

UNDERSTANDING CHILD IN NEED

Background: The Continuum of Need provides a framework where services become increasingly targeted & specialised according to a child's level of need. Children In Need are defined as those under 18 who need support from the Children's Service to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development and/or to prevent significant or further harm to health or development. A Child in Need (CIN) plan can be formulated, with relevant consent, to coordinate services already involved & identify specialist services necessary to promote a child/young person's well being. Children requiring a CIN plan are identified via a social work assessment. CIN is a voluntary service – parents cannot be forced to engage.

Why it matters: If parents decline support and there is no threshold for the Children's Service to step up to child protection, their decision is respected. It is then down to the professionals at the targeted level to proactively engage the family in Early Help support. If this is accepted, it is essential for professionals to ensure clear chronologies are maintained and that plans are outcomes focussed. Serious Case Reviews undertaken in Jersey have highlighted the necessity for timely assessments, clear outcomes focussed CIN plans and robust reviews to measure progress & impact and avoid drift & delay. A shared understanding of CIN plans amongst partner agencies is essential to the success of this process.

Questions to consider: Are the child's needs being met? Has the child had the opportunity to speak and be heard? Have you considered parenting capacity and environmental factors? Do you have a picture of the whole family, including risk & protective factors, needs & strengths? Have you been professionally curious? How is the family coping? Have you considered each child in the family? Have you considered the cumulative impact of little or no change on the child's wellbeing? What support or services have been involved previously?



Information: The Continuum of Need guidance describes potential indicators of concern for children and their families. When properly understood and utilised the Continuum of Need enhances & supports collective understanding of risk, informs professional conversations and aids an understanding of the lived experience of the child. It does not however replace professional judgement. Needs and risks can change rapidly and when new information emerges, advice must be sought and reassessment may be necessary.

What to do: Ensure you are familiar with the thresholds and indicators of need in the SPB's Continuum of Need. Use the Continuum guidance to inform professional conversations both internally and externally so as to improve the quality and consistency of assessments. Ensure your team has access to regular, effective safeguarding supervision and remains focused on the needs of the child. Use the SPB Resolving Professional Differences/Escalation Policy to resolve professional disagreements in relation to the safeguarding needs of children or adults.

CIN reviews are held every 4 to 6 weeks unless significant changes in circumstance require earlier. The social worker leads the review, inviting/seeking the views of the child, parents and any service providers. CIN review outcomes may include a decision to continue with the Plan or, if the child/YP is considered at heightened risk, a Strategy Meeting to consider the need for a child abuse enquiry under Article 42.

A CIN Plan is drawn up following a social work assessment which identifies that the child has needs which requires a coordinated, multi-agency response. The initial plan is drawn up at the first CIN meeting in discussion with parents/carers, the child (dependent on age and level of understanding) and relevant professionals. The Plan must be Specific, Measurable, Attainable Realistic and Time limited (SMART). The social worker is the lead worker and will chair the meetings.