

Education & Children's Services

REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S CASES

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1. Policy Aim

Reviews help ensure that a child/young person's welfare is safeguarded and promoted in the most effective way throughout their period of being looked after.

The purpose of reviews are –

- To help ensure that children who are looked after are given the opportunity to improve and maximise their life choices
- To gather information about the child's progress and care
- To consult with the child/young person's parents, those with parental responsibility and carers
- To discuss information and to amend plans accordingly
- To confirm or make decisions about the child's care plan
- To identify actions needed, persons to undertake them and timescales.

This is achieved by –

- Ensuring that day-to-day arrangements are meeting the child/young person's needs
- Ensuring that the overall Care Plan/Pathway Plan focuses more on the long term arrangements for the child / young person's future and is still appropriate
- Ensuring that the child / young persons education is effectively promoted and that their Personal Education Plan (PEP) is being followed
- Ensuring that the child/young person has the same standard of health care as other children of the same age living in the same area.

Every Child Matters Outcomes

Be Healthy

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to be and remain healthy

Stay Safe

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to stay safe. Steps are taken to minimise the incidence of child abuse and neglect

Enjoy and Achieve

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy all aspects of their life and achieve, to their potential within it

Make a Positive Contribution

Children who are looked after are helped to make positive contributions within the community and wider environment

Achieve Economic Well-Being

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to achieve economic wellbeing, including accessing appropriate education training and employment

2. Legislation, Central Government and other External Documents References

Children Act 1989

Sections 26(1) & (2), 59(4)(a)&(5)
Schedule 6 - Paragraph 10(1) &(2)(1)

Review of Children's Cases (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2004

Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991

Children (Short-Term Placement) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1995

Foster Placement (Children) Regulations 1991

Children Act Guidance Vol. 3

3. Policy

3.1 *Guiding Principles for Reviews*

(Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance 2004 – Grimshaw and Sinclair 1997)

What have been the outcomes of the last review?

Is a new assessment of need called for?

Has the care plan been called into question by developments?

Do its objectives need to be reformulated? Or, is it a question of choosing new means to achieve the same ends?

How integrated does the new care plan now appear?

How is the principle of sensitive, open and shared planning being upheld?

How cogent is the planning process?

How is the current planning process being recorded so that it can be monitored as part of a flexible but continuous long term process?

- 3.2 The IRO must ensure that the review process, and particularly review meetings, remain child and family centred. The IRO should ensure that the right steps have been taken so that the child can make a meaningful contribution to their review. The IRO should also ensure that the views of the birth parents are heard at the review meeting, even if the parents are unable to attend, or if their attendance is not appropriate. Wider family may also wish to contribute to the review and the IRO should ensure that the views of significant adults in the child's life are heard. Where the child's first language is not English, the IRO should ensure that appropriate steps are taken to enable the child to participate fully in the review process. An independent interpreter may be needed to help with this. Similarly, IROs should be satisfied that disabled children's contributions are obtained and effectively presented in the review.

3.3 *Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991*

Local authorities are required to review the case of each child while they are Looked After or provided with accommodation. Each case is **first to be reviewed within 28 days** of the date upon which the child begins to be looked after or provided with accommodation. **A second review must be carried out no later than 3 months** after the first review and **thereafter subsequent reviews shall be carried out not more than 6 months after the date of the previous review.** The frequency of reviews above is the minimum standard, however a review of the child's case should take place as often as the circumstances of the independent cases requires. If the need arises for substantial changes to the plan (eg. sudden placement breakdown, change of care plan) then the date of the next review should be brought forward. Also if the IRO directs that a review should be brought forward then this must occur.

- 3.4 The Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991, Schedule 1 sets out the elements to be included in a review. Slough Borough Council must adhere to the following -

1. Keep informed of the arrangements for looking after the child and of any relevant change in the child's circumstances.
2. Keep informed of the name and address of any person whose views should be taken into account in the course of the review.
3. Make necessary preparations and provide any relevant information to the participants in any meeting of Slough Borough Council which considers the child's case in connection with any aspect of the review.
4. Initiate meetings of relevant personnel of Slough Borough Council and other relevant persons to consider the review of the child's case.
5. Explain to the child any steps which he may take under the Act including, where appropriate-
 - (a) their right to apply, with leave, for a section 8 order (residence, contact and other orders with respect to children),
 - (b) their right to apply for the discharge of the care order, and
 - (c) the availability of the procedure established under the Act for considering representations.

6. Make decisions or taking steps following review decisions arising out of or resulting from the review.

3.5 Slough Borough Council is required to have regard to the following matters –

1. In the case of a child who is in care, whether an application should be made to discharge the care order.
2. Whether they should consider seeking a change in the child's legal status.
3. Arrangements for contact, and whether there is any need for changes in the arrangements in order to promote contact with the child's family and others so far as is consistent with his welfare.
4. Any special arrangements that have been made or need to be made for the child, including the carrying out of assessments either by a local authority or other persons, such as those in respect of special educational need under the Education Act 1981.
5. Slough Borough Council's immediate and long term arrangements for looking after the child or providing the child with accommodation (made pursuant to the provisions of the Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1991), whether a change in those arrangements is needed and consideration of alternative courses of action.
6. Whether an independent visitor should be appointed if one has not already been appointed.
7. The child's educational needs, progress and development.
8. Whether arrangements need to be made for the time when the child will no longer be looked after or provided with accommodation by the Council.
9. Whether plans need to be made to find a permanent substitute family for the child.

3.6 Health Reviews

Arrangements must be made for the Looked After child to be provided with health care services, including medical, dental and optical care. Slough Borough Council must make arrangements for a child who continues to be looked after or provided with accommodation to be examined by a registered medical practitioner and for a written assessment on the state of health of the child and his need for health care to be made-

- (a) at least once in every period of six months before the child's fifth birthday, and
- (b) at least once in every period of twelve months after the child's fifth birthday, unless the child is of sufficient understanding and he refuses to submit to the examination.

3.7 Slough Borough Council is required to have regard to the following health considerations –

1. The child's state of health (including mental health).
2. The child's health history.
3. The effect of the child's health and health history on his development.
4. Existing arrangements for the child's medical and dental care and

- treatment and health and dental surveillance.
5. The possible need for an appropriate course of action, which should be identified to assist necessary change of such care, treatment or surveillance.
 6. The possible need for preventive measures, such as vaccination and immunisation, and screening for vision and hearing.

3.8 **Education**

Under the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, Slough Borough Council has a duty to promote the educational attainment of children and young people in their care.

Guidance on Education of Children and Young People in Public Care - 2000
Slough Borough Council is required -

- To ensure that each child who is looked after has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is initiated within 20 days of them becoming Looked After, in time for the first Review meeting. The PEP should be reviewed within 3 months and thereafter every six months concurrently with the child's care plan. The PEP must be completed in partnership with the child / young person, designated teacher, parent and / or relatives, carer or any other person that may be relevant.
- To ensure that a looked after child (LAC) is in appropriate full time education within 20 days of becoming Looked After.
- To ensure all LAC aged 3-5 years in nursery education should have a Pre-School PEP in place.
- To ensure that young people aged 16-17 should have a Pathway Plan which addresses educational and employment opportunities and assistance relating to these should continue until they are 21 years old or if completing education or training until the age of 24.
- To be mindful that repeated changes of schools and of placement are damaging to a child. School can provide the one source of continuity and stability.
- To be mindful that securing an educational placement is one of the main criteria which must be used in identifying suitable care placement for a child / young person. A child / young person should not move care placement until a school placement is secured.
- To ensure that young people who are looked after are given encouragement and the opportunity to complete appropriate examinations. For example, 60% of LAC in Yr 6 should achieve level 4 in KS2 SATs and all LAC in mainstream education should take at least 1 GCSE or equivalent.
- To monitor and track the educational achievement of looked after children and young people.
- To ensure that every LAC has access to appropriate and up to date books, toys and ICT equipment to support educational development.
- To ensure that LAC have opportunities to engage in out of school hours learning and activities.

4 Procedure

4.1 **Consultation, participation and notification**

Before conducting any review Slough Borough Council must, unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so, seek and take into account the views of-

- (a) the child;
- (b) his parents;
- (c) any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility them; and
- (d) any other person whose views the authority consider to be relevant; including, in particular, the views of those persons in relation to any particular matter which is to be considered in the course of the review.

4.2 The child / young person should also be consulted with regard to those who they would wish to invite to the review and as to the most appropriate venue. Where it is reasonably practical to do so, the above persons should be involved in the review. Where appropriate, those persons shall attend part or all of meeting to consider the review of that child's care plan and the details of the result of the review and of any decision taken should be notified to them.

4.3 Each local authority shall ensure that the following is recorded in writing -
(a) information obtained in respect of the review of a child's care plan,
(b) details of the proceedings at any meeting arranged by the authority at which the child's care plan is considered in connection with any aspect of the review of that plan, and
(c) details of any decisions made in the course of or as a result of the review.

4.4 *Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991* apply to cases where the child is Looked After or provided with accommodation for a series of short periods at the same place where the following conditions are satisfied-
(a) all the periods are included within a period which does not exceed one year;
(b) no single period is for a duration of more than four weeks; and
(c) the total duration of the periods does not exceed 90 days.

4.5 Cases to which this regulation applies may be treated as a single case of a child being Looked After or provided with accommodation by a responsible authority for the purpose of these Regulations.

4.6 **Changes of the Care Plan / Pathway Plan**

The Care Plan can only be changed at a Review Meeting unless agreed at the previous review meeting. Any changes to the Care Plan (relating to the overall plan) and any other major changes will require the Review date to be brought forward. The Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) can be consulted over what constitutes a major or minor change and whether or not an early review is necessary. Parents, children and young people should be consulted on a regular basis as to whether they consider the need for additional reviews. Such requests for additional reviews should be given serious consideration.

Action: Social Worker/Personal Advisor / Independent Reviewing Officer

Form: Care Plan/Pathway Plan

4.7 Frequency of reviews

The minimum frequency for reviews is as follows:

- The first review of the Care Plan for the child/young person must be held within 28 days of the placement
- Next review within 3 months of the first review
- Subsequent Reviews will take place at intervals of no more than 6 months.

This cycle will be repeated anytime a child/young person changes placement. All Looked After Children / young people receiving more than 24 hours care would be subject to the review process. The only exception to this is for one off activity breaks.

Action: Social Worker / Independent Reviewing Officer

4.8 Prior to a Review

If a child is to change school on placement, then prior to any placement being made an education placement should be identified for that child. Such a placement should be identified within 20 school days of a child changing placement.

Action: Social Worker / Education

- 4.9 All appropriate Looked After Children (LAC) paperwork should be completed on the day the child becomes looked after and copies given to relevant people.

Action: Social Worker

Forms: EIR 1 and 2, Placement Plan 1 & 2, Care Plan.

- 4.10 Parents or those with parental responsibility to be requested to complete health consent forms to enable health information to be shared. These to be sent to LAC Nurse within 5 days of a child becoming looked after to ensure that a Statutory Health Review can be arranged.

Action: Social Worker

Forms: LAC Health Consent Forms

- 4.11 The local education, health and other local authorities (where a child is placed outside of Slough) must be notified that a child has become Looked After. These should be sent within 5 days of a child becoming looked after.

Action: Social Worker

Forms: Standard letters to Education, Health and other Local Authorities.

- 4.12 The child / young person should be visited within the first 7 days of placement, at the placement. (This is also applicable where a child changes a placement.)

Action: Social Worker

- 4.13 Contact arrangements for the child / young person with parents (those with parental responsibility) / family (if appropriate) / relevant others (if appropriate) should be planned and agreed.

Action: Social Worker

- 4.14 Looked After Children's Education Services (LACES) to be informed within 3 days that a child has become looked after, giving details of care and education placements.

Action: Social Worker
Forms: Notification letter to LACES.

- 4.15 Where a child young person is under 16 years, a PEP meeting to be arranged and to include, child / young person, parent / person with parental responsibility, carer, school, designated teacher for LAC, and LACES within 20 days of a child / young person becoming looked after.

Action: Social Worker

- 4.16 ***Setting Up A Review Meeting***

First Review – with 28 days of a child becoming Looked After.
Social Worker to inform Review Team as soon as a child becomes Looked After and to complete 'Information of a Child who has become Looked After'.

Action: Social Worker
Form: Information of a Child who has become Looked After.

- 4.17 Leaflet to be sent to parents and children containing information about upcoming review. Following consultation with the child/young person regarding review meeting attendees and venue, **Social Worker** should complete invitation for Review Form and send to Review Team at least 3 weeks prior to review to enable invitation to be sent out. Consultation with the child/young person must consider whether they want the Child Advocacy worker with them (Voice of the child in care) for the review.

Action: Social Worker
Form: Invitation for Review Form

- 4.18 Social Workers must complete LAC Review of Arrangements Form Part 1 in

consultation with the child / young person, parent or other appropriate person who may have parental responsibility, and other professionals. This report should be shared with parent/ those with parental responsibility / child or young person before the review meeting. It should also be given to the IRO a minimum of 2 working days before the review.

Action: Social Worker

Form: Review of Arrangements Form Part 1

- 4.19 Social Workers must also ensure that copies of the completed Care Plan (including Personal Education Plan (PEP), Health Care Plan, and if appropriate Pathway Plan) are given to the IRO, 2 working days prior to the Review.

Action: Social Worker

Forms: Care Plan / Pathway Plan / Personal Education Plan / Health Care Plan

- 4.20 Social Worker must update the Essential Information Records 1 & 2 and Placement Plan Part 1 & 2 prior to the Review Meeting. These should be available to the IRO, 2 working days prior to the Review Meeting.

Action: Social Worker

Forms: Essential Information 1&2 / Placement Plan Part 1 & 2

- 4.21 If appropriate children and young people to be assisted in completing 'Consultation Form for Children who are Looked After ' and other relevant forms. If appropriate, they are given guidance on accessing viewpoint.

Action: Social Worker

Form: Consultation form for Looked after children.

- 4.22 Review Team will ensure that invitation and consultation documents are sent to appropriate attendees. (This can only be undertaken if the 'Information for Looked After Children' / 'Invitation to Review' forms are completed).

Action: Review Team / Social Worker

Form: LAC Consultation Documents (for parents / child / young person / carer/ person with parental responsibility).

- 4.23 Education report to be requested for review.

Action: Social Worker

4.24 ***Subsequent Review Meetings***

Review Team will send out invitations and distribute consultation document for subsequent reviews. The Social Worker must complete the invitation form at least 3 weeks prior to the review.

Action: Review Team / Social Worker
Form: Consultation Documents / Invitations

- 4.25 Date, time and venue for subsequent reviews are set in the previous review meeting and in agreement with those present.

Action: IRO

- 4.26 Social Worker must complete a Review of Arrangements Form Part 1 and ensure that it is shared with the child / young person and with the relevant IRO a minimum of 2 working days prior to the Review.

Action: Social Worker
Form: Review of Arrangements Part 1

- 4.27 Social Worker / 16+ Adviser to update Care Plan / Pathway Plan which will be discussed at the review and these should be available to the IRO at least 2 working days prior to review with Personal Education Plan and Health Care Plan if these have been updated since the last review.

Action: Social Worker
Forms: Care Plan / Pathway Plan / Health Care Plan / Personal Education Plan

- 4.28 A permanency plan (as appropriate) should be drawn up for all Looked After Children / Young People at the four-month review. The National Adoption Standards for England require that a child's need for a permanent home will be addressed at the 4 month review and a plan for permanence made. As soon as adoption becomes the plan or part of the plan, refer to the Permanency Planning Practice Guide.

Action: Social Worker
Forms: Permanency Planning Practice Guide

- 4.29 If a child is placed at home, Placement with Parents Regulations should also be completed and this should be undertaken if the plan is for reunification with parents, before a child is returned home. If a child is subject to an Interim Care Order or Care Order, Placement With Parents Regulations apply.

Action: Social Worker
Forms: Essential Information Part 1&2 / Placement Plan Parts 1 & 2 / Care Plan / Placement with Parents Regulations.

- 4.30 Children and Young People should be able to actively participate in their reviews.

"Professionals have a responsibility to facilitate this and this can only

happen in a climate that encourages children/young people's ongoing involvement and empowerment." (Quality Protects Research)

Reviews should be a positive experience for children/young people and not a forum for criticism.

Prior to the review, the Social Worker **must** meet with the child / young person to discuss the following:

- Who should be invited to the review – for part or whole attendance?
- Who should be asked to provide a written report
- Where the review is to take place. The date and time should be appropriate to them
- The child / young person's agenda for the review
- Providing help, if required, in completing the consultation paper. The consultation paper can also be completed on Viewpoint.

Action: Social Worker

Forms: Consultation Paper/ Review of Arrangements Part 1

- 4.31 The Social Worker must also meet with parents prior to the review:
- Share their report and the report of any other participants
 - To discuss parents agenda for the review
 - To explore whether parents require help in completing consultation forms and to identify where this help will come from.

Action: Social Worker

Forms: Consultation Paper / Review of arrangements Part 1

- 4.32 IROs will offer to meet with the child / young person immediately prior to the Review Meeting (ie. same day and venue) to ensure that the child / young person's agenda for the review is clear and to discuss any particular issues they may or may not want discussed at the review. In exceptional circumstances the IRO may be able to meet with the child / young person on an alternative date prior to the review.

Action: IRO / Social Worker

- 4.33 IROs will offer to meet with the parents / other relatives / those with parental responsibility immediately prior to the Review Meeting (ie. same day and venue) to ensure that any particular issues they may or may not want discussed at the review, if appropriate, forms a part of the agenda. In exceptional circumstances, the IRO may be able to meet with the parent / other relatives on an alternative date prior to the review

Action: IRO / Social Worker

- 4.34 ***Venue for Reviews***

The review should take place in the most conducive surroundings for the child / young person and if possible of their choosing. The child / young person, parents (or person with parental responsibility) and carers should be consulted on this. Reviews may be held at the parents home (if child is placed at home), carers home, young person's accommodation or a variety of local authority or other settings.

Action: Social Worker

- 4.35 The Social Worker must alert the IRO of any special considerations regarding the venue when they contact them to book the Review Meeting.

Action: Social Worker

- 4.36 Attendance at the Review Meeting should be carefully considered and negotiated with the child / young person beforehand. The attendees and for what part of the meeting they are to attend must be with the agreement of the child / young person. Attendance for part or all of the Review should be restricted as far as possible to the child, parent(s) or persons with parental responsibility, carers and their supervising social worker, social worker and other significant adults with a contribution to make. The list of other people to consider inviting / or requesting a written report includes:

- Team Manager
- Designated Teacher
- Children's Rights and Advocacy Worker
- 16+ Team

Action: Social Worker / Personal Adviser

- 4.37 The content of the review should be carefully considered. It may be more appropriate for certain persons to attend only part of the review meeting. This should be negotiated with the child / young person and the IRO.

Action: Social Worker / IRO

- 4.38 Where appropriate a written contribution rather than attendance in person should be requested. Children / young people of sufficient age and understanding should always be helped and encouraged to attend and participate as fully as they are able. This is their review and can have a huge impact on their lives. It is crucial they feel able to contribute.

Action: Social Worker / All

- 4.39 ***Consultation Papers***

It is sometimes easy for those involved in Review Meetings to forget that they

can be confusing and intimidating for others, especially the child / young person. The Consultation Papers are just one of a number of steps that staff should take to help the child / young person, parents and others to feel more able and equipped to participate in the discussions and decision making which affects their lives. The LAC Consultation Papers seek the view of specific individuals in preparation for the Review Meeting and should be available to them at least 2 weeks before the Review Meeting date.

Action: Social Worker / IRO

Form: Consultation Documents

- 4.40 Children / young people should be encouraged, but not pressured to complete their Consultation Documents before the Review meeting. Their carers or Social Worker should offer help (if needed). They should also be given information and support that will enable them to access viewpoint if this is preferable.

Action: Social Worker / Carers

- 4.41 In some cases, the age or the disability of the child/young person may make written documents prepared by the child less useful. In these cases it is even more important that the view and the wishes of the child are ascertained. This will also be the case where English is not the child / young person's first language. Every effort should be made to enable the child / young person to communicate their wishes and feelings. If necessary, an interpreter (including sign language) should be employed to facilitate good communication and the child / young person's full participation.

Action: Social Worker

- 4.42 In all cases parents / person(s) with parental responsibility should be given the opportunity to complete Consultation Documents and to have them considered at the Review Meeting, even when a decision has been taken not to invite them. We have a legal responsibility to consult all parties with parental responsibility.

Action: Social Worker / IRO

- 4.43 It is important to provide help for parents / those with parental responsibility in completing the Consultation Document or to find alternative ways of involving parents' views when they have a disability, or where English is not their first language.

Action: Social Worker

- 4.44 Carers should be encouraged to complete their Consultation Document and to participate fully in the Review Meeting. However, the Review should not be used to raise or deal with issues that are more properly dealt with as they arise.

Action: Social Worker / Social Worker Fostering

- 4.45 Residential staff and foster carers may prefer to provide a fuller written report before the Review Meeting

Action: Residential Social Worker / Carers

4.46 ***The Review Meeting***

The Review of Arrangements form details issues that must be considered at every Review Meeting. Further issues for discussion can be added to this at the beginning of the Review Meeting.

Form: Review of Arrangements.

- 4.47 The IRO should note the Record of Discussions and Review Decisions during the Review. Recording should be brief and to the point, avoiding unnecessary length and detail, ensuring that it is written in a way that is child friendly and easily understood by the child / young person for which the Review is being held.

Action: IRO

- 4.48 At the initial 28 day review, the date for the venue for the following (4 month) Review will be set with those present.

Action: IRO

4.49 ***After the Review Meeting***

After the Review Meeting, the IRO completes Part 2 of the Review of Arrangements Form and this should be distributed for circulation within 14 days. Any action agreed in the Review Meeting is to be taken as soon as possible/or by agreed date, or at a very minimum by the next review meeting.

Action: IRO / Review Team

4.50 ***Assessment and Action Records***

The intention of the Assessment and Action Record is to encourage children / young people who are Looked After to contribute as much as possible to discussions about issues that are central to their well being, while at the same time ensuring that the progress of each Looked After Child / young person is adequately monitored. The focus of the Assessment and Action Record is to ensure that the child / young person and the carers are receiving additional support if it is required and the child / young person is making developmental progress. It is a crucial document in the care planning and assessment process and should be completed after the child / young person has been Looked After for 6 months. It is also a crucial record in the child / young person's life in the

Looked After System and provides them with historical details for their future reference.

- 4.51 The decision as to whether the Assessment and Action Record will be necessary will be made at the second review (after 4 months). The Care Plan will identify at this point if the child is likely to remain Looked After beyond 6 months. In some cases it will be clear at an earlier point and the Assessment and Action Record can be started sooner. Where an Assessment and Action Record is being or has been completed, the summary pages will be considered at the Review Meeting.

Action: Social Worker

Form: Assessment and Action Record

4.52 ***Monitoring Between Reviews***

The IROs will monitor the decisions and actions made at reviews bi-monthly. They will send the relevant social worker the decisions and action sheet from reviews previously held with a request to identify the date they completed the agreed actions or to briefly state why it has yet to be undertaken. This response needs to be completed and returned to the IRO within 5 working days.

Action: IRO / Social Worker

4.53 ***Significant Events Between Reviews***

Social Workers must keep IROs informed of significant events between Reviews. IROs should be forwarded copies of relevant documents or minutes relating to these significant events. These should include, minutes of legal meetings, permanency planning meetings and any other relevant meetings with regard to the child /young person's care plan.

4.54 ***Referral To CAF/CASS***

The Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Adoption & Children Act 2002) states –

“In cases where the IRO identifies poor practice, they will negotiate with the local authority management up to the highest level, and will have, as a last resort, the power to refer a case to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAF/CASS).

If all methods of resolving the identified problem have proved or are proving unsuccessful and there is a danger of the child's human rights being breached, the IRO will have to consider whether they should use their power to refer a case to CAF/CASS so that legal proceedings can be brought to achieve a remedy”.

In the first instance, the IRO will attempt to resolve a problem concerning the child's care plan by negotiation, including:

- Discussion with the team responsible for the child (including Team and Practice Manager).
- If this proves unsuccessful, the IRO will discuss the case with the appropriate Group Manager.
- If this also proves unsuccessful the IRO will then discuss the case with the Assistant Director and the Director and ultimately with the Chief Executive.

If satisfactory resolution is not obtained after the above action, the IRO may, in exceptional circumstances, refer the case to CAFCASS who will consider legal action. When a problem is identified the IRO will discuss the issue with their line manager to keep them informed and to identify the timescale in which the problem should be resolved and to ensure this is made clear to the local authority at each stage of the resolution process.

5. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Review Team on a yearly basis on the date specified on page 1 of this policy.

Appendix 1 : Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

From Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance 2004 –

“The IRO [Independent Reviewing Officer] will improve care planning and decision making and make an important contribution to the consistency of the local authority’s approach. Review meetings will be efficiently chaired by the IRO with the full involvement of the child and key adults in decision-making processes. The IRO will help provide effective care planning for looked after children by ensuring that review meetings take place in accordance with the required timescales and care plans are implemented effectively.

The IRO will ensure that the developmental needs of the child are identified and met through the care planning and review process. The IRO will have a crucial role in ensuring that looked after children are properly safeguarded wherever they live and in securing a timely and appropriate route to permanence arrangements.”

The IRO must be –

- a. independent of the management of the child’s case and
- b. independent of the resources allocated to that case.

The Independent Reviewing Officer’s (IRO) has a key role in the following –

- *Chairing the review meetings*
Chairing enables the IRO to monitor the appropriateness of the care plan, its implementation, and to establish whether the milestones set out in the plan are being achieved in a timely way. The IRO will decide on what actions, in principal, are necessary to meet the child’s reviewed needs and may make recommendations as to how these should be achieved. The IRO is to check that the local authority has made the appropriate arrangements to ensure that the actions take place.
- *Monitoring the local authority’s functions in respect of the review*
It is important for the IRO to have a collaborative relationship with social work staff and management with the responsibility for ongoing care planning for the children in the care of the local authority.
- *Timing of review meetings*
An IRO can direct that the date of the next review meeting (as set out in regulation) be brought forward if substantial changes are required to the care plan before the intended scheduled date of the review.