

# eCAF

## Frequently Asked Questions

Following supporting documentation on eCAF recently published by the DfES, the purpose and business processes involved in eCAF are now becoming clearer. However there still seems to be a number questions regularly asked with regard to the system requirements of eCAF.



### Q1 One of our existing case management system suppliers has an eCAF add on, can't we just use that?

No, tempting as it may be to buy an add on to the education or social care system, this will not deliver the eCAF specification required in the eCAF Requirements Catalogue on a number of counts:

- 1) The DfES has said explicitly that the eCAF should reside in a new system layered above the existing case management systems.
- 2) It is not multi-agency; the education system is designed for use and administration by education users, similarly the social care system by social care users. Whilst some web enabled systems could be rolled out to other agency users, they will not offer the granular security and delegated system administration capabilities of a multi-agency system.
- 3) The child may not exist on the education or social care database, in which case they will have to be created just to hold a CAF against them, even if they are not involved with

that agency. One of the aims of the CAF is to prevent children becoming known to social care by early intervention, creating them in the social care database, even if they are never managed by social services is perverse and goes against data protection guidance.

- 4) The system will be required to manage an "Episode" as referred to in the eCAF Requirements Catalogue (see below).
- 5) The system must manage security in the required way and have level 3 authentication.

### Q2 Can we put the CAF form in our document management system?

No. The answer is similar to that above - the CAF is intended to be truly multi-agency. A document management system is intended for access by employees of the Council. The CAF will be used by many agencies external to the council; various branches of the health service or the Police for instance. They won't have access to the document management system. The other issues remain around the management of the "Episode" and delegated system administration.

**Q3 Can we keep the CAF in a case management system and allow people to telephone in for CAF information?**

No. Keeping the CAF on an existing case management system is not that different from keeping a paper version. A paper CAF has all the same issues; people cannot clearly see if one exists (out of hours for instance) and they cannot share it easily. In some ways it is worse in that they cannot complete an eCAF if they are not a member of the agency that owns the system. Again, the question needs to be asked, can the case management system manage episodes and the security around them.

**Q4 What is an Episode?**

As with all processes involved with trying to define a course of action to assist a person, an assessment (in this case the Common Assessment), is a vital part of the process, although not the only element of an Episode.

Children and families do not get involved with agencies to be assessed, they do so to access services. Therefore, the actions following an assessment are just as important, if not more, than the assessment itself. These actions also form part of an Episode.

The DfES has defined the concept of an Episode in relation to eCAF. An Episode is not just carrying out an assessment, but includes the appointment of an Episode Co-ordinator. In addition, an Episode covers the setting up of any meetings and reviews, as well as creating an action plan, all of which should be managed and shared on a multi-agency basis by the eCAF system. An Episode exists for a child as a discrete piece of activity, separate from previous or future Episodes a child may have.

The eCAF system must allow the Episode Co-ordinator to have additional security privileges for those children whose episodes they are responsible for, but not allow access to those children they are not currently dealing with.

Simply recording an e-form version of the CAF will not provide a full eCAF system. Any IT solution claiming to be a full eCAF system must include all the above functionality.

**Q5 What is devolved system administration?**

This means that the multi-agency system can be administered by all the agencies involved should they wish to. For instance, a voluntary agency might be happy to have new users set up by their Local Authority. The Police on the other hand would probably want to manage their own users, in accordance with their own procedures and not have to contact social care whenever they needed to add or remove a user. Devolved system administration allows agencies this flexibility to add new users and security profiles, only for their own agency users - they cannot change anything to do with users in other agencies.

**Q6 What about restricting data sharing in accordance with the DPA?**

Consent is an important part of the assessment process and should always be obtained before proceeding with an assessment, unless there are over-riding reasons why it can be ignored, for instance to prevent a crime or where there are serious child protection concerns. The eCAF system should also manage consent within an assessment.

What happens if consent has been obtained to carry out an assessment, but the child or parent refuses consent to share a certain part of the assessment with another agency e.g. the Police - which they are within their rights to do. The system should have the ability to cater for information not to be shared with other people or agencies, down to an individual user level, or the electronic assessment must stop if that level of consent cannot be managed. Likewise they may consent to an assessment but refuse to share any of the assessment with either another agency or perhaps a neighbour that they know works for a child agency. The eCAF system must be capable of managing these eventualities.

For more information and to view official guidance documents on eCAF go to:  
[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/e-caf/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/e-caf/)