

# Bristol City Council Children's Services

## Practice Direction to improve the timeliness of Children in Care Reviews

Practice Directions are supported by:

- Working Together 2023
- South West Child Protection Procedures
- Bristol Children's Services' Quality Assurance Framework
- The Independent Reviewing Officer Handbook 2010  
[iro statutory guidance iros and las march 2010 tagged.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

**Objective:** The aims of Practice Directions are to provide clarity of any change of expectations in practice OR clarity on elements of practice where there may be confusion. Practice Directions are intended for practitioners and managers. Practice Directions also enable an audit trail of change in practice expectations to be maintained.

**Process:** Children's Management Team will consider and approve Practice Directions. The Principal Social Worker will issue and ensure that Practice Directions are entered onto Tri-X.

**Practice Change: To improve the timeliness of Children in Care Reviews and ensure they remain in statutory timescales:**

- Children in Care reviews are an essential statutory meeting supporting permanency and care planning for children in care. Children in Care reviews should be prioritised and protected to enable a consistent response to children in care's needs.
- Children should be prepared for reviews by their social worker. They should have had the opportunity to contribute to their assessment and proposed care plan and supported to understand the purpose of their meeting.
- Proposed care plans must be completed by the child's social worker based on the most recent assessment of needs and authorised at least 5 days before the Child in Care review. If these are not completed the review may need to be cancelled which is not in the best interest of the child and can lead to delay in permanency, care planning and addressing issues which could impact stability. It will be the IRO's decision to cancel the review in these circumstances.
- The social worker is responsible for organising the review and ensuring the child, their carer (foster carer/home), the IRO and supervising social worker are available for the agreed Child in Care review date. The timings for each review should follow statutory guidance. Should availability by a carer or young person change at short notice the expectation is the carer will communicate with the social worker at the earliest opportunity to make alternative plans.

- If the child's allocated Social Worker needs to postpone the date of a Child in Care Review (with no less than 5 working days' notice), they must first discuss this request with their Consultant Social Worker, Practice Lead or Team Manager, who will in the first instance work to resolve the reasons for the request to delay for example ensure conflicting work requests are reallocated within the team.
- Should the Team Manager be unable to resolve the reasons for the request for postponement they must discuss this with the Service Manager. Only the Service Manager can approve a postponement having considered all the relevant issues and only having followed a discussion with the IRO. The Service Manager should consider the potential impact on the child including impact in relation to permanency, stability and care planning. The Service Manager should also seek proactively to resolve any challenges to hold the meeting in timescales related to resources.
- Should the only option be postponement the Service Manager will ensure a case direction is added to LCS reflecting the decision agreed and what has been considered.
- The social worker must lead on rearranging the review and ensure a new date is set within 3 working days and within the statutory timescales.
- If the child's IRO needs to postpone the date of a Child in Care Review with no less than 5 working days' notice, they must first discuss this request with the IRO manager and work to resolve the reasons for the request. Should they be unable to resolve the reasons for the request they must discuss with the Service Manager and follow the procedure as per the social worker.
- If the allocated IRO has to postpone due to emergency circumstances on the day (travel disruption or illness) they will discuss with the IRO manager, communicate to the Social Worker/ Team Manager and agree how to communicate with the child/carer, and record a case note on LCS to reflect the reasons for postponing.
- Where the IRO has had to postpone a review they must lead on rearranging the review and ensure a new date is set within 3 working days and within the statutory timescales.

### Quality Assurance of practice change:

Compliance with Practice Directions will be monitored by deep dive audit and performance indicators where possible.

### Service Areas / roles applicable:

FASS

Area Units

Through Care Teams

DCSS

**Date of Change:** May 2024

**Updated by:** Ruth Lucas, IRO Manager

Reviewed by: Jo Coles, Principal Social Worker

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