



Coventry City Council

One Minute Guide

What is S17 of the Children Act 1989

Introduction

Coventry City Council is committed to improving the lives of children, families and young people. Some children and families require extra support because of the needs of a child. This guide tells you more about what we mean by a Child in Need, how that is decided and what your rights and responsibilities are as a parent, carer or guardian. We are committed to working with you for the good of your child or children. Please read through this guide and come back to us if there are any questions you have.

What is a Child in Need

What do we mean by a Child in Need? There is a legal definition which you may be aware of. Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 defines a child as being in need if:

- he or she is unlikely to achieve or maintain or to have the opportunity to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without provision of services from a local authority
- his or her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of services from a local authority
- the child has a disability.

The development of your child can mean his or her physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. Health can be physical or mental health or a child. Parts of the legal definition of a child in need may or may not apply to your child. Why your child is considered to be a child in need will be explained to you. Also, if an assessment is done and he or she is considered not to be a child in need that will be explained as well.

Our duties

Coventry City Council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in need in the city. That means we must wherever possible ensure sufficient services and measures are in place to promote a child being raised within its own family, if a child is safe to be so. Any child that comes under the legal definition as being in need will qualify for services from Coventry City Council. If we receive a referral, we will decide whether an assessment is required and what action should be taken. Coventry City Council must assess the child in need and his family and the services they may require using the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families (2000), which is guidance produced by the Department of Health.



Consent/Working Together

Under Child In Need (S17 of the Children Act 1989), the local authority does need your consent and willingness to work with you. You will need to be willing to engage, work with the social worker during the assessment process and any support plans which may be recommended. Consent from you will be obtained to enable us to access other information from other professionals to ensure we can complete a fair, balanced and open assessment and support.

It can be worrying to have children services involved, but by working together we can ensure your child has the right support if needed.

Your engagement is voluntary, but we would really like to support you to work with us fully.

What happens if I choose to not work with you

This would be your choice, and whilst we would continue to try to work with you and try to engage you, we have to respect your decision. The social worker with her manager would review the concerns which led to the referral, and would determine if the risks or needs could be met via another route, like Early Help or from the school or health professional for example, and if they can they would close the case. However, in some circumstances if the risks are considered too high to close, and despite attempts to engage with you then the case may be escalated in to the child protection arena. This is in exceptional circumstance where we consider your child to be at risk of significant harm. We will always do our best to work with you and in partnership with you to avoid this.

I'm willing to work with you, what happens next

A social worker will start by completing a Child and Family Assessment, this will involve a lot of questions, see you on your own, direct work with your child, to enable the assessment to be completed. Sometimes there might be difficult conversations, sometimes it can be upsetting to talk about your past, and your childhood, all of which will be taken into account and done at your pace to ensure we get the best picture we possibly can of you and your family.

If following the assessment support is needed, then a meeting will be held, you will be fully included and supported in the process and the meeting will bring other professionals together to enable us to have a support plan which will ensure you and your family have the support needed.

You are the expert in your own life, so everything we do we want to do with you to support any changes needed.

**Thank you for reading, we look forward to working with you and your family,
any questions just ask**