

Briefing in a minute

January 2017

Child in Need Reviews – Involving Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

Ensuring children and families receive the right support at the right time is essential if we are to achieve the best outcomes for children in the city. It is important to remember that all the children we work with are children in need, regardless of the plan they are on and it is possible that they will step up and down across various thresholds during their service journey. As such, strengthening our approach to Children in Need (CIN) not only ensures better outcomes for those children, it also helps us manage demand for in other areas such as child protection and looked after services.

One way we are seeking to strengthen our approach to CIN is through the review process. CIN reviews are ordinarily chaired by Team Managers / Consultant Social Workers (CSW). This will remain the case, but in order to provide a greater degree of independent oversight we have identified extra resource within the Children's Standards Unit (CSSU) to enable IROs to chair some CIN Reviews. This is not about correcting something, but about treating all children with whom we work with equal priority, affording all the same safeguards.

Criteria for IRO Involvement

Cases meeting one or more of the following criteria have been identified as ones which **may** have an IRO involved:

- All cases where the expected trajectory is that the case will close to Children's Social Care (CSC), either as a step down to Team Around the Family (TAF) or universal services **within the next 3 months**.
- All cases where a child's plan steps down to CIN from a second or subsequent Child Protection Plan.
- All cases where the child is receiving support under a CIN plan for the second or subsequent time.
- Children stepping down to CIN from a Looked After Children plan where a Supervision Order is in place.
- All cases where a CSW is the principle case holder for a CIN.

If a case meets the criteria there should be agreement between the Team Manager / CSW and CSSU that the case will be chaired by an IRO. There is also flexibility to allow for IROs to become involved in cases outside the above criteria where that may add value and capacity allows.

It is not just by involving IROs that we are hoping to strengthen our approach. The new review procedure clarifies expectations around partner agency contributions to the process, documentation and review outcomes.

Review procedure

A new CIN review procedure is to be uploaded to our Tri.x procedures in the immediate future. What follows is a summary of the procedure – please refer to the procedure for full details.

Organising reviews

Once the chairing role is agreed the social worker will:

- Liaise with the chair, family members and others to agree a date for the CIN Review.
- Book a suitable venue.
- Invite Care Team Members.

Dates for subsequent reviews should be agreed at the review meeting and should not be changed unless absolutely necessary.

Attendance at Reviews

It is expected that all Care Team Members will attend CIN reviews. Where a professional cannot attend they should try to send a deputy. If professionals cannot attend in person they must provide a written report.

Meetings must not take place without the allocated Social Worker, or a Social Worker / Team Manager who knows the case well

Preparing for reviews

The social worker must provide the following documentation, in full, for all CIN Reviews:

- Minutes of all Care Team meetings.
- Single Assessment - updated as required
- Child's plan.
- Any direct work completed with the child

The social worker is also responsible for requesting reports from other agencies involved in the Care Team.

Identifying cases

If you feel you have a case that meets the above criteria or where IRO involvement may be beneficial you can discuss the case with CSSU once you have Team Manager/ CSW approval. Please see the procedure for further guidance.