

Integrated Working in Islington

The Common Assessment Framework: A Toolkit for Practitioners

Children's Trust Partnership



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Defining Integrated Working

Working together effectively to put the child at the centre, meet their needs and improve their lives.

The Tools of Integrated Working

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
The Team Around the Child (TAC)
The Role of the Lead Professional (LP)

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The CAF is a shared assessment and planning tool used across all children's services in England. It helps the early identification of children and young people's additional needs and co-ordinates services to meet those needs.

There are three basic questions to consider before starting a CAF:

- Are the needs of the child clear?
- Are the needs of the child being met?
- Can the needs of the child be met without additional support?

If the answer to any of these questions is NO then you must consider a CAF.

12 Priority Groups to Consider for a CAF

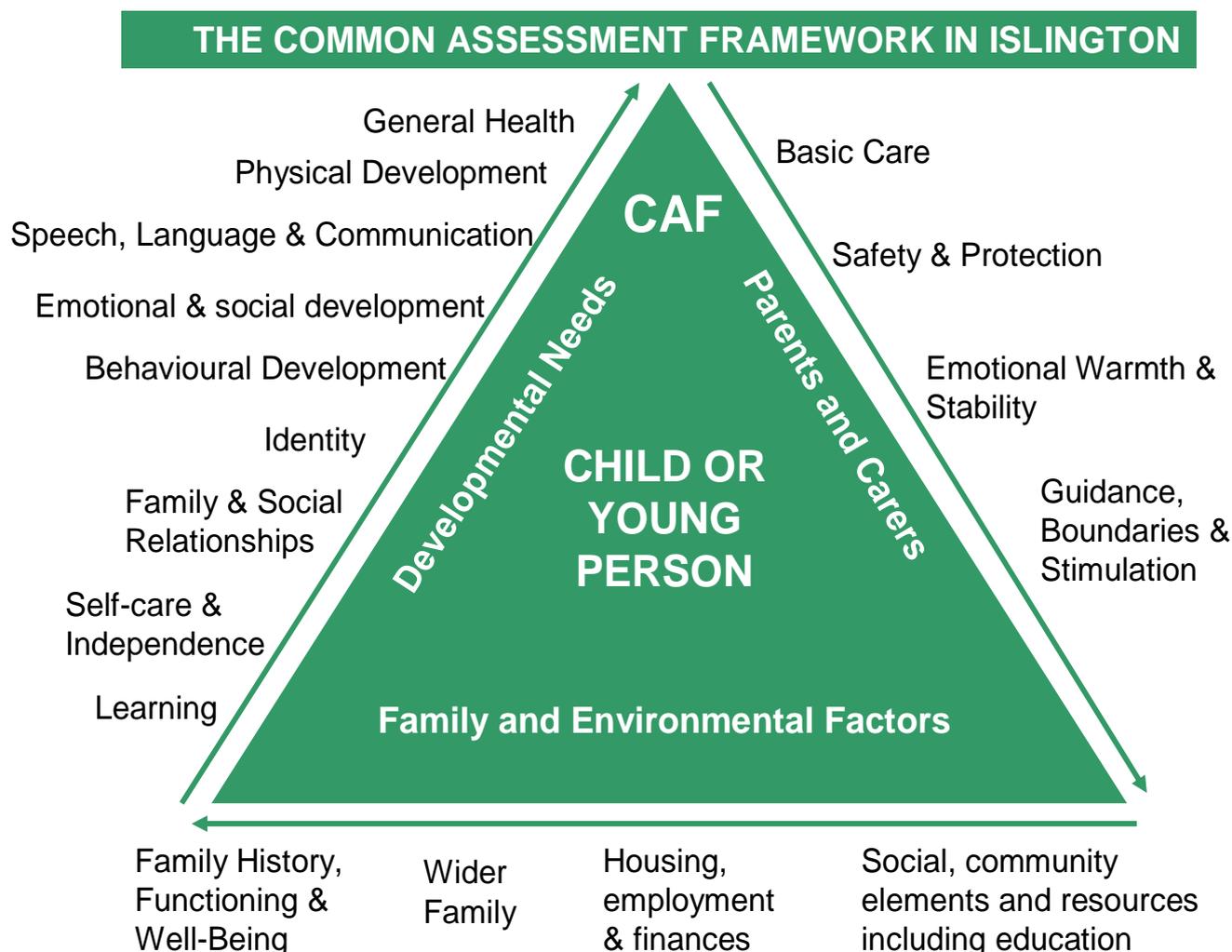
Children and young people who fall into any of the groups below will usually require co-ordinated multi-agency support to meet their needs. The following list is not exhaustive and should you come across a young person who you believe needs a CAF, but does not fit into one of these groups, you should still consider implementing one.

1. Children with additional needs who do not meet the threshold for statutory social care
2. Children not in education employment or training (NEET)
3. Children in a pupil referral unit (PRU)
4. Children persistently absent from school
5. Children at risk of school exclusion
6. Teenage parents or those who are pregnant
7. Children at risk of anti-social behaviour
8. Young carers
9. Children suffering poor outcomes through their own or parental alcohol or substance misuse
10. Children suffering poor outcomes as a result of parental mental health difficulties
11. Children who have experienced domestic violence
12. Children with a disability

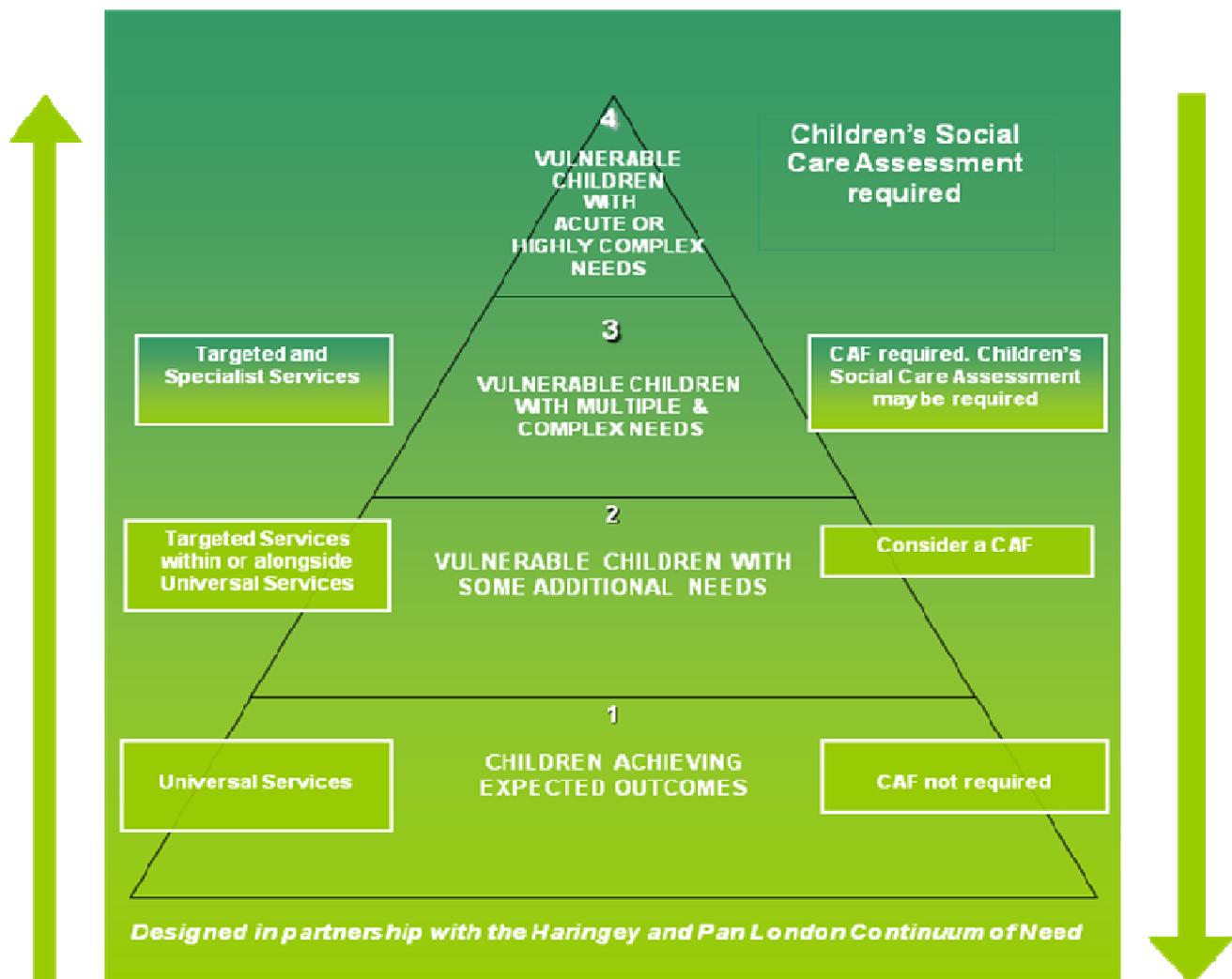
The Common Assessment Framework

The holistic approach adopted by the common assessment framework focuses on three assessment areas.

- **Developmental Needs**
How well the child or young person is developing, including their health, emotional and social development and progress in learning.
- **Parents and Carers**
How well parents and carers are able to support their child or young person's development and respond appropriately to their needs.
- **Family and Environmental Factors**
The impact of wider family and environmental factors on the child or young person's development and on the capacity of their parents/carers.



The Four Levels of Need (Thresholds)



Islington, together with other London boroughs, has agreed the following definitions of need:

1. Universal needs: when a child or young person is achieving expected outcomes and all their needs are being met by family, carers and universal services, i.e. those services available to everyone.
2. Children or young people with some additional needs who may be considered to be vulnerable: this is when you **should** be considering a CAF.
3. Children or young people with multiple and complex needs: this is when you **must** offer a CAF unless there is a social care assessment in place.
4. Children or young people with acute or highly complex needs: this is when you must make a referral to Children's Social Care (CSC). For a planned referral they will ask for a CAF.

Children and young people who may be at immediate or acute risk of harm should be referred immediately to Children's Social Care on 020 7527 7400. If you are not sure, you should phone to discuss before starting a CAF.

The Team Around the Child (TAC)

Preparing for a TAC Meeting

1. Decide who will be chairing the meeting.
2. Decide who will record the meeting and how, e.g. directly onto eCAF online during the meeting; minutes that will be put online after the meeting; paper printout of eCAF that will be put online after the meeting.
3. Photocopy latest version of eCAF so all will be able to see a copy.
4. Prepare and photocopy agenda.
5. Think about accessibility for the child, young person and family and book a venue to suit their needs.
6. Think about the numbers and who really needs to be there. Remember this is not a professionals' meeting to which you are inviting the child or parents/carers.
7. Plan how you will ensure that the child, young person or parent is included as an equal member of the group.

An Example Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions.
2. Introduce the purpose of the meeting, and check everyone's expectations.
3. Confirm who will record the meeting.
4. Check parents'/carers'/young person's consent to share information and agree on level of confidentiality.
5. Agree ground rules for the meeting.
6. Hand out copies of the CAF.
7. Ask all present to contribute a brief piece of positive information about their work the child/family, e.g. "I've recently worked with Joe and I was impressed with how polite he was and the effort he made to complete the work." Don't get into conversation about the work at this stage.
8. Use the CAF to structure the main body of the meeting:
 - (a) If this is not the first meeting, review progress of actions agreed at the previous meeting
 - (b) Share information (or review and update information if not the first meeting) on the three domains within the CAF
 - (c) Agree and record actions; who is responsible for them and by when
 - (d) Agree / confirm who is the Lead Professional
9. Agree who needs to attend the next meeting and whether there are any other people who need to be invited, being mindful of numbers.
10. Agree date, time and venue of next meeting.

The Role of the Lead Professional

Three Core Functions

1. Act as a single point of contact for the child, young person and family.
2. Co-ordinate the delivery of actions which have been agreed at Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings and make sure they are recorded on eCAF.
3. Reduce overlap and inconsistency in the services received by having regular TAC meetings and ensuring all information is recorded on eCAF.

The Lead Professional is not responsible for other practitioners' work and the person who initiates the CAF may not necessarily be the Lead Professional.

As a rule of thumb, each TAC meeting should be no more than three months apart but the team should be flexible about this according to the child's needs.

A Quick Checklist

1. Have you recorded why you are starting a CAF?
2. Have you gained consent from the young person or parent/carer and recorded it in the 'Preparation' stage of eCAF?
3. Has the Lead Professional been agreed by family and the TAC at the first meeting?
4. Have you checked that every member of the TAC can access and add information to eCAF? Contact iwp@islington.gov.uk if anyone needs training.
5. Have you recorded the contact details for all members of the TAC on eCAF?
6. Have you made sure everyone knows the time and place of the next TAC meeting and it is recorded on eCAF?
7. Have you decided with the TAC and family, on the frequency of meetings?
8. If someone tells you that they cannot attend the TAC meeting, ask them to update information about their actions, or any other sections about which they have additional information, directly on to the eCAF, at least two days before the planned meeting.
9. Are the child/young person/family invited to all meetings and involved fully in all discussions and the action plan?
10. Have you prepared the family for meetings, especially in relation to sensitive issues?
11. If there are any disputes between TAC members, have these been managed sensitively in light of the family's needs?
12. Have you ensured a new CAF version is created for each TAC meeting on eCAF?
13. Have you ensured the family have a printed copy of the CAF following each TAC meeting?

If in doubt at any time about any of the above, always consult with your line manager.

Using the CAF: a Step-by-Step Guide

Identify Needs Early and Seek Consent

1. Before you begin a CAF, you should check who else is working with the child or young person and whether a CAF already exists. Consult the eCAF system and search for the child. If someone else has already started a CAF contact the named Lead Professional and ask about joining the Team Around the Child (TAC).
2. If a CAF is not already in place, explain the process to the family and ask for their consent to start a CAF. Emphasise that the CAF is supportive and solution-focused.
3. If they do not agree, record this on the 'Preparation' stage of the eCAF system and consider other options.
4. If they do agree, record consent on the eCAF 'Preparation' stage on the eCAF system. Print two copies of the preparation page and ask the parent/s or young person to sign them. Give the family one signed copy and store one securely.
5. Record that this has happened in the 'Preparation' where your hard copy is stored.

Assess Needs

6. This step involves working with the child or young person and, as appropriate, their family, and undertaking the assessment with them. It is important that participation is firmly embedded in the CAF process. You will need to agree with the family what information you are recording and what is going to happen to it.
7. Organise a TAC meeting, inviting practitioners that you and the family have identified as best placed to meet the needs of the child. Remember, the discussion does not have to be highly formal or presented as a 'big event.'
8. Using the three domains of the Common Assessment Framework, ensure all areas of the child's life are considered, including strengths as well as needs. Effective action planning requires a thorough assessment of the situation based on asking critical questions and actively listening to answers.

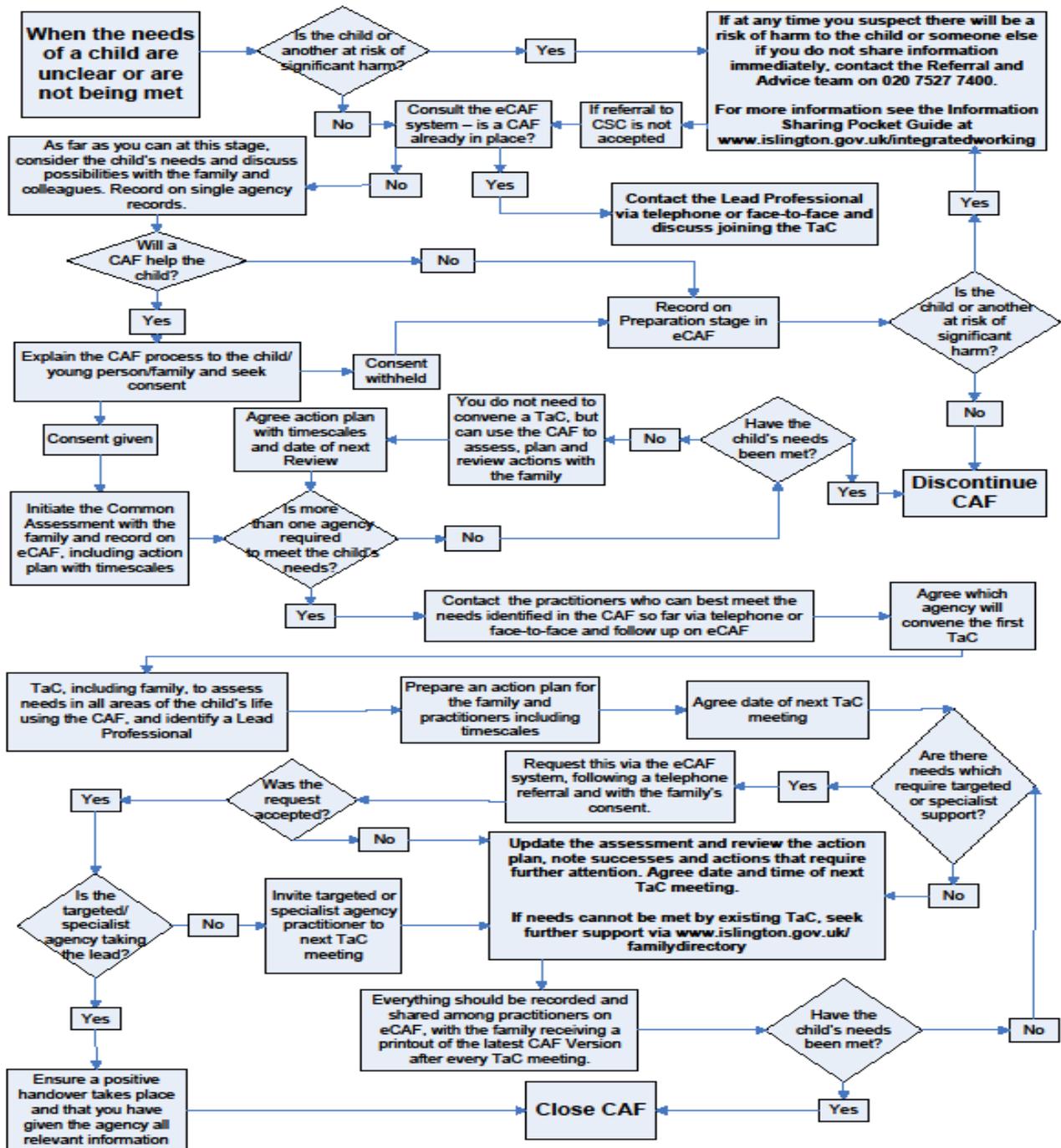
Create the Action Plan: Needs, Outcomes and Actions

9. An action plan is an **agreement** with the family and other members of the TAC.
10. Good action planning builds on strengths to help meet needs. You need to develop a holistic understanding of the child/young person's strengths and needs, not just in terms of your own service.
11. The TAC meeting should:
 - a. Identify the needs: this is the current situation
 - b. Identify strengths that will support successful outcomes and record alongside the needs as these must be maintained
 - c. Identify the intended outcomes
 - d. Agree the actions
 - e. Identify who will be responsible for the agreed actions
12. Agree who will be the Lead Professional for the child/family.
13. If needs emerge which require the support from targeted or specialist services, you can request this via the eCAF system and should telephone to discuss first.
14. If the threshold for support from targeted or specialist services is not met you will need to continue to support the child and family through the TAC.
15. If the threshold for support is met then the targeted or specialist service may take over the role of Lead Professional, or they may join the existing TAC.

Review Progress and End

16. TAC meetings should continue until the child's needs can be met without multi-agency support. At this point the CAF should be closed.
17. TACs should be no more than three months apart, but the frequency will depend on the child's needs.
18. It is important to ensure there is an 'endings' meeting where distance travelled can be acknowledged and celebrated. If a transition to another service is agreed with the family, there should be a transitions meeting to mark the end of this phase.

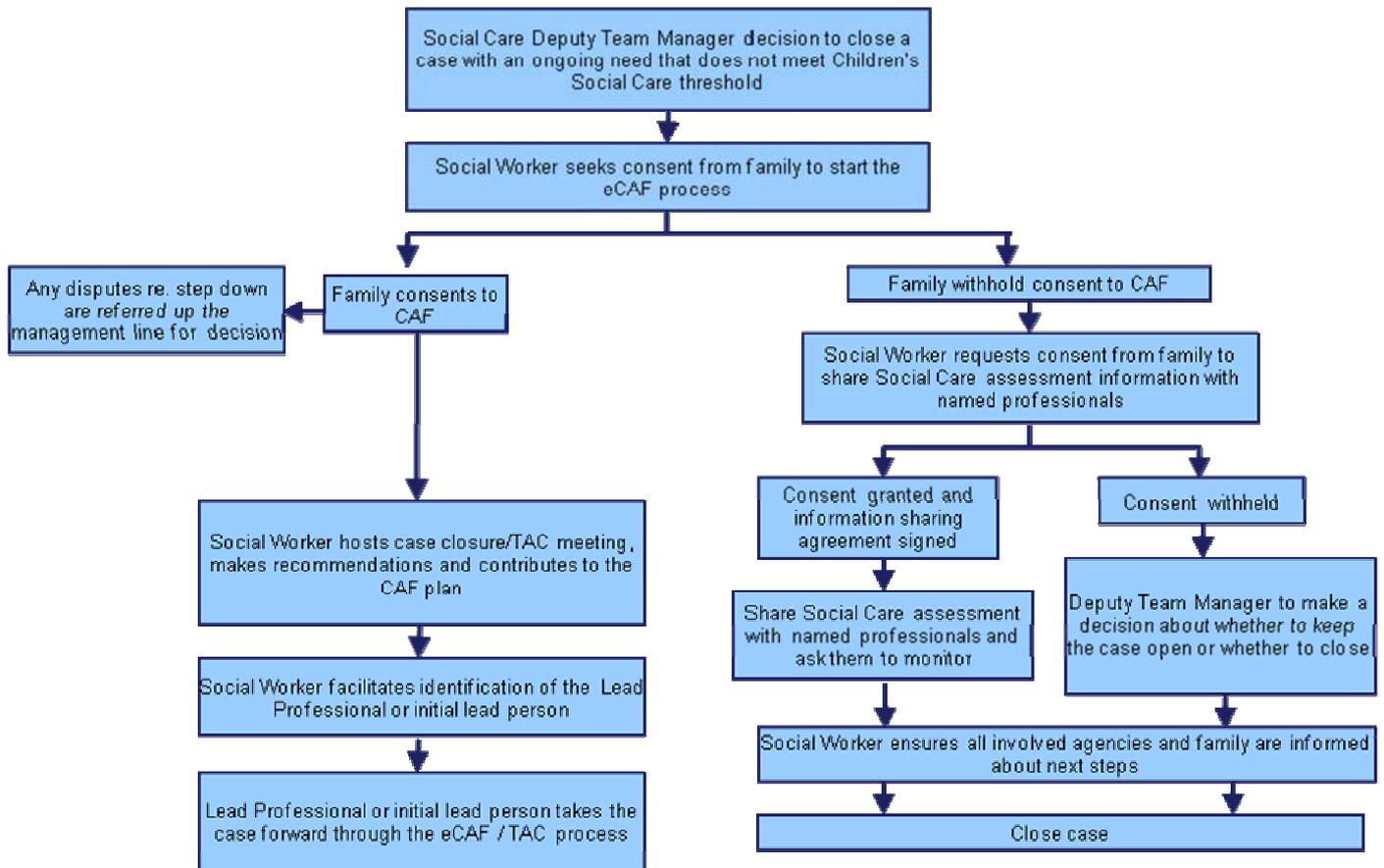
The CAF Flowchart



eCAF Step Down from Children's Social Care

The "Step Down from Children's Social Care" flow chart below sets out the process by which Children's Social Care will hand over cases to universal and community services.

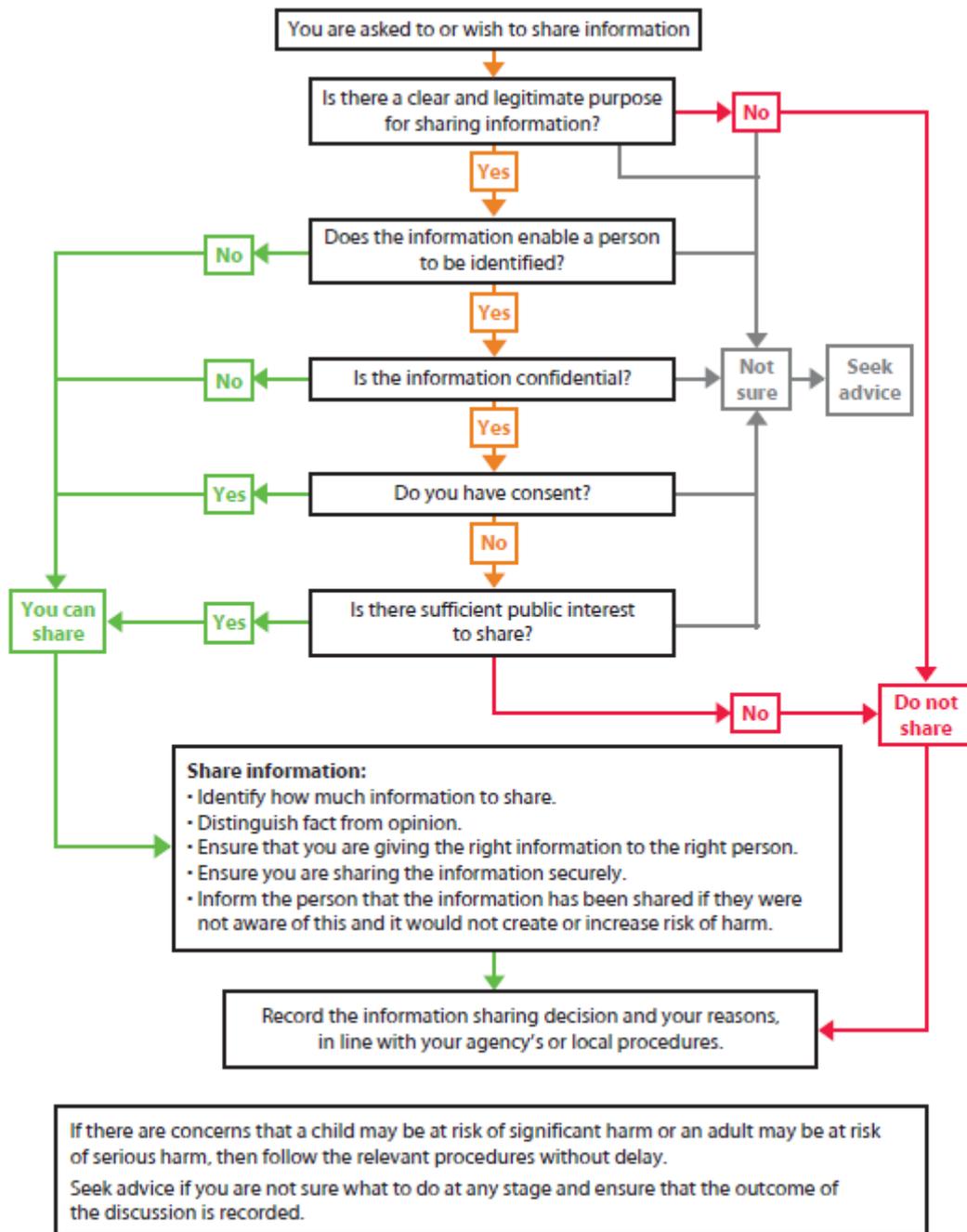
This process applies to cases where Children's Social Care ends their involvement but where there are ongoing needs that do not meet the Children's Social Care threshold.



Information Sharing: the Seven Golden Rules

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information but is a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
2. **Be open and honest** with the person and/or their family where appropriate from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. **Seek advice** if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.
4. **Share with consent where appropriate** and where possible respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if in your judgement that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. Judgement must be based on the facts of the case.
5. **Consider safety and well-being:** base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. **Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure:** ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion and is shared securely.
7. **Keep a record** of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

Flowchart of Key Questions for Information Sharing



Extract from HM Government *Information Sharing: Guidance for practitioners and managers*. Copies can be obtained from www.ecm.gov.uk/informationsharing

Consent

Consent is the key to successful information sharing.

- Consent must be 'informed' – consent by a parent/carer or young person after achieving an understanding of the relevant facts and the likely outcomes. The young person should be aware of why information is recorded and held and the reasons for why it may be shared.
- Obtaining explicit consent is good practice and it can be expressed either orally or in writing. Explicit consent means specific consent to carry out a specific action, particularly in relation to an individual's personal information. Within the CAF arena, consent must always be explicit and recorded on eCAF.
- The approach to securing consent should be transparent and respect the individual. If there is a significant change in the type or use of the information, or in the relationship between the agency and the individual, consent must be sought again.
- Individuals have the right to withdraw consent after they have given it.
- Explain that there are times when confidentiality cannot be maintained.
- Practitioners need not seek consent, for example where to do so would:
 - place a child or young person at increased risk of significant harm; or
 - place an adult at risk of serious harm; or
 - prejudice the prevention or detection of a serious crime; or
 - lead to unjustified delay in making enquiries about allegations of significant harm.

For further guidance on consent, go to www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters

Who Should Give Consent?

- A child or young person who has the capacity to understand and make their own decisions, may give or refuse consent to sharing.
- **Fraser Guidelines** refer to a House of Lords' Judgment, following the case of Victoria Gillick, 1985. The judge in the Victoria Gillick case gave the following general advice:

"It is suggested that a child or young person's ability to make decisions about his/her life depends on him/her having 'sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his/her own mind.'"
- 'Sufficient understanding' relates to a particular child or young person on a particular occasion. Depending on the complexity of the issue a child or young person may be competent to take some decisions and not others.
- Where the child or young person has sufficient understanding, the practitioner should encourage the young person to discuss the issue with their parent(s), unless this would increase risk of significant harm. However, the service should not be withheld on the condition that they do so.
- If a child is assessed as not competent to consent to share information, in most cases a person with parental responsibility should consent on their behalf. However, the views of the child should still be sought as far as possible.
- Practitioners should record that consent has been given, and by whom; and if and when it is withdrawn. In cases of any uncertainty, practitioners should also record the evidence on which the child's understanding to give/refuse consent was based.
- These issues can raise difficult dilemmas. Wherever appropriate you should try to work with all involved to reach an agreement or understanding of the information to be shared. You must always act in accordance with your professional code of practice where there is one and consider the safety and well-being of the child, even where that means overriding refusal to consent. You should seek advice from your manager or nominated advisor if you are unsure.

Islington eCAF Quick Guide

1.	eCAF Address	https://csa.islington.gov.uk/fwlive
2.	Children's Service Desk	The Children's Service Desk will provide IT and login support for eCAF from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Telephone: 020 7527 8886 Email: childrens.servicedesk@islington.gov.uk
3.	eCAF User Guide	There is full guidance on the eCAF system in the eCAF User Guide : www.islington.gov.uk/integratedworking , main menu (on the left of the page), then 'Common Assessment Framework'.
4.	Integrated Working Team	As well as technical support on eCAF, we provide guidance on all aspects of Integrated Working. This includes bespoke sessions on any aspect of Integrated Working including eCAF, free of charge. Please see www.islington.gov.uk/integratedworking or email iwp@islington.gov.uk .
5.	Child Protection	Contact the Children's Social Care Referral and Advice Team immediately on 020 7527 7400. Any accompanying data held on an existing common assessment that will add valuable background information should be sent after the call has been made.
6.	Logging in to eCAF: Security	When you login you will get security certificate messages that you must accept. Only login to eCAF on a secure work computer, and never give your login details to anyone else.
7.	Username and Password	If you have any problems logging in, or you are unsure of your login name and password please contact the eCAF Service Desk. Usernames and passwords are case sensitive.
8.	Pop-ups	If you find the browser closes down after you have entered your login instead of connecting you to your homepage, you will need to turn off your pop-up blocker in your browser settings. For Internet Explorer this is located under the 'Tools' menu at the very top of the screen.
9.	Internet Explorer 8	Users with Internet Explorer 8 or above may find that eCAF does not load properly – if so, you will need to use the 'compatibility view' which is a feature of Internet Explorer 8. If you have any problems, contact the Children's Service Desk.
10.	Acting on Behalf of Another User	If anyone else needs to access your eCAF account, do not give them your login details. Contact the eCAF Service Desk who can set them up to act on your behalf.
11.	Duplicate Records	If you find, or even suspect, a duplicate record on the eCAF system, contact the Service Desk at childrens.servicedesk@islington.gov.uk or 020 7527 8886.
12.	Searching for a Child	Go to the 'People' menu at the top of your screen and select 'Find Person'. If a CAF is in place already, contact the existing Lead Professional. You must search for a child before you can add them to the eCAF system.
13.	Consent	You must obtain and record consent in 'Preparation' before you can start the CAF. Give the family a signed copy of the 'Preparation' page – 'PRINT' is at the bottom of the screen. Select 'Print headers and footers' when the print options appear. If consent is not forthcoming, do not start a Common Assessment – record the decision on the eCAF system and consider further options.
14.	Updating the CAF	Update a current CAF by creating a 'New CAF Version'. For more information on CAF Versions, see the eCAF User Guide , at www.islington.gov.uk/integratedworking and select 'Common Assessment Framework' in the main menu on the left of the page.

15.	New Versions	<p>Every time you select a new episode from the Outcomes screen, you need to select 'Finish' rather than 'Save and Close'.</p> <p>An episode in eCAF is a new version of the CAF, the CAF closure or a version you are assigning to a new lead professional or a specialist or targeted service.</p>								
16.	Action Plans	<p>Actions that have been recorded as completed in a previous CAF version can be deleted in a new version.</p>								
17.	Information Sharing via eCAF	<p>Before 'Requesting a Contribution', 'Requesting Read-Only Access', 'Re-assigning the Lead Professional' or 'Requesting a Service from a Targeted or Specialist Agency' via eCAF, always speak face-to-face or by telephone with the person/agency concerned.</p> <p>eCAF is a system for sharing complex, sensitive information about children and young people, not a replacement for conversations.</p>								
18.	Contributing to the CAF	<p>If you have been asked to make a contribution to a CAF, you will receive the request as a task in the 'Tasks' tab on your homepage. Once you have made your contribution, you will need to go back to 'Tasks', click on the task and click 'Amend Task' in the top left corner to assign the task as complete. If you have any problems contact the Service Desk at childrens.servicedesk@islington.gov.uk or 020 7527 8886.</p>								
19.	Outstanding Tasks	<p>If the eCAF system will not allow a new CAF Version to be made, this will be because there are outstanding tasks. Go to the 'Tasks' tab on the homepage and see if any tasks have not been marked 'Completed', then contact the relevant practitioner. If you have any problems contact the Service Desk</p>								
20.	Requesting a Service from a Targeted or Specialist Agency	<p>If you require support from Children's Social Care, the Integrated Children with Disabilities Service and/or Targeted Youth Support, you will need to provide them with evidence, via eCAF, of what multi-agency support has been in place already, i.e. the Team Around the Child's work with the CAF, and what support the child/young person requires from the targeted/specialist service.</p> <p>You should always contact the relevant agency by telephone before following up the request for a service via eCAF.</p> <p>For more information, please see the eCAF User Guide, at www.islington.gov.uk/integratedworking and select 'Common Assessment Framework' in the main menu on the left of the page.</p>								
21.	Levels of Need	<p>Islington isubscribes to the London Needs Thresholds. To see these, please go to www.islington.gov.uk/integratedworking and select 'Pan-London CAF Protocols' in the Main Menu on the left of the page.</p> <p>There are four levels of need:</p> <table data-bbox="419 1507 954 1630"> <tr> <td>1 Universal</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 Low to Vulnerable</td> <td>Think CAF</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 Complex</td> <td>Think CAF</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 Acute</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	1 Universal		2 Low to Vulnerable	Think CAF	3 Complex	Think CAF	4 Acute	
1 Universal										
2 Low to Vulnerable	Think CAF									
3 Complex	Think CAF									
4 Acute										
22.	If a Service from a Targeted or Specialist Agency is Refused	<p>If your request is rejected, you will need to record the reasons the agency gave and the next steps the Team Around the Child will be taking. In the case of a dispute, discuss with your line manager who will talk through the issues with the relevant Targeted or Specialist agency manager.</p> <p>You may wish to consult the family directory at this stage at www.islington.gov.uk/Education/FamilyDirectory to seek alternative support if the child/young person's needs cannot be met by the existing team around the child.</p>								

Glossary of Terms

Action Plan

This is the agreement between the family and other members of the **Team around the Child** as to who will do what to meet the child's **additional needs**. It is split into Needs (the current situation, including areas of concern and strengths), outcomes (the desired goal for the child) and actions (who will do what, by when).

Additional Needs

A broad term used to describe a risk of poor outcomes as defined by the Every Child Matters outcomes: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being.

Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

An assessment tool used by the whole children's workforce to assess the **additional needs** of children and young people as early as possible and create an **action plan** to meet those needs.

Consent

Agreement and approval of the work of the **TaC** and the **Lead Professional**. The **CAF** should always be carried out with consent which is **informed** and **explicit**.

eCAF System

The internet-based IT system on which all **CAF** work is recorded. This is available to practitioners across all agencies in Islington working with children, young people and families.

Explicit Consent

Explicit consent means specific consent to carry out a specific action, particularly in relation to an individual's personal information. Within the **CAF** arena, consent must always be explicit and recorded on **eCAF**.

Informed Consent

Consent by a parent/carer or young person after achieving an understanding of the relevant facts and the likely outcomes. In order for informed consent to be considered valid, the client must be competent and the consent should be given voluntarily.

Integrated Working

Working together effectively to put the child at the centre, meet their needs and improve their lives. This is done through a combination of the **CAF**, the **TaC** and the **Lead Professional**.

Lead Professional

The person chosen by the family and the rest of the **TaC** to:

- Act as a single point of contact that children, young people and their families can trust, and who is able to support them in making choices and in navigating their way through the system
- Ensure that children and families get appropriate interventions when needed, which are well planned, regularly reviewed and effectively delivered
- Reduce overlap and inconsistency from other practitioners

Levels of Need

Sometimes known as **Thresholds**, the four levels of need correspond to how likely a child or young person is to be at risk of not meeting his or her outcomes, and/or of coming to harm. Each level of need also corresponds to the appropriate type of intervention for the child or young person.

Needs, Outcomes and Actions

See **Action Plan**

Priority Groups

12 'triggers' which indicate that a child or young person is likely to require multi-agency support and may be at risk of not meeting his or her outcomes. Any child who comes within one or more of the priority groups must be considered for a **CAF**.

Specialist Services

Specialist services are those which are provided specifically for children with acute or high-level needs who would otherwise be at high risk for poor outcomes. For example, specialist services will include child protection services, adoption and fostering services provided to looked after children and their families, residential services, and services for children with serious mental health problems such as eating disorders.

Targeted Services

Targeted services provide support aimed at particular groups of children, but often from within **universal services**.

Team around the Child (TaC)

A multi disciplinary team of practitioners established on a case by case basis to help and support a child/young person. It also includes parents/carers, the young person if old enough and other family members as equal members of the team.

Team around the Family (TaF)

A multi disciplinary team of practitioners established on a case by case basis to help and support a whole family. It also includes all family members as equal members of the team.

Team around the School (TaS)

A multi disciplinary team of practitioners who work within a school, usually as part of the Inclusion team, including those who are directly employed by the school and practitioners employed by external agencies. Members of Teams around a School will often identify **additional needs** for a child and can form part of that child's individual **TaC**.

Thresholds

See **Levels of Need**.

Universal Services

Universal services are those services (sometimes also referred to as mainstream services) that are provided to, or are routinely available to, all children and their families. Universal services are designed to meet the sorts of needs that all children have; they include early years provision, mainstream schools, for example, as well as health services provided by GPs, midwives, and health visitors.



Useful Links and Contacts

www.islington.gov.uk/integratedworking

www.islington.gov.uk/familydirectory

www.islington.gov.uk/Education/FamilyInformationService/safeguarding.asp

www.education.gov.uk

For more information on Integrated Working in Islington contact iwp@islington.gov.uk