

ISSUES RESOLUTION AND CHALLENGE PROTOCOL

CHILD PROTECTION (CP) AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC)

1 Introduction

1.1 This protocol outlines two main processes: a mechanism to highlight the failure to progress the implementation of a child protection plan or a looked after child care plan; to outline the way in which IROs will capture issues resolution and challenge in the LCS electronic child recording system.

1.2 Ensuring that protection plans and care plans are implemented in a timely manner and that the necessary resources are made available to do so is a primary responsibility for Independent Reviewing Officers; indeed it is a statutory responsibility in respect of looked after children.

1.3 Where there is a disagreement about the content of a child protection plan, this should be resolved through discussion with the respective first line managers and then the heads of service if that disagreement is primarily between staff working within the council. In the event that the Heads of Service are unable to resolve the matter, the final decision will lie with the Director of Specialist Services or their nominee. If the disagreement concerns a professional from another agency, the HSCB escalation procedure should be used.

1.4 Where there is disagreement about the content of a looked after child care plan, this should be resolved through discussion with the respective first line managers and then the Heads of Service. In the event that the Heads of Service are unable to resolve the matter, the final decision will lie with the Director of Specialist Services or their nominee. .

2 Issues Resolution and Challenge

2.1 When chairing a Child Protection Case Conference or the Review of a Looked After Child, the Independent Reviewing Officer's primary responsibility is to the child(ren) that are the subject of the Child Protection Plan / Care Plan. Such plans should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. This provides children / young people and their parents / carers with a clear expectation of what they should expect to be happening and by when. It also provides the Reviewing Officer with a clear set of expectations by which to judge the implementation of the care or protection plan.

2.2 The Reviewing Officer is expected to monitor the implementation of the protection / care plan at the formal review meetings and at points in between the formal reviews to ensure that progress is being made. Should the reviewing officer be concerned that progress is not being made with the implementation of the protection / care plan, then they should raise that concern informally with the social worker or immediate line manager of the social worker for the child.

2.3 If the informal resolution does not achieve change, then the processes set out below should be followed. Whilst face to face discussion is to be encouraged, a formal challenge should also be documented, i.e. it should be set out in writing (email) and a copy of the email placed in the case notes in LCS.

2.4 The Reviewing Officer should be cognisant of the possibility that their challenge may be subject to the scrutiny of the court and that it is part of a process that should be undertaken before any referral to CAF/CASS. The timescales set out below are the maximum. The age of the child and the nature of the concern may require that a response is required more quickly.

Issues Resolution and Challenge Protocol – Child Protection [CP]

Week 1-2	—	<p>IRO Level 1 Discussion (CP)</p> <p>If there is a disagreement in the decision/outcome of the CPCC between IRO and SW; discussion to take place between these professionals and the query/issue is resolved.</p> <p>LCS Case Notes to Include: query, action, outcome</p>
Week 3-4	—	<p>IRO Level 2 Discussion (CP)</p> <p>Outcome of level 1 has not been achieved within the timeframes and therefore the IRO alerts the IRO TM, CAS ATM and the CAS TM to this query/concern for discussion and it is resolved.</p> <p>LCS Case Notes to Include: query, action, outcome</p>
Week 5-6	—	<p>IRO Stage 1- Issues Resolution Meeting (CP)</p> <p>If there is no resolution to the query/issue, a meeting to be held with Heads of Service. Discussion and outcome of meeting captured on LCS and Case Monitoring Board is alerted.</p> <p>LCS Case Notes to Include: query, action, outcome</p>
Week 7-8	—	<p>IRO Stage 2 – Issues Resolution Meeting (CP) Exceptional Circumstances</p> <p>Should no resolution be made, a progression to Stage 2 Issue Resolution Meeting with AD to discuss issues accordingly. Attendees decided at the time of meeting as appropriate. The AD (or appointee) will make the overall decision in relation to the issue.</p> <p>LCS Case Notes to Include: query, action, outcome</p>
Week 9-10	—	<p>Should the IRO maintain their position, note difference on LCS. Consider the issues which are significantly different. AD to make decision on upholding differences. IRO to follow escalation process as appropriate and can consider contacting CAFCASS accordingly.</p> <p>Note final agreed decisions on LCS</p>

Issues Resolution and Challenge Protocol – Looked After Children (LAC)

Week 1-2	—	IRO Level 1 Discussion (LAC) If there is a disagreement in the decision/outcome of the Care Plan/Pathway Plan between IRO and SW; discussion to take place between these professionals and the query/issue is resolved. LCS Case Notes to Include: query, action, outcome
Week 3-4	—	IRO Level 2 Discussion (LAC) Outcome of level 1 has not been achieved within the timeframes and therefore the IRO alerts the IRO TM, CAS ATM and the CAS TM to this query/concern for discussion and it is resolved. LCS Case Notes to Include: query, action, outcome
Week 5-6	—	IRO Stage 1- Issues Resolution Meeting (LAC) If there is no resolution to the query/issue, a meeting to be held with Heads of Service. Discussion and outcome of meeting captured on LCS and Case Monitoring Board is alerted. LCS Case Notes to Include: query, action, outcome
Week 7-8	—	IRO Stage 2 – Issues Resolution Meeting (LAC) Exceptional Circumstances Should no resolution be made, a progression to Stage 2 Issue Resolution Meeting with AD to discuss issues accordingly. Attendees decided at the time of meeting as appropriate. The AD (or appointee) will make the overall decision in relation to the issue. LCS Case Notes to Include: query, action, outcome
Week 9-10	—	Should the IRO maintain their position, note difference on LCS. Consider the issues which are significantly different. AD to make decision on upholding differences. IRO to follow escalation process as appropriate and can consider contacting CAFCASS accordingly. Note final agreed decisions on LCS

