

Protocol for Common Assessment and Integrated Working in Slough

Background to Common Assessment in Slough

Interagency Commitments to e-enabled Common Assessment

Revised March 2011

Part A: Background to Common Assessment in Slough and thresholds

1. The Protocol and Other Related Documents

This protocol sits within a framework of other local and national documents to improve how services work effectively together to improve outcomes for children, including:

National

- The Children Act 2004
- National Service Framework for Child and Maternity Services
- 'What to do if you think a child is being abused', DCSF 2007
- Common Assessment Framework: Managers' Guide, CWDC 2009
- Common Assessment Framework: Practitioners' Guide, CWDC 2009
- The Team Around the Child (TAC) and the Lead professional: a guide for practitioners, CWDC 2009
- The Team Around the Child (TAC) and the Lead professional: a guide for managers, CWDC 2009
- Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners and Managers, DCSF, 2008
- The Children's Plan: building brighter futures, DCSF 2007
- Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system, DCSF 2009

Slough

- The current Children and Young People's Plan
- Local Safeguarding Children's Board Procedures –
See <http://proceduresonline.com/berks/>
- Slough Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy

More detailed information on how the CAF and Lead Professional work can also be found in the Slough CAF Practitioners Information leaflets. However, where relevant and to enable understanding within this protocol, certain important aspects are re-emphasised here.

2. What is The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)?

CAF provides a single, shared, inter-agency assessment tool to enable those working with a child or family to gain a holistic view of support needs. The CAF is particularly targeted at understanding needs at an early stage before problems become entrenched. Therefore the CAF should be used by any trained practitioner across all services. Slough has adopted the Protocol eCAF system, a web based application designed by LiquidLogic.

3. What is the Lead Professional role?

Where there is only a single additional agency, the eCAF Episode Coordinator (ECO) will initiate and coordinate the eCAF.

Some children and families have more complex multi-agency involvement. The ECO will then take on the role of Lead Professional (LP) to plan, co-ordinate and monitor the services for a particular child and family. The LP should be chosen by the family.

4. What is a Team Around the Child (TAC)?

TAC is a collective term to describe the agencies and practitioners that are working with the same child at any given time. Children with multiple, complex needs may require the support of many different agencies. The term 'TAC' helps to emphasise the importance of the full range of practitioners working effectively together as a team.

5. What is the CAF Action Plan?

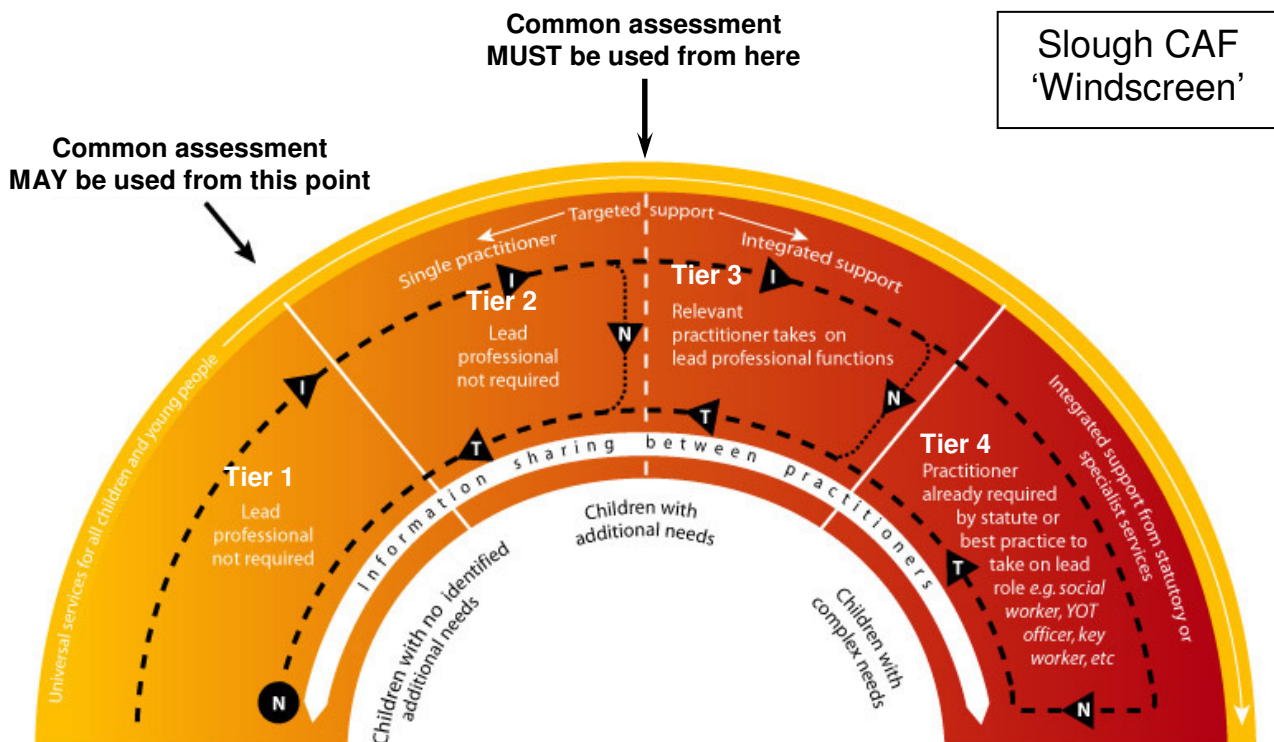
A joint planning tool to be compiled from involved practitioners' individual CAF Action Plans to co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate multi-agency support to a particular child or family. It will be used to plan the work of the Team Around the Child (TAC) effectively. The Plan is aimed to improve and streamline multi-agency working to meet identified needs. It enables cross-agency clarity and commitment.

6. What does Integrated Working aim to achieve?

- Joined up inter-agency processes and protocols to improve joint working and outcomes
- Meeting children's needs in a timely and appropriate fashion
- Co-ordinated support for children and families
- Reducing bureaucracy – for families and agencies
- Earlier and preventative intervention – “nipping problems in the bud”
- A single, point of access to up-to-date case information for a child or young person that is accessible to relevant professionals

7. Earlier Intervention

Research and experience show that earlier intervention is effective in improving outcomes for children. Slough has slightly adapted the DfES 'Windscreen' model based on a four tier model of needs and services. It illustrates when Common Assessment, Lead Professionals and integrated Teams Around Children should be implemented.



8. Common Assessment in Slough

The electronic Common Assessment Framework (eCAF) went 'live' in Slough on 1st October.2008. Training on the electronic system began in June 2008. Several hundred practitioners have been trained (March 2011), including representatives from education, health and voluntary organisations.

Extended training was introduced in October 2010. Training now takes place over three half days and includes background information about Common Assessment, information sharing and consent, the interface with Social Care and child protection issues, completing the form, TAC meetings, and hands on training for the electronic system.

9. Thresholds for starting a Common Assessment (stepping up from no concern)

All children meeting any **one** of the following criteria will undergo a CAF assessment

1. Where **ongoing** targeted (Tier 2) support or intervention is needed,
 - a Where there are concerns (at least at Tier 2 level, *see 'Windscreen' diagram*) about outcomes for the child across at least two of the Every Child Matters outcomes (health, safety, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and economic well-being).
 - b where there is concern under only one Every Child Matters outcome area, but the underlying causes of poor outcomes are unclear, or current interventions strategies are clearly not working to improve outcomes.
2. Where needs are likely to lead to a range of agencies having to become involved.

If it is unclear whether or not a CAF is necessary, there should always be a discussion, for example at a TAC meeting (this could take the form of a MAM, care plan meeting, telephone conversation, etc) to decide on the best way forward.

Parents or carers (or young people of the age and understanding to make their own decisions) must consent to the CAF being carried out.

Note: If no CAF exists, a CAF should not be *started* where there are concerns about significant harm under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. However, an *existing* CAF can be used to support a referral to Social Care. The established and published Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures should be used.

Details at <http://www.sloughchildrenstrust.org.uk/practitioners/safeguarding.aspx>

See also the national guidance '*What to do if you think a child is being abused*' (DfES 2007)

10. Thresholds for starting a Common Assessment (stepping down from Social Care involvement or contact)

Where Social Care carries out an Initial Assessment resulting in no further action, or where Social Care closes an existing CP or CiN case, the Social Worker will ensure that A CAF is started so that support can be provided and any concerns monitored through Common Assessment and Team Around the Child (TAC) processes

Please see Part B below.

Part B: Transfer to and from Social Care and other services using eCAF

There are five points where children and/or young people could be referred or transferred between Social Care and other services (education, health, the voluntary sector, etc. These are:

A Children and young people with an existing Common Assessment

1. Where the initial CAF indicates a possible child protection issue

- 1.1 In these circumstances, an immediate referral to Social Care is necessary
- 1.2 Any practitioner who receives a request for an eCAF contribution and identifies possible child protection issues should, in the first instance, discuss their concerns with the Social Care duty team, making this contact by 'phone
- 1.3 If the case appears to meet Social Care Child Protection thresholds, the practitioner sends a copy of the CAF to the social care duty team immediately – using a print out of the eCAF until e-systems are communicating and transfer of CAF data to ICS is possible
- 1.4 The practitioner informs the eCAF Episode Coordinator/Lead Professional about the Social Care contact and reasons for it as soon as possible, giving the name of the duty social worker involved. The eCAF Episode Coordinator/Lead Professional notifies their organisation's lead person for child protection, who should inform the family/young person
- 1.5 If the Initial Assessment confirms that the case meets Social Care thresholds, the Social Worker informs the CAF coordinator/Lead Professional
The name of the Social Worker should be recorded as a Key Agency on the CAF form
- 1.6 If, following the Initial Assessment, Social Care decides that their involvement is no longer needed (ie Social Care thresholds are no longer met), the Episode Coordinator/Lead Professional should be informed, so that they can arrange a Team Around the Child meeting (TAC) to discuss further support arrangements via CAF. A Social Worker will attend the TAC and/or contribute to the CAF.

2. Where Child Protection (CP) concerns are raised about a child already being supported through the CAF system

- 2.1 The practitioner(s) raising CP concerns should first contact the Social Care duty team to discuss them, making this contact by 'phone
- 2.2 If the case meets Social Care thresholds for child protection (See Slough Education and Children's Services – Thresholds and the Multi-Agency Needs/Risk Matrix), Social Care arranges a strategy meeting with the Police (and if possible the eCAF Coordinator/Lead Professional and other practitioners involved) before seeing the child. Actions will be agreed, eg whether to initiate a Section 47 investigation and who will see the child. If Social Care needs to act without parents' initial knowledge, this meeting will take place as soon as possible thereafter. Social Care will see the child within 24 hours, according to their usual protocols
- 2.3 Social Care confirms to the CAF Coordinator/Lead Professional that Child Protection thresholds have been met, and that they are now taking on coordination of the case
- 2.4 The eCAF Coordinator/Lead Professional then copies the eCAF information to the relevant social worker immediately – on paper until electronic systems are communicating and transfer of eCAF data to ICS is possible
- 2.5 The name of the Social Worker should be recorded as a Key Agency on the CAF form
- 2.6 If, following the Initial Assessment, Social Care decides that their involvement is no longer needed (ie Social Care thresholds are no longer met), the Episode Coordinator/Lead Professional should be informed, so that they can arrange a Team Around the Child meeting (TAC) to discuss further support arrangements via CAF. A Social Worker will attend the TAC and/or contribute to the CAF.

3. Where Child in Need, (not Child Protection) concerns are raised about a child already being supported through the eCAF system

- 3.1 Where a practitioner **who is an eCAF user** wishes to refer a child or young person to Social Care, they should obtain the name and contact details of the Episode Coordinator/Lead Professional from the eCAF system. The child's name and Episode Coordinator information will be accessible even without permission to view episode details.
- 3.2 Where a practitioner who is not an eCAF user wishes to refer a child or young person to Social Care, they should first contact the **Slough eCAF Coordinator (Tel 477225, email ecafsupportdesk@slough.gov.uk)** to check whether the child is already on the eCAF system, and if so obtain the name and contact details of the Episode Coordinator/Lead Professional.

If the child is not on the eCAF system, Social Care will proceed according to normal protocols

- 3.3 For a child with an existing eCAF the practitioner(s) raising the concerns should first contact the Social Care duty team to discuss them, making this contact by 'phone. If the case meets thresholds for CiN processes to start, Social Care will contact the Episode Coordinator/Lead Professional as quickly as possible to inform them that CiN processes have started.
- 3.4 The eCAF coordinator/Lead Professional continues to record and update involvement/intervention using the eCAF system
- 3.5 If, following the Initial Assessment, Social Care involvement is **not** deemed necessary, the Lead Professional should be informed, so that they can arrange a Team Around the Child meeting (TAC) to discuss further support arrangements through the CAF system. A Social Worker may be invited to attend the TAC and/or contribute to the CAF
- 3.6 If, following the Initial Assessment, Social Care decides that their involvement is no longer needed (ie Social Care thresholds are no longer met), the Episode Coordinator/Lead Professional should be informed, so that they can arrange a Team Around the Child meeting (TAC) to discuss further support arrangements via CAF. A Social Worker will attend the TAC and/or contribute to the CAF.

B Children and young people with NO Common Assessment

4. Where Social Care are contacted about a child NOT already being supported through the eCAF system, and an Initial Assessment results in *no further action* by Social Care

- 4.1 Where Social Care is contacted about a child or young person and the case appears to meet Social Care thresholds, an Initial Assessment will be arranged according to normal Social Care protocols. CSOs will check the CAF system to find out whether the CYP has an existing CAF
- 4.2 If the child does not have a CAF, and the result of the Initial Assessment is that Social Care decides that their involvement is no longer needed (ie Social Care thresholds are no longer met) the Social Worker will either:
- a) close the case, if ***no further action*** was found to be necessary
 - or
 - b) identify appropriate support services, and convene a TAC with the family and professional(s) who need to be involved; this could result in preliminary/assessment work to ascertain whether a CAF is required or the appointment of a LP, who will start a CAF immediately.

If preliminary work is carried out, a TAC should be held within six weeks, and a decision taken there as to whether ongoing support is required; if so a LP will be appointed and a CAF should be started

If the child has an existing CAF, see Section 2 above

5. Where Social Care closes an existing CP or CiN case, and there has been no CAF

- 5.1 Where Social Care closes an existing case, the Social Worker should first ensure that the child is transferred to the eCAF system by contacting an appropriate professional involved with the child or young person, and asking them to take on the role of eCAF Episode Coordinator/Lead Professional; that person should seek consent from the parents/young person and start an eCAF in the usual way, so that support can be provided and any future concerns monitored through Common Assessment and Team Around the Child (TAC) processes. The Social Worker will attend the TAC and/or contribute to the CAF

C Support from services for children with a CP or CiN Plan

Where ongoing Social Care cases require input from other services, for example Services Supporting Behaviour or Psychology

Social Care should approach a practitioner or service (eg psychologist, Services Supporting Behaviour) directly, to discuss the appropriateness of support. Social workers should use the new *Request for Involvement* form, making it clear the Social Care is involved.



Taking pride in our communities and town

Date

Dear(Parent/Carer)

When we need to access services outside school for a child or young person to, we are now using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This will help to reduce the number of forms you need to fill in by making information available electronically to those who need to see it. The form will be discussed with you, and you will get a copy for yourself.

The information will be shared with the following service(s)/individuals, and if other people need to be involved later, the changes will be discussed with you first.

Service	Name
.....
.....
.....
.....

I¹ consent for the CAF to be started and for information to be shared with the above services. I give consent for the above services to work with me/my child.

Signature

Date

Child/Young Person's name	DoB
Address:	Tel (if applicable)
Parent's/Carer's name(s)	
Address	Tel
	Tel
Current School (or referrer's name, role and contact details)	Tel
	Tel

Please ask if you have any further questions,

Yours,

¹ Parents should sign this form unless the child is considered to be of an age and understanding to give consent

Slough request for involvement form

Please return to appropriate person for the Service you are requesting:

Demographics:

Child/young person's surname	Forename(s)	DoB			
		M		F	
Parent/carer's surname		Forename(s)			
Home tel		Mobile			
Address					
Present school				Year group	
SENCO or other school contact		Referrer's name			
		Referrer's email			
Previous school					
CoP stage	Is the child/young person aware of the referral?	Yes		No	
Date of request	Is this child a Young Carer?	Yes		No	

Please state the reason/s for requesting involvement at this time:

Parent/Carer/
 Young person's Signature Date

Requester's Signature Date

Slough Request for involvement Form Guidance

- This form can be used to request initial involvement from any educational support service.
- It should be used when a child or young person does not have a CAF and professional assessment or advice is required. *
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- It can be used to request an assessment or short-term time-limited intervention (normally around six weeks of individual or twelve weeks of group support).
- Once the assessment or support has concluded, the professional involved and the referrer should meet and jointly decide whether the child or young person would benefit from a CAF.
- If it is clear *at the outset* that more than one specialist agency will be involved, a CAF should be started straight away.
- If ongoing support/input is indicated *following the initial assessment or time limited intervention*, a CAF should be started straight away.
- A CAF should always be started as soon as possible where a child or young person's needs are likely to be complex.
- It is expected that when a request/referral is made for Statutory intervention, for example Statutory Assessment of Educational Need or intervention from Children's Social Care, the child or young person will normally have a CAF in place.

*** This form can also be used where a child has a CP or CiN Plan, and a Social Worker wishes to request involvement from a support service.**

Part C

Interagency Commitments to Common Assessment

Commitment 1

Every child who meets the thresholds for a CAF assessment will have one initiated

Thresholds for starting a Common Assessment (stepping up from no concern)

1.1 All children meeting any one of the following criteria will undergo a CAF assessment

- 1 Where **ongoing** targeted (Tier 2) support or intervention is needed,
 - c Where there are concerns (at least at Tier 2 level, *see Slough 'Windscreen' diagram*) about outcomes for the child across at least two of the Every Child Matters outcomes (health, safety, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and economic well-being).
 - d Where there is concern under only one Every Child Matters outcome area, but the underlying causes of poor outcomes are unclear, or current interventions strategies are clearly not working to improve outcomes.
- 2 Where needs are likely to lead to a range of agencies having to become involved.

If it is unclear whether or not a CAF is necessary, there should always be a discussion, for example at a TAC meeting (this could take the form of a MAM, care plan meeting, telephone conversation, etc) to decide on the best way forward.

Parents or carers (or young people of the age and understanding to make their own decisions) must consent to the CAF being carried out.

If no CAF exists, a CAF should not be *started* where there are concerns about significant harm under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. However, an *existing* CAF can be used to support a referral to Social Care. The established and published local procedures should be followed.

Details at <http://www.sloughchildrenstrust.org.uk/practitioners/safeguarding.aspx>

See also the national guidance '*What to do if you think a child is being abused*' (DfES 2007)

1.2 Any delay or fault with the electronic CAF system should not be a block to intervention to help meet need. Paper CAFs can be submitted temporarily and action started pending completion of the eCAF. **All paper CAFs must be transferred to the electronic system as soon as possible by the person initiating the CAF.**

Practitioners should not wait for a CAF to be completed to carry out initial discussion (anonymously) or basic activity such as ensuring a child accesses universal services.

1.3 There is no requirement to complete every aspect of the CAF Form. Complete only the sections that are relevant to the child's needs. The Slough CAF and Integrated Working training gives guidance on how to complete the form. For details and bookings contact Suki Bhachu or Vidya Worden sukhvinder.bhachu@slough.gov.uk; vidya.worden@slough.gov.uk

1.4 All practitioners/agencies should provide information electronically (make an eCAF contribution) to support a CAF assessment where asked by a Lead Professional colleague from another agency, with due regard to consent issues.

Commitment 2

All services and agencies in Slough commit to using the eCAF system and undertaking the Lead Professional role

- 2.1 All agencies are responsible for committing to eCAF training, becoming competent users of the system and adhering to protocols guiding its use in Slough. Agencies should maintain an appropriate number of staff trained to use eCAF and be prepared to act as Lead Professionals where appropriate.
- 2.2 Practitioners cannot initiate an eCAF unless they have been on the three half -days CAF and Integrated Working Training. To access training, they must have current Criminal Records Board (CRB) clearance and satisfy any other safeguarding measures that may be required. For information about training please contact: Suki Bhachu or Vidya Worden at sukhvinder.bhachu@slough.gov.uk; vidya.worden@slough.gov.uk
- 2.3 It is very occasionally necessary to initiate or contribute to a CAF using a paper form if the electronic system develops faults. However, use of paper forms makes tracking more difficult, and **all paper CAFs must be transferred to the electronic system as soon as possible by the person initiating the CAF.**
- 2.4 The practitioner initiating the CAF assessment automatically assumes the role of Episode Coordinator (ECO) - and normally Lead Professional (LP) - because they will need to coordinate interventions for a child through the electronic processes. They become a 'champion' for that child and this will mean that *case leadership* is maintained throughout the assessment, planning and review processes.

Practitioners will also need to feel confident that they have the required knowledge and competencies. Information is available on the Lead Professional Information leaflet, and in more detail in the Slough CAF and Integrated Working training as above.

If the LP preferred by the parent or young person is *not* eCAF trained, they will need to liaise closely with the ECO.
- 2.4 For some services, the initial eCAF request for contribution is sent to the head of service or hub manager for discussion/allocation at a panel meeting, for example, Services Supporting Behaviour, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Primary Behaviour Panel, Pupils Educationally at Risk Panel. In these cases, the hub manager will need to ensure that the requester is made aware of the allocated practitioner, and that they have access to the CAF.

Commitment 3

CAF as a primary assessment will be effectively linked to existing specialist assessments and statutory processes

- 3.1 The CAF will be effectively integrated into current processes and procedures that remain, including specialist assessments, care plans, transition plans, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Personal Education Plans, statutory assessment.
- 3.2 Where agencies need to write detailed specialist reports, information should be summarised on the CAF form, but not duplicated. These reports and other

information should be indicated in the text of the eCAF, with details of how to access them, subject to appropriate consent.

- 3.3 Where access to a statutory service/process is required, the eCAF should accompany and support the existing statutory process, eg Statutory Assessment, Attendance, the Youth Justice System, etc.

Commitment 4

All agencies agree on the role of Lead Professionals

- 4.1 The role of the Lead Professional (LP) is to;
- develop a trusting relationship with the child and family
 - be the single point of contact for all practitioners delivering services to the child ie, the Team Around the Child (TAC), including staff in universal health and education services, to ensure that the child continues to access this support
 - coordinate the effective delivery of an agreed set of actions which provide a solution-focused package of support and a process by which this will be regularly reviewed and monitored
 - work in partnership with other practitioners to deliver the support plan
 - communicate effectively to ensure that all support is co-ordinated
 - handover Lead Professional role (or end the episode) effectively and professionally
 - identify where additional services may need to be involved and help to facilitate their involvement
 - continue to support the child or family if more specialist assessments need to be carried out
 - support the child through key transition points but, where necessary, ensure a careful and planned 'handover' takes place if it is more appropriate for someone else to be the lead professional
 - if the LP is also the ECO, s/he will initiate the eCAF
- 4.2 The ECO/Lead Professional will be an existing practitioner. Some existing practitioner roles lend themselves to taking on the role of Lead Professional more easily than others. However, all agencies must be prepared to contribute to the Lead Professional role where it is appropriate.
- 4.3 The Lead Professional is accountable to his/her own school or home agency for delivering the lead professional functions. The LP is **not** responsible for the actions of other practitioners or services.

Commitment 5

Agencies will follow good practice for Lead Professional Allocation, Transfer and Ending of eCAF episodes

- 5.1 The electronic system automatically assigns the practitioner who initiates an eCAF as the ECO, and they will normally also be the Lead Professional. Where an eCAF (or other assessment) indicates that a number of agencies need to come together in a

Team Around the Child (TAC) the Lead Professional role may at this stage pass to someone else in the team. This will ideally be a practitioner with access to the electronic system, though the family/young person's wishes should always be respected.

5.2 The Lead Professional will be selected using the following criteria;

- Choice of the child or family
- Access to the electronic system
- Whether any agency has a statutory responsibility to meet needs
- The predominant needs of the child
- Any earlier or existing relationship with the child, young person or family
- Practitioner capacity
- Possession of skills and knowledge to provide leadership and co-ordinate interventions of other practitioners involved?

5.3 Agencies will only be expected to offer the support of a Lead Professional for those children for whom they provide a service.

5.4 The Lead Professional for a particular child may need to change – e.g. as, staff change jobs, children's needs change etc. Change should be minimised, but where it is necessary or desirable, handover should be done in a managed way and always involving the child and parents or carers. The eCAF Episode Coordinator Transfer Process should be started (guidance available in CAF Manual), and the necessary consents obtained from parents/carers. If an eCAF user leaves, the eCAF coordinator MUST be informed.

5.5 The Lead Professional role for a particular child need not be a long-term commitment. Lead Professionals must ensure that if needs are met and outcomes have improved for a child, a managed ending takes place and the eCAF episode is closed.

Commitment 6

Agencies will provide quality Support, Supervision and Development for eCAF users and Lead Professionals

6.1 All allocated eCAF users and Lead Professionals must have access to good quality management support and supervision.

6.2 In particular, agencies should be confident that the eCAF users and Lead Professionals they manage are knowledgeable and confident in appropriate and effective inter-agency information sharing, and in the use of IT systems.

6.3 Managers in each agency with CAF users are responsible for auditing the CAFs completed by their staff. N they will normally be expected to audit two cases three times each year.

6.4 Each agency will appoint an eCAF lead or 'champion' to promote and support the use of eCAF in their organisation.

Commitment 7

Agencies will employ eCAF Action Plans and participate when a Team Around the Child is needed

- 7.1 All agencies will make their best effort to ensure that staff attend Team Around the Child (TAC)/eCAF Action Planning meetings. The members of the team have a shared responsibility alongside the Lead Professional and the family to deliver the eCAF Action Plan. TAC members must take responsibility for carrying out activities they agreed to in the construction and review of eCAF Action Plans.
- 7.2 Shared eCAF Action Plans for individual children should be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound
- 7.3 There should be clear linkage between the overarching , multi-agency eCAF Action Plan and specialist detailed plans including Individual Education Plans, Care Plans, etc.

Commitment 8: Accountability for Lead Professional and Team Around the Child

- 8.1 Lead Professionals remain accountable to their employing organisation. They are **not** responsible or accountable for the availability or quality of services from other agencies
- 8.2 Agencies are responsible for monitoring the quality of Common Assessment processes in their service, including the quality of data and the success of the action planning and review cycle in improving outcomes for children and young people
- 8.3 All agencies commit to attendance at the CAF Partners Steering Group, and will report to that group on the quality of eCAFs in their area.