

IRO TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

**Reporting Period: 1ST October 2012
To
30th September 2013**

**Report prepared by
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1. Introduction

1.1. The Independent Reviewing Officer's (IROs) primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each Looked After child and to ensure that his/her current wishes and feelings are given due consideration. To be successful, the role must be valued by senior managers and operate within a supportive service culture and environment. An effective IRO service should enable the local authority to achieve improved outcomes for children.

1.2. The purpose of the child's review is to consider the quality of the child's care plan, based on the local authority's assessment of the child's needs. The care plan for each individual child must specify how the authority proposes to respond to the full range of the child's needs. The IRO must be satisfied that the plan identifies who is responsible for achieving the plans objectives and clear timescales set.

1.3. Schedule 7 of the 2010 Care Planning and Review Regulations lists the issues that need to be covered at the review meeting as follows:-

- The effect of any change in the child's circumstances since the last review;
- Whether decisions taken at the last review have been successfully implemented and if not, why not;
- Whether the legal status of the child remains appropriate;
- What is the long-term or plan for permanence for the child;
- The arrangements for contact with family members taking into account the child's wishes and feelings;
- Whether the placement is meeting the child's needs and whether any change is necessary or is likely to become necessary;
- The child's educational needs, progress and development
- Whether leisure activities are meeting the child's needs and current expressed interests;
- The report of the most recent health assessment of the child;
- How the child's identity needs are being met;
- That the care plan demonstrates that the child's wishes and feelings have been taken into consideration;
- Whether the child is being visited by the social worker at the minimum statutory intervals and when the child requires a visit and
- Whether any arrangements need to be made for the time the child will no longer be looked after.

1.4. The role of the IRO is described in detail at <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/i/iro%20%20statutory%20guidance%20iros%20and%20las%20march%202010.pdf>

2. The development of the IRO Service including information on caseloads, continuity of employment and the make up of the Team and how it reflects the identity of the children it is serving.

2.1. When fully-staffed the Team has one full-time Service Manager and nine full-time equivalent permanent IROs. Guidance suggests that each IRO should carry a caseload of between 50 and 70 cases. Average caseloads in Salford are currently 64 cases for each IRO. One IRO has a caseload of slightly over 70 cases where less experienced team members have no more than 55 cases.

2.2. Since the last report was submitted to the Corporate Parent Panel a full-time member of the team has reduced her hours to part-time. This left a full-time vacancy on the Team and this post was filled by an experienced social worker who commenced her role in May. This IRO is an experienced Social Work Team Manager whose previous role was on a Leaving Care Team. She has brought significant experience and skill to the IRO role. An experienced Team member left the Team in December. This was as a result of an opportunity arising for her family to emigrate to America. This post was advertised and an experienced IRO was due to commence her role in September. Unfortunately this member of staff then decided not to join the Team. An Agency member of staff is currently covering the vacant post. In the meantime agreement has been reached that the vacant post should be advertised as a Manager/ Practitioner post in order to offer additional support to the Service Manager and to further enhance good practice and the quality assurance aspects of the role. This post has been advertised and 4 candidates have been invited to attend for interview in November. The interview panel always has a young person in attendance as part of the recruitment process. The two workers who were absent from work on a long-term sickness basis at the time of the last report have now returned to the Team and are fully recovered. One part-time IRO has been absent due to ill health since July 2013.

2.3. All members of the Team, including the Service Manager, are female. Most members of the Team have been in post for several years. There is only one Team members with less than one year's experience in the IRO role and so the level of expertise is building up, providing stability and knowledge about the requirements of the Service.

2.4 Members of the Team provide representation on the Special Guardianship Panel, the Adoption Panel, the Looked After Children Strategy Steering Group, the Children's Rights Steering Group, the Child Sexual Exploitation Steering Group, the Foster Carer Forum, the Adoption Tracking Group and the BME Forum. Some Team Members also undertake Regulation 33 visits to children's homes. One IRO is a member of the Safeguarding Board Multi-Agency Training Pool and

she is involved in developing and presenting Safeguarding training to staff from Children's Services and partner agencies. A number of IROs develop and present training to colleagues in Children's Services. The Team has also contributed to the 'Voice of the Child' Steering Group.

2.5In Salford IROs chair statutory Looked After Children reviews only. In some authorities reviewing officers also chair child protection review meetings. Within the Safeguarding Unit there is a dedicated Child Protection Coordinators' Team.

3. Number of Reviews Held

3.1This report covers the period from 1st October 2012 to 30th September 2013

Month	No. of Reviews Held	Reviews Held on Time	Percentage of Reviews Held on Time
October	146	138	94.5%
November	138	131	95%
December	107	107	100%
January	89	86	97%
February	119	113	95%
March	142	140	98.5%
April	135	129	95.5%
May	122	121	99%
June	118	118	100%
July	161	160	99%
August	85	83	98%

September	95	92	97%
Total	1457	1418	Average 97%

3.2 As evidenced by the above table, an average of 121 statutory review meetings take place every month and the majority of these were held on time during the twelve month period covered in this report. 39 reviews were held outside the statutory timescale out of a total of 1457 reviews held. The reviews which were late all took place within a few days of the required date. The reasons for reviews being held late were either late notification by the social worker that the young person had become Looked After or miscalculation of the date by the IRO. Whilst statutory requirements were not adhered to in the cases where reviews were late taking place no children came to any harm as a result of this.

3.3 Review meetings are routinely booked several weeks in advance of the due date to allow for unexpected situations which may arise and require the meeting to be rescheduled. The IRO Team are aware of the need to be vigilant about dates in order that all reviews take place on time.

3.4 The number of late reviews detailed in this report shows an improvement on the number of reviews held late in the previous report to the Corporate Parent Panel. Support and guidance has continued to be offered to social workers who are new to the authority and it would seem that there is now greater clarity within the operational social work teams about the review process.

3.5. Training will again be provided by IROs to all the Newly Qualified Social Workers in Salford and so it is hoped that late notifications will cease to be a problem.

3.6 Care planning training was presented to social work staff in December 2012 to ensure that there is a greater understanding of the processes involved when a child becomes Looked After. In total 58 social workers and practice managers attended the training. 55 participants provided written feedback about the format of the revised LAC Care Plan drawn up by the IRO Team. This was mainly positive. Participants left with a greater understanding of the purpose of the LAC care plan and a commitment to ensuring that all care plans are based on the assessed needs of the child and are meaningful and achievable. This training will be repeated as new workers join the authority.

4. Procedures for resolving concerns, including the local dispute resolution process.

4.1 There is an expectation that IROs review and monitor the care plans of all Looked After Children. This means that on occasion they must challenge social workers and their managers if they feel that appropriate plans are not being made or are not being executed in a timely manner.

4.2 There is also an expectation that IROs make clear Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) recommendations at the end of each review meeting. In the majority of cases where concerns arise it is sufficient for the IRO to raise their concerns within the recommendations they make at the end of each review. A copy of the completed IRO Chair's report is sent to the child's social worker and their manager before copies are distributed to other relevant parties. There is a requirement that actions arising from recommendations are carried out within agreed timescales and that the IRO is notified when this has happened or is advised if difficulties have arisen in fulfilling the requirement.

4.3 The IRO Team have devised a system for consistently implementing the dispute resolution process, to be commenced where significant concerns arise on a case or where previously identified issues remain unresolved. (See Appendix 1)

4.4 In essence, when the IRO advises the social worker and the practice manager that their chair's report is available they will also highlight any areas requiring immediate attention. Where the issue identified is of more significant concern a formal Management Alert, Stage 1, will be issued identifying the areas for concern, the actions required and the likely consequences for the child if the actions are not fulfilled. Such issues would be discussed by the IRO in their formal supervision with the Service Manager. There is a statutory requirement that from the date that the alert is issued it will be resolved, as far as is practically possible, within 20 working days.

4.5 During the twelve month period covered in this report a number of management alerts have been raised. The main issues arising have been similar to issues highlighted in the previous report in respect of plans not being progressed in a timely manner, delay in seeking revocation of statutory orders and, in the majority, statutory visits to children not being recorded to demonstrate that visits have taken place within statutory timescales. In a small number of cases it was necessary for the IRO to follow up when their review recommendations had not been acted upon. There was also one case where a child protection matter had not been followed up although the child in question was not placed at risk of immediate harm because of this.

4.6 None of the management alerts raised have needed to progress to Stage 2 of the Dispute Resolution process as Practice Managers have responded in a timely manner.

4.7 Work continues on impressing upon social workers the need to keep the IRO informed of significant events between review meetings and to consult the IRO before important decisions are taken in respect of changes to the child's care plan.

4.8 Within the latest IRO guidance there is an expectation that IROs have access to independent legal advice. Salford has a reciprocal arrangement with Oldham's Children's Services in this respect.

4.9 In extreme cases it is appropriate for IROs to pass on concerns to the Children and Family Court Advisory Service (CAFCASS). It has not been necessary for IROs in Salford to do this during the period covered in this report as all issues of concern have been resolved in-house. This reflects a similar trend across other local authorities.

4.10 IROs also recognise and acknowledge good practice. Where they feel that a social worker has undertaken a particularly effective piece of work or has produced a very detailed and meaningful care plan they would comment on this to the worker and to their manager.

5. Outcomes of quality assurance audits in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews.

5.1 Within the Safeguarding Children Unit there is a Quality Assurance Team. The Team coordinates an auditing programme whereby a number of cases are considered on a monthly basis, giving consideration to all aspects of the local authority's involvement with the child or young person.

5.2 All the IROs, and their manager are part of the pool of auditors and this is therefore one more way in which the IROs review and challenge practice.

5.3 Where the case being considered involves a Looked After Child consideration is given to all aspects in respect of their Looked After status. This includes the IRO chair's report being quality-assured.

5.4 Throughout the period being considered in this audit no remedial action has arisen in respect of IRO involvement in cases, indicating that the standard of the IROs work was considered to be at least adequate.

5.5 There is a requirement that the IRO Chair's report is completed within 15 working days of the review meeting taking place and that it is distributed after 20 working days of the review. A weekly report is produced detailing all open assessment documents, including LAC review chair's reports. This means that where a report has not been completed within the required timescale a reminder is provided for the IRO.

5.6 There is also a requirement that the IRO manager monitors the work of the team by attending reviews to observe the IRO and scrutinises a random selection of chair's reports produced at the end of review meetings. IROs are very open to feedback when reviews have been observed and have commented how this makes them more reflective in respect of their practice.

5.7 During the period covered in this report the IRO Service Manager routinely quality assured IRO chair's reports following reviews and the findings were discussed in formal supervision sessions. There was good evidence of review meetings being child-focused and reports being written in a child-friendly manner.

5.8 In the summer of 2013 the Quality Assurance Team undertook themed audits in respect of Looked After Children and in respect of Permanence Planning for Looked After Children. The IRO Team discussed the findings of the audits and have ensured that their practice is informed by them. Examples of this are in respect of ensuring that applications for care orders to be discharged for children living at home are made in a timely manner and for IROs to comment on what aspects of a child's care plan they consider most appropriate and how this will provide the most positive outcome for the young person. The report also endorsed more effective inclusion of consultation documents within the review process.

5.9 In June 2013 Ofsted published a report evaluating the effectiveness of Independent Reviewing Officers in discharging their responsibilities towards Looked After Children. This was based on a sample of 10 local authorities being visited by Ofsted inspectors and drew on evidence from 111 cases, the views of children and young people, carers and professionals from the local authorities and from partner agencies. The Team here in Salford undertook a 'True for Us' exercise based on the findings of the report and have introduced a number of initiatives based on this. The findings of the report were a comparable reflection of our work in Salford and have provided a basis for some of our challenges for the future. The Ofsted report, 'Independent Reviewing Officers: taking up the challenge?' can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/independent-reviewing-officers-taking-challenge>

5.10 On a monthly basis senior and middle managers meet to consider Salford's Safeguarding Action Plan. A report card is produced each month highlighting the local authority's progress in a number of areas identified as being in need of improvement or needing to be monitored. One area considered in this forum is the timeliness of statutory review meetings. It is therefore the case that any reviews which have been held outside timescale are scrutinised at this forum.

5.11 The IRO Team have undertaken a piece of work to determine the most appropriate way of gathering feedback from young people, parents and social workers in respect of the review process and the performance

of the IRO Service. A significant majority of the people asked advised that they would prefer to complete a brief questionnaire at the end of the statutory review meeting to provide their views.

5.12 The original questionnaire used was redesigned to ensure that open questions are asked and that respondents are invited to make clear comments about the service they received. (Appendix 2). The updated questionnaire was handed out at all review meetings that took place in September 2012 and the results again indicated that service users and other professionals felt that the IROs made a positive contribution to care planning for Looked After Children and that review meetings were inclusive. In addition to young people, parents and social workers the September questionnaire was also provided to carers. 26 young people, 73 social workers, 40 parents and 57 carers responded to the questionnaires.

5.13 Consideration will be given to how often this exercise will be repeated each year and the content of the questionnaire will be kept under review. The findings will influence processes and practice on the IRO Team.

6. Extent of participation of children

6.1 Where possible children and young people over the age of 4 attend their review meetings. Consideration is given to the venue of the meeting and who should also be in attendance if the young person is going to be there. The views of the young person about the above are sought prior to the meeting taking place.

6.2 Children and young people are encouraged to complete a consultation document prior to reviews to ensure that their views are recorded and are represented.

6.3 Work has been undertaken by the IRO Team to redesign the consultation documents for young people. The Fight for Change Council was consulted and they provided some excellent ideas for inclusion in the document in respect of both content and layout to encourage young people to express their views in a meaningful and forthright manner. The Children's Services Commissioning Team has also been consulted. The redesigned document is now being used and feedback from young people has been positive.

6.4 The IRO guidance expresses a clear expectation that IROs should visit children and young people prior to their reviews, or should telephone them if young people do not want to be visited or if their placement is at a significant distance from Salford. This means that children and young people are consulted and that their views are sought from someone

independent of the social worker with case management responsibility or from the child's carer.

6.5 The IRO will also speak to the young person about the format of the review meeting and ensure that they understand the process, how they might participate, who will be in attendance etc.

6.6 In January 2013 the IRO Team attended 3 days training in respect of 'Facilitating Person-Centred Review Meetings'. Such meetings are already routinely arranged in Salford for young people with additional needs at the point that plans are being made for their transition to adulthood and in preparation for casework responsibility transferring to Community Health and Social Care services. These meetings are less formal than the traditional LAC review and there is an emphasis on the young person who is the subject of the review having significant amounts of input into how the meeting will be run, the venue etc. Whilst it would not be possible for LAC reviews to follow all aspects of this process, nevertheless there were significant things for IROs to learn about increasing the participation of young people in their review meeting. The Team returned from the training feeling enthusiastic and optimistic about moving this forward. One of the techniques now commonly used at the start of reviews is to ask all participants to say something that they like and admire about the young person. This starts the meeting on a positive footing and usually serves to make the young person feel more engaged in the process.

6.7 IROs always ensure that parents' views are considered and, where parents have been unable to attend, the IRO meets with them where possible after reviews to ensure that they are aware of what has been discussed and what decisions have been made.

6.8 The consultation documents sent out to parents and carers have been redesigned during the past few months and are hopefully now more meaningful. Copies are available for members of the Corporate Parent Panel to see.

6.9 Work has been undertaken by the Team to develop a letter for all young people following the statutory review meeting, regardless of whether the young person attended the review or not. The letter replaces the tear-off slip incorporated into the young person's consultation document and will be a personal response to young people about the issues covered at the review meeting

6.10 With effect from April 2012 IROs began to send a letter to young people when they first become Looked After. The letter introduces the IRO to the young person and provides very brief information about the review

process. The letter also contains contact details should the young person wish to contact the IRO directly.

6.11 Young people have traditionally been sent a leaflet explaining 'What is my review?' when they become Looked After. Earlier this year this was redesigned following consultation with young people and representatives of the Fight for Change Council. Feedback received indicated that young people did not want a 'fancy leaflet' but wanted simple information about the review process – and so this is what they are now provided with. (See Appendix 3)

6.12 A table at section 9 of this report provides details of the extent of participation of young people in their review meetings during the 12 month period covered by this report.

7. Whether any resource issues are putting at risk the delivery of a quality service to all Looked After Children

7.1. The IRO Team have not identified any major gaps in resource provision that would suggest that the quality of service to Looked After Children is compromised.

7.2. An area that has caused some concern has been in respect of a lack of consistency in the provision of transport and supervision of contact for children placed away from home. Particularly in the early stages of a child becoming Looked After, and especially when assessments to determine longer term plans are ongoing, children often have significant amounts of contact arranged to take place outside their placement. Dedicated Family Support Workers often provide transport to and from contact sessions and usually supervise the sessions. Concerns have been raised by social workers, and are echoed by IROs, that there is a lack of consistency in respect of who provides this service i.e. it is not always the same Family Support Worker who works with an individual family. This means that children have to get to know a number of different people, particularly difficult when they are dealing with the trauma of being placed away from home and having to accept that contact is limited. It also means that the boundaries set for contact sessions need to be understood by a number of different Family Support Workers and this sometimes leads to inconsistency in respect of how these are implemented. Whilst this can be confusing for children and their families it also means that evidence provided to court about family interactions during contact is not always as reliable as might be

expected. Every effort is made to ensure consistency but due to the high demand for significant amounts of contact this has not always been achieved.

7.3 An area for consideration has been follow-on services for Looked After Children when they cease to be Looked After. IROs may make a referral to the Child in Need Review Team when a young person ceases to be Looked After and their case is managed by the Child in Need (CIN) Team. The CIN Review Team will undertake regular reviews to establish that the young person continues to receive access to appropriate resources and that the family receives the level of support they require following a period of the young person being Looked After.

7.4 IROs continue to give particular regard to the care plans of children placed outside the authority to ensure that the service originally commissioned continues to meet the young person's needs. Care plans in respect of some of the children in outside placements had originally been drawn up with very specific tasks to be undertaken in order to move the child on to a more suitable long-term placement or a return to birth family. In a number of cases it appeared that, over time, the care plan had changed with some of the original goals not having been completed. Whilst there were no children in such placements who could be brought back to Salford in the short term it is a crucial role of the IRO to scrutinise care plans to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the child.

8. Admissions and discharges

Month	Admissions	Discharges	Total NO of LAC
October 2012	12	29	512
November 2012	23	15	520
December 2012	32	14	538
January 2013	21	16	543
February 2013	8	13	538
March 2013	16	14	540
April 2013	19	13	546
May 2013	35	15	566
June 2013	13	21	558
July 2013	20	20	558
August 2013	29	21	566
September 2013	15	13	568
Total	243	204	

8.1 As can be seen in the above table there were more admissions than discharges during the 12 month period covered in this report leading to an increase in the number of Looked After Children overall. The majority of discharges were due to young people reaching the age of 18 and no longer being LAC, children being adopted and an increase in the number of cases progressing to children placed with relatives being made the subjects of Special Guardianship Orders and ceasing to be Looked After. A significant number of admissions were in respect of children being cared for by relatives or 'connected others' where assessments of carers have taken place and they have been classed as foster carers for that specific child.

8.2 The introduction of the Special Guardianship Panel has meant that earlier consideration is given to progressing cases appropriately where children are placed with relatives or where foster carers wish to offer a long-term commitment to a child without the need for them to remain Looked After

9. Participation in Review Meetings

Derived from the IRO database the following are the results of an analysis of the Child Participation indicator and the participation of parents in the reviews taking place in the 12 month period covered in this report.

Child Participation

Twelve months period 01/10/12 to 30/09/13

Indicator	Code	Total	%of Total
Child attends and speaks	PN1	477	44%
Child attends and advocate speaks	PN2	32	3%
Child attends but gives views non-verbally	PN3	3	0.3%
Child attends but makes no contribution	PN4	6	0.5%
Child does not attend and advocate speaks	PN5	377	34.5%
Child does not attend but conveys views	PN6	137	12.5%
Child neither attends nor conveys views	PN7	59	5%
Total		1091	

9.1 As can be seen from the above table 44% of children and young people aged 4 and above attended their reviews taking place between 1st October 2012 and 30th September 2013.

9.2 52% of young people did not attend their review meetings but only 59 out of a total of 1091 young people neither attended nor expressed their views.

9.3 A minority of young people remain steadfast in their view that they will not attend their review meeting under any circumstances and do not wish to have their wishes and feelings considered.

9.4 Further work is needed to analyse the above information to determine that everything that can be done is being done to encourage all young people to participate in the review process in a more meaningful way.

9.5 A further 364 statutory reviews took place during this twelve month period where the child was aged under 4 years.

Parental Participation

Twelve months period 01/10/12 to 30/09/13

	Yes	No	N/A	Total	0% in attendance
Mother	665	636	155	1456	45.7%
Father	319	766	371	1456	21.9%

9.5 The IRO Team always give consideration to ensuring that all parents are encouraged to attend review meetings when appropriate. In some instances it is appropriate to exclude a parent from a review meeting possibly at the request of the child; where the child is in an adoptive placement or where the direct involvement of a parent might undermine the meeting or pose a risk to participants.

9.6 Where parents are formally excluded from meetings due process is followed in line with statutory requirements.

9.7 Further work is needed to analyse the above information to determine that everything that can be done is being done to encourage more parents to participate in the review process in a more meaningful way.

10 Areas of Progress

10.1 All the areas for development detailed in the previous IRO report have been acted upon and progressed.

10.2 In order to ensure that the IRO role is understood by colleagues and that there are clear expectations across services a number of colleagues have attended IRO Team meetings to share information about practice. These have included representatives of the Commissioning Team; a representative from CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service); representatives from the Early Intervention and Prevention Service; a representative of the Children's Rights Service and officers from the Customer First Team.

10.3 A joint protocol for collaboration between IROs and CAFCASS during court proceedings has now been drawn up and agreed. Effective working between the two services, which both provide independent oversight of cases, is now developing.

10.4 IROs have learned from quality assurance exercises and inspections of the IRO Service and have ensured that they give consideration to an increasing number of areas at each LAC review as a result.

10.5 IROs have contributed to policies in respect of children and young people who go missing from home and care and in respect of the policy for Delegated Authority which is a requirement of all foster and residential placements.

10.6 A policy has been written by the IRO Service Manager in respect of young people placed in unregulated provision.

10.7 With effect from 1st October 2013 issues raised within the dispute resolution process will be tracked more accurately to ensure that themes are identified.

10.8 Young people 12 and over now routinely receive young-person friendly minutes following their review meeting.

10.9 Formal links have now been established between members of the IRO Team and the operational teams within Children's Services to ensure that expectations of each other are clear and to provide an opportunity for discussions to take place about areas of concern and areas of good practice. This will hopefully improve outcomes for Looked After Children and avoid the need for the dispute resolution process to be invoked in some cases.

11. Areas for Development

11.1 The quality assurance element of the IRO role continues to increase with each inspection of local authority children's services departments. IROs are expected to ensure that all appropriate actions are being taken to ensure that care plans for Looked After Children are progressed and that plans are being made in line with statutory initiatives. These include the Family Justice Review reforms requiring local authorities to ensure that care proceedings are finalised in a much shorter time frame and the expectation that local authorities are able to demonstrate that they are making appropriate and timely plans for those children requiring permanent care outside their family by means of adoption. With these and other issues in mind the IRO chair's report, completed at each statutory review meeting, will be updated to ensure that it contains prompts in

respect of all the areas that IROs need to be concerned with. Redesign of this template will be completed by early next year.

11.2 Local authorities are increasingly required to demonstrate that children's views are sought in all aspects of services being provided for them. It is essential that the 'voice of the child' is evident in all reports written concerning the children with whom we are working. One of the amendments being made to the LAC review chair's report template is to ensure that there are prompts throughout the report to ensure that the child's view is recorded. IROs also need to ensure that social workers include the child's voice in the reports they provide to statutory review meetings. IROs need to increase their dialogue with social workers prior to review meetings and need to question how the child's views have been ascertained.

11.3 There is significant work to be done to analyse the information that is available about participation of children and young people in the review process. A working party of IROs has begun to consider what the available data tells us and will highlight areas for improvement as well as areas where we are doing well as a service. The aim remains for as many young people as possible to play a meaningful role in their review process. The Person-Centred training attended by the IRO Team indicated that if we concentrate some of our efforts on Looked After Children aged 8 or 9 this is a good time to engage them in the review process and hopefully to set a precedent for them wishing to attend or even chair their reviews in the future.

11.4 Another group of IROs are looking at 'identity' as one of the areas to be considered in care planning. One section of the care plan requires that identity is considered when assessing a child's needs and considering how their needs might be met. This is an area that has a different meaning for individual professionals and there is a lack of consistency in how this particular identified need is addressed. The IRO Team hope to provide clarity for practitioners and to include young people in their research into this domain.

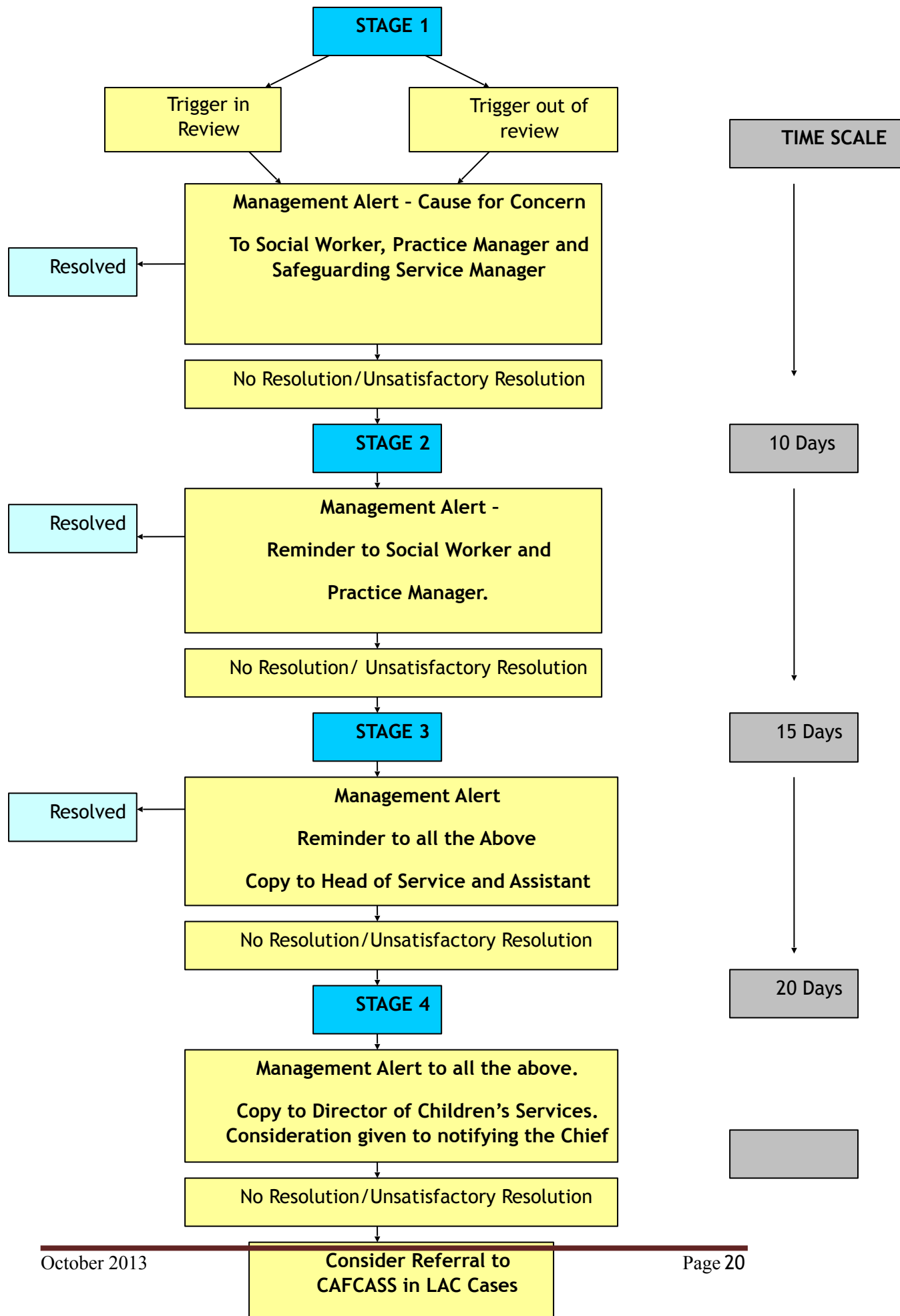
11.5 Further development of the relationship between the IRO Team and CAFCASS would be beneficial. Regular contact between the two services needs to become embedded.

11.6 A more effective method of receiving feedback from service users and professionals needs to be developed. One method that will be used in the coming months is for the Service Manager to contact review participants to enquire about their experience of the review and the 'performance' of the IRO in the process.

11.7 There is an increasing expectation that IROs challenge professionals when they do not feel that sufficient attention is being given to progressing effective care plans for Looked After Children. One of the major functions of the IRO is to monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's case. As 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. An area of development for the Team is to better understand the need to challenge professionals when appropriate in order to demonstrate that the IRO is fully exercising their duties as detailed above. The recently published Ofsted framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers places significant emphasis on the role of the IRO to monitor and to challenge and to be accountable for the quality of service being provided to the children in the care of the local authority. It is essential that the IRO Team fully understand the challenge before them and embrace the enhanced requirements of their role. A Team development day has been arranged to take place in February 2014 to ensure that all members of the Team have a full understanding of the challenge before them and their role in assuring quality of service to vulnerable children in Salford.

Gwynneth McManus

Appendix 1 Dispute Resolution Flowchart



APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire – September 2012

Feedback Questions

Children and Young People

- What did the IRO do to make sure you had the chance to take part in your meeting?
- How did the IRO explain what a review meeting is for?
- How did the IRO make sure that all your important issues were discussed?
- Did you feel that your views were listened to? *Yes, No, Partly*
- What did you think of the venue?
- Was there anyone else you would have liked to see at your review?
- Was there anyone there who you would have preferred not to be there?
- What could have been done better or differently?
- Anything else you would like to say about your review
- Please give your review a score out of 10

Parents

- Did you receive enough notice to attend?
- What help were you given so that you could attend the review?
- Was the purpose of the meeting explained to you by the IRO? *Yes, No*
- Were all the issues that were important to you discussed? *If no, please tell us what was missed out*
- How did the IRO make sure that your views were listened to?

- How did the IRO make sure that your child remained the focus of the meeting?
- At the end of the meeting were you clear about what was expected of you?
- What did you think about the timing of the meeting and the venue?
- How sensitive do you feel the IRO was to your needs?
- Anything else you would like to say about the review
- What could have been done better or differently?

Social Worker

- How did the IRO address the issues considered at the previous review?
- Prior to the review did the IRO consult with you to discuss what needed to be considered at the review meeting?
- How did the IRO ensure that the child's views, wishes and feelings were considered at the review?
- Did the review focus enough on the child/young person? *Yes, No*
- How did the IRO ensure that everyone understood what was expected of them and the timescale for the completion of any tasks set?
- If any family members appeared upset, angry or unclear how did the IRO demonstrate sensitivity to this?
- Anything else you would like to say about the review
- What, if anything, could have been done better or differently?

Carer

- Were all the issues that were important to you discussed? *If no, please tell us what was missed out*
- How did the IRO ensure that the child's views, wishes and feelings were considered at the review?
- How did the IRO make sure that your views were listened to?

- At the end of the meeting were you clear about what was expected of you?
- What did you think about the timing of the meeting and the venue?
- How sensitive do you feel the IRO was to your needs?
- Did the review focus enough on the child/young person? *Yes, No*
- Anything else you would like to say about the review
- What could have been done better or differently?

Appendix 3

STATUTORY REVIEWS

INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

WHAT ARE STATUTORY REVIEWS?

Reviews are meetings that take place when you are looked after which check:

- Your **Care Plan** is working for you
- You are being looked after well
- If anything about your **Care Plan** needs changing
- That things that were decided before have been done for you
- What plans need to be made for your future
- That you and your parents know about your care and that you all can have your say.

They generally happen every six months. You can have a say in where they take place, at what time and who attends.

WHAT IS A CARE PLAN?

Your **Care Plan** covers all areas of your life and makes sure you are well looked after. It says what has been decided about where you live, who you live with, your health, going to school, seeing your family and friends, and culture and all the positive things you have achieved. This plan may change as things in your life change.

HOW LONG ARE REVIEWS?

Your meetings will last about 1 hour or so. It's ok to ask for a break, if you need it.

PEOPLE WHO WILL BE INVITED TO THE MEETING

Your Social Worker, your Carers, your IRO, your Parents, someone from School and your School Nurse

If you are old enough you can attend for part or all of your meeting if you wish - this is something that you can talk about to your Carer, Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO for short) or if you have one your Independent Visitor or Advocate, who can be contacted by phone on 0161 787 9628 or Free phone 0800 085 6908 (but not free from mobiles) or even by Email: scrs@childrenssociety.org.uk

DO YOU GET TO SAY ANYTHING?

It's important that everyone tries to understand about how you are feeling about where you live and how things are going for you

There are different ways that you can have your say:

- You can come along to the meeting
- You can meet with your IRO before the review to discuss some of the things you might want to talk about, or you can email them or phone them. Their contact details are on the back of this booklet.
- You could fill in a consultation document.
- Even if decisions are made that you don't agree with, you can say you don't agree and ask questions. If you are worried about saying things, you can ask someone you trust to help you out (like your Carer, Social Worker, or Teacher). They could speak for you in your meeting if that would help.

AFTER THE MEETING

After the meeting your IRO will send a letter telling you the things that have been talked about in your meeting.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR YOUR IRO

You can contact your IRO between reviews if you want:

Telephone: 0161 603 4350 Email: IroTeam@salford.gov.uk or write to:
Safeguarding Children & Quality Assurance Unit, Sutherland House, 303
Chorley Road, Swinton, M27 6AY

This leaflet has been designed with the assistance of members of Fight for Change - a group of children, young people and care leavers aged 10-23, who meet regularly with the bosses in Salford who make decisions about your care. FFCC work on your behalf to make sure that you all get the best of care and support. You can contact FFCC by: Telephone: 0161 787 9628 Free phone: 0800 085 6908 (not free from mobiles). Email: scrs@childrenssociety.org.uk