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Child in Need Plans and Reviews

**SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER**

This chapter does not apply to children who are the subject of a child protection plan. Where the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan, this will be drawn up in outline at the initial child protection conference and in detail at the core group meeting(s). It will be reviewed by a child protection review conference. Please see the [Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures](https://surreyscb.procedures.org.uk/page/contents)in relation to the implementation of the Child Protection Plan.

For children who are in receipt of Short Breaks, see also the  [Short Breaks Procedure](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/support-and-advice/children-with-disabilities/surrey-short-breaks-for-disabled-children/surrey-short-breaks-statement#section-1).

**1. Child in Need Planning Meetings**

Child in Need Planning Meetings will follow an assessment where the assessment has concluded that a package of family support is required to meet the child's needs under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

The Planning Meeting provides an opportunity for a child and their parents/carers, together with key agencies, to identify and agree the package of services required and to develop the Child in Need Plan.

All Child in Need Planning Meetings should be attended by the child (depending on age and understanding), parents/carers and those agencies whose potential/actual contribution is recommended as an outcome of an assessment. This should include all agencies involved in delivering direct care /input to the family .

The relevant social worker should discuss potential attendees for the Planning Meeting with the child and the parents/carers prior to arrangements being made for the meeting.

It will be important that an appropriate venue suitable for the child and their family are used for the meeting. Consideration 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.

The first Planning Meeting will usually be chaired by the social worker's line manager.

The social worker is responsible for convening the meeting and inviting participants.

Representatives of agencies should provide a written report for the meeting where possible even if attending but when apologies are sent they should include a written report for the meeting. The social worker will either incorporate reports into the notes of the meeting or attach them.

A note of the meeting will be taken by the Chair. This record will be copied to those involved, including the child and parent/s, who will need to sign their agreement. Finalised minutes of the meeting should be circulated to all parties within 10 working days of the Child in Need meeting.

Consideration should always be given to whether the child has an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP) and the Child in Need meeting and process should take account of the contents of the plan and when it was last reviewed. In some circumstances it may be relevant to combine the EHCP review with the CIN review.

CIN meeting should always take account of transition planning for children approaching 14 plus as it is a requirement that consideration is given to young people with additional needs and disabilities and their needs as they approach adult hood. This should be done in conjunction with their EHCP.

**2. Child in Need Plans**

A Child in Need Plan will be developed in a Child in Need Planning Meeting.

Most Child in Need Plans will envisage that Children's Services intervention will end within six to nine months. There will be a Team Manager review of plan progression at 6 months; if a Child in Need plan has been ongoing for 9 months or longer, this will be reviewed by the area Service Manager, to ensure timely step-up or step-down if warranted.

Some children and families may require longer term support, for example children with disabilities.

When a family is deemed to require support under Child in Need provision, the Team Manager should be clear about the agreed frequency of social work visits which should be at intervals of no more than 4 weeks (different arrangements apply for disabled children with stable packages of care). In many families, visit frequency may vary depending on the complexity of the situation and this is agreed within supervision between line manager and Social Worker

The Child in Need Plan must identify the, lead social worker any resources or services that will be needed to achieve the planned outcomes within the agreed timescales and who is responsible for which action and the timescale involved.

In particular, the Child in Need Plan should:

* Describe the identified developmental needs of the child, and any services required.
* Include specific, achievable, child-focused outcomes intended to promote and safeguard the welfare of the child.
* Include realistic strategies and specific actions to achieve the planned outcomes.
* Include a contingency plan to be followed if circumstances change significantly and require prompt action.
* Include timescales that are not too short or unachievable.
* Not be dependent on resources which are known to be scarce or unavailable.
* Identify the Lead social worker and their responsibilities, including frequency of visits to the child – minimum 4 weekly but should be more frequent at the commencement of the child in need plan.
* Identify the plan for the Family programme to be undertaken with the family.
* Clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of other professionals and family members, including the nature and frequency of contact by professionals with children and family members.
* Lay down points at which progress will be reviewed and the means by which it will be judged.

The Chair of the Child in Need Planning Meeting is responsible for the distribution of the Child in Need Plan. A copy of the Child in Need Plan should be provided to the parents, child (if old enough) and the agencies or other professionals involved in the provision of services under the Plan.

The Lead social worker will be responsible for implementing the plan including making referrals to appropriate agencies for services as described in the plan.

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.

Children with Disabilities • Children and young people with a disability, aged under 18, should have an assessment to determine their level of need and should have an up-to-date Child in Need (CIN) Plan if they are receiving a service such as a direct payment or overnight short-break or a social work intervention. All children are reviewed regularly. Where possible, Child in Need reviews should align with Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) Reviews. The Team Manager would determine the frequency of the reviews depending on the level of complexity, with a minimum frequency of 6 monthly reviews.

The CWD service is currently reviewing children receiving stable packages of care under child in need and considering options for these children to be open to Early help .

**3. Reviews of Child in Need Plans**

Reviews will be conducted at intervals agreed with the social worker’s line manager, which will be at least every three months, unless there are exceptional circumstances when timescales can be longer. This can include disabled children whose circumstances remain consistent, and the services provided do not require such a regular review.

If there are significant changes in the family circumstances, an early review should take place.

Any child protection or safeguarding issues which arise during the course of a Child in Need Plan must be responded to in line with [Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures](https://surreyscb.procedures.org.uk/page/contents)

The Review will usually be carried out by the Lead Social Worker who should invite or seek the views of the child, parents, and any service providers. The responsible team will administer all Child in Need Reviews.

The Review will generally take place within a meeting unless the manager agrees otherwise. The Social Worker or line manager will usually chair the meeting.

The purpose of the Review is to ensure that the services provided are contributing to the achievement of the objectives within the timescales set.

Where it is proposed that a complex package of support being provided under a Child in Need Plan should continue beyond 12 months there should be a specific review chaired by the manager of the responsible team. Exceptions to this will be those families where the plan acknowledges the need for longer term support, for example in relation to children who meet the criteria for a service in relation to a disability.

All decisions made should be recorded on the child's electronic record, together with reasons, and dated.

A copy of the record should be sent to the child (if old enough), parent and all other participants in the Review process.

The outcome of a Review will be:

1. That the child is no longer a child in need requiring Children's Social Care Services intervention, which will result in a recommendation to the team manager that the case be closed although the child may continue to receive services from a single agency or under a multi-agency plan not involving Children's Social Care.
2. That the child continues to be a Child in Need requiring the same level of services, resulting in the continuing provision of services and minor amendment, as necessary, of the Child in Need Plan.
3. That the child appears to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, resulting in the need for a strategy discussion/meeting and possible section 47 enquiry.

Where the outcome of the Review is an amendment to the Child in Need Plan, the Social Worker should circulate a copy of the amended Plan to the child, parents, and other agencies/professionals involved in providing the services set out in the amended Plan, including any new services to be provided.

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

This section deals with children who are subject to Children in Need Plans and who 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, children and their families moving to another local authority offers a positive option. However, and particularly where children and their families may have moved on more than one occasion in a short space of time, any assessment should consider whether the child is subject to trafficking or modern slavery (see [Assessments Procedure](https://www.proceduresonline.com/surrey/cs/p_assessment.html)).

* 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 is vulnerable in some way, or urgent consideration / assessment should be given as to the impact of the move for the child in respect of their vulnerability, for example, through changes in the protective factors, increased risk with known perpetrators or whether they might be 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 service required for the child.
* The social worker should assist and promote the family accessing relevant and appropriate services with regard to meeting 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 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**](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.

Otherwise, the social worker or team manager, 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 and prepared to ensure that their relevant information is shared 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 and good 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, to 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; delay in the receiving local authority accepting responsibility of the case, or a dispute about Children in Need thresholds, the team manager 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.

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