



**Independent  
Reviewing Officer  
Service Annual Report**

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

**April 2020 to March 2021**

**May 2021**





## **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.

IROs 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.

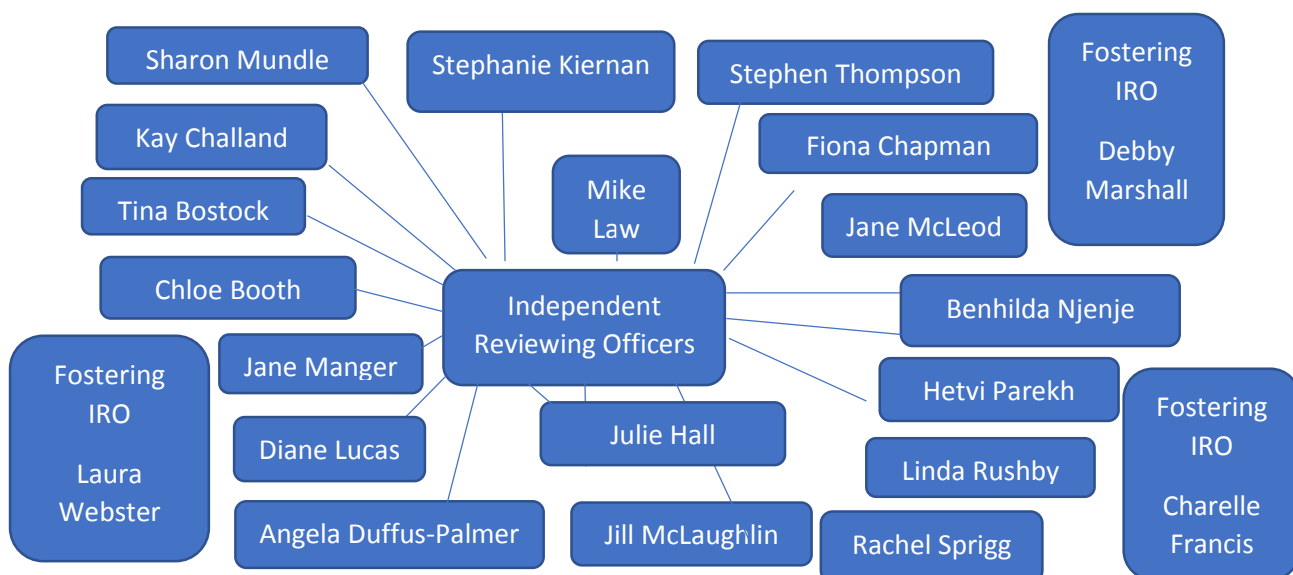
A report is written every year on how we are doing.

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 2021, there were 996 Children and Young People being looked after by the Local Authority.
- 43.2% of Children and Young People attended their reviews
- 49.4% of Children and Young People did not attend their reviews, but asked for their wishes and feelings to be shared at their review
- IROs continue to work to ensure all Children and Young People's Care Plans are meeting their needs and changes to their Care Plans are made when needed.
- IROs continue to promote Mind of My Own app which was launched in 2019.
- IROs make sure they ask about Children and Young People's 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 IROs, or by their carers or their social workers afterwards.



## Achievements of some Children and Young People

Young Person aspires to join the RAF, has supported carer to deliver training and convey what it is like to be a looked after

Young Person is now a mum and despite all the challenges with being young is raising a beautiful and content baby. Mum works hard to be the best parent they can be

After a period of being secure Young Person was involved with, intense work with Social Worker/ CAMHS and parents. Risks reduced significantly and now living at home with continued support.

Young Person has grown since being cared for, able to express their wishes and views to parent. Has had consistent support from carers and the Social Worker which has increased their confidence.



## What's happened during this year?

The IROs Chaired 2635 Children and Young People's Looked After Child reviews by the end of March 2021.

This is many more than the year before when there were 2159 reviews held.

IROs use of technology has been used more with Looked After Child reviews because of Covid- 19, we are now using Microsoft Teams which enables everyone to see each other. Some Children and Young People can join teams for their review whilst others prefer to have someone advocate on their behalf.

IROs 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.





The IROs continue to promote the MOMO app which was launched in 2019. IROs encourage Children and Young People to use this app although many prefer to verbalise their views or ask someone else to speak on their behalf as a means of conveying their views. This tool makes it easier for Children and Young People to express their views, thoughts, and feelings to social workers/IROs and any other staff working within Nottinghamshire.

At the beginning of last year, we took a proposal to the Children in Care Council who have agreed for the making of a short film, one for younger Children and one for Young People. These films will provide Children and Young People with an easy to understand film about who is involved in their care and how they will be supported when they become looked after. The films will also be used with professionals who are involved in providing care and support to Looked After Children.

The making of the film for the Young People has been slowed down by Covid-19, but we are working to finish this over the next 3 months.

The introduction of 2 IROs in the Independent Chair Service who review Foster Carers has increased to 3 temporarily, they 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 carers 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:

- Court team Social Worker has been so committed and focussed throughout their involvement with the children
- Excellent work from the Adoption and permanence Social Worker in identifying appropriate carers for children's needs.
- Social workers working effortlessly to meet the needs of our looked after children and ensuring they are



safeguarded and protected through the last challenging year.

- Young child supported by social worker to give evidence in court.
- Lovely celebratory leaving care review, Young Person has had the same social worker and foster carer since the age of 5 and has always lived with their siblings.
- Young Person reunified back into the care of their family after intensive support from the Looked After Team Social worker on the dynamics of their relationship and a clear plan of support



## **Our Key Plans for Children and Young People for 2021-2022 are:**

To fully embed strength-based model ensuring positive language is consistently used in all the conversations had in your looked after reviews.

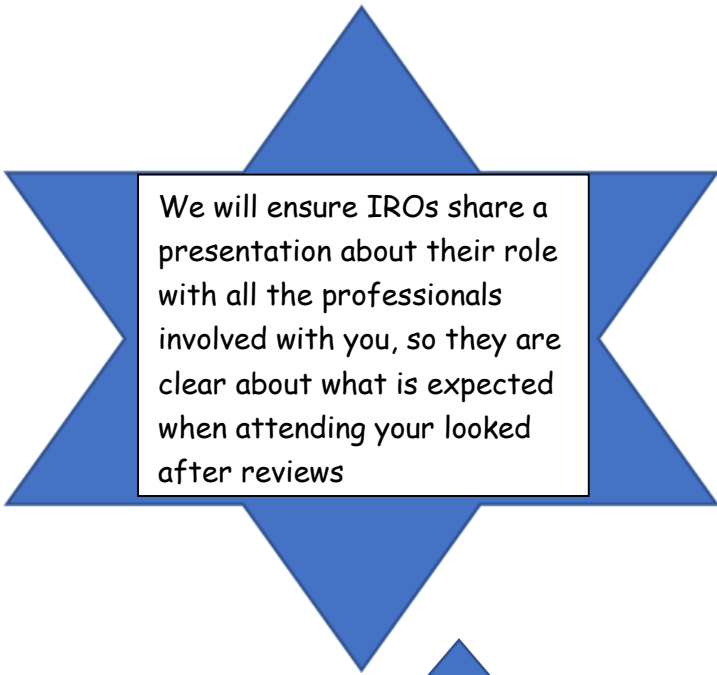
To hold child focused reviews where you will be encouraged with support to chair your own reviews if you wish and your views and ideas will be included in developing child friendly agendas, reports, and minutes.




To ensure any concerns you have about your care plan is discussed fully with the right people and your wishes are listened to.

To actively support more children and young people to access independent advocates.

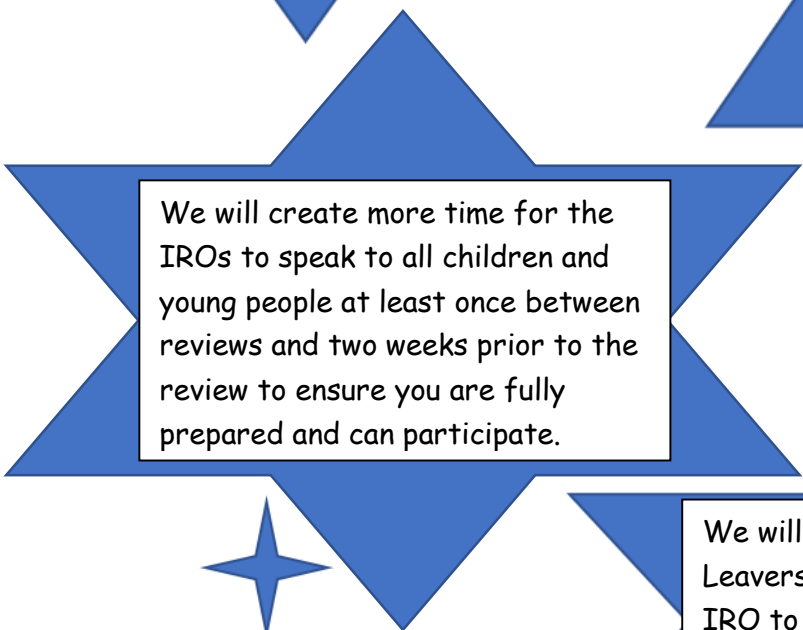
We will ensure the support being provided to you by our partners and children's social care is able to meet your needs and support you in achieving your aspirations.




We will ensure IROs share a presentation about their role with all the professionals involved with you, so they are clear about what is expected when attending your looked after reviews



We will continue to work with the Children in Care Council to explore different ways your reviews can be held and share our plan to work with a small group of young people placed in residential children's homes



We will create more time for the IROs to speak to all children and young people at least once between reviews and two weeks prior to the review to ensure you are fully prepared and can participate.



We will continue to ask all Care Leavers if they wish for their IRO to provide a Post 18 service as many have taken up this offer during 2020/21

Below is a poem written by a young person who gave permission for this to be included in this annual report. This is being published through a Poetry Odessey, a collection of Verse which will be in the National Library. This is a powerful poem and the young person is very proud of this achievement.

### **The Smile**

The smile you see isn't always true

The sadness I feel is nothing new

My feelings are unnoticed

Because I never show this

The thoughts that go through my head

Feelings like I'm numb and dead

Sometimes I want to scream and shout

**Independent Chair Service**

