

The IRO Service Code of Practice

2019

Source: National IRO Managers Partnership
(NIROMP)

We want your thoughts on this draft IRO Service Code of Practice. Please share your views via our online feedback by going to:
www.niromp.org/visionandpriorities.
Your responses will help us shape our future work plans and support IRO services deliver key improvement priorities.

Securing better life chances and choices for all children and young people in care and leaving care.

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The Code of Practice

1. Experience and Qualifications

- 1.1 The IRO will hold a social work qualification recognised by the Health and Care Professions Council
- 1.2 The IRO will be registered as a social worker by the Health and Care Professions Council
- 1.3 The IRO will have had significant relevant social work experience in children's social care
- 1.4 The IRO will be able to demonstrate that they have management skills
- 1.5 The IRO will have a thorough understanding of the legal framework relating to looked after children
- 1.6 The IRO will seek to keep abreast of latest research in relation to looked after children, and to promote evidence based practice

2. A Child-Friendly Review Process

- 2.1 In good time before every review, the IRO will discuss the review with the child's social worker to ensure that the child is properly consulted about the review and the arrangements for the review.



- 2.2 In good time before every review, the IRO will either consult directly with the child or ensure that the child is consulted with by someone he/she knows and trusts about
 - The location of the review
 - Who will be invited to attend the review
 - The timing of the review
 - Particular issues that the child would like to raise at the review
- 2.3 If necessary the IRO will ensure that separate meetings/channels of communication are set up to ensure that all relevant information is gathered for the review process. This is particularly important when important people do not attend the review meeting, perhaps because of the wish of the child.
- 2.4 After each review, the IRO will routinely ask the child how he/she experienced the review and whether there are any measures which could be taken to make the review more comfortable for them.
- 2.5 The IRO will encourage and support the child in chairing their own review if that is their wish.

3. The Voice of the Child

- 3.1 The IRO will ensure the child is enabled to have a friend supporter or advocate attend the review meeting to help them express their view if they would like that.
- 3.2 The IRO will ensure that the child has other ways of conveying their views to the review process, if the review meeting is not the most comfortable for them.



- 3.3 The IRO will ensure that the child knows about the council's complaints procedures and has the help they need in using those procedures if they want to.
- 3.4 The IRO will ensure that all decisions are properly and fully explained to the child according to their age and understanding.

4. Children's Rights

- 4.1 The IRO will have a good understanding of the children's rights framework, particularly as it applies to looked after children.
- 4.2 The IRO will ensure that children are informed of their rights (according to their age and understanding).
- 4.3 Where necessary the IRO will take steps to assist children in pursuing their rights through
 - Access to effective advocacy service
 - Referral to Children's Rights Officer (where available)
 - Referral to the Children's Commissioner
 - Use of the dispute resolution procedure
 - Referral to CAFCASS
 - Referral to a solicitor

5. Scrutinising the Care Plan

- 5.1 The IRO will ensure that the care plan is based on a proper assessment, and is subject to critical scrutiny in the review process.



- 5.2 The IRO will ensure that there is priority on securing permanent and stable placements for children, and that contingencies are identified in case of breakdown.
- 5.3 Essential elements of the plan that will always be scrutinised include:
 - Arrangements about where the child will live, who will look after him/her, and legal arrangements
 - Arrangements for education
 - Arrangements for health care
 - Arrangements for family contact and communication
- 5.4 If a written care plan is not available to the review for scrutiny the IRO will give careful consideration to whether the review needs to be adjourned.
- 5.5 The child's views will be sought on every element of the care plan.
- 5.6 If the IRO believes that the Local Authority care plan is not in the best interests of the child, he/she will challenge it promptly and assertively using the dispute resolution procedure as necessary.
- 5.7 The IRO will ensure that the child/young person is empowered to challenge the plan if they wish to, with the help of an advocate if necessary. (See 4.3)

6. Monitoring the Case and Keeping in Touch with the Child

- 6.1 At each review, the IRO will make it clear to all participants (and particularly the child) that the IRO



should be contacted by any person if they have concerns about the care plan.

- 6.2 The IRO will ensure that all participants know how to contact the IRO.
- 6.3 At least once in between reviews, the IRO will monitor the progress of each case. The extent and type of this monitoring activity should be a matter for the professional discretion of the IRO.

7. Challenging the Local Authority

- 7.1 If the IRO believes that the care plan, or any other element of policy or practice of the Local Authority in relation to a looked after child, is detrimental to the best interests of the child, he/she will raise the matter swiftly and assertively.
- 7.2 The IRO will take independent legal advice if necessary.
- 7.3 The IRO will use the 'dispute resolution procedure' to achieve the best outcome for the child/young person.
- 7.4 The IRO will consider referring the matter to CAFCASS at an early stage if that appears to be the most effective way of resolving the issue.

8. Cases in Family Proceedings

- 8.1 Where a case is in family proceedings the IRO will make early contact with the children's guardian.
- 8.2 The IRO will work closely and collaboratively with the guardian and other parties in the proceedings



- 8.3 The IRO will ensure that his/her views of the case are known to the court.
- 8.4 When the case leaves the court, the IRO will have a careful and rigorous handover process with the guardian

9. Individual and Aggregate Reports for Local Authorities

- 9.1 IROs will prepare timely review reports according to the requirements of the Local Authority.
- 9.2 The team of IROs who serve each Local Authority, will pool their views on the strengths and weaknesses of that authority's looked after children service and provide a report based on this aggregate view.

