

Consent and Confidentiality:

In most circumstances common assessment information should be shared only with the informed consent of the child, or their parent or carer. (see disclosing information without consent) Gaining informed consent should not be a significant barrier if the practitioner is working in partnership with the child or their family. For consent to be 'informed' practitioners need to be able to evidence that family members understand the implications of sharing their information.

Families tend to agree to information sharing when it is clearly explained to them. Factors that contribute to informed consent include;

who will see information,
what information they will see,
when they will see it,
why they will see it
where it will be stored and for
how long it will be available.

Information sharing can be negotiated around all of those above conditions to ensure both parents, and young people who are [Fraser competent](#), are enabled to feel in control of their information. The proviso should always be explained that confidentiality will be maintained unless there are risks of significant harm.

All families should be encouraged to understand that agencies routinely keep information and records for the following reasons; to promote effective service delivery, ensure interventions are focussed on agreed outcomes and hold services and practitioners accountable for the quality of their service delivery.

The benefits of an electronic common assessment should be explained in order to obtain informed consent.

This Electronic CAF or ECAF in Leeds ensures agencies involved in a CAF get to see relevant information quickly and securely. It also allows aggregate reports without individual level details to be created that give city wide data on service delivery. This helps with the following;

Clarity of who is responsible for specific actions in an individual case
Consistency of service response through city wide monitoring of information
Accountability of agencies involved as they each "own" actions on the database
Measure impact and outcomes delivered through monitoring reviews
Evidencing successful service delivery through evaluation processes
Ensuring participation and partnership by auditing involvement
Encouraging flexible integrated delivery and joint working
Developing shared skills and understanding by using shared processes

Copies of relevant documents should also be provided to the child and parent and carer as appropriate. For a Common Assessment, it is important that:

- All practitioners operate within the Data Protection Act

- Consent should be obtained for a CA to be undertaken. Even where the Data Protection Act does not demand it, operating with consent is good practice.
- Practitioners work with children and parents or carers to agree how information is recorded, used and shared; this must include making them aware of circumstances where information may be shared without consent and where confidentiality cannot be maintained.
- If the information held or shared is sensitive or beyond what normally be expected, where possible, consent should be obtained in writing e.g. through a signature on the CA form or on [consent form](#) and, if there is on-going contact, reviewed regularly.

A common assessment should not be completed if the child and/or their parent/carer do not want one. In these circumstances and assuming there are no concerns for the child's safety, case working systems should simply record the fact that a common assessment has been offered and refused. In these cases, the child will be monitored via universal services such as schools, health and early years providers. Practitioners may find it useful to re-offer a common assessment after a period of time, when parents / child/ young person may be more receptive to the idea. It may be necessary to offer a common assessment on more than one occasion before a child/young person or their family eventually accepts. Some families may take longer than others to form a trusting relationship with practitioners who are offering a common assessment.