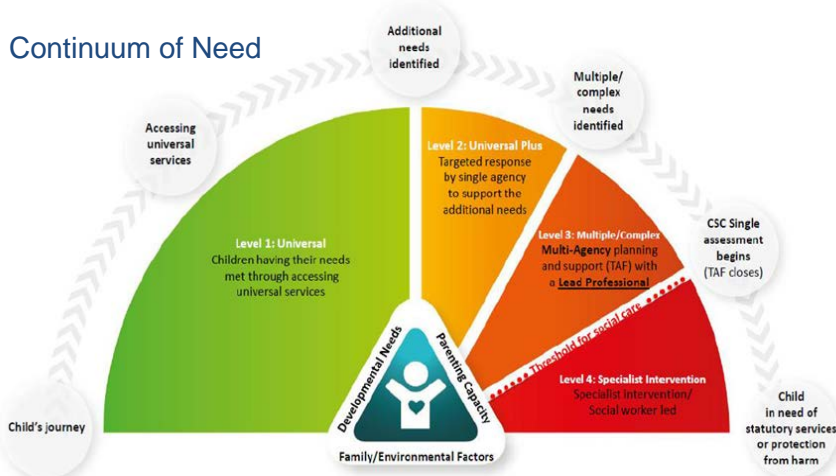




The Team Around the Family (TAF) is the Cheshire West and Chester approach to conducting an early assessment of a family's additional needs and deciding how those needs are best met by Early Support Services through a robust multi agency plan.

TAF focuses on interventions primarily at levels two and three of the continuum of need. All practitioners working with children across the borough are encouraged to initiate a TAF (completing a TAF form) where there are concerns which meet level two and three on the continuum of need. This reduces the demand on level four services and ensures the delivery of a more effective early support service to children and their families.

**Continuum of Need**



Over the past two years since TAF was launched, over 1500 practitioners have attended TAF multi agency workshops.

Since the introduction of TAF in early 2012 there has been a steady increase in the number of TAF assessments completed. Data from TAFs opened in 2013/14 shows that a 932 TAFs were opened from 19 different agencies across Cheshire West and Chester with Primary Education and Integrated Early Support initiating the most TAFs. Level four acute services have been encouraged to consider a transfer to a TAF plan when stepping families down.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Number of TAFs completed in year (2011/12 called Common Assessment Framework (CAFs))	646	881 (+36%)	932 (+5%)

Since TAF was introduced in 2012 over 450 children have been stepped down by social care to receive level two or three intervention through TAF.

At point of closing TAFs there has been a steady increase in the number closed where all the child's needs have been met or where there is no need for multi agency involvement. In 2013/14, 480 TAFs (53% of all TAFs closed in the period) were closures as a result of all needs being met. This is an increase of 60 TAFs compared to 2012/13.

**Challenges**

- The development of the eTAF system ensures that all assessments and plans conducted within the Integrated Early Support Service (IES) are reviewed and authorised by Integrated Early Support Managers. For agencies outside of IES this is still a challenge. However, as the eTAF system develops and more outside agencies are trained in accessing and using the system this will become less of a challenge.
- There is a rolling programme of case file audits, within which a TAF will be audited as part of the process. This, it is hoped will identify training gaps. A package of training for practitioners, along with support from the locality TAF cluster groups will continue in to the future.
- Over the past three years, encouraging partners to come on board with the TAF process has been a challenge. Headline data shows this is progressing.
- Receiving feedback from families and ensuring the individual's voice is heard through all assessments has been a challenge.

**Recommended actions**

- Gaining feedback is now a target for all TAF assessments and plans to ensure that the family's voice (both children and adults) is heard throughout the TAF process and on closure. Appropriate feedback forms have been developed to support this process.
- Continue to provide a package of support for practitioners through TAF workshops and TAF cluster groups.

Rationale: TAF improves multi agency consultation and the sharing of information, ensures action plans are clear and coordinated, and that a lead person is agreed. It prevents the need for children and/or families to repeat their information, or undergo repetitive assessments and reduces duplication of help and/or conflicting advice being given. Practitioners are better placed, along with the child and the family, to agree action plans coordinated through TAF meetings