

# Common Assessment Framework

## Fact sheet



**The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a key component in the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme.**

**The aim is to identify, at the earliest opportunity, a child's 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.**

### What is the CAF?

It 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, 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.

### CAF elements and domains

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 factors used in other assessment frameworks. The sections of the CAF framework

are shown in the box below. They have been grouped into three themes.

#### 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

#### Parents and Carers

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

## Family and Environmental

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

## Holistic approach

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

## CAF benefits

The CAF provides an assessment that is common across services. It will help embed a shared language; support better understanding amongst practitioners; reduce the number of different assessments; facilitate early intervention and speed up service delivery.

## Relationship to specialist assessments

The CAF helps to identify whether a specialist assessment is necessary, and avoid duplication by building on accurate up-to-date information. The CAF will replace 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.

## Implementation

The Children's Workforce Development Council assumed responsibility for supporting the implementation of CAF from October 2006.

## Electronic CAF (e-CAF)

The Department for Children, Schools and Families is developing a single, national IT system to support the Common Assessment Framework. The national eCAF solution will be made available to all practitioners and local authorities. We will be strongly recommending that this option is taken up in order to maximise the benefits of a national approach.

eCAF will only hold information about some children, with consent, and for a limited period of time. It will allow a practitioner to electronically create, store, and share a CAF securely. The complexities of working across geographical and organisational boundaries are removed, as eCAF provides a consistent approach for all practitioners, promoting integrated working and early intervention. This will facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of a coordinated service, improving the experience of service provision for children and families.

For more resources and information:  
visit the Children's Workforce Development Council website: [www.cwdcouncil.org.uk](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk),  
or the Every Child Matters website:  
[www.ecm.gov.uk](http://www.ecm.gov.uk).

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