

# Independent Reviewing Service and Child Protection Chairs Progress Resolution Pathway Protocol.

Working together to promote good practice for children and families in Gloucestershire: celebrating success and resolving challenges to good progress.



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#### 1. Introduction:

The Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chair Services recognise that Gloucestershire Children Services is committed to the delivery of good services to children and their families. Their vision "Right child, right support, right time, every time"

is set out in the Children's Safeguarding and Care Directorate, Ambitions Plan 2023-2024

It makes a clear statement of intent:

"Working together to support families and communities to give every child the best chance of a happy and rewarding life, especially those who need more help.

We will be **accountable** for our actions and decisions; be **honest**, learn and act with **integrity**; practice in a way that is respectful and **empowering** for children and families, enabling individuals to create their own solutions and we will be **relentless** in our pursuit of excellence".

Gloucestershire children's Services ambition is to consistently deliver high-quality practice that achieves good outcomes for children, young people, and families. Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs have an important role in recognising and celebrating good practice. They also have a clearly defined quality assurance role and a statutory duty to challenge where practice and decision making are not meeting the needs of children.

This protocol aims to provide the basis of a shared commitment with Children's Services; to recognise and celebrate good practice and to challenge practice, planning and decision making that is not meeting the needs of the children and families. Underpinning this process are some key principles.

#### 2. Principles:

- We will work together with family and professionals that are involved to promote good outcomes for children and families.
- The views, wishes and experiences of children and families will be at the centre of our work.
- We will hold high expectations of ourselves and colleagues and be accountable for progressing actions that we are responsible for, challenging as needed where systems and process creates delay for children.
- All communication about differences will be respectful and constructive; listening with an intent to understand and taking the views of others on board.
- We will reflect on our own practice, our own strengths and areas for development and commit to doing what works for children and families.
- We will intervene in a way that promotes conversation, strengthens 'relationship-based' practice, and role-models good practice.

#### 3. Responding to good and outstanding practice:

Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs have an important role to play in identifying, promoting, and celebrating good practice. During the course of their work Independent Reviewing Officers and, Child Protection Chairs will identify examples of good and outstanding practice, and these should be acknowledged through a 'good practice note'. The note should be completed with details of the good practice and how it has impacted on the child and family involved. This note should be sent directly to the social worker, copying in their team manager. These should contribute to the Teams' performance-evaluation of practice.

#### 4. Responding to progress and practice concerns:

**4.1 Informal resolution:** Child Protection Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers are responsible for identifying practice concerns and ensuring that they are effectively addressed on behalf of children and families receiving a service from Gloucestershire.

Where concerns are identified, they should be raised informally with the social worker and discussed with the team manager unless the seriousness and/or urgency of the situation precludes an informal discussion. If resolution can be reached, the actions agreed should be completed within 5 days or within a timescale mutually agreed as in the child's interests. For example, a concern about safety, welfare or permanence may begin as an Informal Concern and either be resolved or escalated as needed. Alternatively, an Informal Concern may be used when addressing minor delays in care-planning, starting life-story work, acquiring a service for the child, low-level concerns about their current living arrangements. An informal concern may also be considered an appropriate starting point when a Care Plan requires updating, or other issue with the completion of documents on Liquid Logic for the child such as an up-to-date Case Summary, overdue Single Assessment.

Some of these issues may be identified when QA/Progress Reviews are undertaken, and the Child Protection Chair or Independent Reviewing Officer should exercise their judgement in whether a Formal or Informal challenge is required if documentation is outdated to the extent that this is detrimental to the timely planning and actions necessary to promote the safety, welfare and/or permanence of the child.

If there is an area of intervention for the Child which is important and delayed but does not significantly impact on the care the child is receiving and is not causing undue delay or distress, this may be raised informally. However, this is a matter for the Child Protection Chair or Independent Reviewing Officers discretion who may consider any action for the child not properly attended to as requiring a formal challenge.

The Child Protection Chair or Independent Reviewing Officer will be responsible for recording agreed actions, monitoring completion of the task, and noting resolution at an informal level on the child's record in the 'Progress Resolution Pathway' (PRP) form. There is an option within Liquid Logic for the Informal Concern to be sent and responded to, by the Team Manger which may be appropriate in some circumstances. It is hoped in most cases the Child Protection Chair/Independent Reviewing Officers can agree with the Team Manager what will be noted in the Informal PRP form, and the former will complete this.

It is anticipated that by promoting the Informal, the Formal challenges will be targeted on those concerns wherein there is an issue which may, or is, compromising a child's safety, welfare, and permanence in the broadest sense.

**4.2 Formal resolution:** If the matters cannot be resolved informally within 5 days, or a timescale that is in line with the child's needs, the Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Chair should take formal action. At this point it is assumed that informal discussions with the Social Worker/Team Manager have not been sufficient to resolve the concerns. The IRO/CP Chair will contact the Team Manager to discuss their concerns. They will follow this up with completion of a PRP form, detailing the 'concern' and requesting a response from the Team Manager in the first instance (Formal Level 1). If the agreed actions are not completed within the agreed timescale the concern should be escalated to the appropriate Assistant Director, copying in the Director of Safeguarding and Care. (Formal Level 2). Within Level 2, the Assistant Director may delegate responsibility to a Head of Service, Service Manager, or Group Manager. However, they remain the accountable manager and they will agree who will attend to the concern and respond as soon as possible and no later than 5 days. If the concerns are not resolved, they will be escalated to the Director of Safeguarding and Care (Formal Level 3). If matters cannot be resolved at this stage than a further escalation to the Director of Childrens Services (Formal Level 4) will be made for resolution as necessary. The timescale from the point of being formally raised to resolution should be no more than 20 working days (IRO Handbook, 6.2). For this reason, each stage of the formal process has a maximum response time of 5 working days.

It is important to note that the Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Chair may bypass any stage of the process and raise the concern at the level they consider to be most appropriate (IRO Handbook, 6.2) in line with the needs of the child concerned. The Independent Reviewing Officer also has the authority to refer a concern to CAFCASS if they consider it necessary to do so (regulation 45). In most cases, contact with CAFCASS will be appropriate after local progress resolution processes have been unsuccessful however, should a matter be of sufficient urgency, the IRO can curtail the timescales detailed in the progress resolution pathway and refer the matter to CAFCASS to ensure concerns are resolved in the child's timescale.

Where an IRO believes this is necessary, they will do so in consultation with the IRO Service Manager and, they will inform relevant colleagues including the Head of Service for the Independent Reviewing Service, the relevant Assistant Director, the Director of Safeguarding and Care, and the Director of Children's Services.

Should the IRO be concerned about a point of law, they are able to seek independent legal advice. This will be actioned in consultation with the IRO Service Manager, and only be sought in matters that cannot be resolved without having specific guidance in reference to matters of law and statutory application of such.

# 4.3 Categories of practice quality: Good practice and progress concerns will be categorised as follows:

- Safeguarding
- Drift and Delay
- Process

#### 4.4 Raising and recording external progress concerns:

It is anticipated that in the course of their work that IRO's and CP Chairs may hold concern for the welfare provision for a child in relation to external agencies. In this situation, it is expected that informal discussions take place between the IRO/CP Chair and the external agency professional involved. If this cannot be resolved directly with them, the IRO/CP Chair should follow the procedure of the external agency in raising matters to a more senior level. All concerns relating to external agencies whether informal or formal must be recorded in Liquid Logic in a 'Concern Case note'.

#### 5. Quality Assurance and progress monitoring:

Child Protection Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers have a responsibility to monitor the progress of children receiving a service towards achieving good outcomes. This is undertaken formally through completion of a Quality Assurance Progress Review (QAPR).

For children in care the first QAPR should be completed between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Care Review for the child and between each subsequent Care Review. These do not need to be completed between the Initial and 1<sup>st</sup> Care Review.

For a child on a Child Protection Plan this should take place between all formal statutory reviews. Children will have a minimum of 3 QAPR's in their first-year subject to a Child Protection Plan and 2 checks in subsequent years.

QAPR's can be completed more regularly in line with the needs of the child but must not drop below the frequencies noted above. It is also anticipated that informal oversight will be maintained through everyday contact with the child's case.

As a result of this quality assurance activity, good practice, and practice concerns, will be identified and subject to the respective processes described in this guidance.

## 5.1 IRO Quality Assurance Progress Review: Section 1, 2 and 3:

These provide multiple-choice drop-down boxes under the headings of 'participation/views of the child', 'progress for the child/to what extent is permanence, stability and safety being achieved', and 'timely and appropriate records'. These need to be completed with a rational for each answer provided.

#### Gaining views for the QA check:

Best practice, and quality assurance presumes the inclusion of multiple perspectives in forming a view of the care provided to a child. It is for the IRO's discretion to decide what conversations need to take place to inform the QAPR. However, Social Workers should always be invited to contribute and be given fair notice to join a discussion with the IRO as part of the QAPR. It is not mandatory to speak to the child although if this can be achieved it would be valuable to know what the child's view is of the progress of their care planning. Likewise, the views of parents are helpful and necessary to be understood for every child in care. It is for the IRO to determine if they are gained within the QAPR. Communication with foster carers, and residential/supported living providers should be considered as part of the quality assurance activity. As should those in the professional and community network supporting the child.

## Grading: Rationale must be provided to explain the grading given and explanation of the impact for the child of their current care arrangements.

IRO's will need to rate the quality of the care planning for the child taking due regard for the impact for the child. Inadequate ratings should only be used where the impact for the child shows a significant cause for concern. Where a case is inadequate IRO's must raise a formal challenge.

Should an IRO Grade Requires Improvement (RI), it is anticipated that consideration is given to raising an escalation. This may be informal or formal depending on the seriousness of the concern leading to an RI grading.

A rating of Good or Outstanding should be celebrated and shared with the Social Worker and Team Manager.

#### **Actions/Recommendations:**

These should be kept to a minimum and address significant areas for the life of the child.

In all cases recommendations should be tracked by the IRO after an RI grading to ensure there is not drift in the actions whether a concern has been raised or not.

#### 5.2 Child Protection Chair: Quality Assurance Reviews:

- It is proposed that the Child Protection Chairs use the existing quality assurance form to undertake their mid-way QA Progress Reviews.
  - Outcome of quality assurance review: Outstanding progress/good progress/progress requires improvement/progress is inadequate.
    - The effective use of QARs is central to evaluating the impact of practice on children's outcomes. It is a vital tool in identifying and challenging practice where children are experiencing a service that is inadequate or requires improvement to be good.
    - QARs and the Child Protection planning process should be focused on promoting good practice through relational approaches including family group conferences, engagement with networks and through use of appropriate tools

       the Quality-of-Care e-tool, pre-birth protocol etc.
    - QARs should identify and actively challenge drift and delay and safeguarding concerns; this should include where practice has been incident led or where patterns of harm over time have not been identified, assessed, and responded to robustly.
    - QARs need to consider issues of quality and practice should be viewed through both a short- and longer-term lens.
    - QARs should evaluate the progress of the Child Protection plan as well as the
      effectiveness of the child protection process on a child's outcomes overall,
      looking beyond the immediate period of Child Protection planning to the child's
      lived experience over time.
    - The overall rating given at the end of the QAR is a rating in relation to the impact of practice for the child; critically responding to the question "Is the child safer as a result of our interventions?".

#### 6 Promoting good information sharing:

**6.1 Independent Reviewing Officers**: Good information sharing has a central role to play in good practice. Timely information sharing is vital to allow Independent Reviewing Officers to fulfil their statutory responsibilities in respect of children in care. Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 IRO Guidance (Regulation 8), the Local Authority must inform the IRO of, "Any significant change of circumstances occurring after the review that affects arrangements".

Paragraph 3.74 of the IRO Handbook sets out what constitutes a significant change and as a minimum standard the IRO should be informed of the following:

- Outcomes of any Panel applications or presentations.
- Outcomes of presentations to the Fostering Panel or Agency Decision Maker.
- Unexpected changes in the child's placement provision (which may significantly impact on placement stability).
- Proposed change of placements, and where unavoidable, actual change

of placements.

- Court Orders and outcomes from Directions hearings.
- Significant delays in completing any looked after review decisions.
- Any missing from care episodes.
- Details of any strategy discussions/meetings or other meetings where the IRO was not present.
- Any period of exclusion from school (including informal exclusions).
- Outcomes from health assessments or medical consultations which identify/confirm any serious previously undiagnosed conditions.
- Unexpected changes in the child's family or foster carer's circumstances (births, deaths, etc.).
- Arrests, bail, and convictions.
- Serious accidents.
- Changes of allocated social workers.
- Unexpected proposed or actual discharge from care.
- Complaints from or on behalf of the child, parent, or carer.
- Any relevant parallel planning (e.g. Personal Education Planning, Education Health and Care Planning or Youth Justice).

In view of the above the IRO may consider it necessary to call an early Review for a child in addressing changes to the Care Planning. Therefore, it is essential that the Social Worker/Team Manger alert the IRO, (IRO Service Manger if the IRO is unavailable) at the earliest opportunity for timely oversight.

#### **6.2 Child Protection Chairs:**

Most changes in the child's circumstances are likely to be discussed at Child Protection Conferences. However, the Child Protection Chair will need to be informed of significant changes between conferences. These include:

- Death, serious incident or significant harm to the child.
- Change of address of the primary carer, primary carer's partner.
- The child has moved out of county.
- The child has become looked after or has ceased to be looked after.
- Court Orders and outcomes from hearings (including Private Law, Public Law Outline, and Youth Justice).
- Unexpected changes in the child's family circumstances (births, deaths, etc.).
- Changes of allocated social workers.
- Complaints from or on behalf of the child, parent, or carer.
- If it is not possible to implement the child protection plan for any reason.
- Concerns for the child have increased and an early Review Child Protection Conference (RCPC) is being considered/requested.

 Concerns for the child have decreased and an early Review Child Protection Conference (RCPC) is being considered.

Similarly, to the IRO, a Child Protection Chair may consider it necessary to call an early Child Protection Conference for a child in some circumstances where the safety and welfare of a child is of increasing concern. Therefore, it is essential that the Social Worker/Team Manger alert the CP Chair (CP Service Manager in the absence of the CP Chair) at the earliest opportunity for timely oversight.

#### **7** Reciprocal escalation

In line with the relational principles inherent in this document, Gloucestershire encourages colleagues to identify and celebrate good practice by Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs. Equally, where there are concerns about the practice of these independent officers this needs to be raised accordingly.

Where good practice is celebrated, this should be through a note to the independent officer and their manager that outlines the good practice and benefit to the child and/or their family. Where practice of concern is identified this needs to be responded to through the following routes:

- GSCP Escalation Policy: where differences relate to professional decision-making and practice.
- GSCP Complaints in Relation to Child Protection Conference: where difference relate
  to the process of a conference, the outcome of a conference, and/or the threshold
  decision within conference.

Where there is notable disagreement about how a professional has conducted themself, this should be attended to informally and relationally in the first instance with a priority to repair and strengthen working relationships. If, however, this remains unsuccessful then this can be raised formally through the relevant complaints, grievance or whistleblowing processes as required.

#### **Progress Resolution Pathway- flow chart**

#### **Informal Stage**

The IRO or CP Chair raises a concern by contacting the relevant social worker/team manager and discussing their concerns and completing the PRP on Liquid Logic. Agreed actions should be completed in line with the child's timescales agreed by the CP Chair/IRO.

#### Resolved Concern:

IRO/CP Chair updates the child's record indicating that the concern has been resolved and PRP Form is finalised.

The Team Manager responds by completing the agreed actions and informs IRO/CP Chair. Completion of the PRP on Liquid Logic to be agreed.

#### Formal Stages 1/2/3/4

IRO/CP Chair records the outcome on the child's file finalising the PRP Form.

**Resolved Concern:** 

IRO/CP Chair formally raises the concern by discussing it with the relevant manager and completing the PRP form on Liquid Logic and delegating to the manager. Managers follow up the concern in the child's timescales and no later than 5 working days and completes the PRP Form in Liquid Logic.

#### Unresolved Concern:

IRO/CP Chair completes the comments section on the PRP Form and delegates this to the Team Manager.

IRO considers CAFCASS referral or need for legal advice.

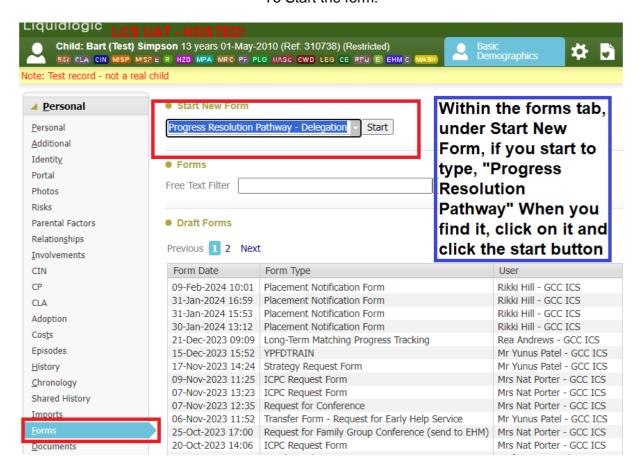
#### Unresolved Concern:

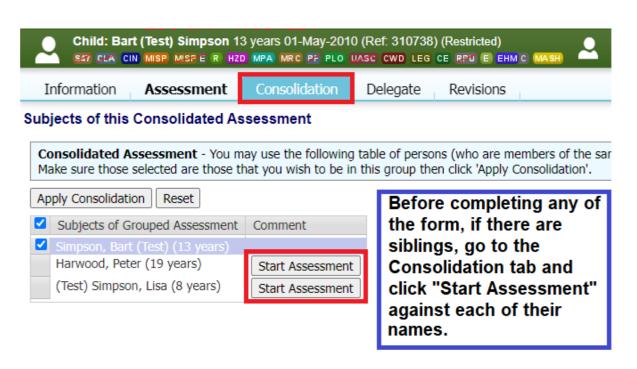
IRO/CP Chair completes the comments section on the PRP Form and delegates to the Relevant Manager as indicated in the below table. IRO considers CAFCASS referral or need for legal advice at each stage of the PRP.

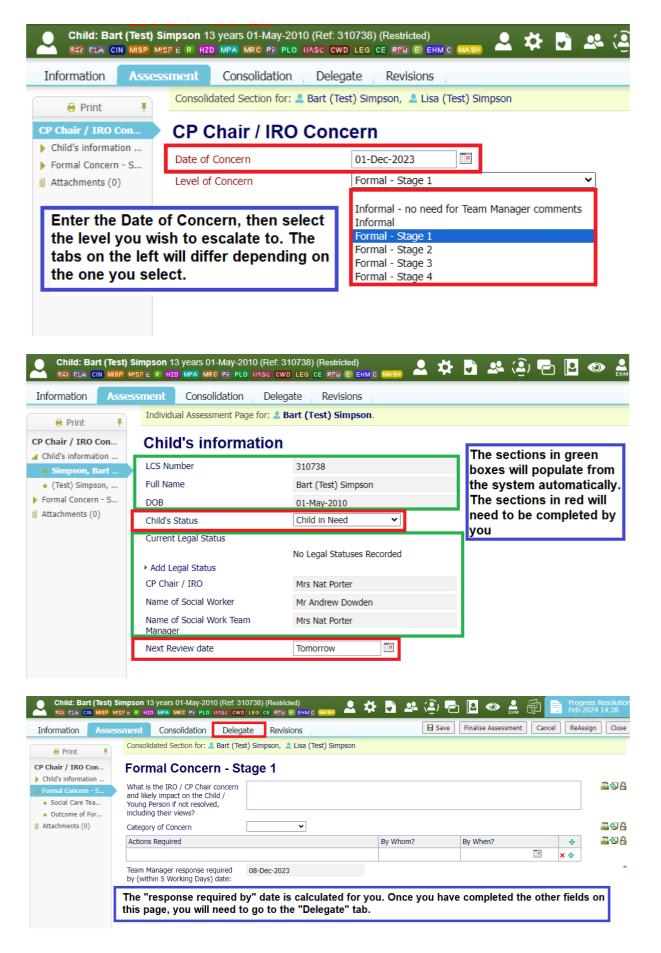
Stage:		Child in Care PRP Form	Timescale for	Note:
	Form Delegated to:	Delegated to:	Response:	
Informal	Team Manager	Team Manager	As agreed by the CP Chair/IRO with the Team Manager. This should not create drift or delay for the child.	It is expected that the IRO/CP Chair where possible will seek to have a conversation with the relevant manager at each stage of the PRP prior to delegating the form. It is the Operational Managers responsibility to oversee timely completion and notify the IRO/CP Chair by completing the PRP. The Formal Stages of the PRP must not exceed 20 working days in total.
Formal 1	Team Manager	Team Manager	5 Working Days	
Formal 2	Group Manager	Head of Service	5 Working Days	
Formal 3	Appropriate Assistant Director	Appropriate Assistant Director	5 Working Days	
Formal 4	Director of Safeguarding and Care	Director of Safeguarding and Care	5 Working Days	

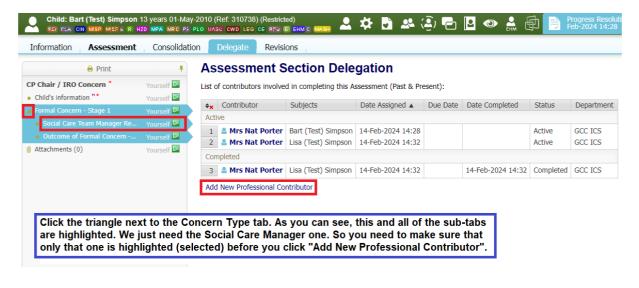
## PROGRESS RESOLUTION PATHWAY – LL GUIDANCE FOR IRO'S/CP CHAIRS MARCH 2024

To Start the form:

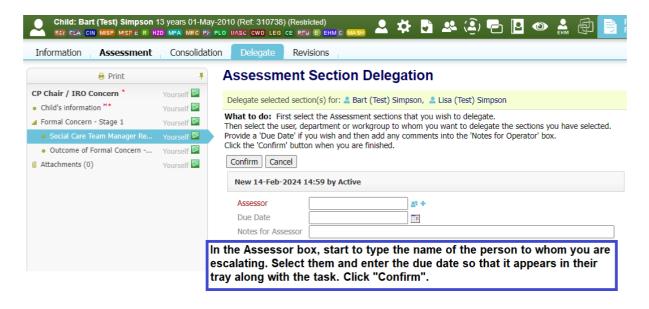


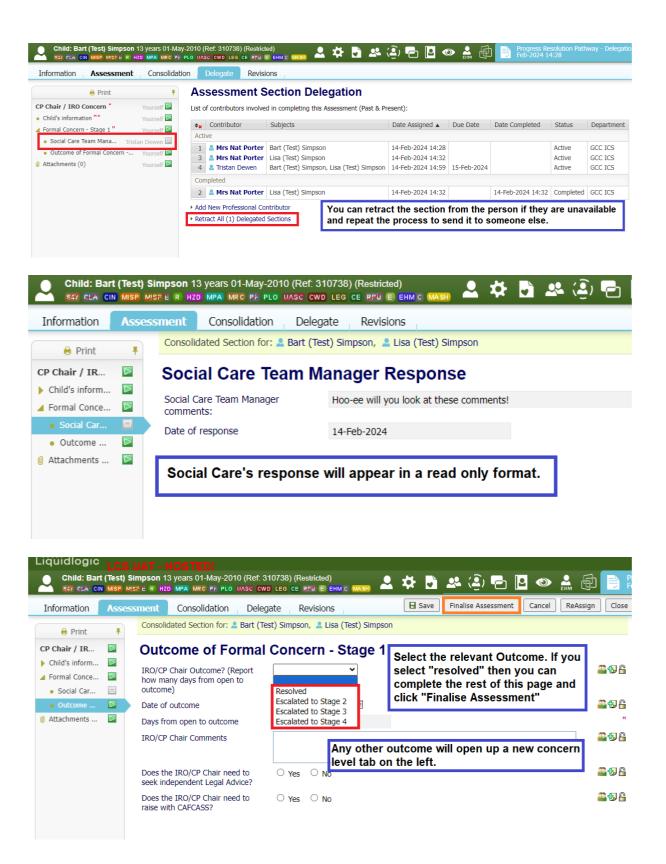


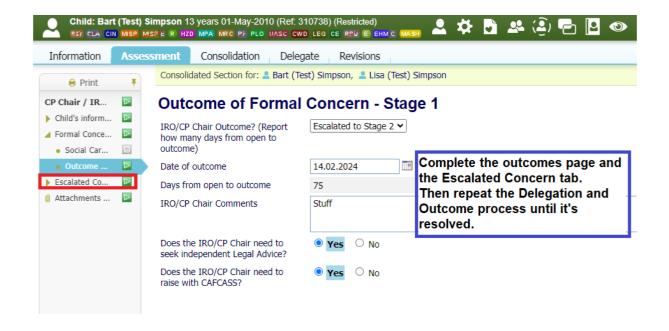




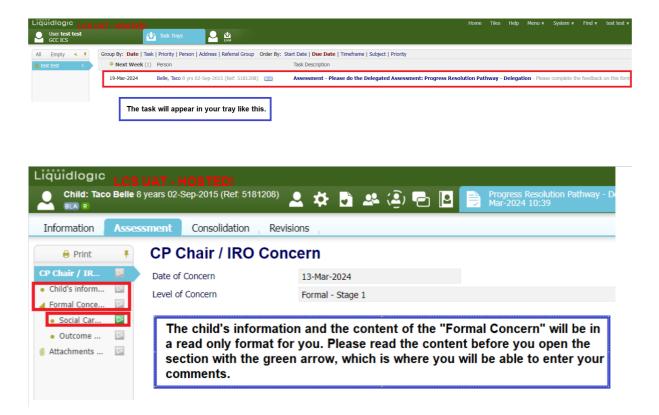


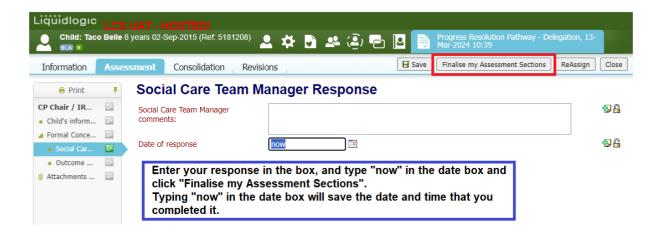






### PROGRESS RESOLUTION PATHWAY – LL GUIDANCE FOR OPERATIONAL MANAGERS





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