

Job Brief

Job Title	Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
Team	Quality and Standards
Directorate	Children's Services
Work Base	Countywide – Locality Offices
Job Ref Number	02871

Key Objective

Independent Reviewing Officer role ensures robust oversight of care planning, promoting the child's voice and compliance with statutory requirements.

Tasks Specific to this Role

To promote consistency in Children in Care practice across the county, ensuring that all children and families experience equitable, high-quality support regardless of where they live.
To be accessible to all partners, actively leading improvements in the quality, focus, and impact of Child in Care Plans, with the aim of improving outcomes for children.
To ensure children, parents, and carers have confidence in the Child in Care process, by providing visible, independent oversight. This includes ensuring that their voices are heard, their views are considered, and they are advocated for throughout the care planning journey.
To collaborate with Social Workers, Practice Supervisors, and Team Managers through Care Planning Meetings, ensuring that Care Plans remain timely, purposeful, and centered on the child's evolving needs.
To challenge Local Authority decision-making where it appears not to be in the best interests of the child. This includes offering constructive challenge, initiating professional escalation, and, where necessary, referring to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) if a child's human rights may be at risk.
To provide opportunities for Social Workers to access practice expertise and reflective space outside of their supervisory relationships, supporting their professional development and strengthening their understanding of the Local Authority's practice models that underpin excellence.
To adhere to the statutory guidance set out in the IRO Handbook (2010), which provides the framework and standards for effective IRO practice.
To act as a champion for children in care, ensuring that their rights, wishes, and best interests are at the heart of all planning and decision-making.
Role Expectations of Independent Reviewing Officer
To be based in the locality office closest to their home, but to travel around the county (and out of county) to meet with children, families and carers in person if this is their desired method of engagement.
To oversee a number of children in Care as outlined in the IRO handbook (2010)
To chair regular Child-in-Care Meetings at frequencies as set out in Care Planning standards.
To chair Short Term Breaks reviews where children meet the criteria for having an IRO.
Ensure that Care Plans for children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, up to date, effective and provide a real response to each child's individual needs.
To remain fully knowledgeable of a child's circumstances, including any significant changes and to monitor their progress whilst in care.
Meet in person or discuss (dependent on the child age and their preferred method of engagement) and consult the child about their Care Plan prior to and during their review and at any time there is a significant change in their circumstances.
Encourage the child to have their say in their review meeting, either in person or through an advocate.
At each review meeting, to consider the child's Health, Education, their living arrangements, their legal status and most importantly the time they spend with those they consider significant to them, preserving and enhancing relationships and promoting a sense of identity.

After each review, send detailed and child focused recommendations to the Local Authority to enhance the quality of care and services received in the child's best interests.
Closely monitor the post review period to ensure that people actually do what they agreed to do.
Be strong advocate for children and if necessary challenge the Local Authority through a range of informal and formal processes, dependent on the level of worry, where it is believed that the child's Care Plan is not progressing as it should or decisions made compromise the child's Care Plan, or where there is drift and delay which may impact on the child.
Following each review, complete the record of Review along with a personalised letter to the child, explain what was discussed in their review, what decisions were made and what their current Care Plan contains, within 15 working days.
Ensure that Pathway Plans are timely, future focused, within current legislation and fully consider the child's needs moving towards becoming an independent adult.
When ratifying final, or changes to Care Plans, to fully consider the range of evidence presented (including all assessments; Local Authority and expert), the constitution of the child's family and network, exploring all realistic alternative care options, prior to making an informed and balanced judgement on the most realistic care option whilst also considering the principle of the Lesser Order.
To consider when ratifying Care Plans, the child's enduring and ongoing relationships with their parents, siblings, family and people of significance to them.
To act as a locality team link, attend locality team meetings to share practice learning, enhance working relationships and to promote the IRO role.

Generic Tasks Applying to All Roles

To be registered with Social Work England, maintain Continuous Personal Development and be fit to practice.
Support alternative arms of the wider service such as where deployment is required to meet service priorities in the case of staff absences or unprecedented demand.
Provide independent oversight and quality assurance of child protection, allegations management and care planning processes, ensuring compliance with statutory guidance and local procedures.
Promote the voice of children and families in all decision-making, ensuring advocacy and participation opportunities are offered and supported.
Monitor and report on the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, identifying patterns and themes to inform service improvement.
Offer professional advice and reflective case discussions to practitioners and managers, supporting practice development and continuous learning.
Escalate concerns about drift, delay, or poor practice through agreed protocols, and challenge decisions that do not meet the child's best interests.
Contribute to audits, thematic reviews, and quality assurance activity, providing feedback to senior managers and the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP).
To complete the relevant monitoring information in relation to practice and practice models to support the Local Authority in celebrating good practice and reflecting on learning opportunities to further develop practice excellence.
To complete internal audit of colleagues through peer observations and reflections, to engage in dip sampling where necessary and formal audits to support practice development.
Contribute to thematic reviews and learning events to improve system-wide safeguarding responses.
Use data and case analysis to inform strategic safeguarding priorities and policy development.
Uphold Lincolnshire County Council's values and behaviours, safeguarding children and promoting their welfare at all times.