

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board



Practitioner Guidance:

Child in Need Working in Partnership

June 2019

Definition of 'Child in Need':

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a general duty on Children's Social Care (CSC) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Worcestershire who are '*in need*' and to promote the upbringing of children in need by their families by providing a range and level of services to meet those children's needs.

Section 17 of the Children Act defines a Child In Need (CIN) as a child:

- who 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;
- or a child whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of services;
- a child who is disabled.

Children with Disabilities

It is hoped that parents and the extended family will provide care for their children and young people, but sometimes some children and young people with disabilities may have needs that cannot be met by just the family, communities or universal services.

When this is the case, to be eligible for a service from the Children with Disabilities Team, a child must be regarded as disabled for the purposes of an 'assessment of need' under the Children Act 1989 and Equality Act. The definition of a disabled child or young person is set out in the Equality Act 2010: 'that is a child and young person who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

Working in Partnership with Children and Families

CIN work relies on the voluntary co-operation of the families we work with. Those with Parental Responsibility (PR) should be informed of the nature of the referral and asked for consent to undertake a Social Work Assessment and be included in the Child In Need planning processes. Consent is also sought to contact agencies that know and work with the family.

There may be occasions when obtaining and keeping consent will take considerable negotiation to enable the family to have a shared understanding of the work that is required. Where parents are unwilling to give consent, the practitioner, in conjunction with their designated safeguarding lead or manager, needs to consider the risk factors to establish whether threshold is met for a Section 47 (child protection) enquiry. If threshold is met for S47, in accordance with the Levels of Need Guidance, parental consent is then not required, but parents should be informed of the change of approach and the reasons for the concerns.

When the involvement of Children's Social Care ends, a robust contingency plan will be devised by the social worker upon closing the case. When appropriate, this will inform a universal service plan.

Role of Agencies

Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. In order that organisations, agencies and practitioners collaborate effectively, it is vital that everyone working with children and families, including those who work with parents/carers, understands the role they should play and the role of other practitioners. They should be aware of, and comply with, the published arrangements set out by the local safeguarding partners.

Effective sharing of information between practitioners and local organisations and agencies is essential for early identification of need, assessment and service provision to keep children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children, which must always be the paramount concern. To ensure effective safeguarding arrangements practitioners should have awareness of the arrangements in place that set out the principles for sharing information (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018).

Information Sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf

What happens at a Child in Need (CIN) Meeting

Timescales:

- A Child in Need meeting is to be held within 10 working days of Manager's Decision for a Child in Need Plan
- Review Meetings will be conducted at intervals agreed with the Social Worker's Team Manager, at least every 6 weeks (30 working days) unless otherwise agreed
- The CIN case will have Team Manager oversight at 16 weeks

Who needs to attend and where it should be:

- Family, (parents/carers & any significant family member wishing to support the family and the Plan) any professional involved (SW, education, Health, police, FSW, youth justice, probation etc.), the child/ren where appropriate
- This can take place in the family's home, school, a local children's centre or a locality office depending on the needs of the situation

What is the purpose of the review?

- The purpose of the Child in Need Review is to monitor the progress of the Plan and the outcomes for the child, to share information between professionals and child/ren and family, to update or revise the Plan as necessary, and to hold to account any party who is not delivering their part of the Plan as agreed. Review meetings will also measure the case

progression against the original risk factors. The process will aim to effectively manage and reduce the level of harm.

- The lived experience of the child should always inform the CIN Plan and there are various tools which can be used in direct work with children that can inform this. In the case of unborn babies, when children in the family are subject to a multi-agency CIN Plan, it is important in the CIN meetings to discuss the impact of the new baby on the family circumstances, and to include the unborn baby on the CIN Plan with specific reference to risks and vulnerabilities.
- When a Child In Need case is due to be closed there must be prior consultation with all professionals involved to seek their views. If a professional wishes to challenge a decision to close a CIN case they must raise this with the allocated social worker, giving their reasons. It is hoped that professional differences of opinion can be resolved in a satisfactory and timely way, however if it is not possible to achieve resolution, professionals are encouraged to use the multi-agency escalation policy located in the Worcestershire section of the West Midlands Safeguarding Children Procedures at: <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/>
- If there is a new concern raised following case closure this should be referred into the contact and referral team via the portal (http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20641/are_you_a_professional_and_worried_about_child). If this is within 3 months and level 4 threshold is met this will be re-opened by the original locality team.

Child in Need closure:

- At the point of case closure, the family and professionals will receive a copy of the child's final Plan. This will outline the ongoing steps to be taken by the family and the support to be offered to them by the agencies involved. It is important that the Plan considers and outlines what action is to be taken if concerns begin to escalate again, so that the right support is put in place at the earliest opportunity.

The Plan should be outcome focused (applies to all plans from Early Help Plans, through to Care Plans for Looked after Children):

- Worcestershire has adopted the Signs of Safety approach for CIN work, where simple language is used, and the Plan is child centred, specific and outcome focused. This will help the family to understand what they need to do so we are no longer so worried, improving the unmet needs of the child/ren, and highlighting successes and what is working well, as well as risks/concerns.
- Meeting/Review, Plan and safety goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely

Process:

Child in Need (meets the threshold for s17)

See Levels of Need guidance:

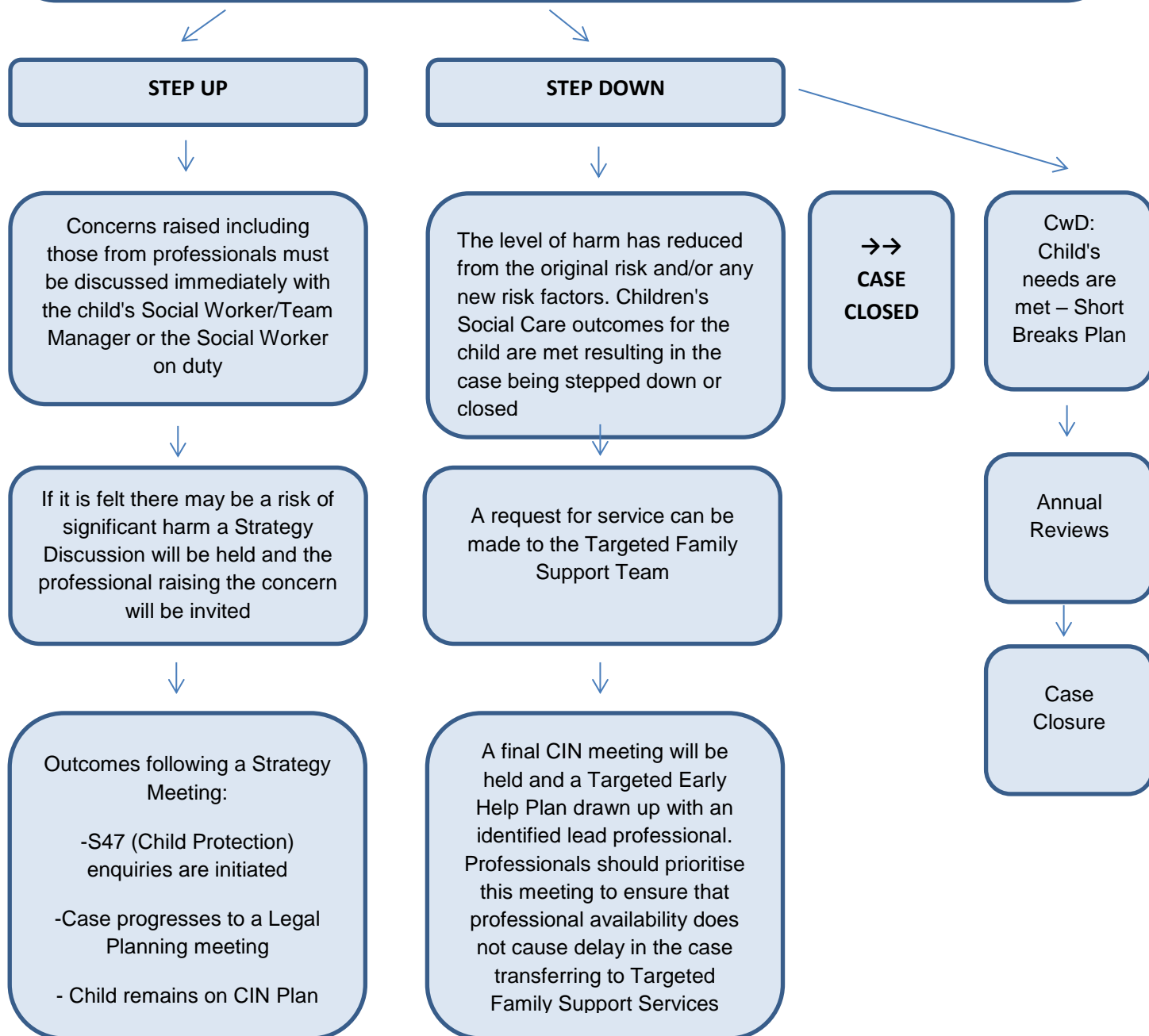
http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/7962/levels_of_need_guidance_formerly_threshold_guidance.

A Child in Need Plan is in place to meet the needs of the child

A Child in Need meeting is held every 6 weeks to progress that Plan

A visit to see the child is made every 6 weeks

A CIN plan will be reviewed at 16 weeks



If you are worried about a child who has not got an allocated SW then you should contact the Family Front Door on 01905 822666. If you are worried about a child who is subject to a Plan then please contact the allocated Social Worker

(If your concern falls out of hours then please contact EDT on 01905 768020)