

Early Intervention Budget Guidance

Procedures for the use of the Early Intervention Budget

1. Background:

1.1 Every Child Matters emphasises the importance of:

- Integrated working
- Early Intervention
- A common approach to the assessment of needs (CAF)
- The coordination of services.

The overall objective is to enable children and families to achieve better outcomes through integrated working.

1.2 The desired outcomes for children, young people and families are:

- Increase the speed at which services are provided
- Increase the support provided to families when difficulties first arise, in particular practical support
- Reduce the number of children requiring statutory interventions due to child protection, family breakdown leading to admission into the care system, school exclusion and school absence.

2. Service User Involvement:

2.1 Children, young people, parents and carers should always be partners in the process of deciding which services should be purchased to best support them. The participation of children, young people, parents and carers is integral to the process of undertaking a CAF, and subsequent interventions. Their views will be obtained in a number of ways:

- As part of the Common Assessment
- At the Coordinated Support Meeting, if one takes place
- At subsequent reviews of the Co-ordinated Support Plan.

3. Scope of the Budget:

3.1 The early intervention budget is designed to meet lower level needs as part of the early intervention/prevention agenda.

3.2 The budget is designed to meet needs that cannot be met in any other way. The specified needs will have been identified as a result of a common assessment and have specified outcomes for the child/young person or family.

3.3 The budget should not be used to purchase any service which is the statutory responsibility for someone else to provide – i.e. the budget should not be used so that agencies can avoid paying for services, or as a means for short-circuiting other processes. For example, it is the responsibility of registered social landlords to repair properties.

3.4 The budget is not to be used for income maintenance, for example, Asylum Seekers and Refugees, or overstaying families that are not eligible for benefits.

3.5 If it becomes known that the application is for a service that has been refused by another agency, then the area CAF Coordinators must take into account that the service has been refused for a reason. Payment must be carefully considered and only made if it is critical to the outcomes for the child or young person.

3.6 There is an expectation that all other possible means of funding or accessing the required services, goods or equipment are exhausted before applying for this funding. For information about what may be available in Worcestershire, please talk to your area CAF Coordinator who may be able to help.

3.7 In Worcestershire, the budget cannot generally be used to pay debts. However, in exceptional circumstances this general principle can be put aside, for example if the main income earner has left the family home. Please see 7.5 for guidance on exceptional circumstances.

3.8 Any services purchased must have a defined purpose and a specified end point at the time they are bought. They will often be for activities over a limited period of time.

3.9 Funding can be applied for goods or services identified in the Common Assessment. The amount is dependent on the needs outlined for the child or young person. CAF Coordinators have access to a limited budget and it is expected that the majority of awards of funding will be less than £350 per child per annum. However, awards of up to £1000 per child per annum can be made.

3.10 Every child and young person aged 18 or under has an equal opportunity to access the early intervention budget. This means that if individual CAFs have been completed for siblings and a need for resources is identified then they can all have access to the budget up to the £1000 limit per child per annum.

3.11 If a payment is made for the purchase of goods, the child, young person and family must be made aware that this is to meet the specific need identified in the CAF. If the item is damaged or sold then a further application to the early intervention budget cannot be made, unless in exceptional circumstances. Additionally, if a payment is made to clear debts because of exceptional circumstances, this is a one off payment and there will be no further awards from the early intervention budget for this purpose.

4. Access Criteria:

4.1 The following criteria will have to be met for families to be eligible to apply:

- The family must be resident and accessing services in Worcestershire or the CAF has been completed by a Worcestershire practitioner supporting the family under the cross border working protocols
- The children must be pre-birth to 18 years old
- The family must have had needs assessed via a Common Assessment.

5. What can be purchased:

5.1 Any service, goods, item of equipment etc. which will meet a need identified in the CAF. It must be possible to “spot” purchase a service; the service can be in the public, voluntary, independent or private sector.

Examples are:

- Child care/nursery place/play scheme
- Mentoring
- Sessional support
- Mediation
- Mentoring
- Counselling
- Cleaning
- Laundry
- Breaks from caring responsibilities for young carers (includes activity-based breaks)
- Leisure activities
- Family leisure
- Furniture, for example, stair gates, beds, etc
- White goods, washing machines, tumble dryers etc
- Transport costs (where the assessment for the family has identified particular transport needs)
- Housing repairs (only for use in circumstances where the assessment for the family has identified particular housing needs to improve the family's situation e.g. decoration materials for a child's bedroom).

N.B. This list is not exhaustive.

6. Principles for purchasing services:

6.1 The safety of the child is of paramount importance when purchasing goods/services from this budget.

6.2 Any equipment that is bought should adhere to British Safety Standards and any installation should be carried out by an appropriately qualified/certified professional.

6.3 It is appropriate to consider buying second hand goods but only if the supplier has been accepted on to the select list of suppliers. This will establish the supplier's policies regarding those standards mentioned in 6.2. This select list will be supplied to area CAF Coordinators when complete.

6.4 Any person that is employed directly by the use of this budget, and has direct contact with children, should be engaged via an approved agency. It will be expected that as part of the agency's registration criteria, checks including Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) will be undertaken.

6.5 The budget will not be used to employ informal carers e.g. friends/neighbours.

6.6 Any services which are purchased should:

- Have a track record of effectiveness, and be appropriately registered
- Demonstrate effective value for money
- Be delivered as part of a broader package of support for vulnerable children and their families
- Be from an approved list.

7. Applying for funding:

7.1 A Common Assessment is completed and needs are identified. A Coordinated Support Meeting may be called but if a single service can meet the needs of the child/young person with additional resources then an application to the early intervention budget can still be made. The lead professional, or person who completed the Common Assessment, must complete the application form, see Appendix 1 (EIB) giving details of the required support, costs and a suggested provider. All costs must be identified including delivery and installation if required.

7.2 The three area CAF Coordinators will receive applications from professionals to access funds to support children and families. Each area CAF Coordinator will make decisions on applications of up to £350 within five working days.

7.3 Where an application outlines a cost of between £350 and £1000, the decision will be made jointly by the area CAF Coordinators. A minimum of two area CAF Coordinators are required for a decision. All decisions will be made within five working days.

7.4 Where an application is for more than £1000 and the area CAF Coordinators are minded to support the application, it must be referred to one of the Service Development Managers (SDM) from Children's Services who is involved in the CAF project for a decision.

7.5 If an application falls outside the remit of this guidance for whatever reason and the area CAF Coordinator is minded to support it, then again it must be referred to one of the SDMs involved in the CAF project for a decision.

7.6 All decisions will be notified to the person who applied to the budget by phone and confirmed by letter using the appropriate sample letter. See Appendix 2 (EIB) and Appendix 3 (EIB).

7.7 No services or items should be booked until the area CAF Coordinator has given authorisation. Please see Appendix 4 (EIB) for a flow chart showing the process for applying to the early intervention budget.

8. How to purchase services and responsibilities:

8.1 The lead professional will:

- Be responsible for identifying what needs to be purchased with the child/young person and parent(s)/carer(s)
- Must get the parent/carer to sign for receipt of any cash or goods
- Identify appropriately registered services
- Send receipts and invoices to the CAF Coordinator within seven working days of receipt
- Complete the evaluation form, see Appendix 5 (EIB).

8.2 The area CAF Coordinator will:

- Provide advice for the lead professional
- Individually make decisions on applications below £350
- Liaise with the person who applied for the funding and providing them with a decision within five working days
- As a group (a minimum of two area CAF Coordinators) make decisions on applications between £350 and £1000
- Where an application is for more than £1000, as a group decide if you are minded to support the application and then refer to one of the SDMs involved in the project for a decision. You do not need to refer up if the group is not minded to support the application.

8.3 The CAF Coordinator admin will:

- Be responsible for identifying where the goods or services can be purchased from using a select list or providers who have been used previously
- Make sure that it is value for money
- Liaise with the person who applied for the funding and issue with appropriate confirmation letter
- Input orders on SAP system and chase invoices if necessary
- Record the required information on the monitoring spreadsheet
- Issue the evaluation form when the CAF is closed.

8.4 The CAF Project Team will:

- Monitor the overall budget
- Ensure that all monitoring and evaluation processes are completed, including the completion of the evaluation form
- Gather and analyse qualitative data from the evaluation form and other methods that may be appropriate
- Prepare quarterly reports to go to the IWP Board
- Provide advice and guidance when required
- Monitor applications and providers to establish if there is a gap in provision and suggest any recommendations for commissioning services.

9. Evaluation:

9.1 At the end of the process the Lead Professional, or the person who completed the Common Assessment, will be expected to complete an evaluation form, see Appendix 5 (EIB). This will help to build up a bank of information for other professionals to use as the CAF process and the early intervention budget become embedded into all our processes. The evaluation form will also provide qualitative data for the evaluation of the early intervention budget.

9.2 The IWP Board will receive a quarterly report on progress, detailing how much has been spent. The Board will also have a critical role in overseeing consistency across the county and appropriate use of the multi-agency budget.

