
A guide to Child In Need

Information for parents and carers



Protection and Support

Every local authority must protect and promote the welfare of children in need in its area.

To do this, it must work with the family to provide support services that will enable children to be brought up within their own families.



Children in need are defined in law in the Children Act 1989, as children who are aged under 18 and:

- need local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development
- need local authority services to prevent significant or further harm to health or development
- are disabled

All families may experience difficulties from time to time for a whole host of reasons, which may affect children if the right help is not provided.



Many families cope with extremely difficult circumstances by receiving support from friends, relatives and services in the community that they already know. However sometimes families require

additional support and may seek help from Children's Services.

This means families seeking help from Children's Services will have differing needs. To help identify who is in need, what those needs are, and how services may be able to help, a social worker is required to work with children and families, and professionals from other services to complete a Child In Need Assessment.

Child In Need Assessment

Child In Need assessments are voluntary. This means that as a parent or carer you do not have to agree to have an assessment. However, the Child In Need assessment aims to find out what extra help and services your child and family need. It is about making sure your child has what they need to be healthy and develop well. Help and services following a Child in Need assessment may not only help now, they can also help prevent needs and difficulties becoming more serious in the future.



If you have any worries or concerns about the Child In Need Assessment, talk them through with the social worker. They should be able to reassure you about the process and provide you further information about what may happen after the assessment. If you refuse the Child In Need Assessment, without having these conversations with the social worker, they may be worried that your child may struggle, and things may get worse. In some circumstances this can mean they will have to consider if there is a need to start a child protection enquiry. However, if you are able to explain your concerns and share information with the social worker, you may also be able to clearly explain how your child's needs can be met in a different way that is agreeable to you all.



Child in Need meeting

Once the assessment is complete, if it is identified that a plan will need to be developed, the social worker will arrange a Child In Need planning meeting. They will discuss with you who is likely to be invited to attend. You will be fully informed and supported to participate in the Child In Need meeting, as your views and wishes are important.

The meeting provides you with the opportunity to be able to:

- give your views about what is happening
- ask your questions
- say what help you think your family needs



You may wish to have help with an interpreter if you speak a different language or you may have special requirements. Please tell the social worker if you do, so that arrangements can be made to help you.

If you have a learning difficulty or disability, you can have an advocate to help you prepare and take part in the meeting. In Solihull this advocacy is provided by [Solihull Action Through Advocacy \(SATA\)](#). You can contact them by emailing office@solihulladvocacy.org.uk or by telephone **0121 706 4696**. An advocate is an independent, trained person who can support you to understand and take part in the meeting. They can help you work out how to express your views and ask your questions, or express them on your behalf if you are unable to. They can also help to ensure your rights are explained to you.



Child In Need plan

Your child's views and wishes are also important, and depending on the consideration of their age and understanding, your child may wish to attend the meeting. They can also have an independent advocate who can support them during the meeting, or meet them before and attend on their behalf. The advocacy service in Solihull is provided by the [National Youth Advocacy Service](#).

At the meeting a summary of the assessment will be shared;

- What is working well
- What people are worried about
- What complicates things

You will then all work together to agree what needs to happen to meet your child's needs and this will form the Child In Need Plan. The plan will include actions, who is going to complete them, when and what the expected result will be once the action has been completed. You will agree a date to meet again and review how things are going.

At the review meeting you will all discuss what contributions have been made to meeting your child's needs as identified in the Child In Need plan, if further needs that have been identified, or there are any issues arising since you last met.

As all families will be seeking help and support for different reasons, there is no specified length of time that this process should take; however, this should be discussed and outlined for each individual family as part of the plan. Some children may need longer term support, for example in relation to a disability, so the plan will need to include this.

Outcomes

You should receive a copy of the plan and a record of the review meetings and updates to the plan.

The outcome of a review could be that:

- Your child no longer requires Children's Services to meet their needs and the family will continue to work with the services they were already involved with
- Your child continues to require Children's Services to progress the actions in the Child in Need Plan;
- There has been no progress/ things have got worse for your child and there is concern that they are experiencing significant harm or the likelihood of significant harm occurring in the future. If this happens the social work manager will hold a discussion with other key professionals, and it is possible there will be a (section 47) child protection enquiry.

If you are unhappy with an individual agency, their performance and the provision or non-provision of services, you should follow the relevant agency's complaints procedure.

For independent information you may wish to contact:

Solihull Citizens Advice – general advice queries **0808 2787 976** open Monday - Friday 10am-2pm

Family Rights Group— A free telephone advice line open Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3pm (excluding Bank Holidays) on **0808 801 0366**.

For Textphone dial **18001** followed by the advice line number. Or you can access their website <https://frg.org.uk/get-help-and-advice/>