



The Nottinghamshire Common Assessment Framework for children and young people (CAF)

Practitioners' guide to using the CAF within integrated early intervention work

Updated January 2010

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'We will work together to provide integrated services for all children and young people in Nottinghamshire aged 0-19 to improve their life chances and to help maximise their potential'

The Nottinghamshire Common Assessment Framework for children and young people (CAF)

Practitioners' guide to using the CAF within integrated early intervention work

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1. Introduction

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a standard assessment that can be used by all services working with children and young people. It is particularly suitable for use in integrated early intervention work, where we work with families as soon as we realise that a child or young person is experiencing difficulties. The CAF helps workers to identify a child or young person's strengths, needs and goals. It can be shared between services and used as a starting point for planning coordinated multi-agency action.

This guide provides essential information to support you in using the CAF as part of your work with children, young people or families in Nottinghamshire.

Before starting to use the CAF, you need to complete an e-learning module and attend the half day "*CAF Practitioner Training*". This training is delivered in multi-agency groups. It introduces you to the CAF and the role of the lead professional and gives you the opportunity to exchange ideas about using the CAF with other practitioners from partner services. You will also be given copies of the local guidance documents that you need.

2. Where to find further information about the CAF

You will find our copies of CAF forms and other information about using the CAF in Nottinghamshire online, at:

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/commonassessmentframework

The CAF is a national initiative and is a key part of integrated locality working. As well as Nottinghamshire guidance, you should also read the following national documents:

- *The Common Assessment Framework for children and young people: A guide for practitioners (2009)*
- *The Team Around the Child (TAC) and The lead professional (2009)*
- *Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners and Managers (2008)*
- *Co-ordinating and delivering integrated services for children and young people (2009)*
- *The Common Assessment Framework for children & young people: Supporting tools (2007)*

All guidance materials can be found on the CWDC website www.cwdcouncil.org.uk and on the Every Child Matters website www.dcsf.gov.uk/ecm

In all the work that you do with children, young people and families, you must ensure that you follow Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board procedures, available online at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb

If you would like to discuss any aspect of CAF developments in Nottinghamshire, please contact:

Vicki Melling – CAF and Lead Professional Development Manager

Telephone: 01623 433101

email: vicki.melling@nottscc.gov.uk

Claire Flexney - CAF Project Manager **email:** claire.flexney@nottscc.gov.uk

Victoria Endersby - CAF Project Manager **email:** victoria.endersby@nottscc.gov.uk

Debra – Lievesley - CAF Project Manager **email:** debra.lievesley@nottscc.gov.uk

Telephone: 01623 433181

Rachel Radford – To arrange CAF training or to request leaflets

Email: rachel.radford@nottscc.gov.uk or **Telephone:** 01623 433291

3. The Nottinghamshire CAF

Following extensive multi-agency discussions in 2006, the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People Partnership (Now The Nottinghamshire Children's Trust) decided to adopt a slightly modified form of the CAF template as developed by the DCFS (previously the DfES). The Nottinghamshire CAF maintains the structure and assessment criteria of the DCSF form, but there are some changes to appearance and language to make the form easier to use, in line with 'plain English' guidance.

The Nottinghamshire CAF form was reviewed in September 2009, following feedback from practitioners. Changes have resulted in a shorter form, from an eleven page, to a six page document. An appendix is available to provide guidance to practitioners completing an assessment on areas to explore with children, young people and their families.

4. How we have introduced the CAF in Nottinghamshire

In Nottinghamshire, we have introduced the CAF gradually, linking its introduction to the roll-out of Integrated Locality Working, including Joint Access Teams (JAT's). CAF has also been introduced in some localities as part of partnership working around children's centres. We aim to have all localities using CAF by the end of 2009.

Integrated locality working is about services working together to provide support for children and young people of all ages, pre-birth to age 19. This requires everyone supporting children and young people to work together effectively to put the child or young person at the centre of everything they do, meet their needs and improve their outcomes as set out in Every Child Matters (ECM).

The Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership (Now Nottinghamshire Children's Trust) decided to roll-out integrated locality working using families of schools as a way of defining a locality. (A family of schools is a group of schools that work together, often a secondary school and the primary schools around it.)

CAF is a key tool to support integrated locality working across services and agencies. When practitioners start using CAF, they need support from their line managers and access to a local structure for multi-agency working. Integrated locality working provides this support and structure. The majority of areas now have integrated locality working established. To support this there is:

- Joint Access Teams: a multi-agency group that meets regularly. This group coordinates multi-agency work and can provide advice to practitioners. The final phase of JAT's will be established by December 2009.

5. An Overview of the Common Assessment Framework

What is the CAF?

- an assessment process used across all services working with children, young people and families
- a common form for recording this assessment
- a holistic assessment that summarises a child or young person's strengths, needs and goals after considering all aspects of his/her development, including health, social development and learning
- designed to be shared between services and used as a starting point for planning coordinated multi-agency action
- a consent-based process – we need the agreement of a parent/carer or of a competent young person/older child before using the CAF

Who might have a CAF assessment?

A CAF can be carried out with any child or young person from pre-birth up to age 19 (up to the age of 24 if the young person has a learning difficulty or disability), where:

- you are worried about how well the child or young person is progressing towards the ECM priority outcomes. You might be worried about their health, development, welfare, behaviour, progress in learning or any other aspect of their well being
- a child or young person or their parent/carer raises concerns with you
- the child or young person's needs are unclear, or broader than your service can address

Which workers might use the CAF?

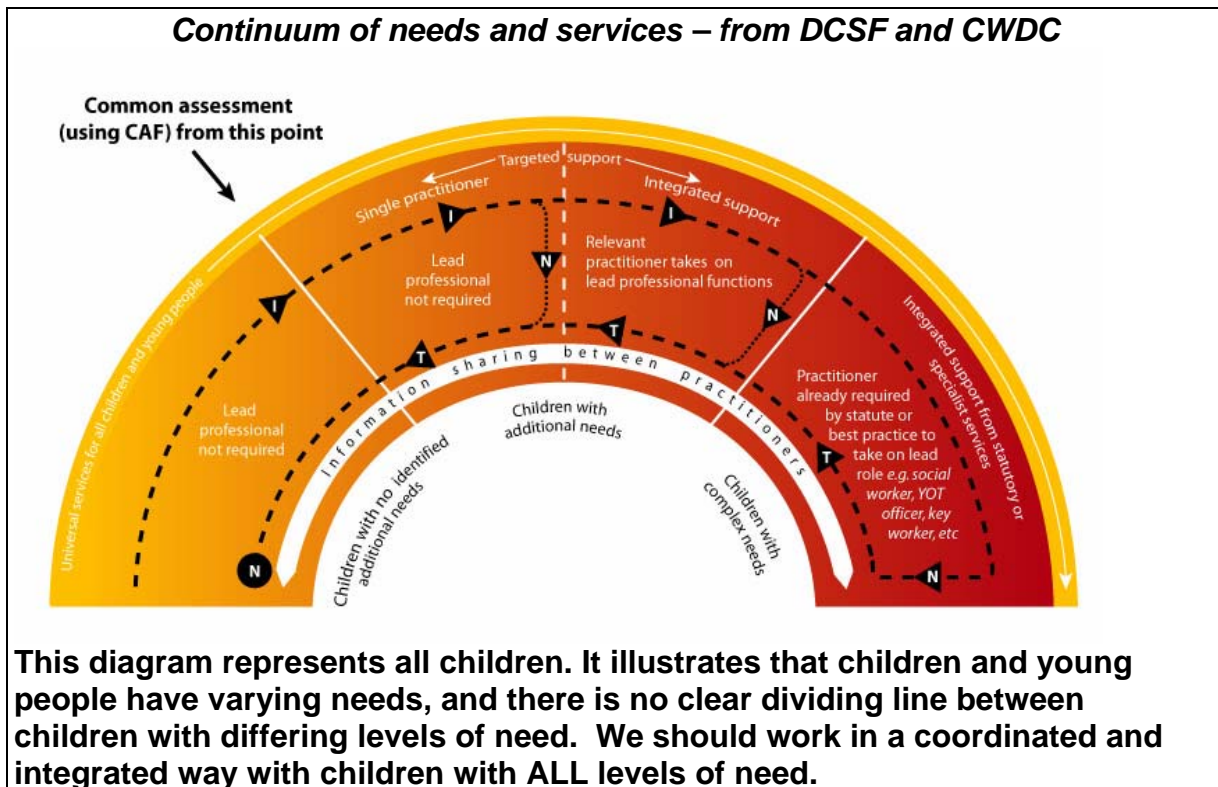
- any worker in any service that works with children, young people and families might use the CAF
- the CAF is a tool for early intervention work to support children or young people, so it is most likely to be used by workers in universal services or by workers providing targeted early intervention support
- the first practitioner who identifies that a CAF is needed is responsible for ensuring that a CAF is completed. This person either completes the CAF or arranges for someone else to do so

How does the CAF relate to other assessments?

- The CAF is the assessment tool for integrated early intervention work to support children who are not making the progress we would expect for their age, and are at risk of poor outcomes.

- Some children who have a CAF assessment may have other assessments for specific purposes; for example, health assessments such as a speech and language assessment, or school assessments relating to educational attainment. A summary of these assessments may be included within the CAF, with the family's permission.
- The CAF does not replace statutory or specialist assessments for children with complex needs. This includes children with disabilities, looked after children, children who are young offenders, and children at risk of harm
- If a child requires specialist services, s/he may have previously been supported by workers in universal or targeted services who have completed a CAF assessment. A worker in a specialist support service who undertakes a statutory assessment should use any existing CAF as a source of information.

6. What do we mean by integrated early intervention?



Early intervention means providing support to children and young people as soon as we realise they are experiencing difficulties. It means intervening early before situations reach crisis level, and making sure that we work in a coordinated way as soon as we realise that a child has additional needs. Using the Every Child Matters outcomes can help to identify if a child has additional needs. If a child is not making the progress we would expect for his/her age, then universal and targeted support services may need to provide additional services. If a child has needs that relate to several services, then those services need to work together effectively.

Early intervention work can be with children of any age. Intervention in the early years of children's lives can be very effective as we support families as soon as they encounter problems. However, children of all ages may experience difficulties and need additional support. For most early intervention work we need the consent of the young person or family. We are offering our help, but families choose if they want to accept it.

For very early short-term intervention it may be enough for practitioners to talk informally (with the family's consent). If several services need to work together for some time, then processes such as the CAF and lead professional working become useful.

For children with more complex needs, we are likely to be already providing multi-agency support. We need to continue to support these children, but early intervention means reaching more children at an earlier stage – and working together to help families resolve their problems as soon as possible.

7. How does the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) support integrated early intervention?

The CAF is the assessment tool for integrated early intervention work. It summarises a child's strengths, needs and goals and can be shared between services as a starting point for planning coordinated action. Usually, one practitioner works with the family to produce a CAF assessment, consulting with other practitioners (with the family's consent). All practitioners intending to use CAF must attend a half day CAF Practitioner Training.

When to use a CAF	
<p>When to use a CAF is a matter for professional judgement. Consider using a CAF on any occasion when you think it might help you to better understand a child or young person's strengths, needs and goals. The key question to ask is: <i>"Would the CAF provide useful additional information or bring together existing information in one place?"</i> If yes, then consider a CAF.</p>	
<p>A CAF might be useful in any of these situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there are concerns about a child's progress towards the ECM outcomes, for example where there is risk of offending, poor attendance or exclusion from school, poor nutrition, substance misuse, anxiety or depression, housing issues etc. • If the child's strengths, needs and goals are unclear 	<p>A CAF need not be done when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child's progress is good • A child's needs are identified by an existing assessment and are being met
<p>If at any stage when you are working with a family, you think that a child is suffering harm or abuse or likely to suffer harm or abuse, then you must immediately follow NSCB child protection procedures.</p>	

8. What is the role of the lead professional?

The lead professional is one person who coordinates support for a child with additional needs. The lead professional could be any practitioner who is working with a child, who takes on this role as part of his/her work. The group of practitioners working with a child agree together with the family who would be best placed to be the lead professional. This is usually the practitioner working most closely with the family, or whose service has the main responsibility for meeting the child's needs. The lead professional is responsible for coordinating a joint multi-agency action plan. S/he arranges regular joint meetings with the family and practitioners working with them to review and update this action plan.

Many children who have a CAF assessment will need coordinated multi-agency support. A practitioner who completes a CAF does not automatically become lead professional, but is responsible for organising the first multi-agency meeting where the lead professional is identified. The half day CAF training for practitioners includes an introduction to the lead professional role.

9. Multi-agency Meeting / Team around the child (TAC)

- Members of the TAC are jointly responsible for developing and delivering the plan to meet the needs of the child or young person
- Each member of the TAC is responsible for delivering the activities they agreed to carry out as part of the delivery plan
- Each member of the TAC is responsible for keeping the other members of the team informed about progress in their area of responsibility
- TAC members should support the lead professional by keeping them informed, providing reports promptly when requested and attending meetings
- All TAC members should contribute to taking minutes and chairing meetings and take on other tasks as necessary
- TAC members should support the lead professional by providing information, offering guidance and advice
- TAC members should contribute actively and positively to solving problems or resolving difficulties

10. How does the Joint Access Team (JAT) support integrated early intervention work?

The JAT is a small group of practitioners within a locality who meet regularly, with members representing key local services. The JAT gives advice and support to practitioners doing early intervention work. It may discuss identified individual children, with family consent.

Often, practitioners working with a child or family know about relevant local services and what each service can offer. These practitioners can coordinate their work, and identify who is best placed to complete a CAF or to act as lead professional. In these situations, the child does not need to be discussed by the JAT team. Practitioners must inform the Information Sharing Project Team about work that they do. The Information Sharing Project Team keeps a record of all children who have a CAF or lead professional.

Sometimes, practitioners may need advice on how to support a child or family. A practitioner may contact a JAT representative to ask the JAT to discuss an individual child or family. The family needs to provide consent for the child to be identified; without consent, the child can be discussed anonymously. The JAT can share information and suggest action to be taken, but does not finally agree action. Action plans must be discussed and agreed with the family.

These are examples of support the JAT might provide.	
1. A practitioner is unsure if a CAF assessment is needed	JAT can provide advice on whether to use CAF or an alternative approach
2. A practitioner from a service that does not complete CAFs identifies the need for a CAF	JAT can agree which service will complete CAF, based on information about child's or young person's needs
3. A practitioner has completed a CAF but is unsure which support	JAT can make recommendations on which services to invite to a multi-agency meeting

services to involve	
4. A multi-agency group has met, but was unable to agree a lead professional.	JAT can agree which service has a practitioner able to act as lead professional. This practitioner will then contact the family to offer to become lead professional
5. A multi-agency group has been meeting regularly to support a child, but has not been able to make progress.	JAT uses combined expertise to identify alternative approaches or alternative services to involve

More information about JAT's is available online at:
www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/jointaccessteams

11. Using the CAF in Nottinghamshire: Principles

The CAF process should fully involve children, young people, parents and carers. The following principles support this way of working:

1) Use a strengths-based approach

- respect children, young people and parents
- listen to and value what they tell you
- focus on strengths as well as needs
- ensure that the child, young person or carer is fully involved in decision making and planning

2) Seek consent to work with a family and to share information about them

Whether to do a CAF is a decision that you should make jointly with the child or young person and/or their parent(s)/carer(s). To complete a CAF, you need the consent of either a parent/carers or of a child or young person who is competent to give consent. If a family chooses not to use the CAF, you should continue to work with them in other ways that they find helpful.

In most circumstances, you must seek consent before sharing information. If you are concerned that a child may be at risk of significant harm, you may need to share information without consent. You must ensure that you follow Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board procedures, available online at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb

You can find out more about consent and information sharing in these documents:

- *The Nottinghamshire Common Assessment Framework for children and young people (CAF) – Practitioners guide to using the CAF within integrated early intervention work* available online at: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/commonassessmentframework
- *Information sharing: Guidance for Practitioners and Managers (2008)*
- *Information Sharing: Case Examples (DfES, 2006)*, all available online at: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/informationsharing

3) Use your professional knowledge and experience to decide how to complete the CAF

The CAF provides you with a structured way of recording information about a child or young person and his/her family. You should use your professional judgement to decide what strengths and needs to record in each section of the assessment. In the document listed below, you will find some ideas about when to complete a CAF and what you might record in each section. These are not checklists and are not a substitute for professional judgement – you and the family are the people who are best placed to decide when to use the CAF and what you need to record within the CAF.

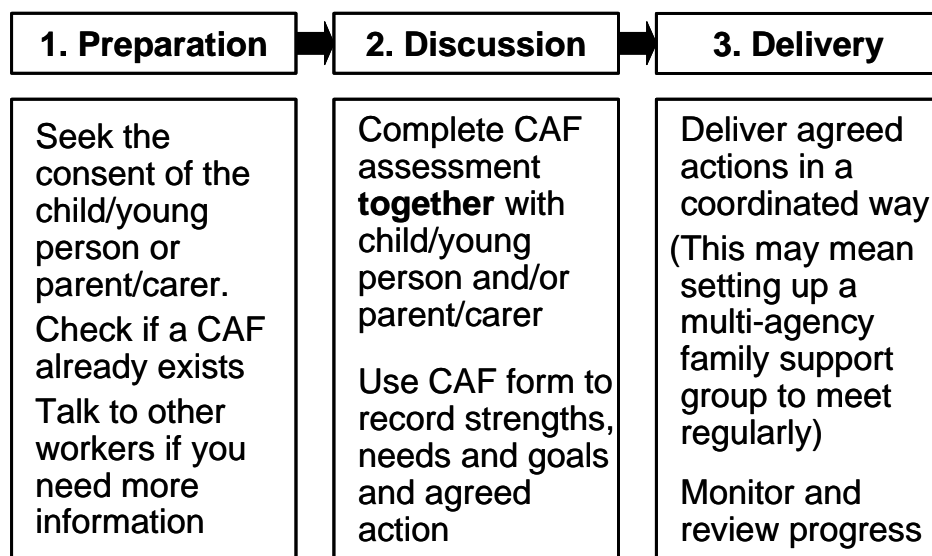
For more information see:

The Common Assessment Framework for children & young people: Supporting tools, available online at www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00143

12. Using the CAF in Nottinghamshire: Process summary

The first practitioner who identifies that a CAF is needed is responsible for ensuring that a CAF is completed. This person either completes the CAF or arranges for someone else to do so

The CAF process can be summarised in three stages:



The standard CAF process assumes that the family prefers to talk with one worker. This one worker will act on behalf of the family to contact other workers and seek their views. S/he will then discuss this information with the family and complete the CAF assessment. You may find that you need to vary this process sometimes to meet the unique needs of a family.

You may complete the CAF in any way and in any place that suits you and the family provided you ensure that you always:

- Work in a strength-based way
- Work with the family at all stages and seek consent where appropriate
- Inform the Information Sharing Projects Team about all work that you do.

You need to make your own professional judgement on how best to work with a family to ensure that they are enabled to contribute fully. You must be satisfied that both the child/young person and parents/carers have been able to fully express their views.* You may need to talk to parents/carers and the child/young person together or separately. You will need to work at a pace which suits the family and may need to complete the CAF over several meetings.

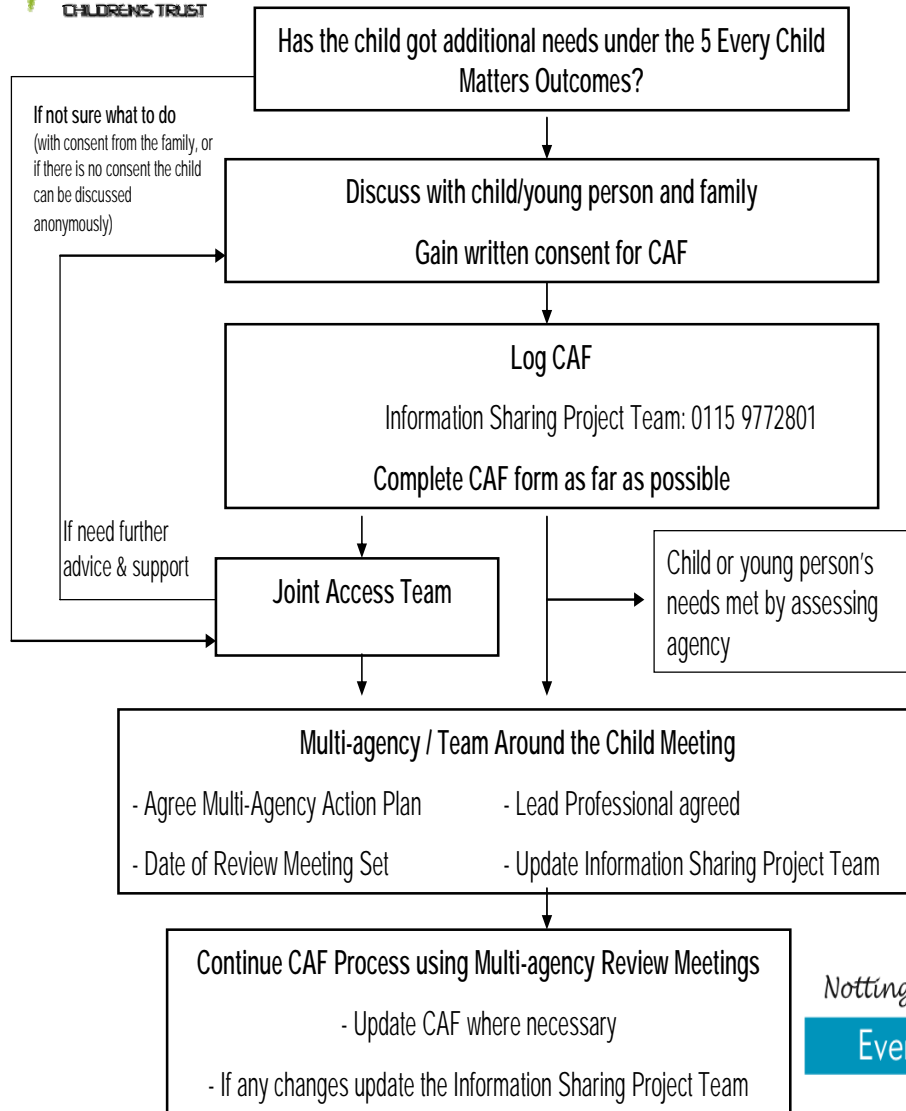
The flowcharts in the next two sections illustrate the Nottinghamshire CAF process in detail. Section 19 contains a list of frequently asked questions about the CAF process.

* Except where a competent young person has given consent for a CAF to be completed and has also chosen not to involve parents/carers. Young people should be encouraged to involve parents/carers, but have the right to choose not to do so.

13. CAF Process in Nottinghamshire



The CAF Process



All CAFs are collected centrally, please send recorded delivery to;

Victoria Endersby
Integrated Services,
Meadow House,
Littleworth,
Mansfield, NG18 2TB

Or password protected to;
caf@nottscc.gov.uk

At each stage, consider if there are any safeguarding concerns

If so, undertake the appropriate action & discontinue the CAF process

Nottinghamshire
Every Child Matters

14. Forms to be used in Nottinghamshire to record CAF assessments and lead professional working

There are standard forms to be used to record CAF assessments and multi-agency action planning. Copies of all these forms are included with this guide and are available on the Nottinghamshire County Council's public website, at: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/commonassessmentframework

In Nottinghamshire, there are three forms to be used:

1- CAF pre assessment checklist

This is a document that was produced nationally, and its use is optional. You may find it a useful checklist when considering if a CAF would be helpful. It is not intended to be shared with other services or used directly with families.

2- Nottinghamshire CAF form

If you undertake a CAF assessment in Nottinghamshire, you should record assessment findings using the standard Nottinghamshire CAF.

3- Nottinghamshire Multi-agency Action Plan

Following CAF completion, it is likely that a multi-agency support group will meet regularly, coordinated by a lead professional. At each meeting, action will need to be reviewed and further action planned. Unless a child's/young person's strengths or needs have changed significantly, there will be no need to complete an updated CAF at each meeting. Instead, the Nottinghamshire Multi-agency Action Plan should be used to review and plan action.

Storage of copies of CAF forms and Multi-agency Action Plan forms

Every time you complete one of these forms, you must store the original of the completed form within your records for a child or young person. You should follow your service procedures on the storage of information, including how long to keep information within records, but must ensure that the original of the CAF is retained for at least 6 years. A copy of the completed form must be given to the person within the family who gave consent for CAF completion (either parent/carer or child/young person). Further copies may be given to other practitioners or family members, if the consent-giver agrees. The CAF Project Team within Integrated Services will also require a copy of the CAF; this should be sent by email password protected or by recorded delivery marked strictly private and confidential, to

**Victoria Endersby
CAF Project Manager
Integrated Services Team
Meadow House
Littleworth
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG18 2TB**

Use of forms when working across boundaries

If a service works across local Children's Trust boundaries, then practitioners may use whichever area's CAF form is most appropriate in the circumstances, taking into account where the child/young person lives or accesses services, and the training that the lead practitioner has attended.

Nottingham City is using a similar CAF form, also based on national guidance, and working to similar arrangements, although there will be variation across localities to meet local need. A practitioner who has completed CAF training in either Nottingham City or Nottinghamshire may use the CAF in either area, using either city or county CAF form as appropriate to the circumstances.

15. Nottinghamshire procedures for registering CAF work

Every time you use the CAF, you must register this by telephoning the Information Sharing Project Team (ISPT):

On 0115 9772801

This section explains why it is important for you to register the work that you do with the Information Sharing Project Team (ISPT). It also tells you when you need to contact them and what information you need to provide. This information is also available as a leaflet that you can carry with you as a reminder.

Why we need to know if you use the CAF

We need to keep a central record of CAFs completed so that:

- We make sure that a child or young person has only one person working with them to complete a CAF.
- We use information to evaluate how effectively we are using the CAF. The CAF implementation team needs to undertake quality audits. They may use the database to identify an individual child or young person and contact the lead person to find out more about work done. Also, CAF management information reports are produced, with no individuals identified.

How we keep information secure

Nottinghamshire County Council holds CAF information on behalf of Nottinghamshire Children's Trust. Information is held on a secure database. This holds the minimum information needed to identify a child or young person and the lead person working with them. It has no details about work done with families.

Only the CAF implementation team and Information Sharing Project Team can directly access this database. Workers telephone the Information Sharing Project Team to update or request information. Nottinghamshire County Council employees follow security procedures to confirm a worker's identity before giving out information about individuals.

When to phone the Information Sharing Project Team (ISPT) to find out if there is already a CAF or a lead professional for a child or young person

You can phone any time you think that someone else may be working with the family. If you are listed as having attended CAF training, the administrator will phone you back with information. If not, the administrator may need to first contact your manager to check why you need this information.

When to phone the Information Sharing Projects Team (ISPT) about work that you are doing with a child or young person

1. When you first decide to use the CAF

As soon as you have decided to use the CAF, phone the ISPT. The administrator will tell you if anyone else is working with the family. If not, you will be recorded as the temporary lead person.

2. When you have completed a CAF assessment

Phone the ISPT with the CAF completion date and agreed action.

This can be one of four options:

- Multi-agency support needed
- Referral to one other service
- Further support from your own service
- No further action.

3. If you decide not to continue with the CAF for any reason

Phone the ISPT to record that CAF is no longer being used.

4. If multi-agency support is needed

Phone the ISPT when the date of the first multi-agency family support meeting is agreed.

5. EVERY TIME a multi-agency family support meeting has happened

The Lead Professional phones the ISPT with agreed action and the next meeting date. Possible actions are:

- Multi-agency support continues
- Referral to specialist service
- Multi-agency support no longer needed.

6. If an updated CAF is completed at any stage

The worker who led on the CAF phones the ISPT with information about action agreed (possible actions are as in situation 2).

16. Nottinghamshire CAF audit process

We have performance management systems to monitor how well we are doing in using the CAF. This is to make sure that when practitioners in Nottinghamshire use the CAF, their work is of high quality and that children, young people, parents and carers participate in the CAF process.

Our performance management systems include a CAF quality audit. We have set up a multi-agency CAF audit group. This group meets regularly to audit a sample of completed CAFs, against an agreed set of audit criteria. This audit process was been agreed by the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People Partnership Executive Group.

You may be approached by a member of the Nottinghamshire CAF Implementation Team to advise you that a CAF you have completed is being audited. The CAF audit process respects the confidentiality of the CAF form. A member of the CAF implementation team needs to know the name of any child/young person selected for audit, but will not pass this information on to anyone else. All identifying information will be removed before the CAF form is reviewed by the CAF audit group.

The audit process is as follows:

- a member of the CAF implementation team identifies a child/young person for audit, using the information held on the Nottinghamshire CAF database
- the CAF implementation team member contacts the practitioner who completed the CAF to inform them their CAF is being audited
- As of October 2009 the CAF audit team now require copies of all CAFs as soon as they have been fully completed and signed by everyone involved. These will be stored confidentially within the Integrated Services CAF Implementation Team
- On identifying the CAFs for audit, the CAF Implementation Team ensures that all identifying information has been blanked out, and allocates a reference number to the form before sending it to the audit review group
- The audit review group carries out a quality audit on the content of the form
- A member of the CAF Implementation Team returns a copy of the audit findings to the practitioner
- The practitioner is invited to add any comments and return them to the CAF Implementation Team

17. Support for workers using the CAF

Before you start to use the CAF, you should make sure that you have discussed this with your line manager. Your line manager should confirm with you how to store a completed CAF within your service records and agree with you how you will be supported within your service.

If you have any questions or concerns about CAF, you should always first discuss them with your line manager. You may then agree together with your line manager to seek the advice of your local JAT team. JAT teams can discuss individual children with the consent of the family, and recommend action. This could be at any stage in working with a child or young person; you might want to seek advice about whether the CAF would be a useful approach, or having completed a CAF, you might want to seek advice on how to meet the child's support needs.

Up-to-date information about the CAF is available online at:

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/commonassessmentframework

If you want advice on using the CAF, or have any questions about how we are implementing the CAF in Nottinghamshire, you may contact the CAF Implementation Team. Contact details are listed at the front of this guide.

18. Frequently Asked Questions about CAF and lead professional

LIST OF FAQs

USING THE CAF

1. Why is a CAF for one child, instead of a whole family approach?
2. Who can give consent to a CAF being completed?
3. What if a family don't want a CAF?
4. What if a family disagree and one person gives consent and another refuses?
5. Who needs to be involved in CAF completion?
6. How long does a CAF take to complete?
7. What if I complete a CAF and identify support needs but I don't know which support services should be involved to meet those needs?
8. Is the same form used across all areas?
9. Is the form available electronically?
10. Is the form available in other languages?
11. How do we deal with family members who are unable to communicate in spoken English, either because English is not their first language or because of disabilities?
12. How do we manage form completion for parents/carers who have difficulties in reading or writing?
13. Where do I store a completed CAF and how long do I keep it?
14. How do we know if anyone else has completed a CAF for a child/young person?
15. Do we record families who refuse a CAF?
16. How do we find out if someone in another local authority area has completed a CAF for a child/young person?
17. What is Contact Point and how does it relate to CAF?
18. What is Parental Responsibility and who has Parental Responsibility?
19. If a young person consents to a CAF and doesn't wish their parent's to be involved, do their parents (with parental responsibility) have a right to see the information on the CAF without the young person's consent?

MULTI-AGENCY FAMILY SUPPORT MEETINGS AND LEAD PROFESSIONAL WORKING

20. Must we always complete a CAF before we start a multi-agency action plan?
21. Can we have one multi-agency action plan for a family covering several children?
22. If more than one child in a family has a CAF, can one person be lead professional for the whole family?
23. If a multi-agency action plan is for a whole family, must every child in the family have a CAF assessment?
24. What venues can we use for meetings with the family?
25. Is a multi-agency meeting intimidating for parents/carers or children/young people?
26. Does a practitioner need any particular qualifications to be a lead professional?
27. How will becoming lead professional affect practitioners' work load?
28. How is the work of lead professionals monitored?
29. What if we can't agree on a lead professional?

INTEGRATED SERVICES AND LOCALITY WORKING

30. Why is CAF being introduced in some localities and not others?
31. Some other areas seem to have started CAF training earlier than Nottinghamshire – why is this?

FAQS AND ANSWERS

USING THE CAF

1. Why is a CAF for one child, instead of a whole family approach?

Every child or young person is different and has unique strengths, needs and goals. The CAF process considers the whole family but focuses on how this affects one child or young person. Sometimes more than one child or young person in a family may have a CAF assessment. Following on from this, it may be sensible to produce a combined action plan for work with the whole family, but this will be based on an assessment of what support each individual child or young person needs.

2. Who can give consent to a CAF being completed?

Whether to do a CAF is a decision that you should make jointly with the child or young person and/or their parent(s)/carer(s). To complete a CAF, you need the consent of either a parent/carers or of a child or young person who is competent to give consent. National guidance states that a young person aged 16 or over, or a child under 16 who has the capacity to understand and make his/her own decisions, may give (or refuse) consent for the assessment to take place and may decide how much to involve his/her parents. In all situations, children and young people should be encouraged to involve their parents or carers as appropriate.

3. What if a family don't want a CAF?

The family's views are an essential part of the CAF assessment and national guidance states that you cannot do a CAF unless the child or young person and/or a parent/carers agree. The CAF is entirely voluntary. If a family do not want a CAF, then you must find other ways to work with them and support them. They may agree to a CAF at a later stage, after you have done more work with them. If a CAF is refused and you are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child you should follow NSCB child protection procedures.

4. What if a family disagree and one person gives consent and another refuses?

The best way to resolve this is to work with the family to seek the agreement of all involved. It is possible to do a CAF with the consent of only one parent/carers or of a competent child/young person.

5. Who needs to be involved in CAF completion?

The child or young person must be involved, unless the CAF is for an unborn child. In most circumstances a parent/carers must be involved. The practitioner leading on completing the CAF must meet with the family to complete the assessment. Other practitioners may take part in meetings with the family or may be asked to contribute information to the assessment (with family consent to information sharing). A parent/carers or a child/young person may choose to involve a friend, supporter or advocate in the CAF assessment.

6. How long does a CAF take to complete?

This will vary, depending on the needs and preferences of the family and the resources available. The CAF can be completed at one meeting, or over a series of meetings with the family

7. What if I complete a CAF and identify support needs but I don't know which support services should be involved to meet those needs?

This is one reason why we are introducing the CAF alongside integrated locality working. The local JAT (Joint Access Team) is a multi-agency group meeting regularly in areas where integrated locality working is established. If you are unsure which services to involve, contact your local JAT representative to ask the JAT team to discuss this at their next meeting. The JAT will provide advice on which services could support the child/young person.

8. Is the same form used across all areas?

All local children and young people's partnerships in England are implementing the same national guidance, which includes a form for recording CAF assessments. Many areas, including Nottinghamshire, have decided to amend the appearance or the content of the form slightly to meet local needs, but forms for all areas are similar. You can use a CAF form from another area to plan work in Nottinghamshire, provided that there have been no significant changes in the child/young person's strengths or needs since it was completed.

9. Is the form available electronically?

The form is not yet available as an electronic form which allows information to be inputted, however we anticipate a local ecaf system will be introduced by the end of the year. Practitioners will be offered training on the Nottinghamshire ecaf system. The current CAF form is available as a Word document that can be printed out.

10. Is the form available in other languages?

At the moment, the form is available only in English. It is not just a matter of having a form available, but also thinking about how we communicate with families who do not speak or read English. (see next two questions).

11. How do we deal with family members who are unable to communicate in spoken English, either because English is not their first language or because of disabilities?

If your service provides translation or interpretation services, then make use of these. You may need to discuss on a multi-agency basis who can provide these services. If you need advice on what is available to support families locally, talk to your manager or contact your local JAT team.

12. How do we manage form completion for parents/carers who have difficulties in reading or writing?

You may need to think about providing information in other formats if parents are unable to deal with written language. This might mean making information available as voice recordings using electronic media.

13. Where do I store a completed CAF and how long do I keep it?

You store the original of the CAF in your records for a child or young person. You must give a copy to the family member who gave consent for CAF completion and may give a copy to anyone else who the family member agrees should have a copy. You follow your service guidance on storing information and on how long you keep information within records, but you must keep the original of the CAF in your records

for at least 6 years. From October 2009 a copy of all completed CAFs must be sent to the CAF Implementation Team.

14. How do we know if anyone else has completed a CAF for a child/young person?

There is an Information Sharing Project Team for Nottinghamshire, who have access to a secure database recording all children in Nottinghamshire who have a CAF or a lead professional. Before starting to complete a CAF, contact the Information Sharing Project Team to check if anyone else is already working with the family. In 2010, this system will be replaced by the national Contact Point system (see question 17).

15. Do we record families who refuse a CAF?

As soon as you agree with the parent, child or young person to start a CAF, you contact the Nottinghamshire Information Sharing Project Team (ISPT) to check if another practitioner is already working with the family. If the family withdraw consent after this initial enquiry, then this will be recorded. If a family never consent to starting a CAF, this will not be recorded by the ISPT (but may be noted within an agency's own records for a child/young person). Information may need to be shared in other ways, with each individual agency following its current policies and procedures on information sharing.

16. How do we find out if someone in another local authority area has completed a CAF for a child/young person?

All children and young people's partnerships/Children's Trusts are establishing systems for recording who has a CAF. The Nottinghamshire Information Sharing Project Team knows how to contact other local authority areas to get this information.

17. What is Contact Point and how does it relate to CAF?

Contact Point will be introduced in Nottinghamshire in 2010. It is a national online directory of all children in England, available to authorised staff who need it to do their jobs. Contact Point will hold basic identifying information for every child in England (aged up to 18) and contact details for services involved with the child. When Contact Point is available, practitioners will be able to use it to find out if any child living in England has a CAF or a lead professional. When it becomes available in Nottinghamshire, it will replace the local CAF administration arrangements.

18. What is Parental Responsibility?

While the law does not define in detail what parental responsibility is, the following list sets out the key roles:

- providing a home for the child
- having contact with and living with the child
- protecting and maintaining the child
- disciplining the child
- choosing and providing for the child's education
- determining the religion of the child

- agreeing to the child's medical treatment
- naming the child and agreeing to any change of the child's name
- accompanying the child outside the UK and agreeing to the child's emigration, should the issue arise
- being responsible for the child's property
- appointing a guardian for the child, if necessary
- allowing confidential information about the child to be disclosed

Who has Parental Responsibility?

In England and Wales, if the parents of a child are married to each other at the time of the birth, or if they have jointly adopted a child, then they both have parental responsibility. Parents do not lose parental responsibility if they divorce, and this applies to both the resident and the non-resident parent.

This is not automatically the case for unmarried parents. According to current law, a mother always has parental responsibility for her child. A father, however, has this responsibility only if he is married to the mother when the child is born or has acquired legal responsibility for his child through one of these three routes:

- (from 1 December 2003) by jointly registering the birth of the child with the mother
- by a parental responsibility agreement with the mother
- by a parental responsibility order, made by a court

Living with the mother, even for a long time, does not give a father parental responsibility and if the parents are not married, parental responsibility does not always pass to the natural father if the mother dies.

All parents (including adoptive parents) have a legal duty to financially support their child, whether they have parental responsibility or not.

19. If a young person consents to a CAF and doesn't wish their parents to be involved, do their parents (with parental responsibility) have a right to see the information on the CAF without the young person's consent?

The parents do not have the automatic right to see the information held on a child/young person (even if they do have parental responsibility) even if the child is under the age of 12 and it is a parent with parental responsibility the request should still be vetted to ensure that the release of the information does not put a child or adult at risk.

A person only has the rights under the Data Protection Act to Access their records not other peoples unless they have written signed authorisation from the person who the records belong to. Obviously when records are released there is also an analysis of whether the release of such documents would put a child at risk or could facilitate a crime (we can choose to hold back records if we think this is the case).

MULTI-AGENCY FAMILY SUPPORT MEETINGS AND LEAD PROFESSIONAL WORKING

20. Must we always complete a CAF before we start a multi-agency action plan?

Action planning should be based on a thorough assessment of a child or young person's strengths, needs and goals, which can be shared with the family and all practitioners who are working with them. If there is already a suitable assessment in place, this can be used. If not, consider completing a CAF assessment.

21. Can we have one multi-agency action plan for a family covering several children?

Yes, if this meets the needs of all children and young people in the family and the family agrees to this approach. The CAF assessment is for an individual child or young person, so that we understand their unique strengths, needs and goals. If more than one child or young person in a family has a CAF, an action plan that follows on from the CAF can be for the whole family.

22. If more than one child in a family has a CAF, can one person be lead professional for the whole family?

Yes, if this meets the needs of all children and young people in the family and the family agrees to this approach. It is important to check that one lead professional can meet the needs of all children and young people, especially if there is a large age difference between them. If there is more than one lead professional working with a family, they will need to work closely together and share information (with consent where appropriate).

23. If a multi-agency action plan is for a whole family, must every child in the family have a CAF assessment?

If an action plan covers a whole family, then some or all of the children may have a CAF assessment. If any child or young person in the family has support needs that suggest he/she needs additional support, a CAF assessment should be considered. There may be other children or young people in a family who do not require additional support, or who already have another assessment completed. These other children or young people would not need a CAF assessment, but might still be included in the action plan as part of the family. Use professional judgement to decide who needs a CAF assessment, discussing this with the family, and with other practitioners (with the family's consent). Record any decisions made, and the reasons for making them, in your records for the child or young person.

24. What venues can we use for meetings with the family?

Wherever is available and that the family are comfortable accessing. Local venues such as Children's Centres, Community Centres, Youth Centres, Connexions Centres or School premises may be suitable. You could meet in the family home, if the family are most comfortable with this.

25. Is a multi-agency meeting intimidating for parents/carers or children/young people?

Meetings should be set up to welcome parents/carers and children/young people and ensure they feel comfortable. This includes: choosing a suitable venue, explaining the purpose of the meeting and who will be there, and at all times using

plain English and avoiding jargon. It is our responsibility to work in ways which welcome family involvement. The multi-agency family support meeting is not about us judging parents, but for parents and children/young people to work with us to decide what support we can offer them.

26. Does a practitioner need any particular qualifications to be a lead professional?

No, more important than any specific qualification is the ability to engage with children/young people and with parents/carers and to empower them to take an active role in planning support to meet their needs. A lead professional must also understand information sharing and confidentiality. If you act as a lead professional you need access to regular supervision arrangements, where you can discuss the work that you do to support individual children, young people or families. Supervision could be with your manager or with another colleague in children's services. If you are unsure whether you could take on the role of lead professional, and then discuss this with your manager.

27. How will becoming lead professional affect practitioners' work load?

Experience from other areas is that sometimes being the lead professional is more work in the short-term, but that it is worth it as the family is better supported. The function of the Lead Professional is to liaise with families and support them through the process as well as to be a point of contact for other practitioners working with the family. It is a joint responsibility for the Team Around the Child to develop and deliver the agreed actions and to contribute to taking minutes and chairing meetings. If all practitioners are working in a more coordinated way because of the lead professional role then this reduces time spent finding out what others are doing or in duplicating work. If you have any concerns about your personal workload, then discuss these with your manager.

28. How is the work of lead professionals monitored?

Lead professionals are accountable to their own service, for the quality of their work. Local administration arrangements record who is acting as lead professional and how often multi-agency meetings happen, but not case information about individual children, young people and families.

29. What if we can't agree on a lead professional?

The experience of those who have used CAF is that, in many situations, they can agree who would be best placed to be lead professional, by considering:

- Who is working most closely with the family
- The predominate needs of the child/young person
- The preference of the parents/carers or child/young person.

If it is not possible to decide who will be lead professional, then discuss the situation with your line manager, and agree what to do next. In areas where there is integrated locality working supported by a JAT, one option is to ask the JAT team to discuss this at their next meeting and advise on who might be a lead professional.

INTEGRATED SERVICES AND LOCALITY WORKING

30. Some other areas seem to have started CAF training earlier than Nottinghamshire – why is this?

In Nottinghamshire, we have provided CAF training in localities and linked to the phased implementation of integrated locality working and to local children's centres. This was so that practitioners could complete CAF training and then be ready to use CAF in their locality, supported by integrated locality working. Integrated working will be established in all localities across the county by December 2009, therefore CAF training has become open to any practitioners from any areas. A range of training dates, at venues across the county are available from Rachel Radford, whose contact details are on page 1 of this booklet.

31. How does this work fit with extended services around schools and with children's centres?

Integrated locality working, extended services around schools and children's centres are all about working in partnership to support children, young people and families. Integrated locality working is for all children, pre-birth to 19, and extending services around schools is part of this. Children's centres work with younger children, and are using the CAF as an assessment tool. JATs (Joint Access Team) and children's centres are working closely together.



Information sharing within integrated early intervention work in Nottinghamshire

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1. Purpose of this document

This document provides advice for practitioners engaged in early intervention work, and for their managers. This includes practitioners using the Common Assessment Framework or acting as lead professionals. This document should be read together with information produced by the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board, available at <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb>

2. Nottinghamshire advice on information sharing about individual children and young people within integrated locality working

The decision to share or not to share information about an individual child or young person should always be based on professional judgement, supported by the cross-Government *Information Sharing: Practitioners Guide* (updated in October 2008) and informed by training. The safety and welfare of a child or young person should always be considered. Cross-Government guidance includes six key points about information sharing, included in Appendix 1.

The Nottinghamshire Children's Trust (previously The Nottinghamshire Children and Young Peoples Partnership) has not produced further local information sharing guidance for front-line practitioners, and does not consider that it is necessary to do so. The Children's Trust considers that the cross-Government guidance provides comprehensive advice to practitioners on the professional judgements that they need to make when sharing information about individual children.

Practitioners should be aware of this cross-Government guidance and use it to support their professional judgement when making decisions about information sharing. It is the responsibility of each organisation within the Children's Trust to ensure that its employees receive appropriate training in information sharing, and that practitioners have access to managerial advice about information sharing. Multi-agency training can support organisations in meeting these responsibilities.

Examples of such training are Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and lead professional training, ContactPoint training, and safeguarding training. Information sharing protocols and agreements are not required before frontline practitioners can share information about a specific child, as stated in advice from the DCFS in March 2009:- “The decision to share or not to share information about a child should always be based on professional judgement....The lack of an ISA between agencies should never be a reason for not sharing information that could help a practitioner deliver services to a child.” *Statement on Information Sharing Agreements and Protocols* (DCFS, August 2008).

There are a number of information sharing agreements and protocols existing between partner organisations in Nottinghamshire, covering situations where business processes require data to be shared, including where it is shared electronically. These agreements and protocols will continue to exist, and will be further developed as necessary. Information sharing agreements and protocols are not about frontline practitioners sharing information about individuals while working with children and families.

Further information is provided below about national Government advice on information-sharing, which provides the context for the Nottinghamshire approach to information sharing.

3. Context:

Summary of national guidance and advice on information sharing

Cross-Government national guidance for practitioners on information sharing has now been published. This is in the document *Information sharing: Practitioners Guide* (DCFS Oct 2008), and the associated documents *Information Sharing: Further Guidance on Legal Issues* (DCFS, 2008) and *Information Sharing: Case Examples* (DCFS, 2008).

The guidance has been endorsed by the following national bodies:

- The Information Commissioner,
- Association of Chief Police Officers,
- Association of Directors of Social Services (Children & Families Committee),
- Barnardo's,
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service,
- General Medical Council,
- Local Government Association,
- Nursing and Midwifery Council,
- Royal College of General Practitioners,
- Royal College of Midwives,
- Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

Information sharing is key to the Government's goal of delivering better, more efficient public services that are coordinated around the needs of the individual. It is essential to enable early intervention and preventative work, for safeguarding and promoting welfare and for wider public protection. It is important that practitioners understand when, why and how they should share information so that they can do so confidently and appropriately as part of their day-to-day practice.

The decision to share or not to share information about a child should always be based on professional judgement, supported by the cross-Government *Information Sharing: Practitioners' Guide* (published in October 2008) and informed by training. **The lack of an ISA between agencies should never be a reason for not sharing information that could help a practitioner deliver services to a child.**

This approach is supported by the Information Commissioner's Office:

"All organisations can accomplish information sharing lawfully by adhering to governing legislation and the principles of the Data Protection Act whether an Information Sharing Protocol is in place or not. An Information Sharing Protocol is a useful tool in some circumstances. It is not a legal requirement.

There are two distinct types of information sharing. Organisations may share large amounts of data with one or more partner organisations on a regular basis, or practitioners may share information with each other on an ad hoc basis as individual situations require.

An Information Sharing Protocol is a useful tool with which to manage large scale, regular information sharing. It creates a routine for what will be shared, when and with whom and provides a framework in which this regular sharing can take place with little or no intervention by practitioners.

It is not a useful tool for managing the ad hoc information sharing which all practitioners find necessary. Most importantly it is not intended to be a substitute for the professional judgement which an experienced practitioner will use in those cases and should not be used to replace that judgement"

Information Commissioner's Office

Statement on Information Sharing Agreements and Protocols (DCFS, August 2008)

4. References

Information sharing: Practitioners Guide (DFES, October 2008), available online at

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/informationsharing

Information Sharing: Further Guidance on Legal Issues (DCFS, 2008), available online at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/informationsharing

Information Sharing: Case Examples (DCFS, 2008), available online at

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/informationsharing

Endorsement of the Information Sharing Guidance (DCFS, 2008), available online at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/informationsharing

Statement on Information Sharing Agreements and Protocols (DCFS, August 2008), available online at

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/informationsharing

APPENDIX 1:

Six key points on information sharing **from *Information Sharing: Practitioners' Guide* (April 2006)**

- You should explain to children, young people and families at the outset, openly and honestly, what and how information will, or could be shared and why, and seek their agreement. The exception to this is where to do so would put that child, young person or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or if it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime * including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.
- You must always consider the safety and welfare of a child or young person when making decisions on whether to share information about them. Where there is concern that the child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, the child's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration.
- You should, where possible, respect the wishes of children, young people or families who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information, if in your judgement on the facts of the case; there is sufficient need to override that lack of consent.
- You should seek advice where you are in doubt, especially where your doubt relates to a concern about possible significant harm to a child or serious harm to others.
- You should ensure that the information you share is accurate and up-to-date, necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, shared only with those people who need to see it, and shared securely.
- You should always record the reasons for your decision – whether it is to share information or not.

* **Serious crime** for the purposes of this guidance means any crime which causes or is likely to cause significant harm to a child or serious harm to an adult.