

# What is a Child in Need Plan?

## A Guide for Parents and Carers



## What is a Child in Need?

A Child in Need is described by the Children Act 1989, Section 17 as being a child who;



- (a) 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 of services by a local authority under this Part;
- (b) their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or
- (c) is disabled.

## Do I need to give my consent for my child to be a Child in Need?



When a referral is made to the Local Authority about your child and they are considered to be a Child in Need, people with Parental Responsibility for the child will be asked to give consent for an assessment to be completed.

Should your Social Worker recommend that your child/ren are subject to a Child in Need Plan, your consent would be needed for this to take place.

Children over the age of 16 with an adequate level of understanding can also be asked to give their consent as well.

You can remove your consent at any time during the Child in Need process, however, your child's Social Worker will have to discuss this with their Team Manager and possibly seek legal advice if they have significant safeguarding concerns.

## What is a Child in Need Plan?

A Child in Need Plan is a Plan which involves a package of support being put in place for your child and your family to address any areas of need and risk assessed by a Social Worker. The Social Worker who completed the Assessment in respect of your child will prepare a draft plan that they will bring to the first meeting, which is called a **Child in Need Planning Meeting**.



The Child in Need Plan will be developed and agreed at the Child in Need Planning Meeting, in consultation with you, your child, and professionals (the team around the child).

## What is a Child in Need Planning Meeting?

The Child in Need Planning Meeting takes place **within 10 working days** of the Assessment being completed. At the



Meeting, you will be involved in discussions with the Social Worker and other professionals, such as representatives from your child's School or Nursery, and Health Services. Decisions will be made about the type of support and actions needed to support your child and your family, to improve your child's situation. This will be put in to the Child in Need Plan, with clear actions and timescales for you to and professionals to follow. A date will be set to review the progress of the Plan at a further meeting, called a Child in Need Review Meeting.

## What should a Child in Need Plan be like?



### **A Child in Need Plan should be;**

- Specific to your child/ren and your family's needs;
- Inclusive of your child/ren and appropriate family members;
- Include the involvement of key professionals, i.e. your child's School, Health Visitor and any important agencies that you might be involved with;
- Realistic, and the outcomes should be achievable for your family to make progress;

- They should be regularly reviewed to make sure the plan is working and progress is being made;
- Be clear about who will be visiting your child/ren and how often they will be doing this.

**You should always be given a copy of the Child in Need Plan and the minutes from every Child in Need Meeting, within 5 working days of the meeting taking place. If the plan changes at all, this should be done in consultation with you and your child, where appropriate.**



## **What is a Child in Need Review Meeting?**

**A Child in Need Review Meeting** is a meeting set to review the progress of the plan to evaluate whether the expected outcomes of the plan are being achieved. Any changes to the plan can be made at these meetings.

**Child in Need Review Meetings** should be arranged to take place **every 6 weeks**, however, the attendees of the Child in Need Reviews may decide that less frequent reviews at up to **3 monthly intervals are required**.

**There are three potential outcomes from Child in Need Review Meetings:**

- Your child/ren are not considered to be a Child in Need; the Social Worker will recommend your family receive support from a single agency, i.e. a school, or from Family Solutions, and therefore not involving Children's Services.
- That the Child in Need Plan continues as there are still needs and support to be provided.
- That your child's situation does not seem to be improving and they appear to be at risk of Significant Harm, resulting in the need for a Strategy Discussion/Meeting and possible Section 47 Enquiry (child protection).

## What is a Child in Need Planning Meeting and Child in Need Review Meeting like?



These meetings can take place in a variety of locations, including your child's school, nursery, your family home, a Family Centre or

Children's Services office. You will be given the address details of where the meeting will be in advance.

The Social Worker will make you aware of which professionals have been invited to attend each meeting, so that you and your child know who might be there. This will likely include a representative from your child/ren's school or

nursery, a health representative, and representatives from any support services involved with your family.

## Do I need to go to every Child in Need Meeting?

**Where possible, yes.** It is important those with Parental Responsibility attend meetings to understand what is happening, share their views, and talk about how things have been since the last meeting. If you're unable to attend, then you should notify the Social Worker to share your views. The Child in Need plan is about helping your child and if you are unable to attend the meeting, the Social worker and other professionals who are supporting your child will want to know what is working well and what you are worried about. By understanding this, there is a greater chance that your child will receive the right help and support.



If you do have difficulties arranging child care or transport to the meeting, the Social Worker should do their best to support you and accommodate these needs to ensure you are able to attend.

## How often will my child be visited?



**Your child will be visited no less than every 20 working days (four weekly).** The Social Worker will tell you when they are seeing your child and where, i.e. at school or home.

## What happens if I move out of the area?

Should you and your family move out of the area, the Social Worker, with your consent, will contact the Local Authority you are moving to and will share information with them about their involvement with your child. They will be asked to send the new authority documents that contain information about your family, for example, the Assessment and the Child in Need Plan.



**If you have any questions in respect of the Child in Need Process, then please contact your Social Worker or their Team Manager at Dudley Children's Services.**