

Cumbria Children's Services  
Prevention & Partnership  
October 2007

Guidance to Schools on

The Single Referral Form to  
Children's Services and the  
Common Assessment Process

**Single Referral Form**

## Introduction

This document aims to help schools with the newly introduced single referral form into Children's Services and its relationship with the **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** as it is rolled out across Cumbria.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is national initiative to improve and develop integrated working. It should improve information sharing, develop a common language, reduce the burden on families to contact multiple agencies and to repeatedly tell their 'story', provide co-ordination of services, and identify strengths as well as needs of the child and family. Most importantly by working together it should aid earlier intervention and therefore improve outcomes for children and young people.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is much more than the form, which is just the tool to record and enable holistic assessment, in turn aiding holistic intervention. As an integral part of CAF it introduces the *lead professional*, so for families and agencies there is one person who can act as a contact point and ensure a joint action plan is drafted and delivered. It also introduces the concept of the *team around the child*.

**In Cumbria**, CAF is being introduced as the multi-agency way of working through the local delivery platforms (LDP). Training and coordination of CAF is provided as each LDP is developed.

Where CAF has not yet been rolled out then schools should continue to use individual agencies referral forms and processes.

For **Children's Services referrals** the single referral form must be used in all areas, the difference being, if you are in an area where CAF is operational and you are referring a child with a CAF this will replace two thirds of the Children's Services referral form. Where Children's Services become involved through a CAF multi agency meeting, a referral will not be needed as the CAF will provide the core information, but additional service specific information may be requested to aid intervention. (See Children's Services Case Management Services Directory.)

More detail on CAF and where to find additional guidance is found later in this document.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- Cumbria Thresholds for Referral, Assessment and Services to Children in Need, including Children in Need of Protection (available on the School Portal, Documents Library, Safeguarding Folder ref: SG 7.2-07)
- Supporting Guidance from Every Child Matters website (hyperlinked to within this document when mentioned)
- [What to do if you are worried that a child may be being abused](#)
- [How to refer a child protection safeguarding issues](#)

## **Children's Services Single Referral Form**

### **The link with the Common Assessment Framework:**

These arrangements are designed to facilitate the introduction of the Common Assessment within Cumbria.

### **Pre Assessment Checklist**

All children/young people referred to Children's Services should have a CAF Pre-assessment Checklist by a professional known to them, including school staff, which identifies the needs and desired outcomes for the child. Children's Services staff will assist referrers in the completion of the checklist if needed. (If the child already has a full CAF this will also be accepted as a basis for referral.) Schools will need to become use to using this checklist as it is the first stage in CAF working, helping you see whether identified needs can be met by a single agency or whether a more detailed assessment is needed to inform a multi agency response.

### **Children's Services Case Management Services Directory**

The Children's Services Case Management Services Directory is designed to specify the various services provided by the Children's Services Directorate and the relevant service/eligibility criteria so that the referring person knows the information required before making a referral and the likely response.

### **The responsibilities of the Children's Services staff receiving referrals:**

Children's Services is committed to ensuring an appropriate and coordinated response to all referrals whichever service receives them. The worker or manager who receives the referral becomes the **'responsible children's services professional'** who must:

- Acknowledge the referral by phone, email, in person or in writing within 48 hours;
- Attend planning meetings and deliver the service alongside the existing 'team around the child' if the referral meets the relevant criteria;
- In areas where CAF is in operation, to take over the role of 'lead professional' if this is agreed as appropriate at the relevant planning meetings;
- If the referral does not meet the relevant criteria ensure the referral is passed to and accepted by a more appropriate service within the Directorate;
- Keep the referrer advised of the progress in redirecting the referral;
- If the child/young person needs services from more than one service within the directory ensure the referral information is received and responded to by the other services;
- If the referral does not meet the criteria for any service explain the reason to the referrer and give information as to other services outside of Children's Services that may be more appropriate.

## **Lead Professional and Children's Services Responsible Professional**

There is no expectation on referrers to hold any 'lead role' when referring to Children's Services using the Single Referral Form. The responsible professional is someone within Children's Services.

When CAF is fully implemented the person who makes the referral is likely to be the 'lead professional' up to the point of the multi-agency meeting, where it may be agreed that there is a more appropriate person. **For schools** it may be appropriate for the key Children's Services member of staff to take the 'lead professional' role up to the meeting, when most of the assessment is outside of the school, unless another agency is already significantly involved then they would be the most appropriate lead. It will be appropriate for the school to hold a 'lead role' up to the multi-agency meeting where it has taken time, skill and effort of the school to build sufficient trust with the parent to allow a CAF to be initiated, again this may be done in partnership with Children's Services staff. It will be unlikely for school teaching staff to hold the 'lead professional role' for the ongoing case management.

Further training on the 'lead professional' and CAF working will be given as CAF is introduced into a Local Delivery Platform's area.

The 'lead professional' responsibilities are summarised as:

- Act as a single point of contact for children, young people and their families, someone they can trust, who is able to support them in making choices and decisions and guide through the various services and support systems;
- Coordinate the delivery and review of the agreed actions of all agencies;
- Reduce overlap and inconsistencies in the services received.

More detail can be found at: [Lead Professional](#)

### **Completing the Forms**

**IF THE CONCERNS ARE OF AN URGENT NATURE (i.e. a child appears to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm) Children's Services Social Care must be contacted immediately by telephone, with this form completed and sent within 48 hours.**

**These referrals should be made through customer advisers who are based at six locations throughout the county. Details of phone numbers and what to do out of hours are available from [here](#).**

**If you are uncertain whether to refer a child, you can ask to speak to a duty social worker to discuss your concerns and who will provide you with advice.**

**Referrals that suggest an immediate risk to a child will be taken by phone, but professionals who wish to refer children should use the Children's Services Referral Form plus [CAF pre-assessment checklist](#) to make non-urgent referrals and confirm an urgent referral in writing.**

**More detailed guidance on making child protection referrals and the process Children's Services follow on receipt of a referral is given in [chapter 6](#) of our safeguarding procedures.**

Copy of the forms can be found on the school portal, County Council Website and Local Safeguarding Children Board website (links below).

Completed forms may be emailed to Children's Services through the school portal.

Completed forms should not be sent via home emails, as these are not secure enough. There are currently no features to enable completed electronic forms from the County Council or LSCB websites to be sent electronically but this is being developed.

Work has been commissioned with Capita SIMs to enable SIMs to populate the form with the core data from the schools database.

## **Portal Links**

### **County Council Website links**

Overview - [www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/casemanagement](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/casemanagement)

Pre-Assessment Checklist [www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/view.asp?ID=19667](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/view.asp?ID=19667)

Single Referral Form: [www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/view.asp?ID=19668](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/view.asp?ID=19668)

Children's Services Case Management Services Directory follow links on right hand side on the page

[www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/casemanagement](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/casemanagement)

### **LSCB Website Links**

[CAF Pre Assessment Checklist](#)

[Referral Form \(Microsoft Word Document\)](#)

## **Prompts for completing the forms:**

Schools are only expected to complete the form with the information they have. It is not expected that the information should be sought in order to send the referral. Referrals should not be delayed unnecessarily. Where school staff are completing the form with the family present, then the family of course can provide much of the additional information as they wish to.

The following are only examples to help you think about the kind of information you may already know about the child in school and are by no means exhaustive.

Please do tick a 'not sure' box if you think there may be issues but you have no information, otherwise 'no' where to the best of your knowledge there isn't anything, or 'yes' where you have information. Do please put the information in the text box.

## **Pre-Assessment Form**

### ***Healthy:***

- Any known conditions that the school is aware of;
- Any known allergies;
- Any known treatment;
- Is the medical absence more than average or has increased recently;
- Observations of the child's health i.e. overweight, underweight.
- Emotional well being

### ***Safe from Harm:***

If you are concerned about risk of significant harm, phone Children's Services Social Care. Others concerns about the child's well-being consider things like:

- Any past child protection concerns;
- Subject to or engaged in bullying;
- Any self harming behaviour;
- Any suspicions of substance misuse;
- Any knowledge of domestic abuse.
- Risk taking behaviour, including being sexual active
- Suspicion of Domestic Violence at home

### ***Learning and Development***

- Attainment levels;
- Any SEN, stage of;
- Any specific learning needs;
- Attitude to learning;
- Under achievement
- Aspirations.

### ***Having a positive impact on others***

- Child's friendships;
- Member of school clubs, school council;

- Parents involved in helping in school, voluntary work in the community;

***Free from the negative impact of poverty***

- Parent(s) engaged in paid employment;
- Living in appropriate housing/accommodation.

**Single Referral Form**

**Page 1**

Self-explanatory (CAPITA SIMs have been commissioned to develop automated completion of the form with data held within SIMs). Further guidance will be issued when this development is completed.

**Page 2**

Top half self-explanatory – do seek parental consent for referral (with exception of at risk of significant harm and informing the parent may increase the level of risk or delay referral).

***Nature of Concern***

Be specific: ensure you record impact on the child e.g. evidence, frequency, severity.

For example, you may be concerned about alcohol abuse by the parent. You need to make sure you record if the child/young person has disclosed their unhappiness about the situation, evidence of the child/young person not getting school, care compromised etc. Remember consent to share information unless risk of significant harm

**Page 3**

***What action have you taken and what were the outcomes?***

This is where you can record all the efforts of the range of support by school and any extended services. This may be in the normal range of provision of the school but may also be exceptional support, such as providing free breakfast, supplying uniform etc.

It is important to record here what has helped and what hasn't worked in order to build on successes and not repeat actions already tried.

***What outcomes would you like for the young person? How do you think the service selected below can help?***

Again be specific and avoid generalities, think about need before thinking about service, then match need to service. Be realistic about what you think can be achieved whilst maintaining high aspirations.

## **PAGE 4**

Use the Children's Services Case Management Services Directory to help you make an informed decision on which services may be able to help and to identify which area is most significant/priority as this will be the service where you will send the referral. The receiving service will approach other Children's Services you identified to ask for their contribution.

Make sure you read what additional information is needed for services and attach it to ensure there isn't any delay in assessing and providing services.

## **PAGE 5**

Self-explanatory, it is about services you know are involved. You are not expected to undertake additional work to find out, but obviously families engaged with you making the referral will have information.

## **PAGE 6**

Bottom half only needs to be completed if parents are not the main carer or not living with the child.

## **PAGE 7**

It is important to record known siblings, other people living in the household, services may have involvement or knowledge of these children or adults that would inform the assessment and intervention.

### ***Significant family members who are not member of the household***

Should include those who have a positive impact on the child/family. These people are likely to be important to finding the solution to the presenting problems, as well as any significant family members who may be having a negative impact.

## **PAGE 8**

We should be working in a consensual way with parents/carers. It helps with information sharing and enabling services to work together if you can obtain the parents signature as evidence of the consent.

Young people should also be aware of the concerns and their consent to sharing the information. You will need to make a professional decision about age appropriate. You may seek advice from the service. Schools can still forward referral forms when they do not have consent for services that have statutory responsibilities, for example poor school attendance and attempts by the school to contact/engage parents have not been successful. If you are unsure contact the service you wish to refer to for advice.