



## One minute guide

# Independent Reviewing Officers



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## What are Independent Reviewing Officers and what do they do?

- Independent Reviewing Officers' (IROs) goal is to help improve outcomes for looked after children.
- Their primary focus is to quality assure the care planning process for each child or young person.
- They make sure that the child or young person wishes and feelings are given full consideration.
- IROs chair looked after review meetings.
- Reviews take place at different intervals depending how long the child has been in care, but are held at least every six months.
- IROs also chair meetings for children who have a Supervision Order. They are called Child in Need Supervision Order (CINSO) meetings.
- In between reviews, IROs have a responsibility to monitor the progress of the care plan, making sure there is no drift or delay in making long term plans for the child or young person.
- IROs will also hold mid-way meetings in between reviews, particularly where there are concerns regarding the child or young person's care plan.
- IROs are qualified social workers with at least five years' experience, and who have acquired the skills, knowledge, and experience to carry out this role.

## Why have Independent Reviewing Officers?

- The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is a legal requirement under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. All Local Authorities must ensure that, once a child becomes looked after they have their own IRO who should continue working with them whilst they are in care.
- The local authority has a statutory duty to appoint an IRO for every looked after child, which includes children placed, or authorised to be placed, with prospective adopters by a local authority, as well as young people remanded into care or custody by the Youth Court.

## What can I expect from an Independent Reviewing Officer?

- The IRO keeps the best interests of the child as paramount.
- They make sure that the voice of the child or young person is heard clearly throughout the process.
- They make sure that the race, cultural and identity needs of the child or young person are recognised, met and valued.
- They make sure that the parents, and anybody else with Parental Responsibility, are involved and that their views are taken into account.
- IROs focus on what is going well for the child/young person, their needs and outcomes.
- IROs have high aspirations for children and young people, and want to help them achieve their goals.
- They will make sure that there is an up to date plan for the how the child or young person's health and care needs will be met, how they will be supported to learn, and be kept safe. The plan will include who is helping and when, and what support is in place if required.
- IROs will make sure an assessment has been completed to help everyone involved know what the child or young person needs. They will help identify if things are not going to plan or if extra support is needed.
- They will challenge the local authority in relation to progress or the quality of the care plan, if required.
- IROs will always try and use 'plain English' and avoid using jargon and letters instead of words (acronyms), so that information is accessible and understood by everyone.
- They will try and help everyone involved to understand what is happening and why.
- The IRO will arrange to meet the child or young person and speak with them in private before their review.
- They will make sure that the child or young person knows their rights and entitlements, and knows how to contact their IRO between reviews.
- IROs will make sure the child or young person understands that they are entitled to an advocate and how they could be helped by one.

## How independence of the Independent Reviewing Officer is supported

- An IRO cannot be a person who is already involved in the management of a child's plan.
- To support this need for independence, IROs are in the Strategic Safeguarding and Independent Review Service which is managed separately from children's social work teams.
- IROs can challenge poor practice using the concerns resolution process. They also have the authority to refer serious concerns directly to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) and to obtain their own independent legal advice.

## Key contacts

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