



Planning in Warrington

The Circle of Change is based within the Systemic Model of Social Work practice and provides a philosophy and framework for planning for our children, families and carers.

The underlying philosophy is simple:

“planning works when the children and parents are fully involved in it.”

Before we do this, we should be asking what the barriers to children, families and carers getting involved in the plan might be, and recognise that barriers can be thrown up by the practice and process of statutory intervention itself.

This handbook outlines the principles of the Circle of Change approach and illustrates how those principles are put into action in Planning for intervention with children and families.

It should be read in conjunction with *Tri-X Procedures*:

[Warrington Children's Services Procedures Manual \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

[Welcome to the Warrington Safeguarding Partnership Online Procedures \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

The Circle of Change

The Circle is a tool for collaborative planning which encourages both self-expression and co-production. It can be used in any setting where a group of people want to devise a plan, for any purpose. The open, questioning format of the planning document is designed to allow everyone in a planning meeting to contribute.

The format is particularly useful as a range of people – children, families, carers and agency representatives alike – can be brought together to put their various abilities and responsibilities to work in addressing a commonly agreed issues for the purpose of jointly achieving specific goals.

When any planning is taking place for children we must asked ourselves and partners the following questions:

PROVOCATIONS



Would this be good enough for **my child**?



What kind of adult does the **child want to be**?
Are we being **aspirational** enough?



Are we managing risk and uncertainty **for the child**
and not for our organisations?



Is **everyone** working towards the same goals?



Are we building **trusted relationships**?

Principles of the Circle of Change and facilitating the meeting

The first principle of the Circle of Change is that the wellbeing and interests of the child are of overriding importance, and an understanding of the child's lived experience – either in their own words or via assessment, is essential.

The local authority duty to involve ourselves in family life in a way which any parent could find both intrusive and threatening. The potential for disagreement between parents and professionals is obvious, but in all cases the interests and wellbeing of the child must be our most important consideration.

Children may require assessment and intervention following a lengthy period of involvement with Children's Services or as a result of a sudden event, having had no previous involvement at all. In all cases the children and parents/carers are likely to feel intimidated and defensive and may respond

accordingly. These feelings are a realistic and understandable response to the situation they are in and should not be dismissed but they cannot *be allowed to prevent a full and honest discussion of the needs and best interests of the child.*

Social work assessments must always include the child's voice and analysis of their lived experience to inform planning. Additionally, the social worker should give consideration as to how the child will participate in their assessment and planning process.

A child may participate in a variety of ways, for example;

- Attendance – can be full or partial and dependent on assessment.
- Advocacy – NYAS can meet and prepare the child for the meeting or can share a report with the chair in their behalf.
- The child can write their own report; draw a picture, or send an audio/video recording.

If the child was not referred to NYAS prior to the initial planning meeting it should be considered at the meeting (age appropriate).

The second principle of the Circle of Change is that we must give children, families and carers the respect that we would wish to be given were we them.

The preparation of the children, families and carers prior to engaging in planning meetings is key to demonstrating respect, fairness and an open and honest process and it is the role of the social worker to do this.

Children, families and carers may feel that the professionals involved have made statements about them which are untrue or unfair. Their concerns must be heard and they must be assured that they will have the opportunity to express their views.

The children, families and carers need also to be made aware at this point that there is a complaints procedure. These are the means by which we can assure the parents and family members of the openness and transparency of the process.

Prior to the meeting the social worker should explain to the child, family and carers the purpose of the meeting and outline with them what their role is within the planning process. The social worker should take a blank copy of the circle of change format to talk through with parents prior to the meeting. It should also be shared with advocates. In order to maximise transparency and participation the social worker should also explore what the child, family and carers feel about the assessment that will inform the planning meeting and resolve any issues that can be easily resolved – e.g. basic factual errors in reports.

It is absolutely essential that family members should have seen the social work and other agency assessments and reports, and had time to read them in advance of any planning meeting.

The third principle of the Circle of Change is that all planning is based on comprehensive assessment of need specific to the child for whom the plan is being developed.

The social worker and facilitator of the planning meeting needs to be wholly familiar with the family history and any previous involvement with Children's Social Care, as well as the views of other

professionals' who have worked with the child and family, in order to understand both background issues and current needs.

The fourth principle of the Circle of Change is that discussion will be open and allowed to flow freely, and each member of the meeting will be given the opportunity to express their views.

During the discussions emotional responses, particularly among family members, are to be expected and should be acknowledged and managed by the meeting facilitator in such a way that they do not inhibit the full discussion of the areas of need.

Meeting members should be invited to introduce themselves and explain their relationship with the child and family including how long they have known the family and what direct work they have undertaken with the child and with the parents.

Following the introductions, the facilitator begins the meeting by outlining the areas of need which have been established through the assessment process and support a discussion, ensuring in particular that the child, family and carers are able to take a full part in the conversation. The purpose of this phase of the meeting is to establish, in as far as possible, a shared understanding of the areas of need, how it is affecting the child(ren), what the child(ren) feel about it, and agreement on what needs to change.

The planning meeting needs, wherever possible, to establish agreement between parents and professionals about the assessment and analysis of need. It is important to establish this before starting the planning process.

The fifth principle of the Circle of Change is shared responsibility, by which each member of the meeting takes part in the co-production of a plan which will meet the needs of the child(ren).

During the planning stage, the child, family and carers are invited to complete "Where we want to be" on the Circle sheet and to add any of the actions which have been agreed during the discussion. The sheet can be circulated among the meeting members so that everyone can add the actions that they have agreed to take responsibility for, and the facilitator can move around the room advising and prompting as necessary in regard to each area of need, the actions pertinent to it, and the quadrant of the circle in which those actions should fall. Alternatively, the facilitator can take responsibility for recording the actions as stated by those in the meeting.

Children and families must be given the option to opt out of writing on the sheet themselves to avoid unnecessary pressure to write something. They should still be encouraged to participate in the discussion. The chair may take responsibility for recording the actions as stated by those in the meeting.

Plans should be based around areas of need and should not be an exhaustive list of tasks. **All plans should include achievable and measurable goals with clear timescales and responsible individuals noted against each action.**

NB: The Circle Planning sheets are the Child's Plan – they will not be transferred into a form or table – so must be legible.

The sixth principle is that the sole purpose of the planning meeting is the creation of an effective plan which will address the identified needs of the child(ren).

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Once the planning stage has been completed the facilitator can recap on the actions that the members of meeting have committed to. The facilitator needs to check if everything has been covered and confirm that there are no further actions which can usefully be made.

At the end of the meeting the plan can be photocopied and provided to all in attendance for them to take away with them. Alternatively, it can be scanned and securely emailed to all group members. It is important that all group members, including the family, receive a copy of the plan as soon as practical after the meeting so they know what is expected.

The social worker will upload a scanned copy of the circle of change plan to MOSAIC and complete the relevant meeting document.

Recording format for the planning meeting in MOSAIC:

- Attendees/apologies
- Summary of significant events since the last meeting; including implications and significance of events - think of this as your ongoing assessment and analysis of the current situation.
- Voice of the child and the impact on their lived experience of above events
- Dissenting views
- Setting the date of next meeting

Using the Circle

The circle can be used for both initial planning meetings and subsequent planning meetings where progress is being reviewed and plans updated to reflect this.

The circle was developed to be printed (A3) and used in a room with the family and professional group where everyone can write in the plan.

THE PLAN
Please provide the name of the lead person and timescale for each action.

Where are we now?
First Plan: Assessment of needs/risks?
Review: Changes to assessment of need/risk.

Where we want to be
Aspirations & Desired Outcomes
Short-term and long term.

Must Do: individual responsibilities that must be completed

Do Together: Two or more individuals working at it: **Do Together**

Do Later: may need to be done, but not right away

Do For You: Resources that the family aren't able to access: **Do For You**

Goals that have been achieved

Title of Meeting/Plan: _____ Name of Children: _____ Date: _____ SW: _____

Where are we now?

First planning meeting: the information recorded should be based on the analysis of the child and family assessment; what are the needs / risks that need to be addressed in the plan.

Where do we want to be?

In order to focus the planning there must be clear objectives which the family and group aspire to attain. It is important that the family are encouraged to lead this conversation with the groups support.

This part of the plan should be completed before the quadrants as it focuses the rest of the conversation and provides positive affirmation that change can be achieved.

Must do - The division of the circle into four quadrants recognises that in achieving our objectives we may have to take on individual responsibilities. This will be the tasks that are required to ensure the children's basic needs are met and will include professional visits to see the children.

Do together – there will be certain tasks can be better addressed by two or more individuals working together. This could include members of the group working with the family members to achieve goals.

Do for you - There may also be resources or specialised abilities which have to be provided from outside the group, but which certain group members alone may be able to access. This may also include group members taking on responsibility for some tasks on behalf of parents until they are ready to take them on and whilst they prioritise other tasks that are impacting on their parenting capacity.

Do later - Some of the actions which the group decide to commit to will need to take place before others, or may not be immediate priorities, and so fall within this section.

Review and subsequent planning meetings:

As a plan moves forward and the group meet to review it, a summary of updates should be recorded in the meeting document and a summary of outstanding issues recorded in the **Where are we now?** column. It is important that all previous agreed actions are reviewed and either progressed through the quadrants or recorded as achieved.

Goals Achieved -

Issues which have been successfully resolved should be recorded here. Any tasks and actions agreed at the last meeting that have been completed should be moved from the quadrants and be noted in this section. It is important to record tasks and actions that have been achieved to demonstrate progress.

When considering how to address the outstanding needs / risks it is important to ask whether the tasks that were set at the previous meeting are still relevant and if they can be moved from one quadrant to another. For example; in the initial planning meeting it may have been decided that a task would be in the 'do for you' quadrant as parents were not ready to take this task on. At a subsequent meeting, having achieved other goals that were barriers to achieving this task, they may

be ready to work with a member of the group to jointly undertake the task – this would then move into the 'do together' quadrant. At the next meeting it may be that parents now feel confident in doing this task on their own and so it would move to the 'must do' box.

Where a task has been consistently met it should then be moved to the 'Where we want to be' box as an achieved change and should remain in this box to demonstrate sustainable progress and change.

This movement around the circle allows families to see the progress they are making in a tangible format. The ultimate goal is to remove all the tasks into the 'where we want to be' column as they are achieved.