

Definition of Complex Child in Need

1. Introduction

All children in need will have a social work led assessment. Where children have complex needs as defined in this document, the multi-agency Child in Need Plan will be directly managed by a Social Worker. If following assessment, the needs are not complex and the child and family are allocated to a Family Support Worker, there remains social work oversight of the plan and a Practice Manager continues to manage and quality assure progress to prevent drift and ensure outcomes are achieved. All child protection investigations are undertaken by a Social Worker with the oversight of a Practice Manager.

- Children that are assessed as falling below the child protection threshold can still have high levels of need and risk requiring a continued level of social work involvement by a qualified Social Worker. It is recognised that cases at the upper end of level 3 of the Continuum of Need may need allocating to a qualified Social Worker.
- A Child in Need Plan may have clear ongoing concerns about the wellbeing and safety of a child/children that requires a substantial multi-agency response and is led by a qualified Social Worker. Such cases may be considered "**Complex Child in Need plans**".
- A comprehensive Child and Family Assessment must be completed. There should be sufficient, reliable evidence on which to make a sound assessment of the child's situation and the risk issues should be clearly understood. There should be multi agency consensus about the level and nature of the risks, and the ways in which the risks can be reduced.
- There must be parental consent to a Child in Need Plan. The parents/carers ability to work with the local authority in an open and honest manner should be a key factor when making decisions about the pathway and allocation of the case.
- The rationale for allocation to a Social Worker should be reflected in the allocation record. This decision must be made by a manager. Clear timescales for review must be recorded and the case must be supervised by a Practice Manager.
- It is recognised that the above requires **professional judgement** and that a range of factors should be considered.

2. Allocation of Child in Need to a Qualified Social Worker

When considering the level of risk to a child and the need for allocation to a Social Worker the following range of key factors must be taken into account. These factors should be considered alongside the Lancashire Risk Sensible Model and Continuum of Need. This is not an exhaustive list but should be considered as a guide.

- Whether harm has occurred.

- The frequency and persistence of any harm that has occurred or is likely to occur.
- The nature of the concerns and its severity.
- The consequences to the child if the concerns were to continue or increase and parental motivation to change.
- The age and vulnerability of the child.
- The stability and predictability of the parents.
- The relationship between the local authority and the parents.
- The number of Underlying Risk Factors.
- The number of High Risk Indicators.

3. Pathways of Complex Child in Need

Children may require a complex Child in Need Plan held by a qualified Social Worker at different stages of their journey through Children's Social Care, or for a variety of reasons. These could include:

- Cases stepping down from Child Protection Plans which may require a higher level of scrutiny.
- Children subject to a statutory order such as a Supervision Order.
- Children who are victims of Child Sexual Exploitation and subject to a Child in Need Plan.
- Children who are frequently missing from home.
- Children who have had a number of referrals, or previous plans.

4. Child Protection Plans

It is recognised that many complex Child in Need cases sit at the upper end of level 3 of the Continuum of Need and can quickly move into Level 4. A number of factors may indicate that a Complex Child in Need Plan will not be sufficient. These include;

- The child has suffered *significant* harm.
- The child is at risk of repeated significant harm.
- The consequences of any likely significant harm will be serious.
- Multi agency plans have been in place for a significant period of time and have failed to bring about change or the outcomes required.
- The parents/carers will not cooperate with professionals.
- Access to the child/children is difficult.
- The child's age and vulnerability.
- A household member has a record of serious alleged or proven harm to a child.
- There is a demonstrable impact upon the child's health and wellbeing which is likely to impact on outcomes for the child, and this has persisted despite sustained professional interventions.
- The number of high risk indicators have increased.

- The number of underlying risk factors have increased.

5. Children and Young People Allocated to the Children with Disabilities Teams

The Children with Disabilities (CwD) Teams work with children and young people who are considered to have a severe or profound disability.

Whilst the above definition of complex Child In Need applies to some children/young people who the CwD Teams work with, complexity in relation to special educational needs and disability (SEND), which includes health and medical needs has an additional meaning and has to be considered in the context of the child/young person's needs and the additional caring demands of these needs on parents/carers.

5.1 Allocation of CwD Child in Need to a Field Work Support Officer (non-qualified worker):

The following will be considered when allocating a case to a CwD Field Work Support Officer:

- Children/young people who are considered children in need under Section 17, Children Act 1989 solely through having a disability.
- The child/young person has a minimal package of support from social care (and other professionals).
- Stability of child/young person's condition.
- No high risk indicators.
- Families who wish to have support with a minimal level of intervention from the local authority.

Where the child/ young person's needs require an updated assessment following a package of support being in place for a period of time, the assessment will be allocated to a Social Worker to undertake with the Fieldwork Support Officer remaining involved with the family.

As part of case management processes, where a child/young person's needs or circumstances change, consideration would be given to whether a Social Worker needs to be the allocated worker and take overall responsibility for the child/young person. All child protection enquiries are allocated to a Social Worker.

5.2 Allocation of a CwD Child in Need to a qualified Social Worker:

The following will be factors which determine allocation to a Social Worker:

- The child/young person has a significant health need.
- The child/young person has a life-limiting/degenerative or unstable condition.
- Extensive packages of support are in place from social care and health.
- The child/young person has extensive specialist equipment needs.
- The needs of the child/young person place significant demands on parent/carers.

- High risk indicators and underlying risk factors.
- Significant parental needs including learning disability, health conditions, mental health needs, substance misuse issues.
- Young people who need extensive and early transition planning.
- Significant number of professionals involved in supporting the child/young person.

11 October 2017