

Child in Need Plans and Reviews

SCOPE OF THIS FRAMEWORK

This framework applies to children requiring a Child in Need Plan under section 17 Children Act 1989. It does not apply to children who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan.

For children who are in receipt of Short Breaks, see also the [Short Breaks Procedure](#).

See also [Children and Young People Aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Procedure](#).

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Appendix 1: Child in Need Agenda – Initial and Review

- 1. Introduction**

Definition of Child in Need

A child should be taken to be in need if:

- *He/she 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/her of services by a Local Authority.*
- *His/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired without the provision for him/her of such services.*
- *He/she is disabled.*

(Section 17(10), Children Act 1989)

Threshold of Need

Devon has an agreed **threshold tool** that defines the criteria for accessing preventative and protective services. The levels are illustrated in the [Devon Threshold Tool](#) and the [Matrix Tool](#).

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a general duty on Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are 'in need' and to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs. Other agencies have a duty to co-operate with Children's Social Care in carrying out their duty to assess the needs of children and to provide services as necessary.

Children in Need have the universal needs of all children and more complex additional needs than those requiring an Early Help Assessment but they do not require child protection measures at this time

In order to determine the needs of a child and the support that they and their family may require, a qualified social worker will carry out a single assessment.

A child with disabilities and his or her family/carers may also be assessed using the Devon Resource Allocation System (RAS).

The Single Assessment will involve finding out and giving due regard to the child's wishes and feelings regarding the provision of services (as appropriate to their age and understanding). The assessment will also involve talking to parents, other family members where relevant, and professionals involved in the child's life such as health visitor or school.

Staff carrying out assessments and formulating plans should consider the strengths and needs of the wider family and other support networks in the broadest sense. Consideration of and discussion with the family about the benefits of family groups conferencing should always be included and referrals made where appropriate.

Children's Social Care and Devon's Disabled Childrens Service work with children in need and their families on the basis of consent. From the first enquiry, those with parental responsibility should be informed of the enquiry (unless it is believed that to do so would place a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm) and asked for consent to undertake a single assessment including written consent for the social worker to obtain information from other agencies/professionals. Parents' agreement to any social work intervention or to services for their child is necessary. Young people of an age and understanding, particularly those aged 16 or over should also be asked for their consent.

If parents refuse consent after the social worker has made sure that they have been given full information about the benefits of assessment and support, this refusal should be accepted and recorded and information/advice about support via the Early Help system should be given. If the family would like a service from early help, the social worker will obtain their consent, seek their view as to who they would like to be the lead practitioner and open the early help assessment on 'Right for Children'.

If it is considered that the child is likely to suffer significant harm without social work intervention, then assessment should be carried out under Section 47 in accordance with the relevant procedures. Consent is then not required, but

parents should be informed of the change of approach and the reasons for the concerns.

Children in Need procedures will be appropriate in the following situations:

- Where a single assessment has clearly identified that the threshold for a service is met and services or support are required in order to meet the identified needs (which may be due to a child's disability) and prevent escalation into a higher tier of intervention.
- Where a child has previously been subject to a child protection plan and work has been undertaken to reduce the level of risk sufficiently for the child to no longer require such a plan. In these cases, the child will remain subject of a child in need plan for a minimum of three months. There may be exceptions to this: for instance where a child is now living in the care of a relative and is subject to a Special Guardianship Order). This must be agreed in writing by a senior manager and clearly recorded on the child's case file;
- Where a child who has been in the care of the Local Authority, has returned home and is not subject to a Care Order or a Child Protection Plan;
- Where a child is presenting with significant risk taking behaviour and/or offending behaviour (although consideration should be given to the need to convene a Child Protection Conference);
- Where a child may be presenting mental health difficulties, such as self-harm and suicidal thoughts and requires a referral to CAMHS;
- Where a child's education is significantly disrupted either by chronic non-school attendance or subject to exclusion combined with other social factors to indicate complex needs;
- Where assessment has established that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm but it is judged that the child's carers have acknowledged the risk and are effectively working in partnership with the Local Authority to manage this risk to a degree that the child is

not currently at risk of significant harm. In such circumstances professional judgment should be used to determine whether a Child in Need plan will be sufficient to promote the child's welfare. This decision should be made by the relevant Team Manager in consultation, if unsure, with the Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Officer (ISRO) and any other relevant professionals, and ratified, where appropriate, at a Child In Need Planning Meeting.

- In addition, children in need procedures are relevant where a child is subject to a Supervision Order, (including some interim Supervision Orders, in the unlikely event that the threshold for a child protection plan is not met). In this instance, the CIN plan will be need to be called a 'Supervision Order Plan' to ensure it is clear to the family and the core group that the threshold for significant harm has been met. This is necessary as any increased concerns are most likely to be addressed via legal planning advice and a consideration via Area/Senior Managers about returning to court to vary or extend the order.

The Children in Need procedures are also relevant when:

- A child has a severe or profound learning or physical disability, life limiting illness or complex sensory needs and requires long term multi agency support as a result of their disability/need;
- Short Break Services are being provided to a disabled child and/or their family on an on-going basis but there are no concerns about the parent's ability to meet the child's needs and there is no need for the coordination of multi-agency services.

[Disabled Children and Child in Need procedures](#)

2. Purpose and Principles

The principles and values that underpin these procedures are that:

- Social workers will not be involved in the lives of children and families unnecessarily and the intervention will be based on non-discriminatory practice which enables children and families to have access to, and be

enabled to participate in, services which they need in a way which respects diversity and their individual needs;

- Interventions will be time limited with the aim of reaching a point where positive outcomes have been achieved for a child and services are no longer required or where support through Early Help or universal services are safe and sufficient;
- Every effort will be made to identify key family members or friends who may be able to contribute to planning to improve outcomes for children: the family solutions service may be able to support this process;
- The approach to Child in Need work will always be informed by a determination to actively promote positive change. Children and families will be involved in the planning and review of services and information will be available to support this participation in an accessible and appropriate format;
- Child in need meetings will monitor the progress of the plan, the quality of intervention and its impact on positive outcomes for each child in the family. The work undertaken will be creative and innovative and informed by what is going to work best for this particular child in this particular family. There is no one size fits all;
- The welfare of the child will remain the focus at all times. Services will be sensitive to the individual needs and aspirations of every child and young person taking full account of their race/ethnicity, culture, language, gender, sexual orientation, and ability;
- Children's Social Care work with children in need and their families on the basis of consent. Parents' agreement to any social work intervention or to services for their child is necessary. Young people of an age and understanding, particularly those aged 16 or over should also be asked for their consent;
- Children with additional/complex needs are likely to benefit from support and practical help. Such intervention will be designed to prevent escalation of risk/need;

- A holistic and strengths based approach will be adopted. The child's needs must always be seen in the context of their immediate and extended family and their community;
- The best outcomes for vulnerable children are achieved when constructive relationships exist between professionals and family members;
- It will be assumed that children, young people and their families and friends come with their own solutions and they will be empowered to assume as much control over their lives as possible: in many cases this will include a referral to the Family Solutions Service for Family Group Conferencing or other types of meetings;
- Social workers will only be able to work effectively with children and families as required if they themselves are facilitated and enabled through the highest quality supervision and professional support;
- The Children Act 1989 incorporates the principle that all children and their parents should be considered as individuals and that family structures, culture, religion, ethnicity and other characteristics will be respected.

The term "parent" has been used in the framework to apply to a parent, or a caregiver who has responsibility for the upbringing of a child, or a person who has a significant role in looking after a child, including a parent's partner.

3. Responsibilities in respect of Children in Need and Children in Need Meetings

The family may require the provision of resources before the assessment is completed. These should be offered as soon as the need is recognised.

The Social Worker should consult with the child/young person and their family about the most convenient time for them to attend, and, where appropriate and feasible, provide options as to the best venue.

It is important that an appropriate venue suitable for the child and his or her family is used for the meeting. It will be the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the meeting provides an environment that is designed and intended to be helpful and supportive and to build on strengths in the family. Consideration must be given to transport, timing and any child care issues. Where a child is attending a meeting and is of school age the meeting should be held outside of school time, wherever possible.

Where a parent or carer has been identified as having specific learning difficulties or mental health needs and other professional supports are not considered appropriate to advocate for them, they should be consulted about whether or not they would like to be supported by an independent advocate. The mental capacity of parents and children/young people in respect of their ability to consent to the sharing of information or the plan itself should be considered and a mental capacity assessment carried out if necessary.

[Mental Capacity Act \(MCA\) Practice Guidance](#)

An initial Child in Need meeting must take place within 15 working days of any decision that this type of plan is required. This meeting must include the key professionals agreeing this decision so that they can support the development of the plan.

The Child in Need Core Group will meet on a 6 weekly basis to monitor the progress of the plan.

The Child in Need Plan will be reviewed formally every 12 weeks (at every other CIN meeting) to ensure that the plan is on track and to consider whether to step up if concern increases, or step down when consistent positive progress has been maintained over a period of time.

Where a child is identified as being at risk of coming into care, plans must explicitly state what has been or what is being done to avoid the need for the child to become the subject of a child protection plan or enter care;

The social worker will record decisions and complete the plan, a copy of which will be recorded on the child's electronic social work record within 5 working days.

All parties will receive the plan and minutes of the meeting within 10 working days.

Where the meeting results from a single assessment undertaken in the Initial Response (IR) team, the IR social worker will convene and arrange chairing of the meeting and take responsibility for drawing up the child's plan and ensuring it is sent to all parties/shared appropriately with the child and family. The Children and Families Team Social Worker to whom the case is to be allocated will attend the meeting as part of the transfer process and contribute to the plan.

The co-ordination and review of the plan and the membership of future review meetings will be decided at the initial meeting.

The plan will be recorded on the case record by the allocated social worker.

If the plan is not actioned or has failed to meet the child's needs the chair of the meeting must be informed and a decision taken whether to reconvene the Child in Need Review Meeting before the planned review date.

4. Process, Membership and Attendance

The Child in Need meeting provides an opportunity for the family and agencies to identify and agree services and support required and to develop the Child in Need plan. The child and immediate family should be invited and given clear guidance about the purpose of the meeting and the importance of their attendance;

The Single Assessment of the child will be available to the meeting and copies distributed to appropriate members of the family and all involved professionals.

A clear analysis of the strengths, needs and concerns that have led to the

need for a Child in Need Meeting should be discussed at the meeting.

All professionals invited to the planning meeting will be asked to complete a report for submission and sharing at the meeting. If unable to attend, a representative should be identified to attend the meeting with the completed report. If this is not possible, the report should be forwarded with apologies to the Chair of the meeting to share with those present. Meeting participants will share information documented within their reports. It is expected that partners will contribute to the planning and actions for the child.

A Child In Need Meeting will include the people most able to contribute to an effective plan in order to promote change. It is likely that the members will consist of the child (if old enough) the parents/carers, professionals already known to the family and, where appropriate, members of the immediate family or key friends identified by the child/parents.

The social worker or chair will take the minutes and record actions for many child in need meetings (to be agreed between them). Some initial or complex child in need meetings may benefit from having a minute taker from business support. Team managers in each team will discuss these on an individual basis with Social Work Resource Officers and arrange for them to take minutes when a need is identified.

Children and young people should be encouraged to attend part of or all of these meetings to share their thoughts and feelings. Should they not wish to attend or where there are specific reasons as to why it would not be appropriate, they should be supported by their social worker to share their thoughts and feelings in other ways (i.e.- through direct work tools, via an advocate/trusted adult etc.).

In circumstances when children do not attend their meetings it is important that the discussions and plans are shared with the child in a manner that is appropriate to their age and understanding. The most appropriate person to do that should be agreed within the meeting.

The meeting will agree a Child In Need Plan that addresses the protective

factors, strengths, needs and concerns in relation to the child and builds on available resources and strengths to meet their needs consistently over time.

Where English is not the first language of one or more of the family members attending then interpreting services must be offered and made available.

5. The Initial Child in Need Meeting

The Social Worker should ensure that an initial Child in Need Meeting is arranged as soon as the child is identified as in need of services under s17. It must take place within 15 working days of the single assessment being completed and identifying that threshold is met for a child in need plan.

To ensure the best outcome there needs to be a commitment from all agencies to attend the Child in Need Meeting, to come prepared to share information and to work to develop the most appropriate plan with the family which may include the provision of support and services. Information shared at the Child in Need Meeting may also inform any ongoing assessment.

The Social Worker will share their assessment including existing strengths and protective factors and any complicating factors to give reasons for the child in need meeting.

The child in need meeting/review meeting will be chaired by a line manager in most cases. During 2018 and 2019 IROs will be in post with a time-limited role to support CIN work. They will be available to chair some CIN meetings, such as those where there is step down from Child Protection planning or being looked after. In addition they can chair Supervision Order CIN meetings.

The agenda is designed to support the assessment and planning process using a strengths based approach.

The Social Worker will prepare the child/young person and family for the Child in Need Meeting and ensure that any completed assessments have been shared with them at least 5 days before the Child in Need Meeting takes place, unless the meeting has been arranged at very short notice (e.g. in circumstances where a child is identified as being at risk of coming into care);

It will be important to be clear about any level of risk the child/young person may be exposed to. In some cases the information shared at the meeting may lead to a recommendation that Child Protection procedures are instigated as a means of best promoting the child's welfare

6. The Child in Need Plan

The Child in Need Plan ensures that all children and young people have clearly stated objectives for them to gain maximum life chances from family relationships, educational opportunities, health care and other services.

A SMART, outcome focussed child's plan will be drawn up which will clearly specify:

- The overall objectives of the plan with a clear strategy for achieving them;
- The services to be provided, timescales for provision and what their purpose/intended outcome is;
- Responsibilities for each aspect of the Plan;
- The expectations of family members;
- The lead professional (Social Worker) with overall responsibility for the plan who will coordinate the plan, arrange meetings, monitor progress and arrange reviews;
- How often the child and family will be visited by professionals and

the family safety network to support the plan moving forward;

- How often the social worker as lead professional, will visit the child and family: this must be set at a minimum of every 20 working days;
- Expected timescales and planned trajectory of case closure;
- Contingency plans including practical arrangements for the child(ren) if care arrangements break down and the circumstances which would be likely to trigger child protection procedures;;
- Review arrangements including the following:
 - i. the method of considering the progress of the plan to measure the effectiveness of support being offered and any improvements being made by the family;
 - ii. How often Child in Need meetings should be held (the Child in Need review meeting will take place within 6 weeks of the initial child in need meeting and thereafter, no less than 6 weekly). NB: Children who have been identified as at some level of risk and/or needing a high level of support and services may need to be reviewed at a child in need meeting more often.

Any disagreements with the plan need to be recorded with reasons for disagreement. The chair will ensure that other agencies are aware of the multi-agency [escalation process](#). The Social Worker must ensure that the child/young person and their family are informed about the Local Authority's Complaints Procedures and how to access them

7. The Review Child in Need Meetings

Review child in need meetings should take place at a minimum frequency of every 12 weeks of the previous meeting although core group meetings will take place 6 weekly.

The purpose of review child in need meetings is to ensure that the Child in Need Plan is progressing and they will consider:

- The progress of the plan against the outcomes previously agreed as required and whether the child/young person's needs are being met;
- Whether the level of support and services being offered by professionals and the family and friends network is making a positive difference to the family circumstances;
- Whether the desired timescales (trajectory) are being met and, if not, whether these need to be reconsidered;
- Whether all those involved need to continue to offer support services and share information (including family and friends network);
- Whether or not the Child in Need plan needs adjusting and, if so, how and who will be responsible for implementing any changes;
- Whether a family group conference or referral to family solutions for other services is appropriate (if not already underway);
- Whether the agreed contingency plan remains appropriate;
- The options available to meet the needs of the child including:
 - i. Continuation of Child in Need plan;
 - ii. Step down to Early Help;
 - iii. The need for a Child Protection investigation/plan;
 - iv. The need for the child to be looked after;
 - v. The need for legal advice with a possible outcome of initiating the public law outline.

Where there have been or where there still remain, issues of a child protection nature, consideration will always need to be given to the level of need and whether or not child protection procedures would best meet that need.

For continuity, review Child in Need meetings should, where possible, be chaired by the same person who chaired the previous Child in Need Meeting.

If a child has been subject of a Child in Need plan for 6 months without effective change then Child in Need procedures should not be used indefinitely but consideration should be given to the need for an alternative intervention to ensure that drift is minimised. Either the issues of

need/concern have de-escalated and the family can manage with support from Early Help/universal services or Child Protection intervention may be required. This discussion should be held regularly within supervision and the team manager should make the final decision in discussion with the allocated social worker.

A decision to end social work involvement should only be made at child in need meetings chaired by a Team Manager.

8. Disabled Children

The details of this policy may, but will not necessarily, apply to disabled children or children with complex sensory needs.

For a disabled child where a formal assessment (single) assessment has taken place, the assessment should lead to a clear written plan (a child in need plan) that sets out all the services that are to be provided to meet the child's needs.

If a parent decides to opt for Direct Payments then the plan for how payments will be used must be clearly set out in a Direct Payment agreement and shared with the parent /carer in receipt of the payments.

Many families with disabled children receive a range of services to meet their child's needs.

Wherever possible there should be a single plan which includes the full range of family support services on a multiagency basis.

[Guidance on the content of a CIN plan for a child with disability](#)

The CIN plan for any disabled child (where there are no active safeguarding concerns) should be reviewed 6 monthly, unless concerns have been identified or the needs of the child or family have changed significantly.

Where families are only in receipt of direct payments and use these to fund support for a child that does not include overnight short breaks, the reviews can take place every 12 months. The new plan should be recorded on the Child and Young Person's CIN Plan. In those circumstances, a disabled

child's CIN review could be incorporated into a child's annual review of the Education, Health and Care Plan to ensure partnership working to meet the child's assessed need.

The review of a plan that includes short breaks for the disabled child away from home will usually include a face to face meeting but in some cases a face to face meeting may not be necessary. Generally it should be possible to include a review of short breaks with a review of other aspects of a child's health, education or development, where some of the same people will already be together. In other cases a review might not have to be a meeting.

The review should be recorded on the Child and Young Person's Plan and consider the child's social need, health needs, home environment and plans for transition where appropriate and any safeguarding issues.

[Short breaks Statutory Guidance 2010 DCSF\)](#)

9. Case Closure, Step Up/Step Down

For those occasions when there is no longer a need for Children's Social Care intervention, formal letters of closure will be sent to all involved parties.

Where step down to early help is agreed, the CIN core group will seek consent from the family and complete the request for early help via Right for Children and agree who the Lead Professional will be as well as the Early Help Plan.

<http://www.devonsafeguardingchildren.org/parents-carers/early-help/>

If concerns have increased, a section 47 investigation process must commence in order to consider step up to an initial child protection plan.

Where a CIN plan ends and step down to early help is not required or agreed to by the family and the case is closed to Children's Social Care, the closing summary form and chronology of significant events, as well as all case recording, must be completed and up to date. The record should evaluate the success and impact of the Child in Need plan, including the views of the child

and parents on how helpful the social work intervention was to them. Child and parent views should be recorded on the closure form.

10. Children in Need who move within Devon

In all cases, where a child subject to a Child in Need plan moves to a different locality within Devon and a transfer is agreed, the allocated team manager must contact the new team manager and inform them that the family have moved/plan to move to their locality, providing information relating to their involvement and any concerns held.

A transfer summary should be completed by the transferring social worker prior to the family moving (or within 5 working days of the family moving if the move is unexpected) and a joint 'handover' visit be completed in line with practice standards section 5. The case should then be allocated to a social worker within the new locality. A Child in Need meeting should be held in the new locality within 20 working days and attended by the new social worker

Children in Need who move to other Local Authority Areas

In all cases, where a child subject to a Child In Need Plan moves to a different Local Authority area, the allocated social worker must contact the Children's Social Care Department of that Local Authority (where this is known) and inform them (by way of a referral) that the family have moved into their area, providing information relating to our involvement and to any concerns held.

Appendix One

Initial and Review Child in Need Meeting Agenda

Section 1: Introductions

- Introductions
 - Apologies
 - Clarify the purpose of the meeting and clearly state the reason(s) for the family's involvement with Children's Social Care
 - Check family details - involve family members in this (dates of birth or names might be recorded incorrectly on files);
 - Remind professionals from agencies that whilst you will take notes about the discussion they are responsible for accurately recording actions relevant to them;
 - Ensure reports/assessments received for the child in need meeting have been seen by all.
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Section 2: Meeting Ground Rules

The chair will read out the following statements to ensure consistency across meetings

Confidentiality:

'Parents and young people have given their permission for information about them to be shared at this meeting, for the purpose of ensuring that their child/ren's needs are met. Participants should remember that this information should not be shared outside of this meeting unless there are concerns about the safety of a child.'

Organisation:

'Everyone will have the opportunity to speak at the meeting and it is my role as chair to ensure this happens. To do this I will ask everyone in turn for their

comments including parents and young people. To make sure everyone is heard, I ask that everyone listens to others and that all remarks are addressed to me. Agencies will be asked to detail the work they have been doing with the family and progress being made. Agencies will be asked to specify any particular concerns they have especially if the situation is worsening and we will decide appropriate actions to improve the situation. This might include as assessment of risk.'

It is important that participants respect each other's contribution and allow time to offer their perspective on issues of concern, strengths and support needed. The chair will support this process.

If you have concerns it is important that these are raised in the meeting so that they can be discussed and any actions agreed.

Section 3:

What are we worried about, what is going well

- Events leading to this meeting (Initial meeting only)
- **REVIEW ONLY:** Events since last meeting and update on each element of the plan from social worker. Have outcomes been achieved?
- Parents/carers view: What they are worried about and what's going well;
- Voice of the child/children: What they are worried about and what's going well;
- Views of professionals: what they are worried about and what's going well.
- Things that make changes difficult (complicating factors) that need particular support?
- Issues we are unsure of (grey areas) that needed further information?
- All to consider: Is the threshold met for a Child In Need plan?
- If not, consideration should be made to support from the Early Help and universal provision.

Develop a SMART, outcome focussed child's plan which will clearly specify:

- The overall objectives of the plan with clear actions to achieve them;
 - The interventions/services to be provided, timescales for provision and what their purpose/intended outcome is;
 - Whether the family have been offered/have taken part in a Family Group Conference and the need to convene one or take into account the family plan where there is one;
 - Who will do what for each aspect of the Plan; ensure that this is shared amongst the multi-agency core group; what family members will be responsible for, including wider support network/extended family;
 - The lead professional (Social Worker) with overall responsibility for the CIN plan who will coordinate the plan, arrange meetings, monitor progress and arrange reviews;
 - How often the child and family will be visited by professionals and the family safety network to support the plan moving forward;
 - How often the social worker as lead professional, will visit the child and family: this must be set at a minimum of every 20 working days;
 - Expected timescales and planned trajectory of case step-down/closure;
 - Contingency plans including practical arrangements for the child(ren) if care arrangements break down and the circumstances which would be likely to trigger child protection procedures;
 - Review arrangements including the following:
 - i.* the method of considering the progress of the plan to measure the effectiveness of support being offered and any improvements being made by the family;
 - ii.* How often Child in Need meetings should be held (the Child in Need review meeting will take place within 3 months of the initial child in need meeting and thereafter, no less than 3 monthly). NB: Children who have been identified as at some level of risk and/or needing a high level of support and services may need to be reviewed at a child in need meeting more often.
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Section 4: CIN core group, future meeting dates and times

Agree membership of the Child in Need meeting and core group.

Consider any other professionals, family or friends who may be helpful to attend.

Agree the dates for:

Core Group Meeting(within 6 weeks)

Review Child in Need meeting (within 12 weeks).
