

Multi agency CAF Meetings or Team Around the Child (TAC)

The Common Assessment Framework is intended to influence the way in which all multi agency activities are undertaken to support children and families. Completion of a CAF will be the trigger which initiates the majority of multi agency activity and Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings.

In Leeds these initial CAF multi agency meetings will be undertaken in a way which emphasises the goals and outcomes that are identified by families involved in the CAF process. The focus is on finding solutions to any barriers that prevent families achieving those outcomes.

The intention is to introduce preventative interventions at an early stage which are:

- child and family focused
- more supportive
- less bureaucratic
- less complex
- and easier to manage

The approach should be informal, with the meetings taking place in the family home if appropriate, attended by those, who with the family's agreement will contribute to an action plan that supports the family in achieving their goals.

The informality should not reduce the professionalism and rigour of practitioners, especially the chair, of each meeting. The meeting is being undertaken for the benefit of the child and family and is chaired on their behalf. They should initiate, contribute to and influence the meeting as much as possible.

If more than two agencies/services become involved with a child/family to deliver a **co-ordinated** approach in order to meet similar or related identified needs, then a meeting with the family members and practitioners must take place.

Purpose of CAF multi-agency meeting

The main aims are to:

- Consider the child's needs as identified through the common assessment
- Identify what actions or services may be required to meet identified needs
- Agree an action plan
- Identify a lead professional who will co-ordinate the action plan
- Agree if appropriate the need for a specialist assessment further referral
- Identify what needs, if any, cannot be met (what will be done about the unmet need?)
- Agree a review date

Before the meeting, practitioners should have accessed the eCAF documentation. After this information has been discussed, future actions should be agreed. At this point, a lead practitioner is identified in line with the guidance. The Action Plan will be the record of the meeting and will become part of the eCAF documentation. If a parent/carer takes on the role of lead practitioner then a practitioner who will offer ongoing support should be identified.

The CAF Assessor's role

It is the responsibility of the CAF assessor to:

- Arrange meetings with due regard to communication, equality and access issues.
- Explain the purpose, process and possible outcomes of the meeting to the child/family.
- Emphasise that the meeting is intended to support the child/family to bring about desired changes that will allow them to achieve their goals. Do not promise specific outcomes.
- Discuss with the child/family who will be invited to the meeting and the reasons for their attendance.
- Send invitations to the relevant people and where appropriate a follow up letter.
- Support participant's access to relevant CAF information.
- Contribute to maintaining a solution focused approach throughout the meeting.
- Ensure that all members of the meeting are given the opportunity to contribute.
- Support focussed discussion of any reports/assessments.
- Support the allocation of tasks and target setting as necessary.
- Encourage creative solutions to fill any support gaps that are identified.

Managing Meetings

CAF assessors, with the support of their managers and colleagues, will be responsible for managing the administration of the first meetings held following a common assessment. The majority of these meetings are likely to be small and informal, where simple notes, reflecting agreed actions, are taken in order to update the eCAF database.

Where meetings are more complex, practitioners may require and should have access to additional support, before, during, and sometimes even after the meeting. This may include administrative support, arranging venues, communicating with participants, supporting access to CAF information, taking notes and chairing meetings.

The role of the chairperson in any meeting is vital to ensure the integrity, rigour and fairness. These examples of a chairperson's roles and responsibilities is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive, but rather supportive in illustrating the knowledge skills and understanding needed to manage possible complex issues.

- Clarify the purpose and the process of the meeting.
- State clearly, the underpinning principles of respect, equality and confidentiality.
- Facilitate the inclusion of all those attending including parents, carers and young people.
- Facilitate the exchange of relevant and up-to-date information.
- Ensure the meeting follows the agenda and that the meeting keeps to time.
- Help members to interpret the information and focus on the relevant issues.
- Manage any conflict and facilitate discussion of opposing views.
- Encourage clear, jargon free communication.
- Explore the evidence base of judgements focusing on fact, rather than opinions.
- Focus on future solutions rather than past problems.
- Encourage flexible and creative solutions, wherever they will safely meet needs.
- Support specific, measurable, achievable, timely goal setting within the action plan
- Summarise regularly to ensure all involved are aware of what is happening and as far as possible share a common understanding.
- Summarise the information that will be held on the CAF database.
- Clarify next steps including attendance, date, timing venue of any subsequent meetings.

The chair should have a good understanding and knowledge of “child in need” and child protection procedures and experience of multi agency working.

The following information should support the ongoing development of a clear and consistent approach to chairing meetings which may be attended by a variety of different agencies. The framework can be applied even in a very informal setting allowing the aims, structure and content of the meeting to be stated clearly at the beginning to ensure everyone shares the same expectations, as far as is possible. The chair should continue to check agreement and understanding throughout the meeting.

Meeting Format

Wherever possible, first meet with the child and family to explain again the purpose and the process of the meeting; clarify attendance and timing, and identify if there are any issues to be dealt with before the meeting begins.

This is an opportunity to emphasise that the meeting should be focused on creative solutions that will support them in the achievement of their goals, but that it is not possible to promise specific outcomes.

Introductions. The family may choose to introduce themselves or have the chair introduce them. Ask other people to state their name and agency

Purpose and Process. State the reason for holding the meeting and refer to the CAF. It may be appropriate to emphasise the goals and the solution focused nature of the meeting. The following statement may be useful:

“Everyone will have the opportunity to speak at the meeting and it is my role as chair to ensure this happens. To do this I will ask everyone in turn for their comments including parents and young people. To make sure everyone is heard, I ask that everyone listens to others, that people wait to be invited to speak, and that no individual is criticised”

Confidentiality. The following statement may be helpful:

“Parents and young people have given their permission for information about them to be shared at this meeting, for the purpose of achieving their goals. This information should not be shared outside this meeting unless there are concerns about the safety of a child.”

Clarify the role of any advocate or supporter who is attending the meeting.

Consider beginning the meeting with some problem free talk, such as a positive description of the family’s vision of their goals, before inviting partners to identify what they can contribute to achieving the goals identified in the CAF.

Summarise information at regular intervals to check everyone understands and agrees.

Clarify the family’s views on the appropriateness of support offered. If they are unable or unwilling to work with services because they feel they are inappropriate, consideration needs to be given to alternative solutions whilst making it clear that the welfare of the child is paramount. Clarify

whether any information shared changes the threshold and requires referral to a specialist agency including Social Services.

Facilitate the construction of a realistic plan bringing together the goals and outcomes identified and the available resources. Include services that are available in the plan and who is to provide them, but identify and report the need for unavailable services where they affect the plan.

Summarise the discussion by identifying agreed actions and timescales to be recorded on the CAF database.

Nominate a lead professional and identify partners' main expectations of their role in coordinating activity identified in the plan. Share appropriate contact details. Remind those at the meeting what the role of the lead professional will be.

Conclude by identifying the next steps, including the focus, attendance, date, timing and venue for any subsequent meetings. Need to agree a date by which the Plan will be reviewed (no more than 6 months from the date of the meeting) State that the completed action plan will be entered onto the CAF database to provide a record of the meeting, a copy of which will be sent to the parent/child or young person. Agree what information will be shared with any agencies working with the family who did not attend the meeting.

Attendance

Relevant practitioners who have contact with the child will be invited to the meetings. Parents/carers and young people of sufficient age and understanding should be encouraged to attend the meeting.

For consecutive meetings, this organisational role will be carried out by the lead practitioner, who will discuss the issues with them, provide written information and prepare the family for meetings. Consideration should be given to the timing of the meeting to facilitate the attendance of family members.

Venue

Ideally the venue should be familiar to the family, preferably a place of their choice, be comfortable, with family friendly surroundings, or possibly their family home.

Consideration should be given to the accessibility of the venue for people with a disability or who are dependent on public transport.

Supporters and Advocates

A positive partnership between parents and agencies is fundamental. However parents may need independent support, information and advice to be able to participate fully in the process from an informed position particularly where there is a divergence of views.

Accommodation should be made in meetings for parents/carers and children to be accompanied by an advocate or supporter if they choose to have this support or need independent support because of their vulnerability or having additional needs.

An advocate is generally someone employed by an advocacy organisation or a specialist solicitor without personal involvement with the service user. The role of the child's advocate is distinct from that of the parent's advocate as they each represent the views of their own client.

The goal of advocacy in the child in need process is:

To empower parents/children to participate in the process from an informed position.

To promote good communication between parents, children and professionals.

A supporter will have an informal relationship with the service user such as friend, relative, member of self-help group

It is important that families are involved and attend meetings. The support plans belong to and are owned by them.

This is based on national guidance that explains the principles of the Team Around the Child.

Team Around the Child (TAC)

“A team around the child or TAC is defined as an individualised and evolving team of the few practitioners who see the child and family to provide practical support in education, therapy and treatment”. (Approach and relationship to good practice Working Paper – Peter Limbrick, June 2005.)

Team Around the Child is a model of service provision where a range of different practitioners come together to help and support an individual child or young person. The model requires those practitioners who offer, or who are going to offer a child and family regular practical support, to work in close collaboration, regardless of which service or agency they work in. An essential feature of it, is that the number of people in each TAC is kept to a minimum (e.g. no more than 5).

The model is based on the ethos that such flexibility is essential if children's services are to be able to meet the diverse needs of each and every child. TAC places the emphasis firmly on the needs of the child, rather than on those of service providers.

It is envisaged that most teams will follow on from the completion of a Common Assessment (CA). Where the needs are at a higher threshold than that which CA is intended to address this approach should still be used.

One of the purposes of building a TAC which can meet the variety of presenting needs, it will be necessary for all service providers to work together to identify and address gaps in service delivery.

It does not imply a multi-disciplinary team that is located together or who work together all the time. In this sense, the team can be described as a 'virtual' team. In practice, practitioners will find themselves working with a range of different colleagues at different times to support different children.

In practice this means that:

- The needs of local children, young people and families need to be understood.
- The TAC should work in partnership with the child and family who are important team members, to ensure an understanding of who meets/works with these child/young people/family.
- The team needs to have an awareness of available resources.
- The possibilities for improving services locally should be explored.
- Service provision needs to be developed to put children and families at the centre of care.
- Meetings should be conducted in a coordinated and consistent way using clear [guidance](#)

Principles and practice that define the team-around-the-child (TAC)

Each TAC is facilitated by one of the professionals, who then functions as the multi-agency key worker or lead professional for that child/family.

The identified needs of the child/family, and the impact these needs have, or could have, disqualify any single practitioner, no matter how well trained, experienced and motivated, from acting alone to support the child and family.

Parents should be *fully* informed/encouraged, involved and empowered to:

- access all relevant services
- share appropriately all essential information

Practitioners should ensure that:

- All separate interventions are co-ordinated as far as possible
- The family is supported in each new situation that arises
- Key professionals work in close collaboration with each other

The TAC approach requires practitioners to develop effective relationships with each other and will require some practitioners to spend more time meeting with each other and with parents. On the other hand, any collective decisions an individual TAC makes to prioritise or integrate the child's separate development and learning programmes, can create flexibility in how much time each practitioner spends working with the child.

Responsibilities of key practitioner

1. To work within a collaborative and individualised team
2. To ensure parents are equal members of the team
3. A key worker (or lead professional) facilitates each individual team
4. The child's development and learning programmes are integrated as much as possible
5. There is a pro-active effort to ensure that each TAC is supported by and built on effective relationships.