

Early Help without Borders

Best Practice Guidance for Early Help Cross-Border Working

Agreement between Local Authorities;
Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire,
Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset
Bath and North East Somerset

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to set out best practice for children and young people's services in using the Early Help single assessment, formerly known as the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) across Local Authority boundaries.

It is acknowledged that practice will vary between Local Authority areas. For example, some areas may have multi-agency teams, or a Single Point of Access to their services, others do not. This variation in practice is regarded as a strength, which increases innovation and opportunities for improving service delivery; it is not necessarily a barrier to effective cross-border working.

This guidance will assist children's services to work in the best interests of children and young people to achieve improved outcomes and fulfil their potential. It is not concerned with maintaining organisational boundaries.

Partners in each Local Authority area will need to promote the guidance and consider how it will be used in practice.

For the purpose of this guide, the term 'cross border working' refers to differences in working practice between two Local Authorities that might share a border and positive attempts to resolve working issues that might arise as a result. In many instances, the Local Authority areas will share a border, however there will be exceptions.

2. Key Principles

- Any practitioner working with a child, young person or family who identifies an unmet need should consider how best they can meet those needs, regardless of where the child / young person lives, or the location of the practitioner.
- The experience of cross border assessments and service delivery should be seamless for children, young people and families and flexible for practitioners.
- The home address of a child/young person defines the 'Home' Local Authority for responsibility regarding processing and coordinating requests for Early Help and single assessments for Early Help.
- The practitioner should check which Local Authority is the home Local Authority for each child/young person prior to initiating any request for help process. Where a child lives in a different Local Authority to that of the practitioners agency, they will need to contact the home Local Authority or read these notes for guidance. (Please see page 13 for contact details.)
- Practitioners are expected to travel across borders to attend any relevant meetings including Team Around the Child / Family (TAC/F) Meetings.
- Practitioners are not expected to deliver services outside their normal areas of delivery, unless prior agreement has been made between the practitioner and their line manager.
- Where schools, Early Years, Youth Services, Voluntary agencies or Health professionals are located in a different Local Authority to that of the 'home' Local Authority of the child / young person, it is recognised that there may be difficulties over accessing resources, as access to resources varies between Local Authorities. Where a child or family is disadvantaged through this process, the case may need to be considered flexibly and individually by all organisations involved in the TAC/F and action plan, across both Local Authorities involved.
- Wherever possible Early Help Managers/Coordinators/Leads will seek to resolve issues by direct discussion or via the Cross Border Working Group.
- Practitioners involved in an Early Help request or assessment who identify at any stage that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm must follow their local safeguarding procedures. It is best practice to inform the child/young person and family that that is happening **unless doing so is likely to expose the child/young person to further risk**. Practitioners should always seek local advice if they are unsure.

South West Child Protection Group:

The South West Child Protection Group outlines standard operating procedures for multi-agency safeguarding. Follow the links below ‘:

<http://www.swcpp.org.uk/>

<http://www.online-procedures.co.uk/swcpp/procedures/getting-help/contact-details/working-across-boundaries/>

3. What to do if working with a child/young person in :

Gloucestershire

If you are a Lead Professional working with a child who lives in Gloucestershire the following guidelines will help you with the Common Assessment Framework process:

There are 7 Locality Teams in Gloucestershire:

Cheltenham Locality
Cotswold Locality
Forest of Dean Locality
Gloucester North Locality
Gloucester South Locality
Stroud Locality
Tewkesbury Locality

Contact details can be found here:

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=22903>

- Please contact the Locality Team where the child lives for advice and help. Please use the Locality finder and the child's postcode to find out which Locality team to contact. <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=104630>
- Please refer to the CAF process checklist found here. <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=98554>
- For all information regarding CAF please use our webpage and follow the links for related pages. <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/caf>

South Gloucestershire

- Contact First Point to discuss whether the family is known to any services already: Tel: 01454 866000 or Firstpoint@southglos.gov.uk
- If there is no prior involvement discuss with First Point what may be required to meet the needs of the child, young person or family. If needs are unclear or there are more than two agencies involved with the family you may be asked to initiate an Single Assessment for Early Help (SAFeh) with the family in order to develop an integrated action plan across agencies.
- If needs are clear you may be able to make a request for Early Help to an appropriate service, by completing the First Point, request for help form.
- You may need to gather more information on the family for a single assessment, possibly through a Team Around the Child or Family (TAC/F) meeting (contact First Point as above, about who to contact and for support with this).
- The Single Assessment for Early Help initiator is the Lead Professional until the first TAC/F meeting has happened, when it will be formally agreed who should take on this role.
- Reviews will need to be coordinated by the Lead Professional at regular intervals, and consideration should be given to holding this in the context of a TAC/F meeting, or at the very least with the family. Suggested intervals are 6 weeks, 3 months & 6 months (dates for this can be set at the first review).
- If you want to attend Chairing Team Around the Child/Family (TAC/F) Meetings training contact hrworkforcedevelopment@southglos.gov.uk

Other sources of support and useful documents

- Firstpoint@southglos.gov.uk - Preventative Services Officer.
- South Gloucestershire SAFeh toolkit can be found at <http://www.sgcyp.org/CommonAssessmentSupport/CAFToolkit/tabid/432/Default.aspx>
- South Gloucestershire website:- <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/children-and-family-care/common-assessment-framework/common-assessment-framework/>

Early Help single assessments initiated on any child / young person or family that lives in South Gloucestershire should be submitted to:-

PO Box 298
The Council Offices
First Point
High St, Kingswood, Bristol
BS15 0DQ
Tel: 01454 866000

Firstpoint@southglos.gov.uk (Only email confidential information securely)
Firstpoint@southglos.gcsx.gov.uk (only use from a secure and compatible email address)

Fax: 01454 864380 (you should check with First Point that they are ready to receive a fax before sending)

Link below to Thresholds Guidance :

South Gloucestershire Thresholds Guidance Part 1 – April 2013

<http://www.sgcyp.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=B2gb0mtcYe4%3d&tabid=82&mid=1099>

South Gloucestershire Threshold Guidance Matrix Part 2

<http://www.sgcyp.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=B%2bSEcqSalpA%3d&tabid=82&mid=1099>

Bristol

Any concern around a child or young person should come through First Response in Bristol. They will be able to assess whether the child or young person is known to any services already.

www.bristol.gov.uk/firstresponse or 0117 9036444

Anyone can ring First Response if they are concerned about a child or young person or if they think they need support. They will then decide whether this meets Social Care Thresholds, if not it will be passed to Early Help.

If a child has already had an Early Help assessment in another authority and the child and family are moving, please contact one of the following area Early Help offices to discuss the case before handover.

North Early Help 0117 3521499

South Early Help 0117 9037770

East Central Early Help 0117 9415886

The Bristol Thresholds Guidance describes our processes in more detail and can be found here:

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/children-and-young-people/bristol-safeguarding-children-board>

North Somerset

North Somerset is operating interim CAF arrangements whilst we complete the work on implementing the Early Help assessment. The following people will be best placed to discuss these arrangements with you and to advise on resources and processes within North Somerset.

Is the child of school age?

- Contact Andy Baker, Advisory Teacher on 01275424358
andy.baker@n-somerset.gov.uk

Is the child pre- school?

- Contact Tracey Wells, Community Family Team Leaders - Early Years on 01934 426643. tracey.wells@n-somerset.gov.uk

Looking for copies of guidance / access to an eCAF account / advice on training?

- Contact Louise Lynch, Integrated Working Support and Development Officer on 01934 426373. louise.lynch@n-somerset.gov.uk

Bath and North East Somerset

- Check whether or not an Early Help Assessment (CAF) has already been completed with the Integrated Working Team in Bath and North East Somerset - 01225 395021 and inform you of the Lead Professional.
- If a CAF is open, then contact the Lead Professional. With parental consent you will be able to access the CAF and join the TAC.
- If there is no existing Early Help Assessment (CAF) and you have consent, complete an assessment with the parent and child, including contributions from any other agencies.
- Secure signed parental consent and comments, and where appropriate those of the child/young person.
- Send the signed paper copy or electronic version securely to the Integrated Working Team at earlyhelp@bathnes.gov.uk.
- Assessment and Information Officers will make a response to all cross border Early Help Assessments (CAFs) and will help to identify the next steps including whether a TAC is required and who should chair and coordinate this meeting.
- At the TAC/F meeting the needs will be confirmed, the action plan will be completed, a Lead Professional will be appointed and a review date will be set.
- The Lead Professional will need to discuss support needs with his/her line manager and the management of subsequent TAC/F reviews.
- Further practical support to complete Early Help Assessments (CAFs) can be offered by the Assessment and Information Officers within the Integrated Working Team.

Training

Multi-agency training is available on the Early Help assessment (CAF) and the role of the Lead Professionals/Team around the child for practitioners and Managers.

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/childrens-workforce-training/child-protection-training>

Other sources of support and useful documents:

B&NES Integrated Working Web pages:

- Early Help to support families webpage
<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/early-help-support-families>
- Early Help Assessment (CAF) webpage
<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/early-help-support-families/early-help-caf>

- Lead Professional & Team Around the Child webpage
<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/early-help-support-families/lead-professional-team>
- Early Help Offer
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/early_help_offer_bath_and_north_east_somerset_02_2014.pdf
- Thresholds for assessment
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Children-and-Young-People/ChildProtection/threshold_for_assessment.pdf

Somerset

The following information is aimed to guide Lead Professionals working with cross border families or with those moving to a neighbouring county.

Cross Border families living in Somerset:

- Please call or email the CAF Coordinator to check if there is already a CAF in place for the child 01823 355803 or CAFCoordinator@somerset.gov.uk
- If there is an existing CAF, you will be put in touch with the Lead professional.
- If there is no existing CAF, please complete an Intention to complete form and return to CAFCoordinator@somerset.gov.uk before completing the CAF with the family. Ensure the family have signed the consent page and return to CAF Coordinator.
- The CAF Coordinator will make contact with you and support in any way needed. Support can be given in terms of whom to invite to a TAC meeting.
- At the TAC a lead professional should be decided in conjunction with the family and a review date set. The action plan should be agreed by all.

Families moving out of Somerset:

- If you are Lead professional for a family who are moving out of Somerset, it is imperative this is made clear to the CAF Coordinator at the earliest possible opportunity in order for them to liaise with the family's new home county. The CAF, with the family's permission, can be transferred to their new local authority. Ensure the family are aware of what will happen next.
- CAF coordinator can assist with contacting the relevant professionals in the new authority.
- A TAC meeting will be convened at the earliest opportunity and the Lead professional will be expected to attend this meeting for a smooth hand over of services for the family. The CAF Coordinator will also attend these meetings where appropriate.

Useful contacts and documents:

- Somerset CAF paperwork can be found at:
<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/strategies/common-assessment-framework-caf/>
- CAF queries should go to:
CAFCoordinator@somerset.gov.uk or 01823 355803
- Somerset getset Early help services can be found at
<http://getsetsomerset.org.uk/>
- Somerset Early Help Strategy and Threshold Document
<http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/council/board3d/2013%20September%2011%20Item%206%20Early%20Help%20Strategy%20and%20Delivery%20Plan%20Appendix%20A.pdf>

4. Transferring an Early Help Assessment / Request when a family moves across boundaries

- Ask the family if they wish to access further support in the new Local Authority in order to share information with new Local Authority.
- Make contact with the new host authority and transfer information to the identified person.
- The old host authority should consider the need for convening a TAC/F meeting where required.
- Ensure the child and family are aware of the handover process and are clear what is going to happen next.
- Old host authority will close interventions and the new host authority will record information and take appropriate action.

5. Contact Details of Early Help Leads

Local Authority	Title/ role	Contact details
Gloucestershire	Katherine O'Keefe Gloucester South Locality Team Manager & Countywide Lead CAF/Individual Commissioning	01452 328060 Katherine.O'Keefe@gloucestershire.gov.uk
South Gloucestershire	First Point Team Early Help Partnership Officer Heather Churchill	01454 866000 Firstpoint@southglos.gov.uk heather.churchill@southglos.gov.uk Telephone : 01454 864680 Mobile : 07748622433
Bristol	Early Help co-ordinators	North : 0117 3521499 East Central : 0117 9415886 South : 0117 9037770
	Good practice guides and locality maps for Bristol can be downloaded from	http://www.bristolpartnership.org/the-5-boards/children-and-young-peoples-trust-board/shared-responsibilities-and-processes/children-and-young-peoples-workforce/integrated-working/childrens-practitioners-toolkit/multi-agency-working-arrangements
North Somerset	Louise Lynch- CAF Training	Louise.lynch@n-somerset.gov.uk
Bath & North East Somerset	Assessment and Information Officers, Integrated Working Team	earlyhelp@bathnes.gov.uk Telephone : 01225 395021
Somerset	Philippa Small CAF Coordinator	cafcoordinator@somerset.gov.uk 01823 355803
	Early Help Service areas	http://www.somerset.gov.uk/childrens-services/childcare/childrens-centres/