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## **One Minute Guide:**

### **The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)**

During the Ofsted inspection of arrangements for the protection of children in Redbridge, undertaken in October 2012, inspectors commented that the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) "is resulting in effective multi-agency assessment and direct, practical offers of help."<sup>1</sup>

The CAF sits within "a national framework within which agencies and professionals at local level – individually and jointly – draw up and agree on their own ways of working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children."<sup>2</sup>

#### **What is the CAF?**

The CAF is a shared assessment and planning framework for use across all children's services including children's centres, health, the voluntary sector, primary and secondary schools, colleges of further education, child and adolescent mental health, and youth services. It aims to help the early identification of children and young people when:

- There are concerns about their progress or wellbeing.
- Needs are unclear and not being met.
- Needs are broader than one or more services can address

A CAF should **not** be initiated when:

- Consent has not been given by the young person or parent/carer.
- The child's needs are clear and can be met by their parent/carer and/or a single Agency.
- ***A child is thought to be at risk of harm, when LSCB procedures should be followed without delay.***

#### **What does the CAF process consist of?**

- A standard form that allows practitioners to record and share information.
- An assessment that is done in partnership with the family.
- A Team Around the Child (TAC) delivery plan and subsequent reviews to assess progress and make further action plans.

#### **What are the benefits of using the CAF?**

- Identifies needs at the earliest possible opportunity.

<sup>1</sup>Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children London Borough of Redbridge Oct. 2012

<sup>2</sup>Working together to safeguard children DfE April 2013

- Identifies a single Lead Professional to link the family with relevant agencies, reducing the need for children and families to have to keep repeating their story.
- Allows the child/young person and their family to take part in their assessment and feel they are in control and have a voice .
- Focuses on strengths as well as needs.
- Offers a common structure to record information in order to facilitate information sharing between practitioners and agencies.
- Provides a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the child/young person

### **What is a 'family' CAF?**

Based on feedback from CAF users, a review of the CAF form was carried out, resulting in a new, improved version, now called the Family CAF. This has a number of important benefits, including:

- A reduction in the number of pages to complete.
- Condensed domain elements consisting of: Development & Learning; Parents & Carers; and Family & Environmental factors.
- Combination of family information on one form to avoid repetition on separate forms for families with more than one child.
- Graded Family Outcome Scales (FOS) to measure change over time.

### **Who can use the CAF?**

Every practitioner working with families in the children and young people's workforce can take responsibility for starting the CAF. If you would like to start a CAF, first contact CAF Admin (see below) giving the child's name, date of birth, address, gender, ethnicity, disability status and a brief reason for starting a CAF. If there is no record of a CAF having already started, you can begin the assessment. This information is stored centrally on the eCAF database. Once the CAF is completed, the subsequent TAC meeting will determine who will take the role as Lead Professional to co-ordinate agreed actions with the family.

### **How can I receive more information and training on how to use the CAF?**

To book a place on the next CAF Assessment and Planning workshop, contact [LSCB.Training@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:LSCB.Training@redbridge.gov.uk).

Further information, including practitioners' guidelines, Family CAF and TAC forms are available on MARCo via <http://find.redbridge.gov.uk>.

For any other questions, contact [cafadmin@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:cafadmin@redbridge.gov.uk) or call **020 8708 3150**.

An e-learning Module entitled "Introduction to the CAF" is due to be published later in the summer on Learning Zone.