



Every Child Matters
Change For Children

ICS, CAF and ContactPoint – an overview

Introduction

Every Child Matters aims to integrate services for children from 0 to 19 with agencies working across professional boundaries to co-ordinate support around the needs of children and young people, using common processes and language to meet those needs in the best possible way, focusing on prevention and early intervention and providing better support to parents and families.

This article provides an overview of some of the key tools that support these integrated services and enable more effective use of information to improve well-being and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. It describes how the [Integrated Children's System](#) (ICS), the [Common Assessment Framework](#) (CAF) and [ContactPoint](#) are separate systems which exist for different, specific purposes, but which are all intended to promote better outcomes for children, young people and their families. Although this article provides a brief description of these tools, it assumes a basic understanding of them and focuses on how they relate to each other.

ContactPoint

ContactPoint will be the quick way to find out who else is working with the same child or young person, making it easier to deliver more coordinated support. This basic online directory will be available to authorised staff who need it to do their jobs. It is a key part of the Every Child Matters programme to improve outcomes for children.

ContactPoint will hold a small amount of core demographic data on every child in England (up to their 18th birthday) and contact details for their parents/carers and for practitioners providing services to the child (except for sensitive services, i.e. sexual health, mental health and substance abuse, where contact details are only held with consent and access to this information is tightly controlled). ContactPoint will not hold any case or assessment information.

Further information is available at <http://www.ecm.gov.uk/contactpoint>

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

Assessing needs at an early stage and deciding on what action to take is where the CAF comes in. We want practitioners to be able to gather and record information about a child or young person with additional needs in a systematic, holistic yet simple, way so that they can begin to work out what the needs are and what should be done to address them. CAF is designed to enable practitioners across all agencies, after training, to follow the same process and achieve more consistent assessments that can be shared and understood by other agencies.

Further Information is available at <http://www.ecm.gov.uk/caf>.

A single, national IT system to support CAF will be developed. eCAF will allow authorised practitioners to electronically create, store, and share a CAF securely, across agency and geographical borders where necessary. eCAF will only hold information about some children, with consent, and for a limited period of time.

The Integrated Children's System

When children are or may be children in need as defined by the Children Act 1989, including those who have or may have suffered neglect or abuse or are looked after, it is necessary to assess their needs using the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their families. This involves systematically collecting and recording information about the child and family. Where an in-depth assessment is necessary or children become looked after this involves significant amounts of information. This information should be gathered in such a way that it can be analysed for use in decision-making and presented in a number of ways for different purposes. The Integrated Children's System is an applied



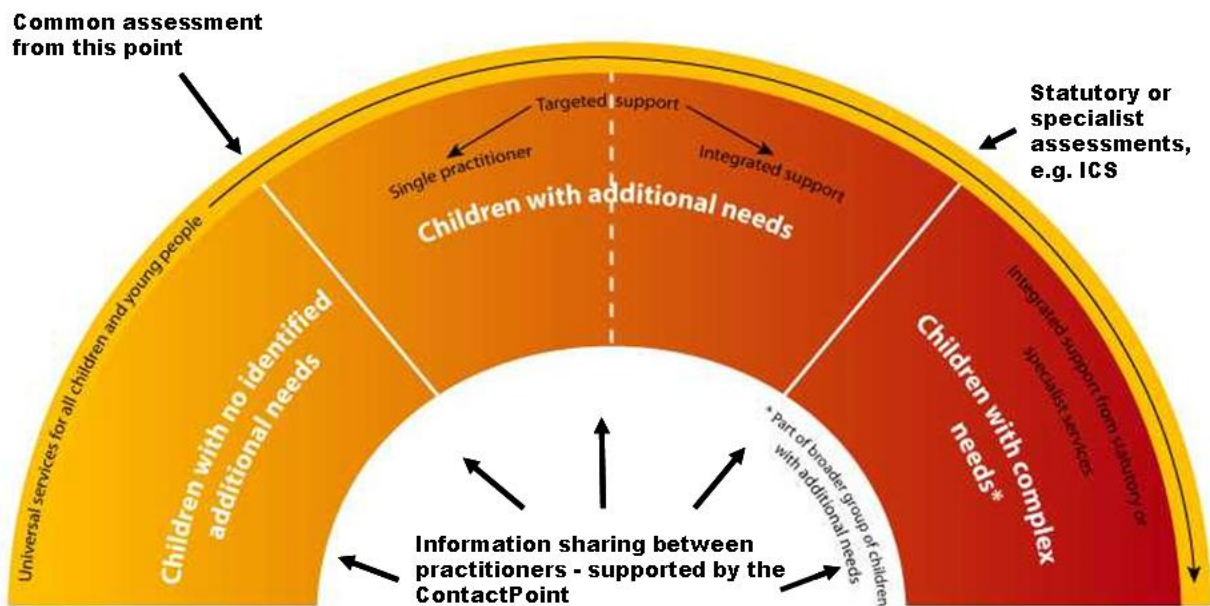
conceptual framework (based on the Assessment Framework domains and dimensions) and a practice tool for working with children in need and managing these detailed information requirements.

ICS supported by information technology is the core of the [electronic social care record](#) for children. The IT system is also known as ICS.

Further information is available at <http://www.ecm.gov.uk/ics>.

Comparing objectives and scope of ICS, CAF and ContactPoint

The diagram below shows where ICS, CAF and ContactPoint provide support across a continuum of needs.



Both ContactPoint and CAF are designed for use across children's services: they are primarily concerned with getting *co-ordinated* help moving quickly for children with additional needs, i.e. children who need additional support over and above that provided by universal services (education and primary health care). ContactPoint and CAF are tools to facilitate early intervention and help deal with additional needs before they escalate into something more serious or more difficult to resolve.

Access to ContactPoint will be permitted to authorised users who need it as part of their work (as defined in regulations made under section 12 of the Children Act 2004). CAF can be used by any suitably trained practitioner.

ICS is a framework for managing the detailed information requirements related to work with children in need, children whose health or development would be impaired without the provision of services. It will contain information about children and their families who are known to children's social care.

ICS will be used by social care workers carrying out their statutory responsibilities within a multi-agency context. Limited access may be given to certain practitioners outside of social care who need to have access in relation to their work with a child, for example, a nurse for a looked after child.

CAF and ICS promote a common approach to assessment: they provide common structures for recording evidence-based information about a child or young person around three domains: developmental needs of the child; parental capacity; and family and environmental factors.

ContactPoint is fundamentally a technology solution, CAF and ICS are supported by technology.



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How will the eCAF and the ICS system link to ContactPoint in the future?

The vision is that, in the future, when a common assessment has been logged in an eCAF system, it will automatically notify ContactPoint that a common assessment has been carried out, along with contact details for the practitioner who completed or updated it. There will be no access to the common assessment via ContactPoint. ContactPoint will display these contact details so that another practitioner looking up the child will discover immediately whether a common assessment has already been carried out and whom to contact about the child. This will speed up communications, avoid duplication and facilitate contact between practitioners across a range of agency and organisational boundaries. It will also stimulate cross-agency working.

When a child is referred to social care services and a referral is recorded on an electronic case record system such as that supporting ICS, the existence (although not the case details) of children's social care involvement and the practitioner contact details will be automatically uploaded to ContactPoint.

In addition, if a common assessment exists for the child this will be used to support a referral to social care. The CAF information will easily be incorporated into the assessment sections of ICS, because the information on needs in each assessment is organised on compatible lines. If a child needs to receive social care services, the in-depth assessment required for children in need will be given a head start with the information incorporated from the common assessment. This speeds things up, builds on existing knowledge, and avoids the need for often distressed children or families to go over the same ground again.

ContactPoint will be updated by limited information extracted from the ICS system, eCAF and other case record systems, for example those held by Connexions and Youth Offending Teams. However this will be a one-way process. ContactPoint will not update the case record systems. Also there will be no access from ContactPoint to case records contained in ICS, eCAF and any other case record systems.

Further information

For further information on each of these tools, please visit www.everychildmatters.gov.uk