

Preliminary Guidance

Isle of Wight Procedures for the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Lead Professional

Phase One (Pan Area)

June 2008

This document will be amended on the basis of feedback from Phase one of the implementation of preventive services and specifically the introduction of the CAF process in the Pan area of Newport. A quality assurance process will be completed at the end of Phase one in order to inform Phase two.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact the EIS Administrator, Anne Cheek, or the EIS Manager (anticipated appointment in July 2008).

Guidance compiled by Mouchel consultants, Rosie Rae and Clare Messenger

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1 Who is the guidance for?

This guidance document is for practitioners who may want to initiate the CAF process for a child or young person (0-19) who is residing in the Pan area. Those living in Pan will access services and be part of the implementation of Phase one and the further development of the CAF process. The intention is to extend this to children and young people attending schools and youth club provision in Pan but who do not live in the area, however access to services in these cases will be from the teams' local to the child or young person's home address. It is important to note that there are no new services but that the CAF process offers an opportunity not only to work more effectively but also to offer a more integrated model of service delivery.

The document outlines the processes put in place for Phase one of the implementation of preventive services and specifically the introduction of the CAF and lead professional role.

The document will be amended in due course for Phase two. The phases are explained below. The guidance will also need to be amended to reflect the introduction of ContactPoint in 2009 and the national introduction of eCAF which is not expected before 2010.

2 Background information on the implementation of the CAF process and the Lead Professional role on the Isle of Wight

The CAF process and the lead professional roles will be introduced in two phases. Phase one will start in June 2008 and will run until October 2008. The focus of Phase one will be to introduce the CAF process and lead professional applications to the Pan area of Newport only. This will mean that professionals and families in the Pan area can access a CAF process, including a CAF panel, which will be based on the current Early Intervention Service multi agency panel. Phase two, starting in October 2008, will introduce the CAF process across the Isle of Wight and will involve the development of locality based delivery of preventive services and locally based CAF processes. In Phase two, one CAF panel will operate in each locality. Phase two will be initiated once locality coordinators are recruited and have taken up post.

Phase one will allow the testing of the CAF and the lead professional processes. It will also offer an opportunity to streamline the CAF and Targeted Youth Support (TYS) processes. The CAF will be implemented for children and young people from 0 – 19 (24 for children and young people with learning difficulties). It is fully anticipated that issues will arise as part of Phase one. These will be considered by a multi agency steering group, chaired by Clare Messenger, Head of Preventive Services and improvements will be made to the process and procedures as and when required.

It is important that this guidance is shared widely with all practitioners working in the Pan area of Newport. This will include universal providers of services (tier 1), for example, schools and health professionals as well as services working within tier 2 and 3.

3 The role of the CAF and the Lead Professional

Everyone working in children services on the Isle of Wight aims for children and young people to reach their full potential across the five outcome areas defined in DCSF documents such as Every Child Matters and Youth Matters.

The five outcomes being:

- being healthy
- staying safe
- enjoying and achieving
- making a positive contribution
- achieving economic well being

The CAF process, together with the lead professional role and better information sharing procedures, has an important contribution not only to make in helping more children and young people achieve these outcomes but also in narrowing the gap between those that achieve at the highest level and those that don't.

Children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes may need additional services. The CAF process is a way of identifying the need for additional services and provides a process for identifying which services on the Isle of Wight may be available to help the child, young person, parents/carers.

The CAF provides a multi agency process which brings together families and professionals. It is often the case that just initiating the CAF process and assessment leads to closer integrated working, which starts to address the issues, identifies possible interventions and leads to successful outcomes. The CAF should not be seen as "just a method of accessing services" but instead a mechanism that allows greater exploration of the issues and a process to seek support at an earlier stage.

The lead professional role is not a job in itself but a set of functions to be carried out as part of the delivery of effective integrated working. For many staff it is no different from what they already do when a number of agencies work together, but it formalises and adds recognition of the role. The key functions of the lead professional role are:

- 1) to be a single point of contact providing children, young people and their families with a trusted person who will support them and communicate without jargon

- 2) coordinate services so that effective action is properly planned, delivered and reviewed
- 3) reduce overlap and inconsistency

The lead professional is not directly responsible or accountable for other practitioner's work but they have a role in coordinating services and ensuring effective action is delivered. The lead professional may or may not be the person that completes the CAF form.

4 The criteria for considering the CAF process

It is important to make clear that the CAF process does not replace the following existing arrangements. These are:

- single agency requests for services
- child protection and safeguarding procedures
- national assessment framework for children in need and their families. It is anticipated that a CAF process (and CAF form) may well have been completed before children in need referrals are made to social care teams.

Therefore it is helpful to see the CAF process as one of three key processes to request services. These are as follows:

- 1) Children and young people who have a clearly identified need for a single agency response (e.g. speech and language or education welfare) can continue to directly access the service. There is no need to initiate the CAF process or complete a CAF form if you are already able to make a single agency request for services. Please continue with your current arrangements.
- 2) The CAF process can be initiated for children with additional needs which are unclear and may benefit from an integrated multi agency response.
- 3) Children and young people who are at risk of significant harm should be assessed and referrals made through the current Local Safeguarding procedures. There is no change in these procedures. The Isle of Wight Safeguarding Procedures should be available in your place of work but any concerns or enquiries should be directed to the Referral and Assessment Team on 01983 525790. Advice can be found in the booklet "What to do if you are worried that a child is being abused".

The following information is to help identify when the CAF process should be considered:

Consider implementing the CAF process if or when:

- you suspect that the child has needs which are not being met but it is not clear what these are and they are broader than those which your service can address
- a child is not progressing as you would expect and the reasons for this are not clear
- it is likely that the child will need help from more than one agency;
- you need additional information to meet needs which have already been identified and/or a parent/carer, or child requests an assessment
- an up to date CAF assessment has not been completed and using the pre-assessment checklist identifies the need for a CAF
- or when specialist services are withdrawing from supporting a child/young person but universal and preventive (tier 1 & 2) services are still needed
- a CAF episode can be completed in relation to children from 0-19 (24 for children and young people with learning difficulties). This can include unborn babies

Children with complex needs and children subject to child protection procedures

– It is unlikely that these children will derive any additional benefit from the CAF process as their needs will already have been assessed and intervention programmes put in place. Where a practitioner has concerns about any child in these categories, the first point of contact would be the allocated lead professional.

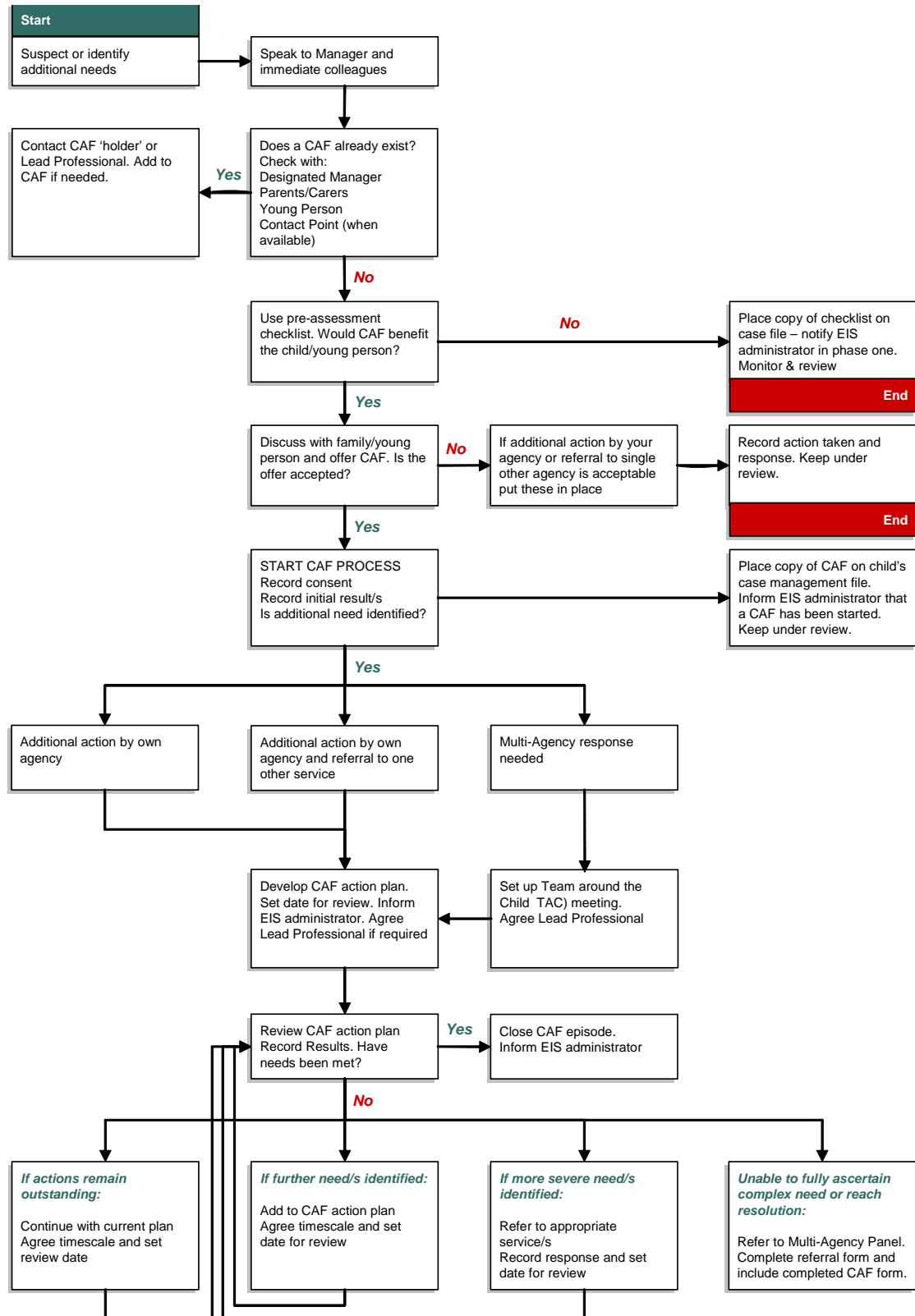
5 Initiation and completion of the CAF process

It is helpful to consider the CAF process as four simple steps which are:

- 1) Pre Assessment
- 2) Assessment
- 3) Action Plan and delivery
- 4) Review

The flowchart below provides an outline of the steps involved in the CAF process.

Isle of Wight Common Assessment Framework – Operational Flowchart



Contact at anne.cheek@iow.gov.uk or EIS at St Nicholas House Annexe, St Johns Road, Newport, Tel: 01983 821000 ext. 2180.

Step 1 – Pre Assessment

If it is agreed that CAF process may be appropriate, check whether one has already been done by:

- contacting the designated officer: this will be either the EIS Administrator or Manager – The Early Interventions Service are based at St Nicholas House Annexe, St Johns Road, Newport, Tel 01983 821000 ext 2180, and are available between 9-5 Monday to Friday. They will be able to tell you whether a CAF already exists and what intervention was put in place. This process will be significantly improved with the introduction of ContactPoint when it becomes available. This is anticipated for 2009 and is part of a government national programme. Mark Paine is the lead officer for ContactPoint (Information Sharing Officer, Tel. 01983 821000 Ext. 6434)
- asking the child, young person, parents/carers

If a CAF is already underway or in place contact the identified lead professional and share your information.

If a CAF is not underway and does not exist then use the Pre-Assessment checklist to determine whether the CAF process would benefit the child, young person and family. The CAF Pre-Assessment checklist will be made available on the Isle of Wight WebPages.

Step 2 – Assessment

Take time to discuss the benefits of the CAF with the child/family and explain the process to them so it is clear. They will need to agree and consent to the process. The assessment can only go ahead if the family give their consent. Consent must be sought and recorded on the CAF form. Try to personalise the discussion, drawing on the knowledge you already have and building up rapport with the child and family.

Use the CAF form (provided on the Isle of Wight WebPages) as a prompt to your conversation with the child, young person and family.

- Aim to gather information about all aspects of the child's life, not just those that fall within your service remit
- BUT, do not feel obliged to record something under every section of the form – concentrate on information which is most relevant to this episode (additional information can always be included later).
- Focus on strengths and positives in the child's life as well as concerns.
- Base the assessment on evidence (what has been observed or what the child or parent has said) rather than opinion.

The key sections for completion are:

- child/young persons developmental needs
- how parents/carers respond to the child/young person
- family and environmental factors
- supporting evidence
- consent

Record the results of your assessment on the CAF form and decide on the level of response needed e.g. your service only, your service and one other that you can now directly involve or a multi-agency response.

On the CAF form there is a section for consent to share information. Services work more effectively when they know all relevant information so please encourage openness about sharing information. If the family choose not to share information but as a practitioner you have a concern you must discuss this with your line manager as a matter of urgency and take the action required. The decision to share or not share information about a child and young person should always be based on professional judgement. The cross government Information Sharing: Practitioners' Guide (Published April 2006 and available at:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/informationsharing/>

is a helpful document and one that should be referred to on a regular basis.

Please inform the EIS administrator that the CAF process is underway. She will advise on what further information, if any is required.

Step 3 – Action Plan and Delivery

Make sure that the action plan records clearly what action is required and that a meeting date is agreed to review progress against the activities in the action plan. Be clear about who needs to attend the review meeting. It is important that the information that is recorded under 'Conclusions, solutions and actions' on the CAF form, includes who will do what, why and when. If any plans are already in place then these should be attached to the assessment. If not readily available, then the contact details for the agency/team should be added so that information can be requested at a later date. An indication of the source of the information, (e.g. mother reported that a plan had been drawn up by her health visitor) should also be noted.

If a decision has been made that a multi agency response is required, then a Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting should be set up. An outcome of this meeting must be to draw up an action plan and again be clear about who will do what, when and why. If there are differing views and opinions then record these as well. Present information in a manner and

language that is acceptable to the child, young person and family. The lead professional will be identified at the meeting, taking full account of the requests from the child, young person and family. Starting the CAF process does not mean that this person will then automatically become the lead professional.

It is advisable to focus on solutions and practical support, identifying what the child, young person and family can do themselves and what the other services can offer. Ensure that the assessment is based on evidence (what has been said or observed) and not on opinion. Where opinion is recorded clearly identify it as such. An action plan format will be provided on the Isle of Wight WebPages.

Once the action plan has been agreed with the child, young person, family and practitioners:

- encourage the child and family to carry out the actions they have agreed, offering support if needed;
- carry out the actions that have been agreed;
- make requests for services or broker access to other services within or outside your own service if needed (using CAF form as evidence of need);
- share assessment information with others as necessary (using the consent given on the form and taking heed of the limitations of this consent); and
- monitor progress against the action plan

Encourage the family to give their comments on the assessment and actions proposed. Ensure that a mutually convenient date/meeting is agreed to review progress against the action plan.

Step 4 – Review

At the review meeting, agreed as part of the action plan, the practitioner meets the child and family to review progress. Depending on the actions specified in the plan, other colleagues, family members or staff from other agencies may be invited to attend with the agreement of the child and family.

The review meeting should identify the following results, which have identified in four categories and accompanying actions:

Result	Action
Child and family are now receiving the services identified and there are no more additional or unmet needs.	<p>Category 1 – Close CAF episode*</p> <p>No further action required at present. Consult with line manager and agree decision. Inform the EIS administrator</p>
Not all the actions agreed have been carried out and some needs remain.	<p>Category 2 – If actions remain outstanding</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Record non-completed actions. 2) Identify people and resources needed to complete them. 3) Set a date for completion and arrange a further review meeting.
<p>Needs have changed or further needs have been identified and other support or services need to be engaged.</p> <p>There is a lack of clarity of extent of need or actual need</p>	<p>Category 3 – If further needs are identified</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue with CAF process. 2) Complete revised action plan. 3) Arrange a further review meeting. <p>Discuss with line manager and/or EIS Manager whether this should be reviewed by the multi agency panel. Inform EIS administrator. Send a copy of the completed CAF and referral to panel forms to the EIS Administrator. Ensure consent is given by the family.</p>
Circumstances have changed and/or needs have become more severe.	<p>Category 4 – If more severe needs are identified</p> <p>Consult with line manager and make request for services to the appropriate agency or discuss whether this should be reviewed by multi agency panel.</p> <p>If it needs to be reviewed at the multi agency Record their response and set date to review. Inform the EIS administrator, complete the referral to panel form and send a completed CAF form. Ensure consent is given by the family.</p>

In all cases, the review meeting and its decisions will be recorded.

* A CAF episode is defined by the DCSF as a complete cycle through the CAF business process – from initiation, preparation to delivery and until any additional needs are met and involvement is closed.

6 Advice on completing the CAF form

During the training in June 2008, a number of specific queries were raised in terms of completion of the CAF forms. The following are helpful tips:

- make sure that the names of all siblings are recorded correctly including any different surnames, step siblings so that Anne Cheek can link CAF forms for all siblings from one family
- copies of CAF forms should be kept to a minimum. Sharing the copies should be discussed with the family and young person and consent given to share them. Good practice would suggest that a copy is provided to the family and each member of the Team Around the Child. A copy will also need to be provided to Anne Cheek if a request

has been made for the Multi Agency CAF panel to consider the CAF assessment. Make sure the CAF form is kept secure and confidential

- if during the process, additional information becomes available, this should be added as an addendum to the original CAF form. Make sure it is dated and signed as to who has provided the information. The lead professional will need to coordinate this process.

7 The identification of the Lead Professional

The lead professional will be identified when a CAF action plan is being drawn up. This will normally take place at the first meeting with the child, young person and family to draw up the action plan or at the first Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting. On a small number of occasions a lead professional may be identified at the Multi Agency CAF Panel meeting. The lead professional is normally selected from the practitioners at the CAF action plan meeting or the larger Team Around the Child meeting where a multi agency response is required.

The decision about who will take on the role of lead professional is made largely as a balance between:

- the choice and wishes of the child and/or family;
- the level of skill needed for this particular lead professional role;
- the relevance of the practitioner's service to the action plan for the child or young person;
- the practitioner with the most relevant skills and experience;
- that practitioner's capacity and willingness to carry out the role; and
- the support and supervision available to the lead professional.

The skills and knowledge required for the lead professional role are listed below:

- relationship building with the child and/or family and with other professionals, even where they appear reluctant or ambivalent
- ability to support children and families to make decisions
- warmth, empathy and compassion
- skills in negotiation, persuasion and challenging others when required
- organisational and planning skills e.g. co-ordinating, chairing and recording meetings
- assessment skills including risk and protective factors in a child's life
- knowledge of local and other services for children and families
- knowledge of integrated working, especially the common assessment framework
- understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different agencies.

8 The Team Around the Child Meeting (TAC)

Practitioners may become a member of a Team Around the Child (TAC) in a number of ways:

- by contributing to the common assessment process and review
- as a lead professional
- as a practitioner involved in working with the family
- by providing information, consultation and advice
- by delivering services

The TAC model has been especially beneficial in the delivery of services to a range of children where there are a number of services and agencies involved. It aims to bring together relevant practitioners to work in partnership with the child and family to deliver a co-ordinated plan which will address their needs.

If the assessment indicates that more than two agencies should be involved in meeting the child's needs, then the initial CAF holder (the person starting the CAF process) should set up a TAC meeting. The practitioner will need to reach agreement with the child and family about which agencies will be invited. The child and family will also attend the TAC meeting and practitioners must ensure that the family are able to participate fully in the meeting. It is anticipated that the TAC meeting will replace some of the existing multi-agency meetings. It is important that duplicate meetings do not take place. A multi-agency meeting that takes place as part of the CAF process will be clearly labelled a TAC meeting and attendance should be prioritised wherever possible.

The purpose of this meeting is to enable practitioners to work together with the child and family and agree a co-ordinated plan of action to meet the needs identified. The lead professional will be appointed at the first TAC meeting. It is the responsibility of the initial CAF holder (in agreement with his/her line manager) to ensure that there is a clear handover of responsibility to the lead professional or to another practitioner¹. This ensures continuity and is part of normal good practice. If there is any difficulty in identifying a lead professional then the CAF holder will remain the lead professional. The lead professional will chair the TAC meeting unless another arrangement has been agreed.

Other members of the TAC are expected to support the lead professional in carrying out their role by:

¹ It may be helpful to think of this in terms of 'passing on the baton' as in a relay race. In other words, responsibility remains with the person who started the CAF until either the CAF is closed or a Lead Professional is agreed.

- delivering the specific actions they agreed to in the plan
- keeping the lead professional up-to-date with developments, actions and any delays relating to the plan
- attending meetings called by the lead professional
- contributing to the planning, delivery and review of actions agreed
- contributing to decision making around closing the CAF

A minimum of two meetings will be needed for each TAC. The first meeting will appoint the lead professional and agree the action plan. The second meeting will review progress against the action plan and agree further work or to close the CAF episode.

However, in most instances, it is likely that more than two meetings will be needed. Decisions about the number of meetings will be determined by the child's needs, by progress against the action plan and whether additional needs emerge. In most cases, it is likely that actions arising from a CAF would be completed within three months. If the work extends to six months, the lead professional should review with his/her manager and the TAC whether a higher level of intervention would be appropriate for this particular child or young person.

It is the responsibility of the lead professional's line manager to make alternative arrangements when the lead professional is absent.

All staff undertaking the role of lead professional should have access to suitable professional support and supervision. If this is not readily available within their own service, then arrangements will need to be made for this to be provided elsewhere. Line managers will need to monitor the workload for practitioners in their teams to ensure that the lead professional roles are shared among a number of practitioners.

One of the findings of the national evaluation of the lead professional role was that staff undertaking this role may need additional support to help manage the potential emotional impact of the work.

9 Escalation of concerns or difficulties

Accountability for work carried out and the quality of that work rests with each practitioner and their service's management structures. The lead professional, or other member of the Team Around the Child, should report through their own line management structure any issues around staff in their own or other services not carrying out commitments agreed on the CAF action plan. This manager is then expected to take this up with the equivalent line manager in the service concerned. If there is a failure to reach resolution within a reasonable time, this needs to be reported and resolved through the management structures of the services involved.

10 The Multi Agency CAF panel

During Phase one, the CAF panel function will be provided by an extended Early Interventions Service Multi Agency Panel. The panel will deal with an extended age range from 0 -19 (24 for children with learning difficulties) and will receive requests for service from practitioners working in the Pan area. It is anticipated that much of the CAF work will be underway and will not require referral to the Multi Agency CAF Panel but where difficulties remain, having already implemented the TAC a referral can be made to the panel. A referral to the Multi Agency CAF Panel can be put in place by contacting the EIS administrator, completing the referral to panel form and providing a completed CAF form. Ensure that consent has been given by the family to share this information. Further information can be obtained from the EIS administrator and EIS manager (once in post).

The panel will have the following key responsibilities:

- Consider requests for service following completion of CAF where the TAC in the locality have been unable to implement their action plan or where complex or unclear needs are identified,
- Make recommendations about a multi agency plan to deliver services, which may be from existing agency/service(s) or from a locality multi agency preventive team or identify additional resources
- Identify a lead professional if one has not been allocated and one is required
- Implement a reviewing/tracking mechanism for CAFs which ensures that actions are completed and services can be accessed by the children, young people and families. To ensure that the data recording process is in place prior to the introduction of ContactPoint.
- Receive requests for services from tier 3 and/or 4 services where the child or young person no longer needs targeted service intervention but may require a step down and input from preventive services. Detailed information will be available but may not be collected as a CAF. Consideration may need to be given to identifying a lead professional
- The panel, over time, will be able to provide information on needs and perceived/actual gaps in provision to those charged with joint commissioning of children and young people's services. This function is more likely to be in place in Phase two, however early information will be passed to commissioners of services in Phase one.

11 Training

A number of e learning modules have been designed to offer an introduction to integrated working, information sharing, CAF and lead professionals. The Isle of Wight Children's Trust Executive Board has endorsed the training and it is available for all practitioners working with children and young people across the Isle of Wight. You will require login details and access

to the internet to complete the modules. Your service managers will have details on this but if you need further information please contact **Sofia Paonessa, Thompson House, Sandy, Lane Newport. Tel. 01983 533523**

Training will also be available to introduce you the new processes in Phase 1 and early in 2009 to Phase 2. Details on multi agency CAF training can be accessed by contacting **Diane McNaught, Thompson House, Sandy lane Newport. Tel. 01983 533523**

12 Resolution of disputes

If a child, young person or their parents/carers are unhappy about any aspect of the service they have received they should discuss it with the practitioner who initiated the CAF and/or the lead professional and together try and resolve the situation. It may be helpful to involve the practitioner's line manager in the process.

If this fails to resolve the matter then the following action can be followed.

- A child, young person, parents/carers should use the relevant agency complaints procedure
- For complaints to the council the Isle of Wight complaints procedure is available.

13 List of forms and checklists related to the CAF process

Forms will be provided on the integrated working pages on the Isle of Wight WebPages. This will include the following forms:

- CAF Pre assessment checklist
- CAF form
- CAF action plan form including a review section
- CAF referral to Multi Agency CAF panel form
- Leaflet for parents/carers on the CAF process
- Leaflet for children and young people on the CAF process
- Definitions used in the CAF process
- ECM Information Sharing Guidance

14 Contact details

The EIS administrator, Anne Cheek can be contact at anne.cheek@iow.gov.uk or at the Early Interventions Service are based at St Nicholas House Annexe, St Johns Road, Newport ,Tel: 01983 821000 ext. 2180.