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SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP



Guide for professionals working with children who are subject to a child in need plan

What does Child In Need mean?

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 defines a Child In Need as a child:

- Who is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services;
- Or a child whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of services;
- A child who is disabled.

It is hoped that parents and the extended family will provide care for children, but sometimes some children and young people with disabilities may have needs that cannot be met by just the family, communities or universal (everyday) services. When this is the case, you may be able to get help from the Children with Disabilities Team. The definition of disabled children and young people is set out in the Equality Act 2010: 'that is a child and young person who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

If a social work assessment has recommended that a "Child In Need plan" is needed then support from Children's Social Care will be offered to the family. Children's Social Care will work alongside and in partnership with key professionals and/or other agencies involved with the family and child. Multi-agency working is crucial to the child in need process.

Is consent needed for a child in need plan to be progressed?

Yes. Child In Need work relies on the cooperation of the family to engage with the plan. Those with Parental Responsibility (PR) should be included in a Child In Need plan and the family will be asked to consent to include other agencies and professionals that know and work with the family.

The family has the right to withdraw their consent to the plan at any time; however if this happens the Social Worker will discuss with their Team Manager about what should happen next.

Who will be at the Child In Need meeting and where should it be?

A Child in Need Meeting should take place within 10 working days of Manager's Decision for a Child in Need Plan to be started. This can take place in the family's home, school, a local children's centre or a locality office depending on the needs of the situation.

It is important that all professionals working with the child/ren work together to support the family and attend the Child in Need Meetings which are normally held every 4-6 weeks. The following people may attend the meeting:

- The child or young person, if this is a good idea and if they are able to understand and take part.
- Parents and/or those who have parental responsibility or care of the child, should attend the meeting because their views and feelings are very important.
- A supporter, could be a family member, friend (those who you would like to be part of your safety plan) or legal representative
- An advocate - is someone who puts forward the parent or child's point of view.
- Professionals who are responsible for providing services to the child or family. This could be Health Visitor, School Nurse, Doctor, Teacher, Police or Probation Officer.

Your role as a professional?

Preparing for the meeting

As a professional attending it is important that you have a good knowledge of the child and the plan in place. If you are attending on behalf of a colleague it is expected that there has been a good handover so that the person attending has a sound knowledge and can inform the meeting. If no-one is available to attend on behalf of your agency the social worker will need to be made aware of this in plenty of time before the meeting and it is expected that a written update will be provided in your absence.

You will need to have considered prior to the meeting your professional opinion and be able to report on any developments and give your rationale around whether you feel that the situation for the child has improved or has not. You will also be expected to be able to access any documentation that you may refer to at the meeting.

Information sharing at the meeting

A child in need plan is a multi-agency intervention which requires the commitment and consistently reliable input from all professionals to maximise the effectiveness of the plan to achieve the best outcome for the child.

All professionals and the family will have the opportunity to talk about what they are worried about, what is working well and what needs to change. As a professional you have an important role to play in understanding the risks to the child and your involvement in the plan will contribute towards the child's journey. You may be asked to scale the situation for the child on a 0-10 rating, this is done in line with the Signs of Safety Approach and is a useful tool to find out how the professionals and family involved feel that things are progressing.

My role in the plan

The child in need plan will be mutually agreed between professionals and the family at the first meeting, making sure that all those professionals involved have actions which are clear and realistic. The plan will state what each person/professional has agreed to do at the meeting. You will play an important role within this, working to the plan is your opportunity to improve the care, support and protection for a child. It is important that professionals take their own responsibility to progress their own actions/work streams within the plan in a timely way. This joint enterprise determines the success of the planning process.

When will the plan be reviewed?

Another meeting will take place within 6 weeks for the plan to be reviewed. Everyone will talk about whether the plan is working and if things are getting better or worse for the family.

It is important that each professional working with the child contributes to this meeting and is able to update the social worker and evidence that they have carried out any actions specific to their role/agency.

As a professional you will be asked at this meeting what your worries continue to be, what strengths you have identified and what you feel needs to happen. You will also be asked to scale the situation on a scale of 0-10 as per the Signs of Safety approach. This is undertaken to evidence progress and highlight the views of all professionals and the family about how they perceive the risks/progress. You will be asked to provide some rationale for your scaling number to help those attending the meeting understand why you have given it the number you have.

What happens if a plan is not needed?

If it is felt that the risks have reduced and there is no longer any need for the child in need plan to be in place, this will be discussed as a multi-agency group and all professionals will have the opportunity to give their professional view as to whether they feel the plan should be ended. There may be a role for other agencies rather than social care and a referral could be made to them with the agreement of the family.

If a professional wants to challenge a decision to close a Child In Need plan they must raise this with the allocated social worker and professionals are encouraged to use the multi-agency escalation policy if needed.

If a professional seeks to make a complaint against the way in which the child in need process has been lead by social care they need to do this by making contact with the Consumer Relations Unit in WCC.

