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**Monitoring the case on an ongoing basis**

Protocol for IROs to evidence their on-going oversight and scrutiny of a child’s care plan

**August 2023**



**Background:**

The IRO Handbook extended the IRO’s responsibilities for monitoring the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to a child’s **review** to monitoring the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to a child’s **case**. The purpose of this was to ‘enable the IRO to have an effective independent oversight of the child’s case and ensure that the child’s interests are protected throughout the care planning process’.

The IRO’s primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child and ensure that care plans are based on up-to-date assessments of the child’s needs. The IRO also has a responsibility to ensure that the child’s current wishes and feelings are given full consideration and reflected within the care plan and care planning process, and that there is no drift or delay in progressing the plans for them.

Between reviews, if the care plan continues to meet the needs of the child there may be no need for any communication between the IRO and social worker or the child. However, in the event of a change / event in the child’s life that is significant, the social worker **must** inform the IRO.

A list of circumstances / situations that social workers must inform the IRO about is documented in the IRO Handbook (page 30).

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this protocol is to support the IRO in their responsibility of evidencing their on-going oversight and scrutiny of a child’s care plan – ensuring this is a transparent process for all concerned.

**Process:**

Although not documented explicitly in the IRO Handbook there is an expectation that the IRO will ensure that the recommendations / decisions of a child’s review will be checked by the IRO prior to any subsequent review taking place. IRO’s therefore are expected to carry out a midway monitoring meeting and complete a “**Monitoring the case on an on-going basis”** form in Mosaic as evidence of this meeting which helps to establish the IRO footprint in the child’s record. The midway monitoring meeting will be held 6 weeks following each child’s review and will involve a discussion with the social worker to check on the progress of the decisions made in the meeting as well as an opportunity to be brought up to date with any significant developments or incidents involving the child or the plans for them. Wherever possible or appropriate, the IRO may speak to the child, carer, and parents as part of the midway monitoring process.

This procedure will not replace the active monitoring of specific cases where the IRO has identified issues relating to drift and delay. These concerns will continue to be managed within our existing quality assurance and resolution processes, and where IRO’s have a concern about delay, difficulties in the planning process, or specific concerns about a child, such as frequent missing episodes, emotional well-being, harm outside the home for example, additional midway monitoring meetings will take place or an IRO resolution raised.

The Midway Monitoring is not an audit. It is an opportunity for “touching base”, an evidenced-based dialogue between the IRO and social worker (and if required with the responsible team manager) to ensure that care planning is on track.

Where necessary this will enable the IRO to have the opportunity to challenge and resolve any identified concerns at an earlier stage and avoid delay caused by not reviewing the progress of decisions made between one review and the next which might not happen for anything up to six months. It also allows for review and reflection on the care planning taking place, impact on or for the child, and earlier consideration of anything that potentially may cause delay.