



Tameside Safeguarding Children Board

Tameside Children's Needs Framework

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Section 1- Introduction & Commitment

The Children's Needs Framework is a document that supports children, adult and family services to:

1. Safeguard and protect children
2. Provide children and their families with the support that they need at the earliest opportunity.
3. Help children and young people to achieve good outcomes.
4. Prevent problems escalating to a point where statutory safeguarding arrangements or criminal proceedings have to be put into place.

All partner agencies of the Tameside Safeguarding Children Board (TSCB) are fully committed to the Framework and Senior Leaders are required to ensure that their service adheres to it and that their staff are equipped with the appropriate knowledge, skills and resources to do so.

The framework should be used as;

- A guide for Senior Managers to ensure that their service has the appropriate systems and processes in place to support its full implementation.
- Pre-requisite reading for managers and practitioners attending CAF Training and a reference guide for them to use in practice and in supervision.

CAF training is available via the [TSCB Training Programme](#) .

Specifically the framework;

- Identifies the Family CAF as the primary assessment, planning and support process for all services to use where children and families require additional support below the level of statutory intervention.
- Provides further guidance on multi-agency consultation and links to a range of other risk assessments for practitioners to use and to the Service Information Directory.
- Highlights the principles and good practice that practitioners should work towards including for example, respectful challenge, professionals meetings, and escalation.

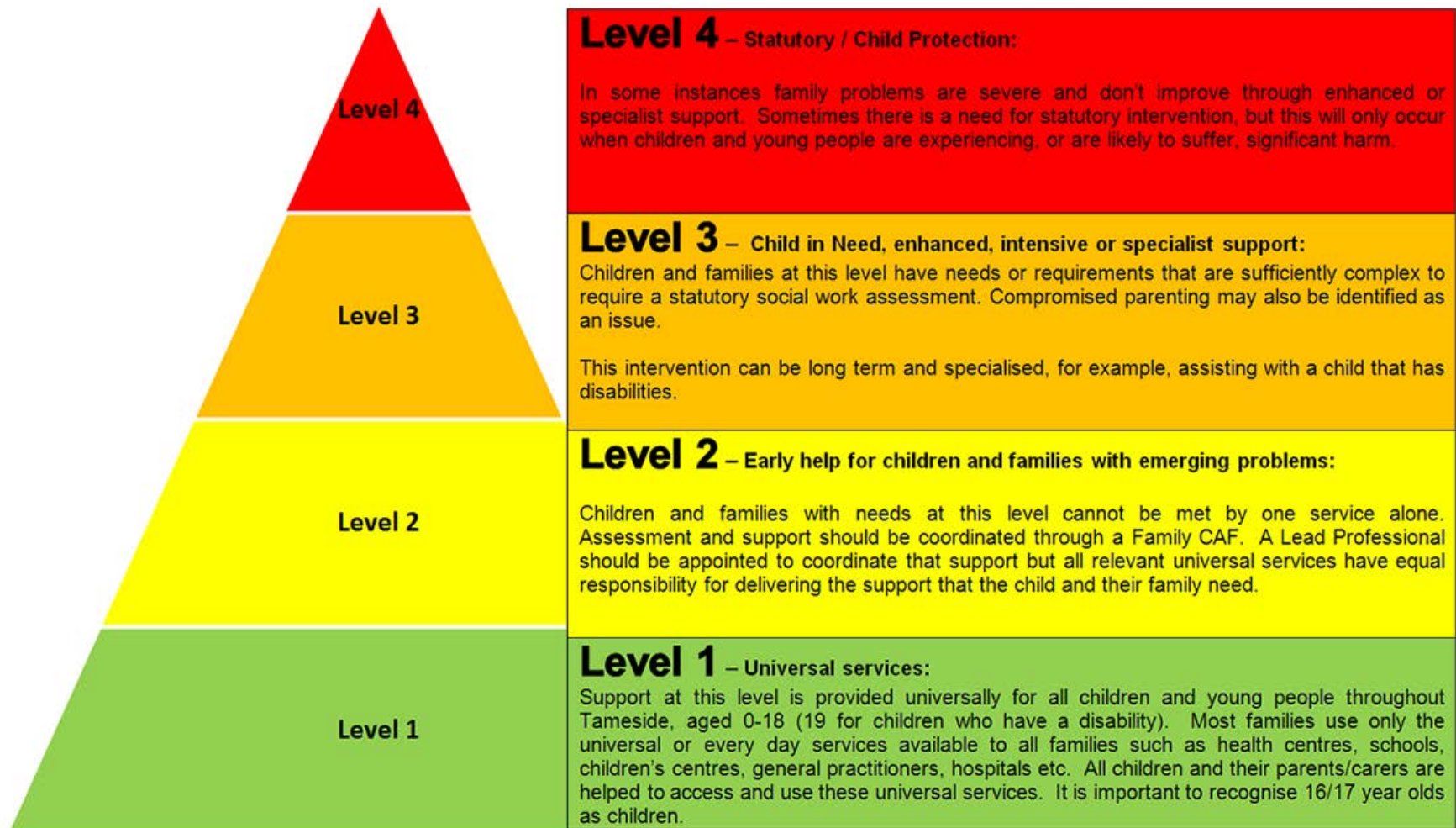
For detailed guidance on how to complete a CAF and follow the different parts of the planning process, practitioners should refer to the 'Tameside Family CAF Support Guidance for Practitioners'. This will also be provided to all those that attend CAF Training.

Section 2- The Continuum of Need

The continuum of need in Tameside has four levels agreed by Tameside Safeguarding Children Board. These levels are part of the Threshold Guidance and help professionals to decide what assessments and support children, young people and their families require. The Threshold Guidance should be read alongside this Children's Needs Framework. It includes guidance on;

- Tameside's Continuum of Need
- Principles of Assessment
- Getting Early Help
- Reporting a Safeguarding Concern
- Decision Making
- Professional Disagreement & Respectful Challenge
- Level 1 Universal Services
- Level 2 Early help for children with emerging problems
- Level 3 Child in Need (section 17 Children Act 1989)
- Level 4 Statutory / Child Protection

SECTION 2 - TAMESIDE'S CONTINUUM OF NEED



Section 3 - Family CAF

When to use the Common Assessment Framework?

The purpose of the assessment is to gain a holistic understanding of a child's / family strengths (resilience) and needs (risks) so that effective interventions can be made. It is particularly important in a multi-agency context, where you may be addressing a range of needs and require input from a range of services.

The Family CAF is suitable for use at level 2 of the Continuum of Need when practitioners first become aware that a child or a member of their family has unmet needs. The decision as to whether to undertake a Family CAF is a matter for the judgement of the practitioner observing or assessing the child or family members with unmet needs. Completion of the CAF helps to identify exactly what the nature of the problem is so that it can be addressed before those problems become serious. It helps practitioners and families to make a plan so that they can get the right kind of support and help themselves to improve outcomes. If a Family CAF is not in place there should be clear evidence of a plan where a path of continued support is in place.

The Family CAF consists of:

- A process for undertaking a common assessment, to help gather and understand information about the needs and strengths of the family, based on discussions with the family and other services as appropriate.
- A standard form to help you record and, where appropriate, share with others the findings from the assessment in terms that are helpful in working with the family to find a response to unmet needs.
- Three domains of assessment including;
 - i. Children
 - ii. Parents and carers
 - iii. Neighbourhood & Community

Preparing to do a Family CAF

In most cases, where a practitioner is concerned about the progress of a child, the first stage would be to discuss issues with the child or young person and their parent or carer. If necessary, this might be followed up by discussions with your manager, colleagues or other staff.

If you are still concerned you should (normally with the consent of the child/young person or parent/carer) find out who is else is working with the child and their family before doing a Family CAF. Always check with a CAF Advisor whether a CAF already exists for the family. It is important to remember that some children, e.g. those with a learning or physical disability, will almost certainly be working with other agencies and that all children should have a GP and, if of school age, have a school and access to a school nurse. It is likely that most babies and their parents or carers will have at least some contact with the midwife, health visitor and/or GP. Anyone completing a Family CAF should contact the relevant practitioners.

Consent and Confidentiality

Obtaining consent to a Family CAF is not usually difficult, particularly, where practitioners have been able to nurture good relationships with children and families. However, when deciding to undertake a Family CAF it must be formally obtained.

In most circumstances documentation for the Family CAF should be shared only with the informed consent of the child, or their parent or carer; copies of the Family CAF and other relevant documents should be provided as a matter of course.

It is important for practitioners to:

- obtain consent to share information wherever possible
- agree with children and families how information is recorded, used and shared and review this regularly
- make children and families aware of circumstances where information may be shared without consent and where confidentiality cannot be maintained
- obtain consent in writing if the information held or shared is sensitive or beyond what

might normally be expected

- operate within the Data Protection Act 1998

In some circumstances the child will be able to give consent without reference to their parents or carers i.e. if they are judged to be Fraser competent. Children under 16 should always be encouraged to involve their parent or carer unless to do so could put them at risk of harm. Particular care should be taken with children with a disability, who are sometimes wrongly assumed not to be able to give consent.

The mental capacity of children and adults should also be considered when gaining consent.

Disclosing Information without Consent

It may be necessary to share information without obtaining consent from the child/young person or parent/carer when:

- the disclosure prevents the child from committing a criminal offence that could place others in jeopardy or places the assessor or any other person at risk of collusion
- the child is at risk of significant harm or harming someone else
- the child needs urgent medical treatment
- information is required as part of a legal proceeding e.g. by order of the Court
- information is requested by the police if investigating a serious crime
- sharing that information is required to undertake a statutory function.

Where it is necessary to share information without consent, the reasons for doing so should be recorded. The record must contain details of any third parties and information or evidence they have been given.

Children and their parents or carers have the right to refuse:

- consent to their information being shared
- a Family CAF
- any services that may be offered

In these circumstances, their views must be respected and alternative action based on

professional judgement considered. In some instances non engagement of the family may heighten your concerns for the child and that may mean reporting any safeguarding concerns to the Public Service Hub. It is your responsibility to [respectfully challenge](#) the family to encourage them to engage on a voluntary level and that may mean discussing your concerns with them and stating your intended course of action if they refuse to engage.

Completion of the Family CAF

In completing the assessment with the child/young person or family, good practice suggests that you:

- seek to build a working relationship with the child/young person, or family, and fully explain the assessment process and issues of consent and confidentiality
- be aware that families (including those members who have parental responsibility) may not agree between themselves about the child's/young person's needs and solutions
- work with the child/young person and/or their parent/carer to understand the issues and develop solutions
- conduct the assessment in a child-centred way, e.g. in an appropriate environment within which the child/young person and parent/carer are likely to feel more secure and confident listening to and taking into account the views of the child/young person and/or parent or carer observing responses, and focusing on areas of strength as well as need.
- Seek advice if you are worried about a child's/young person's welfare or their own safety.
- Agree the outcomes you want to achieve for the child or young person with the family. There is a section on the Family CAF form for recording this information.

The Family CAF discussion is divided into six areas:

- i) Explanation of the purpose of the assessment, what information will be recorded and why
- ii) Collection of basic information about the child and the family, including their demographic and contact details
- iii) Assessment of each of the three domains recording strengths as well as needs.
- iv) Recording overall conclusions and the evidence behind them; major differences of opinion should be shared and recorded.
- v) Identification of solutions and actions.

- vi) Agreeing the Plan Do Review process, who will do what and timescales for review (it is recommended, reviews are every 6 weeks). Where appropriate a lead professional should be agreed. At this stage it is usually the assessing practitioner that is the lead professional until this can be discussed in more detail at a Team around the Family meeting.

Delivering Support and Follow-up Action

The purpose of the assessment is simply to lead to the next stage of intervention:

- No further action – the practitioner's concerns have been resolved and no further needs have been identified
- Single agency support (may be multi-disciplinary) – the needs identified require action by the child and/or their parent or carer, or by the practitioner's agency
- Multi-agency support – the needs identified require multi-agency intervention. In these circumstances a Team around the child meeting must be convened (see Section 3 - Team around the Family Meetings)
- Additional screening/assessment – during the process of completing the CAF you may discover that the child or family is vulnerable, or at risk, because a particular issue that needs further exploration for example mental health problems, substance use, domestic abuse or neglect. (see section 7 – Risk Assessment Tools)

Once a Family CAF is completed and signed, the form should not be amended or fresh information added. Changes in information and circumstances should be documented during assessment reviews and/or Team around the child meeting/reviews. If there are significant changes in the child/young person's needs or circumstances, a new Family CAF should be undertaken. This will replace the original assessment, and the Lead Professional should ensure that only one assessment is open at a time.

The completed and signed Family CAF should be securely stored by your own organisation and shared appropriately with other services that are going to be supporting the family. Following assessment and having made a decision on outcomes required with the family, a team around the family meeting must be convened.

Section 4 – Team around the family meetings

Team around the family meetings provide a consistent approach to inviting all the relevant services and coordinating a plan and review process to meet the needs of children and young people. The plan will focus on achieving the outcomes that were agreed at the end of the assessment process with the family.

Principles

- It is essential that a child, young person, and parent or carer be involved at every stage of these processes. The Team around the Family process should have a child focus at all times.
- The Lead Professional should aim to complete the CAF assessment within 3 weeks
- The Team around the Family meeting should be convened within a week of completion of the assessment
- The number and nature of services to be invited should be shared with the family.
- The Practitioner who completes the CAF will convene and chair the initial Team around the Family meeting, at which point a Lead Professional will be identified. The Lead Professional will take over responsibility for arranging future review Team around the Child Meetings (recommendation these are every 6 weeks).
- The focus of the meeting is to develop the plan with timescales and to identify which practitioner/s will work to agreed outcomes
- The completed plan should be copied to all participants for their reference using Tameside Family CAF paperwork.
- A review date should be set.
- Individual services will maintain their own records.

Section 5 - Lead Professional Role

Role of Lead Professional

The lead professional is not a job title or a new role, but a set of functions to be carried out

as part of the delivery of effective integrated support. These functions are to:

- Act as a single point of contact for the child or family, who they can trust and who can engage them in making choices, navigating their way through the system and effecting change.
- Co-ordinate the delivery of the actions agreed by the practitioners involved, to ensure that children and families receive an effective service which is regularly reviewed. These actions will be based on the outcome of the assessment and recorded in a child and family plan.
- Reduce overlap and inconsistency in the services received.
- Identify where additional services may need to be involved and put processes in place for brokering their involvement.
- Continue to support the child/ren and family if more specialist assessments need to be carried out.
- Support the child through key transition points but, where necessary, ensure a careful planned 'handover' takes place if it is more appropriate for someone else to be the lead professional.

Section 6 - Multi-agency Consultation

The Children's Needs Framework is underpinned by positive multi-agency consultation in order to allow children, young people and families to benefit from additional services and advice. In the 1st instance professionals should always consult with their safeguarding lead unless to do so would create a delay that would place the child at risk of harm.

Principles

- Consultation is a two-way process, acknowledging different valuable knowledge and expertise.
- Consultation is about sharing responsibility for children and young people's well-being. It is not about transferring ownership of problems even if a referral is made as a result of the consultation.
- Information should be shared where appropriate and necessary and in line with Data Protection legislation.
- Parents/carers and or young people should be informed of any referrals/action agreed as a result of consultation

Multi-agency consultation can take place in a number of ways;

Professionals Meetings

Professionals working at Level 2 of the Threshold's that have additional safeguarding concerns that may or may not require escalation to Level 3 or 4 should consider holding a professionals meeting. The reason for holding a Professionals Meeting should be clearly recorded by all agencies that attend. The purpose of a professionals meeting is to;

- Take stock of all relevant current and historical information from services that are involved in supporting the family;
- Assess whether over a period of time the family is pro-actively and positively engaging with those services and;
- Determine whether progress is being made that is resulting in improved outcomes for the child and family.

If a decision is made that the case needs escalating then the Lead Professional should consult with the Children's Hub.

N.B. Convening a Professionals Meeting is not appropriate if there are immediate safeguarding concerns and in these circumstances the Children's Hub should be contacted without delay.

Children's Hub Consultation

Consultation is available from the Tameside Children's Hub during office hours and allows practitioners to seek advice and support from other services to help them in their work with children and young people needing additional support. It is a means of exchanging information and agreeing action to meet the needs of children and young people.

If you have concerns about a child's welfare and require support and advice on "borderline" child protection cases, refer to the [Thresholds Guidance](#) and consult with your safeguarding lead and the Children's Hub if necessary. If a Family CAF is in place and there have been Team around the Family Meetings that have not improved outcomes for the child then it is

important to let the Children's Hub know that.

Professional Disagreement and Escalation Policy

Professionals that report safeguarding concerns often know the family well and together with their line manager, safeguarding lead, or other professionals have a carefully considered view on whether the concerns meet the criteria for statutory intervention at levels 3 and 4 of the Thresholds.

In many cases, deemed not to meet the criteria for statutory intervention, it is reasonable for the Children's Hub to advise professionals to complete a Family CAF and to support the family through other multi-agency support.

However, all professionals, regardless of their position or profession have the right and duty to challenge that decision if they disagree with it and believe the child to be at risk of harm.

In these circumstances professionals should refer to the [Escalation Policy](#).

Furthermore if professionals are not informed of the decision at the point of contact or within 24 hours they should contact the Children's Hub to check what decision has been made.

Professionals should never assume that by contacting the Children's Hub and sharing their concerns they have fulfilled their responsibilities.

Section 7 Risk Assessment Tools

The CAF itself should be considered a risk assessment tool. Whilst its' primary purpose is to identify unmet needs and to provide support, the process of completing the assessment may uncover risks that you were previously unaware of. In some cases it could mean you need to make an immediate child protection referral or undertake further risk assessments. If you receive information that you are concerned about and are unsure about the best response then you should always seek consultation either with your agencies safeguarding lead or via the Children's Hub.

If you identify risks associated with any of the following then you should go to the TSCB [Local Assessment and Guidance](#) page and click on the attached links for the relevant assessment tools and guidance

- Neglect – Graded Care Profile

- Domestic Abuse – Domestic Abuse Seriousness of Harm (DASH) Tool and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Referral Form
- Learning Difficulty/Disability – Good Practice Guidance, Parent's Brochure and Accessible Writing Guide

Tameside Safeguarding Children Board also has a [self-harm and suicide](#) web page containing a self-harm referral pathway and links to emotional health and well-being training.

In Tameside we also have a bank of [Greater Manchester Safeguarding Procedures](#) that all practitioners should use when dealing with a wide range safeguarding issues. TSCB recommends that all practitioners [register for updates](#).

Section 8 - Service Directory (SID)

What is a service directory?

A service directory is a comprehensive online information bank of all types of children's and young people's services available in Tameside, it also holds information on national services. The directory includes a broad range of preventative services in both voluntary and statutory agencies and provides;

- Contact details of service providers
- Eligibility criteria
- Geographical location
- Referral procedures
- Facilities
- Costs (where appropriate)

By providing this information, the service directory should contribute to the reduction in the number of inappropriate and misdirected referrals.

Who will use the directory?

The online service directory is widely available and easily accessible to all practitioners from statutory and voluntary sectors.

Children, young people and families are able to access the directory.

Accessibility

Tameside Service Information Directory is available at www.tameside-sid.org.uk