**Guidance for Child in Need Plans and Child in Need Meetings**

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**Date of Issue: February 2023**

**Date to be Reviewed: February 2026**

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following procedures and guidance:

### [SMART Plans Guidance](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/18262/smart-plans-guidance.docx)

[Safety Planning Guidance](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/18261/safety-planning-guidance.docx)



You may also find the following procedures and guidance useful:

### Transfer Policy and procedures for Specialist Children's Teams

[Disabled Children's Services Procedure](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_child_disability.html)

[Single Point of Access](https://www.kmpt.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/SPoA.htm)

# Table of Contents Page

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Contents | Page |
| 1. [Introduction](#_1._Introduction) | **3** |
| 1. [Situations where Child in Need is likely to be appropriate](#_2._Situations_where) | **3** |
| 1. [The use of danger/worry statements and safety goals in Child in Need Planning](#_3._The_use) | **4** |
| 1. [Involving a child / young person in the Child in Need process](#_4._Involving_a) | **6** |
| 1. [Membership and Attendance at a Child in Need Meeting](#_5._Membership_and) | **7** |
| 1. [Chairing the Meeting](#_6._Chairing_the) | **8** |
| 1. [Effective use of a Scaling Question to review progress](#_7._Effective_use) | **9** |
| 1. [Preparation for Child in Need Meeting](#_8._Initial_Child)s | **10** |
| 1. [Minutes](#_9._Minutes) | **11** |
| 1. [Children open to the Disabled Children and Young People’s Service](#_10._Children_open) | **11** |
| 1. [Appendix 1: Top Tips from Children about positive meetings](#_Appendix_1:_Top) | **12** |
| 1. [Appendix 2: Initial Child in Need Agenda](#_Appendix_2:_Initial) | **13** |
| 1. [Appendix 3: Review Child in Need Agenda](#_Appendix_3:_Review) | **14** |

# 1. Introduction

When a child has been identified, via a Child and Family Assessment, as a child ‘in need’ under section 17 Children Act 1989, social work practitioners need to ensure that ‘Child in Need’ intervention is in partnership with families. Alongside other relevant parties (both professionals and wider friends and family), the aim is to build family resilience and their ability to address life challenges and ensure their children’s needs are met. Therefore, it is vital that children and families are supported to be active in their own Child in Need planning.

This guidance, alongside the Child in Need Plans and Meetings Policy, has been written to ensure there is a collaborative process around Child in Need intervention. Families need to have a clear end goal, have worries explicitly discussed and be involved in bringing together their own SMART plans.

# 2. Situations where Child in Need is likely to be appropriate

Child in Need intervention is likely to be appropriate in the following situations (list not exhaustive):

* When a Child and Family Assessment has identified that the threshold for a service is met, a Child in Need Plan of services or support is required to meet the identified needs and prevent escalation into a higher tier of intervention.
* When an assessment establishes that a child has suffered or is likely to have suffered 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. This is to a degree that the child is not currently at risk of significant harm, and it is felt a Child in Need Plan will be sufficient to promote the child's welfare.
* When a child is identified as being at risk of coming into care.
* When a child has 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 a Child Protection Plan. In these cases, the child will remain subject to a Child in Need plan for a minimum of three months.
* When a child who has been Looked After by the Local Authority has returned home and is not subject to a Care Order or a Child Protection Plan. [See Transfer policy and procedures for Specialist Children’s Teams](#_Transfer_Policy_and)
* When a child is presenting significant risk-taking behaviour and/or offending behaviour.
* When a child may be presenting mental health difficulties, such as self-harm or suicidal thoughts and requires a referral to Children and Young People's Mental Health Service (CYPMHS). See [Single Point of Access](https://www.kmpt.nhs.uk/information-and-advice/SPoA.htm).
* When a child's education is significantly disrupted either by chronic non-school attendance or being subject to exclusion combined with other social factors to indicate complex needs.
* When a child has a severe or profound disability or complex sensory needs and requires long-term multi-agency support because of their disability/need.
* When services are being provided to a child with a disability and/or their family on an ongoing 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.
* For more information about Disabled Children and Child in Need procedures please see [Disabled Children's Services Procedure](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_child_disability.html)

# 3. The use of danger/worry statements and safety goals in Child in Need Planning

**The danger statement**: gives the reason we are working with the family in clear terms the family understands. **The safety goal**: addresses the concerns and describes what the child’s life will be like and how the family will be behaving so that we are no longer worried.

Danger Statements

Danger statements can begin honouring what the family have already done, safety that is in place, based on evidence of specific actions or behaviours.  They then clarify the risks/worries/danger

1. Who is worried?
2. What are they worried about?
3. What are they worried will happen if nothing changes?

Based on the findings of the Child & Family Assessment, the social worker will need to consider one or more danger statements (also known as worry statements, where the word danger is not appropriate).

There should be no more than four danger statements which focus on the key dangers/worries e.g., neglect, DA, alcohol, or drugs. They should be written directly to the child and note the actual or potential impact of the harm on the child, including the worst-case scenario if this continues.

Examples can be explicit, e.g:

*A - ‘**Jimmy, your grandpa and social worker are worried about your safety given you have been hurt, including bruises to your head and arms, when stepping in to stop your dad from hurting your mum. We worry that you may continue to get hurt and at worse receive life-changing or fatal injuries’.*

*B - ‘Sammy, we worry about what you hear and see at home when your Mum is not well and drinking alcohol. Sammy, we know this makes you scared and stops you from being able to sleep, go to school at times or have friends at home. We worry if this continues you will miss out on learning and making friends. You may struggle with your confidence and suffer from stress and anxiety now and as you get older’.*

The danger/worry statements should be discussed and agreed upon in partnership with the child (age-appropriate) and family before to the Child in Need Meeting. These will help inform the safety goals, which should also be written to the child. Further information about safety goals can be found in [Smart Plans Guidance](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/18262/smart-plans-guidance.docx) and [See Safety Planning Guidance](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/18261/safety-planning-guidance.docx).

Safety goals

The Safety Goal says what we need to see to close the case or step the case down.

Safety goals can be prefaced with best hopes for the situation, followed by a safety goal for each danger/worry statement.  The safety goals describe what things will be like at the point that we are ready to close the case or step down the service input.

1. What will the parent be doing that is different?
2. What will the child be experiencing?
3. What will professionals see that tells them things are good enough that the child is safe and will continue to be safe?

Examples of safety goals (linked with above danger statements) include:

*A – ‘Jimmy, you will not be getting hurt or worry about your mum being hurt. You will see the adults around you using their safety plan to make sure disagreements between your parents don’t end in you or your mum get hurt. You and your grandpa will see and feel confident that life at home is better for you’.*

*B – ‘Sammy we will see that you feel able to go to school, are able to concentrate and learn when there and make and keep friends because you are not worrying about your mum or home life’.*

Whilst safety goals may be devised with the family, it is worth noting with the family that there is the potential that they are adjusted at the Initial Child in Need Meeting, in consultation with the family and professionals.

# 4. Involving a child / young person in the Child in Need process

Children and young people’s involvement within the Child in Need process should be meaningful and appropriate to their needs and wishes. Practitioners should help the child to be fully informed about what is going on, and why Integrated Children’s Services are involved and include them in the Child in Need process. Doing these needs to consider the child’s age, level of understanding, communication preferences and needs, and general circumstances.

To assist practitioners in ensuring good practice occurs a focus group was set up with children and young people in Kent in Dec 2022. The young people responded to questions about their experiences and what they feel practitioners can do to help them be involved in knowing what is going on, devising plans, and attending and/or being supported with any meetings that occur.

These are the key messages children and young people want practitioners to know:

## Before a meeting:

* Personally invite me to the meeting in advance so I know it is coming and have time to prepare.
* Explain to me what the purpose of the meeting is and who will be there, and why.
* If possible, let me have a say on when and where the meeting will take place and who will attend so I feel comfortable.
* If I want one, organise a pre-meeting with me to discuss what will be spoken about in the main meeting and what I want to say.
* Do not just give me a form to fill out!
* Support me to prepare for my meetings by giving me different ways that help me share my views. This could be prompt cards or flashcards.

## During a meeting:

* Introduce all the workers at the meeting.
* Tell me why they are there and how they support me - especially if they are strangers to me.
* Speak to me directly in the meeting and give me clear opportunities to share my views in a way that suits me.
* Do not speak to each other as if I’m not there.
* Ask me what I think and take me seriously even though I am young. Use language that I understand, not acronyms and jargon.
* Do not judge me, say “I know how you feel” or dismiss my opinions; you have not lived my life and experienced what I am going through.
* Do not prioritise my family’s or other workers' views above mine.
* Include a section in the meeting about what is going well and what I enjoy.
* Take an interest in my life, do not just focus on the negatives.
* Be as open and honest as possible about what is happening now and what might happen in the future.
* Check up on me during the meeting and provide breaks if I need them.

## After a meeting:

* Give me time and/or a safe space after the meeting to think about what has been said. Meetings can sometimes be an emotional rollercoaster for us!
* If my meetings take place during school time, let my teachers know that I may not be able to re-join the class and start learning straight away.
* Provide me with a copy of the report or plan. Ask me if I want to get the same plan as the workers, a short version or just an overview. The plan should be easy for me to understand and written with my reactions in mind. In the report or plan, write what I say - not your interpretation of it!
* Let me know how I can contact you in between meetings if I need you or want to discuss the meeting or anything else with you.
* Keep me updated on what happens after the meeting, especially if things do not go to plan or happen more slowly than expected.
* Check up on me after the meeting. It shows you care about me and my feelings.

[See “Top Tips from Children about positive meetings”](#_Appendix_1:_Top)

Where a child or young person does 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. This may include via an advocate/trusted adult, letter, pictures, or video.

The Child in Need Meeting Child Participation forms can be used to encourage and facilitate the child or young person's involvement. The forms can be found under Child in Need section [Forms/Practice Guidance (proceduresonline.com)](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/local_resources.html). However, the forms should not be seen as the only tool or option to gather views.

# 5. Membership and Attendance at a Child in Need Meeting

A Child in Need Meeting should include the people most able to contribute to an effective plan to promote change along with the family. The members will likely consist of professionals already known to the family such as health, education and the family and friends’ safety network. If you have questions about education attendance, the Virtual School Kent Advisory Team (VSK) can be contacted for advice.

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 where the meeting could take place.

Consideration should be given to transport, timing, and any childcare issues and where a child is of school age the meeting should be held outside of school time wherever possible. A record about the discussion around the arrangements should be noted on the file.

Where a parent or carer has been identified as having specific learning difficulties or mental health needs and other professional or family support is not considered appropriate to advocate for them, they should be asked if they want support from an independent advocate. In some cases, a referral may be required to achieve this via the Access to Resources Panel.

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

# 6. Chairing the Child in Need Meeting

Whilst the initial Child in Need Meeting should be chaired by a Team Manager, future meetings can be Chaired by a Senior Practitioner if necessary. There must be continuity and wherever possible, the same Chair used for future reviews.

The Chairperson must ensure that the meeting provides an environment that is designed and intended to be helpful and supportive. This will include thinking about who is present, how people are seated, what is said and how it is said, offering challenges where language is blamed, or when jargon or acronyms are used.

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.

If there are any disagreements about the plan, the Chairperson will ensure this is recorded in the minutes and that the Social Worker has ensured that the child/young person and their family are informed about the Local Authority's Complaints Procedures and how to access them. See [Complaints and Representations Procedure](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_reps_complaints.html)

If there is concern about drift and other agencies progressing actions agreed, an agreement should be made about how this will be addressed. This may include speaking to the relevant Safeguarding Leads and if there are questions regarding educational issues, the Virtual School Kent Advisory Team (VSK) can be contacted for advice.

Where a child or young person has not attended the meeting, the Chair will confirm how discussions and plans will be 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 upon within the meeting.

# 7. Effective use of a Scaling Question to review progress

Within Child in Need meetings, a scaling question can be a useful tool to explore views on the progress of the plan and achieving the safety goal, or goals. This helps family and professionals think about whether things are improving or not and often the family appreciate hearing the score and explanation for this from others. The most important thing about scaling is to understand people's explanations for where they are on the scale.

To be effective there should be one scaling question which needs to be thought about before the initial meeting. It should take into consideration the worries/dangers identified and all the safety goals. There needs to be a rationale for what would cause a zero and what needs to be seen to achieve a ten. An example could be:

**Freddie:**

On a scale of 0-10, when 10 is that you, Freddie, are living in a home where you are not exposed to violence between your parents and they are no longer taking drugs and drinking high levels of alcohol, and although things aren't perfect we have no concerns about you because you feel safe and properly cared for and 0 is that the dangers you are exposed to are at such a level that you are at risk of significant harm and cannot remain at home in the care of your mum and dad.

**Helen:**

On a scale of 0-10, when 10 is that you, Helen are regularly going to school (more than 95% attendance) and your worries about your mum not coping whilst you are away do not get in the way of your learning. 10 is that we have seen you regularly sharing your worries with your counsellor which means you are no longer cutting your arms or picking at your hands until they bleed and 0 is that your worries and anxieties feel so huge for you that you are cutting yourself or worse, trying to take your own life, and as a result need to spend time in hospital where you can be kept safe.

Once the scaling question is agreed upon, it should remain the same whilst the plan is reviewed. If there is a new danger that arises, an agreement would need to be given within the Child in Need Review Meeting as to whether the scaling question needs to be adapted.

Children, family, and professionals should be asked their views on the score, with time given for them to gather their thoughts about the rationale for their score.

When reviewing the scaling question, it is helpful to:

* Remind parties that 10 is not about being perfect, but that parties are confident the statement in the scaling question is being met and achieved over time.
* Remind parties of their previous score (which should be on the previous minutes).

# 8. Preparation for Child in Need Meetings

The social worker will prepare the child/young person and their family for the Child in Need Meeting and ensure the Chair has the relevant information required.

For initial meetings, the social worker will ensure that:

* The outcome of the Child & Family Assessment and reasons for convening a meeting (including before this is completed) are shared with the family - prior to the Child in Need Meeting
* The child / young persons’ views are sought about the worries and the plan to address them – prior to the Child in Need Meeting
* A draft Child in Need plan is considered with the family about their views on what needs to happen, and what they will do to address the worries.
* There are no surprises for the family concerning what the meeting will involve, or the information or proposed actions being shared by the social worker at the Child in Need Meeting.
* They provide the Chairperson a copy of the Child and Family assessment and any draft plan the family have devised - Prior to the Child in Need meeting
* They are prepared to discuss the draft danger (or worry) statement/s, any existing strengths, protective factors, and complicating factors identified when asked by the Chair.

For Review meetings the social worker will ensure that:

* The child / young persons’ views are sought, and their attendance is considered with them.
* There are no surprises for the family concerning what the meeting will involve, or the information or proposed actions being shared.
* If there is a proposal to end the plan that this has been discussed with the Team Manager in advance (who will ensure there is management oversight on the file).
* The child/young person and family are clear about the options if the Child in Need Plan ends, and their views sought on this. For further information see [Child in Need agendas](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/18260/review-child-in-need-agenda.docx)



# 9. Minutes

A member of the meeting will take minutes, record discussions and decisions and note who was invited, attended, and gave apologies. They will seek agreement regarding content from the Chairperson who will also ensure the worries, what is working well, and the Child in Need Plan is updated.

The minutes and plan should be written directly to the child. Evidence shows when minutes are written to children, practitioners are better able to break down information and imagine they are having a direct conversation with the child, meaning they remove professional jargon and best explain why decisions and/or plans were made. A case note will be put on the child’s file by the minute taker, noting who chaired the meeting, the decision from the meeting (e.g. if to step down, continue or close) and the date of the next meeting, within 1 working day.

A copy of the plan will be forwarded to the Team Manager to authorise and be placed on the child's file within 5 working days

Minutes of Child in Need Meetings should be sent out to all parties within 10 working days.

# 10. Children open to the Disabled Children and Young People’s Service

For all Children open to Disabled Children and Young People’s Service there should be consideration about how you involve them in drawing up a Child in Need Plan and any Child in Need Meetings.

Being aware of how a child or young person communicates is key to thinking about how their views will be gathered and shared and their attendance at meetings. Seek information from all possible sources, this may include other professionals who know them or their family. However, when views are given, be professionally curious and request clarification when a parent or carer says things you are unsure of or uncomfortable with.

Consider various communication tools and methods and any barriers to using these and seek specialist expertise to aid communication, if required.

Further information and resources can be found at Kent Academy, under Children with Disabilities and Special Educational Needs. See [Course: Children with Disabilities and Special Educational Needs (delta-learning.com)](https://www.delta-learning.com/course/view.php?id=1862)

# Appendix 1: Top Tips from Children about positive meetings

**A detailed description of top tips for positive meetings
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# Appendix 2: Initial Child in Need Agenda

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| **Welcome and introductions – overview of the purpose of the Child in Need Meeting**   * Introduction and who is present * Apologies received * Reports/assessments received for the child in need meeting |
| **Why are we here today?**   * Parents should be aware of and understand the basis on which Integrated Children’s Services is working with them (i.e. s17 Child in Need) and be in agreement with this. * The Chair will refer to the draft danger (or worry) statement/s, any existing strengths, protective factors and complicating factors identified from the C&F Assessment. |
| **Views of the Child – see Top Tips from Children about positive meetings (on KPON)**  Children and young people should be told about the meeting, what it involves and asked if they want to attend and options on how to do this, along with ways they can contribute their views to the meeting.  Examples of things to explore with the child and share at the meeting: What do you think is good about home, what do you want to be different? What are you worried may happen? Is there anything you would like help with or are worried about (this may be to do with home/school/ community/friends)? What do you think people may be worried about? (Explain why you are involved). What do you think would help to make things different? What do you think should be in the plan? |
| **Views of the Parent**   * What do parents want to be different? Are we working towards this? * Do parents understand what they need to do? Do they think it is realistic? What do they feel may get in the way of doing it / be the barriers? |
| **Agree the plan – see SMART plan guidance (on KPON)**   * Consider the current worries and impact on the child, what the aims are and actions to achieve them (by family and professionals). Ensure the actions noted are measurable and have timescales. Plans need to be SMART. * Ensure the family own and agree the plan and it is written to the child/children. * The plan is the safety plan and it must be clearly stated what is being done to ensure safety.This includes what family and friends may do to assist. |
| **Consider the contingency plan** **and scale the current situation**   * Agree with the family what their back up plan is. * Note what would lead to the Child in Need plan ending or stepping down to Early Help. * Note the Local Authority contingency plan and what would lead to them escalating the situation. * Agree how any disagreement can be resolved. * Scale with family and professionals *To be effective the scaling question needs to be thought about before the meeting and a clear explanation given on what would be 0 and what would be 10. (10 is not about being perfect but being confident the goal is achieved and seen over time).* |
| **Future meeting dates and times – if applicable**   * Agree membership of the Child in Need meeting and consider any other professionals, family or friends who may be helpful to attend. * Agree the date for the next Child in Need meeting (within three months). |

To access the agenda on KPON please click here: [**Initial CIN agenda**](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/18259/initial-child-in-need-agenda.docx)

# Appendix 3: Review Child in Need Agenda

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| **Welcome and introductions – overview of the purpose of the Child in Need Meeting**   * Introduction and who is present * Apologies received * Any reports/assessments received for the child in need meeting * Brief overview of why there is a Child in Need Plan currently |  |
| **What has happened since the last Child in Need Meeting?**  Any significant events, positives, new worries – request parents views first, then professionals. |  |
| **Views of the Child - see Top Tips from Children about positive meetings (on KPON)**  Children and young people should be told about the meeting, what it involves and asked if they want to attend and options on how to do this, along with ways they can contribute their views to the meeting.  Seek their views on the plan and how it is going, anything they think should be added or taken off, anything they want family and professionals to know, change or help with?  You can ask them to scale how they think things are going – use the same scale or adapt, given age/cognitive ability. |  |
| **Review the Child in Need Plan – what has been achieved, what is working well, what we are still worried about, the impact on the child/children and update the plan**   * Ensure parents views are gathered first, then professionals (unless parents request otherwise) on the progress of the plan and any barriers. * Consider the aims and actions, what has been achieved or not achieved, the impact this has had on the child and measure progress. * Consider positives and areas which need further development/ intervention. * Review the whole plan or note why any part is not discussed. * Do parents or others feel anything else needs adding to the plan – be clear in the minutes why. * Ensure the plan continues to reflect the safety plan, is SMART and written to the child. * If actions have been completed check with the family if they still want it left in the plan but noted as completed or be deleted. |  |
| **Consider and scale the effectiveness of the plan and gain professionals view on threshold**   * Is there evidence that parents have implemented and sustained the changes, or can? * Is the risk increasing or decreasing? Does the contingency plan need to be implemented? * Should the family remain open on a Child in Need plan, step down to Early Help or be closed? * Are the concerns so great that the family need escalating, and a strategy meeting occur?   **USE THE SCALING QUESTION FROM THE INITIAL CIN MEETING – remind parties of their previous score if given (and questions can be asked what would increase the score)** |  |
| **Future meeting dates and times – if applicable**   * Agree membership of the Child in Need meeting and consider any other professionals, family or friends who may be helpful to attend. * Agree the date for the next Child in Need meeting (within three months). |  |

To access the agenda on KPON please click here: [**Review CIN agenda**](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/18260/review-child-in-need-agenda.docx)