

## Information for practitioners, volunteers and their managers



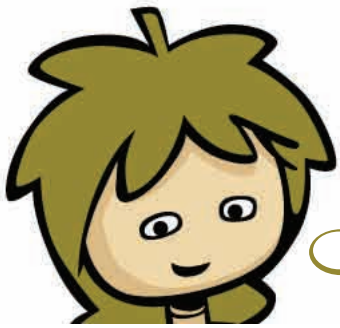
## Working together to support families

Common assessment and integrated working

### Common Assessment Framework

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a new way of working with children and young people. It offers a framework to identify any additional needs of the family, child or young person. Once a CAF is completed a 'Team Around the Child' is brought together, an action plan is agreed and put in place to make sure the child or family get the right support.

The CAF is voluntary, which means parents and children choose to be involved or not. If the family choose not to consent to CAF, you should still offer any appropriate support.



**"I'm enthusiastic. It's putting my family first, instead of professionals deciding what my family needs. It gives my family a voice".**

### Team Around the Child or Family

A Team Around the Child focuses on the needs of the family or child, and is made up of family members and appropriate practitioners. Practitioners may come from Children or Adult Services, or from statutory or voluntary agencies.

This team is responsible for supporting and monitoring the progress. One of these team members will become the lead professional.



**"I felt that everyone listened and understood what my child needed. Anything that makes life better for my child is positive and the Team Around the Child is just what we needed".**

Please contact us if you need help to understand this information or if it is needed in another format or language.

There are a number of sources for more information and guidance

For more information about CAF, information sharing, ContactPoint and more visit [www.newcastlechildrens-services.org.uk/caf](http://www.newcastlechildrens-services.org.uk/caf)

The Children's Workforce Development Council supports the implementation of Every Child Matters [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

The Families Information Service website is a guide to services and organisations working with children and young people [www.newcastlefis.org.uk](http://www.newcastlefis.org.uk)

This leaflet has been produced by Newcastle City Council [www.newcastle.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk)

**"Attending the CAF support group helped me come up with new ideas and I found out about new services which have had a positive affect on the families I work with."**



Newcastle City Council Children's Services offers safeguarding, integrated working and information sharing training for practitioners and managers from all agencies. Practitioner support groups are held in various venues across the city. They also enable you to meet other practitioners, receive updates on CAF and integrated working, problem solve and get advice and support around difficult case issues. There is a range of local and national guidance available to support you in all aspects of integrated working.

### Training, support and guidance

### Lead professional

The lead professional is part of the delivery team and ensures the plan is coordinated and acts as the main contact for the child and their family and other members of the team. They also bring the team together to review progress.

**"The lead professional was fantastic to work with. You know which professional to contact about anything instead of contacting lots and getting passed around".**

### Information sharing

Information sharing is essential for effective early intervention and prevention work with families. Information sharing is also vital for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

It is important that practitioners understand when, why and how they should share information.



**"No enquiry in to a child's death or serious injury has questioned why information was shared. It has always been the opposite".**  
- Lord Laming

### ContactPoint

ContactPoint is an on-line directory for people working with children and families that allows them secure access to information that will help them contact other practitioners working with the same children and families.



# Using CAF to support integrated working

## How will I know that a Common Assessment has already been completed?



Speak to the CAF team, if a CAF has been completed, you will be given the contact details for the lead professional and you can find out whether you should be part of the Team Around the Child. ContactPoint will be in place, so key professionals will be able to search it to see whether a CAF has been started.

## If I complete a Common Assessment will I be the lead professional?



No, if there are two or more targeted services involved, you will arrange a Team Around the Child meeting and the lead professional will be identified. This could be anyone at the meeting, and will depend upon the specific needs of that family. The parent or young person can take on this role with appropriate support from practitioners.

## I am worried about the impact of CAF on my workload.



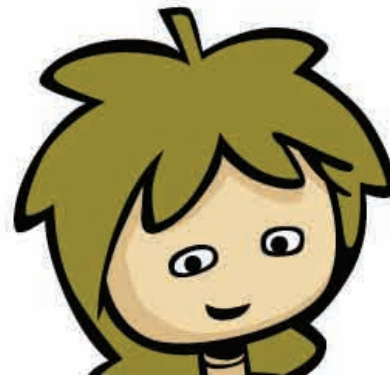
Many workers have found that CAF has actually supported their work with the family and by intervening early it has actually saved time. But like any workload issue we expect managers to support staff and review workload. Issues and queries can be brought to CAF support groups or to the CAF Coordinator. But if everyone is working in one way with processes streamlined, the reduction in duplication will free up important resources across Children's Services.

## What do I need to know about sharing information with others?



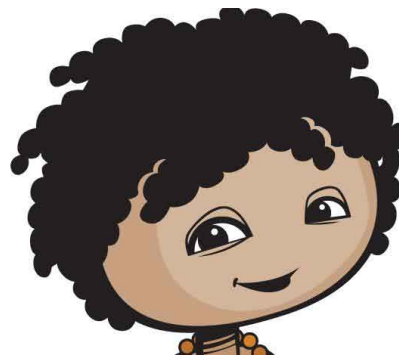
Information sharing is essential to effective integrated working. It is also vital for safeguarding and ensuring the wellbeing of children and young people. Practitioners and managers should become familiar with the DCSF national guidance, attend Newcastle information sharing training where appropriate and know where to seek advice and support within their own agencies.

## What if a parent or young person refuses to give consent?



If they do not give consent you cannot complete a CAF but you should still work with the family and gain their trust, which may help them to understand more about the process and the benefits to them. Maybe after a while you can ask them for consent again, but if at any point in the discussions you have safeguarding/child protection concerns, you should follow the local safeguarding procedures.

## If there is already a specialist assessment does a CAF have to be carried out?



The CAF does not replace any specialist assessments. If a specialist service has carried out their own statutory assessment but their intervention is coming to an end, the CAF process, including the need for a lead professional, may be appropriate if the child still has additional needs.

## What if there is more than one child in the family?



A CAF should focus on one child. If another child in the family has additional needs then they should have a CAF completed. If there are a number of siblings you should consider how to allocate the lead professional role. In some cases, one practitioner has acted as lead for older siblings and another has acted as lead for the younger children and they have shared tasks. There are other solutions but the overriding consideration should be that communication is coordinated, responsibility is clearly shared and the family know who to contact for advice and support.

**For more information about training and support contact the Integrated Working Team on:**  
**0191 246 1879**  
**or email [CAF@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:CAF@newcastle.gov.uk)**