

The Common Assessment Framework in County Durham

**OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR
PRACTITIONERS**

First Edition

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INTRODUCTION

The Common Assessment Framework is a vital component in supporting child well-being, and is key to helping children and young people achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes below:

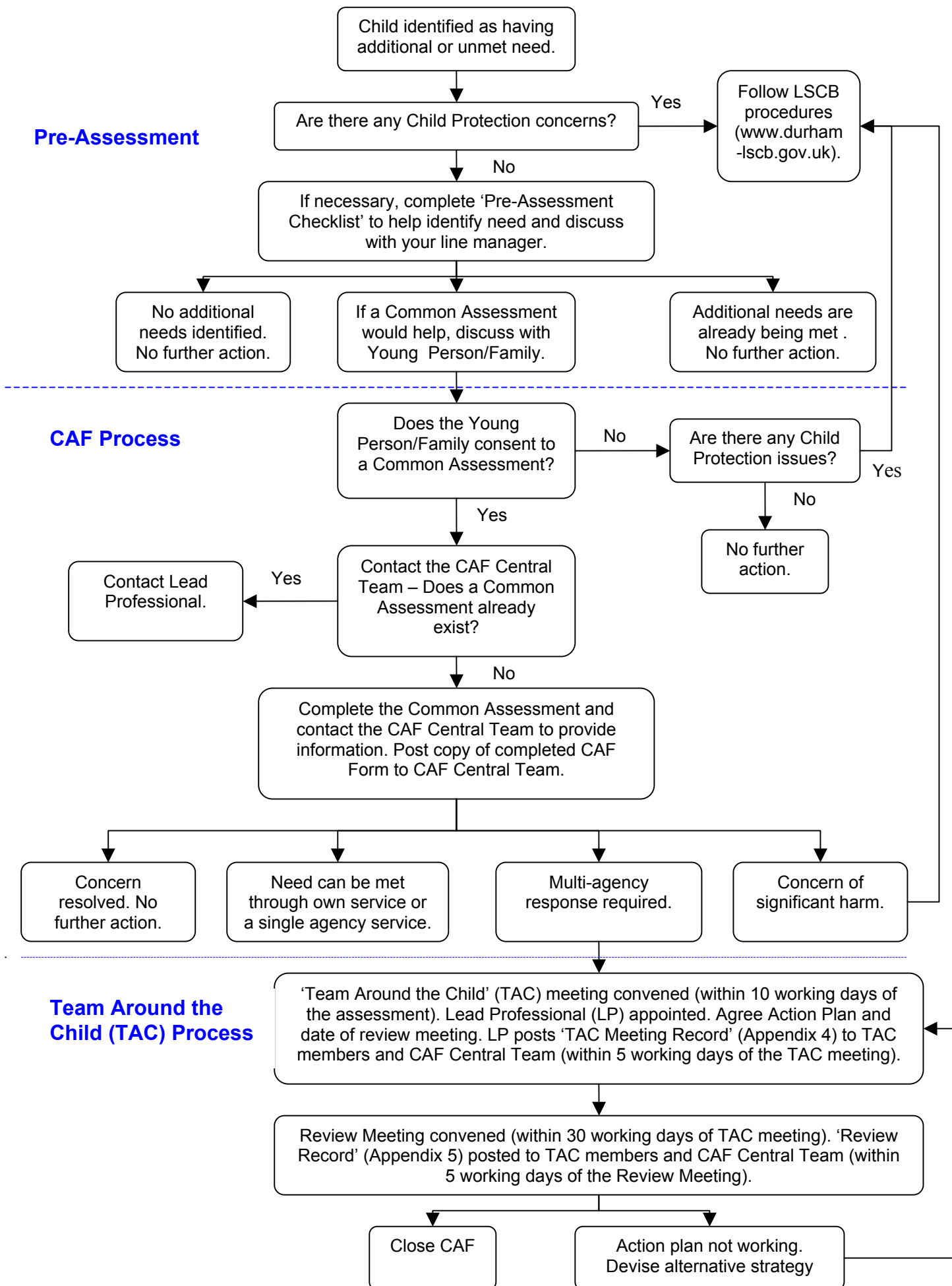
- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

This document has been produced to support those front line practitioners who:

- Will use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF);
- Be required to share appropriate information about individual's effectively between organisations; and
- May become the Lead Professional to act as a single point of contact for a family and co-ordinate the support they receive from relevant organisations.

All children and young people deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential. This guidance outlines how we can work together to provide preventative services at an early stage when a child or young person is identified as having additional needs.

THE CAF FLOWCHART



How to do a Common Assessment

Process for Practitioners to Follow

In order to make the CAF effective across County Durham, it will be necessary for some information to be stored centrally. These guidelines have been produced to help steer you through this process.

At various stages of this process it will be necessary to either contact the **CAF Central Team** or forward specific documentation to them. The contact details are as follows:

Steven Bowyer
Project Manager - CAF
Strategic Commissioning
Children & Young People's Services
Durham County Council
DH1 5UG
Tel: 0191 383 3640
E-mail: steven.bowyer@durham.gov.uk

Please note - All requested documentation should be sent to the CAF Central Team by post only. Due to the unsecured nature of e-mail systems, no identifiable information about persons involved in the CAF process should be sent via e-mail. This is a temporary system until the arrival of the 'e-CAF' which will provide an electronic solution to the transfer of CAF information.

STAGE 1 - Before carrying out a Common Assessment

Important - The Common Assessment Framework should not be used for those children or young people at risk of harm and therefore in need of protection. If you are concerned about the safety of a child or young person, follow Durham's Local Safeguarding Children Board's child protection procedures (www.durham-lscb.gov.uk or see page 21 for further information)

1.1 Use the CAF Pre-Assessment Checklist

If you are not sure whether an assessment is needed, use the CAF pre-assessment checklist (Appendix 2). This short form encourages you to look at the five *Every Child Matters* outcome areas and consider whether the child is healthy, safe from harm, learning and developing, having a positive impact on others and is free from the negative impact of poverty. If the answer to any of these is no, and additional services might be required, this suggests that that a CAF assessment would be an appropriate next step.

1.2 Find out if a CAF already exists – (Contact CAF Central Team)

If you:

- think that a child / young person with whom you are working might be in need of a Common Assessment

and

- if you have the explicit permission of the child/young person or, where appropriate, their parent/carer to seek further information,

you must check with the CAF Central Team to ensure a CAF has not already been completed. If an assessment exists and other practitioners are working with the child, you should join up with and use existing work rather than starting again from scratch.

To contact the CAF Central Team you can either:

- telephone the CAF Central Team (Steven Bowyer) **on 0191 383 3640**

or

- e-mail the CAF Central Team at **steven.bowyer@durham.gov.uk** – you should leave your telephone contact details indicating that this is a CAF matter and a member of the CAF Central Team will contact you. **DO NOT** send any information about the person / person's involved.

What will happen next?:

- When you speak with a member of the CAF Central Team, you will be asked your name, and the name of your agency. This will be checked against the register of those trained to carry out the CAF / Lead Professional process.
- You will be asked to confirm that you have been given explicit permission by the child/young person or, where appropriate, their parent/carer to contact other professionals. This will be recorded.
- You will be asked to give the child / young person's name, date of birth, and address.
- If available, the following information will be given to you about the child / young person:
 - whether the child is currently part of a CAF process;
 - the name and contact details of the Lead Professional;
 - the date of the last CAF episode;
 - the number of previous CAF episodes;
 - outcomes of previous CAF episodes;
 - the agencies who are involved with the child/young person

STAGE 2 – Completing the Common Assessment

Please ensure that you have received the relevant ‘CAF Practitioner’ training before completing any CAF forms. If you do not have the relevant training but someone else within your organisation does, ask that they complete the CAF.

2.1 Inform children, young people and families of the process

Important points to remember:

- you must have consent from the child/young person or, where appropriate, their parent/carer to proceed with the completion of the CAF form.
- the child/young person or, where appropriate, their parent/carer is expected to be at the centre of this process and should be fully involved in the assessment.

You should prepare for the discussion. If there are any special communications requirements, you should consider whether an interpreter is needed.

It is important to ensure that parents, carers, children and young people understand what a CAF is and how it will help to support them.

2.2 Hold the CAF discussion and complete the CAF form

This step involves working with the child and, as appropriate, their family, and completing the assessment with them. You will need to **make sure they understand what information you are recording and what is going to happen to it**. It will help to use plain, jargon free language which is appropriate to the age and culture of each person, explaining any unavoidable technical and professional terms. Remember the discussion does not have to be highly formal or presented as a ‘big event’. You will want to use a method and style that suits you, the child/parent and the situation.

The key points to remember about your discussion are:

- it is collaborative – you are working with the family to find solutions;
- you should consider the child’s **strengths** as well as needs and these should be recorded;
- you should make use of information you have already gathered from the child, parent or other practitioners so they don’t have to repeat themselves;
- at the end of the discussion you should have a clearer picture of the child and family’s strengths, needs, and what can be done to help.

Ensure the ‘Consent’ section of the CAF form has been signed by the child/young person or, where appropriate, their parent/carer before proceeding to ‘Stage 3’.

STAGE 3 - After carrying out a Common Assessment

3.1 Assess the findings

The most likely outcome of your Common Assessment discussion will be one of the following:

- a) **you will have determined that there is no additional action required as you have resolved any concerns that may have existed.**
- b) **you will have agreed some actions for you or your service and/or the child/family:** delivery will involve you undertaking these actions, setting a date for review and monitoring progress;
- c) **you will have identified that a multi-agency response is required to address unmet needs:** You will **convene a 'Team Around the Child' (TAC) Meeting**, involving other agencies, and produce an action plan to address any identified additional needs.

3.2 Update CAF Central Team

You must contact the CAF Central Team (0191 383 3640) to update on the outcome of the Common Assessment.

You will be asked to give the following details about the child / young person:

- Name;
- date of birth;
- address;
- date the Common Assessment was completed;
- names of services working with child / young person;
- expected date of the 'Team Around the Child' meeting (if required)

You must also **post a copy of the completed CAF Form** to the CAF Central Team (address on page 5). The envelope should be marked **'STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL – to be opened by addressee only'**.

STAGE 4 - Arrange a Team Around the Child (TAC) Meeting

If in 'Stage 3' the Common Assessment has indicated that a multi-agency response is required (i.e. outcome **c**), a Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting should be arranged.

The practitioner that carried out the common assessment is responsible for convening the **initial** TAC meeting and deciding who should be invited. If practitioners are unsure who to invite, they should consult their manager or the CAF Network Directory for their Local Children's Board area. The CAF Network Directory will have a list of all CAF Trained Practitioners for the area together with contact details of all local Children's Services. The Network Directory will also include a list of all members of the Local Child Resource Group and their contact details.

The invitations must include:

- the child / young person (subject to their age and understanding), or, where appropriate, their parent/person with parental responsibility.
- any organisation identified by the child/young person and parent and the assessor, who can provide a service to support the individual (based on the needs identified within the Common Assessment).

The TAC meeting should be convened as soon as possible following the completion of the Common Assessment but this should be **no longer than 10 working days**.

TAC meetings should be organised to facilitate the parent/carer and child/young person's attendance.

The TAC meeting will be chaired and recorded by the convening organisation (unless otherwise agreed in advance).

Practitioners may wish to circulate the completed Common Assessment to attendees prior to the TAC meeting. This should be done by post with envelopes marked **'STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL – to be opened by addressee only'**

Appoint a Lead Professional

The Team Around the Child Meeting should discuss and agree with the child/parent and agencies who the Lead Professional will be. This discussion should take full account of the wishes of the Child and Parent. Any difficulties in identifying a Lead Professional should be referred to the Local Child Resource Group, details of which will be contained in the CAF Network Directory.

Produce an Action Plan

The TAC meeting record will specify what action will be taken by those involved detailing who has responsibility and what outcome is expected from the action. Actions must be timely, taking into account the fact that delays can have a significant impact.

The record of the action plan remains the responsibility of the Lead Professional to retain in accordance with their organisation's own record keeping procedures.

A record of the TAC meeting and its associated action plan should be completed and circulated by the Lead Professional to all TAC members (**by post**) **within 5 working days** of the meeting (template can be found in 'Appendix 4'). You must also **post a copy** to the CAF Central Team (address on page 5). All envelopes should be marked **'STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL – to be opened by addressee only'**.

Review

The Lead Professional will convene further TAC meetings as often as necessary, but at a minimum of every **30 working days**. Both the parent, or child / young person and any practitioner involved can request a review at any time.

The review must ensure that;

- Each action specified in the plan is reviewed against the stated desired outcome;
- The views of the child, young person and their parents have been considered;
- The TAC meeting record is revised;

The Lead Professional must make a record of each review (template can be found in 'Appendix 5') **within 5 working days** of the review meeting and send (**by post**) to all members of the TAC and the CAF Central Team (address on page 5). All envelopes should be marked **'STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL – to be opened by addressee only'**.

Closing a Common Assessment

The TAC collectively makes the decision that a Common Assessment is to be closed.

THE LOCAL CHILD RESOURCE GROUP (LCRG)

What is the role of the Local Child Resource Group (LCRG)?

Every area within County Durham will have at least one Local Child Resource Group (LCRG) responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework within localities. The number of LCRG's that operate and their membership will be determined locally by Local Children's Boards (LCBs).

The main functions of the LCRG are to:

- Review and develop the CAF implementation plan.
- Support the CAF process within its local area and ensure its effective delivery.
- Resolve any difficulties of conflict, resource, or engagement within the 'Team Around the Child' process.
- Advise and support practitioners and managers involved in the CAF process
- Monitor and evaluate CAF management information received from the CAF Central Team.
- Ensure that, within the CAF process, gaps in service are identified and addressed, or where this is not possible, to provide a clear reporting link back to the Local Children's Board regarding the CAF and unmet need.

- Where issues/problems cannot be resolved at LCRG level, these will be referred to the Local Children's Board.
- Facilitate access to specialist services for the 'Team Around the Child' if, as part of the Assessment or as part of the work of the TAC, it is determined they are required. This does not prevent the person carrying out the assessment (or the Lead Professional) from contacting the specialist service directly, however, if there are difficulties in doing so, the LCRG will work to resolve this.
- Support practitioners to work in partnership to develop local community provision that will support health and wellbeing for children, young people and families, based upon identified needs.
- Ensure a good understanding of available resources is made known to practitioners and those involved in TAC processes so that these can be easily and readily accessed if it would benefit the child/young person and/or family.

Frequently Asked Questions

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the CAF?

The CAF is a new, standardised approach to assessing children's needs for services. It is targeted at those children with unmet additional needs, and where there are concerns around their well-being, such as those at risk of achieving poor outcomes. The CAF has been developed for practitioners in all agencies so that they can communicate and work together more effectively. It is particularly suitable for use in universal services (e.g. early years settings, schools, primary healthcare services, the youth and Connexions services, voluntary or community sector support), to help identify and respond to problems before they become serious.

The CAF is part of a wider programme to provide more integrated services and should:

- **Support earlier intervention**, by providing methods to help practitioners and professionals who come into day-to-day contact with children and families, such as those providing ante- and postnatal services or those in early years settings, schools and youth services to identify and meet needs at an earlier stage;
- **Improve multi-agency working**, by enabling lead professionals to maintain a single, overview record of the needs and progress of a child in contact with several agencies; embedding a common language of assessment, need and response; and improving trust, communication and information sharing between practitioners;
- **Reduce bureaucracy for families**, by providing practitioners (including Lead Professionals) with a more complete overview of a child's needs and responses, thereby reducing the number of inappropriate inter-agency referrals, separate assessments and different agencies working with the child.

The CAF aims to help practitioners and professionals working with children and young people to undertake assessments in a more consistent way and in many cases, it will simply formalise current practice. It is expected that with the right knowledge, skills and training, practitioners in any agency will be able to undertake a common assessment.

2. What is the background of the CAF?

The Children Act 2004 provides the legislative framework around Every Child Matters and includes the duty for inter-agency co-operation to improve children's well-being. The Act also enforces the legal responsibility of all agencies to work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. In order to deliver on this agenda, local authorities and their partners are currently undergoing a widespread change process to help them and their partners to deliver better outcomes for children and young people. This includes the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework.

The Common Assessment Framework forms part of a move towards a common system for responding to need. Those children and families in need are the concern and responsibility

of all agencies and professionals in County Durham. A key part of the wider programme for change is the earlier identification of need to help children and young people have improved outcomes. This will see a move towards greater collaboration between individual workers and agencies both at a strategic and practice-based level, including an increased emphasis on integrated working. Integrated working focuses on enabling and encouraging professionals to work together to deliver frontline services, coordinated and built around the needs of children, young people and families.

3. What are the main principles of the Common Assessment?

The principles underlying the approach to common assessment are that it:

- Looks at the whole child, not just the policy focus and statutory obligations of a particular service;
- Takes account of strengths as well as needs and understands the role of parents/carers and a wide range of family and environmental factors on child development;
- Is simple to use and geared towards the practical delivery of support to children, young people and their family members;
- Is empowering for families, completed in partnership with children and families at all stages, where possible enabling them to take the lead, and ensuring they have a copy of all the relevant documentation;
- Enables and encourages information held by agencies to follow the child, for example, as they get older, change schools or move house, subject to controls to protect confidential information;
- Is a tool to support practice, and enhances ongoing and effective communication within and between agencies.

4. Why do we need common assessments?

There are four important reasons:

To give all practitioners working with children and young people a holistic tool for identifying a child's needs before they reach crisis point and a shared language for discussing and addressing them.

To ensure important needs are not overlooked and reduce the scale of assessments that some children and young people undergo.

To provide a common structure to record information and facilitate information sharing between practitioners.

To provide evidence to facilitate requests to involve other agencies, reducing unnecessary referrals and enabling specialist services to focus their resources where they are most needed.

5. Why should I use the CAF?

We all want better lives for children. Most children do well. Some don't, but don't get help until things are really bad. We want to identify such children earlier and help them before issues/problems reach crisis point. The most important way of doing this is if every person whose job involves working with children keeps an eye out for their general well-being, and is prepared to help if something's going wrong.

The common assessment is one way to help people to do this. It is a tool to identify unmet needs. It covers all needs, not just the needs that individual services are most interested in.

6. What are the benefits of a CAF?

Potential benefits include:

- Quicker service provision to children and families
 - as a result of more appropriate referrals to specialist services.
- Better service provision to children, young people and families
 - due to the CAF looking at the whole child rather than the needs of the child from the perspective of one particular agency.
- Less repetition and duplication for children, young people and families
 - due to the CAF information being shared, with consent, between practitioners.
- Better understanding and more effective communication amongst practitioners
 - due to the promotion of a common language around the CAF.
- Time savings for practitioners
 - who will be able to build on existing CAF information rather than collecting it themselves from scratch.

7. What does the CAF consist of?

The CAF consists of:

- A simple pre-assessment checklist to help practitioners identify children 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.
- Standard forms 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.
- A process for implementing a Team Around the Child (TAC)

8. Which children and young people is CAF for?

Most children will not need a CAF. CAF is for children and young people with additional needs. These are children and young people who, according to the judgement of practitioners, require extra support to help them achieve the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes:

- being healthy;
- staying safe;

- enjoying and achieving;
- making a positive contribution;
- achieving economic well-being.

9. Who Needs to know about the CAF?

All practitioners working with children and young people should have an awareness of the CAF and either know how to complete a common assessment themselves or know how to arrange to have one carried out. Everyone working with children should be aware of the sorts of situations that indicate the need for a common assessment. All services should train at least some of their staff in completing common assessments.

10. When should I do a CAF?

You can do a common assessment at any time you believe a child is not progressing towards the five *Every Child Matters* priority outcomes. You need to identify these children early and help them before things reach crisis point. The CAF is an important tool for early intervention. It is designed for use when:

- you are concerned about how well a child is progressing. You might be concerned about their health, welfare, behaviour, progress in learning or any other aspect of their well-being. Or they or their parent may have raised a concern with you;
- the needs are unclear, or broader than your service can address;
- a common assessment would help identify the needs, and/or get other services to help meet them.

The decision to proceed with an assessment is one that should be made jointly with the child, young person and/or parent. If a young person is old enough to understand and competent enough to make their own decisions, they should be the one to decide with you whether to proceed with the assessment. Always encourage young people to discuss things with their parents, if they feel comfortable.

If you are unsure you should discuss the case with your line manager.

11. When should a Common Assessment not be carried out?

- There is no need to do a common assessment for every child you work with. Children do not need a Common Assessment if they are progressing well, or have needs that have already been identified and are already receiving services to address these needs.
- You do not need to do a common assessment where it is obvious what the needs are and **your** service can meet the full range of those needs.
- If you are worried that a child may have been harmed or may be at risk of harm, you should follow established LSCB procedures without delay. You should not stop to do a common assessment (LSCB procedures are available at www.durham-lscb.gov.uk. To make a referral to Social Care Direct telephone 0845 850 50 10).

- You cannot undertake a common assessment unless the child/young person, or where appropriate, their parent agrees. The CAF is entirely voluntary. If a common assessment is refused and you are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child, you should follow LSCB procedures. (NB - Whether to do the assessment is a decision you should make jointly with the child and/or their parent. A young person aged 16 or over, or a child under 16 who has the capacity to understand and make their own decisions, may give (or refuse) consent for the assessment to take place. You should always encourage children under 16 to involve their parent as appropriate).

12. What happens when consent to proceed with a CAF is withheld?

Practitioners should make a record where consent is withheld following the offer of the CAF process. In such instances, they should contact CAF Central Team to inform that this situation has occurred – **practitioners should not provide the CAF Central Team with any identifiable details of the child/young person involved.**

Refusal of consent may give rise to further concerns about the child's welfare. In these cases, the professional concerned should inform their line manager and together make a decision how to progress, taking into account all available information, and consulting LSCB procedures.

13. Will the CAF add a layer of bureaucracy?

No. The CAF should reduce bureaucracy. Subject to consent from the child, young person or parent, the reduction will come from a practitioner building on information that has already been gathered, rather than collecting it from scratch.

14. What is the role of the Lead Professional?

The role of the Lead Professional is to co-ordinate actions and services and share information with appropriate workers who are or will be providing support to a child or young person. The Lead Professional will be identified at the initial TAC meeting

The Lead Professional will be the worker with the most relevant skills and experience and has a responsibility to ensure that services are co-ordinated. However, responsibility for meeting the child and young person's needs rests with the whole team and all members of the TAC should recognise they continue to be accountable for the child or young person's welfare. Each worker must co-operate with the Lead Professional to enable them to fulfil their co-ordinating role.

Becoming the Lead Professional does not imply the person does all the work and is solely accountable. It means they will ensure the TAC is working together efficiently and monitor the child or young person's progress against the agreed actions within the action plan.

Key Functions of the Lead Professional

The Lead Professional will:

- Act as a single point of contact for the child, young person and family. Be someone who they can trust and who can engage them in making choices and effecting change.
- Co-ordinate the delivery of actions agreed by the practitioners involved to ensure that child, young person and family receive an effective service which is regularly reviewed. These actions will be based on the outcome of the assessment and recorded in an action plan.
- Reduce overlap and inconsistency in the services received.

To carry out the role effectively, it is likely that a Lead Professional will perform a number of key functions including:

- building a positive relationship with the child or young person and family to secure their engagement and participation in the process;
- providing the child, young person and family with sufficient information to help them contribute to the decision making process and ensure they remain central to any decisions taken;
- ensuring that progress is monitored
- ensuring that an effective 'handover' takes place when a new Lead Professional is identified

A Lead Professional should be supported in their role by the manager from their own organisation.

The lead Professional is there to act as a co-ordinator and be a single point of contact for the family. However, they are not there to do everything! Everyone is expected to play their part in supporting a family as agreed in the action plan. If another practitioner is not fulfilling their part of the agreed plan speak to them directly first. If they refuse to co-operate speak to either your manager or their line manager.

15. What is the role of the 'Team Around the Child' (TAC)?

A 'Team Around the Child' (TAC) is convened whenever a common assessment identifies that the child has needs requiring the support of more than one organisation or service.

The Team Around the Child is a response to the need for joined up services and the need to provide a more integrated approach within existing resources. The aim is to reduce duplication and support a common service delivery approach, which continues from the CAF process. A TAC aims to plan actions around the child's identified unmet needs through an agreed written TAC plan.

The Team Around the Child brings together relevant practitioners with the family to address the child or young person's needs. The team works together to plan co-ordinated support from agencies to address problems in a holistic way. It can be an evolving team of practitioners who see the child/young person and family to provide support and who will work with the child/young person and family as appropriate.

The function of the TAC includes:

- reviewing and agreeing information shared through CAF
- agreeing a Lead Professional
- planning and agreeing actions with timescales
- identifying solutions, allocating tasks and appropriate resources
- monitoring and reviewing outcomes with timescales
- reporting, as required, to the Local Child Resource Group to assist them in identifying gaps and informing planning and commissioning

The membership of the TAC will inevitably change as the needs of the child and family change. The TAC operates as a supportive team, rather than just a group of practitioners. In this way there is direct benefit to parents who have new opportunities to discuss their child and family with key practitioners all in one place and to practitioners who might otherwise feel isolated and unsupported in their work with the child and family.

What is important about the TAC process is that there is always a Lead Professional, the child, young person and their parent/carer are always involved, and there is an agreed plan to address needs identified.

The ideal TAC:

- arrives at a collective agreement
- is encouraging, positive and supportive to all members
- provides members with an equal voice
- acknowledges differences of views and negotiates workable solutions
- reviews and tracks outcomes for the child/young person

This model relies on the availability of positive consultation between all agencies. It will provide an opportunity for those practitioners working with children and young people to access additional knowledge and expertise and to explore any given problems at an appropriate level. As with information sharing, consultation should not be seen as a way to transfer responsibility for a problem to another agency unless this is an agreed discussion outcome.

16. What if a service is not responding to the agreed action plan for the Child/Young Person?

If you are concerned that your service or another service is not responding to the needs identified, take the matter up through the 'Local Child Resource Group'.

17. What if I do not know which practitioners to invite to a ‘Team Around the Child’ meeting?

Local Children’s Boards are developing ‘CAF network directories’ which will assist with this process and it will be each organisation’s responsibility to ensure that their information is relevant and up to date (directories will become available at www.everychildmattersincountydurham.gov.uk).

It should however be noted that the CAF process is operational now and should not be delayed whilst we await the formulation of these directories. In the interim, practitioners should seek advice from their line managers or contacts within the ‘Local Child Resource Group’ if they are unsure who to call upon from agencies to attend a TAC meeting.

18. Are services that are identified through the CAF process guaranteed?

Since resources to pay for services are finite, the Common Assessment Framework cannot offer a guarantee that services will be delivered. However, it should increase considerably the likelihood that services will be delivered, because decisions will be backed up by evidence and more referrals will be directed to the right place.

19. What should I do if I think a child is at risk of harm?

It is important to understand that the Common Assessment Framework is to be used for children and young people with additional need who can be provided with low level support services at an earlier stage to prevent them from requiring longer term involvement with specialist services.

The Common Assessment Framework should not be used for those children or young people at risk of harm and therefore in need of protection. If you are concerned that a child or young person is at risk of harm follow Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board’s child protection procedures (www.durham-lscb.gov.uk).

If at any time you are concerned about the safety of a child or young person, you should follow Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection procedures:

Contact:

Social Care Direct – 0845 850 5010

Police – 0845 606 0365

If it is an emergency dial 999.

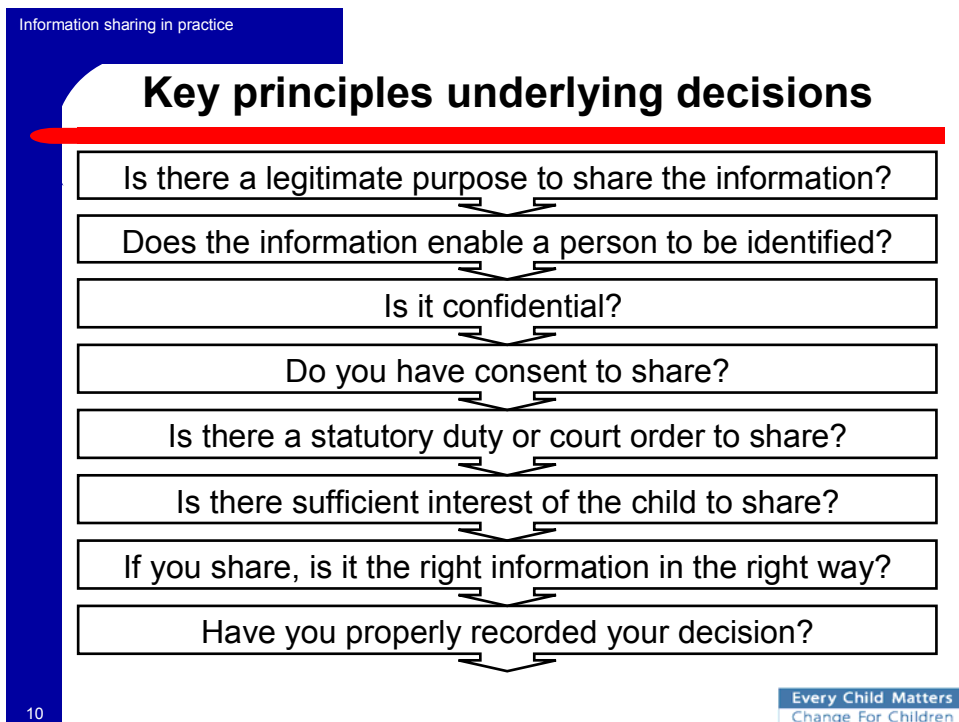
To access procedures on website:

1. Enter web address:
www.durham-lscb.gov.uk
2. Click on ‘Child Protection Procedures’
3. Click on the section you require
4. Click on items in the index

20. What are the guidelines for sharing information?

Information Sharing Protocol

A multi-agency protocol for information sharing has been developed across County Durham and the Tees Valley. Guidelines for practitioners to help with using this protocol have been developed in conjunction with partner agencies, and are summarised below. This flow chart is useful for practitioners in deciding what can be shared with whom.



Practitioner Guidelines for Information Sharing

Practitioners should:

- Share information where there is a legitimate need
- Share information only with those who need to know
- Check that the information is accurate and up-to-date
- Seek consent, and respect refusal where possible - **unless there is sufficient need to over-ride the lack of consent e.g. where a child's safety and welfare might be at risk**
- Share information in a secure way
- Store information safely
- Establish with the recipient whether they intend to pass the information on to other people, and ensure they understand the limits of any consent which has been given
- If you have not already done so, and it is safe to do so, inform the person to whom the information relates, and any other person who provided the information
- Openly and honestly explain to the person what, how and why information will be shared
- Always consider a child's safety and welfare when making decisions about sharing information

- Seek advice where in doubt
- Record the reasons for the decision – whether it is to share information or not.

21. What if the TAC cannot reach agreement about who should act as Lead Professional?

If agreement cannot be reached about who should act as Lead Professional, this should be referred to the 'Local Child Resource Group' for resolution.

22. What is the relationship between the CAF, the lead professional and information sharing?

The CAF, the lead professional and information sharing are all essential for the effective provision of integrated services to children and families.

The **CAF** provides a process for identifying needs and bringing services together to meet those needs more swiftly and effectively.

Where a range of needs are identified that require an integrated response, the **lead professional** co-ordinates these actions and acts as a single point of contact for the child and family

Effective **information sharing** then helps practitioners work together to deliver a coherent and relevant service to the child and family.

23. What are the Local Structures to Support the CAF Process in County Durham?

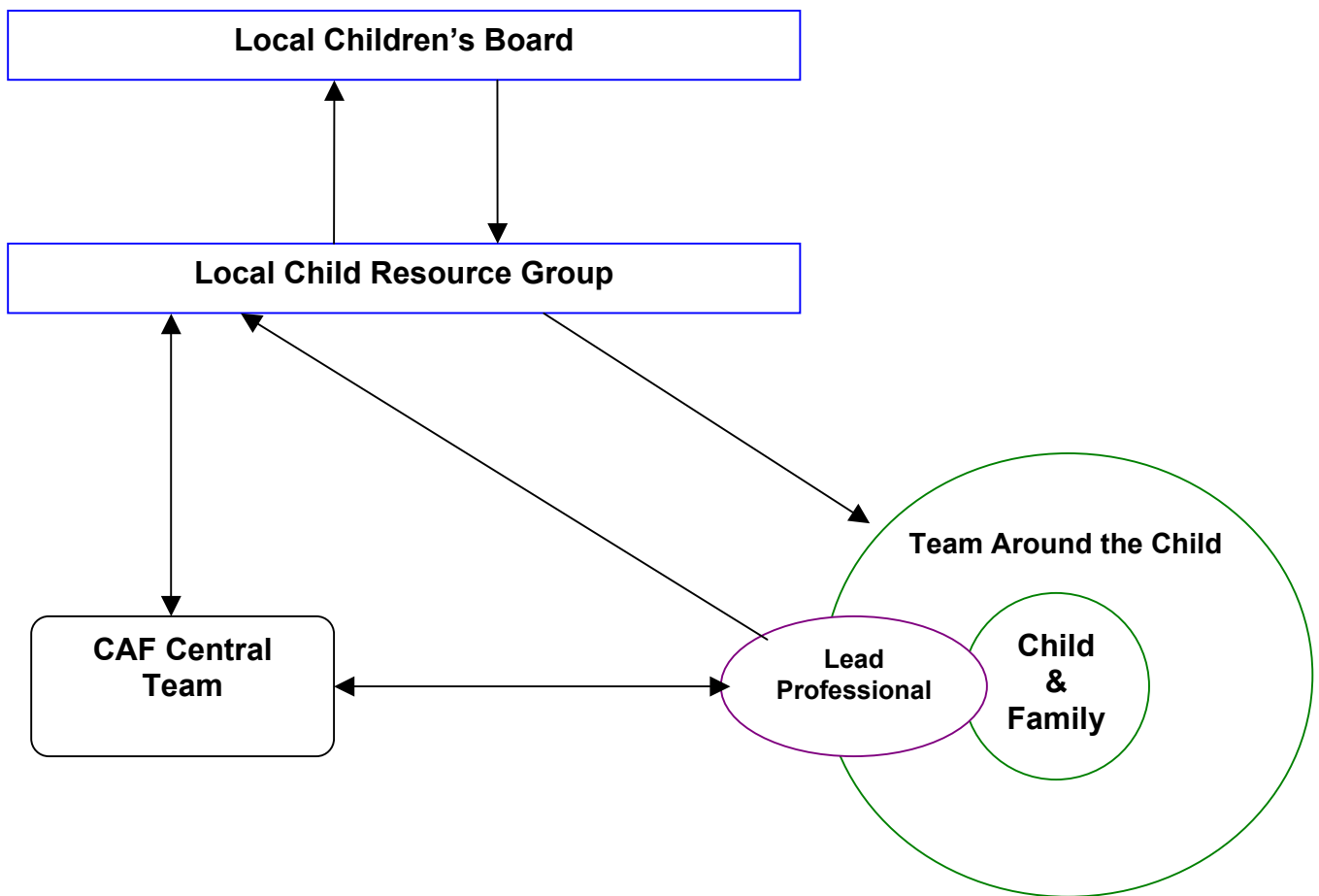
As the CAF project rolls out in County Durham it is essential to have a clear governance model and associated local processes to support its implementation.

It has been recognised that these should be:

- The most effective process to address the needs of child/young person and family (i.e. solution focussed, geared around action).
- User-friendly for child/young person and family (i.e. not intimidating in any way)
- Able to be serviced by all agencies to ensure engagement in process (e.g. practicalities for attending meetings)
- A smooth, effective process that will be practical for use across County Durham.

Below outlines the governance model that will operate across the county:

CAF Governance Model



24. Where can I find the CAF documents and further information about CAF?

Up to date CAF documentation and information will be available at:

www.everychildmattersincountydurham.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can e-mail the CAF Central Team – steven.bowyer@durham.gov.uk

For national information and further reading on CAF please visit:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

CAF CHECKLIST

I am in the process of completing a CAF, what do I need to remember?

Pre Assessment Checklist complete (if required)?

Discussion with parents/carers and child/young person?

Check if a CAF already exists (contact CAF Central Team)?

Consent gained to proceed with CAF?

Common Assessment completed with the child, young person and family?

Contact CAF Central Team with basic details of CAF for recording

Copy of CAF Form posted to CAF Central Team?

TAC planned?

Action Plan agreed and completed?

Has a review date been set?

Has the CAF form been updated (if necessary)

Pre-assessment checklist

Notes for use: If you are completing form electronically, text boxes will expand to fit your text.

Where check boxes appear, insert an "X" in those that apply.

Identifying details (For unborn baby, infant, child or young person; include contact name for parent/carer)

Name

Contact name

Date of birth or EDD¹

Contact tel. no.

Address

Checklist (record evidence and comments in the white boxes below, where relevant)

Does the unborn baby, infant, child or young person appear to be:

- Healthy Yes No Not sure

- Safe from harm? Yes No Not sure

- Learning and developing? Yes No Not sure

¹Expected date of delivery

- Having a positive impact on others? Yes No Not sure

- Free from the negative impact of poverty? Yes No Not sure

What areas of need have you and the child/young person/parent(s)/carer(s) identified?

- Can your agency meet these identified needs? Yes No

If you answered 'No' or 'Not sure' to any of the previous questions, would an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework help?

If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, who will do this assessment?

- I will Another practitioner will

Signature of persons completing this form:

Parent/carer(s)

Child/young person (if appropriate)

Worker

Copies given to: Date:

..... Date:

..... Date:

APPENDIX 3

Lead Professional checklist

- Does everyone have a copy of the TAC Meeting Record (Appendix 4)?
- Is everyone clear who is doing what?
- Copy of TAC Meeting Record posted to CAF Central Team?
- Have you given the family your contact details?
- Have you given the other workers involved with the family your contact details?
- Have you set a review date?
- Have you explained to the family how each of the workers will support them?
- Do you keep in regular contact with the family to ensure that everything is going okay?
- Once the action plan is in place check with the other practitioners that everything is going according to plan.
- If things are not going according to plan, do you need to reconvene another meeting?
- At the review meeting did you check that the family was still happy to consent to you sharing information with relevant agencies?
- Copy of 'CAF Review Record' posted to TAC members and CAF Central Team?

APPENDIX 4

CAF TEAM AROUND THE CHILD MEETING RECORD

Personal Details

Name of child/young person

AKA¹ Date of Birth

Gender M F

Address Postcode

Telephone

Practitioners Details

Address Postcode

Email

Telephone

Meeting Details

Present Apologies

Reason for TAC Meeting

¹ AKA – Also known as

Record of discussion and agreed action

Action	By Whom	By When

Discuss and agree who will take on the lead professional role

Name and role of lead professional	Contact address

Email Telephone

Agree a date to review the action plan

Review date

Any other comments/issues

	Print Name	Signature
Parent/Carer	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Young Person	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Practitioner	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Please ensure that a copy of this information is passed to the child or young person, parent or carer, relevant practitioners, and the CAF Central Team.

APPENDIX 5

CAF REVIEW RECORD

Personal Details

Name of child/young person

AKA² Date of Birth

Gender M F

Address Postcode

Telephone

Practitioners Details

Address Postcode

Email

Telephone

Meeting Details

Review Date:

Present

Apologies

Summary of changes that were intended

Refer to solutions, conclusions and actions on the CAF form or the CAF Action Plan.

Summary of completed actions

² AKA – Also known as

Comment on who was involved, what was addressed, what worked, what did not work, note any major differences in view.

--

Outcome of review

Close CAF (record reasons)

--

Use CAF to engage specialist services

Specialist Service:

Who will action?

--

Complete a new CAF action plan

Action :

By Whom:

By When:

--	--	--

Record any additional comments

Child or Young Person

Parent(s) or carer(s)

Practitioners

	Print Name	Signature
Parent/Carer	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Parent/Carer	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Young Person	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Practitioner	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Please ensure that a copy of this information is passed to the child or young person, parent or carer, relevant practitioners, and the CAF Central Team.