**Child in Need Meetings and the Child in Need Plan**

Following the decision that a package of family support is required to meet the child’s needs under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, a Child in Need plan must be developed and confirmed at a Child in Need plan meeting.

The Child in Need plan meeting is an opportunity for the child, parents / carers and other key agencies to identify and agree the most effective inter-agency services to meet assessed need and develop / update the CIN plan.

The family must be supported and encouraged to attend the meeting. Consideration should be given to involving the child and supporting their attendance. CIN meetings can take place in a variety of locations to support full attendance for the family. Thought 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. A record of attendees is maintained.

The relevant social worker should discuss potential attendees for the CIN Meeting with the child and the parents/carers prior to arrangements being made for the meeting. Parents / carers must give consent as it is a voluntary service. If consent is not obtained, consideration must be given to how the child’s needs will be best met. For example:

* Instigate a Section 47 Child Protection enquiries and potentially an Initial Child Protection Conference;
* Meet the child’s needs via Universal or Targeted Services; and/or
* Single agency response.

It is an expectation that the child should not be subject to a Child in Need plan any longer than 12 months. The relevant Service Manager will review the case at the 9 months milestone to understand and consider:

* What support has been provided;
* What actions were agreed and progress achieved;
* Why is this still a Child in Need, could the child’s needs be met through Universal or Targeted Services;
* What are the next steps identified.

The Service Manager will provide a decision which is recorded on the child’s Azeus Care case record.

**Timescales and Frequency of CIN Meetings**

A Child in Need initial meeting must be convened within 15 working days of a decision that the CIN meeting is required. This decision may be made during or on the completion of the single assessment.

The frequency of subsequent CIN meetings will be determined at the initial CIN meeting. However, subsequent CIN meetings should be held at least every 3 months.

In the case of disabled children, the CiN meeting will take place every 6 months unless it is decided by the Practice Lead in consultation with the team around the child that a more frequent timescale is indicated.

**Practice**

Any child protection or safeguarding issues which arise during the course of working with a Child in Need must be responded to in line with the London Child Protection Procedures.

It is an expectation and a requirement that Child in Need plans are reviewed actively and the required response for the child is provided at the right time. This relies on reviews taking place within timescales and that the child is visited, seen alone and their views heard and recorded throughout the lifetime of the plan.

The frequency of visits should be:

* Agreed with the Practice Lead on a case-by-case basis;
* at least once every **20 working days**.

Or more frequently if indicated in the CIN plan.

**Key Responsibilities**

The Practice Lead will chair the initial CIN meeting and an agreement must be reached at this meeting regarding who will chair subsequent CIN review meetings. This would normally be the allocated social worker, however, there may be occasions where it is agreed that the Practice Lead assumes this role.

The allocated social worker is the lead professional and they are responsible for the following:

* Convening CIN meetings;
* Arranging meeting invitations;
* Recording agreed updates to the plan;
* Circulation of the plan.

The Practice Lead must maintain oversight of progress against the Child in Need plan through supervision and is responsible for discussing next steps with the relevant Service Manager.

The Service Manager is responsible for reviewing the case prior to the 12 month period of any Child in Need plan that has not concluded.

Key professionals are responsible for the formulation and implementation of the plan and for ensuring their services are delivered as part of the plan and for their own attendance.

**Prior to the CIN Meeting**

Recording on Azeus Care should follow the Child in Need workflow.

Arrangements should be made to organise the meeting, book a room etc.

Invitations must be sent out 3 to 4 weeks before the meeting.

The allocated social worker must visit the child and family to prepare for the meeting and to seek their views. This must include exploring ways in which to engage the child in the meeting and consider advocacy services if required.

If the child has communication needs, consult with parents / carer / school staff and consider creative methods of communication including: visual aids, toys, Boardmaker, Makaton and photographs.

If professionals are unable to attend the meeting they must update the social worker and provide a written update regarding their involvement with the family.

**The Initial CIN Plan Meetings and Plan Reviews**

The purpose of the initial CIN meeting is to agree and clarify the actions of the CIN plan and to challenge the plan to ensure that it is robust enough to reduce any identified risks and develop strengths. Actions must be challenged to ensure that they are SMART:

* Specific;
* Measurable;
* Achievable;
* Realistic;
* Timed.

All actions must have identified people responsible for them. In addition, decisions and actions agreed are recorded. Planning and intervention through the CIN meeting must be underpinned by a thorough assessment and continuing evaluation and re-assessment.

In particular, the CIN plan must:

* Describe the identified developmental needs of the child, and any services required; *“Why are we here”*
* Include specific, achievable, child-focused outcomes intended to promote and safeguard the welfare of the child; ”*What needs to change”*
* Include realistic strategies and specific actions to achieve the planned outcomes; *“How can we do it”*
* Include a contingency plan to be followed if circumstances change significantly and require prompt action; *“What to do if it does not work”*
* Included timescales that are not too short or unachievable; “*How soon can be done”*
* Not be dependent on resources which are known to be scarce or unavailable; *“Who can help in the community”*
* Clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of professionals and family members, including the nature and frequency of contact by professionals with children and family members; *“Who can help in the support network”*
* Establish points at which progress will be reviewed and the means by which it will be judged. *“How do we know it is working”*

The purpose of the subsequent CIN meetings is to review and monitor progress against the **intended outcomes** set out in the plan. In addition, at CIN review meetings, the plan must be amended and updated as required and action taken if risks escalate / de-escalate.

Following the start of the CIN plan, the second CIN meeting (first review) will be held at 3 months with subsequent CIN meetings held 3 monthly. There can be exceptions if agreed by the Practice Leader after a case review. However, all CIN Plans must be reviewed at least 6 months. The rationale for the exceptions need to be documented in a Note in Azeus

All attendees should be introduced and the attendance list must be maintained. The invitee list must be reviewed and consideration given to whether anyone else should be invited including other family members or friends or other professionals. Consideration will need to be given to potential Health and Safety situations, particularly when there are concerns of Domestic Abuse between family members.

There should be discussion, review and challenge on the progress of agreed actions. Any written information provided by professionals not at the meeting must be shared. In addition, updates to the plan must be noted and issues that cannot be resolved identified. If there is agreement for the child's needs to be met in universal or targeted services, a lead professional must be identified and agreed. If the Child in Need plan is to continue following the review, a date should be set for the next CIN meeting.

**Following the CIN Meeting**

The allocated social worker must update the plan within 2 working days and circulate the updated plan to the family, child/ren and key professionals within 5 working days. The updated plan must be recorded on Azeus Care.

If there are any identified issues that were not able to be resolved at the meeting, these should be raised with the Practice Leader.

Where it becomes necessary to make minor adjustments to the plan and services provided, any changes to the plan must be made in consultation with the parents and the child (where appropriate) and key professionals from other agencies.

Any newly proposed invitees should be contacted and invited to the next meeting.

After the initial meeting (and again if there are any significant changes to the plan), the CIN plan must be shared with the family and signed by them. In addition the initial plan should be shared with the Practice Lead and signed by them and again for each subsequent plan review.

**Next Steps**

When it is decided that social work involvement is no longer required to meet the child’s needs, the work undertaken and areas addressed should be recorded in a closing summary. This should give the reasons for the end of the plan and include the views of the professionals involved, and the views, wishes and feelings of the child / young person and their parent / carers.

Most CIN plans will envisage that Children and Young People’s Service (CYPS) intervention will end within 12 months. However, some children and families may require longer term support, for example disabled children and those with complex needs.

Decision for the child in plan to conclude should always be made in consultation with those practitioners who were part of the Child in Need plan. This should always include the Practice Lead and the relevant Service Manager to clarify the next steps and identify the lead professional.

The next steps may include support being provided through Targeted Services or may be that the child is no longer in need of services to meet their needs.

Where it is proposed that the package of support being provided under a CIN plan should continue beyond 12 months and this has been agreed by the Service Manager there should be a specific review chaired by the Practice Lead.

Exceptions to this will be those cases where the plan acknowledges the need for longer term support.

The outcome of a CIN review meeting will be:

1. That the child is no longer a child in need requiring CYPS intervention, with a recommendation for the next steps. Next steps may include support provided by Targeted Services;
2. That the child continues to be a CIN requiring the same level of services, resulting in the continuing provision of services and minor amendment, as necessary, of the CIN plan;
3. That the child’s needs are sufficiently complex and/or s/he requires additional services to safeguard and promote his or her welfare such as to justify an update of the single assessment;
4. That the child appears to be at risk of significant harm, resulting in the need for strategy discussion / meeting and possible section 47 enquiry.

**Recording on Azeus Care**

Recording on Azeus Care should follow the Child in Need workflow.

The updated plan must be placed on Azeua Care. The allocated social worker should also set up the next CIN meeting activity.

To ensure quality of recording, the allocated social worker must check that all actions have allocated responsibilities and action by dates. They should be mindful of the purpose of the recording and mindful of the potential audience for the recording (young people, families, inspectors etc).

Key discussions at the meeting can be recorded using bullet points, ensuring that significant events, areas of disagreement are recorded with a level of detail to appropriately reflect the discussion held.

The allocated social worker must record the CIN **meeting on Azeus Care within** 2 working days.

The allocated social worker should also set up the next CIN meeting activity.

 **4.** **Children in Need Moving to Another Local Authority - Principles**

This section covers issues which arise when children who are subject to Children in Need Plans move to another local authority. The principles apply to local authorities in the circumstances of both transferring out and receiving in Children in Need.

In a number of situations, a move by a child and their family to another local authority can be a positive option. However, where children and their families may have moved on more than one occasion in a short space of time this can be cause for concern, and any assessment should consider whether the child is subject to trafficking or modern slavery.

* When a Child in Need moves from one local authority area to another, the Children Act 1989 is clear that the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child lies with the local authority where the child is to be found;
* Given the child has already been identified as having particular needs or as being vulnerable in some way, urgent consideration / assessment should be given as to the impact of the move for the child in respect of their vulnerability, for example, by a reduction any protective factors, increased risk with known perpetrators or if they are subject to trafficking or modern slavery;
* Given the circumstances, and in line with the above, a timely response should be made with regard to levels of assessed risk;
* The parent/carer should be made aware of their responsibility to ensure the child receives appropriate education and health support in the area they plan to move to, together with any other specialist services required;
* The social worker should support the family to access relevant and appropriate services to meet the child’s needs. Any deficits in services to meet specific needs by the receiving local authority should be noted;
* The local authority Children’s Social Care Services where the child and family are moving to should be formally notified of the move and all relevant information should be shared:
	+ Social work assessment;
	+ Child in Need Plan;
	+ Minutes of latest Child in Need Review;
	+ A summary / case report.
* Parent / carer’s permission should be sought to share this information with the receiving local authority in line with [**Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners (DfE)**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice).

However, the Data Protection Act should never be a barrier to ‘sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm’ or indeed on those occasions where seeking consent might increase the risk of harm.

If the parents / carers do not consent to this information being shared, the Practice Lead, should consider seeking advice from their Caldicott Guardian or their Legal Services;
* The social worker should ensure that other agencies involved in the Child in Need Plan are made aware of the move and so they can share relevant information as soon as possible with their respective counterparts in the area the family have moved to, (for example school and GP records, etc.);
* The social workers and team managers of the respective authorities should ensure there is clear effective communication during any transition and any risks are clearly communicated and understood.

Where possible, the social worker should seek to meet their counterpart and where geography allows, consider a joint visit and attendance at the Child in Need Meeting, so that the issues can be fully shared. The process should reflect the family’s needs and any associated risks;
* Where there is dispute about case responsibility a delay in the receiving local authority accepting responsibility of the case, or a dispute about Children in Need thresholds, the Practice Lead should promptly notify the Service Manager who should make a decision regarding next steps, including, where necessary, to take legal advice;
* The family should be kept informed of any respective responsibilities during a transition stage and when the receiving local authority, (where the family reside), take full responsibilities;
* Receiving local authorities should seek to convene a Child in Need Meeting within 20 working days of the family being resident in their area and include all relevant agencies and, where possible, the social worker and other specialist staff where the child and family have moved from;
* All actions, decisions and arrangements should be fully recorded on the child’s case record during this process. This should include management decisions, which should identify the rationale for any decisions made, especially where specific services cannot be provided and/or it is considered the child is no longer a Child in Need.