

Workshop for Independent Reviewing Officers

Background

The statutory duties of the IRO are to:

- Monitor the local authority's performance of their functions in relation to the child's case
- Participate in any review of the child's case
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority
- Perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations.

In discharging these duties, the IRO has a number of specific responsibilities which include:

- promoting the voice of the child
- ensuring that plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up-to-date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs
- identifying any gaps in the assessment process or provision of service
- making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his/her entitlement to one
- offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning for looked after children and the delivery of services to them
- monitoring the activity of the responsible authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands the implications of any changes made to his/her care plan.

IROs and Placement Stability

Placement stability is a key part of ensuring that care is a positive experience for looked after children. It helps to ensure that they are offered the same opportunities as other children and that they have the individual support necessary to reach their potential. The LA with responsibility for the child's care must respond to any recommendations made by the IRO.

During each care planning and review service cycle, the IRO service will have personal contact with all children in the LAs care. An effective IRO service is therefore well positioned to support the authority's corporate parenting

responsibilities, ensuring that the children in the authority's care are provided with stable placements that meet children's needs, enabling them to reach their potential.

Workshop Consultation

Through the use of case studies drawn from current practice to:

1. Examine the issues facing the IRO around challenging more effectively
2. Examine what prevents the IRO from challenging social workers, the local authority, the multi-agency system more effectively to improve outcomes for children
3. To focus on what are the systemic issues that make it difficult to move the work forward and how the IRO or Chair can intervene to make a difference
4. To explore the barriers/fears around challenge
5. Explore what has been learnt from the specific cases that can be generalized to other cases
6. To practice skills that enable the IRO to be more effective at raising complex and difficult issues with professional colleagues

Method

An introductory day followed by a series of half day workshops. In the half day workshop IROs to present cases that are 'stuck' within the care planning process. The point of departure in the care planning process is a so called "critical incident" within the planning process. This could be a positive or negative event or sequence of events which made an impression on the IRO.

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