

Manchester Child in Need Guidance and Procedure

Practice Standard

All open cases must have one of the following plans:

- Children in Need;
- Child Protection;
- Looked After Child; or
- Leaving Care Pathway.

The allocated social worker is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate plan for the child is open, accurate and up to date on the MiCare system.

The child in need (CiN) 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.

Child and Family Engagement

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.

Procedure

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 (CiN) plan must be developed and confirmed at a child in need plan meeting. The plan must be opened on MiCare within 24 hours of the decision to allocate as a child in need case.

When a CiN plan is opened the allocated social worker must arrange a CiN meeting within 10 working days to consider the content and review process for the CiN plan. 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 to engagement in a CiN plan because it is a voluntary service. If consent is not obtained, consideration must be given to how the child's needs will be best met as follows:

- instigate 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 at level 2.

It is an expectation that the child should be subject to a child in need plan for a maximum of 9 months and that this is only extended if it meet specific needs being set out in the CiN plan. The relevant Children's Team Manager will review the case at the 6 months milestone to understand and consider the following:

- What support has been provided and have the objectives of the plan been met?
- Have all actions been completed and progress achieved?
- Is a child in need plan still required, could the child's needs be met through Universal or Targeted Services?

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- What are the next steps and actions that need to be completed?

The Team Manager will provide a decision which is recorded on the child's MiCare case record.

Timescales and Frequency of CiN Meetings

A Child in Need initial meeting must be convened within 10 working days of a decision that the CiN meeting is required. This decision may be made during or on the completion of the Child and Family 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 three months.

In the case of disabled children, the CiN meeting will take place every six months unless it is decided by the Team Manager 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 MSCB Safeguarding Procedures.

It is 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 team manager on a case-by-case basis;
- as frequently as required within the plan but not less than every 20 working days;
- focused on progressing the actions agreed in the CiN plan.

Key Responsibilities

The social work team manager, Grade 8 or social worker may 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 team manager assumes this role. The CiN review meeting will be chaired by the Team Manager.

A social work practitioner is the Lead Professional and they are responsible for the following:

- convening CiN meetings;
- arranging meeting invitations;
- recording the plan agreed updates to the plan;
- circulation of the plan.

The Team Manager must maintain oversight of progress against the child in need plan through supervision and is responsible for monitoring progress of the plan and discussing next steps with the allocated social worker.

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The Locality Manager is responsible for reviewing and approving the extension of all CiN plans over the 9 month period and having arrangements to monitor the progress of these plans.

Key professionals are responsible for their attendance at CiN meetings and their engagement with the plan. They are also responsible for the formulation and implementation of the actions allocated to them within the plan and for ensuring their services are delivered.

Prior to the CiN Meeting

Recording on MiCare should follow the Child in Need workflow.

Arrangements should be made by the allocated social worker to organise the meeting, book a room etc.

Invitations must be sent three weeks in advance of the meeting, the social work practitioner 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 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 completing them. In addition, all decisions and actions agreed are recorded on MiCare. 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:

1. Describe the identified developmental needs of the child and any services required;
2. Include specific, achievable, child-focused outcomes intended to promote and safeguard the welfare of the child;
3. Include realistic strategies and specific actions to achieve the planned outcomes;
4. Include a contingency plan to be followed if circumstances change significantly and require prompt action;

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5. Included timescales that are achievable;
6. Take consideration of the resources required to complete them;
7. 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;
8. Establish points at which progress will be reviewed and the means by which it will be judged.

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.

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.

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 identified that cannot be resolved. 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.

Social Work Task Following the CiN Meeting

The social work practitioner must update the plan within two working days and circulate the updated plan to the family, child/ren and key professionals within five working days. The updated plan must be recorded on MiCare.

If there are any identified issues that were not able to be resolved at the meeting, these should be raised with the social work team manager.

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 team manager and signed by them and again for each subsequent plan review.

Completion of the Children in Need Plan

When the plan is completed, 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.

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Most CiN plans will envisage that Children's Services intervention will end within nine 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. The plan must specify what the case outcome will be and outline the next steps which may include support being provided through FINNIS or Early Help Support.

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 Locality Manager there should be a specific review chaired by the Social Work Team Manager.

The outcome of a CiN review meeting will be:

1. That the child is no longer child in need requiring Children's Social Work Service intervention and the case will be closed to social care, with a recommendation for the next steps (step-down arrangements). Next steps may include support provided by FINNIS;
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 Child and Family Assessment;
4. That the child appears to be significant harm resulting in the need for a strategy discussion meeting and possible section 47 Enquiry.