

IRO SERVICE ACTION PLAN FOR CHILDREN IN CARE 2020- 2021

PROMOTING THE CHILD'S VOICE and INFLUENCE

The IRO service will ensure that children are actively consulted and supported to participate in planning for the care and services they receive. We will listen and act on what children in care tell us.

Every conversation and every review process will explicitly start and end with the child,

	Area for development	Current situation / progress made	Specific actions to drive change	Current Performance	Target Data & Date	
1	IROs will make direct contact with every allocated child in care to explain the 'IRO promise to children in care' and will provide a tailored IRO letter of explanation / introduction.	In consultation with SMTIM and CIC participation group the IROs have developed a template letter of introduction from the IRO which includes basic information about / photo of the allocated IRO and the IRO pledge to children in care	1. All IROs will complete a proforma Letter of Introduction that they tailor to individual children . 2. The IRO letter will be hand delivered on the IRO's visit or sent out following the review meeting with a personalised letter where applicable	Currently only 3 out of 12 IROs are writing to children in care / promoting the IRO promise	By end Oct 2020 100% children in Care over 5 years will have received a personalised letter from their IRO. 2021 Tell Us Survey will confirm >80% children aged over 5 know who their IRO is.	Amber
2	IROs will visit or attempt to make contact with every child in care ahead of their review to consult them (in an individually tailored way) about their care arrangements to clarify the child's views and any changes or explanation that the child is seeking.	IROs are making flexible use of phone, skype and e-media to maximise the level of direct consultation 'IRO visits' during COVID19 restrictions - for those declining direct consultation and the very young this representation of the child's voice and lived experience is sought via other contributors to the review process including direct consultation with the carers, social worker, parent(s) and other key professionals	1. All IROs will always make direct call to the child and / or their carer at least 15 working days before a review meeting to agree how this consultation is best undertaken . 2. All IROs will promote and support use of phone, text, powerpoint, e-media, and Mind of My Own App to maximise children's direct participation in their planning process.	In 2019-20 IROs reported that they only succeeded in separately consulting 34% children aged over 5 years outside of their review meeting	>80 % children in care aged over 5 years will have been directly consulted by their IRO as part of their review process.	Amber
3	IROs will ensure that every child in care has access to a current copy of the 'New to Care' Packs and a good understanding of the support and services available to them	The Speak Up Service send a pack to all new children in care aged over 8 years within a week of the care arrangement starting - IROs check as part of the review process that this has been received and understood and will reissue if the pack has been mislaid	The IROs will check as part of every review process whether the child still has access to a current version of the care pack or needs one sending to them, data about this is included in the weekly bulletin to managers.	There was no quantitative measure of this prior to August 2020, so there is no baseline on which to base projections	This data will be collated and available as part of a live tracker report available to all managers and IROs	Green
4	IROs will plan with each child in care how they want their review arranged and how they want to be supported to share their views, supporting every child to lead their review as much as they feel comfortable doing.	It is a statutory requirement that IROs consult with all children ahead of their reviews - resource constraints have been such that when a child has declined this first offer of consultation the IRO has not always been able to persist in exploring more innovative ways of engaging children - this will now be a priority for development	1. All IROs will always liaise with the child's social worker at least 15 working days ahead of the review date to confirm how the child's participation is best achieved taking into account the child's expressed wishes about this - emphasis will be on maximising the child's direct input however they feel most comfortable achieving this.	in 2019-20 IROs reported that they had only succeeded in undertaking direct consultation with 35% children aged over 5 yrs ahead of the review meeting	Target for >80% children aged over 5 years to be directly consulted by their IRO as part of the review process.	Green
5	IROs will be very flexible with children in care about how they wish to participate in their review, and will proactively promote use of electronic media , advocacy and direct work for any children who do not want to directly participate in a 3+ way discussion / meeting.	IROs are promoting a blended approach during COVID19 restrictions , where reviews are undertaken as a process using a flexible range of telephone, written, electronic, skype or direct meetings for some or all of the review participants, dependent upon the individual circumstances of all involved	1. IROs will promote understanding by all parties that reviews are a process not a one off meeting, and that most important part of the process needs to be centred around hearing the child's views as shared by the child themselves - however this is achieved	29% children directly participated in their review during 2019-20 , 45 % contributed indirectly and 1.9 % did not participate at all	Target for > 50% children aged over 5yr to directly participate in their reviews. 0% not to have their views represented at all.	Amber
6	IROs will write an individually tailored letter to every child in care following their review (if of an age to understand it) to confirm what was discussed and agreed at the review meeting, and to seek the child's feedback about this, if they wish to respond.	From June 2020 trailblazing IROs started writing review records to the child not about the child, and sending to the child (via their carer with a tailored letter encouraging them to make contact if they wish to discuss / give feedback re the review	1. IROs to write review records in the first party (to not about) children wherever this is appropriate 2. All IROs to consistently send a personalised letter to the child after their review encouraging feedback and promoting advocacy service	Prior to September 2020 feedback regarding CYPIC reviews was not directly sought	IROs will report monthly on feedback received	Amber

Corporate Parenting Strategy November 2018 – March 2020 Delivery Plan

7	Each IROs will routinely seek direct feedback from at least two children each every calendar month- one who participated in their review and one who did not, to improve understanding about what works well and what can be improved to encourage more direct participation	Prior to September 2020 children's direct feedback about the review process was not sought- intention is that this should now be embedded QA work that is reported on monthly	1. All IROs to register and be taught how to use the Mind of My Own App in November 2020. 2. All IROs to self select two children to 'Rate my Review' with ever calendar month - encouraging them to use the MOMO app , or to provide verbal feedback re the MoMo app questions. 3. IROs to develop a separate word version feedback form for those children who prefer to giev their views verbally / not on line. 4 IRO manager to collate information from above feedback to inform monthly report to managers	Prior to launch of MoMo 2020 feedback regarding CYPIC reviews was not directly sought	Feedback from at least 16 children each month to inform monthly report to SMT and inform service development	RED
8	Where a review makes a decision that the child does not fully agree with, the IRO will provide age appropriate explanation to the child about the reasons for this, and will help them understand how they can be supported by an advocate to complain or have their views reconsidered.	As part of the review process IROs confirm who will share the outcome of review with the child, and additionally the IRO will write a personalised letter- including reference to the advocacy service	1. IRO to be explicit in every review about thow the review decisions will be shared with the child and about promotion of the advocacy service	In 2019-20 IROs made 10 direct refereals to the advocacy service	It is expected that the referral rate to advocacy service will increase	Amber
9	Where any individual or collective concerns are raised about the services being experienced by a child in care the IROs will consult the child and relevant others and seek resolution and / or referral to advocacy services, escalating to appropriate managers to achieve quick resolution if required.	There are a high number of informal resolutions arising from reviews but relatively few escalated to formal escalations . IROM reports weekly to SMT on the issues in formal resolution to help achieve expedient resolution / avoid need for further escalation	1. All IROs will make consistent and expedient use of the formal resolution process to escalate issues that are not promptly resolved through informal resolution. 2 IROM to continue reporting to SMT weekly and to provide monthly / quarterly composist report about issues in resolution.	In 2019-20 there were 266 informal resolutions issues resolved at SM level issues resolved at GM level issues resolved at AD level.	Aim is to reduce number of informal resolutions , but to increase use of formal resolution process to speed up resolution activity.	Amber
9	IROs will undertake at least one mid point check on every child between their formal review meetings to consult them about how they are doing and if any different or additional support is required ahead of their next review/conference	IRO's caseloads were reduced in Q4 2020 to support the expectation that at least one midpoint check is undertaken by the IRO with the child and / or relevant othere between reviews	1. All IROs will always schedule the date for proportionate mid point review and the date for next review as part of every review process. 2. All IROs will undertake compliance audit to and offer direct consultation with every child ifor whom potential concerns are evident as part of the mid point review - consistently recorded using Mid Point Review case tab and tracker.	Unable to report on mid point reviews previously	Target is for >80 % children in care to have at least one recorded mid point review within every 6 month review cycle.	Green
10	IROs will liaise with social workers to ensure that every child is fully consulted and provided with information about any proposed placememt move before the move takes place, (with opportunity to visit in advance unless an emergency move is required)	Social worker has a statutory duty to advise IRO of any changes toplacement before they arise, so tat IRO can consult the child and determine if cahnge warrants an early review / change of care plan = as part of these consultations IRO will nsure that children are appropriately informed and consulted about moves	1. IROs will escalate any instances where a child has not been appropriately consulted , informed or prepared for a move, and will request postponment of the move until this is achieved where concerns warrant this.	This issue does not appear to feature in any of the resolutions raised in 2019-20	IROs will specifically check re quality of information and consultation when advised of any proposed change	Green
11	IROs will readily attend the SMTIM, IM2 and I Still Matter groups upon invitation to help answer or address any specific issues that any of these groups raise, and will respond to any releveant requests or actions responding from these groups.	IROs have not been invited to attend SMTIM since launch of the review toolkit in 2019- however the SMTIM group did provide direct feedback upon request for the National IROM network re use of advocacy in reviews.	1. IROM to produce child friendly version of annual report 2 IROM to offer to visit the groups to share annual report and service plan seeks views re production of a child friendly version.	Child friendly version of annual report has not been preduced previously	October 2020 ??	Red
11	IROs will continue to seek feedback from Child in Care and care leavers through the U matter survey and to act on what it tells us - an additional survey will be introduced to collate the views subject to safeguarding interventions	IROs are aware of the National research projects findings from 2019 survey and identified areas for development. Currently there isn't the equivalent data source for children subject to safeguarding interventions.	1. All IROs will encourage the children allocated to them to participate in the 2021 survey so current feedback is as broad and as inclusive as possible. 2. Additional survey to be developed through Survey Monkey to collate the views of children subject to safeguarding interventions 3 Specific feedback will be sought regarding what works and does not work so well for children regarding remote or blended metings, arising from COVID restrictions.	83 children participated in the 2019 survey	Desire is to get at least 50% Children in Care to participate, and and least 30% children agead 8+ years subject to CP plans.	Green

Corporate Parenting Strategy November 2018 – March 2020 Delivery Plan

12	The IRO service will maintain live reports for operational managers, weekly update and monthly / quarterly report to CSC Senior Management Team and Annual report to the Corporate Parenting Board, Children in Care Strategic Partnership, with thematic update to Multi agency Children's Voice and Participation Group to help raise and address any emergent issues on behalf of children in care.	Live reports are available to the management team re QA monitors, weekly meeting bulletin, compliance audits and the IRO resolution tracker, the IROM provides weekly composite data about this to SMT and front line managers and monthly / quarterly overview reports to inform service performance meetings.	1. IROs to complete QA data with 24 hours of any meeting to facilitate prompt reporting 2. Based on the above IRO Service to maintain live tracker reports, weekly bulletins and monthly service reports. 3. Monthly report to be expanded to include the 'Rate my Review' feedback from children and young people. 4. Quarterly service reports to provide additional analysis and overview of any wider audit activity.	Maintenance of 3 x live trackers, and production of weekly bulletin and monthly service report.	Monthly service report to be completed by first Friday of every successive month.	Amber
----	--	---	--	---	---	-------

Objective 2 - PROMOTING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITY.
that children in care maintain and develop positive relationships with the people who are important to them, and that children who can safely remain with or return to their families do so, with as much support or as little intrusion as is right for each individual child.

IROs will help to ensure

	Area for development	Current situation / progress made	Specific actions to drive change	Current Performance	Target Data & Date	
13	Where child protection plans indicate that it may not be safe for a child to remain with their parents, IROs will oversee that that early consideration is given to other family or friends who may be able to provide care or support, in parallel with robust support to try to raise standards of parenting.	There is a contingency plan as part of all child protection plans, but these are not always sufficiently clear about the need to consider contingent permanent carers.	1. IROs to drive the expectation that there is a well informed cultural genogram to help inform understanding about the family support network 2. The IRO will ensure that proactive use is made of Family Group Conference where appropriate to help maximise understanding and use of informal support networks 3 IROs will ensure that every child's plan includes explicit contingency plans in the event that a child can not safely remain with their parents.	Dip sampling and audit has indicated the need for more consistent and explicit reference to ecomaps, FGC and contingency planning / early viability assessments	Dip sampling and routine compliance audits to indicate consistently high standard of practice	Green
14	IROs will proactively consult children and their social workers to consider if there are any family or friends who could safely care for a child in preference to them remaining with unconnected carers. IROs will promote this wherever it is thought to be right for the child.	As part of all interventions IROs oversee that due consideration has been given to the child's own network of connected carers - sometimes absent fathers and paternal family members are not involved / consulted as soon as they could be.	1, IROs to oversee that embedded use of cultural genograms informs interventions. 2. IROs will robustly address any such gaps in assessment / consultation if identified, so that there is no drift or delay for children.	Audits currently show 30% open cases have a genogram that is judged to be of good standard	Target is 100% genograms on open cases	Green
15	IROs will promote the importance of meaningful ecomaps, assessment and life story work being undertaken with children to help them have a secure sense of identity, to inform who the important people are in their life and how they wish to stay in touch.	All children in long term care should have access to age appropriate information to help them understand their culture, life history and care journey - where this is not the case IROs should identify who will do this work.	1. IROs will promote the need for current and reflective chronology on all open cases to help inform ongoing assessment and therapeutic work. 2. IROs will promote proactive consideration of the need for life story work as part of every child's care review. 3. IROs will ensure that the social worker writes a sensitive and informed 'later life letter' for any child deemed to benefit from one in child care review.	Audits currently indicate the 28% open cases have a reflective chronology judged to be of good standard	Target is 100% reflective chronologies on open cases	Green
16	IROs will make immediate and direct referral to advocacy service and / or the IRO resolution process if ever routine planning and review processes do not immediately resolve any concerns raised by the child or any party on their behalf, about the nature, quality or frequency of how a child stays in touch with the people important to them.	As part of every review IROs promote proactive consideration of how well the local authority is helping the child to remain in touch with all those people with parental responsibility and identified by the child as being important to them and each review actively considers if any changes need to be made in accordance with the child's expressed view and assessed need. IROs will proactively address any difference of opinion via use of resolution process or advocacy.	1. Review records and care plans will evidence how the child is being supported to develop and maintain significant relationships. 2. Resolution process and referrals to advocacy service triggered by the IRO will evidence how any differences of opinion are being addressed.	In 2019-20 IROs made 10 referrals to advocacy services of which 5 related to plans re them seeing family / friends	It is expected that their referral rate may increase if more proactive focus is given to promoting the child's wishes and feelings re family visits	Green

Corporate Parenting Strategy November 2018 – March 2020 Delivery Plan

17	If there is reason to believe a child can safely return to the care of a parent or other family member, the IRO will proactively work with the child and all other parties to ensure there is a tight plan to ensure that this is achieved safely and within a timescale that is right for the child	As part of permanence / care planning IROs oversee that full consideration is always given to the viability of any family placements before alternatives are considered, and where rehabilitation is identified as a likely prospect IROs oversee that there are very clear parameters and timescale for what needs to be achieved by whom, by when and how this is being supported, measured and reviewed.	1. IROs will ensure that as soon as any child care review confirms that reunification with family is a viable outcome that they are identified as such on the reunification tab of the permanence tracker to ensure close oversight and tracking of the intervention and support to achieve this by relevant senior managers. 2. IROs will oversee that very explicit timesframes and goals are listed in the care plan and review record about how and when reunification is to be achieved - the IRO will oversee that this is closely progressed by sw and team manager, and proactive consideration is given to discharge of care order at every review. Any drift will be quickly identified and escalated	In 2019-2020 20 children returned to the care of parents	An increase in the number of children being successfully rehabilitated to family would be seen as an indicator of positive intervention	Green
18	Where a child subject to care order is being well cared for by parents or connected carers or long term foster carers and the local authority no longer needs to share parental responsibility for any reason the IRO service will be proactive in promoting timely application for discharge of the care order / promotion of the new Special Guardianship Support Offer.	Where children subject to care or interim care orders are living with family members the IRO is proactive in overseeing that consultation and consideration is regularly undertaken with all relevant parties to ascertain if CYC need to retain parental responsibility, with evidence based assessment undertaken to inform application to discharge care order in a timescale that is right for the individual child,	1. IROs will promote timely application to seek discharge of care order for any child no longer requiring the safeguards of a care order - using the resolution process to escalate if there is delay in relevant assessments / court papers being completed or disagreement about recommended post care support arrangements.	In 2019-20 children ceased being looked after because their carers gained Special Guardianship orders for them, 5 of whom were relatives	An increase in the number of children being made subject to Special Guardianship Orders would be seen as an indicator of positive intervention	Green
Objective 3; ACHIEVING PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE						
IROs will help to ensure that all children in care have somewhere suitable to live and be cared for that they are happy to call home						
How will we do this						
19	IROs will help to ensure during Public Law Outline process and / or at first review that it is clear what needs to be achieved to help determine the child's long term care plan with the aim that all children in care have a defined primary plan of permanence by the time of their second review	There has been an increased instance of permanence plans not being confirmed at 4 months due to high reliance and late commissioning of expert assessments to inform court proceedings, and drift in external assessments linked to COVID	1. During preproceedings / public law outline process and at 1st CIC review IROs will ensure that evidence based assessment establish parents' capacity to change in the child's timeframe, and that there is parallel identification and assessment of potential viable support / carers within the child's connected carers to as contingency plan if parents are not able to safely care for the child(ren) 2. IROs will clearly establish at 1st review what evidence based assessments are completed / outstanding, including capacity to change assessment and viability of alternate carers, 3. IROs will undertake mid point review within 6 weeks of 1st review and initiate resolution activity if all is not on track to confirm permanence at 4 months	Timeliness of 4 month decision making dropped since COVID 19 restrictions have delayed court work. >50% children who have been made subject to ICO since March 2020 did not have a confirmed permanence plan at 2nd review.	Timeliness of 4 month decision making will be closely monitored via permanence tracker, All children will have a primary plan confirmed by 2nd review- this might need to include clear contingents.	Green
20	IROs will use the Permanence Tracker to help plot and illustrate where individual children are on their individual care journey to help ensure there is no drift at any stage in pre proceedings intervention, permanence planning, or reunification.	The IROs are assisting in embedding use of the permanence tracker, which was introduced in 2019-20 as an additional safeguard to help reduce risk of drift.	1. IRO will update relevant sections of the permanence tracker immediately following child care review in which a child is identified as being on the edge of care, in PLO, subject to proceedings, moving to permanence placement, likely to be successfully reunified to family, ready for care order to be discharged	The permanence tracker was newly introduced in 2020- it's use is not yet embedded	All children in and on the edge of care will be represented on the permanence tracker, and their care journey will be proactively tracked by SMT, front line managers and IROs	Green
21	IROs will routinely undertake mid point reviews on all open cases to help ensure that there is no drift and help promote understanding about effective pre proceedings, permanence planning and reunification to help reduce the number of children in the authority who remain subject to S20, Placement Orders, or who are Placed with Parents or connected carers on full Care Order for longer than 6 months.	IROs are expected to complete a proportionate mid point review at least once for every child between every formal review meeting to ensure that all agreed actions are being robustly progressed and emergent issues addressed. Issues arising from the reviews and mid point reviews form part of a live tracer and weekly reporting to the management team.	1. The permanence tracker and key KPI reports will continue to be proactively reviewed with the IRO team as part of weekly performance meetings, and with individual IROs monthly as part of supervision, to help identify potential drift and need for IRO intervention.	Currently 30% of the children allocated to IROs for over 3 months have had a recorded midpoint review	Target is 100% children allocated to an IRO for >3m having a recorded mid point review	Green

Corporate Parenting Strategy November 2018 – March 2020 Delivery Plan

22	IROs will proactively review all young people aged 16/17 in residential care with a view to stepping down to semi independence or supported lodgings where appropriate and safe to do so.	IROs oversee that a robust pathway needs assessment is completed ahead of a young person's 16th birthday that identifies the support the young person requires to facilitate their move to independent / post 18 accommodation. IRO oversees implementation of a robust Pathway care plan from 16 years, ensuring that the support provided is consistent with child's assessed needs and escalate if they have concerns about drift or delay in preparing the young person for independence	1. IROs will contribute to the new Permanence Panel- which will scrutinise transition planning for all 16/17 year olds in residential care. 2. IROs will maintain weekly oversight and reporting to AD regarding suitability of provision for any young people in unregulated placements. 3. IROP will undertake additional QA review of any unregulated provision at least ever 12 weeks.	Of the 52 16/17 years olds in care on 31st March 11 were in regulated children's homes, with 7 in semi supported accommodation/ unregulated accommodation	Permanence panel will confirm that only those young people who require a high level of care remain in residential provision, others will have appropriate packages of community based support to help maintain them in their own accommodation.	Green
----	---	--	--	---	---	-------

Objective 4; Promote best outcomes for children in care, ensuring that we celebrate all successes and support all children in care and their carers to be ambitious in what they seek to achieve

	Area for development	Current situation / progress made	Specific actions to drive change	Current Performance	Target Data & Date	
23	IROs will take robust action to escalate concerns if ever there is a delay in a child having initial / Review Health Assessment or Personal Education Plan, if ever there are concerns about the quality of the plan arising from these or if any party is not doing all that they should to address the recommended actions in the plan	In preparation for all child in care review and as part of any mid point review IROs check that sufficiently robust and current assessment of need has been undertaken, with SMART health / education / placement / care plan clearly citing what needs to be done, by whom, by when and for what end result.	1. IROs to maintain live report regarding issues arising from statutory meetings and mid point review. 2. Any drift or statutory non compliance to be identified and addressed through IRO escalation process.	Variable compliance with practice standards across all service areas, but particularly in court and safeguarding teams	100% compliance with statutory requirements and practice standards across all areas of the directorate.	Green
24	Where children are reluctant to directly participate in the health assessment , review of their Personal Education Plan or Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, the IRO will ensure that someone appropriate is tasked with talking with the child about this to help them better understand how these services can support them	1. IROs routinely report on and seek to address non compliance through live tracker , review recommendations and IRO escalation process.	1, Where IROs identify drift or statutory non compliance they will undertake robust consultation to help identify and address barriers to participation. 2. In undertaking review of the care plan IROs will consult all parties about whether the targets / desired outcomes are sufficiently ambitious to help achieve optimal outcomes and improved life chances.	On 31st March 2020 79.64% CIC had current HA and 91.2 % had a current PEP	Target is 90%+ PEP and Health Assessment	Amber
25	IROs will ensure that the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (assessment tool) is used as an active tool to inform care planning arrangements, ensuring that there is effective reflection and that the care plan addresses the need for intervention if year on year SDQs scores indicate any cause for concern.	All children in care of statutory school age should have a triangulated SDQ completed with them by carers and school staff at least every 12 months to help identify if they have emotional / behaviour issues requiring support - this should be proactively reviewed as part of the statutory child care review- Dip samples indicate that explicit reference to the SDQ is not made in all records of review	1. IROs will make explicit reference in the record of review to the SDQ score, whether it is more / less than previous years and whether appropriate support is in place- if not the gap will be addressed through review recommendations.	The average SDQ on 31.3.2020 was 14.15- just marginally above the national average 14.	SDQ to be below the national / regional average, and all children accessing therapeutic help for who this is indicated as relevant.	Green
26	IROs will ensure that work is undertaken with children throughout their childhood to help promote age appropriate self care skills and preparation for eventual independence, ensuring that they are fully informed from an early age about the full range of post care support that will be available to them	Reference should be made in all children's assessment and review actions to how carers are helping to develop age appropriate self help skills , and all 16+ year olds will have a current and robust pathway needs assessment and pathway care plan	1. Specific reference to be made to age appropriate development and life skills in all review records, and actions being taken to encourage ambitious aspirations. 2. IROs to specifically check that all children in care are being proactively encouraged and supported to pursue extra curricular hobbies / activities / community based groups to increase their life experiences	There is no current measure of the extra curricular activities / expenditure by carers.		Amber
27	IROs will ensure that children's reviews are also used as a process to help identify, promote and really celebrate the success and achievements that young people make	Reviews routinely consider the significant events that have arisen / impact on a child - IROs are seeking to ensure that this includes emphasis on positive achievements and cause for celebration,	1. IROs will ensure that every meeting starts and ends with the child - include celebration of achievements and future goals. 2. IROs will write a personalised message to children and young people after any review meeting celebrating achievement and confirming agreed actions, and encouraging the young person to 'rate your review' 3. Each IRO will collate feedback from 2 c/YP each calendar month- one from someone who directly participated and one from someone who did not, to inform ongoing service development about what works well and what needs to be improved.	Dip sampling evidence that child's voice is becoming more prevalent, but still needs to be better emphasised.	Dip sampling will evidence clear and strong focus on the child's own spoken voice, achievements and personal aspirations.	Green