



Core Group and Child in Need Meetings

Guidance for
Professionals



This document aims to provide professionals with a comprehensive understanding of their roles and responsibilities in Core Group and Child in Need meetings.



BARNSELY
Metropolitan Borough Council

What are Core Group and Child in Need Meetings?



Children's Social Care intervention with children and their families is defined in law, under the Children Act 1989. Children's Social Care work with families where threshold for intervention has been met at a Child in Need or Child Protection level (S17 or S47 of the Children Act 1989).

Core Groups are held when a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan and Child in Need meetings when a child is subject to a Child in Need Plan.

Child in Need meetings and Core Groups are made up of parents, their support network and relevant professionals and should be the key people supporting the family.

The purpose of the meeting is to review the Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, identifying what is working well and any barriers to change. Professionals have a key role in enabling families to take ownership of their plans and supporting them in developing, implementing and reviewing the plan. There will be times when professionals need to guide and lead on the development of the plan and offer increased oversight, support and intervention to ensure that the plan is effectively addressing the worries.

All members of the meeting are accountable for any actions aligned to them and for progressing these in the timescales identified in the plan.

Signs of Safety



Here in Barnsley, our Stronger Together Practice Model is underpinned by Signs of Safety framework. At the heart of the Signs of Safety process is a risk assessment and case planning format that is meaningful for children, their families and networks and the professionals supporting them.

Every meeting will start by sharing the danger statements and safety goals and use the scaling questions to review the progress of the safety plan.

Families and their network will map the progress made and identify any new worries and positives in their lives, with the support of the professional team. Together they will also identify if there is any additional support that could help them.



When and where will the meetings take place?

All meetings should be held in premises that are comfortable, accessible to all and that allow for privacy.



Core Group

Core Groups are a statutory meeting. At the Initial Child Protection Conference the outline plan will be agreed and the conference chair will identify the Core Group members.

A date, time and venue for the first Core Group meeting will be agreed at the end of the initial conference. All Core Group members should ensure that they share contact details with other members at the outset of the first Core Group meeting. Core Group members should take equal responsibility for knowing when the next meeting will take place and ensuring that they attend.

Child Protection procedures state that the first Core Group must take place within 10 working days of the initial case conference and then subsequently every 28 days. To avoid drift, meetings must be arranged in advance, with the next date being identified at the Core Group meeting.

All Core Group members should share the chairing and recording of the meeting.

Child in Need Meetings

Child in Need meetings are held when a child is assessed to be in need of services, under S17 of the Children Act. The outline Child in Need Plan is developed by the assessing social worker and is based on the analysis and outcome of their assessment. This plan will be shared and agreed at the first CIN meeting.

Child in Need meetings will take place a minimum of every 6 weeks and should be planned in advance to avoid drift.





Who are the members of a meeting?

The members of a meeting may vary depending on the needs and circumstances of the child and family, but they usually include:

- The child, if they are old enough and willing to participate.
- The parents or carers of the child.
- Wider family or friends who provide support to the family and are part of the family plan.
- The social worker.
- The midwife, health visitor and/or school nurse who is the health representative.
- The teacher or early years practitioner who is the education representative.
- Any other professionals who are involved in providing services or support to the child and/or family, such as a family support worker, a therapist, a police officer, or mental health worker.




What are the roles and responsibilities of the meeting members?



What is the first thing I need to do as a meeting member?

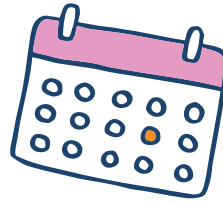
- It is the responsibility of every member to ensure that they have the dates of meetings and that these are prioritised.
- Line managers should be informed about meetings. They should also support staff to prioritise attending meetings, and follow up agreed actions.

What will happen at the first meeting?

- Meetings can be daunting for families and all professionals have a responsibility to support the family and enable them to engage in the meeting.
 - At the first meeting introductions should be undertaken, with professionals being clear about their professional role and involvement with the family.
 - At the first meeting the plan must be finalised and agreed.
 - By the end of the first meeting all attendees, in particular the family, should be clear about the tasks they are responsible for, the expected outcomes and the timescales aligned to these.
- 



What other responsibilities do I have as a member?



Attendance at meetings is crucial. If a professional cannot attend, a representative from the agency should be identified to attend in their absence. Only in exceptional circumstances, and with line manager agreement, should a written report be submitted in the absence of a representative. Apologies should be sent to the social worker and it is the responsibility of the absent professional to ensure that the date of the next meeting is sought.



For plans to progress it is vital that all meeting members participate fully and demonstrate their commitment to the child and family.

Families should be supported to lead their meetings, and encouraged to play as active a role as they feel able to. This may include chairing their own meeting. We do recognise that this may be daunting for some families.

There is an expectation that one member chair the meeting and another take a note of the meeting. Both tasks cannot be undertaken effectively and robustly at the same time. At the beginning of each meeting, members should determine who chairs the meeting and who will take the minutes.

These tasks should be shared amongst meeting members as each person has a significant role and an equal responsibility towards the production, implementation and progress of the plan.

There is a standardised template meeting agenda, you can find the QR code to download this on the back page of this booklet. All members of the meeting will be required to have a copy to refer to within the meeting.

The individual writing the minutes should provide a written copy to the social worker within five days. The social worker will be responsible for disseminating the minutes along with the agreed updates to the plan to all meeting members including the family.



The social worker, as Lead Professional, should be in attendance at each meeting. A Core Group should not progress without a social worker present. For Child in Need meetings however, if an unavoidable situation arises and the social worker cannot attend, the meeting should still proceed following the agreed format.

There should be **one** shared and agreed set of minutes for all agency records.

In reviewing progress on the plan, meeting members should ensure they are both measuring work done (activity) and measuring outcomes (results) for the child.

Information Sharing/Consent



You do not need consent to share personal information about a child and/or members of their family if a child is at risk or there is a perceived risk of harm. However, it is good practice to seek consent and to ensure information shared is discussed with parent(s)/carer(s).

Working with Social Care under Child in Need is not statutory and is voluntary for families. Parents can withdraw consent at any time by speaking with the social worker. If parents do withdraw consent, then the social worker will encourage

All members have a responsibility to be accountable for actions and to hold others to account for theirs.

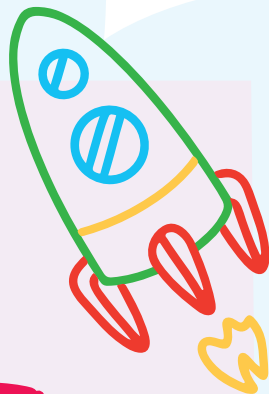
All Core Group/Child in Need members should assess the progress that is being made and where progress is not being made consider next steps, including escalation.

All Core Group/Child in Need members have a responsibility to be open and honest with parents and carers about expectations and offer support if there are barriers to parents/carers achieving change.

engagement and try to support parents to work with the plans but if Children's Social Care determine that the worries are such that the child/children are at risk of significant harm they will consider whether an escalation to a strategy discussion is required.

In Barnsley Social Care we work to building positive working relationships with families to help reduce escalation of concerns and recognise that this can only be done by working with families to identify their support network and help parents and children to be at the centre of all planning.

Key resources:



Find out about the **Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures** and other policies on our website.



Scan the QR code or visit our **Child Protection meeting template** to download the standardised templated meeting agenda.

