



INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (CARED FOR CHILDREN)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2018-2019

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IRO annual report for Children and Young People

1. Introduction

Every year the IRO team produce a report which is published and presented to the councillors of Cheshire East who are responsible for the services which support you if you are a cared for child or young person or a care leaver here in Cheshire East. This is a shorter, more interesting version of the report for you.

2. The role of your IRO

An Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is appointed to every child or young person who becomes cared for and our role is to make sure the Local Authority (Cheshire East) make sure you are well cared for and carries out all its duties to you as children who in their care.

Your IRO does this by:

- Holding cared for review meetings which you can attend and be involved in
- Speaking to you about your care plan, what you want to happen and what is important to you
- Making sure you have all that you need to keep you healthy, what you need to support you to have a good education or career and making sure you are staying in contact with your family network and keeping in touch with the people who matter to you
- Making sure that your views are heard and that your care plan reflects what you need and what you want to happen
- Making sure things happen on time and that people do what they say they will do following a review meeting
- Helping you to raise any concerns by making sure you have access to an Advocate or making sure you have access to Independent Visitor to visit you where you live.
- Raising concerns with your social workers and their managers when things are not going to plan or we do not agree that the plan is what is best for you.

3. Our team in Cheshire East

There are 10 IROs in our team in Cheshire East, 3 are men and 6 are women, you might know our names, Ian, Kevin, Victor, Lisa, Angela, Dawn, Allison, Karen and we have 2 Rachels!. You should be able to find your IRO and their contact details by following the link below:

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/are-you-concerned-about-a-child/cheshire-east-consultation-service-cheecs/independent-reviewing-officers-contact-information.aspx>

4. What did we do in 2018-19?

What went well? 😊

- We chaired **1481** cared for reviews and pathway plan reviews this year – a lot of meetings!
- 151 children had their first review so have just become cared for by us
- 98% - that is nearly **all** of you, took part in your review in some way
- 60% of you aged under 18 attended your meeting, we would like this to be more please, so let your IRO know what would help you to come to your meeting
- 61% of you aged over 18 came to your meetings, again let us know what would make it better for you to attend, we can't do it as well without you
- We have two new IROs Dawn and Allison who joined the team this summer and we said goodbye to Lisa and Miranda
- We started using a consultation form designed with children in My Voice and we send out emoji stickers with this form for children and young people under 16. We are working on a new form for over 16's. let us know if you want to help design it
- We are trying to make your reviews more interactive to help you feel involved because it's your meeting! Please give your IRO any ideas you have.

What are we worried about? 😞

- We are worried your meetings get moved at short notice when social workers and IROs are busy and we need this to change
- We are worried you do not always see your care plan before your review and this needs to change as you need to be able to read your plan before your review meeting and be involved in writing your plan so we know you understand what will happen to care for you.
- We are worried that some children and young people do not like their review meetings and we want to change them so you want to attend your meetings. We would like to see at least 80% of you coming to your meetings if possible. Please let your IRO know what they could do to help you want to attend your meeting
- We are worried that so many children and young people are living too far from their families and this makes it more difficult for us to visit you regularly and this can also mean you have lots of changes to manage

5. How we can make a difference

It is very important for the IRO to make a difference to children and young people below are 2 examples of where we believe we have made a difference for the young people we review

Example 1.

J had a care plan that said the best thing was for her to go home to her Mum and Dad it seemed as though things were going well and Mum and Dad had made lots of changes. J knew her IRO quite well and asked to meet with him with her teacher, J told her IRO she was unhappy with her plan and told him about lots of things she was worried about. Her IRO asked why J could not tell her social worker, J told him her social worker was very new to her and she was not sure if she would tell her Mum and Dad how she felt. The IRO spoke with the social worker and agreed some more time would be spent with J so she could pass on her worries about going home. Once this happened J's plan was changed so J could stay with her foster carers and just spend time with Mum and Dad. This was what J wanted and after speaking to Mum and Dad again the social worker agreed this would keep J safe.

Example 2.

R was a cared for child who had a baby when she was 16 she grew up in a family who did not like to speak to social workers so she was not happy about social workers being involved in her baby. The IRO for her baby met with R and her carers and found that R was caring for her baby very well and although she was not happy with speaking to the social worker for her baby she understood why they were worried. The IRO for the baby challenged the care plan for the baby to be moved away from R and requested that more time and support be given as it was possible R could care for her baby long term and she just needed people to work and communicate with her in a different way. The social worker agreed that further support could be arranged but was worried this would not help however she agreed to ask the court for more time, R began to work with people more easily and continued to do well with her baby. The plan was changed and whilst she still has a social worker for her baby she had now moved to her own home with her baby.

6. Future plans

What needs to happen? 😊

These are the main aims we have for this year and we hope to achieve this by April 2020.

- Improve your attendance at your reviews - we want more of you to want to come to your reviews as they are your meetings
- Improve our consultations – if you don't want to come to your review or if people close to you cannot come to the meeting, we want to make sure we know what they think about your care plan so we are trying to find new ways to collect people's views
- Improve your involvement in reviews - this year you nearly all took part in your review in some way but we would like you to tell your IRO what we can do to make this even better for you

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- Improve invitations to reviews – we are hoping to make arranging your review quicker and easier for your social worker to make sure everybody you want to come to your review knows when it is taking place
- Finally, like last year, we will be speaking to some of you to see what you thought of your reviews and whether the changes we are making are working for you and what else you would like us to do!

