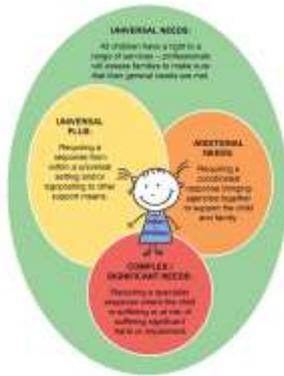


The  
**Family**  
**Common Assessment Framework**  
(fCAF)



**Process & Guidelines**  
**2012-15**

The Family Common Assessment Framework (fCAF) in Birmingham is a vital component to enabling a more integrated approach to working with children, young people and their families. The ability to assess whole families and co ordinate delivery of services across both the children’s and adult sectors delivers both improved outcomes for children and young people and better communication and working between all agencies.



**The Right Services, Right Time guidance** provides descriptors of the kind of evidence, which would indicate that, a child / young person has more complex needs. These are not definitive lists, but illustrative to help practitioners have a shared understanding of the whole needs of a child / young person.

The fCAF process is positioned within the Right Services, Right time; meeting children’s needs model that is now active for all practitioners within Birmingham - Please see further guidance from BSCB.

The fCAF process supports children that have additional needs that may require support from a number of agencies. This requires a coordinated response to bring agencies together to support the child and family.

An fCAF can be undertaken by any practitioner who identifies a family with an unmet need that would benefit from a multi agency approach. 1 day fCAF training is available and can be accessed the fCAF website [www.birmingham.gov.uk/caf](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/caf)

If the practitioner is unclear, or wants guidance on what steps to take, then they should discuss the situation with their line manager in the first instance. Additional advice can then be sought from the fCAF Team within the Information Advice Support Service (IASS) asking for an fCAF Coordinator on 0121 303 1888.

**5 Key Priorities**

Whilst practitioners will be working across a range of disciplines, as a city the focus of provision for all our families is encompassed in 5 key priorities. By using the fCAF to support families it is anticipated that these priority areas can be addressed, particularly:

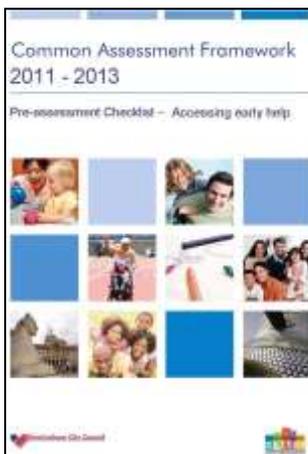
- Prevention – Health
- Integration – Engaged in learning and Achievement
- Safeguarding – Safe from harm
- Aspiration – Free from the impact of Poverty and Worklessness
- Participation – Free from crime and anti social behaviour
- Excellence – Agencies working together to meet the whole families needs

# Journey of the Child/Family



The Birmingham Family CAF process is designed to meet the family's needs at the earliest, and most appropriate way. The forms underpinning this approach and maintaining a consistent and auditable trail across the agencies concerned. The paperwork that supports the fCAF process should be downloaded from the fCAF website [www.birmingham.gov.uk/caf](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/caf) to ensure that practitioners are using the most up to date versions

## Pre fCAF assessment - Engage the Family



fCAF is a consensual process designed to place the family at the centre of support. Effectively engaging the family at the outset of multi agency intervention will provide valuable opportunities for self advocacy that will not only aid the process of fCAF but most importantly support the family through the interventions that are being provided.

Consent to share information should be obtained at this stage

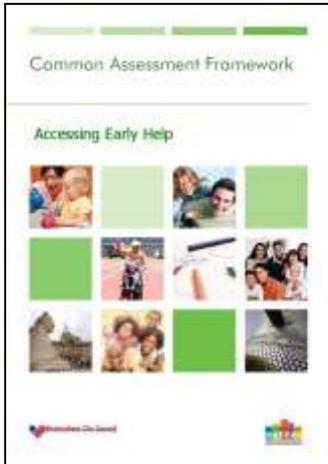
For practitioners the pre fCAF assessment stage provides a robust framework to identify and document concerns in a need focused manner.

It is important to establish whether an fCAF assessment has already been undertaken to avoid unnecessary duplication and this can be undertaken by a call to an fCAF coordinator on 0121 303 8117.

## fCAF assessment with consent - Engage the Professionals

### Completing an assessment

fCAF assessments are generally initiated by the first professional that identifies that the child/family have unmet needs, remember for families that need to access support there is no wrong door .



fCAF assessments can be undertaken for all members of a family residing in the same household where there is at least one child presenting with additional unmet needs, It could be that a range of agencies are already engaged. In this case it may be more appropriate for each agency to contribute to the assessment. It is however important to remember that the family must remain central to the assessment process and their contribution is vital to obtaining a meaningful assessment that will inform effective outcomes.

At this stage consent must be obtained from the family and where appropriate the child / young person.

It is vital to ensure that the children within the assessment have been given appropriate opportunities to contribute to the assessment process

and add their views.

It does not follow that the professional that initiates an fCAF will become the lead professional for the family. The assessment stage is designed to engage a range of agencies of whom any one could become the lead professional. This is decided at the Integrated Support Plan (ISP) stage. The initiator would however remain in this "key worker" role until such time as a Lead Professional is appointed from within another agency.

To engage new agencies around the child/family standard referral routes should be followed. Once a professional has been allocated to the family they can then be invited to the integrated support plan meeting (ISP).

Often the most time consuming part of the assessment process can be the setting up of the first meeting with professionals and with this there is support available from the fCAF team. To access this all that is required is the completion of the meeting section in the assessment outlined in red. It is important to state 3 proposed dates, a venue and details of the professionals as requested.

If the practitioner is unclear, or would like guidance on what steps to take, then they should discuss the situation with their line manager. Additional advice can also be sought from the designated Locality fCAF Coordinator or from the City fCAF Coordinator.

### Managing the paperwork

The completed Assessment record remains the responsibility of the originating agency; a print out copy should be retained in accordance with each agency's own record-keeping procedures and a clear & legible photocopy sent to the City fCAF Coordinator at the address indicated on the assessment paperwork.

A copy of the completed Assessment record should be given to the parents of the child / young person and the child / young person themselves (unless doing so will place the child or young person at risk), taking into account their age and understanding.

## Escalating concerns

If at any time during the assessment period a child is deemed to have complex / significant needs requiring a specialist response where the child is suffering or at risk of significant harm or impairment in accordance with the right services, right time model individual agency guidelines must be followed.

It is anticipated that the Common Assessment will constitute the first portion of the single assessment process and that a Specialist Services will be able to utilise any information gathered during the fCAF process to underpin any work they implement.

## Integrated support plan and review - Meet the Family's needs



Integrated Support Plan meetings (ISP) provide the forum for a multi-agency meeting. This meeting gives opportunity for agencies to give an update on the current work taking place, reflect on the progress to date and look towards the next steps. Conducting this process with the family in a multi agency forum allows professionals to bring differing areas of expertise together to produce an individualised plan that places the family at the centre. For professionals this can both provide opportunities to develop personal practice and also ensures that interventions are not duplicated. For families this forum for multi agency working provides both an opportunity to raise their concerns to all professionals in a single meeting and the construction of a clear action plan.

### Attendance

- Responding to invitations to ISP meetings is essential and it would be hoped that all professionals would be able to attend, however where this is not possible a written report can be submitted.

### Preparing for the meeting

- A suggested Agenda for the meeting is available from download from the fCAF website [www.birmingham.gov.uk/caf](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/caf) however for all meetings it is important to consider the individual needs of the family so that if necessary a tailored approach can be taken. At all ISP meetings it is advisable to circulate an attendance list with space for contact details and ensure that a date for the next ISP is set before the end of the meeting.

### Domestic Violence & the ISP

- The Integrated Support Plan meeting should be a safe, supportive and informed environment for responding to incidents of domestic violence. Whatever the setting for the ISP, when it is expected that people will talk about their experiences of violence it is important that they feel safe, supportive and informed.

To ensure that the environment is safe you may need to arrange for any children to be supervised safely – children should not be exposed to disclosures. Nor should the victim experiencing domestic violence be impeded by their presence. Children should never be used as interpreters or involved in describing the actions of the perpetrator or the victim. Exposing children to a disclosure or discussions of the DV may be harmful and traumatising to them.

## **The Plan**

- A good assessment is vital to writing an effective plan and will have placed the child and family at the centre and has documented both the needs and the strengths of the family. Within the ISP it is important that the needs identified from the fCAF are drawn into the ISP. Consideration should be given to the family in not trying to change too much at any one time and so suggested maximum of 7 needs should be addressed at any one time within the whole family.

Needs as yet unmet should still be recorded and the reason for delay noted.

Actions included in the plan need to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have a clear timescale). All plans should have the full involvement of children and their families. There needs to be a clear outcome.

## **Using a 'Think Family' approach**

For families that are accessing support under the national "troubled family's agenda" "drop down boxes" indicating the criteria below form an integral part of the form allowing practitioners to evidence interventions and outcomes.

- Reducing anti social behaviour and youth crime
- Improve attendance at school
- Address worklessness
- Parenting Capacity

## **The Lead Professional**

At this meeting the Lead professional (LP) will be appointed. Factors in choosing the LP will include the predominant needs of the child and family, the knowledge, skills, ability and capacity of the involved practitioners and the level of trust built up and the existing or potential relationship with the child or family.

The predominant role of the LP is to be the first point of contact for the family. It is important to note however that the LP is not responsible for the actions of other professionals. Chairing meetings and completing fCAF paperwork can be undertaken by any of the professionals involved with the family.

## **Communication**

The ISP meeting and the ISP paperwork provide structured and effective tools to enable good communication for the family and the professionals. This is key throughout the fCAF process.

### **Circulating the action plan**

The action plan should be completed and circulated to the parent, child / young person and all practitioners involved within ten working days of the meeting.

- A copy should be retained by each practitioner contributing to the ISP
- A copy of the completed ISP needs to be sent to the city fCAF coordinator

The Lead Professional will convene further Integrated Support Meetings as often as necessary, but at a minimum of every 3-4 months. The family can request a review at any time as can any practitioner involved in the family. Reports, written or verbal, must be submitted to the Integrated Support Meeting by any service that cannot be represented at the meeting in person.

## **Practitioner withdrawal**

The average life of an fCAF is 9 months and during this time practitioners may either complete their agency intervention or hand over their work to another practitioner. At these key times clear communication with the LP and the family is very important.

The Lead Professional role can only be transferred or terminated following a review Integrated Support Meeting (ISPr), unless transferred to a statutory service such as Social work teams where a statutory assessment is undertaken e.g. a section 47 child protection investigation is started or the child / young person starts being looked after by the local authority.

## **Storage of fCAF information**

In order to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the 1998 Data Protection Act all fCAF documents produced need to have a security classification. Because the completed fCAF forms hold information that would cause 'distress to an individual' if revealed without consent it falls into the security categorisation of 'PROTECTED'. This means that:

Completed fCAF forms should:

- Paper version - stored in a locked cupboard, Electronic version – in a password protected file.
- Not be left unattended (on desk tops, printers, in cars etc.)
- Not be accessed on shared computers unless accessed through individual passwords
- Computer screens should be positioned so information cannot be read by unauthorised people e.g. looking over your shoulder.
- Posted in secured opaque envelopes (non-window) to a named individual with a return address on the envelope – there is no need for this to be recorded delivery
- Faxed & emailed only if specific requirements are met

Any loss should be reported to your line managers and to the central fCAF team.

## **Evaluation of interventions and closing an fCAF**

As each outstanding need is met the fCAF process allows for the effectiveness of the intervention to be measured using Goal Attainment Scoring (GAS). Interventions should be evaluated with the parents/young person as to whether they met the expectations of the family, much better or much worse. Anecdotal evidence should also be recorded.

The assessment however should be seen as episodic in nature, and as such will be closed when the needs identified during the assessment process have been met. Closure of the fCAF is with the agreement from the Parent/Carer/Young Person and all agencies working with the Integrated Support Plan.

## **Practitioner Support**

If the practitioner is unclear, or wants guidance on what steps to take, then they should discuss the situation with their line manager in the first instance

At each stage of the fCAF process support for practitioners is available. The fCAF website [www.birmingham.gov.uk/caf](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/caf) should be accessed for copies of the latest forms, details of training events and a range of practitioner support tools.

In addition telephone support is available from Area fCAF coordinators on 0121 303 8117