DEVELOPMENT OF AN ELECTRONIC COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR WALES

Final Report

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CAF in Wales: Technical Template

CAF in Wales: IT Options Beyond The Pilot

CAF in Wales: Training Materials
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BACKGROUND TO THE CAF PILOT

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for Wales and the conceptual and administrative features that underpin it were developed in 2007/8 in unitary authorities across rural, urban and valley regions of north, mid and south Wales. The development phase entailed the design of the CAF, accompanying training materials, and the training of multiple agencies on the use of CAF.

The CAF in Wales was initiated and supported by a Welsh government inter-departmental strategy group. Its development was undertaken by an inter-disciplinary project team of trainers and researchers co-ordinated by the Social Inclusion Research Unit, University of Wales, NEWI. It was designed and piloted in collaboration with five unitary authorities and their local partners. The project has benefited from the oversight and guidance of the Social Care Institute for Excellence who commissioned the study from NEWI on behalf of Welsh Assembly Government.

The implementation of the CAF by the participating local authorities and their partners and the evaluation of that process was not part of the requirements placed upon the NEWI project team and is therefore not addressed in this report.

CAF AIMS

The CAF was designed to facilitate better and earlier partnership working between children, families and professionals in order to deliver citizen-centred services that will support children with unmet needs. It is particularly suitable for children’s universal services in health, education, the voluntary and private sectors. The CAF is supported by a computer based system that seeks to (a) develop a joint approach towards assessment and planning for children (b) enable swift sharing of information between agencies and (c) generate data for strategic management of services. In so doing, the CAF should lead to earlier intervention, better communication, more appropriate referrals, better decisions about future interventions, and useful strategic data.

CAF PRINCIPLES

The CAF is embedded within a clear legal, ethical and policy context for Wales which intends to enhance multi-agency collaboration and promote children’s rights. The importance of following existing child protection procedures and not incurring any delay, when there are concerns about the safety of children and young people, is emphasised on the Common Assessment form and within the guidance and training. Expert opinion on information-sharing from the Information Commissioner for Wales has informed the CAF procedures. Using the CAF to identify the needs of a child is a voluntary and collaborative exercise and gaining consent from children and their parents or carers to both participate and share assessment information lies at its heart. The information provided by children and families and placed on the Common Assessment form is only entered by appropriate agencies and persons who are police-checked, child protection trained, fully trained as
CAF users and password approved. The core principles of security of information and service-user confidentiality underpin CAF practice, unless overriding matters of risk or actual significant harm apply.

CAF PILOT OUTPUTS

The project to develop the CAF in Wales resulted in a Common Assessment form, the IT system to support the use of the CAF and bespoke training materials. All these materials are available bilingually. Other outputs of the project include key materials to assist WAG in producing guidance for a wide range of CAF users and on-going support throughout the pilot phase.

DESIGNING THE CAF IN PARTNERSHIP

The design stage of the pilot was informed by views from service users and service providers via workshops, electronic and paper based questionnaires, an on-line development community and other early consultation events. The consultation led to a number of key features being incorporated into the CAF including:

- voluntary status and used with children showing low levels of need, it was not to be part of a social work initial assessment,
- a tool for multi-agency use - children’s needs are everybody’s business,
- all agencies involved in piloting the CAF are of equal status, be they a large statutory or small voluntary organisation, and
- the strategic ‘home’ of CAF lies in the Children and Young People’s Partnerships that operate across local authority areas.

THE CAF CONCEPTUAL MODEL

To create an evidence based tool that would be familiar to many working across children’s services, the CAF in Wales draws on the UK’s Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. As a result the CAF provides a simple, practical and holistic assessment covering three areas of a child’s life: their development; parents or carers’ capacity to meet the child’s needs; and the impact of wider family and environmental factors. The CAF was designed not as some narrow referral tool but a more reflective mechanism for agencies to undertake basic assessments for internal use, or to share their assessments with other services in order to promote joint action.

FAMILIARISATION WITH THE CAF

Preparation for the pilot included a number of one day training events with a wide array of representatives from multiple agencies in each pilot area. The expectation was for trained CAF users to cascade the training within their own organisations and wider. The training events across the five pilot areas drew, innovatively, on the voices of Welsh young people from one local
authority area who helped create a video used in the training to illustrate the sorts of issues and needs that might warrant a Common Assessment.

CAF CHALLENGES

While the CAF design, IT components, training and testing have been delivered successfully and on time, a number of challenges to embedding it successfully in day to day practice still exist. To address these challenges the findings suggest:

• first line managers need to enable their workers to use the CAF by explicitly identifying where the CAF fits within their agency’s working procedures and practice; and
• all those involved in CAF need to be reassured that the system will continue after the pilot phase. At present agencies’ uncertainty is resulting in some reluctance to invest limited resources.

KEY MESSAGES FOR IMPLEMENTATION BEYOND THIS PROJECT

The findings from the development project suggest the following key messages for implementation beyond this project:

• Local authority CAF steering groups should include representatives from universal services, specialist bodies, and large and small voluntary agencies;
• Steering group members should be sufficiently senior and influential to commit their organisations to the implementation of the CAF;
• Steering groups should consider appointing a full time project lead to plan, co-ordinate, steer and promote the CAF across the authority;
• Steering groups should ensure the purpose of the CAF is clear and unambiguous;
• Careful consideration should be given as to how best to publicise the CAF;
• For the CAF to be effective all relevant agencies need to be involved in using it;
• The CAF is likely to require a change in attitude from many workers. Line managers need to fully understand the CAF system in order to support their staff; and
• To support workers in undertaking a Common Assessment and entering data on to the CAF IT system, agencies should consider developing their own agency CAF protocol.

IN SUMMARY

We remain confident in the quality of the CAF and believe the pilot phase is meeting its objectives. The CAF for Wales offers a tool that can generate useful information in relation to familiar assessment domains and dimensions; it can help identify unmet needs and build on the strengths of children and their families; it can help identify goals and outcomes in partnership with service users; it can facilitate realistic achievable and agreed plans and it can help identify clear actions for the various participants. We will continue for the time being to offer consultation to those whose task it is to promote the CAF in the pilot authorities and we look forward to learning more from them about CAF implementation in the months ahead.
CHAPTER 1: Background to the development of the Common Assessment Framework in Wales

BACKGROUND

The piloting of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in selected authorities in Wales has been led and supported by a Welsh cross-government strategy group. Members of the strategy group include representatives from all key statutory agencies, non-statutory agencies and voluntary organisations.

The primary aim of the CAF is to help facilitate sustainable change for a child including more opportunities and better outcomes. It seeks to do this by developing a culture of assessment and planning across a spectrum of people who work with children, young people and their parents or carers. It aims to support the Assembly Government’s agenda to promote citizen-centred services, social inclusion and independence, children’s rights, family support, early intervention, and access to services.

The CAF is a voluntary arrangement whereby workers, children, young people, parents and carers can co-operate to identify the difficulties children may be experiencing and develop strength based solutions. It is a tool to support workers in completing an assessment of the child’s needs, in partnership with the child and family, and establish contact with other agencies in order to develop joint plans. The CAF is supported by a computer system to facilitate assessment practice, information sharing and strategic management.

Carrying out a Common Assessment may not necessarily lead to inter-agency contact and much depends upon the nature of the needs and wishes of participants. It must not be a barrier to exchanging concerns about actual or potential harm to a child or the public. In this context it is not a suitable tool to be used when there are clear and immediately referable concerns about child protection. Nor is it meant to be an alternative to specialist and statutory assessments.

RATIONALE AND DEVELOPMENT

The aim of the CAF is to help shift the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children’s lives to preventing things from going wrong in the first place. Preventing problems, or intervening as soon as they are identified, is essential to sustain a child’s life chances. Some children are having important needs overlooked because these fall outside the remit of an agency and inter-agency referrals do not operate as well as they could (Department of Health 1995a).

The CAF is one way to help those whose job involves working with children keep an eye on their general well-being. It provides a standard approach to assessment which will support:

- workers to identify issues outside their own discipline;
- earlier intervention as workers trust one another’s assessments;
- joint working and communication;
- effective sharing of information;
The CAF aims to provide a common approach to assessing children at risk of poor outcomes. It includes a CAF Form for use by all agencies that provide services for children and their families. The CAF will support a range of workers to undertake an early holistic assessment of a child or young person’s needs. It will help them to identify and understand the child’s strengths and needs, and decide what the most appropriate response should be. Where this indicates that the child has urgent or complex needs, requiring a more detailed, specialist assessment and intervention, the Common Assessment will feed into the specialist assessment process. Thus, the CAF is not a substitute for other specialist assessments (such as the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families; Special Educational Needs Code of Practice; or ASSET), but may inform those assessments, or, reveal that they may, or may not, be required.

The CAF Form is not a referral tool. The basic aim of a Common Assessment is to allow a worker to meet the needs of the child within their own agency. However, if they decide that they cannot do this, the CAF will help people from different agencies to work together. So, a completed CAF Form may accompany a referral, but it is not the means of making that referral.

The CAF will be particularly suitable for use in universal services, such as health, education, and the voluntary and private sectors so that problems can be tackled before they become serious. The CAF will enable agencies to communicate and work together more effectively.

The CAF Form records basic information to identify the child together with details from a short Common Assessment that draws on the UK’s Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health 2000) to utilise tested concepts and themes familiar to many working across children’s services. The Common Assessment covers three areas of a child’s life: their development including health and education; parents or carers’ capacity to meet the child’s needs (for example to provide love, nurture and safety) and the impact of wider family and environmental factors.

THE LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

The Children Act 2004 (s25) places a duty on local authorities and relevant partners of co-operation to improve the well-being of children and young people in order to achieve the aims set out in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (Department of Health 2004; Welsh Assembly Government 2005a). Current UK government proposals to introduce Children’s Trusts in England and Welsh Assembly Government plans to introduce new Children’s Framework Partnerships in Wales (see Welsh Assembly Government 2005b) have as their core purpose a more co-ordinated approach to planning and delivering services. The early identification of need is a key objective of these new arrangements and the introduction of a CAF to enhance multi-agency working, to generate better information sharing and to eliminate repeat assessments, is now part of a more collaborative future envisaged for children’s services.

The CAF was foreshadowed in the Green Paper, Every Child Matters (Department for Education and Skills 2003), and in the Assembly Government policy document - Children and Young People:

The underpinning policy context for the CAF in Wales is located within various legislation and policy sources that refer to multi-agency collaboration to support children and parents with additional needs. The Welsh Assembly Government’s clear vision about working in partnership and information sharing is set out in Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales (Welsh Assembly Government 2004). More specifically, the Children Act 1989 s27(1) and (2) contains explicit provisions for joint working to promote the welfare of children in need. Co-operation across agencies to support the well-being and safeguarding of children is also at the heart of the Children Act 2004 (s.25 (1) and (4)) which seeks to achieve the aims set in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (Welsh Assembly Government 2005a).

The Children and Young People’s Partnerships introduced by the Assembly Government in 2005 oversee strategic joint service planning and commissioning at local authority and regional levels across Wales and assume a capacity to integrate new initiatives such as the CAF. Recent guidance to local authorities and their partners about their strategic plans for children (Shared Planning for Better Outcomes, Welsh Assembly Government Circular 31 / 2007, p.8, 1.16.) explicitly refers to using tools such as the CAF when planning to work together. Likewise, guidance on local co-operation under the Children Act 2004 sets out in some detail the aims of the CAF and the common standards expected around confidentiality and information-sharing protocols (Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes, National Assembly for Wales Circular 35 / 2006, pp.22-23).

INFORMATION SHARING – LAW AND POLICY


In relation to these requirements the CAF is explicitly based on consent to information sharing which satisfies the principles in Schedules 2 and 3 of the 1998 Data Protection Act. The common law duty of confidence will not be breached if the person to whom the duty is owed (child of sufficient understanding, young person, parent or carer) consents to the disclosure of a CAF Form and its contents. In exceptional circumstances a duty of protection to a child may override any withholding of consent. Such a duty is to be made clear to relevant parties at the time of completing the Common Assessment.

Statutory powers to share information between agencies and specified individuals have diverse sources of possible authority. The Children Act 1989 [s27 (1) and (2)] may, and has been used, to facilitate sharing of information between authorities about children in need. Co-operation and information sharing between professionals is explicitly referred to in guidance (Paragraph 7.27) in Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department of Health et al, 1999) and in its replacement...
CHAPTER 1: Background to the development of the Common Assessment Framework in Wales

The Children Act 2004, in respect of the well-being of children more generally, supplements and does not replace powers in the 1989 Act. Co-operation between local authorities in Wales and their partners becomes a duty under s25 (4). Section 28 (subsection 4) of the Act requires local authorities and other statutory bodies (health, police) to have regard for any guidance by the Assembly Government in the discharge of their duties.

Section 29 of the Children Act 2004 contains specific powers for the establishment of information databases in relation to Wales. Under s29, the Assembly Government for the purposes of arrangements under s25 or 28, may require local authorities to establish and maintain databases about children and agencies involved with them, or, itself establish and operate or make arrangements for the establishment of such databases. The CAF will not constitute such a database but it is probable that the model will influence its future development.

Local partnerships are responsible for ensuring that organisations with access to the CAF are able to meet the requirements and make a commitment to the information sharing arrangements identified in the Wales Accord for Sharing Personal Information (Welsh Assembly Government 2005d).

It can also be noted that Section 27 of the Childcare Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to establish and maintain a service providing information, to advise and assist parents or prospective parents with regard to the provision of local childcare services; any other services or facilities, and any publications, which may be of benefit to parents, prospective parents, children or young persons living in their area. Those completing the CAF Form will need links into these systems to ensure quick and easy access to advice and guidance about facilities and specialist organisations that can assist them and the young people and parents implement their identified plans.

EVIDENCE BASE

Intervention with families and children is too often constructed around risk and geared to a child protection agenda. It has long been argued that children’s services need to orient more to prevention in order to reduce the incidence of harm and to avoid practising almost as an emergency rescue service (Hardiker, Exton and Barker 1996). It has also been known for some time that while families with children at risk are likely to get a fast response, most families so referred do not get much in the way of family support. If the child does not need protection, then the family, despite other needs, may get no services at all (Cleaver and Freeman 1995).

The consequence of an increased emphasis on child protection investigations has meant that the well being of all children in need of support is thought to have been affected adversely (Department of Health 1995a; see Peel and Ward 2000). As a means of helping to re-focus the response by social services to children and families, the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families was launched by the Department of Health in England in 2000, and by the National Assembly in Wales in 2001(Department of Health 2000; National Assembly for Wales, 2001). The Framework tools and guidance (see Department of Health and Cleaver 2000; Department of Health 2000, p.63) emphasise that children’s needs and their families’ circumstances will often require inter-agency collaboration to ensure full appreciation of what is happening and to ensure an
Research suggests a number of advantages may stem from introducing a Common Assessment Framework (see Brandon et al 2006; Cleaver and Walker with Meadows 2004b; Department for Education and Skills 2006a; Pithouse 2006a; Peel and Ward 2000; Rose and Ward 2003). These include: a decrease in unnecessary assessments; decrease in the need to ask children and families for the same information time and time again; more focused referrals; more prompt service delivery; helps to view child and parent capacities and strengths as well as difficulties; a shared language to help assess needs that might not fall within a worker’s area of expertise.

In designing the CAF it was recognized that to be effective, assessment tools must be organized around well understood ideas about child development and those factors which promote or inhibit successful progress, based on research evidence and integrated with policies and procedures (see Department of Health et al 1999; Webster 1999). The CAF drew on the Framework for Assessment of Children and their Families (National Assembly for Wales 2001) as an organising principle to generate a set of similar assessment themes that would be familiar to a range of staff across children’s services. The pilot CAF is configured in relation to the three domains featured in the Assessment Framework: child’s developmental needs; parenting capacity, and the impact on the child and family of the wider family and environment. The guidance to the Assessment Framework expects that the assessors draw on knowledge of what reasonably would be expected for this child and their parents.

In identifying appropriate points to undertake a Common Assessment, attention was given to the intervention levels as set out in Assembly Government guidance which identifies four ‘Tiers of Need’ (see Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities: A Strategy for Social Services in Wales over the Next Decade, Welsh Assembly Government 2006a, p.43). A brief summary of these tiers will indicate the positioning of the CAF.

- Tier 1 deals with universal services (such as education, health, housing) which all children receive and in which they may sometimes need help accessing all that is appropriate and available.

- Tier 2 deals with cases where there is supported self-care by families, here, early intervention, remedial support, family support services seek to sustain a family and prevent problems becoming entrenched or harmful (e.g. Flying Start; SureStart).

- Tier 3 deals with complex support and care needs and where aims include restoration of a child to the family, safeguarding, meeting long term needs, therapeutic and practical support to child and family. A level where preventative efforts seek to avoid more serious escalation to level four.

- Tier 4 deals with acute and serious concerns. Often the child is being accommodated in a social care or health setting, for example where a child is in need of highly specialist intervention to meet significant needs or prevent or address serious harm, or in need of ongoing protection.

Tiers 3 and 4 will entail specialist assessments and highly interventionist services with a relatively
small number of children and families. Tiers 1 and 2 address needs at an early preventive point and this is where the CAF positions itself. In doing so the CAF may deal with a potentially larger number of children and young people than those at levels 3 and 4, and about matters that warrant attention before they become more complex or serious. Of course, a Common Assessment may reveal the need for urgent and more specialist assessment and intervention at Tiers 3 and 4.

The children at Tiers 1 and 2 that are envisaged to be the subject of a Common Assessment are unlikely to be those already known to agencies and where an assessment of some kind has already taken place (for example, children in need as defined by s17 of the Children Act where an initial or core assessment has already been completed). Instead they are likely to be children more generally in the population who may be having some difficulty in regard to the seven core aims set by the Welsh Government in Children and Young People: Rights to Action – Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes (Welsh Assembly Government 2005b). These aims are:

- A flying start in life;
- Education and learning opportunities;
- The best possible health, freedom from abuse, victimization and exploitation;
- Access to play, leisure, sport and cultural activities;
- Listened to, respected, and have race and cultural identity recognized;
- A safe home and community supporting physical and emotional wellbeing; and
- Not disadvantaged by poverty.

These aims, which call upon effective joint working (as expected in Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government 2004), make the CAF a necessary assessment tool for a range of service providers.

AIMS AND METHODS OF THE CAF PROJECT

The Assembly Government in promoting the CAF pilot will retain a close interest in its implementation and will evaluate the impact of the pilot in order to inform future thinking. It commissioned the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to oversee the development of a CAF system for Wales and its subsequent pilot. In 2006 SCIE appointed a multi-disciplinary university and private sector project development team who have been responsible for developing the CAF system. The evaluation of the pilot will be undertaken by an independent group of researchers.

Aims of the project

The project aimed to develop a Common Assessment Framework (CAF), an electronic record of a Common Assessment, an IT system to support recording, searching and sharing the CAF Forms, and a related training pack to cover both the use of the CAF and the supporting IT system.

Methods

The pilot authorities were selected by the Welsh Assembly Government in partnership with SCIE. The project team worked in partnership with five selected authorities who, in developing the CAF,
involved all agencies and organisations working with children within a chosen geographical area, and consulted with the wider community, including children, young people and parents.

To develop a tool to be used by workers in a range of different agencies and organisations working with children calls for partnership and openness. The project team drew on guidance for successful collaboration (Hudson et al., 1999; Lloyd and Taylor 1995; Peel 1999). To make inter-agency participation successful the development of the CAF built upon an identified purpose, consent, reciprocity and trust between agencies and professionals, and between professionals and service users (Peel and Ward 2000). A variety of methods were used including local steering group meetings, a series of multi-agency workshops, and an online development community for children, young people and parents to have their say.

The project team has brought the pilot to its launch phase via consultation exercises and training on the design and application of the CAF in Wales. The team will offer support throughout the pilot period and their work will come to an end in mid 2008 once the CAF pilot is completed.

This report describes how the following pilot project outputs (required by the funders) were achieved through effective collaboration with the pilot authorities, the Welsh Assembly Government and SCIE:

- an agreed Common Assessment suitable for use in universal services;
- an electronic record of the Common Assessment;
- an IT system to support recording, searching and sharing CAF Forms;
- a Common Assessment technical template for IT developers;
- a training pack for local trainers, IT staff and other workers to cover both the use of the Common Assessment and the supporting IT system;
- on-going support, both practical and technical, to be provided to the authorities during the pilot phase through a forum on the online development community website; and
- key materials to inform WAG guidance for pilot CAF workers.
CHAPTER 2: The contents of the Common Assessment Framework

The findings from the consultation exercise, described in Appendix I, informed the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for Wales including the computer system and training materials (see Appendix II). This chapter provides a full and detailed explanation of the CAF which will be piloted in Wales during 2008. It focuses on three key areas:

- **Principles of the CAF**
  The Common Assessment is a collaborative and consent based process, through which all parties (children, young people, family and workers) can form an agreed picture of the child or young person’s situation and develop shared plans which are realistic, achievable and owned by all parties.
  The CAF process, in itself, can be therapeutic by identifying areas of strength which can be built upon to address some of the identified needs.

- **CAF Form**
  To achieve the aims laid out above, the Common Assessment form is based on the Assessment Framework for Children and Families and gives a holistic, strength based picture of a child or young person’s situation.
  The form itself is short and simple to complete, allowing those involved to focus on identifying strengths, needs, actions and possible solutions, rather than being distracted by a complex form filling exercise.

- **Computer system which supports the CAF in Wales**
  The system which can be used to complete electronic Common Assessment forms is, very straightforward to use and follows the consent and confidentiality model laid out in the framework (as described in Appendix I).
  Agencies remain the owners of their own Common Assessment forms and are able to modify, delete and share electronic Common Assessment forms with the relevant consent.

**PRINCIPLES OF THE CAF**

**Consent model**

The CAF design and training has been predicated on the following assumptions about seeking consent from the child and/or an adult with parental responsibility. If the child or young person is 16 years or older, then they should normally be asked to give consent themselves. If the child or young person is younger than 16, then the worker carrying out this assessment should decide if they have sufficient understanding to give their permission. If the worker decides that they do not, then an adult with parental responsibility should be asked for their permission. A Common Assessment will only be undertaken with the permission of the child, young person or their family. Therefore those who undertake a Common Assessment must ensure that:

- consent from the young person or parent/carer is obtained to start a Common Assessment;
- the young person or parent/carer gives consent for the Common Assessment to be ‘published’ on the database by another worker in the future. Here, basic information (such as name, the fact that a Common Assessment has previously been completed and contact details of assessor) can be made available to anyone who is in the process of completing a new Common Assessment with the same child or young person; and
• the young person or parent/carer gives consent before a copy of the assessment can be sent to any other trained CAF workers. Permission must be given for each agency with whom the Common Assessment is to be shared.

People who have given consent to sharing information as above may change their mind at any time in which case they must get back in touch with the agency concerned in order to amend or withdraw any prior consent(s).

Effective consent requires that the child, parent or carer can examine the Common Assessment and they may disagree with anything that has been written. The worker may want to correct the form and will seek a signature to the corrected version. However, the person completing the form may also want to leave the content as it is (it is after all a record of their views). If so, they must record any objections from children, parents and carers under the appropriate section and seek a signature to the version which contains aspects that are not agreed.

**The Common Assessment Framework**

At the heart of the CAF is the ‘CAF triangle’ which includes the same domains and dimensions as the Assessment Framework although some of the language has been changed to make it more accessible to workers not familiar with the terminology used by children’s social services. In addition, the CAF triangle has been developed with guidance and examples against each dimension to support its use by a wide range of agencies and organisations working with children and families. The triangle has been produced in two versions:

i. The simple CAF triangle.
   This gives the domains and dimensions (see Figure 4.1)

ii. The full CAF triangle.
   This gives the additional notes against each dimension (see Appendix I)
The Common Assessment is a simple, practical and holistic assessment which is carried out together with the child, young person and/or parent. To help establish and maintain this collaborative approach, unless there are safeguarding issues, the process of carrying out a Common Assessment and storing or sharing a completed CAF Form should always be done with the knowledge and understanding of the child, young person and parent and only with their consent.

The assessment takes the form of a guided conversation with the young person or parent. The conversation covers all areas of a child or young person’s life as identified on the CAF triangle. In carrying out a Common Assessment workers should explore how each area impacts on the child or young person’s development, the parents’ capacity to meet the needs of their child, taking into account the impact of the wider family and the environment. The CAF Form is used to record the information gathered during this conversation against the relevant areas of the triangle. There is no expectation that information should be obtained against every area of the triangle, rather that each area is considered during the conversation. When an area is explored both the strengths and needs should be identified and recorded on the CAF Form.

When a CAF Form is stored electronically its existence may be ‘published’. ‘Publishing’ a CAF Form means that workers in the future who are in the process of completing a Common Assessment with the same child or young person will be able to: know the existence of this published Common Assessment; the date it was completed; and the contact details of the worker who completed it. A Common Assessment can only be ‘published’ with the consent of the young person or parent.
If the worker completing the Common Assessment and the young person or parent thinks it would be of benefit to share the information with another agency, the CAF Form may be sent to nominated workers within the agreed agencies. The information written on a CAF Form is only accessible by the agency that completed it and the agency or agencies to which it has been sent.

The consent model incorporated in the CAF allows young people and parents to remain in control of the information they give. However, there are some circumstances when workers should not seek consent. The Government provides the following guidance on when not to seek consent.

‘There will be some circumstances where you should 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.’
(HM Government, 2006a p.17, 4:22)

Each CAF Form is owned by the agency that completed it. As such it must fit into their existing procedures and protocols for handling confidential information. The consequences of this approach are four-fold. First, the agency is responsible for the information recorded on the CAF Form, and for matters of consent and information sharing. Second, the agency must act on the information which they collect – a Common Assessment is not a referral tool. Third, each agency acts as Data Controller (as defined in the Data Protection Act 1998) for their own Common Assessments. Fourth, agencies need to ensure that their existing policies and procedures for handling such information are clear and up to date.

‘“data controller” means, subject to subsection (4), a person who (either alone or jointly or in common with other persons) determines the purposes for which and the manner in which any personal data are, or are to be, processed;’
(Data Protection Act 1998, p.2, 1:1)

In addition, if a CAF Form is sent to another agency, either electronically or on paper, that agency becomes responsible for their copy of the Common Assessment.

THE CAF PROCESS

To support workers in using the CAF the process has been developed as a number of steps.

1. Decide whether a Common Assessment is the most appropriate tool
   There are no hard rules about when a Common Assessment should be used, only when it should not be used. All concerns about child abuse or neglect should be immediately referred to children’s social services or the police. Similarly, if, during the process of carrying out a Common Assessment, a worker develops such concerns, they should make a referral to social services or the police. Workers must not delay a referral in order to
complete a Common Assessment (HM Government 2006b).

If the worker has concerns that a child or young person has additional needs that are not related to abuse or neglect, then they should consider whether to carry out a Common Assessment. Other courses of action, such as providing help from within their own agency, seeking help from another agency via an existing, well established route, or doing nothing at this time may all be valid and the Common Assessment should not hinder these actions. The Common Assessment should be seen as another option for workers which will yield a clear understanding of a child or young person’s situation and how best to address his or her needs.

2. Explain the CAF to the young person or parent and ask if one has been done before
   When a previous Common Assessment (or Assessments) have occurred, the worker should discuss with the young person or parent whether they are relevant to the present situation and should be accessed. If it is agreed that seeing an earlier CAF Form would be helpful, the young person or parent must contact the worker(s) who carried out the prior assessment(s) to ask for a copy to be sent to the current worker.

3. Agree to start a Common Assessment
   If professional judgement suggests an assessment would help identify the child’s additional needs, the worker must gain agreement to carry out a Common Assessment. When permission is refused, the worker should explore the reasons for the refusal and consider the implications for the child or young person’s welfare.

4. Record basic details of child or young person on the CAF system  
   *IT only*
   If the young person or parent gives permission, the basic details of the child or young person should be recorded on the CAF computer system. The computer system will search for previous CAF Forms and, for any which exist and have had their existence ‘published’, show: the date it was completed, who completed it, and whether the case is active or inactive. If a previous CAF Form exists, the worker should consider contacting the agency that completed it.

5. Carry out a Common Assessment
   The worker should carry out a Common Assessment with the child, young person or parent. Concerns should be discussed and the CAF triangle used to help identify the child and family’s strengths and needs. The findings from the assessment should be used to inform the worker’s conclusions.

6. Complete the CAF Form
   Information from the assessment should be recorded on the CAF Form. Based on the findings from the Common Assessment, and with the permission of the young person or parent, the worker should use professional judgement to decide whether to contact other agencies or organisations. The value of holding a multi-agency meeting should be considered.

7. Print a copy of the completed CAF Form  
   *IT only*
8. **Young person or parent checks recorded information, signs the form and gives consent**
   The young person or parent is asked to check the accuracy of the details recorded on the CAF Form, sign the form and give consent.

9. **Record consents obtained from the family on the CAF computer system**  
   *IT only*
   The worker completes the electronic CAF Form by recording the consents obtained on the paper form. The paper form would normally be kept by the agency in line with their existing protocols.

11. **Carry out actions and solutions identified on the CAF Form**

12. **Review work carried out against stated aims**
   The worker should carry out a review against the stated aims in line with local policy timescales.

**THE CAF FORM**

The CAF Form exists in two formats:

1. A printable paper form (Appendix II)
   This serves two distinct purposes. First, it can be used as a tool to record information from a Common Assessment. Second, it provides legal information, guidance and notes for both the worker completing the form and for the child and family.

2. An electronic form
   This serves as a tool to record information and does not contain the legal information, guidance or notes included on the paper form. The electronic form is not intended as a tool to be used to work directly with children, young people or their families.

The information recorded on each form is identical and is presented in the same order and with a similar appearance. In addition, the two forms are interchangeable: information gathered using a paper form can be easily typed into the electronic system; and information typed into the electronic form can be printed out within the paper form template (which then displays all the legal information, guidance and notes).
Figure 4.2: Guidance
Page 1 of the paper form

Guidance

The first page of the paper form is a page of guidance for workers, young people and families. It uses plain language and covers information relating to data protection, consent and confidentiality and is broken into the following sections:

What is the Common Assessment Framework?
Why is it being done?
Who should be involved in the process?
What will happen to the information?
What if I disagree with what’s written on this form?
How do I get another copy of this form or make a complaint?
Who should be asked for permission to share this information?

Confidentiality.
Basic Information

The first section of the form gathers Basic Information. This includes details of the worker completing the form, the child or young person who is the subject of the Common Assessment, family members and the reason for completing the Common Assessment.

This section occupies page 2 of the paper form, but is split across screens 1 and 2 of the electronic form to improve navigability.

Some of this information is used to identify previous CAF Forms stored electronically for which consent to publish their existence has been given. Specifically:

First name* Previous or other first name
Surname* Previous or other surname
Date of Birth Gender* Postcode*
Other postcode 1 Other postcode 2
Other postcode 3 Other postcode 4

The asterisks denote that these fields are mandatory on the electronic form.

The matching of previous Common Assessments is error tolerant and case insensitive. All CAF Forms for which consent to publish their existence has been given are tested against the current CAF Form in four ways (see Tests for identifying previous CAF Forms below). If three or four of the results match then the Common Assessment is classed as a potential match and shown to the user as a Previous CAF.

The existence of Previous CAFs are shown to the user before they move onto the next section of the CAF Form. If any Previous CAFs are shown then, as described previously, the worker should use their professional judgement and discussions with the young person/parent to decide whether to contact the agency which completed it. In this way, both the sharing of CAF Forms and multi-agency working are facilitated.
Tests for identifying previous CAF Forms

The four tests used to find previous CAF Forms are given below. It is important to note that users must always confirm that a previous assessment really relates to the same child.

1. Name matching
   Each first name and each surname is coded (using Phonex algorithm) into a 4 letter name code.
   If any first name code on the current CAF Form matches any first name code on a previous CAF Form, and,
   if any surname code on the current CAF Form matches any surname code on a previous CAF Form then the names are assessed as a match. Else, the names do not match.

2. Date of birth matching
   The dates of birth need first to be normalised (given a consistent format e.g. dd/mm/yyyy) then if the normalised date of birth on the current CAF Form is identical to the normalised date of birth on a previous CAF Form, the dates of birth are assessed as a match. Else they do not match.

3. Gender matching
   Gender is collected as Male, Female or Unknown.
   Gender matching is assessed as follows:
   \[
   \begin{array}{ccc}
   \text{Current CAF} & \text{Existing CAF} & \text{Result} \\
   \text{Male} & \text{Male} & \text{Match} \\
   \text{Male} & \text{Female} & \text{No match} \\
   \text{Male} & \text{Unknown} & \text{Match} \\
   \text{Female} & \text{Male} & \text{No Match} \\
   \text{Female} & \text{Female} & \text{Match} \\
   \text{Female} & \text{Unknown} & \text{Match} \\
   \text{Unknown} & \text{Male} & \text{No match} \\
   \text{Unknown} & \text{Female} & \text{No match} \\
   \text{Unknown} & \text{Unknown} & \text{Match} \\
   \end{array}
   \]

4. Postcode matching
   Postcodes need normalising before matches are assessed. This means that all spaces are removed (e.g. LE10 0PH becomes LE100PH). Normalised postcodes which are identical are deemed a match, else they are not a match.

Results of tests
If three or four of the above tests results in a match, then the previous CAF Form being tested is displayed to the user as a ‘Previous CAF’.
The CAF triangle

The next section of the paper version of the CAF Form shows the CAF triangle (see Appendix I). This is provided as an *aide memoir* for the worker and to help with explaining the principles and the assessment process to the young person or family.

Figure 4.4: CAF Triangle
Page 3 of the paper form

The CAF triangle

The next section of the paper version of the CAF Form shows the CAF triangle (see Appendix I). This is provided as an *aide memoir* for the worker and to help with explaining the principles and the assessment process to the young person or family.
Strengths and needs

The CAF triangle can be used to remind workers of the areas and issues they need to consider when carrying out a Common Assessment. The form enables information about a specific area of the child’s life, for example health or learning and education, to be recorded in terms of the identified strengths and needs. There are eight distinct sections. On the paper form these all reside on page 4, on the electronic form, these are split across two identical screens (screen 3 and screen 4). On the electronic form, each section has a drop-down box from which the specific dimension from the CAF triangle can be selected.

Recording information in this way yields a number of benefits. First, by placing strengths before needs it reinforces the notion that the Common Assessment is a positive tool to be used collaboratively with young people and families. Second, specifying strengths and needs against dimensions of the CAF triangle allows workers in different agencies to gain a clear understanding. This approach should support the development of a common language, improve trust and lead to closer multi-agency working.
CHAPTER 2: The contents of the Common Assessment Framework

Figure 4.6: Planning
Page 5 of the paper form

Screen 5 of the electronic form

Screen 6 of the electronic form

Planning
The planning section of the CAF Form is split into three sections:

Conclusions;
What needs to change; and
What will be done.

The ‘Conclusions’ section provides information about what impact the strengths and needs identified previously are having on the child or young person’s situation and allows for additional needs to be explicitly identified.

The ‘What needs to change’ section is the opportunity to discuss and record what the young person or their family hopes to achieve and a range of potential solutions.

The ‘What will be done’ section boils the information down further to provide concrete, achievable actions to address some or all of the issues raised in the above sections.

This approach supports workers to explore whether the identified needs could be met by the family or the worker’s own agency before considering whether the services of another agency are needed.

The final section of the planning is a space to record if the Common Assessment is to be reviewed and, if so, to record a review date. Common Assessments need not be reviewed and individual agencies should decide their own procedure in line with existing policy.

If a Common Assessment is to be reviewed, the CAF Form may form the basis. A new CAF Form can be completed, based on the original one, with details of progress recorded. If this is done electronically, the original form can be ‘cloned’ to save the user retyping information.
Key agencies and views

In the next section, any key agencies that are known to be already working with the young person or family should be recorded.

This section also records the views of the child or young person and those of the parent or carer. Although the Common Assessment is a collaborative tool, the views of the worker, the young person and the parent may not always agree. By recording these views separately, a clear distinction is made which reinforces the message that although the tool is owned by the agency who completes it, value is assigned to the participation of both the young person and their family.

On the paper form there is an additional space to record if attachments accompany the CAF Form. Any attachment must be done with the agreement of the young person or parent. Attachments may be an existing file or other relevant information.

On the electronic system up to four files from the worker’s computer may be attached (in a similar manner to attaching a file to an email) and will accompany the CAF Form when it is stored or sent to another worker. These files remain attached until or unless the worker removes them. The attachments to an electronic form are handled on Screen 8.
Recipients, additional questions and consent

The final section of the CAF Form records consent, recipients, and additional questions.

The young person or parent is asked to give:

1. Confirmation that they have read the CAF Form and have had their views recorded.
2. Consent to publish the existence of the form to other workers completing a Common Assessment with the same child or young person in the future.
3. Consent to send a copy of the form and its attachments to other agencies.

Participants are other agencies containing trained CAF workers who are to be sent a copy of the CAF Form including any attachments. Up to six recipients can be listed and permission is asked for the form to be sent to each individually; reinforcing the consent based nature of the tool.

The system increases its flexibility by enabling agencies to ask additional questions. Additional questions are setup and maintained by each agency. They are presented to the user of the electronic form whenever a recipient from that agency is added. There is no requirement that agencies use this facility. For example, an agency specific question might be *has the child/young person had a hearing test in the last 12 months?* In this way, an agency will collect answers to these questions for all Common Assessments sent to them via the IT system.

THE IT SYSTEM

The CAF is supported by a bilingual IT system which delivers a wide range of functionality. The system is web enabled and may be accessed by any suitable computer with internet access at www.cafwales.co.uk.

System security - Overview

The CAF system is protected at the hardware, software and social engineering level. The security setup has the following features:

THE IT SYSTEM

The CAF is supported by a bilingual IT system which delivers a wide range of functionality. The system is web enabled and may be accessed by any suitable computer with internet access at www.cafwales.co.uk.

System security – Overview

The CAF system is protected at the hardware, software and social engineering level. The security setup has the following features:
• the computers which run the CAF system and contain the sensitive data are physically secured;
• all information flow to and from the hardware is encrypted on route;
• the software has been developed to withstand malicious attacks using industry standard approaches;
• the only access to the information contained on the CAF system is via the user interface;
• all users of the system have a current enhanced CRB check in place;
• all users of the system have received child protection training;
• all users of the system have had their identity checked prior to being added to the system;
• all users of the system have attended a training day which covers all aspects of the CAF including security; and
• the system is designed such that a user can never access the content of any CAF Form outside their own agency unless the agency who completes it sends it to them.

The last feature is critical and bears further explanation. Users of the system can only access their agency’s own CAF Forms. If they want to access a CAF Form completed by a worker in a different agency, they would have to request that worker to send it to them. This applies in all circumstances, there are no overrides. This way of managing CAF Forms mimics the way that existing paper records containing sensitive personal information are handled. For example, if the police or children’s social services wished to access a CAF Form completed by a different agency, and even if they had reason to do so with or without consent, they would still have to follow the existing path of contacting the agency who completed the CAF Form. They would have to demonstrate that they have a need to access the information, and request it be sent to them. This could, of course, be sent electronically using the CAF computer system, but the agency who completed the CAF Form would have to send it – the requesting agency could not access it electronically in any other way. Whilst there are a number of different user levels, each of which has different access rights, no user of any level is able to override the safeguards outlined above (for example, no users at any user level is able to access individual CAFs or sets of CAFs which reside outside their own agency for any reason). These safeguards are built into the system and there is no reliance on training or the following of good practice to ensure this feature.

The approach outlined above provides a robust system which is resilient both to potential deliberate external attack and to inappropriate use by trained workers, either deliberate or accidental.

**System security – Operation**

During the operation of the CAF system, activity is monitored by the steering groups in each pilot area. They can access management information broken down to the individual user level showing the number of CAFs started and the status thereafter (completed, shared, published, deleted etc). Inappropriate use of the system by a trained worker (for example, starting a large number of CAFs which do not progress past the stage where previous CAFs are shown) will be evident in this management information.
Functionality
The system is split into two areas:

1. A publicly accessible area. This is aimed at interested parties who are not trained CAF workers.

2. A secure area. This is accessible only to those workers who have completed the Common Assessment Framework training.

The range of functions delivered by the IT system can be grouped into five areas:

• A repository for help and guidance materials;
• Common Assessment functions;
• A search facility for trained CAF workers, and links to external directories of services;
• User and agency maintenance functions; and
• Management information generation.

These functions are described in detail following the section on user levels.

User Levels
The functions available vary by user level. The CAF in Wales IT system has 6 distinct user levels which cater for the different functions required to setup, use and monitor the CAF system:

1. **Systems Administrators.** These users are able to:
   - Find CAF Workers;
   - Create new Steering Group Manager user accounts in any region;
   - Create new Steering Group Admin user accounts in any region;
   - Access management information across all regions; and
   - Access help information.

2. **Steering Group Managers.** These users belong to a specific region and are able to:
   - Find CAF Workers;
   - Edit profile information for CAF Users, Managers, Trainers and Agencies within their region;
   - Delete CAF Users, Managers, Trainers and Agencies within their region;
   - Create new CAF Users, Managers, Trainers, Steering Group Managers, Steering Group Admin and Agencies within their region;
   - Access management information within their region; and
   - Access help information.

3. **Steering Group Admin.** These users belong to a specific region and are able to:
   - Find CAF Workers;
   - Edit profile information for CAF Users, Managers, Trainers and Agencies within their region;
   - Create new CAF Users, Managers, Trainers, Steering Group Managers, Steering Group Admin and Agencies within their region;
Access management information within their region; and
Access help information.

4. **CAF Trainers.** These users belong to a specific agency\(^1\) and are able to:
   - Access all the Common Assessment functions, *except* CAF Trainers cannot be sent a Common Assessment;
   - Find CAF Workers;
   - Edit their own profile information;
   - Activate CAF User and Manager accounts within their own region\(^2\); and
   - Access help information.

5. **CAF Managers.** These users belong to a specific agency and are able to:
   - Access all the Common Assessment functions;
   - Access all the Common Assessment functions for other CAF Users and CAF Workers within their own agency, *except* a CAF Manager cannot start a new Common Assessment on behalf of another worker within their agency;
   - Find CAF Workers;
   - Edit their own profile information;
   - Edit profile information for CAF Managers and CAF Users within their own Agency;
   - Edit the profile information for their own Agency;
   - Promote CAF Users within their own agency to CAF Managers and *vice versa*;
   - Delete CAF Users and CAF Managers within their own Agency;
   - Access management information within their own Agency; and
   - Access help information.

6. **CAF Users.** These users belong to a specific agency and are able to:
   - Access all the Common Assessment functions;
   - Find CAF Workers;
   - Edit their own profile information; and
   - Access help information.

**A repository for help and guidance materials**

Help and guidance materials are split across the public and secure areas. The public area offers information about the Common Assessment Framework project in Wales. It gives information about the pilot duration and regions and contacts for the steering groups in each pilot region and the project team. In addition, there are a number of downloadable resources aimed at providing information for people outside the pilot areas in a transparent manner. These include:

CAF Form (English)
CAF Form (Welsh)
CAF in Wales Bulletin Number 1 (English)
CAF in Wales Bulletin Number 1 (Welsh)
CAF in Wales Bulletin Number 2 (English)
CAF in Wales Bulletin Number 2 (Welsh)

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\(^1\) Agencies belong to a specific region and all CAF Trainers, CAF Managers and CAF Users inherit the region from their Agency.

\(^2\) When a CAF User or CAF Manager is created, the account is not active until a trainer activates them. This is done at a training event once the ID of the worker has been verified.
All these materials are also available within the secure area. In addition, the secure area holds a list of frequently asked questions and answers, and a link to the CAF in Wales Pilot Forum. The forum is a discussion area for trained CAF workers and allows them to report bugs with the IT system, seek help using the IT system and make suggestions for future enhancements of the system. The aim of the forum is to provide another means of contact both between CAF workers themselves and between CAF workers, the steering groups and the project team.

**Common Assessment functions**

The IT system allows the completing, publishing, discovering, sending, receiving and management of Common Assessments. These functions are accessed via the worker’s ‘Common Assessment’ page (see figure 4.9)

![Figure 4.9: The Common Assessments page of the IT system](image)

**Entering information**

Information on a paper CAF Form can be typed into the equivalent electronic form. There is no requirement to complete a paper form first and this will depend on a number of factors including working style, and the assessment situation.
Attachments
Additional documents may be attached to a Common Assessment.

**Common Assessments can be printed to be checked and consented**
When a Common Assessment is printed, the information entered into the electronic form is merged with the paper form’s template and downloaded securely to the worker’s computer as a pdf file. This file contains all the guidance and information present on the paper form. It may be saved, entered into an agency’s existing electronic document management system or simply printed out to be checked by the young person or parent. In line with agencies’ existing practices, a printed copy would normally be given to the young person or parent.

**Publishing a Common Assessment**
As explained previously, the existence of Common Assessments can be published when consent has been given.

**Discovering previous Common Assessments**
As discussed, early in the process of completing a new CAF, previous CAFs can be ‘discovered’ if the young person or parent had agreed to it being published.

_The content of the CAF Form cannot be accessed._

**Sharing Common Assessments**
A Common Assessment can be shared with nominated workers and agencies if the young person or parent gives permission. Consent may be given or withheld differently for each listed recipient.

**Receiving a Common Assessment**
Whenever a CAF Form is sent to another CAF Worker, the recipient receives an automatic email informing them that they have received a Common Assessment and prompting them to login to the IT system to view it securely. Common Assessments are not emailed.

**Cloning a Common Assessment**
Cloning a CAF Form is useful if a worker wishes to start a new CAF Form based on one which they have previously completed or have received from another CAF worker. Cloning a CAF Form allows the worker to make changes to an otherwise locked CAF Form; all completed Common Assessments are locked. For example, a worker may wish to clone a previous Common Assessment in order to send it to another worker. Alternatively, to review a case a worker may wish to clone the original Common Assessment as the base to record progress. The consent gained when the Common Assessment was originally undertaken does not transfer when the assessment is cloned. In order to modify a Common Assessment at review or to send it to another worker will require the consent of the young person or parent.

**Deleting a Common Assessment**
Common Assessments may be deleted by the worker who completed them or a CAF manager within their agency. If a copy of a Common Assessment has been sent to another worker, this copy may only be deleted by that worker or a CAF manager within _their_ agency. This approach reinforces that electronic Common Assessments are owned by agencies, which are responsible for them in the same way that paper ones are.
A search facility for trained CAF workers, and links to external directories of services

Within the secure area of the IT system, workers can search for other trained CAF Workers or their agencies via the ‘Find a CAF Worker’ screen (see figure 4.10). Workers can search by worker or agency names and may use wildcards to help them if the full name is not known. For example, a worker can search for *counselling* and will be shown all agencies with the word counselling in their name, such as child and adolescent counselling services. In addition, a number of filters may be used to narrow down the search results.

**Figure 4.10: The Common Assessments page of the IT system**

As well as searching for trained CAF workers, the ‘Find a CAF worker’ page provides links to each pilot region’s service directory. These are comprehensive directories of services available in the pilot regions including those who are not involved in the CAF pilot.

User and agency maintenance functions

The IT system contains profile information for every CAF worker and their agencies. This information is entered when the worker or agency is created. Most of this can be modified by a worker with the appropriate user level (see user level descriptions, page 61). Some information may not be changed:

- User IDs are fixed at the point that a user is created;
- Agency IDs are fixed at the point that an agency is created;
- Users may not be moved from one agency to another; and
- Agencies may not be moved from one region to another.
These parameters ensure that users and their agencies are always traceable and that agencies remain within the remit of a single steering group.

It is the responsibility of all workers to ensure that their profile information is accurate and up to date. In a similar manner, it is the responsibility of CAF managers to ensure that the list of CAF users and managers within their agency is kept up to date as staff move posts.

**Management information generation**

The IT system provides basic manager information on the activity of users and agencies. Different users have access to different sets of management information (see user level descriptions, page 61). Figure 4.11 shows the ‘Management Information’ screen as seen by a Project Admin account. Each user of the system is listed alongside a total for each agency. The data presented can be filtered by region, type, field and subfield of work, and within a date range.

All results shown for each user give their Agency, User name, number of Common Assessments started, completed, published, deleted, and their recipient information (how many assessments have been shared with how many other CAF workers).

![Figure 4.11: The Management Information page of the IT system](image)

Steering groups can monitor this information to determine how different agencies within their region are using the Common Assessment IT system and to ensure that inappropriate actions are identified and investigated. The management information is based only on electronic Common Assessments. Common Assessments which are completed and remain only on paper are not counted in this way.
SUMMARY POINTS

- The CAF in Wales is based on the Assessment Framework and is to be used with unborn babies, children and young people. Some of the language has been simplified to make it more accessible to workers from a range of disciplines.

- All processes associated with carrying out a Common Assessment can only be done with the consent of the child, young person or parents.

- Access to the CAF system is restricted. Information is only available to registered CAF users and only when they have entered specific information into the system about the child and family with whom they are carrying out a Common Assessment.

- Individual agencies are responsible for their own CAF Forms and act as the Data Controller.

- The CAF process includes a number of steps designed to support workers to:
  - use their professional judgement in carrying out an assessment;
  - carry out the assessment in partnership with children, young people and families; and
  - ensure informed consent is given and the family remains in control.

- The CAF Form is available in both a paper and electronic format. The paper version includes guidance and notes that provide a simple explanation of the CAF, the assessment process, complaints procedures, and an explanation about confidentiality. The CAF triangle is included as an aide memoir for the worker, and to help families better understand the assessment process.

- Both the paper and electronic forms record basic information to identify the child or young person. Some of this information is used by the IT system to identify Common Assessments that have previously been completed about the same child.

- The assessment covers the child’s development, parents’ and carers’ capacity to meet the needs of their child, and the impact of the family and environmental factors. The CAF Form is designed to record information against specific areas of the child’s life in terms of the strengths and unmet needs.

- The planning section of the form is divided into three sections for workers to record their conclusions, what needs to change, and what will be done as a result of the Common Assessment. Space is also available to note whether the assessment will be reviewed and if so, the review date.

- The CAF Form provides space for children and families to record their views about the assessment and the actions they think would be most helpful.

- All CAF processes need to be agreed with the young person and/or their family. The CAF Form records consent on three issues. To show that the young person or parent:
  - has read the CAF Form and recorded their views,
  - agrees the form can be ‘published’ (i.e. other workers completing a Common Assessment on the same child will learn of its existence),
  - agrees that a copy can be sent to another specified worker or agency.

- The CAF system allows supporting information to be attached to the CAF Form. The system also enables registered agencies to setup additional questions that are activated automatically when a CAF Form is sent to them.

- The IT system is in Welsh and English and is split into a publicly accessible and a secure area.
The system provides a range of functions and their availability depends on the user level that is granted to the worker or agency. There are 6 distinct user levels.

- The system provides a repository for help and guidance materials that includes the CAF Form, CAF in Wales Bulletins, a user guide, and materials from the training days. The secure area also holds a list of frequently asked questions and a link to the CAF in Wales pilot forum.

- The secure area of the system includes all the CAF functions and provides the ability for workers to search for other trained CAF workers.

- The system contains the profile of every registered worker and agency and provides the ability for this to be kept current.

- The CAF system also enables users with the correct user level access to collate basic management information.
CHAPTER 3: How the Common Assessment Framework is used

This chapter describes the preparation that the pilot agencies need to put in place to prepare workers to use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Whilst the development project provided support for introducing the CAF, the pilot area’s steering groups are responsible for its implementation. The chapter focuses on the following issues:

• Users of the CAF in Wales
  The CAF is designed to be used by as wide a range of people who work directly with children as possible. This includes statutory, voluntary and private agencies. All agencies are established on the IT system with identical access rights and permissions – there are no ‘super-agencies’ who have greater access than others. All those who are allowed access to the IT system are police checked, child protection trained and have attended a full CAF training day which covers the principles of the CAF alongside the use of the IT system.

• Circumstances when a Common Assessment should be used
  The CAF is not a tool to deal with child protection issues. Rather, it is aimed at early intervention when a worker is concerned about the progress of an unborn baby, child or young person. It forms a robust structure within which strengths and needs can be identified, and actions agreed. It also provides a consistent and familiar record of information when the support of more than one agency might be required.

USERS OF THE CAF IN WALES

The aim of the CAF in Wales is to be as inclusive as possible and enable all those whose work brings them into direct contact with children or young people to use it. The way the CAF will be used may vary from agency to agency. It has been designed to fit within and compliment agencies’ existing working practices. The Common Assessment element of the CAF should be seen as another tool in the armoury of the agencies and their workers. Using the Common Assessment should never present an obstacle to delivering assistance to children, young people and their families.

DECIDING WHO SHOULD USE CAF

Each agency taking part in the pilot will need to decide which of their staff will be trained to complete Common Assessments. The decision should be taken in collaboration with their local CAF steering group. The number of trained users will depend on the size and structure of the agency and their workforce. For example, a large secondary school may decide to train their Special Educational Needs coordinator or their pastoral head. In such a scenario the classroom teacher, for example, would raise their concerns about the progress or wellbeing of a pupil with the trained CAF worker. The trained CAF worker would provide advice about the appropriateness of using the Common Assessment and would be involved in the process where necessary. Alternatively, a small school may decide to train all their classroom teachers, either initially or during the pilot period, to complete Common Assessments.
The local CAF steering groups and the evaluation team commissioned to assess the pilot in Wales will monitor the different approaches and analyse the implications for the successful roll out of the CAF across Wales.

**TRAINED USERS OF THE COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK**

As part of the development process, the project team developed a one day training course. Three of the four pilot areas were provided with three training days. The fourth pilot area, which consisted of a partnership between two local authorities (Conwy and Denbighshire), had four training days split between the two parts of their pilot area. Each training day had facilities for a maximum of 14 trainees, providing places for 182 workers in total.

Before a worker can access the CAF computer system, they must have attended a training course. Attendance is an initial stage in the security procedure designed to ensure that only appropriate workers have access to the computer system (details are given in Figure 5.2).

The course was designed as ‘training for trainers’ with the expectation that those trained by the project team would train other workers. The decisions about who would attend and organising the attendance were the responsibility of the CAF steering groups in each pilot area. The project team trained a total of 163 users across the four pilot areas. The trainees came from many of the key disciplines working with children and families (see Table 5.1). The ‘fields of work’ were taken from each agency’s Profile Sheet (see figure 5.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of work</th>
<th>Carmarthenshire</th>
<th>Newport</th>
<th>Neath Port Talbot</th>
<th>Conwy &amp; Denbighshire</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education/Training/Careers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Help and Support</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Clubs and Activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>163</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different pilot areas took different approaches to who should be invited to the initial training events. Whilst there was a commitment in all areas to engage and involve a wide range of agencies, some steering groups focussed on specific agencies and fields of work in their first cohort of trained users.
ACCESS TO THE COMPUTER SYSTEM

The project team put in place a robust invitation procedure which was used by the steering groups to ensure that only appropriate workers became trained users with access to the CAF computer system. The procedure consists of eight steps given in figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: CAF in Wales invitation to training events procedure

1. New agencies are identified and contacted by the steering group.
2. New agencies fill in and return an Agency Profile Sheet (this information will be used later within the IT system).
3. For new agencies, the steering group creates a new agency on the IT system by entering the information from the Agency Profile Sheet.
4. Agencies nominate specific workers who they want trained. For each worker, a Worker Registration Form is completed and returned to the steering group.
5. For each Worker Registration Form received, the steering group ensures an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check is carried out and that the worker has received training in Child Protection Procedures. Once these checks are in place, the steering group creates the new user account on the computer system using the information from the Worker Registration Form. Once created, user’s accounts on the system cannot be used until they are activated which is done by the trainer at the training day.
6. For each new user created on the computer system, the steering group mails a ‘ticket’ confirming their place on the training event which gives details of the time and venue. This ticket must be mailed to the worker at their agency’s address. It is important to stress to workers that they must bring this ticket with them to the training day, along with identification which matches the name on the ticket. They will not be admitted without both the ticket and matching identification.
7. At the start of the training day, trainers collect the tickets from the attendees. The signatures of the trainer and the attendee must be recorded on the ticket once the worker’s identification has been verified. When this has been completed the trainers may activate the worker’s computer accounts and issue them with their user ID and password. The tickets must be returned to the CAF steering groups.
8. When the steering groups receive the returned tickets they should check that each is signed by both the named worker and the trainer. They must also ensure that any ‘no-shows’ have their computer accounts removed. The tickets are retained for audit purposes.

The above procedure:

- ensures that only individual’s from an agency known to the steering group are included onto the system;
- ensures that all users have their identity checked;
THE PROCESS OF COMPLETING COMMON ASSESSMENTS

As part of the training materials, an ‘ideal’ CAF process is described (see page 47). This method of using the electronic Common Assessment may not fit within the existing working practices of some agencies, and need modification. The suggested structure is provided as a starting point for each agency. The steering groups can offer advice if needed to agencies about appropriate ways of managing their Common Assessment process. The range of different approaches to completing a Common Assessment will be analysed by the evaluation team at the end of the pilot period.

REVIEWING COMMON ASSESSMENTS

The decision to review a Common Assessment will be determined by individual agencies in line with the agencies existing procedures. Some agencies may review all their Common Assessments whilst others, such as agencies who do not have ongoing contact with the child or young person, may not. To review Common Assessments agencies may clone the completed CAF Form and use it as the basis to record their review. The cloned Common Assessment used for the review exists in isolation, as with any CAF Form.

CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN A COMMON ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE USED

Thresholds for the Common Assessment

When a worker has concerns about the safety of a child they must follow the existing child protection procedures of the agency. Any concerns that the child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm must be referred, as soon as possible, to children’s social services or the police. If, during the process of carrying out a Common Assessment, the worker develops such concerns, then again they should make a referral to social services or the police. They must not delay a referral in order to complete an assessment.

During the pilot of the Common Assessment in Wales, there are no lower thresholds determining when a Common Assessment should be completed. Each agency piloting the CAF will have to judge when to use a Common Assessment. Some agencies may leave the decision to individual workers while others may set thresholds. The steering groups within the pilot areas will offer advice where needed and will monitor the outcomes of these decisions.

When to use a Common Assessment

The Common Assessment is a collaborative exercise and, as such, requires the engagement of the young person or a parent. Workers must assess the likelihood of obtaining this agreement when deciding whether to use the Common Assessment. The Common Assessment should be used:

- allows steering groups to ensure that relevant police checks have been performed and that each worker is trained in child protection procedures; and
- ensures a robust system for the creation new users.
• when the worker is concerned about the progress or wellbeing of an unborn baby, child or young person;
• when the worker is unclear what the child or young person’s needs are; and
• when the worker considers that the support of more than one agency might be needed.

In contrast, the Common Assessment should not be used:

• when the worker considers that a child is progressing well;
• when the worker considers that identified needs are being met;
• when the worker considers that the needs are clear, and they know how to get the required help; or
• when the worker has concerns about the child or young person’s immediate welfare or safety.

The Common Assessment is a tool

Workers also need to understand that the Common Assessment is an additional tool to support their work with children, young people and their families. When workers believe a child may not be accessing or receiving the support they need to reach their potential, the Common Assessment is one of a number of approaches they make take to provide the necessary services (see Figure 5:1).

![Figure 5.1: The Common Assessment Framework roundabout](image)

When children are not reaching their potential deciding on the most appropriate action can be difficult and when necessary workers should seek help and advice from their line managers or colleagues. To select one approach or route does not exclude other options, and a worker can reassess the situation and change direction at any point. For example, workers may decide to use the Common Assessment when they first have concerns about a child or young person. Alternatively, they may decide to use it after an existing attempt to provide help and support has not been successful. The use of the CAF in such circumstances will allow young people, families and workers, to re-assess the child’s situation in order to provide more appropriate help.
RATIONALE UNDERPINNING THE CAF

There are a number of advantages to workers in using the CAF. For example, the CAF will support the development of a common language and bring the working practices of a wide range of workers and agencies into closer alignment.

Structured thinking
The use of the CAF triangle (Figure 4.1) supports workers to think holistically about a child or young person’s circumstances in order to assess and record their needs in a structured manner. The structure of the CAF prompts workers to consider issues outside their normal remit. For example, the inability to read may be caused by poor sight or dyslexia. But insecurity or family issues may also affect learning; the CAF prompts teachers to explore beyond the obvious. In such circumstances the Common Assessment would complement the specialist tests.

The Common Assessment provides the following structure to the assessment process:

- Gather and record information associated with the specific dimensions of the CAF triangle;
- Analyse the evidence base to identify the child and family’s strengths which can be built upon and areas of unmet needs which need to be addressed;
- Identify the desired outcomes and goals that the child, young person and family wish to achieve. The identified outcomes provide the basis by which the effectiveness of any actions can be assessed, for example, during a review; and
- Produce an unambiguous, realistic and achievable plan of action which is agreed and owned by the young person and their family. The plan may contain actions for the worker, child, young person and family. It is important that the plan records both the formal and informal actions to be undertaken. Developing a shared plan in this way is essential if children, young people and families are to fully engage with the process.

The structure of the Common Assessment ensures that all parties are clear about what to expect as a result. In addition, it should reduce the risk that children, young people or families’ have unrealistic expectations of what services they will receive. It ensures that all actions are supported by a clear evidence base and that their effectiveness can easily be measured against the desired outcomes.

When the CAF identifies the need for the involvement of another agency in order to meet the child and family’s needs, the CAF Form can be sent to that agency to provide information and analysis to support a formal referral. Any referral must be done with the agreement of the child and family.

Commonality
Where the CAF Form is used and shared with another worker and their agency, the recipient should understand what actions are requested, and should have a clear, evidence based argument explaining why their assistance is required. In addition, it will inform them of the outcomes the child, young person and family hope to achieve with their help. All the information and analysis will be in a format which is readily accessible and understandable by the recipient and should enable them to provide appropriate, well targeted help.
The commonality of using the CAF ensures that all agencies using it have equal status. This approach benefits both small and large organisations. For example, it will enable small community projects to communicate at the same level with statutory agencies. In addition, well established organisations will be provided with more consistent information from a broader range of relevant community and voluntary agencies.
### SUMMARY POINTS

- The agencies piloting the CAF will decide which members of staff will be trained to use the system.

- The training introduces workers to a structured ‘ideal’ method to be followed when completing an electronic Common Assessment. However, if this is not consistent with existing agency procedures it may need to be adjusted. The evaluation team will assess the impact of different approaches.

- The existing policy within agencies towards reviewing work will apply to Common Assessments. A Common Assessment may be cloned to form the basis for their review.

- All users of the CAF system must be trained. The project team trained 163 workers from a range of disciplines.

- A robust invitation procedure has been put in place to ensure only appropriate workers become trained users. All users must have been trained in child protection procedures and have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.

- All safeguarding concerns must be referred as soon as possible to children’s social services or the police and should not be delayed in order to complete a Common Assessment. In all other cases workers will need to use professional judgement to decide whether to carry out a Common Assessment. Common Assessments should be carried out when workers are concerned about the progress or wellbeing of the child, they are unclear what the child’s needs are, or the support and services of more than one agency may be needed.

- The Common Assessment is a tool to support workers to identify and provide the most appropriate support to address children’s unmet needs. The decision to carry out a Common Assessment should be based on professional judgement and taken in partnership with the child and family.

- The CAF will support the development of a common language and provide a formal structure to the assessment process. This should result in greater clarity and understanding between workers based in different agencies and result in more effective interventions for children and families.

- All agencies using the CAF are of equal status within the system. This approach will support greater information sharing particularly between community and voluntary bodies and statutory organisations.
CHAPTER 4: Summary and messages for policy and practice

SUMMARY

Background
The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a common approach to assessing children at risk of poor outcomes. The CAF includes a Common Assessment and an IT system that facilitates information sharing. The CAF is for use by workers in statutory, independent and voluntary organisations who work with children, young people and their families. Assessments and the sharing of information are on a voluntary basis and involve a partnership with children and families to identify unmet needs and develop strength based solutions.

The primary aim of the CAF is to help facilitate better outcomes for children through earlier identification of need and intervention, improved joint working, and more evidence based and targeted referrals. The implementation of the CAF will help shift the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children’s lives to preventing things from going wrong in the first place.

The piloting of the CAF in Wales has been led and supported by a Welsh cross-government strategy group and is part of the Welsh Assembly Government’s Rights to Action programme. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) was commissioned to oversee the development of a CAF system and the assessment of the subsequent pilot. To develop a CAF in Wales, SCIE appointed the project team in 2006; the evaluation of the pilot will be undertaken by an independent group of researchers.

This report describes the work of the project team. The team’s objective was to develop a CAF for Wales, which incorporated an electronic record of the assessment, an IT system to support the CAF, and a training pack. The team worked in close partnership with the five local authorities which covered the four pilot areas, selected by the Welsh Assembly Government in partnership with SCIE. A variety of methods were used to involve all relevant agencies including meetings with local steering groups, a series of multi-agency workshops, questionnaires, and the establishment of an online community for children and parents to have their say.

Results of the consultation exercise
The objective of the consultation exercises was to involve all those whose work brings them in contact with children and families in the development of the CAF. Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring voluntary and community based services were included.

- Steering groups
Each of the four pilot areas established a steering group with a lead officer to implement and pilot the CAF. In only one pilot area was the lead officer a full time post. The membership of the various steering groups differed but all included representatives from the police, health, education, children’s social services, and a large voluntary children’s service; small voluntary groups and clubs were less well represented. The project team met with each steering group to
explain the aims and methods of the project including the proposed electronic system to support the CAF.

The steering groups were committed to the implementation of the CAF, seeing it as a way to provide support to children and young people with additional needs. A strong message from the groups was that the CAF must not become the precursor to the children’s social services’ assessment system. The groups stressed that, in their view, to achieve its purpose the CAF should be set within the multi-agency context of the Children and Young People’s Partnerships.

• **Agencies and organisations working with children and families**

Questionnaires and workshops enabled a variety of agencies to contribute to the development of the CAF. The results suggest that ready access to the internet in a non-public location to check email and use the CAF confidentially should not be a major barrier to the implementation of the CAF in the pilot areas. However, a series of previous high profile IT debacles elsewhere in the United Kingdom, left workers with reservations about entering information about children and families onto a centrally controlled database.

There was consensus across the workshops that the CAF should be used at an early preventative stage and focus on universal and family support services. It was recommended that, from the outset, there should be a clear message that the CAF is a voluntary exercise where children and parents are in control of the information they provide. Informed consent must be sought from the young person or parent and this must be explicit and recorded on the CAF.

The findings from both the questionnaires and the workshops showed widespread agreement over the basic information to be recorded on the CAF to enable a child to be accurately identified. Agreement was also reached on the additional information that should be recorded.

There was strong support for the CAF to be based on the domains and dimensions of the Assessment Framework, but this was accompanied by a recommendation that the language used should be clear and family friendly and include simple explanations of the concepts used in the assessment. The term ‘worker’ has been adopted throughout the project to refer to those using the CAF. This was recommended as an alternative to terms such as ‘practitioner’ or ‘professional’ which may alienate those working in community settings.

Although there was widespread agreement that assessments should result in a plan, imposing a rigid review process might prove problematic and discriminate against those community projects which are not in a position, for various reasons, to review their work. A flexible approach, which allowed agencies to decide their own review policy, was recommended.

• **Wider community including children and families**

Involving the wider community including children and families in the development of the CAF proved difficult and depended on the publicity and support provided by the steering groups and agencies within the pilot areas. Findings from this exercise suggest that young people want to be treated with respect and have their views valued. When they are experiencing any difficulties they want to choose who they talk to and want to know what is
being said or written about them. They want adults to express things in terms they can understand, and they want the opportunity to have their say.

The findings from the online development community reinforced the importance of using plain, clear language, free of jargon.

**Developing the computer system which supports the CAF in Wales**

The computer system was developed by means of a detailed functional specification and a web based mock-up of the final system. The specification grew organically in light of consultations with the steering groups, workers (via a series of development workshops), and children, young people and the public (via an online consultation exercise).

Once the functions of the system were agreed, a detailed technical specification was developed in conjunction with the IT developers within the project team. The system was built and run through two phases of testing:

- Alpha testing was performed by the project team to ensure that the system met all the criteria laid out in the functional and technical specifications.
- Beta testing was undertaken by a range of workers and steering group members to highlight any further modifications required.

The changes identified were catalogued and assigned a priority order for the project team to address them. All changes identified were completed and tested before the system was presented to the SCIE web development team who signed the system off as fit for purpose.

The computer system was developed on time and on budget and went live prior to the first training events.

**Developing the training materials to support the CAF**

A principle underpinning the CAF pilot was that every user must be trained on all aspects of the CAF before gaining access to the system. The project team developed training materials and designed a day’s training. The aim was to prepare potential users in the pilot areas to carry out Common Assessments and create, save and share them using the IT system. The training was informed by the findings from the consultation exercises. In particular, emphasis was placed on the importance of following existing child protection procedures when a worker had concerns about a child’s safety. In such circumstances, undertaking a Common Assessment should not delay making a referral to children’s social services or the police.

The design of the training drew on different techniques to help engage with and sustain the attention of the trainees, and included short presentations, video scenarios, and hands on work with computers. The assessment of children’s developmental needs, parenting capacity, and the impact of family and environmental factors was an integral part of every exercise.

**Content of the CAF in Wales**

The findings from the consultation exercises have resulted in the project team taking the approach to the CAF in Wales outlined below.
Principles of the CAF

The CAF in Wales is compatible with the Assessment Framework, which is evidence based and already familiar to many practitioners working with children and families. The ‘CAF triangle’ includes the same domains and dimensions. In order to encourage its use by community groups and to support direct work with children and families some of the terminology has been made more accessible. The CAF triangle has been designed to act as an aid memoir for workers.

The CAF Form enables workers to record the findings from their assessment against the relevant dimension. For example, in considering a child’s health the worker, with the parent or young person, should identify and record both the strengths and any unmet needs. There is no expectation that information will be recorded against every area. The CAF in Wales is predicated on working in partnership with the young person or parent. Each step of the CAF process must be done with their agreement.

The IT system enables completed CAF Forms to be stored electronically. The existence of an electronically stored form is only ‘published’ if the young person or parent gives consent. A published form enables other workers completing a Common Assessment with the same child to learn of its existence, the date it was completed, and the contact details of the agency responsible.

If the child and parent agree that the services of another agency are needed, the IT system enables the worker to send the completed CAF Form to a nominated worker in another agency securely.

Each CAF Form is the property of the agency that completed it. The agency is responsible for acting on the findings from the assessment and must act as Data Controller for their own Common Assessments. When a copy of a CAF Form is sent to another agency, the recipient agency is responsible for their own copy.

To support workers in using the CAF system a step by step model has been constructed. This will help workers to:

- decide whether a Common Assessment is the most appropriate tool to use to support the child or young person meet their potential,
- ensure the child and parent understand the process, are fully involved and agree to all decisions,
- carry out an holistic assessment with the child and parent,
- share information in line with the law on data protection, and
- form a plan based on the findings of the assessment and carry out the agreed actions.

The CAF Form

The CAF Form (available in both Welsh and English) has been produced in both a paper and electronic version. The way information is recorded on each type of form is identical and is presented in the same order and with a similar appearance. This provides a consistent and straightforward system which enables information recorded on the paper form to be easily typed into the electronic system, and information recorded electronically can be printed out onto the paper.
Development of an Electronic Common Assessment Framework for Wales

Final report

CHAPTER 4: Summary and messages for policy and practice

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A printed version enables young people and parents to check for any inaccuracies, allows them to record their own views, and sign the aspects of the Common Assessment they agree to.

The CAF Form records basic information including the name of the worker, details to identify the child, the reason for the assessment, and the names of family members. With consent, workers can identify previously ‘published’ CAF Forms relating to the same child. Cases are matched using four tests: name, date of birth, gender, and postcode. If three of the four matches are positive the existence of the CAF Form is displayed to the worker who must confirm that it relates to the same child.

The central section of the CAF Form records the findings from the assessment. This is done by identifying the aspect of the child’s life that is being considered and recording the findings in terms of strengths and needs. Recording the family’s strengths as well as needs gives a positive message to families, and ensures the plan builds on what is already working well. The dimensions of Assessment Framework, on which the CAF triangle is based, are already familiar to many workers and their continued use encourages further the development of a common language.

The CAF Form includes a planning section that is split into three: conclusions, what needs to change, and what will be done. The objective is to encourage the worker and family to consider to what extent the resources within the family and the assessing agency can meet the child’s needs before deciding to make a referral to another agency. Agencies can record if and when the assessment is to be reviewed. Not all agencies using the CAF will be in a position to review their work.

Although the CAF is carried out in collaboration with the family they may not always agree with the views and decisions of the worker. The form provides a space for the child or young person, and a separate space for the parent to record their comments about the assessment.

The CAF Form records: whether the young person or parent has read the form and had their views recorded; consent to ‘publish’ the form; and consent for a copy of the assessment, with any attachments, to be sent to a specifically named worker and agency.

The CAF IT system

The CAF is supported by a bilingual web based IT system with separate public and secure areas. The public area provides information about the CAF pilot in Wales with a number of downloadable resources including the user guide, the training materials and two bulletins produced by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The secure area is accessible only to trained CAF workers and serves a number of functions. For example, in addition to all the materials displayed on the public area, the secure area provides a repository for guidance and affords a discussion forum to connect CAF workers to each other, the steering groups and the project team. This allows bugs in the IT system to be reported, enables CAF workers to seek help in using the system, and make suggestions for future enhancements.

The secure area enables CAF workers to: access all the CAF functions; identify other trained CAF workers or their agencies; and link to external service directories. The system holds a profile for
every worker and agency. Keeping this information current is the responsibility of the CAF managers.

Finally, the system provides management information to enable the activity of users and agencies to be monitored. This function is available to CAF managers to support them in their supervision and monitoring roles and to systems administrators and steering groups in order for them to ensure any inappropriate use of the system is identified and investigated.

Training and preparation for CAF

Bilingual training materials have been developed to cover all aspects of running a training day for CAF workers. The materials include three elements. The first is an information pack for trainers, which provides details on how to organise and set up a training event, and how to get trainees added to the IT system before the day starts. It also includes all the materials needed to run the various training exercises. The second is a PowerPoint presentation that forms the structure for the day. This gives information about the CAF process, video scenarios and other group exercises. The third element is the ‘take-home’ information pack for trainees, which contains all the information used during the training along with additional reference material.

To introduce a new system, such as the CAF, meant that prior to the pilot few established trainers had the knowledge to train workers. The project team provided a total of 13 training days, attended by 163 workers who represented the key agencies working with children and families including community groups, leisure activities and voluntary agencies.

To ensure that only appropriate workers gained access to the CAF system the project team in partnership with the steering groups put in place a security procedure. The procedure meant steering groups had to ensure: potential CAF users were based in agencies known to them; enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks were carried out and users had been trained in child protection procedures. These security procedures made certain that the system for creating new users on the CAF system was robust.

The training covered when the CAF should be used. And set the CAF within existing child protection procedures. The video scenarios and discussion groups held during the training enabled trainees to reflect on how the CAF would support their day-to-day work with children and families. It encouraged them to consider issues outside their normal remit, to think holistically about a child’s needs, and record their findings in a structured way. The aim was to ensure workers understood the importance of basing their actions on firm evidence.

MESSAGES FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE: ROLLING THE CAF OUT ACROSS WALES

The development of the CAF in Wales was carried out at a time when the impact of significant new pieces of legislation and government guidance were still being felt. For example, agencies and organisations had to ensure their practice was in line with the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Data Protection Act 1998. At the same time greater emphasis was placed on inter-agency collaboration in the Welsh Government’s clear vision about working in partnership and information sharing as set out in Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales (Welsh Assembly...
Government 2004) and more specifically in Children and Young People: Rights to Action – Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes (Welsh Assembly Government 2005b). Given these clear policy expectations about joint working, the findings from the development project suggest that there are a number of essential features for any future successful roll-out of CAF across Wales.

- Local authority steering groups should include representatives from universal services such as health and education, specialist bodies such as the police, probation and social services, and representatives from large and small voluntary agencies such as activity based clubs and groups. The CAF must be inclusive of all agencies and key to its success will be the involvement of the voluntary and private sectors.

- The steering group members should be sufficiently senior and influential to commit their organisations to the implementation of the CAF. A clear message from the various consultation exercises was that the CAF in Wales should be used by workers in universal and family support services to identify children’s needs at the early stages of intervention.

- The steering groups should consider appointing a full time project lead to plan, co-ordinate, steer and promote the CAF across the authority. The findings suggest that a part time position can result in conflicting pressures which may affect the implementation of the CAF.

- The steering groups should ensure the purpose of the CAF is clear and unambiguous. The primary aims of the CAF are to help facilitate sustainable change for a child, more opportunities and better outcomes. It seeks to do this by developing a culture of assessment and planning across a spectrum of people who work with children, young people and their parents or carers. It aims to support the Assembly Government’s agenda to promote citizen-centred services, social inclusion and independence, children’s rights, family support, early intervention, and access to services.

- To fulfil its aims, the general public, agencies and organisations working with children and families should understand that the CAF is not part of children’s social services assessment system, nor is it a multi-agency pre-referral form. It will be important to ensure that both the general public and agencies understand that the CAF is a process that requires consent; Common Assessments are carried out on a voluntary basis only.

- Careful consideration should be given as to how best to publicise the CAF. Local authorities should develop a strategy for informing workers within relevant agencies and ensure those working in small voluntary groups are included. Equal attention needs to be given to informing the general public. Possible initiatives for reaching children and young people may include working with schools, voluntary groups and clubs, while parents may be contacted through parent groups, GP surgeries and health clinics.

- In order for the CAF to be effective all relevant agencies need to be involved in using it. This will require a sufficient body of trained CAF workers. Local steering groups and agencies need to consider how many workers within their organisations should be trained to enable CAF to be successfully integrated into day to day practice. The number will depend on the size and type of organisation and may change over time.

- The training developed by the project team covers both the principles of the Assessment Framework, on which the CAF in Wales is based, and the use of the IT system. An important message that trainers will need to get across is that undertaking a Common Assessment is not an end in itself; the agency is responsible for the subsequent decisions and actions that may result from it.
• The introduction of the CAF is likely to require a change in attitude from many workers. This is not easy to achieve and the training and implementation of the CAF in Wales should ensure workers understand why it is being introduced and how it will benefit the children and families they work with. Line managers can provide essential support to workers who have been trained to use the CAF if they themselves fully understand the CAF system and are supported by senior staff. Consideration should be given to targeting some initial training at line managers.

• CAF workers need to fully understand the IT system, and any understandable concerns over inappropriate access to data and information leaks need to be addressed in training. To do this, publicity and training should clearly detail the structure and security of the CAF IT system and the safeguards that are in place to ensure only appropriate workers are granted access.

• To support workers in undertaking a Common Assessment and entering data on to the CAF IT system, agencies should consider developing their own agency CAF protocol which outlines the procedures to be followed and how and if plans are to be reviewed. The protocol should also highlight the need to follow existing agency child protection procedures when there are safeguarding concerns, as well as explaining the importance of gaining consent when carrying out a Common Assessment.

• The success of the information sharing element of the CAF will depend on workers having access to the internet and reading their emails on a daily basis. Although the findings from the project suggest most workers have internet access in a non public place, steering groups and agencies should ensure this applies to all trained CAF workers. The role of line managers will be crucial in making certain that email messages are checked every working day.

• The findings from the project brought to light concerns over the ownership of the completed CAF Forms. Steering groups should provide guidance to all agencies using the CAF that completed CAF Forms should be treated in the same way as other records held by the agency. Each individual agency will be responsible for any CAF Forms that their workers complete and similarly for any CAF Forms that they receive from another agency.

• To support CAF workers in meeting the needs of children and families the CAF system links to local directories of services. For this to be of use, agencies must ensure that their entries are comprehensive and up-to date.

• The consultation workshops requested that a multi-agency tool to support interagency working and the role of the lead worker, be developed to follow on from the CAF Form. The Welsh Assembly Government agreed to consider this further once the pilot had been completed. To ensure that both parts of the system are compatible this should be done before the CAF is rolled out across Wales.

• Once the pilot period for the CAF is completed and if the CAF is rolled out across Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government will need to give further thought to the arrangements that need to be put in place in the short and long terms to maintain the CAF computer system. A detailed description of various options is included in a separate annex to this report *CAF in Wales: IT options beyond the pilot*.
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APPENDIX I: Developing the Common Assessment Framework – a consultation exercise

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the consultation process that was undertaken to inform the project team in their work to develop the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in Wales. The success of any change in working practice, and particularly one that affects workers from a range of different agencies and depends on their collaboration, must be underpinned by a commitment from chief executives and directors of the relevant services.

Seven local authorities responded to the invitation issued by SCIE to participate in the development and piloting of an electronic CAF for Wales, and provided the requested supportive information. From these applications four pilot areas were selected by SCIE to participate in the CAF project and grants of up to £25,000 were made available to the areas to support their work. The selection ensured that a pilot areas was based in each of the four Welsh police authorities.

The chosen pilot areas consisted of a county borough, two district/unitary authorities and a joint application involving a county borough and a district/unitary authority. The following provides some comparative information about them.

Neath Port Talbot is a district/unitary authority with a population of 134,471 covering an area of 171 square miles. It ranks amongst the 10% most deprived areas in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government 2005c) and includes areas of multi deprivation; 26% of adults are social security benefit claimants and nearly a quarter (23%) of the school age children qualify for free school meals.

Carmarthenshire also a district/unitary authority. It is one of the largest counties in Wales, covering 925 square miles with a population of 173,635. The authority includes seven wards within the most deprived in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government 2005c).

Newport is a county borough covering 84 square miles with a population of 150,000; 21% of whom are children. It includes several areas of high poverty, one of which ranks amongst the 25 most deprived in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government 2005c).

Conwy and Denbighshire made a joint application. Conwy is a county borough with a population of 109,597. It covers 436 square miles with a number of areas described as being among the poorest sub wards in Wales in terms of unemployment, child poverty and poor educational achievement. Denbighshire, with a population of 93,065 and covering an area of 326 square miles, also has pockets of multiple deprivation with some communities featuring amongst the highest for child poverty on the Wales index.

The authorities took different approaches in relation to piloting the CAF. At the point of application: two (Neath Port Talbot and Carmarthenshire) planned to implement the CAF across the whole of their authorities, one (Newport) planned to base the pilot on a high school cluster, and the
dual bid (from Conwy and Denbighshire) planned to pilot the CAF within three wards; two in Conwy and one within Denbighshire.

To participate in the CAF development project and to implement the CAF for the coming pilot period each authority established a steering group with a lead officer. The steering groups differed in terms of their membership, but all included representatives from the police, health, education and children’s social services.

At the outset of the project there was a degree of confusion over whether the steering groups would be responsible for developing the IT to support the CAF in their areas. When this occurred a significant proportion of the steering group membership was responsible for systems, such as management information systems, rather than managers representing specific services. The initial meeting between the project team and the steering groups clarified that the IT development would be done by the project team. As a consequence the steering group adjusted its membership to include a greater representation of service providers.

**LIAISING WITH THE STEERING GROUPS ABOUT CAF**

Liaison with steering groups was essential to ensure that the development of the CAF was done in partnership with those whose work brings them into contact with children and families, and with children, young people and parents. The project team worked closely with the four steering groups responsible for driving the CAF forward across their established pilot areas. Members of the project team sent a brief outline of the project to the steering groups and met with each group to discuss the project in more detail and agree a strategy and timetable to enable managers, workers and children and families in their authority to contribute to each stage in the development of the CAF. To aid communication an identified member of the steering group agreed to liaise closely with the project team during the development phase. In one of the four pilot areas, a new full time post had recently been created to promote multi-agency working in that area. The post holder took on the responsibility for liaising with the project team and publicising the CAF to relevant agencies, and children, young people and families within their pilot area. In the other pilot areas these responsibilities were taken up by a project lead, alongside their existing roles outside the CAF.

The initial meeting with the steering groups started with a short presentation by the project team to explain:

- what the CAF was and how it would support earlier intervention for vulnerable children and families;
- the aims of the project to develop the CAF in Wales;
- the methods the project team would use to involve workers, children and families (including an online community and workshops for managers and workers);
- the electronic CAF system; and
- the training and support the project team would provide.

The meetings enabled members of the steering groups to comment on the project team’s approach and to raise any concerns.
Concerns raised by the steering groups

All four steering groups expressed much enthusiasm for developing the CAF in Wales although there was some uncertainty over its purpose. For example, there was a general concern that the CAF might be seen as integral and owned by children’s social services; a pre-referral assessment system linked to the *Integrated Children’s System* (Department for Education and Skills 2006b). The consensus across the steering groups was that this would not be the most helpful approach and a clear message was given to the project team that the CAF should be firmly set within *Children and Young People’s Partnerships* (Welsh Assembly Government 2002). *Children and Young People’s Partnerships* are multi-agency strategic planning groups for all services relating to children and young people.

Other concerns related to the ‘ownership’ of a completed Common Assessment and questions were asked about how long information about a Common Assessment would be held on the computerised system, what factors would result in this information being removed and who would have the ability to carry out this task. It was agreed that the project team should consult with the Welsh Assembly, SCIE and the Information Commissioner to ensure appropriate and legal decisions were made in developing the CAF.

The steering groups’ commitment to the project team

To aid communication with as wide an audience as possible, the project team outlined the structure of an online development community. The aim of the community was to inform and involve workers, children and families in the development of the CAF, act as a repository for documents, help to establish a sense of ownership of the CAF and provide a means by which the project team could recruit workers to test the CAF IT system when it was developed. The steering groups welcomed this mode of communication and agreed to inform and encourage managers and workers in the agencies they represented to regularly access the online development community and to complete the short questionnaire online.

During the initial meeting with the steering groups, dates for the workshops were agreed and the potential attendees discussed. The steering groups took responsibility for ensuring workers from a range of statutory and voluntary agencies were invited and encouraged to attend the workshops. Historical issues in one steering group, initially impacted on their cohesion and some members were not convinced of the usefulness of the CAF, nor on the need for more than the steering group representatives to attend the workshop. However, after considerable discussion it was acknowledged that this would restrict the consultation exercise and there was agreement to open the workshop to a wider audience.

By the end of the meetings the steering group representatives agreed to work closely with the project team to:

- ensure children and families were informed about the CAF project;
- disseminate information about the CAF and distribute invitations to the workshops to managers and workers in relevant agencies;
- alert managers and workers to the questionnaire to be completed online and make paper copies available when necessary;
CONSULTING MANAGERS AND WORKERS ABOUT CAF

Previous work on developing multi-agency tools for assessing children’s needs (Cleaver et al. 2004a; Cleaver and Nicholson 2005; Pithouse 2006b) suggests the task of collaborating with staff from a range of agencies to gain agreement over the language, content and process should not be underestimated. The investment of sufficient time and resources at an early stage was found to be associated with a greater sense of ownership and use of the materials.

To encourage as wide participation as possible a combination of methods were used including:

- worker questionnaires;
- workshops with key stakeholders;
- an online development community to inform the wider worker group about the CAF and enable them to participate in its development. As will be discussed in Appendix I it was also used to enable children, young people and families to have their say.

The expectation was that this mix of methods would enable every participant to contribute and ensure their experiences and professional judgements were heard by the project team.

FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaire was designed by the project team and posted on the online development community for a period of three months. To ensure access to the internet did not restrict the participation of any workers, the steering groups in each pilot authority undertook to signpost the agencies they represented to the online community. However, not all workers, particularly those based in small voluntary agencies, had access to the internet and the steering groups agreed to ensure that paper copies would be available and took responsibility for collecting completed questionnaires and entering the data onto the online community website.

The questionnaire gathered information about: the respondents themselves and their organisation, their access to IT and the internet, their views on how the completing of a Common Assessment would best be organised in their agency, and what information they thought should be available to users of the electronic CAF system.

One hundred and twenty five completed questionnaires were made available to the project team via the online community website. Respondents were based in 13 Welsh authorities, although, as would be expected, the majority (n=115) worked within the pilot authorities. The responses from the pilot authorities varied. For example, 35 responses were received from Carmarthenshire, 28 from Conwy...
and 39 from Denbighshire, while 7 were made available from Neath Port Talbot and 6 from Newport.

Profile of the respondents
The majority (82%) of the responses came from workers based in public agencies; 23 workers (18%) from voluntary and independent agencies submitted a completed questionnaire. The agencies represented by the respondents were:

- Health - including practitioners working in NHS trusts, GP surgeries, and CAMHS;
- Education – including schools, careers service, educational psychology service, and speech and language therapy;
- Youth services including the youth offending service;
- Children’s social services;
- Police;
- Young carer’s agencies;
- County councils;
- National voluntary organisations – including Barnardos and NCH;
- Local authority voluntary services councils; and
- Local voluntary groups – including activity clubs, before and after school groups, playgroups, childminding and women’s aid.

The range of the agencies represented by the respondents suggests that the development of the CAF was informed by the views and experiences of those working in organisations responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, such as children’s social services, police and health, and those working to enable children to fulfil their potential, such as education, activity clubs, and youth services.

Respondents represented all levels in their organisations. Their positions ranged from senior managerial posts such as head teachers and detective inspectors, to middle management, and those working directly with children and families such as teachers, nurses, social workers, health visitors, general practitioners, project workers, and youth advisors.

Internet access
The success of the CAF is predicated on users having internet access and checking their email on a daily basis. At the outset of the project there were concerns that workers in small local voluntary bodies and some staff in the statutory sector may not have such access. The responses suggest that access to the internet is widespread. All but three respondents reported having access to the internet at their place of work; the three who did not worked in a NHS trust, a high school and the police service. Ease of access to the internet is affected by the mode of connection; via the telephone tends to make access slow and unreliable. A quarter of respondents (24.6%) who had access reported this was via a dial up connection.

Dealing with sensitive material on the internet necessitates privacy when connecting and working, and confidence in being able to store and download material to a personal email address. The majority of workers (86.1%) who had access to the internet at work reported that this was located in
a private area. The 17 workers where access was in a place open to the public did not cluster in any particular agency; they came from a range of both statutory and voluntary organisations.

The majority of respondents had their own email address. The 10 respondents who reported not having a personal email address, came from both statutory and voluntary organisations including schools, NHS trusts, NCH, the county council and women’s aid. Three-quarters (76.5%) of respondents reported that they checked their emails at least once per day, a fifth (19.3%) checked them at least once a week and five respondents (4.2%) checked them less frequently. The five workers who checked for emails less than once a week all came from the statutory sector, two worked in infant schools, two in GP surgeries and one in a NHS trust. The majority of the workers who did not check their emails on a daily basis reported that to do so would significantly impact on their working practice.

Whilst most respondents had private internet access, a good internet connection, and checked their email daily, there are clearly some workers who, at present, would find using the CAF computer system difficult due to their current IT provision. This issue was communicated to the steering groups who are offering a range of additional support and advice to the affected individuals and organisations.

**Completing CAF within their agency**

It was made clear to those completing the questionnaire that for the pilot, every worker using the CAF would have to have attended a one day training event. The questionnaire explored respondents’ views on the proportion of staff within their agency that should be trained to use the CAF. The responses varied greatly, for example 41% of respondents thought every member of staff in their agency should be trained, while 16% felt less than 20% of staff should be trained. As might be expected responses varied with the size and type of organisation but there was also considerable variation within a particular type of organisation. For example, although some school staff thought all teachers should be trained to use the CAF, others thought this should be the responsibility of a specific member of staff, such as the head or deputy head teacher, the SENCO or named child protection teacher.

**Information available to users of the electronic CAF system**

To inform the development of the IT system to support the CAF in Wales the questionnaire sought the views of respondents on what information about the child should be made available electronically to other trained users of the system. The responses suggest that most respondents felt basic information to identify the child should be available. For example, of the 119 responses to this section of the questionnaire, approximately 90% thought the child’s name, previous names, gender and date of birth should be available, and approximately 80% thought the child’s address, and a reference number (such as NHS or NI number) should be there. The questionnaire also sought their views on what information about the Common Assessment should be available. Nearly all the 119 respondents thought that the fact that a Common Assessment existed for a child, the date it was completed, who completed it, whether it was shared, and when, and with whom should be available.

**THE WORKSHOPS**

Workshops were held in the pilot authorities in December 2006 and January 2007 and provided a forum where issues (some of which were also being explored via the online questionnaire) could be
debated in more depth. A one day workshop was held in each participating area and brought together workers and managers from a range of voluntary and statutory agencies working with children, and a number of key organisations working with adults, many of whom would be parents. The aim of the workshops was, through engaging with participants, to both learn from their current experiences and to foster shared agreements about how the CAF should be taken forward.

The workshops had a number of objectives. The first was to enable participants to share their experiences, identify what currently works well and where things could be improved in order to agree:

- when a Common Assessment should be used;
- who should be responsible for completing a Common Assessment; and
- a ‘glossary of terms’ (a common language) to be used by all agencies.

The second was to establish a common format and agree the content for the CAF Form. For example, it was important to establish:

- how a child or young person should be identified;
- how should the assessment be structured and what it should cover; and
- what additional information should be included, for example particular agencies may wish to record additional information specific to the children they work with.

In addition to the content of the CAF Form, the workshops were used to establish what ‘meta data’ would be collected and made available to users of the electronic database. Meta data in this context was defined as information about the activity of a specific case – not about the circumstances of the child or young person or the findings from the Common Assessment. For example, this could include that a CAF Form exists for a specific child or young person and the name and contact details of the person who completed the CAF Form. Other reporting functions were also discussed including the generation of aggregated management data based on the activity of users and the contents of CAF Forms. The final objective of the workshops was to discuss the CAF process and make recommendations to the project team.

The programme for the workshops interspersed short presentations with group work. The project team gave two presentations during the day, the first introduced the CAF and the principles that underpin it and the second showed how the CAF might work in practice. Attendees had opportunities to voice their concerns and wishes and contribute to the development of the CAF through question and answer sessions, open discussions, and in feedback from small group exercises. In addition, each attendee could comment anonymously on any aspect of the CAF through the use of ‘post–it’ notes on message boards.

**Findings from the workshops**

Attendees expressed much enthusiasm for the CAF and expressed hopes that it would promote good relationship with families, help integrated working and communication between agencies, reduce the number of assessments, prevent children and families having to unnecessarily go over the same ground when talking to different workers, and identify at an earlier stage how best to support vulnerable children and young people.
‘There are a number of instances where small issues have developed over the years and picked up years later when they got worse. There was no way of recognising and recording these – CAF would help to identify these small issues much earlier and take action.’

‘Childminders presently work in isolation – we can go forward with CAF.’

Following the initial presentation about the CAF, the workshop attendees were divided into small work groups and tasked with gaining agreement on three issues in relation to the CAF: basic information, assessment, and planning. In order to provide a basis to work from and to ensure that the CAF in Wales built on earlier work on Common Assessments, the groups were provided with copies of the English CAF Format and earlier local formats developed by Swansea and Cumbria. It was made clear to the attendees that the three formats were to be used purely as illustrations and they were free to start afresh, adopt or adapt specific aspects from these.

Having considered these examples, the workshops attendees were in agreement over the following overarching themes in relation to the type of CAF Form they wanted. They thought it was essential that the CAF Form was user friendly and employed simple language. The printed version must look good and a user friendly leaflet and guidance should be provided to families and workers. To assist workers in completing a CAF Form the groups recommended the use of tick boxes and drop down menus wherever it was sensible.

- **Basic information**
  
  In considering what basic information should be recorded, attendees took time to consider what would be necessary to both accurately identify a particular child or young person and provide the worker with the relevant essential information. There was agreement across all the workshops that in order to identify the child the following information should be recorded:

  - child’s first and surname;
  - child’s previous names;
  - gender;
  - date of birth; and
  - child’s address(es) including the post code(s).

  With regard to what information was essential for the worker there was agreement that the following should be recorded:

  - the family’s home/mobile telephone number;
  - the child’s and their parents/carers’ first language;
  - whether an interpreter was needed;
  - whether the child has a disability or special needs; and
  - the names of the child’s principal carers and any other household members.
Finally, there was agreement across the workshops that the following case related information should be recorded:

- the reason for completing a Common Assessment;
- the key agencies involved with the child and family;
- the name of the person completing the CAF Form; and
- the date the CAF Form was completed.

The widespread agreement over the importance of recording this basic information gave a powerful message to the project team and was reflected in the development of the CAF Form (see chapter 4).

The discussions over what basic information should be recorded threw up other ideas for which there was not overall agreement. For example, some attendees thought it was important to record the child’s religion, ethnicity or immigration status, the names of significant family members not living in the household, and any special requirements. The final CAF Form developed for the pilot (see chapter 4) allows for some of this information to be recorded under existing sections, while other issues could be noted in the ‘agency question’ section. Any of these issues which are impacting on the child either positively or negatively should inform the assessment and be recorded in the assessment section.

- **Assessment**

The workers attending the workshops expressed a strong view that the CAF in Wales should not form the front end of the assessment process used in children’s social services; they were adamant that it should address children’s needs at an early preventive stage, a message also given by the steering groups. To be really useful it was agreed that the CAF should be geared to identify children’s needs at the early stages of possible intervention, that is at tier 1 - universal services and tier 2 - family support (Welsh Assembly Government 2006a, p.43).

One way of indicating that the CAF is different from children’s social services’ assessments was to make it look different. There was widespread agreement across the workshops that the form for the CAF in Wales should not duplicate the children’s social services’ initial assessment format. It should be visually interesting, not just rows of boxes to be filled in, and there were suggestions that the printed off formats should be glossy and brightly coloured.

The starting point for the groups was that the CAF was to be based on the Welsh Assessment Framework (National Assembly for Wales 2001) which is research based and familiar to many professionals working with children and families.

> ‘This provides a systematic way of analysing, understanding and recording what is happening to children and young people within their families and the wider context of the community in which they live.’

(National Assembly for Wales 2001, p.vii)

The Assessment Framework guides workers when undertaking an assessment of a child to explore three domains and how they inter-relate:
– The child’s developmental needs;
– The capacity of his or her parents or carers to respond to those needs; and
– The impact of the wider family and environmental factors on both the child and his or her parents/carers.

There was agreement across the workshops that the Assessment Framework triangle displaying the three domains and the various dimensions should appear on the CAF Form to act both as an aide memoire for workers and enable children/young people and parents to understand what the assessment had been based on. Although there was general acceptance of the use of the Assessment Framework and the principals underpinning it, concerns were raised over some of the language it uses. Attendees wanted the project group to explore the possibility of employing simpler and less threatening language. For example, terms such as ‘identity’ were considered difficult to understand and the expression ‘parenting capacity’ was thought to be a concept linked with children’s social services.

The principal underpinning the Assessment Framework and adopted by the CAF in Wales is that in carrying out an assessment workers should base their judgements on what would be reasonably expected for the development for this child and for the parental care, and draw on knowledge about how family and environmental factors affect children and the parenting capacity. The workshop attendees thought that workers would be helped in carrying out assessments and making judgements, if the CAF Form displayed a short explanation for each dimension.

The workshop discussions on the assessment aspect of the CAF informed the design of the forms (see chapter 4); the CAF Triangle has been included and the boxes to record information are distinctive. Producing a glossy and brightly coloured form was considered, but proved too problematic. Glossy forms would have to be printed externally and circulated which would increase both set up and ongoing costs, moreover, the objective was to have the forms printable by anyone. In addition, using bright colours runs the risk of being illegible to some vulnerable groups such as those suffering dyslexia or who are visually impaired. The suggestions over language and information resulted in the CAF Form using simpler headings, for example replacing ‘parenting capacity’ with ‘parents and carers’ and incorporating a short description of each dimension.

• Plans

Assessing the needs and circumstances of a child may in itself be a therapeutic process, however there is a general acknowledgement that in cases where unmet needs have been identified children benefit from specific plans based on the findings from the assessment (National Assembly for Wales 2001).

‘The details of the plan are bench marks against which the progress of the family and the commitment of workers are measured, and therefore it is important that they should be realistic and not vague statements of good intent.’

(Department of Health, 1995b, p.80, 8.27)
There was general agreement across all the workshops that a section should be included in the CAF Form to enable workers to record their conclusions of the assessment and what needs to change. However, there was less consensus over how specific any plan should be. Some workers favoured a detailed plan, mirroring those used in children’s social services. Other workers considered this approach too formal and not suited to those working on a voluntary basis with children and families.

Workshop attendees also held rather differing opinions over whether the plan should result in a formal review process. The views of attendees generally fell into three groups. First, were those who considered it best practice to review any work carried out in order to discover whether the actions taken have had the required impact on the child and family. Second, were the group who acknowledge the importance of reviews but felt ‘we simply will not be able to do it because just getting our workers to use the CAF will be hard enough. If they thought that it would have to be reviewed they would not start’. Third were those unable to review their work because their contact with the child or young person was not ongoing, for example, detached youth workers who engage with young people living on the streets, NHS direct or ChildLine.

These discussions informed the conceptualisation of the plan included on the CAF Form. In order to appeal to all workers the decision was to include a section titled ‘Conclusions solutions and actions’ with a box for each section (see chapter 4). The expectation was that breaking it into three distinct steps would allow workers to analyse the findings from their assessment, identify how their agency or organisation might help the child or young person and, where necessary, to make a referral to another agency. In order not to alienate any agency, a flexible approach was taken to the review process. Agencies whose processes require a review of the work undertaken can clone the completed CAF Form and use it as the basis for their review.

- **Consent and confidentiality**

  ‘Ensuring that children and young people are kept safe and receive the support they need when they need it is vital. Where information sharing is necessary to achieve this objective it is important that practitioners have a clear understanding of when information can be shared. It is also important for them to understand the circumstances when sharing is inappropriate.’

  (HM Government 2006a, p.0)

Previous work has shown that many practitioners are uncertain and lack clarity over what information about children and families they can share safely (Cleaver, Barnes, Bliss and Cleaver, 2004a). In response to this anxiety the Welsh Assembly Government held a consultation exercise in 2005 on information sharing, *Welsh Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI)*.

  ‘The scope of this Accord provides the foundation for the secure and confidential sharing of agreed appropriate personal identifiable information.’

  (Welsh Assembly Government 2005, p.6, 1.3.1)
All the workshops took the issue of gaining consent and the need for confidentiality extremely seriously and there was much debate over how consent should be gained, and what issues need consent. Attendees expressed the need for a clear consent process and the establishment of information sharing protocols. ‘Need protocols for sharing information’. There was a strong view that young people, parents and carers should be provided with sufficient information to be able to give informed consent and that the giving of consent must be ‘explicit, written and recorded’. It was agreed that workers carrying out a Common Assessment should gain the young person or parents’ consent before:

- sharing the fact that a CAF Form has been completed (i.e. putting it on the system so that it can be searchable by other registered CAF users), and
- sending any information to a named individual or agency.

There was also much discussion over the ability to withdraw consent. ‘What happens if people change their mind. Will a CAF come off the system?’. Finally, there were serious concerns over data protection and a strong message given to the project team that without reassurance that the system was secure, the CAF would not be used.

The workshops also expressed concerns that the CAF guidance and training must make it clear to CAF users when confidential information should be shared without the authorisation of the person concerned. Government guidance provides clear guidance that confidential information may be shared if it is in the public interest and proportionate, and provides the following examples:

- **when there is evidence** that the child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm; or
- **where there is reasonable cause to believe** that a child may be suffering or at risk of significant harm; or
- **to prevent significant harm** arising to children and young people or serious harm to adults, including through the prevention, detection and prosecution of serious crime.’

(HM Government 2006a, p.10, 3.12)

The messages from this wide ranging debate within all the workshops resulted in the project team working to ensure that the CAF consent process would be transparent and straightforward. The training and guidance for CAF users and the CAF Form make it clear that workers must make sure children, young people and parents are aware of what and how information will or could be shared before being asked to give their agreement. Consent must be written and recorded and the CAF Form includes clearly written explanations about what the young person or parent is consenting to. Workers must be aware that the CAF is voluntary and the young person or parents have the right to get a Common Assessment about them or their child deleted from the system. With regard to the agencies own recording system the Common Assessment fits into the organisation’s existing protocols for recording and deleting sensitive information – some agencies may choose not to delete a CAF Form (for example the police) if it is against their existing procedures.
The importance of no delay when workers are concerned about the safety of a child are made clear. The CAF Form, guidance and training all cover the importance of following child protection procedures when there is evidence, or reasonable cause to believe, or to prevent, significant harm to children and young people.

Confidentiality and data protection have been live issues throughout the development stage of the CAF. The findings from the workshops were followed by extended discussions on confidentiality and information sharing with WAG, SCIE and the steering groups. To ensure that the CAF consent model and the process for data protection developed by the project team was in line with the law and Government guidance SCIE organised a meeting with the Information Commissioner for Wales in July 2007. At this meeting it was decided that, for the duration of the pilot, there should be a number of “data controllers in common” in addition to data processors each of whom has responsibility for different aspects:

- WAG – Data controller for the system. This responsibility being devolved to SCIE for the duration of the pilot.
- Agencies – Data controllers for the information recorded on CAFs that their workers complete.
- Steering Groups – Data processors for the management data for their pilot region.
- Legatio Technologies Ltd (part of the project team) – Data processors for WAG (devolved to SCIE) who act in accordance with their contract with SCIE.

At the July meeting the CAF consent model was, in the main, found to be in line with the law and current best practice. The Information Commissioner agreed to advise SCIE and the project team on the recording and sharing of information about third parties. A response was received in August 2007 which drew attention to the Data Protection Act and the need to balance competing interests and the consequences to both the child and the third party of recording or sharing the information. Three criteria were provided to determine whether CAF users should gain the consent of family members before recording their details. Using these criteria, the project team in partnership with SCIE believed that recording this information was justified and would not breach the Data Protection Act, because the information about family members would only be used to build up a complete picture of the child and there was no intention to act on it in a way which relates directly to the family members, or use it in any other context.

This decision was made known to the steering groups. The information sharing specialist (health) from one area disagreed with the decision not to get the consent of family members before recording information about them. As a result further advice is being sought from the Information Commissioner.

**Process issues raised by the workshops**

The workshops spent considerable time discussing issues related to completing a Common Assessment, the outcome of a completed Common Assessment, and the security of the IT system.
Completing a Common Assessment

Workshop attendees raised a number of questions in relation to the process of using the CAF. In particular they wanted to clarify:

- when a Common Assessment should be completed and by whom. ‘Is [the CAF dealing with] problems perceived by others or by children themselves e.g. anti-social behaviour.’
- what level of need the CAF is aimed at. ‘Let’s get scoping right for this project. Focus on early intervention – more preventative. CAF is a tool to help families – create a positive feel for CAF.’
- what happens to the information if the person completing the CAF leaves the organisation. ‘If the person who completes CAF leaves what happens to info – re-routing emails.’
- how workers will know what services are available. ‘Need a directory of services to ensure awareness of all services, what they provide and how best to access them.’
- how voluntary and small rural organisations can be supported. ‘Danger of overwhelming voluntary organisations and losing them. Make it easier for them e.g. fill in a paper version and send it to someone else to fill in especially in rural areas.’
- electronic communication must not be at the expense of face to face contact. ‘Person to person contact – must not lose this by having an electronic database.’
- how the family will be involved. ‘Family must have ownership of their plan and agree it’. ‘Provides opportunities to build good relationships with children/young people and families.’

The outcome of these workshop discussions informed the development of the CAF. For example, to help workers identify what services are available locally the IT system has been linked to the local authorities’ Services Directories.

The system enables CAF users to search for one another. However, although the contact details of other CAF workers are provided to CAF users, the CAF cannot replace conversations and face to face contact because the system does not allow information about a child to be automatically transferred to another agency.

In response to concerns over involving children and families, the CAF Form has been designed to be completed in partnership with young people and parents and includes sections specifically for their comments and input.

With regard to whether young people or parents should give consent to share information with a named individual or their agency, it was decided that consent should be linked to agencies not workers. Two reasons informed this decision. First, if a worker leaves the agency CAF Forms will be dealt with by their manager or another nominated worker, and second managers will be able to oversee their workers CAF Form.
To support workers in using the system the workshops attendees recommended that the IT system should include a spell checker. The project team worked to address this recommendation, however, after considerable exploration into the possibility of incorporating a spell checker into the system the decision was taken not to proceed as the resulting system would be cumbersome, slow and unwieldy. A number of existing free downloadable utilities exist which can be used to check spelling, such as ‘Google Toolbar’.

Finally, there was some discussion within the workshops over the possibility of incorporating warning flags into the IT system. ‘Possibility of utilising a warning flag following 3 agencies CAF’s’. There were two main concerns over introducing warning flags. First was a danger of busy workers doing nothing on seeing a warning flag because they may assume another worker has taken responsibility for resolving the child’s difficulties. Second, was the possibility that Common Assessments may be completed inappropriately in order to raise the profile of the case. As a result, it was decided not to include warning flags on the system.

- **Outcome of a completed Common Assessment**

  The discussions during the workshops revealed considerable confusion over who would take ownership and act on the findings from a Common Assessment, how would multi-agency meetings be called, who would be the key worker, to whom the Common Assessment belongs (who owns the data), and how would the case be reviewed. The following quotes illustrate attendees concerns.

  ‘What do I do with the information I have gathered?’.
  ‘How are the child’s need monitored if the situation changes?’.
  ‘How long will information stay on the system?’.
  ‘Maintenance of an accurate CAF user list – who is responsible?’.
  ‘Will we get a receipt to show when someone has looked at a CAF?’.
  ‘Feedback required from system to practitioner, parent and referrer’.

  The workshops revealed a commonly held notion that IT systems have magical qualities; that the act of completing a Common Assessment will result in something happening which would provide the child and family with the assistance they need. The project team needed to reinforce the message that, although carrying out a Common Assessment may in itself be a therapeutic experience for the child and family, the worker remains responsible for deciding what actions should be taken (which may involve organising a multi-agency meeting) and for monitoring and reviewing the situation.

  The concerns about the importance of feedback raised in the workshops were addressed by the project team in the design of the CAF computer system. As a result, when one worker sends a CAF Form to another worker, the system reports back when the recipient worker has viewed it. This process may, with the agreement of the young person or parents, result in phone calls and discussions and assist a joint or multi-agency plan being developed. The CAF does not take away the need for professional judgement and decision making.

  As a result of the discussions held during the workshops it was decided that users, managers and their agencies should be responsible for keeping their information on the IT system up to date.
Concerns about the security of the IT system

The workshop attendees reported that a secure IT system was vital for workers to feel confident in using the CAF electronically. It was thought essential that all registered users should be Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked and have a personal password. The possibility of hackers getting access to the system was a major concern and the attendees stressed the importance of ensuring that the system was robust and resilient to attack.

‘The ability of users to record their passwords insecurely should not be underestimated, potentially granting access to extremely sensitive information – should only certain users have the ability to see CAF’s?’

‘Do we need two factor authentication (e.g. password and dongle) like the NHS?’

‘Should we have a timeout on the system?’

The concerns over security were taken very seriously by the project team. To ensure the system is secure, all information is encrypted using industry standard strong encryption (akin to that used with credit cards and internet banking).

Management information

The possibility of gathering management information from the CAF system was discussed by the workshop attendees and there was general agreement that the pilot authority’s steering groups should decide what information they wanted. The project team informed the steering groups, but no decisions had been taken prior to the pilot of the CAF.

Additional issues raised by the workshops

Workshop attendees raised a number of additional issues which they thought needed to be addressed:

First, as already discussed, there was a consensus that the CAF should target children at an early preventative stage and focus on universal and family support services.

Second, in respect of multi-agency assessment, participants urged that procedures be established to ensure services are co-ordinated in line with an agreed plan of action. The project team raised the possibility of developing a multi-agency tool to follow on from the CAF Form with the Welsh Assembly Government. The decision taken by the Assembly Government was that this should not be introduced during the development and pilot phase of the CAF, but they gave assurances that consideration would be given to developing such a tool at a later date.

Third, participants were concerned that the term ‘assessment’ contained in the titled ‘Common Assessment Framework’ could detract from the fundamental aim of making it family friendly, and requested that it should be re-branded in order to distance it from children’s social care and any notional link to child protection.

‘Lose the word assessment, it needs a new name.’
Fourth, a further terminology issue was raised. Workshop attendees thought that to ensure inclusivity the term worker rather than practitioner or professional should be used to refer to those working with children and families. There was general agreement that the term practitioner was linked to health and social services; educationalists and those working in community based services did not generally conceptualise themselves as practitioners. In a similar way many volunteers working in community settings may not consider themselves to be professionals. To use either term when referring to the CAF may alienate many based in voluntary and private agencies and it was agreed that the term ‘worker’ would be more inclusive and should be used.

Fifth, the attendees at the workshops reported that there was a need for considerable publicity to inform workers and children, young people and families about the CAF. A range of options were suggested to inform members of the public including leaflets, information published in council newsletters, and CAF being placed on the agenda of agency’s internal meetings.

‘Needs to be a big push on publicity – need to think about language and how to sell it.’
‘What is the selling point for parents? How can we help your child. Added value is exploring and doing more for children.’
‘Can CAF information for children and families go into council newsletters as these go to all families.’
‘Printed leaflets to give to children, young people and families.’
‘CAF should be on the agenda of internal meetings.’
‘Each organisation needs to take responsibility for raising awareness of CAF within their own agency.’

While it was beyond the remit of the project team to address all the issues raised in the workshops, where concerns fell beyond the team’s jurisdiction, appropriate agencies and other bodies were alerted. Thus, the project team acted as a conduit to channel issues outwith their control to the appropriate authorities.

CONSULTING WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY INCLUDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Developing a poster
The success of any consultation exercise with members of the public depends on the publicity and support provided. The issue of how best to consult with children, young people and families was discussed at the original meetings with the steering groups. To provide some basic information about the CAF, the project team drafted a poster, which was displayed for comment at two parent groups, and was discussed with representatives from SCIE and the Welsh Assembly Government. Their feedback resulted in some general changes to simplify the language and major changes to the Welsh translation which did not sufficiently reflect the English version.
The final poster informed viewers about the CAF in Wales, the purpose of the supporting IT system, the need for families or young people to give their permission, and the website where more information was available and where they could have their say about the CAF. Two thousand posters were produced; a thousand in Welsh and an equal number in English (see Figure 2.1). Steering group members agreed to distribute these to the agencies they represented and to display them at places frequented by children, young people and families.

Figure 2.1: The English and Welsh Posters

![The English and Welsh Posters](image)

The posters were circular with a diameter of 395mm.

Although the posters provided some information about the CAF, agencies involved in the pilot project were responsible for consulting with children, young people and families in their area and for supporting them to view the other CAF materials posted on the website and to comment on them. The steering groups suggested a number of ways that agencies could facilitate the participation of children and young people including, schools dedicating part of their ‘citizenship lessons’ to the CAF, talking to children in hospital and leaving a computer available on the children’s wards, and similarly schools making a computer available so that children and young people could access the CAF website.

Implementing the CAF within the pilot sites was not part of the project brief, and the team are therefore not able to comment on the work done with children, young people and families or the extent to which they were enabled to access the online development community. The following example of consultation was provided by the full time CAF lead in one pilot area. It shows considerable dedication and commitment to informing them about the CAF and to ensuring their views are heard and taken into account.
As part of the development of the North Wales CAF pilot, we did a fair amount of work with children and young people to find out their views and to ensure that these were taken into account.

WHO?
I talked with a fairly wide range of children, young people and families in both counties including:
Brownies
Junior guide leaders
Children and young people in the looked after system
Children with disabilities
Young people involved in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
Children and young people in a range of youth clubs and groups
Homeless young people and those in temporary housing
Representatives of tenants associations and their children

They ranged in age from about 4 to 24.

HOW?
Although often I spoke about the CAF and the difference we hope it will make, in more or less the same way that I do with adults, with some groups I worked differently.
Because my standard CAF presentation and training can be fairly dry and wordy I decided, particularly when working with younger children and those with learning disabilities to use a more interactive approach.

With 2 groups in Denbighshire I worked with another drama therapist and ran a series of drama workshops in which we played games for fun and to build trust and then worked towards giving them opportunities, through the medium of drama to explore times in which they had wanted or needed help or support. We developed this into looking at why some interventions had been more helpful than others and started to pick up common themes.

With some of the groups, particularly with the Brownies we were asked to look at particular topics – in particular bullying and we spent a little time exploring how working within the CAF structure could help victims and perpetrators of bullying and those who work with them. With one of the groups we looked at story telling as a potentially useful medium.

With all the groups I talked with – adults and children, I mentioned the online development community on the CAF website and children had fun helping me to broadcast this to a wide range of agencies. I spent some considerable time with one 12 year old looking at the site. His comment was that it was not very exciting or colourful and that people used language on it which he did not understand.

RESPONSES
Messages from all the children and young people I listened to, irrespective of their age, were very similar. The strongest were:

I hate having to tell my story over and over again, especially to people I don’t know. I’d rather not tell anyone.
I don’t mind workers telling each other stuff about me if it means they’ll be able to get me some support.
I’m fed up with adults not listening to me.
I want to be able to see/ know what staff say to each other about me – and it sounds as though, through the CAF, I’ll be able to.
I want to be able to choose who I talk to about problems. I don’t mind talking to my youth worker because I’ve known him a long time and I know I can trust him, but I don’t want to have to talk to a stranger.
I like the fact that I can put my own comments on a CAF.
The CAF should not use fancy language. I want to be able to understand it.
I usually don’t understand what social workers and people like that say. This sounds better.
Talking about your problems can be a bit scary. I like the idea of staying with someone I know and like & who knows me.
I’m sick of being spoken to the way I am by workers. They are aggressive and they don’t show me any respect. Then they wonder why I get frustrated.
The CAF should not take too long or it will be boring. Could it be fun?

Steering Group Lead
The responses of the children and young people echo those from earlier studies (Cleaver et al 2004b). A consultation exercise held with 277 children and young people found 78% valued being respected above all other qualities, and 70% valued adults who listened to them (4Children 2005).

The views of the children and young people gained from consultation that took place in this pilot authority were fed-back to the project team and informed the wording on the CAF Form.

**Online development community**

The project team established an online development community which interacted via the web site http://www.cafwales.co.uk before the workshops started. The online community served a number of functions. By posting all relevant documents online it made the work of the project team transparent and enabled all interested parties to keep themselves up to date on the progress of the CAF. In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government made their January and June 2007 CAF bulletins available on this site. The project team’s ‘worker questionnaire’, discussed earlier, was accessed via this website. Of particular importance was the role the online community played in serving as a gateway to the general public. A discussion forum was established which requested comments on: communicating with children and young people and their families, the content of the CAF Form, the layout of the CAF Form, and other aspects of the CAF. To assist members of the online development community to contribute to the development of the CAF the project team posted the draft CAF Form on the website and developed three tools that were made available on the forum: a brief guide to the CAF, a glossary of terms, and the responses to a list of frequently asked questions.

- **Brief guide to CAF**
  
  The brief guide to the CAF started with an introduction which explored the background to the CAF and set out its aims. Readers were informed that the purpose of the CAF was to: support those working in universal and voluntary services to tackle the difficulties children are experiencing at an earlier stage; to prevent them from becoming serious; and to enable agencies to communicate and work together more effectively. The guide went on to explain the reason why the CAF was needed, and the approach taken to assessment and decision making. The guide covered, in some detail, the assessment element of the CAF and explained: when a Common Assessment should be undertaken and who might carry out a Common Assessment, before discussing what might be held on the CAF computer system.

- **Glossary of terms**
  
  One of the aims of the CAF was that it should support better communication between workers through the development of a common language.

  ‘It will assist communication through the development of a common language and means of understanding and describing children’s needs, thereby supporting more effective working together by practitioners from different agencies.’

  (Welsh Assembly Government 2005b, p.15, 6.2)

  To promote discussions about terminology the project team in consultation with SCIE drew up and made available, online, a short glossary of terms. The glossary covered the following labels and expressions: child, parental responsibility, Common Assessment Framework
(CAF), Common Assessment, child in need, information sharing, informed consent, Common Assessment Framework user, and Common Assessment Framework database.

- **Frequently asked questions**

  Finally, to provide further information to members of the online development community and to help them to understand and comment on the development of the CAF, answers to the following frequently asked questions were provided.

  - Why do we need a Common Assessment Framework?
  - What is the Common Assessment Framework?
  - What is a Common Assessment?
  - When would a Common Assessment be completed?
  - Who might carry out a Common Assessment?
  - Is the Common Assessment basically a tool for social workers?
  - Is a Common Assessment just a way to pass a child or young person from one agency to another?
  - What is the Common Assessment database?
  - What information about a child or young person will be accessible, and who will be able to get it?
  - What is the Online Development Community?
  - When and where is the Common Assessment Framework going to be tested?

**Response to the online forum**

The response to the online development community was very disappointing. Only fourteen people added comments to the forum and of these seven were members of the public. The remaining seven were people directly involved in developing the CAF including a representative from the Welsh Assembly Government, one from SCIE and five members of the project team. The poor response may have had a number of causes. For example, it is not known the extent to which the CAF was publicised or the degree to which relevant agencies and organisations supported, encouraged and enabled children, young people and families to have their say. The poster produced by the project team in itself would not have been sufficient to stimulate participation.

During the early stages in developing the CAF, workers may not have viewed it as imminently impacting on their day to day practice. Taking time out from direct work with children and families to access a web-site and comment on the materials to support the CAF may, therefore, not have been seen as a priority.

A further issue which may have impacted on the response was the extent to which members of the public and those working with children and families had access to computers or the capacity to use them, as the following posting on the website illustrates.

‘I have spoken to 2 other community leaders who have said that the people they represent might be keen to be involved in the development of CAF but they lack either the capacity, the confidence or access to a computer in order to feed in through a website or in some cases to visit.’
Finally, the need to register (i.e. give an email address) before being able to comment was an issue for some potential participants, noting that ‘it feels a bit like electronic tagging’. Although the project team responded explaining that registration was to protect against unscrupulous people posting adverts and detailed how email addresses would remain confidential, nonetheless this may have affected participation.

**Findings from the online forum**

Although participation in the online forum was poor, nonetheless some themes emerged that informed the development of the CAF. For example, a discussion on the words and terminology workers should use when talking to children and families about the CAF reinforced the need to keep language simple.

’Some of the adults I talk to use really posh words just a little bit like you. I thought it would be better when the CAF starts but it would not work if people speak in fancy language.’

The forum also prompted discussions on what basic information to identify the child or young person should be included. For example, one participant suggested that the CAF Form should allow both the child’s legal name to be recorded as well as the name the child or young person wishes to be known by. Another discussion focussed on the necessity of recording the race or ethnicity of a child or young person.

The lay-out and clarity of the form and the inclusion of the CAF triangle were also topics for conversation. Responses ranged from those who thought:

‘…overall the form is clear and very easy to read and broken down into useful sections. I think it is useful to have a copy of the Assessment triangle for reference’;

...to others who feared:

‘its prominence in the form may be off putting for children and families who might use the CAF because it might be an effective route to finding help rather than because they wanted an assessment.’

The online development community enabled consultation to take place during the development phase of the CAF. It was closed in August 2007. The three tools developed to support consultation: the brief guide to the CAF, the glossary of terms, and frequently asked questions and answers were incorporated into the materials included in the packs distributed to workers who attended the training events (see Appendix II).
SUMMARY POINTS

• The project team met with the steering groups in each pilot area.

• The steering groups expressed a strongly held view that the CAF should be set within Children and Young People’s Partnerships.

• Clarification was sought over the ownership of the CAF records. The project team agreed to seek legal advice.

• The steering groups undertook to help the project team publicise the CAF, organise the workshops, enable workers to complete a questionnaire, make use of the online development community, and organise the forthcoming CAF training events.

• Workers completed 125 questionnaires which were made available to the project team.

• The completed questionnaires came from senior managers, line managers and workers. The group represented a range of statutory and voluntary agencies.

• Their responses suggest that most have ready access to computers and the internet in a non public location, have their own email account and check it on a daily basis. For the CAF to be successful these circumstances must apply to all those trained on the system. This may involve changes in the working practices in some agencies.

• The findings from the questionnaires suggest that agencies will need to work out how best to organise the use of the CAF within their organisation. Some may wish to train all their staff while other may take a different approach depending on their size and type of organisation etc.

• In developing the CAF system most respondents thought it was acceptable for basic information to identify the child, and metadata about the CAF (if a CAF Form had been completed, who completed it, and whether it was shared and with whom) to be made available.

• Workshop attendees saw the CAF as an important initiative to support earlier intervention for vulnerable children and young people.

• Workshop attendees agreed what basic information to be included on the CAF Form.

• Workshops welcomed the fact that the Common Assessment included in the CAF was based on the Assessment Framework.

• A strong message from the workshops was that the CAF must not be seen as part of the child protection process. The CAF should be a preventative tool to be used by workers in universal and family support services.

• The attendees recommended that the Common Assessment element of the CAF be written in clear, family friendly language and include simple explanations of the terms used.
- There was general agreement that assessments should be followed by a simple plan.

- There was less agreement over whether a review should be a formal part of the CAF. Including a review could alienate agencies whose work with children or young people is on a one off basis, such as NHS direct or ChildLine.

- The workshops gave a clear message that young people and parents must give informed consent and that the process be transparent. Consent must be explicit, written and recorded on the CAF Form.

- To support the CAF users the workshops recommended: a link to local services directories; the ability for CAF workers to identify one another and electronic feedback to show whether a worker has viewed a document that had been sent to them.

- Secure systems were thought to be vital for workers to feel confident in using the CAF. The workshops advised that all registered users should be CRB checked and hold a personal password, and that encryption be used to counteract potential hackers.

- The workshops raised other general issues that were beyond the remit of the project team, such as the need for a multi-agency assessment procedures. The project team passed on the messages from this exercise to the appropriate agencies and organisations.

- The project team provided the steering groups with posters that could be used to support the authorities’ strategy to inform the general public about the CAF and the online development community where children and adults could comment on the draft CAF materials.

- The input of the general public required the commitment of agencies working with children and young people to help them understand this new initiative and support and enable them to contribute to its development via the web-site.

- The discussions held on the online development community did not bring any new issues to light but reinforced the need to use simple, non jargoned language. The findings also contributed to the debate on the minimal information needed to identify a child or young person, and the general layout of the format.
APPENDIX II: Developing the IT and training to support the Common Assessment Framework

Previous research has shown that key to the successful introduction of new ways of working based on the electronic exchange of information are robust IT systems and relevant and adequate training (Cleaver Walker with Meadows, 2004b; Cleaver et al, forthcoming). This chapter focuses on how the CAF IT system evolved and the process of developing the training materials.

DEVELOPING THE COMPUTER SYSTEM WHICH SUPPORTS CAF

The approach taken by the project team to develop the computer system to support the CAF in Wales was to produce a clear and detailed technical specification before involving the IT development team. Previous work has shown that this approach ensures that the system is designed in conjunction with the workers who will be using it and the progress and expectations on the IT development team can be monitored (Cleaver 2006).

The technical specification grew organically throughout the consultation phase of the project. Initially, the project team produced a generic model of how the system should operate. This included details of the functions (for example, that a completed CAF Form be shared) and left deliberate gaps (for example, under what circumstance a CAF Form should be shared, and with whom). The generic model was presented at the development workshops and attendees filled in the gaps and critically analysed the processes described.

The findings from the workshops informed the production of a functional specification. This described exactly what the computer would do from a user’s point of view and was further developed into a web based mock-up. The mock-up showed all the screens required of the final system. It was circulated amongst the project team and SCIE, and was checked back against the workshop findings.

Once the mock-up was completed, it was used as the basis for the technical specification. The technical specification was developed in collaboration with the IT development team to ensure that its requirements were achievable within the time and budget constraints of the project. The final technical specification covered all the areas of the functional specification in addition to some areas not previously defined (for example, the detailed user level structure and permissions module). The technical specification was discussed with, refined, and signed-off by, the web development manager at SCIE.

Once the technical specification was agreed, the IT development team used it to develop the computer system. The team produced an alpha system which was tested, by the project team, against the technical specification to ensure that all functionality was correct. Following further refinement in light of the alpha test results, a beta system was produced. Again, this system was tested. The beta testing was designed to be more in depth and inclusive of a wider range of testers. Beta test scripts were produced which gave instructions for a number of different tasks that beta testers were asked to complete. Beta testers were asked to give categorised responses as to the results of each stage of the tests, and were given space on the test script to record description information about what worked well, and what needed further refinement.
One hundred and twenty eight beta testers were approached. These included anyone who had previous contact with the project team (for example, attendees to the development workshops or those who had completed an online questionnaire) and who had indicated that they would be happy to be approached in the future by the project team. Of the 128 people approached, 21 responded that they would be happy to test the system, and were sent the testing scripts and supporting documents. These people included: members of the project team not involved in the previous alpha testing; workers at SCIE; members of the steering groups; and workers across a range of agencies. The results of the beta tests were collated to produce a ‘snag list’ - a list of problems with the system identified by the testers. For each snag on the list (initially 32 in total), the project team reproduced the error and gave a description of the change required. Each snag was categorised as ‘top priority’, ‘medium priority’, ‘low priority’ or ‘halted’: typically, a feature which did not work would be assigned a top priority; a request to, for example, change the location of a particular button on the screen would be assigned a medium or low priority. Issues which were either not reproducible or were due to a misconception on the part of the beta tester were assigned the category ‘halted’.

The IT development team worked through the snag list in priority order. Each snag fixed was tested by the project team against the original description on the beta test script. As the snag fixing progressed, other snags came to light which were added to the snag list, worked through and tested in the same manner. The progress of resolving the snags was overseen by the web development manager at SCIE. In the first week of October, all the snags on the list had been corrected and tested (with the exception of those marked ‘halted’). In total, 170 snags had been identified, 28 were ‘halted’ and the remaining 142 were fixed and tested.

On the 9th October 2007, SCIE formally accepted the computer system as fit for the purpose of running the CAF pilots in Wales.

DEVELOPING THE TRAINING MATERIALS TO SUPPORT CAF

The CAF aims to provide a common approach to assessing children at risk of poor outcomes and will provide a useful tool to help a range of workers working with children, young people and families, undertake an early holistic assessment of the child or young person’s needs. It is likely to be used primarily by those working in universal and community services including the voluntary and private sector.

The introduction of the CAF will require significant attitudinal changes and ways of working for some workers. The steering groups, workshop attendees and the project team acknowledged that this type of change is difficult to achieve and requires considerable training and on-going support. Indeed, Beer and Nohria (2000) estimate that 70% of all ‘change initiatives’ fail. To change attitudes and develop new ways of working, CAF users would need the opportunity to reflect on the necessity for change and its implication for their practice. A firm principal underpinning the piloting of the CAF in Wales was that every user must be trained on all aspects of the CAF system, including the use of IT and the principals underpinning the Common Assessment, before gaining access.

Moreover, putting what has been learnt on training courses into practice when workers return to stressful and busy situations is difficult and requires the full support of their agencies. Previous
research suggests that the support of middle and line managers will be key to the success of the CAF (Cleaver, Walker with Meadows 2004b; Cleaver et al forthcoming).

‘Changes initiated in unsupportive cultural environments tend to last less than one year. In contrast changes that are supported by culture are likely to stick.’

(Allen 2004 as quoted in Cleaver et al 2004c, p.4).

**Aim of the training**

The project team developed a set of training materials that cover all aspects of how to setup and run a training day for CAF workers. These were based on the findings from the steering groups, workshops, previous research on the development of Common Assessments (Cleaver et al 2004c; Cleaver and Nicholson 2005; Pithouse 2006a & b) and legal advice provided by the Information Commissioner. The first presentation drew on:

- research evidence to contextualise and explain why the CAF was being introduced;
- the Welsh Assembly Government policy to explain what the CAF is; and
- the Assessment Framework to explain the research evidence that underpins the Common Assessment element of the CAF.

Based on the findings from the consultation exercises, the objectives for the training were that by the end of the event participants would:

- understand what is meant by the CAF in Wales;
- be familiar with the CAF process and know when to carry out a Common Assessment;
- know what makes a good Common Assessment;
- be registered onto the CAF computer system;
- be familiar with and have experience of using the CAF computer system to create, save and send Common Assessments; and
- be ready to carry out Common Assessments.

The feedback from the steering groups and the workshops made it clear that potential CAF users would have experience, knowledge and skills in working with children and families and in basic IT. In addition, there was an assumption that all workers would be aware of their existing roles and responsibilities relating to safeguarding children and child protection procedures. However, it was thought essential that training sessions, information about the CAF including the CAF Form, should make clear that the CAF does not change what workers currently do if they are concerned about the safety of a child; in such instances existing agency child protection procedures should always be followed.

Attendees of the workshops and members of the steering groups had also made it clear that because potential CAF users would be drawn from a wide range of disciplines the training should use a range of different techniques to help engage with, and sustain the attention of the trainees. Discussions with WAG, SCIE and a number of the steering groups resulted in the project team developing an action packed training day.
Developing the training materials

Materials have been produced in both English and Welsh and are included, in full, as an annex to this report *CAF in Wales: Training Materials*. The materials are aimed at trainers who may not know the details of the Common Assessment. They cover all aspects of the CAF, its principles and process, the CAF Form, how to carry out a Common Assessment and full use of the IT system. It does not, however, cover presentation skills, how to keep to time or handle trainee’s questions.

All the training materials are posted on the public part of the IT system so are available for all interested parties to download and refer to. The materials consist of three elements:

1. A trainer information pack
   The trainer information pack is designed to be printed by the trainer prior to the training event. It contains information about how to organise and setup a training event, what materials will be required and how to get trainees added to the IT system before the day commences. It also includes all the printed materials needed to run the various exercises.

2. A power point presentation
   The power point presentation forms the structure of the training event and is designed to run throughout the day. The slides contain all the information to be explained and discussed during the day, a set of video clips to be used during the morning session, and instructions for trainees on how to complete the various exercises used during the training. In addition, each slide has an associated page of notes (within the same PowerPoint file) that should be printed off by the trainer. These provide additional information and context about the information featured on each slide, and will help trainers to manage the timing of the day and run the various exercises.

3. A trainee information pack
   The training materials include a ‘take-home’ pack of information for each trainee. The pack is designed to be printed and handed out at the start of each session. It contains key information and additional reference materials referred to during the day (such as the IT User Guide). It does not contain a copy of the presentation given during the training event. Trainees are referred to the CAF website where this can be downloaded, along with all the associated notes. In addition, trainees were given a ‘CAF card’ when they attended the events. This is a credit card sized *aide memoire* showing the simple CAF triangle (figure 4.1) in Welsh and English along with the website address of the CAF computer system. Each steering group was given a number of additional cards to be handed out at their own subsequent training events.

The training materials use a number of different teaching styles so as to appeal to, and engage with, as wide a range of learning styles as possible.

One of the concerns when structuring the training day was that many trainees will be nervous about using IT and worry that the introduction of electronic systems can negatively impact on their direct work with children and families. To reinforce the principles underpinning the CAF, the training day is structured in two parts; the morning session covers practice issues while the afternoon session is devoted to training workers on how to use the CAF IT system.

The morning session covers all aspects of the Common Assessment in Wales under the following headings:

- Registration
• Welcome and Introduction
• Introducing the Common Assessment Framework
• Deciding when to use the Common Assessment
• The Common Assessment Process
• What makes a good Common Assessment

After lunch, the trainees are given a detailed tour of the computer system before all logging on and completing a set of tasks using the IT system. By the end of the afternoon session, all trainees should have:

• learned to navigate around the computer system;
• accessed, viewed, checked and, if applicable, changed their own profile information;
• identified other CAF Workers by using the system’s search facilities;
• started an electronic CAF Form and saved it;
• retrieved their underway Common Assessment and completed it;
• sent a Common Assessment to another worker (attending the same training event);
• received a Common Assessment from another worker (attending the same training event);
• cloned a Common Assessment; and
• deleted a number of Common Assessments.

All this work is carried out on the live IT system. This ensures that learning from the day is easily transferred back to the worker’s own work environments. At the end of the training event, users are reminded that they now have access to the system in the same manner as during the afternoon session.

Developing the video scenarios
To help those attending the training to translate the theory of the CAF into practice it was essential that the voices and experiences of children and young people formed an integral part. The original idea posited by the steering group lead in one pilot area came out of their experience of running a series of CAF drama workshops with children with special and additional needs. These children expressed a wish to make a bigger contribution to the CAF through developing a piece of theatre which would become part of the training sessions provided by the project team; they were particularly keen to help workers who might use the CAF to do so in a way which would be most effective for them.

After considerable discussion between the steering group lead and the project team it was felt that transporting a large group of children and young people around all four pilot area so that they could take part in the training was not practical. A more feasible option was to encourage the group to create a DVD featuring a number of vignettes which could form part of the training pack. These were to be designed to provide different scenarios which challenged workers to discuss whether, if they came into contact with the child or young person featured in the video clip in their own place of work, they would consider carrying out a Common Assessment. The added advantage of this route was that the input of children and young people would not be restricted to the initial training sessions but become an integral part of all CAF training.
This pilot local authorities’ children and families’ services agreed to fund *Music and Sound Experience* (MASE) a community based organisation dedicated to giving young people in North Wales opportunities and support with music, sound and performance, to make the DVD. However, to complete the DVD in time for the training meant that it had to be done in a very short period of time. Unfortunately, this group of children and young people, although tremendously enthusiastic, were not able to dedicate the long hours required to meet the deadline.

The CAF lead from the steering group then approached the Communities 1st Community Centre in one of the areas where the pilot was to be run. A meeting was held with the Youth Worker, the MASE director and the CAF lead to discuss the CAF and its potential to benefit young people. The possibility of identifying a group of young people willing to work on a DVD to support the CAF training pack was explored. The Youth Worker agreed to discuss the proposal at his weekly youth drop-in session which normally attracts between 40 and 50 young people. At the session young people were informed what the CAF was, and the possibility of them becoming involved in making a CAF training video to be used by workers all over Wales. The message was clear, involvement would mean hard work, giving up three full weekends and lots of evenings, and no pay. On the other hand young people were told that the CAF project team genuinely wanted their advice and views – messages that adults may find difficult to hear would not be edited out.

The idea of making the DVD was greeted with much interest and the young people were eager to have a chance to express their views and have them heard by adults. Many of the young people volunteered and a meeting with the steering group lead and the MASE director was arranged. However, commitments to part time work or exams prevented several taking part leaving ten young people aged between 12 and 17 years, eager to devote the necessary time to make the DVD in time for the CAF training events. The group comprised 5 girls and 5 boys, the majority of whom lived on the same housing estate in the Communities 1st area where the CAF was to be piloted. Four young people had a history of offending and experience of the Youth Justice Service and three had been excluded from school. One young woman had a learning disability and was keen that issues encountered by some young people with disabilities were illustrated in at least one scenario. In developing the DVD the young people worked with two parents, one adult volunteer, three MASE workers and the steering group lead.

The steering group lead reported that

> 'Without exception all of the team worked incredibly hard and gave freely of their time over several evenings and 2 full weekends. No payment was offered although we provided drinks and lunch at weekends.'

(Steering group lead)

An important finding from the exercise was that the concept of the CAF was greeted by the young people with universal enthusiasm. For example, those involved with the Youth Justice Service thought that the introduction of the CAF might stop others in similar circumstances having to go over the same things to the many different workers they have to see.

The young people were responsible for developing the characters and situations used in the training DVD.
‘Few of the group had much experience of this sort of work and yet they came up with the characters and improvised scenes extraordinary quickly. They were full of ideas about situations where a CAF might or might not be useful and while all the characters were created from their vivid imaginations, there was real engagement in the roles and each actor was absolutely clear about who they were playing and why.’

(Steering group lead)

In order for the group to take into account the sorts of situations which may compromise safety they were taken to Dangerpoint. This is a dedicated centre developed by North Wales Police, Fire and Rescue and BPH Billiton. The centre provides hands-on safety education for children and young people through allowing them to see and hear the hazards they may encounter in real life but without the risks. After exploring the site all the work took place in one office and the filming was done in the train carriage on site.

The resulting DVD consists of a number of brief scenarios followed by a short discussion of the characters and situations. The whole group contributed to the wording of the character descriptions.

The steering group lead reported that the exercise had been very rewarding.

‘The group were all eloquent and thoughtful and there is no doubt that they appreciated the chance to contribute to something which we all hope will go on to make a big improvement in their lives or those of their friends or siblings.’

(Steering group lead)

The scenarios played by the young people did not by definition involve young children. To ensure that there were examples which were relevant to all those who work with children, with the agreement of the Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, two additional scenarios were included in the training materials. These had been developed as part of the UK Government’s training pack ‘The Developing World of the Child’ (Department for Education and Skills et al, 2007). This training pack

‘…was commissioned to support practitioners undertaking assessments of children in need but also for those undertaking Common Assessment and other types of assessments who require an understanding of children’s development.’

(Department for Education and Skills et al 2007, p.5)

**Developing the statement cards**

To help think through the issues to be considered and the steps to be taken in carrying out a Common Assessment the project team developed a group exercise. This was informed by the consultation exercises and previous research on assessment and Government Guidance (National Assembly for Wales 2001; Cleaver et al 2004b). The result was an exercise using the following 11 statements (provided to them in no particular order).

- Decide that a Common Assessment would be helpful
- Explain the CAF to the young person and family and ask if a Common Assessment has been done before
• Ask for a copy of previous Common Assessments
• Decide to start a Common Assessment
• Record details of child or young person on the CAF computer system and be shown if previous Common Assessment forms exist
• Carry out a Common Assessment
• Complete the CAF Form on the CAF computer system and print off a copy
• Ask young person and their parent/carer to check completed CAF Form, sign it and give consent
• Record consents given by family on the CAF computer system
• Carry out actions/solutions identified on Common Assessment
• Review work against stated aims

Trainees were asked to consider how to best accomplish the task and the order in which it should happen. Discussion time was then allowed to enable trainees to share ideas and reflect on their judgements.

**Developing the computer exercise**

The final part of the training day was devoted to using computers to learn how to record information on an electronic CAF Form, how to send a CAF Form to another worker, and what to do when receiving a CAF Form from a worker. In partnership with the steering groups in each pilot authority the project team ensured that their training venue had one computer for each trainee to use during this session. The trainees were first given a tour of the computer system, after which they had time to use it themselves. The trainees were given a structured set of tasks to work through which covered all the functionality of the system. These tasks were developed from the beta testing scripts used prior to the system being launched, and the feedback from the beta testers. Each trainee had up to 2 hours to work through the exercises in an informal atmosphere. During this time the trainers were on hand to offer advice or assistance where required. Where help was needed, trainees were encouraged to offer advice to each other.

During some training events the exercises drew on the characters seen and discussed in previous sessions, whilst in other cases, trainees created scenarios of their own with which to practice using the system. Trainees were reminded not to use real case information that they might know as later parts of the session required them to send completed CAF Forms between themselves.

At the end of each training event, trainees were asked for their permission to circulate a list of their contact details. In addition, contact details of the steering group and the project development team were added and trainees were offered reassurance that they were not on their own and that they should seek advice whenever they needed to.
SUMMARY POINTS

- The computer system which supports the CAF in Wales was developed organically through a series of consultations and refinements.

- A functional specification of the computer was developed and agreed before any IT development took place.

- Once the computer system was developed, it was run through a series of alpha and beta tests which ensured that it met the requirements of the specification and the needs and wishes of the future users.

- The computer system was delivered on time and to specification by the IT development members of the project team and it was signed-off as fit for purpose by SCIE prior to the training events.

- The training materials were developed with an emphasis on the change management aspects of introducing the CAF.

- The training materials were designed to address the wide range of prior knowledge and experience that trainees will have.

- The training materials included sessions covering why we need a CAF in Wales, when a Common Assessment could be a useful approach, and how to undertake a Common Assessment.

- The training materials included a range of different pedagogies and approaches to engage with as wide a range of learning styles as possible, including a number of videoed scenarios developed by young people in conjunction with one steering group.

- The morning sessions of the training day covered all the theory and practice of using the CAF in Wales, with little more than passing reference to the computer system.

- The afternoon session described and demonstrated the computer system and allowed each trainee a computer with which to explore the IT system.
APPENDIX III: THE FULL CAF TRIANGLE

CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT

Health
General health including dental; physical development; impact of disability; immunisations

Learning and education
Understanding, reasoning and problem solving; attention span and concentration; progress and achievements; participation in learning, education and employment

Emotional development and behaviour
Temperament; response to stress; appropriate self control; coping strategies; lifestyle; anti-social behaviour

Self image
Views and feelings about themselves; sense of belonging and acceptance by family, peers and wider society; experience of discrimination

Family and social relationships
Quality of relationship with parents or carers and siblings; friendship patterns with peers and other significant people

Social presentation
Understanding of how appearance, behaviour and any impairment are seen by others, appropriateness of dress for age, gender, culture and religion; personal hygiene

Self-care skills
Acquisition of practical, emotional and communicational skills necessary for increasing independence (taking account of the impact of any impairment)

PARENTS AND CARERS

Basic care
Providing for the child or young person’s physical needs (food, drink, warmth and shelter); appropriate medical and dental care; ensuring appropriate clothing and adequate personal hygiene

Ensuring safety
Ensuring child or young person is adequately protected from: contact with unsafe adults and children; self-harm; hazards and dangers inside and outside the home

Emotional warmth
Ensuring child or young person has secure, stable and affectionate relationships; providing praise and encouragement; appropriate sensitivity and responsiveness to child or young person’s needs

Stimulation
Responding and encouraging child or young person’s learning; joining in play; promoting learning opportunities; ensuring school attendance

Guidance and boundaries
Demonstrating and modelling appropriate behaviour; avoiding over-protection; setting appropriate boundaries; effective discipline and shaping of behaviour

Stability
Consistency of emotional warmth over time and responding in a similar manner to the same behaviour; supporting contact with important relatives and other significant people

FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENT

Family history and functioning
Composition of household; parental or sibling physical or learning disability, chronic physical or mental illness, bereavement, substance misuse, violence and criminality

Wider family
Support networks from wider family and others; provision of wider caring and employment roles and responsibilities

Housing
Adequacy of living arrangements (heating, water, sanitation, cooking facilities); cleanliness, hygiene and safety; homelessness

Employment and work patterns
Employment and work patterns; family’s attitude towards work or absence of work; child or young person’s experience at work

Income and finance
Sufficiency of income or benefits; use of resources available to family; effects of hardship

Social integration
Degree of acceptance and integration or isolation of family within the local community and peer groups and the importance attached to them

Community resources
Availability, accessibility and standard of amenities - health centres, day-care, schools, leisure, transport, worship; extent of anti-social behaviour or crime
APPENDIX IV: THE CAF FORM

Common Assessment Form
Pilot Common Assessment Form

The development of the Common Assessment Framework in Wales by The University of Wales, North East Wales Institute (NEWI) has been commissioned by the Social Care Institute for Excellence and is funded and sponsored by the Welsh Assembly Government.

APPENDIX IV: The CAF Form

What is the Common Assessment Framework?
The Common Assessment Framework is being developed as a new way to help children, young people and their families in Wales. It will assist those working with children, young people and their families to provide the support they need to reach their full potential.

Why is this being done?
This common assessment will allow you and the worker to understand you situation more easily and to provide help at an earlier stage.

Who should be involved in the process?
The common assessment will be undertaken by a worker, along with the child or young person whom they are worried about, and their family. All the workers who do common assessments have been trained on the principles which underlie the assessment.

What will happen to the information recorded on this form?
The aim of this assessment is to allow you and the worker to better understand how help can be provided. At the end of the assessment, you and the worker may decide that you want to send a copy of this form to another worker (either because they can provide some help, or because you decide that they should be informed about your situation). If so, you will be asked (at the end of this form) to give your permission for this. If you don’t want a copy to be sent to them, it will not be sent (unless there is an overriding legal requirement for it to be sent – see the section ‘Confidentiality’ below).

Who should be asked for permission to share this information?
This depends on the age of the child or young person and their capacity to understand and make their own decisions: If the child or young person is 16 or younger, then they should normally be asked to give permission themselves; if the child or young person is younger than 16 years old, then the worker carrying out this assessment should decide if they have sufficient understanding to give their own permission. If the worker decides that they do not, then an adult with parental responsibility should be asked for their permission.

Confidentiality
All the information collected about you (or your child) and your family will be kept confidential. It will normally only be shared with other people with your permission.

What if I disagree with what’s written on this form?
If you disagree with anything that has been written on this form, the worker may want to correct it and ask you to sign the corrected version. However, the person completing the form may also want to leave it as it is (after all, it is a record of their views) but they must record your objections under the section for your views. They will then ask you to sign the modified version of this form which states which parts of the form you disagree with.

How do I get another copy of this form or make a complaint?
If you wish to get another copy of this form, or make a complaint (for example, you are not happy about the way that the Common Assessment has been carried out, or you think that information has been shared inappropriately) then please get in touch with the agency which completed this form.

How can I make my views known?
You have a legal right to express your views about this assessment. You should be asked to put your views in writing and sign them, and the person completing the form must record your views. The person completing the form may also want to leave it as it is (after all, it is a record of their views) but they must record your objections under the section for your views. They will then ask you to sign the modified version of this form which states which parts of the form you disagree with.
### COMMON ASSESSMENT FORM

**Name of worker**

**Worker’s agency**

**Date of assessment**

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#### Child or young person’s details

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<th>First name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Middle names</th>
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<th>Previous or other names</th>
<th>first name</th>
<th>surname</th>
<th>other names</th>
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<th>Date of birth or EDD¹</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<th>○ female</th>
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<td>EDD</td>
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#### Address

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#### Telephone numbers

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#### Child’s first language or preferred means of communication

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<th>Details of any special requirements (eg, interpreter or signer)</th>
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#### Reason for completing this Common Assessment

(please use this space to briefly explain why you are carrying out this Common Assessment)

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#### Family members

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<th>First name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Relationship to child</th>
<th>Age (if a child)</th>
<th>Parental responsibility</th>
<th>Present at meeting</th>
<th>Household member</th>
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Additional information

(for example, parent’s preferred means of communication or address of those at the meeting who do not live with the child)

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**APPENDIX IV: The CAF Form**

Page 86 of 91
Consider all the dimensions of the CAF triangle when discussing the child or young person’s situation.
Record below information from the triangle giving details of needs as well as strengths. Please identify the relevant dimension in each case.

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<th>Strengths</th>
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Conclusions, solutions and actions

now that the assessment is complete, you need to record conclusions, solutions and actions. Work with the child, young person and/or their family, and take account of their ideas, solutions and goals.

What are your conclusions?
for example: strengths, no additional needs, additional needs

What needs to change?
for example: what outcomes, solutions and goals do the child or young person and their family want to achieve

What will be done as a result of this Common Assessment
try to be specific about what will be done and who will do what

Does this need to be reviewed?

○ yes ○ no

Agreed review date
(if applicable)
Key agencies who are also working with the child, young person or their family (if known)

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<th>agency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>contact name</td>
<td>telephone</td>
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<td>contact name</td>
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Child or young person’s comments on the assessment and the actions identified

Parent or carer’s comments on the assessment and the actions identified

Attachments

This is a list of any existing files or information which are attached to support this CAF. Attached files will be shared securely with anyone receiving this CAF electronically.

This version (v 1.7) of the Common Assessment Form is for use during the pilot period.

Copyright Welsh Assembly Government 2007
Consent

No information from this form will be shared without your permission unless there is a legal requirement to do so (in which case, you will be notified that the information has been shared without your permission unless doing this would place you or your child at risk).

If you give your permission, you may change your mind at any time in the future (in which case you should get back in touch with the person who has completed this form).

I have read the information recorded on this Common Assessment form and I have had my views listened to and recorded.

I agree that information in this form may be stored electronically and that the existence of this form, the date of this assessment and the name of the worker who carried out this assessment can be shown automatically to any other worker who is in the process of completing another Common Assessment with me in the future.

I agree for a copy of this form to be sent to:

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Additional questions

This area may be empty, or it may contain specific questions that the agencies listed above wish to ask.

Signed

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<tr>
<th>Young person or an adult with parental responsibility</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Worker:

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<th>Date</th>
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