

**Focus on Practice Quality**  
**Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officer**  
**Good Practice Recognition & Dispute Resolution**  
**Protocol**



To make North Somerset a truly great place for children and young people to thrive; where all have the best possible life and opportunities, including those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged and/or have special educational or additional need

## Contents

Subject	Page
1. Foreword	3
2. Statutory Guidance	3
3. Process	
3.1 Good Practice Recognition	4
3.2 Raising Concerns	5
Appendices	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ISRO Formal Dispute Resolution – Stage 1 (Team Manager)</li><li>• ISRO Formal Dispute Resolution – Stage 2 (Head of Service/Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Manager, Team Manager and ISRO)</li><li>• ISRO Formal Dispute Resolution – Stage 3 (Assistant Director Children’s Services)</li><li>• ISRO Formal Dispute Resolution – Stage 4 (Director Children’s Services/CEO)</li> <li>• Outcome Statement for the Child</li><li>• Good Practice Recognition Form</li><li>• Process Chart for Dispute Resolution for Children in Care</li><li>• Process Chart for Dispute Resolution for Children subject to Child protection plans</li></ul>	

## 1. Foreword

The ISRO has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the local authority fulfils various responsibilities as a 'corporate parent' for all the children that it looks after and children subject to Child Protection Plans. The ISRO should ensure that the child is offered care and/or support that is sensitive and appropriate to their individual needs so that they are able to flourish and achieve safely. The plan for each child must demonstrate how the services provided have fully taken account of the child's wishes and feelings.

Each Local Authority is required to put in place a formal protocol for the Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Service (ISRO) to raise both issues of good practice and concerns in relation to children and young people. It is imperative that this protocol is respected and prioritised by managers.

The protocol ensures that North Somerset Council has an operational process and recording system for this requirement. It covers two areas of practice; the recognition of good practice and the way in which issues and disputed decisions are resolved. It references current national guidance and looks at the roles and responsibilities of the ISRO service.

## 2. Statutory Guidance

Please visit [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk) and type in 'Volume 2 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review' in the search engine to find:

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (DCSF-00185-2010) at:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00185-2010.pdf>

Regulation 45 (P97 4.39) states "where disagreements or differences in opinion arise in the course of the review process between those present, every effort should be made to resolve the matter on an informal basis. Where agreement cannot be reached, the responsible authority should ensure that the child, parents, carers and others involved with the child are aware of the procedure that is in place. The ISRO is under a duty to advise the child of his/her right to make a complaint and of the availability of an advocate to assist the child in making a complaint."

This is further addressed within the statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers available for download at:

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/736/1/DCSF-00184-2010.pdf>

This document describes revised procedures and new guidance on setting up: first and subsequent Children in Care Reviews; writing Care Plans (including Permanency Plans); writing social work reports for Child Care Reviews; writing ISRO record of reviews; monitoring care plans, and the use of negotiation and challenge processes for statutory reviewing.

There is no statutory guidance regarding dispute resolution for children on child protection plans, as this is not a statutory function but one North Somerset has recognised as equally important, the statutory guidance that is used for such children is [Working Together](#).

### 3. Process

#### 3.1. Good Practice Recognition

Where there is evidence of good practice and management of Children's Plans the ISRO will complete a Practice Recognition Form. The format ensures consistency in where information is recorded and stored as part of the child's electronic file record (LCS). Completed Practice Recognitions will be shared with the social worker and their respective line manager (as evidence to support CPD).

Good practice will also be shared more widely across. This will support learning across the service.

Good practice may be characterised by exceptional efforts to achieve stated outcomes for a child and may include elements or all the following:

<b>Effectiveness of Interventions</b>	Impact of intervention has achieved desired changes within the family.
<b>Effective planning and review</b>	Documents are child centred and child-friendly, have clear and measurable outcomes and identify who is doing what and when. These will be reviewed by the ISRO at every Child in Care and Child Protection review.
<b>Building a trusted and effective relationship</b>	The core of good social work practice – the child and their family are involved in decision making and planning. The practitioner has demonstrated and evidenced skill in building a good relationship with the child and family.
<b>A child-centred approach including attention to equality and diversity</b>	Practice has paid attention to a child's individual needs, and the response to factors relating to their age, ethnicity, or disability, identity, language, etc.
<b>Multi-agency involvement</b>	Effective communication and information sharing are key elements achieved by ensuring everybody is involved in the meeting and child's planning process.
<b>Management supervision and oversight of practice</b>	The quality of practice and case recordings demonstrate strong management direction/sign off. The plan for the child being discussed at every stage, the child's wishes and feelings, there is evidence of the child participating, the parents are kept informed and central to decision making wherever appropriate.
<b>Quality of case recording</b>	Reports and key documents recorded to a good standard showing what is happening for the child at any given time, to immediately understand what the child needs, show that the child's wishes and feelings are clearly evidenced, and it reflects and analyses information in order to develop and adjust their plans. This ensures accountability is maintained within the organisation.

## 3.2 Raising Concerns

The ISRO is required to and may raise concerns for discussion that relate to the child's plan and/or care planning process. This will usually begin with an informal process and ideally should be addressed through good communication, such as face to face or telephone discussion, with the social worker in the first instance with the aim of achieving early resolution within an agreed timescale.

Concerns arising directly from the child/young person's child in care or CP review will be discussed with the social worker immediately following the review. The result of communications, including timescales for an action, will be recorded by the ISRO on the child's electronic case record (LCS).

However, if the concern cannot be resolved informally within 5 working days it needs to follow the formal process.

### 3.2.1 Informal Concern

We would always be keen for issues to be resolved at this stage.

Where the informal concern raised does not result in actions being taken to satisfactorily address the issues raised in the timescales set, then move to formal dispute.

Informal Issues and Formal Challenges could include:

- Relevant reports / plans or background information, including an up-to-date plan, not provided or available to the ISRO at least three working days before the review
- Child not involved in their care or CP plan or their views not taken into consideration or recorded on the plan
- Drift and delay e.g. delay instigating care proceedings or achieving permanence
- Failure to consider child/young person's identity and equality needs e.g. access to social and cultural activities, hobbies and interests
- The child has a disability and is over 14 but no planning commenced or sufficiently progressed in relation to their transition needs / plan
- Decisions not actioned from last review
- Placement breakdown or instability
- Escalating concerns regarding the child's safety and the need to consider seeking legal advice
- Concerns about health / contact / education / placement
- Statutory visits out of timescales and / or child not seen alone
- Poor quality social work report
- Parent/carer/network not involved, or views not sought for review
- There is no plan for permanence in place or ISRO is not in agreement with the proposed care plan / permanence plan
- There is no effective, working safety plan in place

- Concerns about funding or resources not meeting the child’s needs e.g. SGO support package decisions or provision to meet therapeutic or treatment needs etc
- ISRO not consulted between reviews when there have been significant changes to the child’s plan
- ISRO not informed about a Standards of Care investigation taking place and its outcome
- ISRO not informed about safeguarding concerns (e.g. regular absconding / risky behaviour / risk of exploitation etc)
- ISRO not informed about a formal complaint or the outcome
- No evidence that the young person has a form of identity i.e. birth certificate, passport etc
- Multiple changes of social worker

### 3.2.2 Formal Concerns for Children in Care

The following stages provide a clear and transparent process for both informal and formal concerns. The formal process as laid out below can be bypassed at any stage by the ISRO and progressed to a level he/she considers most appropriate. The formal process should not last more than 20 working days in total as directed by the IRO Handbook (2010).

<b>Informal Concern– Social Worker and Team Manager</b>		
Informal Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISRO raises an informal concern with the Social Worker and outlines the reasons by telephone in the first instance, and as necessary followed up by an email.</li> <li>• Suitable methods of communication including telephone, email or face to face meetings, are used to resolve the matter as an Informal Issue.</li> <li>• ISRO records as a case note on child’s electronic record (LCS) under ISRO Dispute Resolution Informal Stage</li> <li>• In most instances’ issues will be effectively resolved at this level.</li> <li>• ISRO then records outcome on child’s electronic record (LCS)</li> <li>• The Social Worker may enter any additional comments on child’s electronic record (LCS) at this time</li> </ul>	Timescales for completion of issues raised informally will not usually exceed 20 working days. However, timings may be shortened, and stages combined to ensure a proportionate response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formal Concern Process Stage 1</b></li> </ul>		
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the ISRO identifies a concern that hasn’t been resolved informally, they will complete the Stage 1 section of the Dispute Resolution form and forward to the Team Manager by email.</li> </ul>	5 working days



	<p>The ISRO records on child's electronic record (LCS) under ISRO Dispute Resolution – Stage 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ISRO must record on the form the concern identified, attempts made to resolve this informally and recommend how the resolution is to be resolved at Stage 1.</li> <li>• The Team Manager must respond within 5 working days in writing, by completing the form. This should detail the actions already taken to resolve the concern or proposed SMART actions and email this back to the ISRO.</li> <li>• The ISRO will then respond to the Team Manager to confirm whether the actions taken or proposed are agreed and accepted. The ISRO records on child's electronic record (LCS) under ISRO Dispute Resolution – Stage 1</li> <li>• If there is no agreement and/or satisfactory resolution within the 5 working days, the ISRO will instigate Stage 2 of the dispute resolution process.</li> </ul>	
<p>• <b>Formal Concern Process Stage 2 (Head of Service/Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Manager)</b></p>		
<p>Stage 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where no satisfactory resolution to the concern at Stage 1, the ISRO will move to Stage 2 of the process. This will involve the ISRO convening a meeting with the receiving Head of Service, Team Manager and Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Manager.</li> </ul> <p>The meeting should seek to agree proposed actions and resolve the concern in a SMART manner. (actions from this meeting will need to be recorded by the ISRO on the form for Stage 2 of the process). This will be recorded on the child's electronic record) 'ISRO Dispute Resolution – Stage 2'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ISRO should respond to the Head of Service with a brief acknowledgement as to whether the actions taken or proposed to resolve the concern are agreed and accepted.</li> <li>• This is to be recorded on the dispute form, emailed back to the Head of Service and entered onto child's electronic record (LCS).</li> </ul>	<p>5 working days</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Formal Concern Process Stage 3 (Assistant Director Children’s Services)</b></li> </ul>		
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where no satisfactory resolution to the concern has been achieved at Stage 2, the Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Manager will formally raise with the Assistant Director for Children’s Services.</li> <li>The ISRO will complete the form for Stage 3 disputes and notify the Assistant Director by attaching this to an email with the actions from the meeting convened at Stage 2 of the process. This will be recorded on child’s electronic record (LCS) under ‘ISRO Dispute Resolution – Stage 3’</li> <li>The ISRO must ensure that they record on the form the concern identified, how attempts were made to resolve this at Stage 2 and will recommend how the resolution is to be sought with the Assistant Director.</li> <li>Within a maximum of five working days the Assistant Director should respond on the dispute form to seek to resolve the concerns.</li> <li>If there is no satisfactory agreement and/or resolution agreed with the Assistant Director, the ISRO should instigate Stage 4 of the formal process. This too must be captured on the Stage 3 form and recorded on the child’s electronic record (LCS)</li> </ul>	5 working days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Formal Concern Process Stage 4 (Director Children’s Services (DCS) and Chief Executive)</b></li> </ul>		
Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where no satisfactory agreement and/or resolution to the concern has been achieved at Stage 3, the ISRO/Safeguarding and Reviewing Manager will discuss with the Head of Service Quality Assurance and Safeguarding and agree escalation to the DCS.</li> <li>The ISRO will complete the form for Stage 4 disputes and notify the DCS. This will be recorded on the child’s electronic record (LCS) under ‘ISRO Dispute Resolution – Stage 4’.</li> <li>The ISRO must ensure that they record on the form the concern identified, how attempts were made to resolve this, at all the stages, if relevant, and will recommend how the resolution is to be sought with the DCS.</li> </ul>	5 working days



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within a maximum of five working days the DCS should respond either in writing by email or request that the ISRO convenes a meeting with the relevant parties as identified by the DCS to seek to agree proposed actions to resolve the concerns. (any actions from this meeting will need to be recorded by the ISRO on the Stage 4 form and captured on the child's electronic record (LCS) and the dispute resolution spreadsheet). This may need to include the Chief Executive as appropriate.</li> <li>• This is the final stage of the formal dispute resolution process. If there is no satisfactory resolution at this stage, the ISRO in consultation with their line manager should consider seeking legal advice and potentially a referral to CAFCASS.</li> </ul>	
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### 3.2.3 Formal Concerns for Children subject to CP plans

The following stages provide a clear and transparent process for both informal and formal concerns. The formal process should not last more than 20 working days in total in line with Children in care guidance.

<b>Informal Concern– Social Worker and Team Manager</b>		
<p>Informal Concern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISRO raises an informal concern with the Social Worker and outlines the reasons by telephone in the first instance, and as necessary followed up by an email.</li> <li>• Suitable methods of communication including telephone, email or face to face meetings, are used to resolve the matter as an Informal Issue.</li> <li>• ISRO records as a case note on child's electronic record (LCS) under ISRO Dispute Resolution Informal Stage</li> <li>• In most instances' issues will be effectively resolved at this level.</li> <li>• ISRO then records outcome on child's electronic record (LCS)</li> <li>• The Social Worker may enter any additional comments on child's electronic record (LCS) at this time</li> </ul>	<p>Timescales for completion of issues raised informally will not usually exceed 20 working days. However, timings may be shortened, and stages combined to ensure a proportionate response</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Formal Concern Process Stage 1</b></li> </ul>		
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where the ISRO identifies a concern that hasn't been resolved informally, they will complete the Stage 1 section of the Dispute Resolution form and forward to the Team Manager by email. The ISRO records on child's electronic record (LCS) under ISRO Dispute Resolution – Stage 1</li> <li>The ISRO must record on the form the concern identified, attempts made to resolve this informally and recommend how the resolution is to be resolved at Stage 1.</li> <li>The Team Manager must respond within 5 working days in writing, by completing the form. This should detail the actions already taken to resolve the concern or proposed SMART actions and email this back to the ISRO.</li> <li>The ISRO will then respond to the Team Manager to confirm whether the actions taken or proposed are agreed and accepted. The ISRO records on child's electronic record (LCS) under ISRO Dispute Resolution – Stage 1</li> <li>If there is no agreement and/or satisfactory resolution within the 5 working days, the ISRO will instigate Stage 2 of the dispute resolution process.</li> </ul>	5 working days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Formal Concern Process Stage 2 (Head of Service/Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Manager)</b></li> </ul>		
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where no satisfactory resolution to the concern at Stage 1, the ISRO will move to Stage 2 of the process. This will involve the ISRO convening a meeting with the receiving, Head of Service, Team Manager and Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Manager.</li> </ul> <p>The meeting should seek to agree proposed actions and resolve the concern in a SMART manner. (actions from this meeting will need to be recorded by the ISRO on the form for Stage 2 of the process). This will be recorded on the child's electronic record) 'ISRO Dispute Resolution – Stage 2'.</p>	5 working days

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ISRO should respond to the Head of Service with a brief acknowledgement as to whether the actions taken or proposed to resolve the concern are agreed and accepted.</li> <li>• This is to be recorded on the dispute form, emailed back to the Head of Service and entered onto child's electronic record (LCS)</li> </ul>	
<b>Formal Concern Process Stage 3 (Assistant Director Children's Services)</b>		
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where no satisfactory resolution to the concern has been achieved at Stage 2, the Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Manager will formally raise with the Assistant Director for Children's Services</li> <li>• The ISRO will complete the form for Stage 3 disputes and notify the Assistant Director by attaching this to an email with the actions from the meeting convened at Stage 2 of the process. This will be recorded on child's electronic record (LCS) under 'ISRO Dispute Resolution – Stage 3'</li> <li>• The ISRO must ensure that they record on the form the concern identified, how attempts were made to resolve this at Stage 2 and will recommend how the resolution is to be sought with the Assistant Director.</li> <li>• Within a maximum of five working days the Assistant Director should respond on the dispute form to resolve the concerns.</li> <li>• The Assistant Directors final decision will conclude the process.</li> </ul>	5 working days

## Appendix1

### ISRO Formal Dispute Resolution – Stage 1 (Team Manager)

Date:

To:

From:

Date expected back (within 5 working days):

Child's name:	
DOB:	LCS number:
SW:	TM:

Summary of concern(s) remaining from informal stage:

Requested action(s):

Response of Team Manager (to include any practice development issues):

Date completed:

Resolution of Alert (recorded by ISRO)

If not resolved, ISRO to progress to Stage 2

Date:



## ISRO Formal Dispute Resolution – Stage 2 (Head of Service/Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Manager, Team Manager and ISRO)

Date:

To:

From:

Date expected back (within 5 working days):

Child's name:	
DOB:	LCS number:
SW:	TM:

Summary of concern(s) remaining from Stage 1:

Requested action(s):

Actions from the meeting with Head of Service, ISRO, Team Manager and Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Manager (to include any practice & development issues):

Date:

Resolution of Alert (recorded by ISRO)

If not resolved, ISRO to progress to Stage 3

Date:

## ISRO Formal Dispute Resolution – Stage 3 (Assistant Director Children's Services)

Date:

To:

From:

Date expected back (within 5 working days):

Child's name:	
DOB:	LCS number:
SW:	TM:

Summary of concern(s) remaining from Stage 2:

Requested action(s):

Actions from Assistant Director (to include any practice development issues):

Date:

Resolution of Alert (recorded by ISRO)

If not resolved, ISRO to progress to Stage 4 (only for CiC – disputes relating to children subject to CP are resolved by the AD's final decision)

Date:

## ISRO Formal Dispute Resolution – Stage 4 (Director Children’s Services and / or Chief Executive)

Date:

To:

From:

Date expected back (within 5 working days):

Child’s name:	
DOB:	LCS number:
SW:	TM:

Summary of concern(s) remaining from Stage 3:

Requested action (s):

Actions from the Director (to include any practice development issues):

Date completed:

Resolution of Alert (recorded by ISRO)

If not resolved, ISRO to progress to CAFCASS

Date:



**Outcome Statement for the Child**

What is the impact for the child/young person?

## North Somerset Council ISRO Good Practice Form

### Good practice with:

Children in Care	
Children who have Child Protection plans	

### Allocated Practitioner:

### Team Manager:

### Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officer:

Date sent:

### Child's Details:

Name:	
DOB:	LCS number:

### Good Practice details

**Please detail specifically what it was about this practice that stood out and the impact upon the child/family. Also indicate where the examples can be found on the child's electronic record**

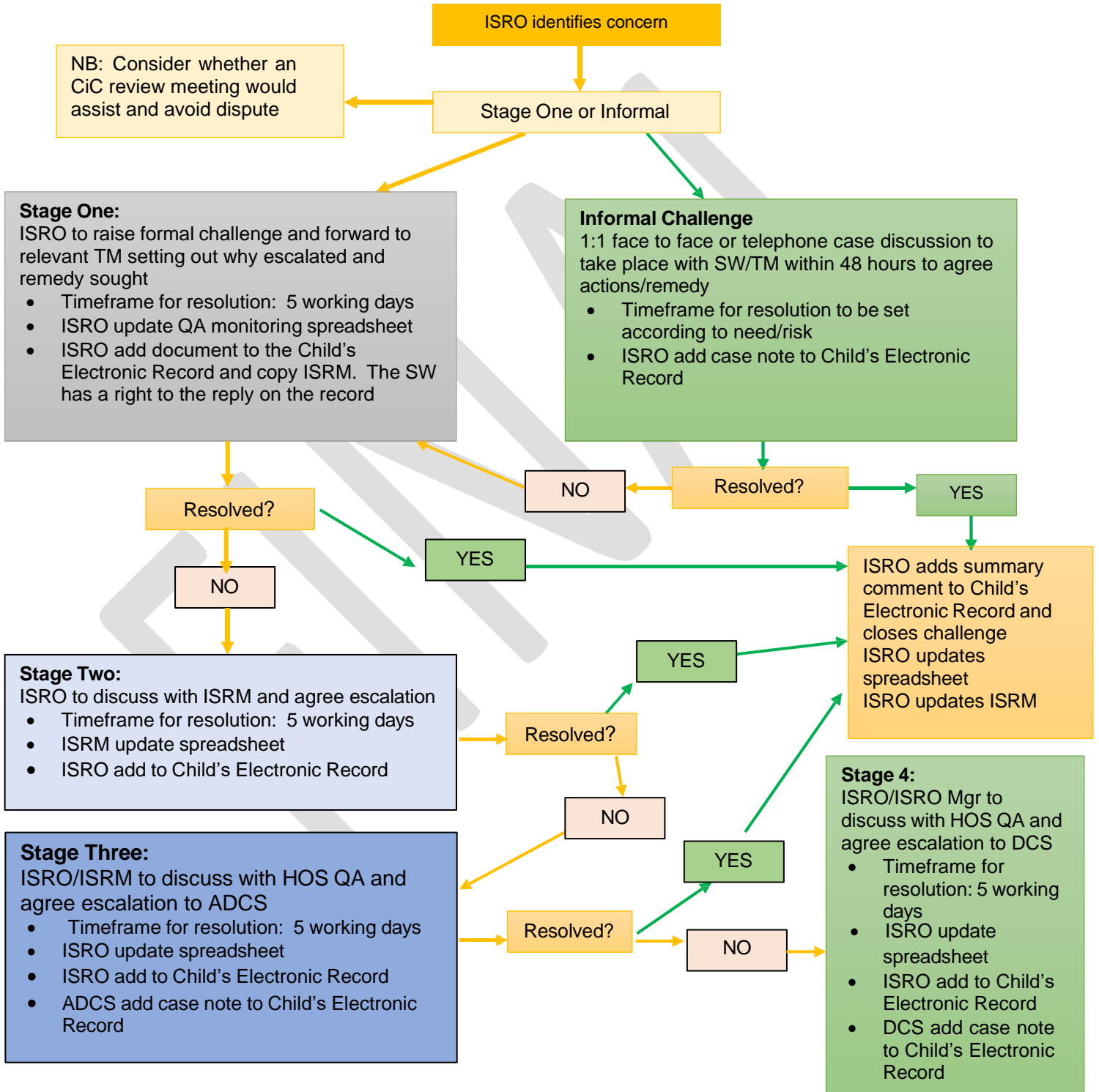
**ISRO please ensure you upload this onto the child electronic record**

Practice Recognition and Dispute Resolution Protocol; updated August 2023

# PROCESS CHART FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION

## ISRO DISPUTE PROCESS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

The ISRO may refer the matter to CAF/CASS at any point in this process and may also make a concurrent referral to CAF/CASS at the same time that he or she instigates the dispute process. Independent legal advice may be sought at any point during this process. The ISRO can exercise discretion at which level to escalate in proportion to the severity and urgency of the identified issue.



## ISRO DISPUTE PROCESS FOR CHILDREN ON CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

The ISRO may refer the matter to CAF/CASS at any point in this process and may also make a concurrent referral to CAF/CASS at the same time that he or she instigates the dispute process. Independent legal advice may be sought at any point during this process. The ISRO can exercise discretion at which level to escalate in proportion to the severity and urgency of the identified issue.

