

# **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

## **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER'S (IRO'S)**

### **Challenge and Escalation Overview**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

The key aim of this report is to provide a regular overview of the number of Escalations by IRO's via the formal Challenge and Escalation process (this replaced the DRP – Dispute Resolution process in September 2016)

#### **IRO Monitoring and Challenge**

The IRO Handbook and Care Planning Regulations (2010) clearly place responsibility upon the IRO to 'monitor the child's case' on an ongoing basis. There is the expectation that the IRO will challenge managers where necessary and 'champion' positive care planning which is timely and relevant in respect of individual children. As a part of the monitoring function, the IRO also has a duty to monitor the performance of the local authority's function as a corporate parent and to identify any areas of poor practice. IRO's seek to ensure good outcomes for children are identified and seek to support this on an individual basis through the quality assurance role they have within the LAC Review process.

The IRO's undertake considerable work in seeking to resolve differences of opinion (disputes) informally and seek to ensure care plans and actions from reviews are based on assessments that consider the individual needs of children and their families. Where resolution focused practice has not supported the progress of the child or young person's plan, the IRO has a statutory duty to address this via the escalation process.

#### **The Escalation and Challenge Process**

Within Rotherham the Challenge and Escalation process is the formal route by which an IRO can escalate their concern to the appropriate management level.

Rotherham's Escalation and challenge process was re-launched following review in September 2016. There are 5 stages which can be commenced at any point and at

any stage. The level is determined by the IRO and Operations manager for the IRO's and determining factors would be the urgency and level of authority needed to make decisions to progress the issues identified.

The stages reflect the level of management that that the concern should raised with and the identified response time.

- Stage 1 - IRO to Team manager (1 day to respond)
- Stage 2 - Ops manager for IRO's to Service manager (5 days)
- Stage 3 - HofS Safeguarding to HofS ( 4 days)
- Stage 4 - HofS Safeguarding to Deputy Director / Director ( 5 days)
- Stage 5 – Referral to CAFCASS
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The process should provide for no more than 20 working days, to resolve the issue. In practice however it can take longer due to, the complexity of the issues raised via the process.

### **IRO Quality Assurance and compliance**

As part of the role of driving forward quality outcomes, as well as ensuring compliance, the IRO service now completes an IRO Quality Assurance and Compliance checklist. This process has been in place since October 2016 and is completed for each young person before their looked after reviews. It allows the IRO to comment on key areas of the young person's plan and journey through care and offer an overall grading as to the quality of the work completed around the young person. There are 4 grading; Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate. In order not to duplicate work, where a case is graded as Inadequate this is also regarded as a stage 1 Escalation and a plan is formulated between the IRO and Team manager following the review to support improvement.

### **IRO Activity from October 2016 to end of January 2017**

	<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Contact with CAFCASS</b>
October	14	1	1	-	-
November	19	2	2	-	-
December	10	2	3	-	-
January	11	-	2	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>0</b>

Using early intervention and monitoring complex cases between the reviews, the IRO works with CYPS, Virtual school, health and other key agencies to try and address issues where there is the time to do so at a local level and outside of this process. The Challenge and Escalation process is used where there is a visible impact for the young person or a level of concern that if action is not taken quickly, this will impact on the young person.

Key themes and issues raised via the Escalations are:

- Concerns over care planning or drift and delay
- Delay in progressing Care proceedings and lengthy periods of care under section 20
- A lack of supervision leading to a lack of management oversight and grip
- Concern around decision-making; safeguarding issues and risk being managed in placement.
- Delay in finding a long term placement, despite ongoing assessment highlighting the placement cannot meet the needs of the child
- Delay in permanence planning in respect of SGO's
- Concerns re transition to adults services and delay in the adult assessment process commencing
- Delay in the provision of therapeutic support
- Concerns around the regulation of placement with parents and management of risk related to this.
- Lack of health assessment
- Lack of PEP and or appropriate education provision
- Progression of contact
- Placement suitability
- Lack of appropriate written assessment given current level of need and risk

These key themes and issues are similar to previous periods. Of significance is the numbers that are having to be formally raised with the Head of Service as these have not been through the various stages. Key issues are the timely progression of legal action and appropriate orders and placement sufficiency.

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Children's Safeguarding Service