



**Independent
Reviewing Officer
Service Annual Report**

**A Summary Report for Children
and Young People**

April 2022 to March 2023

September 2023





Our vision for all Looked After Children and Young People

"To ensure that, through the independent review process, protection and care plans for children meet their individual needs and secure better outcomes for children and young people."

Your IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) will ensure your protection and care plans will meet your individual needs which will make sure you have the best outcomes possible.

We are committed to you and will help you to achieve your best by focusing on your strengths and celebrating your achievements.

IRO's work creatively and praise the positive work undertaken with looked after children, which is very important to make sure children are safe, happy, healthy and are being supported to build a promising future.

The Voice of Nottinghamshire Children and Young People

The IRO service ensures the voice of Children and Young People are listened to and any issues they raise are talked about and the right action is taken for them.

Every effort is made to make sure the voice of Children and Young People is heard, some Children and Young People choose to speak with their IRO on their own, some come to their review and some ask an advocate to speak on their behalf.

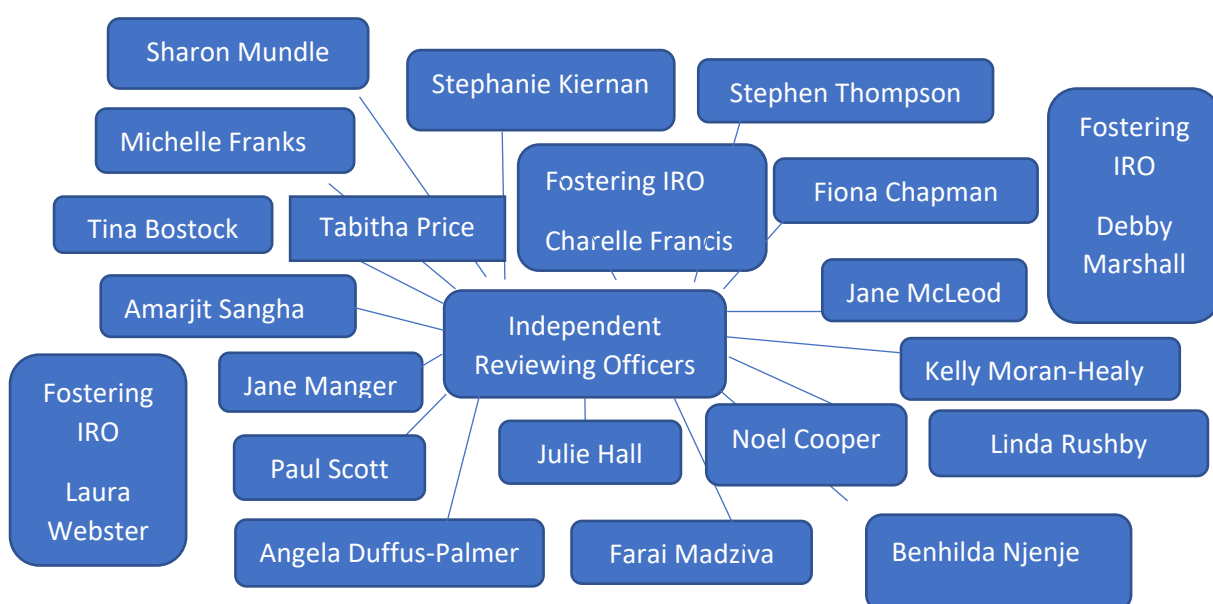
A report must be written every year on how we are doing.

This report talks about:



What is the Independent Reviewing Officer Service?

The Independent Chair Service makes sure that Children and Young People who are Looked After or going through the Child Protection process are listened to and get the care and support they need. We make sure people work together and share what works well to make things better for Children and Young People.





Children and Young People who are Looked After

- At the end of March 2023, there were 967 Children and Young People being looked after by the Local Authority.
- 43.2% of Children and Young People attended their reviews.
- 50.9% of Children and Young People did not attend their reviews but asked for their wishes and feelings to be shared at their review.
- 5.9% of Children and Young People did not attend their reviews but asked for an advocate to speak for them.
- IRO's continue to work to ensure all Children and Young Peoples' Care Plans are meeting their needs and changes to their Care Plans are made when needed.
- IROs make sure they ask Children and Young Peoples' wishes and feelings through talking to and visiting them, also through their social worker or carer, these tend to be young people who either do not want to be involved in their review or are happy to be told how their Care Plan is meeting their needs by their IRO's, or by their carers or their social workers afterwards.



Achievements of some Children and Young People

16 yr old who overcame illness, he was being very brave when undertaking treatment. He started to attend college and described as having an infectious laugh and being a caring young person. He also won the John Stollery award for his bravery.

17 yr old began his basic training for the army. Although he struggled initially, he persevered and is now enjoying the training.

This shows what a resilient and determined young person he is as this has been his long-term ambition.

17 yr old who adjusted well to living independently. He experienced a lot of challenges throughout his care journey. He applied for a part time job and achieved highly in his college exams. He was described as a model tenant.

Young person who got an injury that left them in bed for months. After returning to education, they grew in confidence and they try new things such as going to the library, youth club, swimming, adventure son trains. They have an IPAD which has given them a voice.



What's happened during this year?

The IRO's Chaired 2627 Children and Young Peoples' Looked After Child reviews by the end of March 2023.

IRO's continue to use technology when undertaking reviews, this has worked well for some Children and Young People who have told their IRO's that they felt more able to join their review, while others prefer to meet face to face in their reviews. Over this past year IROs are now chairing initial reviews face to face and are visiting children and young people when they can between their reviews.

IRO's continue to work to make sure that Children and Young People are encouraged and supported to participate in their review. All Children and Young People continue to be offered the opportunity to complete a Listen to Me consultation booklet or through other creative ways to include them in their Looked After Child review.

IROs continue to encourage children and young people to use the Mind of My Own app as a means of conveying their views.

Children and young people also are offered an advocate by the IRO at each review, this is someone independent of Social Worker and the IRO that you can speak to about any worries you may have.

Over this year IROs have changed the way looked after reviews have been conducted, they have changed the agenda to the meeting and now write a summary of the review to the

child and young person. Before this new approach was launched the proposed changes were taken to Children in Care Council who offered some suggestions but overall felt the new outline to the agenda and summary document was good.

There have been quite a few changes to our IRO group, we have had a couple of IROs retire recently; Mike Law and Stephanie Kiernan who both were in our service for a long time. Both loved working as an IRO and want to wish you all the best for the future.

Originally there were 2 IRO's who review Foster Carers only who are placed in the Independent Chair Service, this number has increased to three and are managed by one manager and continue to work independently focusing on Foster Care Reviews.



What Children, Young People and their carers said:

Children and Young People, their carer's and parents continue to make positive comments about the involvement of the IRO in their lives and for many the IRO has been the most consistent professional in their life.

Here are some Good Social Work Practice Stories shared by IRO'S:

- Social Worker has worked hard to make sure she had listened to the child's views about her rehabilitation home to live with her dad.
- The Social Worker's report to the review for a young person was clear and they remained child focused, the information presented on the young person ensured they were kept safe and considered their emotional wellbeing.
- Parents of a child returned to their care under a Supervision Order said how supported they felt by the social worker who has helped them manage a very difficult time and felt she went over and above in her work and support of them which resulted in a very positive outcome for them and their daughter.
- It was a pleasure to chair young person's initial review today. The report provided by the Social Worker was strength based and there was clear evidence of a good working relationship between the young person and the Social Worker. It was lovely to hear the progress the young person is making where she is living.
- We had a great review meeting today and the care plan is progressing in a much better manner. From an IRO perspective, it was helpful to have a proactive social

worker and team manager championing for better outcomes for the children.



Working together for Children and Young People



IRO's have regular meetings with Team Managers and the service to ensure there is consistent practice with:

Children in Care Council / Participation Group

Children Disability Service/Local Family Justice Board

Adoption Service/Foster carers meetings/CAMHS.





Our Key Plans for Children and Young People for 2023-2024 are:

We will ensure we routinely collect your views about the meetings IROs chair. This will enable us to improve on our practice and develop the service further.

IROs will encourage everyone involved with yourselves to use strength-based language which will focus on your views, strengths, aspirations, hopes, talents and achievements. They will also look at ways with yourselves to be supported to understand and work with professionals and social workers about your Care Plans

We will work to ensure the summaries produced from your reviews are clear and understandable. Will also work to increase IROs time so they can build relationships with yourselves, social work teams and other important people working with you.

As a group of IROs we will continue to work with you in a consistent way and will record on your file when we visit you or when we have discussions with others about your lived experience.

We will work with
Childrens' Social Care
staff to ensure
professionals work with
yourselves focusing on
your achievements along
with the challenges you
may encounter

We will continue to ask all
Care Leavers if they wish for
their IRO to provide a Post
18 service and make sure we
are working in a way you find
helpful and supportive.

Independent Chair Service



