



working
together

WIGANBOROUGH PARTNERSHIP
for Children, Young People and Families

CAF

Common Assessment
Framework

Handbook

What is the Common Assessment Framework? (CAF)

The CAF is central to ensure that children and young people in Wigan Borough make progress against the Government's Every Child Matters outcomes. Every child and young person in the Borough is entitled to: be healthy; be safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and, enjoy economic well-being.

The CAF is

- A structured process for collecting information about the development, circumstances and/or behaviours of a child/young person who practitioners* have decided may have additional and/or unmet needs; and
- A form for recording such information - which is standard across all agencies and establishments in every local area throughout England.

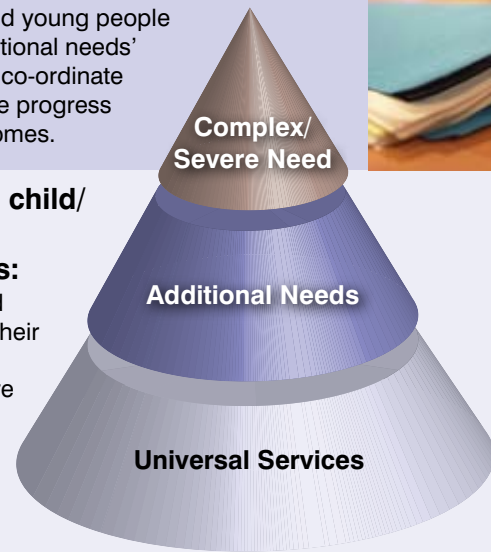
***Note: a 'practitioner' is anyone (whether employed or working as a volunteer) who works with a child, young person, parent/caregiver, or other member of the household in which the child/young person lives.**

When do I do a CAF?

CAF was created so professionals can work with each other and with parents(s)/ carer(s) and young people to collect information about any 'additional needs' a child/young person may have, and co-ordinate support that will make sure they make progress against the Every Child Matters outcomes.

A CAF is appropriate when a child/young person has/may have additional needs. This means:

- two or more agencies are involved with the child, young person and their family;
- the child/young person's needs are not clear, and/or they cut across different aspects of their life; and/or
- effectiveness of the interventions would be improved by child focussed co-ordination.



So, what are 'additional needs'?

"Additional needs" is a very broad term used about children and young people who may need help for a wide range of reasons, for example

(note - this is not a complete list):



- caring responsibilities
- pregnancy
- emotional, social and/or behavioural difficulties (including anti-social and/or pre-offending behaviour and/or whose behaviours exceed their parent's parenting capacity)
- school related difficulties (including extensive absence and/or fixed term exclusions)
- unaccompanied asylum seekers
- where a parent is in a fragile tenancy
- substance misuse
- chronic non-specific illness
- their parenting is compromised through parental substance misuse, mental health, disability and/or domestic violence.

The CAF's purpose is to provide a basis for practitioners to work with children, young people and their families, and with each other, to ensure any child/young person who has/may have 'additional needs' is able to make progress against the Every Child Matters outcomes.

If you are worried a child/young person has additional needs - do a CAF

In places where the CAF has been in operation for some time, practitioners are now able to see the child or young person's needs holistically - not fragmented because of the assessment tools used by different services. CAF does not replace the specialist assessment tools required by law or statutory guidance or diagnostic tools (e.g. audiology) (please see pages 13 and 14). What CAF provides is a means for collecting basic information in a way that can enhance understanding of the child/young person and family's needs, and assist in planning services to meet those needs.

The CAF form helps to capture information about three aspects of a child/young person's life

Child

- Health (physical, emotional, sexual)
- Emotional, Behavioural & Social Development
- Family & social relationships
- Self-care skills
- Learning

Parenting

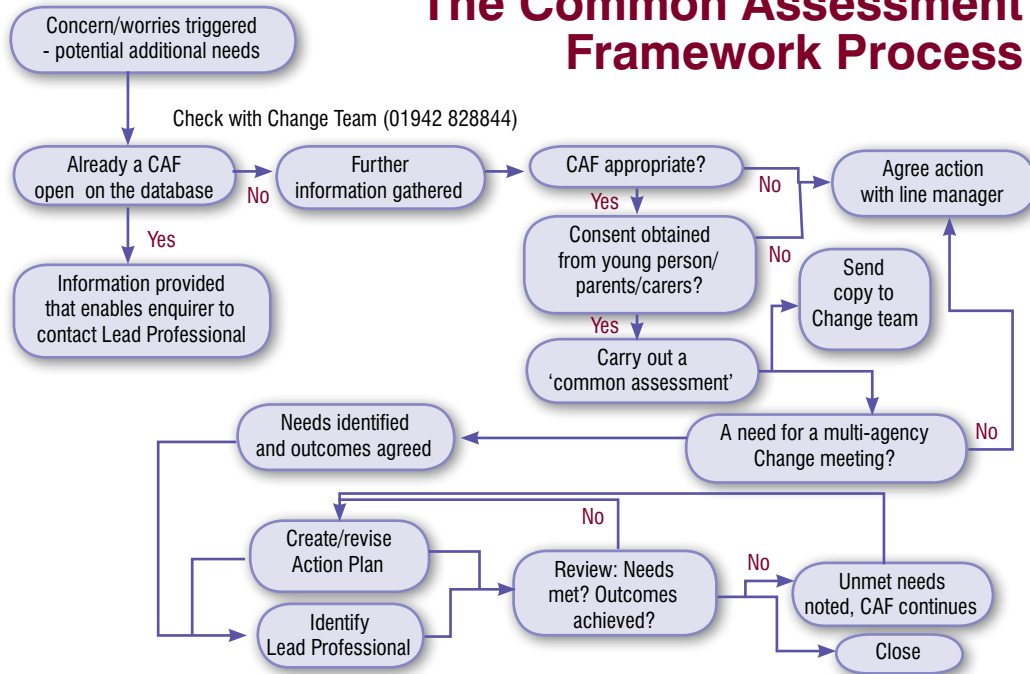
- Basic care, safety & protection
- Emotional warmth & stability
- Guidance, Boundaries and stimulation

Environment

- Family history
- Wider family factors
- Housing, employment etc
- Social & Community factors



The Common Assessment Framework Process



Consent and the CAF

In order to effectively identify needs and solutions, practitioners will need to share information with practitioners in other agencies.

The first thing a practitioner needs to discuss with parents/ carers and the young person is their consent to participate and share information within a common assessment.

A young person aged 16 or over - or child under 16 who is deemed Fraser competent - may also give (or refuse) consent.

What if I don't get consent?

Even if you have identified additional needs you cannot proceed with the CAF – in such cases you must follow the procedures of your service about what you need to do next.

Can I share information without consent?

The law requires practitioners to share information without consent in the following circumstances:

- Where a child/young person is at risk of significant harm.
- When the information is about the commission of a crime or the prevention of a crime.
- A court has issued a witness summons (subpoena).

As a practitioner, just because you haven't got consent doesn't mean you don't do anything.



What do I need to know about the CAF form?

The CAF form was created to capture any eventuality in the life of a child/young person. This means that practitioners do not need to fill every box or space. Its useful to think of the CAF form as a means for recording the discussions you've had - not a checklist to be ticked.

Do not feel stuck because you can't decide exactly where to put information. Put it where it feels right to you and if you think it fits in two or more areas then cross-reference it rather than repeating the same information.

- There isn't a right way or a wrong way of completing the form.
- Filling the CAF form in isn't a test of practitioners' assessment skills.

What is important is that practitioners record information about the child/young person and their circumstances, which is set out in a way that family members and other practitioners can understand.

The document, CAF Supporting Tools is a useful reference:-
<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/search/IG00146>

Focus on Outcomes

When the assessment process is complete and any needs have been discussed; then parents/carers, child or young person and practitioners will have begun to understand what additional/unmet needs there may be.

It will be helpful at this point to think about what are the outcomes intended for the child/young person. Focusing on a realistic outcome will also help to clarify how to meet the need. It also helps to manage everyone's expectations. (See example, below)

Services may appear to be able to meet a need but not actually achieve outcomes.

The CAF process will help to record needs which cannot be met, and help decide which services could help the child/young person achieve intended outcomes.

Need

To be fully engaged on schooling and achieving potential

Improve specific Parenting skills

Intervention/Service

Learning Mentor and Education Welfare service intervene

Parenting support

Outcome

Attending school

Engaged?
Achieving potential?

Parenting course completed
Specific skills – Improved?



I've completed the assessment... now what?

1
2
3
4
5

You should have listed the services which are involved with the family (p3 on the form).

You should have agreed the additional/unmet needs with the child/young person, their parents and other practitioners (p7 on the form).

There should be a list of actions that practitioners, the child, parents need to undertake to meet the needs (p7 on the form).

You should return a copy of the completed CAF form to:-

Change for Children & Young People's Team
7 Worsley Terrace
Gateway House
Standishgate
Wigan WN1 1XW

You may also feel that a change meeting is necessary to co-ordinate services with the child/young person and their family – and other practitioners.

Any actions should have been agreed with the young person, parent or carer.

Children, young people, parents/carers must be involved with the assessment and the agreed actions.
(p8 of the form)



What happens at a change for children meeting?

A change meeting may be necessary where two or more agencies are working with the child, young person or family - a range of agencies are involved in meeting the identified needs of the child/young person.

Appropriate representatives from those agencies should be invited to the meeting, together with the young person, parent, carer - to share information, to identify actions which need to be undertaken and to agree an action plan.

A change meeting provides an opportunity to explore creative options, identify overlaps or gaps and develop effective working relationships with practitioners from other agencies.

Note:

It is not good practice to invite every colleague from a standard list – irrespective of the needs of the child/young person. Practitioners should make a reasoned professional decision about who should be invited to attend.

At the change meeting, the child/young person and practitioner should also identify who will become lead professional.



Who should be the Lead Professional?

In most cases the lead professional should be identified in accordance with the wishes of the child/young person or family. This is the practitioner with whom they have an effective professional relationship.

A Lead Professional is a practitioner who: acts as a single point of contact for the child or family; someone who they can trust; and, who can engage the child/young person in making choices and navigate their way through the range of services.

Note:

A Lead Professional is neither responsible nor accountable for ensuring other practitioners complete the tasks they have agreed.

Lead Professionals will expect any practitioner involved in the change meeting to take active responsibility for their role in the multi agency action plan to improve outcomes for the child/young person.



The Common Assessment Framework and other assessments

The Government expects all practitioners and services who work with families to actively implement the Common Assessment Framework to improve outcomes for children and young people. However, CAF won't and can't replace specialist assessments such as the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, the SEN Code of Practice, assessments in youth justice (ASSET and ONSET), nor specialist medical, clinical and/or diagnostic assessments (e.g. audiology).

The Government's intention is that by completing a common assessment with children, young people and parent(s)/ caregiver(s), practitioners will develop an effective overview about needs that a child or young person might have. The Department for Children Schools and Families is consulting with all government departments and agencies to decide how the Common Assessment Framework should be used to identify and meet children's needs at an early stage, and reduce duplication, by building on assessments such as ante- and post-natal checks within the National Child Health Promotion Programme, the Foundation Stage Profile, Key Stage 2 assessments and drug screening and assessment tools.



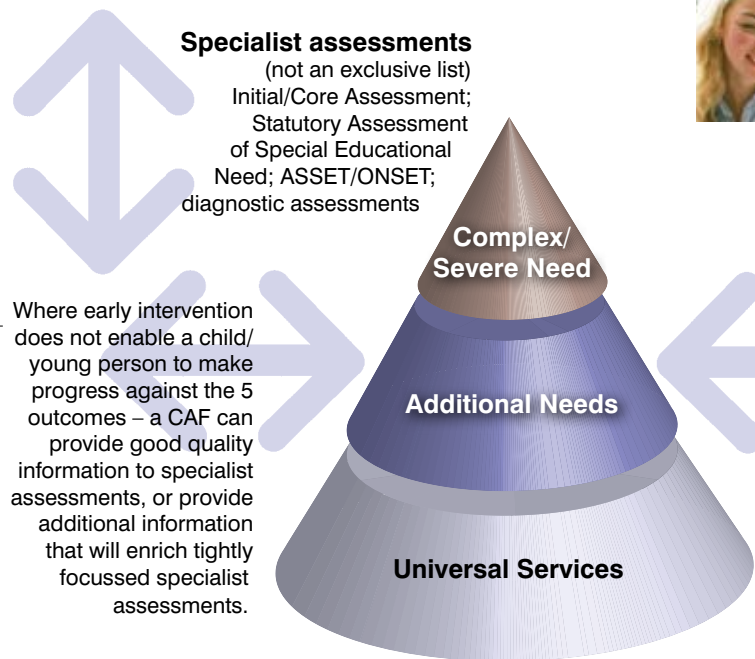


Further information and resources

Change for Children and Young People Co-ordinator

01942 828840

7, Worsley Terrace, Gateway House,
Standishgate, Wigan.



Assessments that can support early intervention

All agencies – Common Assessment Framework

Agency specific (not an exclusive list) – Pastoral Support Programme (PSP); Developmental assessments

The Every Child Matters:

Change for Children website contains extensive information about the Common Assessment Framework and every other aspect of the Every Child Matters programme
<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk>

→ **The web-page(s) about the Common Assessment Framework within the Every Child Matters site**

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf>

→ **Practitioners Guide to the Common Assessment Framework**

http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/0C734C7BC2984FA94F5ED0D500B7EF02.pdf

→ **Managers Guide to the Common Assessment**

http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/C90390EA0078D3E9721C7C1A8F04DDBE.pdf

→ **The Common Assessment Framework:**

Supporting Tools. This document was created to accompany the Guides for practitioners and managers. It provides additional information about CAF, including examples of when to initiate a common assessment, frequently asked questions and case studies

http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/D3F563015C6F3FD351DF34EB69278F20.doc

→ The following provide links to Microsoft Word templates of the Common Assessment Framework form and the Pre-assessment Checklist

CAF form - http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/63A30D7E11A4A726253C324B19999723.doc

Pre-assessment checklist - http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/C02087097EA27155915396EB0FBE8710.doc

→ **Help4Me** : <http://wigan.help4me.info>

For more information:

please contact the Change for Children and Young People Team on 01942 828844 or write to:
7 Worsley Terrace, Standishgate, Wigan, WN1 1XW
Website: www.wigan.gov.uk

This booklet is available in other languages, on audio tape, CD, large print or other formats on request.

In producing this guide, Wigan's Change for Children and Young People Team acknowledge the work of Oldham's C4C Team - on whose original material this guide is based and the managers and practitioners in Wigan Borough who provided feedback on drafts of this guide.



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