

Young people's guide to the Common Assessment Framework

What is Common Assessment Framework (CAF)?

The CAF is a way for everyone to work together which puts you at the centre of decisions made about you. CAF is something that enables a number of different workers (such as school staff, school nurses or youth support workers) to come together with you and your family to help you get the best possible help and support when it is needed.

We will only go ahead once you have decided to take part in the CAF process. Whoever starts the CAF will want to talk with you and make sure that your views are fully understood. They will want to know about the things that are going really well in your life as well as the things you are finding difficult. This means your strengths can be built on and any difficulties can be sorted out.

You will only need to discuss this information once rather than with lots of people lots of times. They will write down what is talked about on the form, and once you are happy with everything you will be asked to sign it and you will be given a copy to keep. Then all the people who can help you will work together to give you the support you need.

"We did the CAF together and she made it easy to understand. Then I checked it over to make sure I was happy about the information and where it was going."

Young person aged 15

A multi-agency meeting

A meeting is held with the people that are already working with you (or about to start working with you). For example, a member of staff from your school or a Youth Support Worker. You and your parents/carers will also be invited, to come if you want them to.

Sometimes you might not want your mum, dad or carer to be at this meeting and we will talk about that with you and will always try to respect your wishes. Other people might need to be involved who can offer extra support if you or your family feel that you need it.

The action plan

At this meeting a plan will be made. This will be typed up and someone (called a Lead Professional) will be put in charge to make sure all the things in the plan happen. This person will keep in touch with you and might arrange another meeting if it is needed.



"They used the CAF form and everyone started to talk to each other. The youth support worker helped us find work. We were housed and helped with budgeting and paying rent – stuff like that."

Young person aged 17

The Lead Professional

The Lead Professional

A number of people may work with you and your family and one of these may become the 'Lead Professional'. The Lead Professional will keep you up to date with what is happening and how it is all going. They will also make sure that all the people who are helping you are working together well.

You will have a say in who should be the lead professional. You will probably feel happier with someone you know and trust, you can choose or let somebody else decide for you and it is OK to change your mind.

"He is talking to me. It's not like he's talking to my mum about me. He is more bothered about what I want to do and how he can help me."

Young Person aged 10,
talking about their Lead Professional

Our promise to you

As a rule, the information on your CAF will not be shared with anyone else unless you agree. However, there may be times when the people working with you will need to share the information. For example:

- when they need to find out urgently if you or someone else is at risk of harm
- to help you or someone else who is at risk of harm and to keep you safe
- to help stop a crime.

If at any time you are feeling unsafe, you can speak to a duty social worker in Barnet's Children's Service: 020 8359 4066



Want to know more?

If there is anything more you need to know then speak to the person who gave you this leaflet. You can also visit www.barnet.gov.uk/caf

"I had been regularly late getting to school and felt tired when I got there. My youth worker chatted to me about this and heard about how I was caring for my baby sister in the mornings whilst Mum worked. Completing a CAF has helped my Mum claim the benefits she was owed and to find out about childcare. I am also now getting on better at school."

Young person aged 15



Barnet guide to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

Welcome to a way of helping children, young people and families



Parent and carers guide to the Common Assessment Framework

When your child needs extra support, we want to find the best way forward as soon as possible. This leaflet explains a way for everyone involved to work together which puts your family at the centre of decisions made about your child.

What is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)?

The CAF is a simple way of gathering and sharing information about your child. It involves listening to you and your child to find out about your child's needs and also what is working well in your child's life – we want to ensure strengths can be built on and difficulties can be addressed. The CAF is a way of gathering all relevant information together in one place. It will mean that you don't have to keep repeating your story to lots of different professionals.

The CAF is a voluntary process; this means that you and your child can choose whether you want to be involved and who you want the information to be shared with.

"I was angry that I had spoken to so many different people over the last 6 months about my child's situation. I felt relieved when the school completed a CAF form and began to speak to other people involved. I felt that I wouldn't have to keep repeating myself again, and that everyone would now be working together to find a solution to my son's problems."

Mother of 14 year old son

How will it work?

Your child's practitioner (such as a Youth Support Worker, a health visitor/school nurse or a member of staff from your child's school) will ask if you agree to go ahead with the CAF process. Then with your agreement he/she will make a time to sit down with you and your child to talk about any concerns and to try to identify what help is needed. This information will then be recorded on to a CAF form.

You and your child (depending on their age) will be asked to sign the CAF form to give your consent to share the information gathered with other workers if necessary. If you do not give your consent, the information will not be shared. You will be given a copy of the CAF.

Older children may feel able to discuss their situation on their own with the worker. A young person's wish to keep information confidential from parents may be respected by the worker, where this is in the young persons' best interests.



The Lead Professional

If a number of people are providing support to your child, one of these will be appointed as the 'Lead Professional'. This person will keep you informed, listen to your views and support you. They will also co-ordinate all the services supporting your child and will make sure that the action plan keeps on track.

"You need to be able to pick up the phone and speak to one person, in turn, that person communicates your message clearly to all concerned. That happens now.... it didn't in the past. It was a long fight and I could have lost my children. Once people started communicating with each other, they realised it wasn't my fault. When you are a single parent it isn't easy."

A single parent of four children

What happens next?

Once the worker has a clearer understanding of your child's needs and strengths, an action plan will be agreed with you, your child and with any other agencies involved, so that everyone is clear about what needs to happen next. Often it is helpful to hold a Multi-Agency Meeting (known as a Team Around the Child meeting) with you, your child and other professionals involved (or who are about to become involved) so that the information can be easily shared, and that everyone can plan the next steps together.

"It gives me a lot of confidence knowing that they are there to listen to me. I used to be really shy, whereas now I'm bringing up a topic for discussion. All these organisations began to tell me how well I was doing. I see my daughter changing everyday."

Mother of one year old daughter



Confidentiality

As a rule, the information on the CAF form will not be shared with anyone else unless you and your child agree. However, there may be times when the people working with you and your child will need to share the information. For example:

- when they need to find out urgently if your child or someone else is at risk of harm
- to help your child or someone else who is at risk of harm and to keep them safe
- to help stop a crime.

Want to know more?

You can find more information by visiting www.barnet.gov.uk/caf

Anonymised information from these assessments will be used to inform the future service planning in Barnet and help identify any gaps in the service.