

National eCAF

Fact sheet

An overview of the system

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National eCAF is a secure consent-based IT system for storing, accessing and sharing information captured through a Common Assessment Framework

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) has been developed to help practitioners working with children, young people and families to assess the additional needs of children and young people and to work together to meet them.

National eCAF will enable authorised, trained practitioners from across the children's workforce to electronically store and share CAF information quickly and securely, and to work together to build a holistic picture of a child or young person's needs. The system reduces the need for children, young people and families to repeat their story for different services.

A single system for cross-border, multi-agency working

Children with additional needs often need support from more than one agency and from more than one local authority area, which is why cross-border, multi-agency working is so important.

Currently, CAF information is paper-based or stored on local IT systems. National eCAF will operate across local authority areas, unlike local systems.

Practitioners who use National eCAF can be located in any area of the country and within any accredited organisation, working together across borders and agencies, improving the service experience and continuity of care for children, young people and families who move locations or use multiple services in different areas.

Who will benefit from National eCAF?

At any one time, 3-4 million children and young people in England will need to access additional services over and above the core health and education services. Some of these children and young people will need help from multiple agencies, and it is these children in particular that the CAF and National eCAF are designed to support.

Some benefits of National eCAF

- More secure, faster sharing of the most up-to-date CAF information (with consent) reducing the need for children, young people and families to repeat their story
- Facilitates cross-border, multi-agency working enabling practitioners to build a more holistic picture of a child or young person's needs
- Improves the service experience and continuity of care for children, young people and families accessing services across different areas

How will National eCAF work?

National eCAF is simply an electronic version of the standard CAF process already being used by children's services practitioners across England. The National eCAF system is based on the latest CAF form and guidance issued by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC).

With the informed and explicit consent of a child or young person (or their parent/carer where appropriate) a practitioner will enter information gathered through the CAF process, and any agreed actions to meet the additional needs identified. Other authorised and agreed practitioners supporting that child or young person can view this information and update their own actions and enter relevant information onto the National eCAF system.

Improving outcomes for children, young people and families

For practitioners to provide the best possible services for children and young people they need the best available tools and guidance to work with. National eCAF promotes a standard, best practice approach to the CAF process. It has been developed in close consultation with stakeholders across the children's workforce, including practitioners from all sectors, local authorities from each region, and voluntary organisations including Barnardo's and Kids.

Access and security

The National eCAF system complies with national and international standards for secure information management. Practitioners will only have access to information about a child or young person they are specifically working with, and only after the informed and explicit consent of that child or young person (or their parent/carer where appropriate). National eCAF users must complete training, identity checks and enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure.

National eCAF, ContactPoint and integrated working

National eCAF, CAF and ContactPoint are all key components of Every Child Matters – a national Government programme to transform and join up how services are delivered to children and young people. National eCAF and ContactPoint are complementary tools designed to help practitioners work together. National eCAF will notify ContactPoint that a CAF has been created on National eCAF, together with contact details for the practitioner responsible for it, so practitioners can make contact, work together and not duplicate work. National eCAF also notifies ContactPoint of closed episodes, changes in the lead professional, contact details and the child or young person's demographic details. Before beginning a new CAF on National eCAF, a practitioner will check ContactPoint to see whether a CAF exists or whether one existed previously; however there is no access to National eCAF from ContactPoint.

National eCAF timing

National eCAF will be implemented in a phased approach. A small group of six Early Adopter organisations are the first to access the system in March 2010, and a national rollout will begin in 2011. The DCSF will make the system available to accredited local authorities and national partners, who will then make the system available to practitioners in their area.

For more information about CAF, National eCAF and ContactPoint visit www.dcsf.gov.uk/ecm/ecaf and www.cwdcouncil.org.uk