

Using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to facilitate multi-agency support of a child or young person

Following extensive consultation with heads of services across the London Borough of Ealing a revised CAF process was launched at the beginning of 2011. Schools across the borough were offered training, which many took up and CAF is now being used within schools more successfully.

A **CAF Kit** (including a guidance booklet, CAF forms, CAF audit form, information leaflet and Thresholds of Need and Response Wheel) has been developed to support training, understanding and use of the CAF in Ealing. Hard copies are available from the Family Information Service (FIS) and can be downloaded from the Ealing Council website:

http://www2.ealing.gov.uk/services/social_services/children_family_care/childrens_trust/information_for_professionals/integrated_working_processes/common_assessment_framework/

Support for schools with CAF

The FIS are the first point of contact for all CAF enquiries, maintenance of the CAF register and CAF monitoring - specifically, the FIS can:

- ✓ Provide CAF use in schools training.
- ✓ Confirm whether a CAF already exists for a child/young person or their sibling.
- ✓ Issue a unique reference number for a CAF after registration.
- ✓ Support understanding of the Thresholds of Need in deciding what level of service the child/young person needs.
- ✓ Help with accessing services to invite to a Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting.
- ✓ Advise on organising a TAC meeting as well as help with finding a venue.
- ✓ Replenish stock of CAF forms or CAF Kits.

The Family Information Service (FIS)

020 8825 5588

CAF@ealing.gov.uk

(Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)

Benefits of using the CAF

For the child/young person and their parents/carers the CAF offers:

- Effective, early identification of additional needs.
- A simple process for a holistic assessment with direct access to multi-agency support without the need for numerous referrals and processes.
- Full participation, shared decisions and transparency.

For practitioners and services:

- The CAF is a shared, accessible tool offering a single structure and approach to conducting a holistic assessment of needs at an early stage, planning how to meet those needs and reviewing progress – with the child/young person at the heart of each stage of the process.
- The CAF also offers a common structure to record information and share information among practitioners.
- CAF assessments provide evidence to facilitate involvement of other agencies, reducing duplication of referrals.
- Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings (integral to the CAF process) ensure a balance of input and ownership between professionals, the child/young person and the parent/carer.

When to use the CAF for a child/young person

The CAF is for multi-agency help and support. So where a situation or concern can be dealt with effectively between the school and the child/young person's parents or carers – CAF is not needed.

Day-to-day observations and situations that might lead to use of the CAF include where a practitioner observes a significant change or worrying feature in a child/young person's appearance, demeanour or behaviour; knows of a significant event in the child/young person's life; or where there are worries about the parents/carers or home; or in any other circumstance that may result in the child/young person being at risk of:

- Missing developmental milestones or making slower progress than expected
- Presenting challenging or aggressive behaviour
- Experiencing physical or mental ill health or disability (either their own or within their family)
- Exposure to substance abuse/misuse or violence within the family
- Having to undertake caring responsibilities
- Experiencing family breakdown
- Being bullied or becoming the bully
- Suffering discrimination or disadvantage for reasons such as race, gender, sexuality, religious belief or disability
- Becoming homeless
- Becoming a teenage parent
- Persistent non-attendance at childcare/early education or at school

(The above are examples and not an exhaustive list).