

Focus on Practice Quality

Quality Assurance, Reviewing and Safeguarding Team

ISRO Issue Resolution Protocol

August 2024

Review August 2026



Foreward

The ISRO has a crucial role in ensuring that the Local Authority fulfils its responsibilities as a corporate parenting for all children and young people that it looks after and children and young people supported by Child Protection plans.

The ISSO should be satisfied that a child or young person is being offered care and/or support that is appropriate to their needs so that they are able to flourish and achieve safety. Each child's plan must demonstrate how the services provided have fully taken into account the child/young person's wishes and feelings.

Statutory Guidance

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (DCSF-00185-2010) at: [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance-and-regulations).

Paragraph 4.44 (page 125) states: "where disagreements or differences of 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 representations procedure they are required to have in place. The IRO 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."

Statutory guidance contained in the IRO Handbook: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/736/1/DCSF-00184-2010.pdf> states, "one of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems in respect of plans being made for children."

There is no statutory guidance for resolution of issues in relation to children and young people supported by Child Protection plans as this is not a statutory function, however it is one which North Somerset recognises as being equally important. Guidance around Child Protection planning is found in Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023 available online.

Escalation

Where early resolution approaches have not been successful or where the ISRO identifies systemic issues that are impacting on the effective planning for a child or young person, the Issues Resolution Protocol should be followed.

Guidance regarding the type of concerns or issues that will be subject to Issues Resolution are set out in Appendix 1 attached. This list is not exhaustive and professional judgement should apply in all individual cases.

Aim

The processes and procedures set out in this document aim to:

- Ensure that when an ISRO identifies a problem in relation to a child or young person's safety, care planning, social work practice, management or decision-making, that issues are resolved quickly and effectively
- Ensure that where themes are identified that may have implications beyond a specific child or young person's plan and need resolution through amendment to wider practice, management, systems, protocols and procedures, that this is highlighted for senior management consideration through a structured mechanism
- Ensure that, wherever possible, issues of concern are resolved at the earliest possible stage with the social worker and their manager
- Ensure that there is an effective process to escalate concerns when issues are not resolved at an early stage so that protracted professional disputes that put children at risk, obscure the focus on the child/young person, or delay decision making are avoided
- Contribute to a culture that has high expectations, provides high challenge and high levels of support to achieve shared goals

The safety of children and young people is paramount. Any professional disagreement or unresolved issues should be escalated using this procedure with an understanding of and a focus on the safeguarding risks for the child or young person.

In all eventualities where the ISRO has intervened in planning for a child or young person, this will be recorded on the child/young person's electronic file.

The ISRO Issue Resolution processes will identify the nature of the concerns under one of the following headings:

- Immediate safety
 - Quality of assessment
 - Absence or delays in assessment
 - Quality of planning – safeguarding
 - Quality of planning – independence/transition
 - Absence or delays in planning including permanence
 - Participation
 - Statutory compliance
 - Stability of placement
 - Suitability of placement
 - Quality of relationships in placement
 - Quality of professional relationships
 - Case management and oversight
 - Direct practice with children and families
 - Other
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Timeliness

Timely and effective resolution of professional concerns is crucial.

Professional disagreement and conflict must not place children and young people at risk and adherence to the timeframes within the procedure is essential to good practice.

The procedure is a staged process intended to encourage early attempts to resolve concerns with the social worker or team manager, however an ISRO may bypass any of these stages if the urgency or seriousness of the matter demands a more senior response.

It is important to note that the ISRO may refer an issue to CAFCASS at any point in the process. They may also consider the option of a concurrent referral to CAFCASS.

The status rating below will be used to communicate the urgency of the escalation **AT EACH STAGE** and governs the required response time from the person to whom the concern has been referred.

Urgency RAG rating	Guidance	Response Time
GREEN. Low risk	Concerns regarding compliance and/or the quality of assessment, planning, participation, case management or other practice that do not meet the threshold for AMBER or RED ratings	Within 5 working days
AMBER. Moderate risk	Significant welfare concerns about a child but immediate and urgent action is NOT required	Within 3 working days
RED. High or immediate risk	Urgent safeguarding concerns about a child requiring immediate action to ensure their safety	Within 25 hours

In all cases, a resolution should be achieved within 20 working days or within a timescale that protects the child/young person from harm (whichever is less).

Process

We are always keen for issues to be resolved informally at an early stage. However, if the issue cannot be resolved in this way within 5 working days it needs to be escalated within the formal process.

Early resolution will be sought by the ISRO who will outline the concerns with the child or young person’s social worker in the first instance and follow up with an email. The ISRO will record this on the child or young person’s file with an ISRO Dispute Resolution case note, which includes the concerns and responses and a short analysis of the resolution.

Where the ISRO identifies a concern that has not been resolved in this early stage, they will formally escalate using the RAG rating outlined above by completing the Issues Resolution form at Appendix 2. A case note will be added to the child or young person’s electronic file and a copy of the form uploaded to the documents tab.

The staged process for Issues Resolution is outlined below:

Stage 1	Concern that has not been fully resolved at early resolution and/or requires the attention of the Team Manager
Stage 2	Concern that has not been fully resolved at early resolution or Stage 1 and/or requires the attention of the Head of Service *
Stage 3	Concern that has not been fully resolved in previous stages and/or requires the attention of the Assistant Director *
Stage 4	Concern that has not been fully resolved in previous stages and/or requires the attention of the Director of Children’s Services **
<p>*There are many reasons why an ISRO may bypass a stage to bring the concern to the attention of a more senior manager. These may include highlighting a concern made about a decision at a senior level or the serious nature or urgency of the concern demands it. Other reasons may also be valid.</p> <p>**Escalation of a concern to this stage requires discussion with the QA Head of Service following agreement with the QA Team Manager.</p>	

Accountability

The ISRO will notify the person to whom the Issues Resolution is referred by phone and email the same day as the escalation is raised.

At each stage it is important that the person who originally raised the concern is given feedback on what action has been taken in response within the prescribed RAG rating timescale. It is the responsibility of the person to whom the issue is referred to ensure that clear and timely feedback is provided and recorded on the child's electronic file.

Themed Concerns

Concerns that arise as a result of resource or other system issues and/or indicate a pattern or theme beyond an individual child should be recorded on the Themed Concern form (appendix 3) and sent to the Quality Assurance Team Manager who will review the supporting evidence.