


Title	Looked After Reviews	
Type	PROCEDURE	
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SCOPE OF THIS PROCEDURE

This procedure applies to all Looked After Children. Also see Looked After Children on the Child Protection Register Procedure. **All users please note:** This procedure must be read in conjunction with the Looked After Children’s Policy Statement and the Underlying Values and Principles. You may find the glossary of terms in the Keywords Appendix helpful.

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1. Purpose Of Looked After Reviews

- 1.1 The purpose of a Looked After Review is to ensure that adequate plans are in place to safeguard and promote the overall welfare of Looked After Children and achieve Permanence for them, to review the progress of the implementation of those plans and to make decisions, as necessary, for changes to those plans.
- 1.2 The focus of the Review meetings will be to check that:
 - a) the overall Care Plan is appropriate and has a clearly stated permanency option;
 - b) the work required to meet the objectives of the Care Plan is being undertaken within a clear timeframe; responsibilities for progressing specific tasks have been clearly identified;
 - c) the agreed day-to-day arrangements continue to meet the child's needs;
 - d) consultation has been undertaken with the child, parents, carers and other relevant professionals
- 1.3 It will be the Operational Manager's responsibility to ensure appropriate representation at review meetings. This will reflect the gravity of the decisions required.

2. Frequency Of Looked After Reviews

- 2.1 Where children are placed in Looked After placements for a continuous period, Looked After Reviews should normally be convened at the following intervals.
 - a) An Initial Looked After Review should be conducted within 28 days of the child becoming Looked After.
 - b) The second Looked After Review should be conducted within three months of the Initial Looked After Review.
 - c) The third Looked After Review should be conducted within three months of the second Looked After Review. However, if the permanency option is clear at this stage and plans are progressing satisfactorily, this review could take place within a 6 month timeframe at the Independent Reviewing Officer's discretion.
 - d) Subsequent Looked After Reviews should be conducted not more than six months after any previous Looked After Reviews.
- 2.2 These are maximum timescales and Looked After Reviews can be convened more frequently if the urgency of the case determines they should be, if there is a substantial change to the Care Plan, at the child or family's request, or if the Independent Reviewing Officer so directs.

- 2.3 Young People, aged 16 to 18, are part of the Right2BCared4 initiative which specifies that a review must take place in the following circumstances:
- a) Whenever there is a proposal for a young person to leave care before the age of 18, i.e. for the young person to become a 'relevant young person' rather than an 'eligible young person', as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
 - b) Whenever there is a proposal for the young person to move from a regulated placement, e.g. foster care/children's homes, to unregulated lodgings or to 'independent living' e.g. independent flats or hostels, before the age of 18.
 - c) Whenever there is a proposal to move a young person from a placement in residential care where the care plans have previously indicated that the placement is appropriate and the child is settled and going to school.
 - d) Prior to young people being discharged from Secure Children's Homes or leaving custody.
 - e) Whenever any unplanned change is proposed to a young person's accommodation that would have the effect of disrupting their education (e.g. having to move school in-year or change school during a programme leading to recognised qualifications)
- 2.4 Where a child for whom it is planned to have a series of short break placements (i.e. that are less than 120 days in a year), Looked After Reviews should normally be convened at the following intervals.
- a) An Initial Looked After Review should be conducted within 3 months of the first overnight stay of the placement.
 - b) The second Looked After Review should be conducted within 6 months of the Initial Looked After Review.
 - c) Subsequent Looked After Reviews should be conducted every 6 months.

3. Notifications

- 3.1 Whenever a child is placed in a looked after placement (including where there is an Emergency Protection Order, Interim Care Order or Care Order), the social worker must immediately contact the Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Service Development Team by telephone.
- 3.2 The notification of a child's first placement will trigger the appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer. The Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Service Development Team will inform the social worker of the name of the Independent Reviewing Officer with whom the social worker should agree a date for the first Looked After Review within the required timescales.

4. The Role of The Independent Reviewing Officer

- 4.1 The Independent Reviewing Officer from the Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Service Development Team will chair Looked After Reviews.
- 4.2 The Independent Reviewing Officer will be responsible for bringing a degree of oversight to the monitoring of the local authority practice in relation to the plans for the child with the aim of minimising drift and challenging poor practice.
- 4.3 In cases where the Independent Reviewing Officer identifies poor practice they will negotiate with the local authority management up to the highest level, through the agreed communication protocol and will have as a last resort the power to refer a case to an officer of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS)
- 4.4 The Independent Reviewing Officer has a role when they meet a child to inform them of their right to make complaints to the Local Authority, and of the Local Authority's responsibility to provide them with an independent Advocate should they so wish.
- 4.5 The Independent Advocacy Service will contact all Young People, aged 16 to 18, who are part of the Right2BCared4 initiative, prior to each review, and offer them the support of an advocate at the review. The young person may decline this service if they so wish. (Opting Out, rather than Opting In)
- 4.6 The Independent reviewing Officer will be made aware of any complaints that are being investigated by or on behalf of the child. Where necessary they will work with the local authority complaints officers and advocacy service for the resolution of such complaints within the specified time frame. The Independent Reviewing Officer should become involved in serious complaints concerning the child's Care Plan. In all cases the welfare of the child is the primary concern. The Independent Reviewing Officer will need to make a judgement about whether a problem raised via a complaint is serious enough to constitute a breach of the child's human rights, such as to justify making a referral to the Children and Family Court Advisory Services (CAFCASS) or whether it would be reasonable to wait for a resolution through the formal complaints procedure, with or without the additional support of the Independent Reviewing Officer's own negotiation.
- 4.7 Where possible the Independent Reviewing Officer will attempt to resolve a problem concerning the child's Care Plan by negotiation including contacting the team responsible for the child and expediting a solution. If this proves unsuccessful the Independent Reviewing Officer will

- refer the case to senior management through the communication protocol.
- 4.8 If it does not prove possible to reach a timely resolution a meeting will be held with all relevant agency managers and the reviewing officer prior to any final decision being made about a referral to CAFCASS.
 - 4.9 Young People, aged 16 to 18, who are part of the Right2BCared4 initiative, have been given a 'veto' over decisions that s/he should move from a regulated to an unregulated placement.
 - 4.10 In circumstances where the outcome of the review leads to actions that set aside the wishes and feelings of the young person concerned, the IRO is responsible for triggering the 'Dispute Resolution' process.

5. The Role of The Reviewing Officer in Legal Proceedings

- 5.1 Legal Proceedings should be considered only as a last resort, in extreme cases where all other attempts to resolve a problem within the local authority have failed. The additional delay associated with legal proceedings is not in the interest of the child, and every effort should be made to resolve the problem before such action is taken.
- 5.2 Legal proceedings should only be considered if:
 - the reviewing officer has made every attempt to resolve the problem within the authority, including to the level of Chief Executive;
 - there is no other person able and willing to take the case on the child's behalf.
- 5.3 If a child does wish to take proceedings under the Act, the reviewing Officer will ensure that the child has access to legal advice.

6. Co-ordinating and Covering Looked after Reviews

- 6.1 The child's social worker will be responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the venue and for the convening of and preparation for Looked After Reviews, as set out below.
- 6.2 The Review should always be held at a time and venue that is most appropriate for the child. Consideration should always be given to holding the Review in a neutral setting.
- 6.3 Consideration should also be given to the individual needs of those attending the meeting and support provided to ensure those with e.g. hearing impairments; literacy needs, language difficulties are able to fully participate in the meeting.

- 6.4 The social worker, in consultation with the child, parents and Chair, should consider who should attend the Review meeting, who will provide reports and how the results of consultation with others, not attending, will be represented.
- 6.5 Sufficient notice of the Review meeting date should be given to all those involved.
- 6.6 Where any of the circumstances outlined in 2.3 apply to young people, aged 16 to 18, the young person's Social Worker must notify the IRO as soon as possible in order for a Looked After Review to be arranged.

7. Invitations

- 7.1 The social worker is responsible for ensuring all those invited are informed verbally and in writing of the date, venue and purpose of the review.
- 7.2 Where an invited person cannot attend, the Independent Reviewing Officer may agree that a delegate attend instead.
- 7.3 It is for the Independent Reviewing Officer and social worker to agree who should be invited but the following people should normally be considered, where relevant:
 - a) the child and any person who the child wishes to support them;
 - b) the parent(s);
 - c) the carers;
 - d) the fostering social worker or residential worker;
 - e) the Young Persons Advisor if the child is approaching the age of 16;
 - f) any other person involved in the child's plan (e.g. teacher, health visitor, independent visitor etc).
- 7.4 In order to inform the decision making process, all relevant information about the child's placement; education; health etc. should be made available to the Review. However it will not always be appropriate to invite everyone involved in the planning process to the meeting.
- 7.5 Consideration of the wishes and best interests of the child will always influence decisions about the appropriateness of specific individuals' attendance at the meeting. In some circumstances, it may be more appropriate to ask for a written or other contribution to be made.
- 7.6 Although children are central to the planning process it may not

always be appropriate or the wish of the child to attend a formal meeting. Consideration needs to be given to the most appropriate form of their participation.

- 7.7 The social worker should make necessary arrangements to invite a supporter, interpreter or a professional (for example, an advocate of the child or a person with specialist skills or knowledge) to speak on behalf of the child or child's parent(s).
- 7.8 Where the child and/or parents have needs arising from a disability, the social worker must arrange the necessary assistance.
- 7.9 Whilst the parents must be involved in the reviewing process and provided with information, a judgement may need to be made on how best to manage the meeting where conflicts may arise which compromise the child's best interests.

8. Preparing For The Looked After Review

- 8.1 The child's social worker plays a key role in this process.
- 8.2 Prior to the Review, the Chair and the social worker should meet to review the paperwork and agree the agenda. All review processes should cover the agenda items identified in Section 4 of the Review of Arrangements Form 'Issues for Discussion'.
- 8.3 Additional items for the agenda can be clarified and added as appropriate.
- 8.4 The social worker will prepare all appropriate documentation as follows.
 - a) The Care Plan
 - b) Review of Arrangements Form**
 - c) Placement Plan Parts 1 and 2
 - d) Essential Information Parts 1 and 2
 - e) Pathway Plan where the young person is 16 years or more
 - f) Personal Education Plan
 - g) Health Care Plan
 - h) Summary from the Assessment and Action Record (when applicable).
 - i) The previous Review Decisions or Planning Meeting recommendations if for the first Looked After Review
 - j) Completed core assessment.
- 8.5 **The social worker will complete the Review of Arrangements Form incorporating any consultation papers and arrange for other

reports agreed as relevant with the Chair.

- 8.6 The child and parents should be encouraged and supported to prepare for the Review, in writing or other ways if they wish.
- 8.7 See also 'Contributions/Reports' below.
- 8.8 In addition to the above requirements, reviews held for young people, aged 16 to 18 and part of the Right2Bcared4 initiative, where a significant change is being proposed, the following information must be available;
 - a) Information demonstrating that any proposed changes have been discussed with the young person and their parents/carers
 - b) Reports from other agencies, relevant to the proposed changes in the care plan.

9. Contributions And Reports

- 9.1 As well as the above documentation, the social worker is responsible for collating or arranging for written or other contributions/reports (as agreed with the Chair) to be prepared and furnished on time.
- 9.2 Agencies/providers who are invited to the Review may be asked for a written contribution outlining their involvement to date or since the last review. Those who are requested to prepare contributions/reports should be informed verbally and in writing by the social worker of the request together with advice on the matters to address, whether contributions should be furnished in advance and, if so, when and where to send them.
- 9.3 Those providing contributions should ensure that information is communicated or translated in the most appropriate way taking account of the language and any sensory or learning difficulties of the child or parents.
- 9.10 In circumstances where a review has been arranged for a young person in the Right2BCared4 initiative, where a significant change is being proposed, if the minimum information is not available in time for the review, the IRO should adjourn the meeting until such time as this will be available. In the meantime the proposed changes to the young person's care or education should not be implemented.

10. Chairperson's Responsibilities During The Review

- 10.1 As Chair, the Independent Reviewing Officer is responsible for ensuring that all relevant people, including the child and parents, understand the purpose of the Review and have been given appropriate opportunities to contribute and express their views.

- 10.2 If the parent(s) or the child brings a supporter, the Chair will need to clarify their role, ensuring that they understand that they may clarify information but may not cross-examine any contributor.
- 10.3 It will be necessary for the Chair to ensure the following is considered and accounted for during each Review.

- a) That race gender and disability issues are addressed in all reviews and care plans for looked after children.
- b) The extent to which the aims and objectives of the child’s Care Plan, and/or the Pathway Plan have been achieved and take account of any child protection issues and any relevant changes in circumstances which have a bearing on the case.

For the specific requirements of the Review in achieving Permanence for the child see the end of this section on page 9.

For the merging of the Care Plan with the child’s Child Protection Plan, see Looked After Children Subject to Child Protection Plans.

- c) The appropriateness of the child’s legal status, i.e. the need for the child to continue to be looked after or where a care order exists; whether an application to discharge the order should be made.

For consideration of this issue where children have been placed with their parents, see also Placement with Parents Procedure.

- d) Appropriate arrangements are in place to protect the child’s safety and welfare, preferably within his/her own family or community.
- e) The child’s Health Care Plan is in place and promoting the child’s health and well-being.
- f) That the most appropriate placement is identified to meet the child’s needs and that a relevant Placement Plan is in place and has been circulated to relevant people. If it is an external placement the reviewing officer will check if an Individual Placement Agreement has been completed
- g) The educational needs of the child are being met. In this respect the Chair must ensure that the child’s Personal Education Plan is relevant and up to date.
- h) That the child maintains contact with his/her family and significant friends, and the arrangements for it.
- i) That an appropriate level of advice and assistance is provided to the child in order to promote their welfare and prepare them for independence and adulthood.
- j) Where the child has reached the age of 16, the Chair will

ensure that a Young Persons adviser has been appointed and work has started on the assessment of need and Pathway Plan. Where a Pathway Plan is in place for eligible or relevant young person, it will be reviewed at the Looked After Review.

- k) Whether any additional, specialist or therapeutic assessments or interventions are necessary to meet the child's needs.
 - l) Whether it is in the child's interests to undertake completion of a LAC Assessment and Action Record; if so, who should do this and by when.
 - m) The possibility that the child may require an Independent Visitor or befriender; if so, what arrangements should be undertaken in this respect.
 - n) That the child or young person is informed that they have a right to make complaints to the local authority and of the local authorities responsibility to provide them with an independent advocate should the child so wish.
 - o) That a clear decision is recorded regarding the appropriateness of the child's plan and specific recommendations made about tasks, timescales and responsibilities needed to progress the plan.
- 10.3 It is the IRO's responsibility to raise relevant issues in respect of young people, aged between 16 and 18 who are part of the Right2BCaerd4 initiative. This will include ensuring that the Dispute Resolution Process is triggered in those circumstances where the outcome of the review sets aside the wishes and feelings of the young person.

11. Social Worker Responsibilities After The Review

- 11.1 After the Review, the social worker is responsible for updating the Care Plan and Personal Education Plan in line with the recommendations of the Review, and circulating copies to the Chair and those who contributed or were invited to the Review within 14 days.
- 11.2 The social worker should arrange for a Pathway Plan summary sheet to be completed, if relevant, or updated as appropriate.
- 11.3 The social worker should also ensure the child's Placement Plan is updated if necessary, within a Placement Plan Review.
- 11.4 If any recommendations from a Review are not actioned, within the agreed time frame, the social worker must inform the Chair and those who contributed or were invited; giving reasons why not.
- 11.5 The Social Worker must inform the IRO of any change in circumstances in relation to the young persons Care Plan

- 11.6 Where the Dispute Resolution process has been triggered, the Social Worker should inform their manager and discuss proposals to resolve the issues.

12. Recording Of Looked After Reviews

- 12.1 The Chair has the responsibility for ensuring that the minutes of the Review are completed and circulated to all Review participants within 14 days.
- 12.2 Agreements will be reached within the Review meeting about the most appropriate method of ensuring that the outcomes and recommendations are received and understood by the child.
- 12.3 One copy of the Review of Arrangements Form should be placed on the child's case file together with any written reports, the agenda and Assessment and Action Record and Summary of Assessment and Action Record.
- 12.4 The Review of Arrangements Form, together with the Summary of the Assessment and Action Record and any other written reports, should be retained on the child's Review file in the Children's Reviewing Section.
- 12.5 The Chair should also complete the Monitoring Checklist and forward this with the Review Form to the relevant Operational Manager and the child's social worker.

13. The Child and the Complaints Procedure/ The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer

- 13.1 It is the Independent Reviewing Officer's responsibility to ensure that the child or young person is informed that they have a right to make complaints to the local authority and of the local authorities responsibility to provide them with an independent advocate should the child so wish.
- 13.2 Advocacy is about empowering children and young people and ensuring that their rights are respected and their views and wishes are heard at all times. Advocates should represent the views wishes and needs of children and young people and help them navigate the system responsible for their care.
- 13.3 The Independent Reviewing Officer should be informed by the Customer Relations Team of any complaints made by the child or on the child's behalf in relation to aspects of their care plan.

- 13.4 In situations where a young person has exercised their veto in respect of leaving care decisions and the Dispute Resolution Process has been triggered, the IRO should inform the Customer Relations Team. The Customer Relations (complaints) process would only commence if the Dispute Resolution process fails to achieve an outcome that the young person is satisfied with and the young person wishes to make a complaint.
- 13.5 The process of advocacy and complaints can run along side the Independent Reviewing Officer's actions in working to resolve an issue and it will be good practice for the Independent Reviewing Officer, the complaints officer advocate or young persons adviser to agree their respective roles and responsibilities in trying to resolve a complaint and how they will communicate with each other. The reviewing officer may have a role in communicating both with the child and the complaints department. The reviewing officer should not prejudice the complaints procedure but their work may help to speed up the process or hold a key to its resolution.
- 13.6 If all other methods of resolving an identified problem have proved or are proving unsuccessful and there is a danger of the child's human rights being breached, the Independent Reviewing Officer will have to consider whether they should use their power to refer a case to Children and Family Court Advisory Services (CAFCASS) so that legal proceedings can be brought to achieve a remedy.
- 13.7 Legal proceedings should be considered only as a last resort in extreme cases where all other attempts to resolve a problem within the Local Authority have failed. This step should only be taken where:
- the Independent Reviewing Officer has made every attempt through the agreed Communication Protocol to resolve the problem with the local authority;
 - there is no other person able and willing to take the case on the child's behalf. If there is such a person the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer is to establish that this is done.

14. Progress Chasing By The Independent Reviewing Officer

- 14.1 Where the Independent Reviewing Officer is concerned about any aspect of the child's plan they will refer the case via the communication protocols to the relevant senior manager.
- 14.2 If timely feedback about resolution of the issue is not received by the Independent Reviewing Officer, they will actively progress chase through the line management arrangements.

- 14.3 Where the Independent Reviewing Officer becomes aware that Review recommendations have not been followed through or incorporated into the relevant Children's Plans, he or she may take this up with the relevant manager and/or consider whether to reconvene the Looked After Review and/or report the matter to the appropriate senior manager.

15. Role Of Looked After Review In Achieving Permanence

- 15.1 The Independent Reviewing Officer must check that the child's Care Plan includes a Permanence Plan, which contains measurable milestones.
- 15.2 At the second Looked After Review, there is a requirement to focus on the requirement for the Care Plan to provide for a Permanence Plan for the child within a timescale which is realistic, achievable and meets the child's needs. If it is considered that the chosen avenue to permanence is not achievable within an appropriate timescale for the child, the Independent Reviewing Officer should consider referring the case to the Children's Panel.
- 15.3 At the third Looked After Review there will be a need for a Contingency Plan to be made where a permanency plan has not been achieved. For example where a plan for rehabilitation of the child has not been achieved, the Review should seek to establish whether the lack of progress is as a result of drift or whether there are valid child-centred reasons, properly recorded and endorsed by the Operations Manager. No further rehabilitation plan should be recommended unless there are exceptional reasons, which justify such a plan, or where the Court specifically directs further assessment. In this case, the Contingency Plan must include the active pursuit of an alternative placement for the child.
- 15.4 All subsequent Reviews should review the progress and continued appropriateness of the permanence plan.
- 15.5 Where the Care Plan for the child is permanency/long term placement, the Care Plan and Looked After Review will promote permanency within a family setting, with a particular focus on remaining with the carers beyond 18 under the Staying Put Pilot. This approach focuses on young people leaving care when they are ready not by attaining the age of 18.
- 15.6 Where a young adult is remaining in a family setting under the Staying Put Pilot, the IRO will chair the first review under these arrangements. Subsequent reviews will be chaired by the Team Leader in the appropriate Leaving Care Team. (see Leaving Care Procedure)
- 15.7 Copies of all former relevant reviews for young people Staying Put will be forwarded to the Designated Staying Put IRO to ensure scrutiny and

quality assurance of transition plans post 18.

16. Referrals By Independent Reviewing Officers To Senior Manager's/Children's Panel

- 16.1 The Independent Reviewing Officer should refer cases to the Children's Panel in the following circumstances (see The Communications Protocol):
- a) Where there is a block to planning for the child.
 - b) Where a Care Plan with a clear permanency option is not in place.
 - c) Where a permanency option (other than rehabilitation) has been identified and included in the Care Plan and no suitable placement has been identified pursuant to the Plan six months after the plan was made.
 - d) If rehabilitation is one element of the Care Plan and it is unlikely to be achieved by the date of the third Looked After Review.
 - e) Where the child has been placed with his or her parent(s) and after six months, the child's Looked After Review identifies concerns as to the continuing appropriateness of the placement.
 - f) Where the child has been placed with his or her parent(s), after the placement has continued for 12 months, to enable the Panel to consider the appropriateness of the placement and the continued need for a Care Order.
- 16.2 If timely feedback about resolution of the issue is not received by the Independent Reviewing Officer, they will actively progress-chase through the line management arrangements and senior managers if appropriate.
- 16.3 Where the Independent Reviewing Officer becomes aware that Review recommendations have not been followed through or incorporated into the relevant Children's Plans, he or she may take this up with the relevant manager and/or consider whether to reconvene the Looked After Review and/or report the matter to the appropriate senior manager.
- 16.4 The IRO will ensure the Dispute Resolution process is triggered in circumstances where the outcome of the review leads to actions that set aside the wishes and feelings of the young person concerned. (see Dispute Resolution Process)

END OF LOOKED AFTER REVIEWS PROCEDURES