

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 the concern should raise 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 for Safeguarding to HofS (4 days)
- Stage 4 - HofS Safeguarding to Deputy Director / Director (5 days)
- Stage 5 – Referral to CAFCASS

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 March 2017

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Contact with CAFCASS
October	14	1	1	-	-
November	19	2	2	-	-
December	10	2	3	-	-
January	11	-	2	-	-
February	24	3	-	9	-
March	31	2	-	-	-
April	23	5	1	1	
May	21	4	3	-	
June	23	3	6	-	

July	25	1	7	2	
Total	192	21	25	12	0

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 for stage 1 reflects that since May 2017 there has been a reduction in the number of Escalations in relation to changes of SW impacting on social work visits to progressing care plans. There has been less concerns raised around supervision and visits with this reflecting a more stable management, and social work force across LAT teams 1 to 5 especially.

*Please note the majority of the stage 1 escalations are generated when an IRO rates their Quality and Compliance checklist as **Inadequate**. There are often various elements which have been identified individually reflecting a higher number of themes that the escalation figures alone indicate*

The key issues reflected in stage 2, 3 and 4 for April to July are:

- Quality and clarity of care plan (3)
- Need for updated assessment ()
- Concern around delay in active care proceedings and legal care plan (4)
- Concern around legal delay in discharging care order (2)
- Concerns around the regulation of placement with parents and management of risk related to this (3)
- Lack of appropriate education provision (1)
- Lack of up to date health assessment
- Concern around decision-making; safeguarding issues and risk being managed in placement. (8)
- Concerns re transition to adults services (1)
- Issues around contact that need to be addressed (1)
- Delay in permanence planning in respect of SGO's (1)
- Delay in permanence planning in respect of Adoption (1)
- Placement suitability (5)
- Impact of changes of social worker in relation to addressing the plan (3)
- Provision of service – access to records (1)
- Voice of Young person and delay re SGO (1)

At the last report we had raised several escalations in relation to section 20 status that had been apparent for too long. All have been addressed expect one who wet

hoe and has returned into care, showing grip and tenacious management and joint working around this issue, to ensure timely decision are made around PR and permanence planning for this group of young people.

There has also been a decline since May in cases where IRO's raised concerns around the cluster of issues related to multiple changes in social worker; issues in school, visits not recorded and PEP's and Health Assessments outstanding. There has also been a much more significant grip around supervision, with this becoming less of a theme of the stage 1 escalations in after May 2017.

We also continue to have a small amount of unregulated placements being raised by the IRO's, where there has been a delay in progressing the Placement with parent paperwork that would support consideration of this placement as regulated. This wider piece of work has been addressed by the head of service for CIC since March 2017. This does however highlight an issue around placement sufficiency as at times the decision around a young person returning home is not always planned and can be as a result of a placement breakdown and then being able to then find the right placement. Especially for young people who often have challenging needs and who want to be at home, despite the risks posed to them.

A strong theme has been the suitability of placements and the risks posed when the placements breakdown or are found not to be 'good enough'. The real spike in IRO escalations reflect we have had an increasingly older cohort of young people becoming looked after 14 + and this has at times been unstable and unsettled while we work to support the young person and keep them safe.

Another key theme that remains high is the level of concern around the quality of care plan especially in some cases where social workers have changed mid proceedings and this has created a direct impact for the young person and their plan,

On a positive level the IRO's are seeing are not raising issues re Lifestory or therapeutic provision, and the reduction in escalations around statutory visits and Supervision reflects an increasingly positive management grip.

Rebecca Wall – Operations Manager for IRO's
Children's Safeguarding Service
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