

Education and Children's Services

SOCIAL CARE AND EARLY HELP

CHILD IN NEED

Practice Guidance

2017

OUR MISSION:

'To improve children and young people's lives by working in partnership to raise aspirations, build achievement, and protect the most vulnerable'

Introduction

This Child in Need (CIN) Practice guidance has been developed to set out how children assessed as being in need will be supported by a range of Children's Services staff and partner agencies. These children will be assessed in accordance with Section 17 of Children Act 1989.

The guidance will outline expectations and provide a framework to staff to ensure that timely assessments are undertaken with clear plans to support children and their families. This will include CIN processes for the step up and step down of open cases within the CIN Service, including the expectations upon social workers to involve Early Help colleagues at the earliest opportunity, when working with families to ensure that they are offered the right help at the right time; which is proportionate to the needs identified.

It is for all frontline staff and managers with responsibility for managing Child In Need (CIN) work. It provides guidance to staff on the management of children who are assessed as children in need of statutory support by a social worker. All Children and young people who are subject to a Supervision Order are considered a Child in Need and thus must follow the same process.

Children and Families contribution to CIN Planning

It is essential that children and their parents / carers are consulted by social workers and managers to ensure that their views are ascertained and there is a good understanding of the 'child or young person's 'lived experience'.

Parents and children will be invited to CIN Review Meetings and the meeting will not be deemed as quorate without a parent/carer present. However on specific occasions meetings may go ahead in the absence of a parent/carer as assessed necessary by the chair of the CIN Review Meeting. A clear rationale for the decision will be shared with the attendees and subsequently recorded by the Chair. It is imperative to have discussions with parents beforehand to ensure consent and views are obtained.

The CIN Assessment Process

Assessments are a dynamic process and must be undertaken at critical points in a child's life by a qualified and suitably experienced social worker. It forms an integral part of the CIN process and must underpin the CIN planning arrangements. Assessments must be undertaken when there is a change of circumstances, such as a change in placement, living arrangements and must be undertaken when a S47 is initiated.

The assessment must be undertaken by obtaining the views of all significant people (for example relatives/friends), key professionals involved with the family.

The initial Child in Need plan should be discussed at a child in need meeting which will involve family members and their connected network of support. This may

include extended family members, Early Help and agencies involved with the family. If the single assessment has been completed in the Single Assessment Team (SAT) the first CIN meeting is the handover point to the receiving in team. The new worker or a member of the team as agreed by the TM will attend the meeting. Wherever possible, the first meeting should be convened within 7 days of the completion of a Single Assessment.

Team Managers are responsible for signing off and quality assuring assessments and CIN plans, in doing so they are underwriting that the plans in place for the child(ren) are outcome focused and the actions are SMART and meet the needs identified.

- Specific (concrete descriptions of behaviours required, frequency required);
- Measureable (what will we all see more of or less of that tell us the plan is working?);
- Achievable (the goals are focused on the issues of need and well defined);
- Realistic (the family and the professionals are all confident the plan fits with daily life and the family's unique circumstances);
- Timely (all goals should have a timeline).

All open Child in Need cases within the CIN Service must have a Child in Need Plan, which has been formalised at a CIN Meeting. The Child in Need Plan must be reviewed and updated on a **6 weekly basis** to track progress of the child/ren and to determine whether the plan is making a driving improvements to the child/ren's situation – improvements and/or deterioration.

All children subject to a CIN Plan will be visited by a social worker at a **minimum of every 3 weeks or more frequently**, if needed. Decisions about more frequent visiting timescales to be taken by Team Manager as part of CIN Review Meeting and recorded in CIN Review minutes, within the CIN Plan and in supervision.

All CIN meetings will be chaired by a CIN Team Manager, Advanced Practitioner or suitably experienced social worker as identified by the Team Manager.

Team Managers are responsible for monitoring / tracking CIN cases within their team to ensure that 6 weekly review meetings are taking place and plans are being updated at every CIN Review Meeting to reflect any concerns and progress. The use of regular reflective supervision between Team Managers and Social Workers is essential to ensure effective and meaningful planning which is driving outcomes.

The TM will chair a CIN review meeting at key timescales to ensure there is no drift and delay and intervention remains targeted and robust. The meetings chaired by a TM will take place at the 3 and 6 months stage. The Social Worker is responsible for chairing the 6 weekly review meetings. If the CIN plan remains in place over 6 months the TM must discuss the frequency of chairing the meetings with the SM.

Timescales and Frequency of CIN Meetings

It is an expectation that the child in need plan should not be needed any longer than 12 months. Service Managers will review any Child In need plan that remains in place at 9 months to consider the support provided and any progress made.

CIN plans

Children are made subject to CIN Plans via a range of different pathways:

- As an outcome of a Single Assessment.
- Step Down from a Child Protection Plan.
- Step Down from a Looked After Child's Plan.
- As an outcome at the end of care proceedings via a Supervision Order.
- Section 7/37 court reports directed by the Family Court where the assessment deems it is necessary

CIN Plans as an outcome of a Single Assessment

Where the allocated Social Worker and Team Manager have agreed that the child(ren) subject to the single assessment require support under a CIN Plan, workers **must** complete the "CIN Plan" section of the Single Assessment Form, which will be carried forward to the CIN Plan pathway and enable workers to build upon this work in the CIN Plan pathway.

Team Managers **must not** authorise Single Assessments where the "CIN Plan" section of the Single Assessment has not been completed by the Social Worker. They must reject the assessment and include a manager's comment in the authorisation field which gives clear direction to the worker.

The allocated Social Worker and Team Manager will ensure that the proposed CIN Meeting takes place within 1 week of the authorisation of the Single Assessment and is chaired by a TM/AP or suitably qualified SW.

If at any point during the single assessment, the Social Worker identifies that a CIN Plan is needed, then a Multi-Agency Meeting will be convened and parents invited to that meeting. The services provided to the family must not be delayed whilst waiting for the completion of the single assessment. Thereafter, subsequent CIN Review Meetings will be chaired every 6 weeks.

Comprehensive SMART and outcome focussed plans will be put in place and reviewed by the CIN Review Meeting Chair.

The plan will be updated by the social worker on LL and circulated to the family and other professionals within 5 working days.

The chair will need to ensure that consideration is given to the SA being updated this may include:

- Following S47 being completed (a SA is completed whenever a s47 is undertaken)
- New adult /child joining or leaving the house
- Escalation in risk e.g. increase in missing episodes/domestic abuse incident

CIN Plans as a Step Down from a Child Protection Conference

Where children are subject to a Child Protection Plan and are de-planned at a Child Protection Conference, the CIN plan will be developed in the conference. This is to ensure that all those professionals working with the family, who have agreed a CIN plan as appropriate can contribute to the making of the plan. This plan will then be reviewed at the frequency stipulated for CIN review meetings (6 weekly).

Early Help are to be invited to CIN Review Meetings to consider whether the case can be stepped down to Early Help.

CIN Plans as Step Down from a Looked After Child/ren's Review Meeting

For all children and Young people who are Looked after, where it is envisaged that the child will return home, the SW needs to consult with the IRO. If this is considered an appropriate plan, the TM will contact the IRO before the meeting to confirm the plan and will consider inviting an early help representative to the Looked after review meeting .If it is considered that a CIN plan is required, the TM will attend the LAC review and will the agree the CIN plan with those present. The reviews will then be held at the stipulated frequency.

Early Help are to be invited to the CIN Review Meeting to consider whether there is a role for them with the family if early help is considered appropriate at a later stage.

Section 7/37 Court Directed Reports

The single assessment undertaken for these cases will decide upon whether a CIN Plan is needed. If so, the Social Worker and Team Manager to arrange a multi-agency CIN Meeting within 7 days of the Single Assessment being completed.

If at any point during the single assessment, the Social Worker identifies that a CIN Plan is needed, then a Multi-Agency Meeting will be convened and parents invited to that meeting. Intervention for the family will not be delayed whilst waiting for the completion of the single assessment. Thereafter, subsequent CIN Review Meetings will be convened every 6 weeks. Consideration is to be given to Step Down at the 2nd CIN Review Meeting.

CIN Plan and Supervision Order

For Supervision Orders made to the Local Authority CIN Review Meetings must take place as a minimum every 6 weeks, in line with all other CIN cases. The care plan ratified at court must be reviewed and incorporated into the CIN plan. All children and young people subject to Supervision Order will be tracked using existing PLO processes. The court Care Plan and Supervision Order must be reviewed within all supervision sessions to ensure compliance and robust planning.

Nine months after the making of a Supervision Order, the Team Manager and Service Manager will agree further actions required (which may include further court action through a Legal Planning Meeting [LPM]). It is expected that the Service Manager contact legal in writing if an LPM is not to be scheduled, detailing the reasons why.

A CIN plan should be created and updated during CIN Review Meeting

Team Managers within CIN will chair a CIN Review Meeting 2 months prior to the expiration date of the Supervision Order. This will allow time to hold an LPM and decide upon whether an application for an extension to Supervision Order is needed.

Upon the conclusion of the Supervision Order the child or young person can remain subject to a CIN plan if their assessment deems this is necessary.

Case closure cannot occur until the Supervision Order has expired and it will then follow the same processes as CIN closures.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) cases

(This section should be read in conjunction with the 'MACSE [Multi-Agency Child Sexual Exploitation] team operating protocol')

CSE processes do not replace the Child In need approach but add bespoke and specialist intervention to the Children's Services Section 17 statutory intervention.

An initial CIN plan (this will also serve as the CSE plan) will need to be developed and reviewed in accordance with the agreed (6 weekly) timescales. The Multi-agency CSE team manager chairs all CSE meetings as of February 2017. They will convene the initial meetings and will chair the review meetings after 3 months and 6 monthly thereafter. This meeting will be held to review the plan and determine if risk of CSE is still prevalent. This meeting will have a dual purpose and will take place in place of the 3 and 6 monthly CIN meetings. It is the TM from the CSE team that will chair these meetings not the TM of the allocated SW. The CIN plan should be reviewed every 6 weeks but the CSE worker must be invited. The reason for this is to ensure CSE issues are incorporated into the CIN plan and to ensure children, young people and their families are not having to attend meetings unnecessarily. The allocated SW responsible for the CIN plan should liaise with the CSE worker to ensure this is co-ordinated. It is further recommended for 3-way supervision (including the CIN SW, CIN TM and CSE SW) to occur every bi monthly.

Children Using Abusive Behaviour (CUAB) cases

CUAB processes do not replace the Child in Need approach but add bespoke and specialist value to the Children's Services Section 17 statutory intervention.

An initial CIN plan will need to be developed and reviewed in accordance with the agreed (6 weekly) timescales. Currently the Safeguarding Unit is responsible for the chairing of CUAB meetings. The Unit has an expertise in this area and so it is

considered that they provide additional oversight and objectivity around an area that is considered complex.

In these circumstances the CIN plan will need to be developed and will necessitate reviews in the frequency stipulated. The CUAB review meetings will be held 3 monthly for the initial review and 6 monthly thereafter. The CIN review meetings should combine to ensure only one meeting is held. The reason for this is to ensure CUAB issues are incorporated into the CIN plan and to ensure children, young people and their families are not having to attend meetings unnecessarily. The Allocated SW responsible for the CIN plan should liaise with the safeguarding unit to ensure this is co-ordinated.

CIN Step Down to Early Help

See “*Step up Step down Process and Transfer Protocol within Social Care & Early Help Services*”.

Closure of CIN cases

When a decision is made by the Team Manager to close a CIN case this must be carried out promptly by the social worker. Visits must remain at a minimum of 3 weekly until the case has been closed to Children’s Social Care.

It is expected that parents, children and professionals will be notified of the decision to close their case to Children’s Social Care.

There will be ongoing liaison with agencies to ensure that the child’s situation remains stable until closure.