For all CAF forms and Integrated Working Guidance,
go to: www.bradford.gov.uk/caf
For the CAF Helpdesk: 01274 437902
Email: cafhelppdesk@bradford.gov.uk

6. THE CAF PROCESS

Preparation and Consent

Within your agency talk through your concerns with all involved. Your agency will already have some basic information about the family and you should use this to prepare discussion and assessment with the family. There may be significant areas of common understanding of the concerns. Always obtain consent of the parent and if appropriate the consent of the young person if they are under the age of 16 and over the age of 12 and your professional judgement is that they have sufficient knowledge, understanding and intelligence to give informed consent.

The practitioner must make it clear that to secure support from other agencies appropriate information will need to be shared with them. With the consent of the parent and where appropriate the young person, the practitioner may seek any relevant information from other agencies to better inform the assessment. It is practical to start to work with verbal consent at the start of the assessment and

this must be recorded on the form. It is preferable to also have written consent at a later stage.

If **partial consent** is given and families do not want information shared with certain agencies then this should be respected and recorded on the form. When **consent is not given** the practitioner will consider whether it is in the child/young person's best interest to over-ride consent.

Follow Information Sharing Guidance for further help. This is available on the [Integrated Working Website: http://www.bradford.gov.uk/integratedworking](http://www.bradford.gov.uk/integratedworking).

Discussion and Action Plan

Complete the assessment with the family and absent parent if it is possible and safe to do so. Make sure that information recorded includes the child/young person's views about their situation and how they were involved with the drawing up of the action plan and the reviewing process. Focus on areas of strength as well as needs using solution focussed approaches and questions. Agreement should be reached with the family about what the family can do themselves, what the assessing agency can provide and what support may be required from partner agencies.

The Action Plan should clearly state the outcomes that are intended as a result of the Action Plan. The relevant questions on the CAF form are; "**What needs to change**"? And "**how will you know when things have improved**"? The words recorded should be those used by the child or young person or the family or very closely represent them.

Use the strengths of the family in the actions agreed for the family. Record needs, solutions, actions and the review arrangements on the form using evidence based and good practice case recording principles. Make sure the family/young person's views are recorded and that the recording reflects their understanding of the concerns. The completed assessment with the mutually agreed action plan for achieving intended/desire outcomes belong to the family. The practitioners involved will also need copies.

(See also the Flow chart and "Help and Contacts" page)

Delivering the Action Plan

Make sure that tasks in the agreed Action Plans are clearly identified against the family, child/young person and the named practitioners and their agencies with clearly stated timescales and review arrangements. This will be most effectively done in co-operation with the family, young person and the other practitioners involved. Where there has been insufficient progress after 4 reviews of an action plan the assessment will need to be re-considered and a new Action Plan negotiated.

Following the CAF assessment there are four broad possible outcomes,

1. No further action - the family's and the practitioner's concerns have been

resolved and no further needs have been identified.

2. The needs identified require action by child/young person and/or the family.
3. Single agency support – the needs identified require action by child/young person and/or the family, and by the practitioner's own agency.
4. Multi-agency support – the needs identified require action by the child/young person and/or the family and other agencies. Where more than one service is required a Lead Practitioner will be appointed.

7. THE ROLE OF THE LEAD PRACTITIONER

- The Lead Practitioner should be someone who is the most relevant person to the child/young person's Action Plan and who has the most appropriate skills and competence levels to co-ordinate and deliver and review an integrated response.
- A Lead Practitioner can be selected from a wide range of staff working with children/young people and their families. Each partner agency should promote working practices that fully support the Lead Practitioner role and the CAF Process with dedicated administrative support for the process and arrangements for the supervision support and guidance of practitioners that enables all practitioners to embed the new integrated working culture.

Additional training will be provided for all practitioners to help them develop their knowledge base, skills and competence levels against “the Common Core Skills”

- A Lead Practitioner will be selected where children/young people either already have multiple input from different agencies or have had an assessment completed with them suggesting that a multi-agency response is required.
- A Lead Practitioner will act as a single point of contact. S/he will have a general overview of the child/young person's circumstances and the range of services currently in place. S/he will receive support through the CAF support arrangements in their agency within the Constituency Area and via other practitioners involved in delivering the Action Plan.
- The Lead Practitioner will co-ordinate the sharing of information between practitioners and the family. This can take place by telephone, fax or home visits.
- The Lead Practitioner will make sure that an Action Plan is agreed and in place with intended outcomes and clearly stated tasks for individuals with time-scale, dates and the review arrangements.
- The Lead Practitioner will co-ordinate reviews to check whether the Action Plan and provision of service has achieved the intended outcomes. S/he will

make sure that Action Plans are updated where necessary or if a change of plan is needed in light of new developments. All partner agencies will facilitate this process through establishing the CAF support arrangements in their own agency.

8. ORGANISING REVIEWS

All involved agree what they consider are suitable and appropriate arrangements for the review. This could be a visit, phone calls, emails or a meeting. It is important that the arrangement is an agreed part of the plan and the review is carried out as agreed and on the date arranged.

Practitioners can use existing multi agency meeting forums to review a CAF, as long as that meeting invites and involves the parent and, where appropriate, the child.

- Record your **Review** on the CAF Review Form currently available on the [Integrated Working Website](#).
- For a review meeting you will need someone to chair the meeting and someone to make notes.
- Use plain accessible language so everyone feels included.
- Focus on positives using solution focused approaches and credit the family or young person with their successes.
- Family and practitioners report on their actions, concentrating on and emphasising the positive actions and results.
- Record any barriers or difficulties in making changes and look for alternative solutions.
- Agree new actions or continue working on current actions which are able to affect change.
- Agree a new review date.

If actions by agencies are not carried out, this should be taken up by the Lead Practitioner with his/her own supervisor and/or manager. The supervisor needs to support the approach to the relevant agency.

The Lead Practitioner is not responsible or accountable for services delivered by other agencies. Each practitioner is responsible for their part of the action plan and line management accountability is with the home agency and through the Children's Trust Arrangements and the Director of Children's Services.

9. **CLOSING A CAF**

If the following criteria are met the practitioner can close a CAF if:

- during a review a decision is reached that most of the intended/desired outcomes in the action plan have been achieved;
- the family decide they no longer want to be involved with the CAF and the child/young person's progress is satisfactory;
- the Lead Practitioner concludes with other relevant practitioners that the child/young person's progress is satisfactory and further involvement is not needed; or,
- the child/young person, at age 19, is successfully transferred to Adult Services with his/her agreement and involvement in the decision.

To close a CAF the Lead Practitioner must record the decision on the CAF form in the section "[How will you know when things have improved](#)" followed by the CAF outcomes of how concerns were resolved.

CLOSING THE CAF - OUTCOMES

- Resolved via Family/child/young person planned actions
- Resolved via Single service planned actions
- Resolved via Multi-agency provision and Lead Practitioner
- Resolved Other
- Consent withdrawn
- Consent overridden (safeguarding issue)
- Stepped Up

And advise the CAF Administration Team to register the decision and CAF outcomes.

10. **MULTI-AGENCY MEETINGS**

All multi-agency meetings in Bradford can be used by practitioners and managers to implement the CAF process and to implement integrated working practices. These meetings will help practitioners to negotiate and agree the delivery of solution focused outcomes as part of the CAF Action Plans, select a Lead Practitioner arrange reviews and where appropriate to undertake reviews.

Examples of current multi-agency meetings that practitioners can use for the CAF process:

- Family Support Meetings
- Family Support Clinics - CAMHS
- School Action Plus Meetings

- Children Support Panel – MAST/BIP
- Young People Support Panel – MAST/BIP
- Focus Groups – Positive Futures

N.B.:as long as that meeting invites and involves the parent and, where appropriate, the child or young person.

Bradford has some very good examples of multi-agency working where practitioners work well together to safeguard and promote children and young people's welfare. Practitioners with this good experience of integrated working will find implementation of the CAF process and the Lead Practitioner role a familiar experience.

11. CAF SUPPORT

The CAF Administration Team maintain the CAF Register and can let you know if a common assessment is open in relation to a child / young person. They can also let you know the identity of the Lead Practitioner.

A regular practice forum that can support practitioners and managers in implementing integrated working and CAF is also being developed in each Constituency Area.

For further information, all CAF forms and Integrated Working Guidance,
go to: www.bradford.gov.uk/caf

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