

## Practice Guidance - Children Looked After Reviews

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### 1. The Purpose of Children Looked After Reviews

The purpose of the Looked After Review is to:

- Ensure that appropriate plans are in place to safeguard and promote the overall welfare of the Child Looked After in the most effective way and achieve permanence for them within a timescale that meets their needs;
- To monitor the progress of the plans and ensure they are being progressed effectively;
- To make decisions, as necessary, for amendments to those plans to reflect any change in knowledge and/or circumstances.

It is important that decisions taken at Looked After Reviews are implemented and responsibility for actions clearly defined.

The key plans that should be considered at a Looked After Review are:

- Care Plan;
- Individual Health Plan;
- Pathway Plan if applicable;

- Personal Education Plan (PEP).

The review should also take account of the child's Placement Plan and any other plans or strategies (e.g. vulnerability and risk management plans, Education, Health and Care Plan), ensuring that they are up to date, or that arrangements are in place to update them.

## 2. Frequency of Looked After Reviews

Normally, Looked After Reviews should be convened at the following intervals:

- An initial Looked After Review should be conducted within 20 working days of the child becoming Looked After;
- The second Looked After Review should be conducted within 3 months (91 days) of an Initial Looked After Review;
- Subsequent Looked After Reviews should be conducted not more than 6 months (183 days) after any previous review;
- Following the start of the **Care Plan**, practitioners must complete a case summary every 6 months. The case summary and the case review will run alternatively every 3 months to form a pattern as shown below.

Timescale	Activity
<i>CLA only - 20 working days after placement start</i>	<b>Review</b>
3 months after start of plan	<b>Review</b>
6 months after start of plan	<b>Case Summary</b>
9 months after start of plan start	<b>6-month review</b>
12 months after start of plan	<b>Case Summary</b>
15 months after start of plan	<b>6-month review</b>
18 months after start of plan	<b>Case Summary</b>

A case summary recording template and good practice recording example are located in the **Resources and Forms Library**.

In relation to children placed with prospective adopters or where there is **Authority to Place for Adoption**, see the **Adoption Review Guidance**.

Looked After Reviews should normally be conducted at a meeting, there are exceptional circumstances where this may not be required in respect of a child who has been in a designated Long-term Foster Placement for over 12 months (**see Section 10, Looked After Reviews Concerning Children in Long Term Foster Placements**).

The IRO must be notified of any significant changes in the child's circumstances and consider whether, as a result, the Looked After Review should be held earlier than the scheduled date.

Consideration should be given to Looked After Reviews being brought forward by the IRO in the following circumstances.

- A proposed change of care plan for example arising at short notice in the course of proceedings following directions from the court;
- Where agreed decisions from the review are not carried out within the specified timescale;
- Major change to the contact arrangements;
- Any safeguarding concerns involving the child, which may lead to enquiries being made under Section 47 of the 1989 Act ('child protection enquiries') and outcomes of child protection conferences, or other meetings that are not attended by the IRO;
- Complaints from or on behalf of the child, parent or carer;
- Unexpected changes in the child's placement provision which may significantly impact on placement stability or safeguarding arrangements;
- Significant changes in birth family circumstances for example births, marriages or deaths which may have a particular impact on the child;
- If the child is charged with any offence leading to referral to youth offending services, pending criminal proceedings and any convictions or sentences as a result of such proceedings;
- If the child is excluded from school;
- If the child has run away or is missing from an approved placement;
- Significant health, medical events, diagnoses, illnesses, hospitalisations, or serious accidents; and panel decisions in relation to permanency.

DfE Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 2: care planning, placement and case review.

This is not an exhaustive list and the IRO may judge that other events are significant and require an earlier review. The parents and child should also be consulted about the need for an additional review.

### 3. Chairing of Reviews

IRO's will chair reviews. They are located within the Quality Assurance Team.

The IRO's responsibilities are outlined in **Section 8, Independent Reviewing Officer's Responsibilities**.

If the allocated IRO cannot attend the meeting and it is important that the review meeting is not delayed, the meeting will be chaired/attended by a substitute IRO.

### 4. Convening Looked After Reviews

#### 4.1 Arranging the First Review

As soon as a child becomes Looked After. The QA service will receive a notification from the placement finding team. This will trigger the appointment of an IRO within 5 working days of the child becoming looked after. The IRO will liaise with the social worker and arrange a date, time and venue of the child's first Looked After Review.

The IRO is required to speak with the child in private prior to the first review and before every subsequent review [**regulation 36**]. This should provide the IRO with an opportunity to discuss with

the child matters to be considered at the review and for the child to raise any issues. The first review will be important and may set the tone for the longer-term relationship that will develop between the child and IRO. Time and consideration should be given to planning this and all subsequent reviews. It will be important to work with the child to discuss how s/he is likely to be able to make the most meaningful contribution to the review.

#### **4.2 Arranging Second and Subsequent Reviews**

At the end of each review the IRO will set the date, time and venue of the next review, taking account of what is convenient for review participants. The timing and venue for the next review will be revisited and discussed with the child 20 working days prior to the next review, (see Section 5, Invitations and the Child's Participation).

Review dates cannot be rearranged or adjourned unless there are exceptional circumstances and then only if the rearranged meeting can take place within statutory timescales, in which case the new date should be agreed by the social worker with the IRO and the Independent Review Service, with an agreement as to who will inform the other participants. Responsibility for deciding whether or not a review should be adjourned rests with the nominated IRO for the child concerned. In such circumstances the review may be adjourned once but should be completed within 20 working days.

The Independent Reviewing Service Team Manager should be notified by the IRO, in the event that they are considering postponing or adjourning a review.

In the event of a key participant being ill or unable to attend the review, the meeting will go ahead but the IRO may decide that the review be adjourned to a new date when all participants can attend. The social worker should inform other participants of the new date. If a review is to be cancelled and cannot be rearranged within statutory timescales this is to be agreed by the IRO.

Where the reunification of a child is achieved in line with the Care Plan the child's social worker will notify the IRO. The social worker will ensure that other prospective attendees are informed that the review is cancelled and why.

#### **5. Invitations and the Child's Participation**

The social worker should discuss with the child at least 20 working days before the meeting who they would like to attend and to confirm whether the venue that was previously agreed is appropriate. The IRO and the social worker will then confirm who is to attend and the venue, and updating invitations sent. A balance must be struck in relation to who the child wishes to be present and the need for information and input from the professionals and family members involved. Efforts should be made to keep the number present at the review as small as possible. It may be appropriate to request written contributions from agencies rather than invite them to attend.

The consultation form to be completed by education also incorporates their contribution to update the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and will inform the discussion at the PEP review to measure outcomes against the agreed objectives and to set new targets. There may be occasions where aligning the PEP review with the Looked After Review is considered in the best interest of the child.

**The following people should normally be invited/consulted:**

- The child. There is a presumption that the child will attend the review if they wish to. A child's disability must not be a bar to the child's attendance;
- The parents;
- Foster carers and any significant people or specialists involved in the child's case (except as set out below);
- The supervising social worker, if the child is placed with foster carers;
- The key worker if the child is in residential care;
- A representative from the child's school, college or early years provision;
- Health Visitor or School Nursing Service dependent upon the age of the child;
- Looked After Health Team for all children aged over 16 or placed in residential care;
- A Personal Adviser, if the child is over the age of 16;
- An Independent Visitor, if involved;
- The Children's Guardian where one has been appointed;
- If required, an interpreter.

The IRO must meet with the child before the review; this includes all children and young people. The IRO must ensure that the child understands their role in review, and responsibility to monitor progress between reviews, they must establish a meaningful relationship with the child enabling them to ensure that the wishes and feelings of the child are fully represented within the review process.

Parents should be informed that they can arrange to see the IRO separately if they wish or bring a supporter or interpreter to the review.

Where the child does not wish to attend the review, the IRO must ensure that the child has had the opportunity to submit their views. The child's social worker must ensure that children and families have been given information about the **Complaints Procedure**. They should provide the child with details of independent advocacy services who may provide support if the child requires it.

The Quality Assurance Team have produced a series of 'your say on your review' leaflets, to help children and young people to express their views as part of the review process. There are leaflets available, each one can be related to an age group:

- Have your say Green leaflet for younger children;
- Have your say Blue leaflet for older children;

To help explain the review process there are two leaflets available:

- Information for Parents and Carers of Children Looked After;
- What is an IRO?

**See Section 7, Supporters and Advocates.**

A decision not to invite a child or parent(s) to a review should only be made in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the IRO, prior to the review. The decision should be recorded, together with reasons, on the review document and child's record.

There may be exceptional circumstances where the child's social worker, in consultation with the IRO decides that the attendance of the carer at all or part of the review meeting will not be appropriate or practicable. Where this is the case, a written explanation of the reasons should be given, and other arrangements made for the carer to contribute to the review process. Reasons why a decision was made to exclude a carer should be placed on the child's case record, along with a record of their input.

Where any other invited person cannot attend, the IRO may agree that a delegate attend instead.

**6. The Role of the Social Worker**

The social worker should discuss with the child who they wish to attend and the proposed venue. Where the child wishes to chair their own review, the social worker should inform the IRO.

In all cases, the child and parent(s) should be encouraged and supported by the social worker to prepare for the review, in writing or other ways if they wish. The social worker should agree with the IRO how this will be achieved. This requires early consultation between the social worker and the IRO and should be part of a thorough preparation of all the key issues for the review.

The child's social worker must also ensure the child's IRO is kept informed of any significant changes in the child's circumstances and the outcomes of any other meetings held as part of the review process, which consider aspects of the child's Care Plan.

The social worker must inform the IRO of the following events/changes in a child's life:

- A proposed change to the Care Plan arising at short notice in the course of proceedings;
- Where agreed decisions from a review are not carried out within the specified timescale;
- Major changes to contact arrangements;
- Change in allocated social worker;
- Any safeguarding concerns involving the child which may lead to enquiries under Section 47 of the 1989 Act;
- Complaints from on or on behalf of child, parent or carer;
- Unexpected changes in the child's placement provision which may significantly impact on placement stability or safeguarding arrangements;
- Significant changes in birth family circumstances;
- Where the child is charged with an offence leading to a referral to the Youth Offending Service;
- Where a child is excluded from school;
- Where the child has run away or is missing from an approved placement;

- Significant health, medical events, diagnosis, illnesses, hospitalisations;
- Where there a number of professionals or different agencies involved who are finding it hard to engage with the young person;
- Panel Decisions in relation to Permanence.

A review will not be required for every change; the IRO will determine whether the changes require a review to be convened. If the IRO is satisfied that the arrangements in the Care Plan continue to meet the child's needs and that a review is not necessary, a record of this agreement and the reasons for it will be recorded on the case file.

Where the child has been or is the subject of Court proceedings, the social worker should ensure the IRO has clear information of the child's legal status and the Court timetable.

Prior to the review, the social worker must ensure the child's records and plans are up to date, for example, that they include records of the placement visits and the last date when the child's sleeping accommodation was seen. Any changes in household membership need to be clearly recorded.

The social worker must notify the IRO that the Care Plan / Pathway Plan and social work report is on the child's file in preparation for the review, signed by their manager, a minimum of at least **3 working days** before the review date. The pathway care plan is for those approaching and over the age of 16.

The social worker should share the Care Plan/ Pathway Plan and the Social Work Report for the Review with the child / young person and relevant family members prior to the review.

In addition, the child's social worker should ensure that the following key documents are completed and available on the child's file in advance of the review:

- All completed consultation documents (the social worker is responsible for sending these to the child, carers and family members as appropriate);
- Individual Health Action Plan;
- Updated Personal Education Plan (PEP);
- Any other relevant reports by professionals.
- The social worker should also ensure that the child's Placement Plan is updated.

The IRO may have a pre discussion with the social worker to review the relevant aspects of the Health Action Plan and PEP. The IRO will then summarise these documents during the review and provide information about the discussion with the social worker as appropriate.

Where the parents or relevant family are unable to attend the review, they will receive the review report from the IRO, the social worker should also ensure that parents or relevant family are aware of the outcome.

## **7. Supporters and Advocates**

When meeting with the child before every review the IRO must ensure that the child understands how an advocate could help and their entitlement to one. The IRO should ensure the necessary arrangements are made for an advocate to attend. This may be a formal appointment from a specialist organisation or an adult already in the child's network.

It may also be necessary for the social worker to plan for an interpreter to attend. Special needs, for example those arising from disability, should always be considered and appropriate assistance arranged where relevant.

Any request by the child or parent(s) for their legal adviser to attend as their supporter should be notified to the IRO prior to the review and arrangements made where appropriate for the attendance at the review of a local authority legal adviser.

Where the 'supporter' is a legal representative then the IRO should note the [Law Society guidance 'Attendance of Solicitors at Local Authority Children Act Meetings'](#) and related [Code of Conduct \(2011\)](#).

All solicitors attending these meetings should be aware of the local policies and procedures in respect of Children Act Meetings and of their role in terms of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.

## 8. Independent Reviewing Officers and their responsibilities

The Statutory duties of the IRO are to:

- Monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's case;
- Participate in any review of the child's case;
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority;
- Perform any other function which is prescribed in regulation.

Two clear functions to chair the child's review and to monitor the child's case on an on-going basis. IRO should ensure that the Care Plan for the child fully reflects the child's needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.

The IRO must speak with the child in person before each review; this will provide the IRO with an opportunity to discuss with the child, matters to be discussed at the review and for the child to raise any issues. This is an essential component of the IRO's role in establishing a meaningful and enduring relationship with the child. This would include any issues round bullying that the child may have encountered/been part of and their general interactions with their peers. It will be important to work with the child to discuss how they can make a meaningful contribution to the review.

In relation to babies and younger children, it may not be necessary or appropriate to see the child alone. Observing the child or interacting with them is a more appropriate way of establishing the child's feelings and understanding. If the main part of the review meeting takes place away from the placement, it will be important for the IRO to meet with or observe the child in the placement so that consideration is given to the suitability of the placement to meeting the child's needs.

The IRO must also speak with the social worker at least 5 working days before the review to discuss progress of the case since the last review, the content of any written reports available to the review meeting and any other relevant information. This should include details of any significant events that have occurred for the young person, such as the death of a friend or a close family member. All

safeguarding incidents, including those referred to the Designated Officer in the local authority (LADO), should be notified to the IRO prior to the review commencing. Further to this any episodes of the child going missing, absent from school or episodes of vulnerability including being at risk of sexual exploitation or displaying sexually harmful behaviour should be reported to the IRO.

There may also be other professionals new to the team that need to be included in the review meeting e.g. Therapeutic worker.

A key task for all IRO's is to ensure that the review process is child and family centred and that the child's current wishes and feelings have been established and taken into account, where appropriate. They should be satisfied that disabled children's contributions are obtained and effectively presented in the review.

The IRO must be satisfied that the wishes and feelings of the child's parents, any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility and the current carer (foster carer or registered person in respect of a children's home) have been taken into account as part of the review process.

Wherever possible, the child should be encouraged and supported by the IRO to lead all or part of the meeting. In all other cases, the IRO will chair the review - **see Section 3, Chairing of Reviews**.

More than one meeting may be required to ensure the views of relevant people inform the review without the meeting becoming too large. For example, it may be appropriate to hold a meeting involving the child prior to a meeting involving the parent to obtain information and ascertain the views of both where the child does not wish to attend a review with their parents present.

The IRO is responsible for ensuring that all relevant people, including the child and parents, understand the purpose of the review and have been given appropriate opportunities to contribute and express their views. The IRO should also ensure that relevant consultation has taken place with those professionals who are not in attendance at the meeting.

Where participants' views are not followed, an explanation of the reasons why needs to be provided by the IRO and/or the social worker. Any differences of opinion should be recorded in the relevant section on the review report.

If the parent(s) or the child brings a supporter, the IRO will need to explain their role, ensuring that the supporter understands that they may clarify information but may not cross-examine any contributor.

The agenda for each review will be agreed at the beginning of the meeting and each participant will be invited to contribute their own items to the agenda and have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

The IRO will decide on what actions in principle are necessary to meet the child's reviewed needs and make recommendations as to how these should be achieved.

Where a review considers that adoption is the most appropriate way to meet the child's needs, the recommendation is then submitted to the permanence panel for consideration - **see The Child's Journey - Placement for Adoption**

The IRO has duty to ensure that the child, where appropriate, has been informed of their right to apply, with leave, for the discharge of the care order and their right to make a complaint and to an advocate. If the child wishes to take legal proceedings under the 1989 Act, the IRO must establish whether there is an appropriate adult able and willing to assist the child to obtain legal advice or bring proceedings on the child's behalf or, if there is no such person, assist, the child to obtain legal advice. The IRO and their manager must be satisfied that the child is aware and understands their rights.

It will be necessary for the IRO to ensure decisions are SMART and establish who is responsible for an action and the timescales agreed for completion. The IRO should ensure that the following are considered and accounted for during the review:

- The effect of any change in the child's circumstances since the last review;
- Whether decisions taken at the last review have been successfully implemented and if not why not;
- Whether the child's social worker has taken steps to establish the child's wishes and feelings and that the Care Plan takes these into consideration;
- Whether the placement safeguards and promotes the child's welfare, and whether any safeguarding concerns have been raised;
- Whether all the required plans (including plans for permanence) are in place, detailing how the child's needs are to be met, and whether they are up to date. Plans need to have viable timescales that are meaningful to the child **See Section 9, The Role of the Looked After Review in Achieving Permanence for the Child;**
- The extent to which the aims and objectives of the child's Care Plan/Pathway Plan, Individual Health Plan, and the PEP have been achieved and any relevant changes in circumstances which have a bearing on the case;
- The need for the child to continue to be Looked After and where a Care Order exists, whether an application to discharge the Care Order should be made;
- Whether any arrangements need to be made for the time when the child will no longer be looked after;
- Whether the plans fully cover the necessary actions to meet the following responsibilities:
  - To protect the child's safety and welfare, preferably within their own family or community;
  - To ensure the child's placement is appropriate to meet the child's needs and that a relevant Placement Plan is in place. This should include consideration of the attachment between the child and those who are caring for them, how the local authority is ensuring that the placement provides the quality of care that the child needs;
  - To promote the educational needs of the child. In this respect the IRO must ensure that the child's PEP is relevant and up to date;
  - To promote the health and well-being of the child. In this respect the IRO must ensure that the child's Health Plan is relevant and up to date;

- To ensure that the child maintains contact with their family and significant friends and that the arrangements are appropriate, or, where there is no contact between the child and their family, that there are good reasons for this;
  - To provide advice, assistance and other support for children with a view to promoting their welfare and preparing them for independence and adulthood;
  - Where the child is reaching the age of 16, need to ensure that a Future Needs Assessment is undertaken, this will inform the Pathway Plan;
  - To establish whether any additional, specialist or therapeutic assessments or interventions are necessary to meet the child's needs;
  - To establish the identity needs of the child and how these are being met;
  - To establish the leisure activities in which the child is engaging and whether these meet the child's needs;
  - To clarify whether a claim for criminal injuries compensation has been made or should be considered;
  - To establish whether the child has a right to have an Independent Visitor;
  - To ensure children and families are aware of the right to complain about either the service or plans and understand the processes available to do so if they require.
- The IRO must be satisfied that the wishes and feelings of the child's parents, any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility and the current carer (foster carer or registered person in respect of a children's home) have been taken into account as part of the review process;
  - Other matters which may arise should also be considered with due regard to the circumstances of the child and the placement.

In most cases where a child is the subject of a child protection plan becomes looked after it will no longer be necessary to maintain the child protection plan. Where safeguarding issues remain, such as the child remaining placed at home having been made subject to an interim care order or the child's behaviour is likely to result in significant harm to themselves or others then the child protection plan should continue, at this stage it is important for the two processes to be co-ordinated. It is expected that there will be a single planning and review process, led by the IRO, which meets the requirements of both the Regulations and the guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children.

The IRO is responsible for setting any remedial timescales if actions have not been taken and there is a risk of drift in the delivery of a plan that will meet the child's needs and planned outcomes within the child's timescales.

After the review, the IRO will ensure that details of the way in which the child participated in the review will be included in the review report and on the quality monitoring form.

Where there is evidence of poor practice, the IRO will consider what action is needed to bring this to the attention of the relevant and appropriate managers - **see Section 12, Monitoring of Reviews.**

It is also the IRO responsibility to focus on dispute resolution - see **Section 13, Local Dispute Resolution Process**.

## 9. The Role of the Looked After Review in Achieving Permanence for the Child

*This section reflects the outcome of a High Court Judgement in respect of children who were subject to Section 20 and where there were concerns of significant delays in their planning for permanence. The court noted the IROs' recognition and action over a number of reviews but acknowledged that a more robust response had been needed.*

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must check that the child's Care Plan includes a Permanence Plan with measurable milestones and a Contingency Plan should the preferred plans not materialise.

The permanence plan presented to the looked after review should have been agreed at the relevant panel (e.g. permanence panel, adoption panel) before it is presented to the review.

At the second Looked After Review, there is a requirement to focus on the Permanence Plan, to ensure it provides permanence for the child within a timescale which is realistic, achievable and meets the child's needs. This will be a twin track/parallel plan where permanency has not been achieved.

For example, where a plan for rehabilitation of the child has not been achieved, the review should seek to establish whether the lack of progress is as a result of drift or whether there are valid child-centred reasons, properly recorded and endorsed by the social worker's manager. No further rehabilitation plan should be recommended unless there are exceptional reasons justifying such a plan or where further assessment is specifically directed by the Court or the review. In this case, the Parallel Plan must include the active pursuit of an alternative placement for the child. All subsequent Reviews should review the progress and validity of the Permanence Plan.

As part of permanence planning, the IRO should be satisfied that:

- The local authority has explained fully to the child and the parents the implications of the permanency plan; and
- The local authority has provided information on post-adoption or special guardianship support to parents or extended family, where the plan is adoption or a special guardianship order.

Review decisions should include timescales for the completion of:

- Life story work;
- Later life letter; and
- The post adoption/special guardianship support plan.

**Children who are Section 20 Accommodated (Children Act 1989):** IROs should pay particular regard to children accommodated under S.20 to ensure there is appropriate progression of their plans and that there are no delays in respect of them having 'permanence', (which should include a return home). A High Court judgement (see [Herefordshire Council v AB \[2018\] EWFC 10 rtf](#)) was critical of protracted delay in a child's planning and failure to respond to a parent's request to have a child return home to their care under S.20(8). Further, that the IRO, whilst recognising the issues of delay and

planning, and highlighting these to managers, did not respond more robustly (see **Section 13, Local Dispute Resolution Process**).

The judgement considered that in circumstances where the threshold criteria (for Care/Supervision Orders) under Section 31 Children Act 1989 are met, (i.e. where a child is at risk of significant harm, or the likelihood of significant harm), then care proceedings should be issued without delay.

#### **10. Looked After Reviews Concerning Children in Long Term Foster Placements**

The March 2015 Statutory Guidance "Permanence, long-term foster placements and ceasing to look after a child" sets out that where a child is placed in a designated long-term foster placement and has been in this placement for more than a year consideration should be given to whether it is necessary to hold a meeting as part of each review.

The guidance requires that the social worker, following discussion with their Manager, should consult the IRO and the child (where appropriate to age and understanding) in reaching a decision on whether to hold a meeting. Where it is agreed that a meeting will not be held as part of every review a meeting should be held at least once a year. The factors leading to a decision to hold review meetings on a less frequent basis must be recorded in the child's Care Plan and by the IRO in the Decision Review Record.

In the exceptional circumstance where a review cannot take place in a meeting the social worker and IRO must ensure that full consultation with all relevant individuals, including (but not limited to) the child, parents, carers and other professionals has taken place to inform the review of the child's case.

If there is any disagreement to the recommendation to reduce the meeting frequency, then this will need to be recorded in the Review Meeting Minutes. Those disagreements will be fully discussed and reviewed at the next full meeting.

#### **11. Recording of Looked After Reviews – Letter to the Child**

It is the responsibility of the IRO to record the review report as a letter to the child. The IRO needs to take into consideration the relevance and appropriateness of the information going into the letter.

*The document will support any required changes to the care plan and must contain an accurate and comprehensive record of the meeting, including decisions made about the care plan. It must record the views of all those who attended or were consulted as part of the process and address in detail all elements of the care plan. Decisions should make clear the identified needs and planned outcomes, the person responsible for implementing the decisions and the timescale for implementation.*

The Decision Record will be uploaded onto the child's case file by the IRO within 5 working days of the review meeting and notify the social worker and line manager.

Line Managers have 5 working days to consider the decisions made at each review and advise the IRO and all those who attended the review if they are unable to agree them. If no response is received the decisions should be considered agreed by the local authority and should be implemented within the timescales set out in them.

If the manager(s) disagrees with any of the decisions within that initial 5-day period, this should be notified in writing to the IRO, in the first instance the IRO should attempt to resolve the issue

informally. If this is not successful the IRO can consider activating the local dispute resolution process - see **Section 13, Local Dispute Resolution Process**.

The record of the review will be completed within 15 working days of the review.

The full written record of the review, including the decisions, should be distributed within 20 working days of the completion of the review.

All those who attend the review should receive a copy, with any identifying details removed as necessary, for example exceptionally the address of the placement.

## **12. Monitoring of Reviews**

The IRO plays an important part in the quality assurance function of the local authority's service for Children Looked After, it will be important that they recognise and report on good practice by individuals or teams.

It is important for the IRO to have a collaborative relationship with the social workers and their managers.

Where there is evidence of poor practice, the IRO should, wherever practicable, address these issues through the normal channels, contacting the social worker's manager and where necessary the Service Manager. The IRO must alert the accountable manager to any failure to take proper steps to implement decisions, as outlined within the Quality Assurance process, this would be recorded on the child's file and through appropriate informal formal dispute resolution process (if appropriate).

## **13. Local Dispute Resolution Process**

One of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process, in the first instance the IRO will seek to resolve the issues informally with the social worker or the Manager.

If the matter is not resolved in a timescale that is appropriate to the child's needs, the IRO should consider taking formal action through the dispute resolution process. Resolution is sought within 20 working days (please refer to the Dispute Resolution Process).

**See Dispute Resolution and Quality Assurance Flow Chart.**

**See also Dispute Resolution and Quality Assurance Guidance.**

The IRO has the power to refer the matter to CAFCASS at any point in the dispute resolution process and may consider it necessary to make a concurrent referral to CAFCASS at the same time that they instigate the dispute resolution process. Where required, the local authority must provide the IRO with access to independent legal advice

**See also:**

Note that different provisions apply to children who acquire Looked After status as a result of a remand to local authority accommodation or Youth Detention Accommodation. In relation to those

children, please see Remands to Local Authority Accommodation or to Youth Detention Accommodation Procedure, Care Planning for Young People on Remand.

**Relevant information**

- Have your say leaflet Green
- Have your say leaflet Blue
- Information for parents and carers of Children Looked After;
- What is an IRO?

<b>Review / Contacts / References</b>	
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