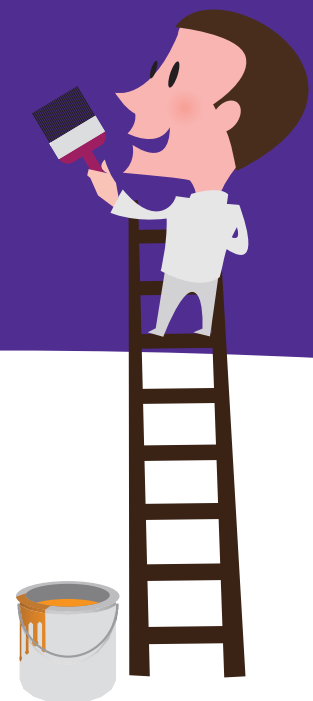


# Common Assessment Framework Guidance

Guidance for Children's Services and Housing Services  
in using the Common Assessment Framework when  
dealing with Homeless Young People



# Introduction

This non statutory guidance sets out some specific considerations to be taken into account by Children and Housing Services professionals when using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to assess the needs of young people under the age of 19 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Housing need may or may not be the primary reason that an assessment is being undertaken but there should be an awareness over the particular support that a young person needs which can be identified through the CAF.



This guidance should be read in conjunction with other resources that have been published particularly the recent joint guidance by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Communities and Local Government (CLG) *'Joint Working between Housing and Children's Services: Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people'* which is available online at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/goodpracticeguide](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/goodpracticeguide)

The guidance stresses the importance of all local areas developing effective joint working protocols and practices between children's services, housing authorities and other key partners both to prevent homelessness and tackle its adverse effects on outcomes for young people and their families. It is important that children's services and housing services work with the young person and other practitioners and agencies to assess the full range of the young person's needs and provide appropriate, holistic support. In addition there is information for both managers and practitioners on what the CAF is, who it is for and its benefits in the *'Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People; Managers Guide'* and the equivalent *'Practitioners Guide'*, which are detailed in the resources section.

Recent structural changes such as the integration of children's education and social care and the development of children's trust arrangements have encouraged greater joint working between services. Also of importance is the introduction of Targeted Youth Support reforms which recognise that some young people, particularly those who have multiple needs, such as for example teenage parents, are in need of more support than is provided by universal services. The purpose of these reforms is to bring together local services, including education, welfare, Connexions, social services, youth services, housing, health and teenage parent support services and youth offending. The aim is to create a common approach to identifying young people with additional needs, assessing those needs and providing integrated support. All local areas should have these elements in place by early 2009 with universal services such as extended schools also supporting the young person and their family by providing a range of services. The resources section at the end of this document gives details of where you can find more about targeted youth support.

# Case Study: Brighton and Hove Council and use of the CAF

When a young person seeks housing assistance from Hove YMCA Housing Services, an initial assessment is completed to assess what type of housing support they require and whether they would benefit from more specialist services such as Housing Options or Housing Advice.

If necessary the options or advice workers complete a comprehensive assessment and support form through which the young person can be referred to a variety of services depending on their needs. This approach ensures that services work together in order to address the young person's needs in the round.

As part of the work with young people who need housing assistance the CAF form is being developed so that when a young person is identified as being at risk of homelessness, additional questions can be asked in order to assess what services can be delivered to support the young person. This will also encourage services to work together to ensure that issues are resolved at the most appropriate point, whether that is with targeted support or more generalised services.



# What should the CAF focus on?



Each local area should be using the CAF when they identify a young person who may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, as well as having regard to their statutory obligations under relevant legislation, particularly the Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996. The strengths and needs part of the CAF form is split into three sections; 1) development of child/young person; 2) parents and carers; and 3) family and environmental. Whilst all three sections should be explored when conducting a CAF there are certain areas that should be particularly considered when dealing with a young person who seeks housing assistance and may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These include:

- Preventing homelessness: If the young person is not at risk of harm at home, services should look at what can be done to support the young person and their family to enable the young person to continue living at home with their family, either long term or until suitable alternative accommodation can be found for the young person. If the young person is themselves a parent or is pregnant are there particular issues such as overcrowding in the family home which need to be taken into consideration? Are there issues at home that could be addressed with the help of family support or mediation?
- If the young person is a young offender, the authority will need to work with the young person's Youth Offending Team worker to identify the young person's needs, within the context of their family, and then work with other services in order to address them. As appropriate they should work with any secure unit (such as Young Offenders Institutes) in which the young person is being held to ensure that their housing needs can be addressed.

- Ensuing continuity of access to health services if a young person experiences homelessness, particularly if the young person has a health condition or any needs for which they may need ongoing treatment or medication, for example diabetes, substance misuse, mental health or sexual health and contraception issues or is pregnant. The crisis of homelessness can lead to disruption in treatment and additional stress for the young person, exacerbating health problems and preventing access to health services. Referral to GP's or specialist services such as CAMHS should be considered where appropriate.
- Research has shown that young people who are in learning or work who experience homelessness are at greater risk of dropping out of learning or leaving or losing their job, potentially severely damaging their life chances. Every effort should be made to work with the young person, their learning provider and/or employer to prevent this, for example by helping the young person negotiate some time off if they need it and ensuring that they can reach their place of work or learning from any accommodation they are placed in.
- The degree of vulnerability of the young person, and the way they relate to and feel about other young people, also needs to be assessed, to help identify the most appropriate accommodation option and to look at whether safeguarding procedures need to be put in place. For example, some young people cope better in supported accommodation shared with other young people. Others may feel safer and more secure in a household setting such as that offered by supported lodgings. When the young person has moved out of familiar surroundings there is a risk of them becoming disengaged and consequently becoming involved in negative behaviour. There should be efforts, therefore, to actively engage the young person in local activities and encourage them to get involved in appropriate opportunities.

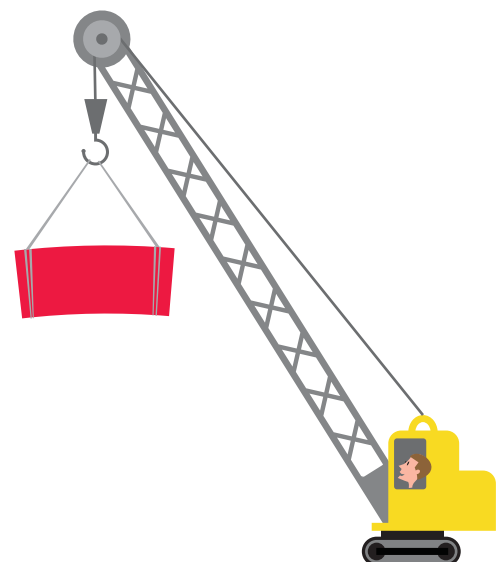


# How to find out more about the CAF in your local area:



The CAF is being rolled out in all local areas in partnership with the targeted youth support reforms and there should already be in place a team in each local area coordinating delivery arrangements. These teams are a good contact point for how the CAF can be used to assess young people's needs for support. Each local area will be providing CAF training and this is often on a multi agency basis. Although no one should undertake an assessment using CAF without having done appropriate training, all practitioners should be able to refer young people to someone trained to use the CAF.

However the best work is often done informally between colleagues sharing their experience and knowledge and we would encourage colleagues in both children's services and housing services to promote informal contacts with each other for this purpose.



# Resources

For more information about the National Youth Homelessness Scheme, including its regional centres of excellence, visit: [www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness](http://www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness)

For more information about the CAF and the role of the Lead Professional, visit the resources on the Every Child Matters website at: [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/)

For more information on targeted youth support, including the leaflets:

*Targeted youth support and housing practitioners – working together to tackle youth homelessness* and

*Targeted youth support and teenage pregnancy – working together to reduce teenage pregnancy rates and support young parents,*

visit: [www.ecm.gov.uk/deliveringservices/targetedyouthsupport](http://www.ecm.gov.uk/deliveringservices/targetedyouthsupport)

Common Assessment Framework case studies can be found at: [www.tda.gov.uk/extendedschools](http://www.tda.gov.uk/extendedschools)

More information on the role of the Lead Professional can be found at: [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/leadprofessional/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/leadprofessional/)

'*Making It Happen*' has been published to support the development and implementation of more effective front-line integrated working practice across the children's workforce. This can be found at: [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/search/IG00130/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/search/IG00130/)

'*Integrated Working Explained*', published by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) can be found at: [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/\\_files/Integrated%20Working%20Explained.pdf](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/Integrated%20Working%20Explained.pdf)

'*Children's Trusts: Statutory Guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve the wellbeing of children, young people and their families*' (DCSF, November 2008) available online at: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00943-2008&>



A commitment from  
**The Children's Plan**



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PP/D35(4012)/0109

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