

IRO HANDBOOK-statutory guidance

IROs should have at the forefront of their minds the lifelong welfare needs of the child and how to achieve the best outcomes for them.

From the IRO Handbook

'The IRO's primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child and to ensure that his/her current wishes and feelings are given full 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.'

When consulted about an early draft of this guidance, children and young people were clear what they wanted from their IRO:

"When they meet the child they should do this one to one so that the child can talk freely. They must check with both the child, and other people working with the child, on whether the child is OK and happy where they are living and with their care plans. They must regularly ask each child whether they are happy with how things are being done for them, and keep checking what is happening for each child against that child's plans and the decisions made at their reviews."

'The primary task of the IRO is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.'

There are now two clear and separate aspects to the function of the IRO:

1. chairing the child's review; and
2. monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis

THE LUTON MODEL OF STRENGTHENING FAMILIES & RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

'As corporate parents each local authority should act for the children they look after as a responsible and conscientious parent would act.'

IROs in Luton are expected to work within a 'Strengthening Families' model of practice. When ensuring that the Care Plan meets the needs of the child the IRO should expect that the assessment of the child's situation and permanence options has been undertaken using this model to build on the strengths and safety features of the child and their birth family, whilst taking account of the risks and history. 'Grey areas' should be explored and the wishes and feelings of the child need to be clearly understood and taken into account.

Any concern that the IRO has about whether the Care Plan meets the child's needs, or whether the Care Plan is being progressed, or any other concern that the local authority is not fulfilling its statutory duties as a Corporate Parent should be raised using a Restorative Practice approach. The aim should always be to achieve the best outcome for the child.

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS

Task	Person Responsible	Timescale
Start of BLA		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start BLA/CLA process in LCS Alert SQA manager by e-mail if LCS delay Prepare draft Care Plan & share with parents/ carers/ child Obtain & record consents (S.20/health) in LCS Provide written information about child to carers Complete Placement Plan with parents /carers /child (inc. Delegated Authority) 	<p>Social Worker/Team Manager case-holding Team</p> <p>SW with parents/persons with PR/child</p> <p>'The child's Care Plan must be prepared before the child is first placed by the local authority, or if this is not practicable, within ten working days of the start of the first placement' (IRO Handbook & Reg. 4)</p>	<p>Date of CLA/BLA</p> <p>At time of placement or within 10 working days after placement at latest</p>
Allocation of IRO		
Check e-mails & Alerts in SQA Manager's & Business Support Tray	SQA Manager and BS Manager	Daily
Allocate an IRO & notify BS Manager	SQA Manager	Within 5 working days of BLA/CLA
Add IRO to child's LCS record 'Involvements'		If late notice from SW team allocate as soon as notified
Allocate BSO	BS Manager	Within 2 working days of IRO allocation
Change of IRO	SQA Manager	Within 5 working days of need to change
SQA Manager allocates new IRO & changes child's LCS record 'Involvements'	SQA Manager will change IRO if IRO leaves/ is off L/T sick or due to needs of the case	
Allocated IRO will make contact with child, parent(s) and carer/SSW & child's SW	<p>IRO</p> <p>This can be by visit, phone, e-mail or letter/card but the child must have a written record of the IRO's name and how to contact them</p>	Within 5 working days of allocation
Timescales for Reviews- See Appendix 1 for timescales		
Monitor Review timescales in LCS	<p>BSO</p> <p>The 'Deadline date' is the last date the Review can take place to be within statutory timescale. BSO to ensure this is</p>	'Deadline date' in calendar within 5 working days of new

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

<p>Alert IRO to deadline for 1st/next Review by placing date in their calendar</p>	<p>accurate.</p> <p>IRO must give their BSO access to their electronic calendar for BSO to add the 'deadline' date to calendars. It is for IROs to manage their calendar, keep it up-to-date and add (or ask their BSO to add) actual Review date/time or other appointments & make any amendments. BSOs cannot do this unless asked.</p>	<p>LAC for 1st Review</p> <p>'Deadline date' in calendar within 5 working days of subsequent Reviews</p>
<p>Alert BSO to any change requiring earlier <i>statutory</i> Review deadline</p>	<p>IRO/BSO</p> <p>The 'Deadline date' may change if there is a Care Plan change requiring an earlier Review (See IRO handbook for circs requiring an earlier Review)</p>	<p>New deadline to be given by IRO to BSO within 5 working days of change</p> <p>New deadline to be placed in IRO's calendar</p>
<p>Adjourning a Review</p>	<p>IRO</p> <p>'Responsibility for deciding whether or not a review should be adjourned rests with the nominated IRO for the child concerned. In such circumstances the review may be adjourned once but should be completed within 20 working days.</p> <p>Where the review is adjourned by the IRO, the date of the review for recording purposes is the date on which the review was originally scheduled to take place' (IRO Handbook)</p> <p>An adjournment is exceptional. Circumstances where an adjournment should be considered are in IRO Handbook & the reasons must be recorded in the Minutes and as a case note.</p>	<p>If adjourning, Review process to be completed within 20 working days of scheduled date</p>
<p>Changing the date of a child's Review</p> <p>Any request for a change of Review date must be made to the child's IRO and can only be agreed by the IRO</p> <p>IF IRO agrees new date with SW IRO informs BSO to change date in LAC calendar- this will trigger new date to send invites</p>	<p>SW/TM/IRO</p> <p>IRO can only agree to change date of Review within statutory timescale. The child/parent/care must be informed asap if SW/IRO changing date and consulted re new date</p> <p>IRO/BSO</p>	<p>IRO/SW/TM must agree any change asap</p> <p>BSO to follow Invitations process/timescale</p>
<p>Requesting Review outside timescale</p>	<p>SW TM</p>	<p>Service Director to be notified asap and</p>

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

<p>Only the Service Director can approve a Review being moved outside statutory timescale</p>	<p>TM to Service Director</p>	<p>permission requested in advance by SW Team</p>
<p>Prior to Review Meeting</p>		
<p>Check LAC calendar for forthcoming reviews</p>	<p>Business Support Officer(BSO)</p>	<p>20 working days before Review send IRO and SW an alert with message</p> <p>Appendix 2 message</p>
<p>Interpreter Services</p>		
<p>Ensure child and/or their parent has access to an advocate and/or interpreter or any other aid they require in order to understand and make their contribution to the child's care planning and Review</p>	<p>SW & IRO</p> <p>'Every child and his/her parents should be offered the support of an interpreter, if English is not their first language. This is the responsibility of the social worker. However, as part of the initial discussion between the IRO and the social worker, in advance of the review, the IRO should establish the first language of both the child and the parents. A child may be of the view that his/her use of the language is adequate but it is important that each child can participate appropriately in the process and that his/her views are fully represented. Decisions could be made at a review that will have lifelong implications. It may therefore be helpful for an interpreter to be present, even if his/her services are used for parts of the meeting only.'</p> <p>(IRO Handbook)</p>	<p>SW Team to book interpreter or ensure aids available for child/parent if required in timescale for Review</p>
<p>Advocacy</p>		
<p>Information to be given to child on role of advocate and referral to be made to NYAS if child/person with PR consents</p>	<p>SW</p> <p>'Every child has the right to be supported by an advocate. The local authority must have a system in place to provide written, age appropriate information to each looked after child about the function and availability of an advocate and how to request one'</p> <p>(IRO Handbook)</p>	<p>SW to make referral to NYAS in timescale for NYAS to contact child and be available to support/represent child at Review</p>
<p>Date, Time & Venue</p>		
<p>Initial Reviews Only Date, time & venue of Initial LAC Review to be agreed with SW and notification sent to allocated BSO</p>	<p>IRO/BSO</p>	<p>Within 2 days of allocation of new LAC child</p>

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

<p>Initial & Subsequent Reviews SW to consult with the child/their representative and IRO re invitees and venue</p> <p>BSO to add to LAC Calendar</p> <p>IRO to agree date of next Review with LAC Review participants at meeting.</p> <p>IRO to note date, time and venue in Review Outcomes as last decision & on Attendance Sheet</p> <p>IRO to hand Attendance sheet to BSO with attendee details & date, time & venue of next LAC Review</p> <p>BSO to input in LAC Calendar</p>	<p>Child's SW/Team</p> <p>'The review is the child's meeting (see paragraph 3.29) and discussion should take place between the social worker and the child at least 20 working days before the meeting about who the child would like to attend the meeting and about where the meeting will be held.' (IRO Handbook)</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the SW to discuss the invitees & venue with the child and inform the IRO, and ensure the venue is booked. If assistance to do this is required from the SQA Business Support Team, the SW must request this at least 15 working days before the Review</p> <p>BSO</p> <p>IRO</p> <p>IRO Revised Attendance Sheet must be used with box for details of next Review</p> <p>IRO</p> <p>BSO</p>	<p>SW to discuss with child/their rep. 20 working days before Review</p> <p>Within 24 hours of notification from IRO</p> <p>At Review</p> <p>Within 5 working days of Review</p> <p>Within 2 working days of Review</p> <p>Within 5 working days of being handed Attendance sheet</p>
Invitations		
<p>Initial LAC Reviews Only Send out invitation list to SW and Team admin clerk with 2 working days' deadline to complete</p> <p>Make case note in LCS and update LAC spreadsheet with date invitation list sent</p> <p>LAC nurse and Adoption TM and Admin and Fostering TM and Admin to be notified of Initial LAC Review</p>	<p>BSO</p> <p>BSO</p>	<p>For Initial LAC Reviews Within 24 hours of notification of date from IRO</p>

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

Return completed invitation list with confirmed names & addresses/secure e-mail address for all invitees	SW Team It is the SW Team's responsibility to ensure that the names and addresses given to the BSO are accurate and up-to-date & align with details in LCS	Within 2 working days of receipt of request NB deadline may be shorter if SQA Service had late notice of LAC as 1st Review date remains within 1 month of LAC start date
If invitation list not received send reminder to SW and team admin clerk and copy in TM Update LAC spreadsheet with date reminder sent	BSO	2 working days after above
If updated invitation list not received then escalate to SQA Manager	BSO/SQA Manager SQA Manager will copy to TM (& SM if required) for urgent response	1 working day after above
Send out invitations <i>including name and contact details of IRO, consultation forms & NYAS information</i> for children, carers & parents Update LCS and LAC spreadsheet with date that invitations are sent & invitation list	BSO Written consultation documents should be sent out to children, parents, carers and other relevant adults at least ten working days before the review. (IRO Handbook) BSO	At least 10 working days prior to Review
Subsequent LAC Reviews Send copy of last attendance sheet to SW to ask if any details for child, parent or carer have changed & if there are any new professionals who were not at least LAC Review	BSO	25 working days prior to next Review
Send IRO & SW an e-mail reminder of actual date of next LAC Review *+ CC Virtual School & LAC Nurse + Fostering SSW &/or Adoption SW if internal	BSO SW Teams Please note that no reminders will be sent to external professionals who received date of Review in Outcomes/Minutes from previous Review unless this was subsequently changed	20 working days prior to next Review
Return attendance sheet confirming details and any changes for child, parent or carer address and noting any new professionals involved who need to be invited (after consultation with child)	SW Team It is the SW Team's responsibility to ensure that the names and addresses given to the BSO are accurate and up-to-date & align with details in LCS It is best practice to advise the IRO/BSO asap when a new professional becomes involved- 20	Within 2 working days of receipt of request from BSO

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

	working days prior to next Review is deadline	
BSO to send reminder invite to child/carer/parent (<i>with consultation docs</i>) + any new professional to be invited and notify of date, time & venue of LAC Review	BSO	Within 5 working days of receipt of reply from SW and no later than 10 working days before Review
Print off report packs if required by IRO Consultation Forms to be uploaded to LSC	BSO	As above
Before the Review Meeting		
IRO to consult with case-holding SW before the Review & record progress against Care Plan and any actions outstanding/concerns Record in child's LCS record a case note of outcome of consultation	IRO & SW 'The IRO should speak to the social worker at least 15 working days before the review.' (IRO Handbook) IRO should note when Care Plan on track, or if any changes are required, if anyone needs to be consulted about changes, or if any actions from previous Review are outstanding & how outstanding issues are to be resolved with timescales.	At least 15 working days before Review
Complete SW Report for Review & share with child/parents/carers	SW (IRO Handbook)	At least 3 working days prior to Review
View in LCS containing social worker pre meeting report, minutes of last LAC review, PEP, Health Assessment, Consultation Forms, Feedback Questionnaires	IRO 'The IRO should be provided with or have access to any relevant reports/plans or background information, including the current care plan, the report from the social worker (which should be available at least three working days before the commencement of the review), the current health plan or medical assessment report and the current personal education plan (PEP)'. (IRO Handbook)	At least 3 working days prior to Review
Consult with the child's carer/SSW before the Review & record this in child's LCS record as a case note	IRO	By 3 working days before Review
Meet with the child alone if of age and understanding Or:	IRO 'The IRO must speak with the child before the review	Before the Review

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

<p>See child with carer/SW/advocate if deemed to be too young or vulnerable to see alone</p> <p>Or: Contact the child by other means before their Review- text/ phone/e-mail</p> <p>And: Ascertain their wishes and feelings in respect of their Review and explain the Review process</p> <p>Record this as a separate case note in child's LCS record with observations, & child's wishes and feelings</p>	<p>If the IRO has an established relationship with the child this can be by phone or short discussion pre-review'</p> <p>(IRO Handbook)</p>	<p>Within 5 working days of contact with child</p>
--	---	--

**The Review Meeting –
Appendix 3: Agenda Aide Memoir**

REVIEW PRINCIPLES

- **The Review is the child's meeting**
- **Subject to the age and understanding of the child, the child should be involved in decisions about the date, time and venue of the meeting, the agenda and the invitation list.**
- **The meeting should take place at a time convenient for the child. Meetings should not be arranged at a time that would result in the child being absent from school or college (*but could be at school/college worked around the child's timetable*) or an essential health appointment. It should take place in a setting in which the child feels comfortable and relaxed.**
- **The review must address a specified range of issues and must take place at specified intervals. Neither of these requirements may be in line with the child's wishes and feelings. In order to ensure that the meeting remains the child's meeting as far as is possible, the IRO should always begin from the perspective of the child, listen to his/her views and make sure that s/he is involved as much as possible in the review process.**
- **The purpose of the 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, taking into account his/her wishes and feelings**
- **The review will need to monitor the progress of the plan and to make decisions to amend the plan as necessary in light of changed knowledge and circumstances**
- **The IRO must be satisfied that the plan identifies who is responsible for achieving the plan's objectives and clear timescales set**

Date, Venue, Time of Next Review

<p>IRO to ensure all attendees have agreed date, time &</p>	<p>IRO</p>	<p>At end of Review</p>
---	------------	-------------------------

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

venue of next Review (subject to consultation with/on behalf of child if not present or represented)	<p>IRO to ensure date is within statutory timescale for type of Review (1st/2nd, adoption, custody, secure, change of plan) & leave margin</p> <p>IRO to agree with participants/child whether next Review will be 1 meeting or series of meetings</p>	
At the end of the Review		
Ensure Attendance Sheet is completed with names, addressee + any who did not attend but needs a copy of the Minutes + date, time and venue of next review	<p>IRO</p> <p>IRO to ensure all attendees gave their full address or a <u>secure</u> e-mail address for minutes</p> <p>SW to add anyone who is not in attendance but needs copy of Minutes with accurate address/<u>secure</u> e-mail details details</p>	At end of Review
If the child attended, check they are OK and understand the decisions agreed	IRO	At end of Review
Collect Feedback Sheets from child/carer/parents	IRO	At end of Review
Following Review Meeting		
IRO to update Attendance Sheet with details of next Review date, time & venue recorded	IRO	Immediately after Review
Return Attendance Sheet to BSO	IRO	Within 2 working days of Review
<p>Scan Attendance Sheet into LCS Docs and amend LCS Review Attendance Record</p> <p>Request from Civica addition of any professional/relative not recorded in child's LCS record who attended or needs a copy of the Minutes</p>	<p>BSO</p> <p>BSO</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the SW Team to ensure the child's LCS record is updated before the Review with details of all relatives and professionals who will be attending or need a copy of the minutes.</p> <p>However, to progress business the BSO will request anyone missing to be added to the child's LCS record after the Review. This should be an exception, not the rule.</p>	<p>Within 1 working day of Review</p> <p>IRO needs this updated asap in order to complete Outcomes/Decisions</p>
Implement 'Escalating Concerns		

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

(inc. Dispute Resolution)' Procedure if required and notify BSM of date of implementation	IRO	Within 5 working days of Review (depending on urgency this may need to be sooner)
Record date of Review and any key actions as case note in child's LCS record Record as separate case note if spoke with child alone and record their views and IRO observations Record as separate case note if raised an Escalation/Dispute Resolution &/or any consultation with TM/SW after the Review	IRO	Within 5 working days of Review
Input date of next LAC Review on LAC Calendar & update next 'deadline' date	BSO	Within 2 working days of Review
If Escalation/Dispute Resolution Process commenced then date to be added to Escalation/Dispute Resolution Spreadsheet and Escalation/DR to be tracked with reminders sent to IRO to escalate further if not resolved within 5 working days	BSM	Within 2 working days of notification from IRO
Complete Outcomes/Decisions and notify TM, SW and BSO that these are available on LCS	IRO Date of Review must be recorded from date of Part 1, or original date if adjourned (IRO Handbook) IRO to complete Decisions in WORD, make a case note, and send to TM & SW if unable to upload to LCS due to lateness of Sw Report or other workflow issue	Within 5 working days of Review
Check Decisions in LCS and notify IRO of any disagreement or amendment	Case-holding TM No response to IRO within 5 working days will indicate approval of Decisions *There has been much discussion and debate over many years about the	Within 5 working days of notification from IRO

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

	<p>status of decisions made at reviews and an acknowledgement that the review cannot tie the hands of a local authority in relation to some issues, particularly where there are resource implications.</p> <p>In order to remove these difficulties, the local authority should have a system in place for a designated senior member of staff, for example a team manager, to consider the decisions made at each review within five working days of receiving them and to advise the IRO and all those who attended the review if they are unable to agree them.</p> <p>If no response is received the decisions should be considered agreed by the local authority and should be implemented within the timescales set out in them. If the senior member of staff disagrees with any of the decisions within that initial five working day period, this should be notified in writing to the IRO and all those who attended the review.'</p> <p>(IRO Handbook)</p>	
<p>Complete minutes and notify TM and SW and BSO that these are available on LCS</p> <p>*CC Fostering SSW and/or Adoption SW & Virtual School if internal</p>	<p>IRO</p>	<p>Within 15 working days of Review</p>
<p>Consult with child's SW if parents did not attend Review re distribution</p> <p>Inform BSO of decision re distribution to parent(s)</p>	<p>IRO/Child's SW</p> <p>'Where parents do not attend the review part of the meeting with the child and contribute their views in some other manner, a discussion should take place between the social worker and the IRO as to whether it is in the child's interest for the parents to receive a full record of the review and, if not, what written information should be sent to them. Examples of where this should be a consideration are where there is a no contact order or supervised contact only'</p> <p>(IRO Handbook)</p> <p>IRO</p>	<p>Within 15 working days of Review</p>
<p>Distribute minutes to attendees and those who have given apologies who do not have access to LCS</p> <p>Update LCS & LAC spreadsheet with date minutes are distributed</p>	<p>BSO</p>	<p>Within 20 working days of Review</p>
<p>Feedback questionnaires to be</p>	<p>IRO</p>	<p>Within 5 working days of</p>

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

placed in tray in the office		the Review
Feedback questionnaires to be uploaded to child's LCS record and noted as 'returned' on LAC spreadsheet	BSO SQA Manager will routinely sample feedback questionnaires for audit	Within 15 working days of the Review
Child's Care Plan (Part 1 & 2) to be updated in LCS & distributed to Review participants Placement Plan also to be updated esp. if changes to Delegated Authority or other requirements of carers re contact arrangements or response to missing episodes agreed in Review	SW & SW Team 'Within ten working days, following the completion of the review, the social worker should update the care plan in relation to any changes to the care plan agreed at the review.' (IRO Handbook)	Within 10 working days of the Review
IRO Monitoring		
Complete QA Checklist	IRO	Within 5 working days of Review
Mid point review date to be placed in IRO calendar & to be conducted and case note to be added to child's LCS recording	IRO IRO will undertake an audit of progress of the child's care plan, including whether the Care Plan parts 1 & 2 is up-to-date, reflects the Permanence Plan for the child, decisions of the last Review and any significant changes, and is being progressed in timescale. IRO to note progress in a case note against child's Care Plan, acknowledge good practice, &/or escalate any concerns using Escalation/Dispute Resolution process & record the impact for the child.	Mid point between Reviews
IRO to see the child in placement at least 1x annually & record observations and analysis in LCS	IRO IRO to ensure child has copy of The Pledge, NYAS information, IRO & SW contact details. IRO to go through Care Plan –in line with child's age and level of understanding Pack will be available to take out	1x annually
Ensure consultation with SW takes place before child's Review	IRO/SW	At least 15 working days before next Review

BUSINESS PROCESS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEWS & CARE PLAN MONITORING

<p>Notify IRO of any proposed or actual change to Care Plan between Reviews</p> <p>Seek & record IRO view before completing Final Court Care Plan in care proceedings</p>	<p>SW</p>	<p>At time of proposed or actual change</p>
<p>Respond to any notification of change of Care Plan or request for views</p> <p>Record in LCS case note</p>	<p>IRO</p> <p>Consider whether Review needs to be brought forward (see IRO Handbook for when this must happen and when discretionary)</p>	<p>Within 5 working days of notification</p>
<p>Complete Feedback for Foster Carer Reviews</p>	<p>IRO</p>	<p>Return before 5 working days before Foster Carer Review</p>
<p>Use Escalations Procedure to address any concerns re progress of Care Plan for the child at any point</p>	<p>IRO</p>	<p>In Escalation/DR timescales</p>
<p>Monitor progress of any Escalation/Dispute Resolutions raised & record actions taken in LCS</p> <p>Note concerns addressed</p> <p>Escalate to senior managers if required</p>	<p>IRO</p> <p>Use Escalations Procedure</p>	<p>In Escalation/DR timescales</p>
<p>Note progress of Escalations raised and request updates from IROs</p> <p>Update Escalations spreadsheet</p>	<p>BSM</p>	<p>End of each month</p>
<p>Monitor progress of any Audit Action Plan with TM (as allocated by SQA Manager) where 'inadequate' audit has been done until gets to 'good'</p> <p>Report progress to BSM & SQA Manager</p>	<p>IRO</p>	<p>Monthly</p>
<p>Monitor IRO caseloads and progress of care plans in IRO Supervision</p>	<p>SQA Manager</p>	<p>Monthly</p>