



Knowsley Council

Safeguarding Quality Assurance Unit – Doing the Basics Well

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and Child Protection Chairs (CP) Practice Standards - Monitoring of the Child's Case

The Safeguarding Quality Assurance Unit will play a vital role in making Knowsley – a place where all our children have the best start in life, where every family thrives and where all our young people aim high and achieve their potential.

This document seeks to provide guidance working with children, young people and families, building on their strengths to better manage the harm and challenges they face. We aim to improve outcomes for children and families and be aspirational in supporting them to achieve their potential.

The standards contained in this document should be viewed as part of an approach to ensure that social work intervention with children and their families in Knowsley are delivered to a high standard.

The standards are not standalone but a part of service strategies, policies and procedures.

The standards should be read in conjunctions with Social Work England Professional Standards Guidance last updates 31st July 19

The following definitions explain how each of these work together:

- **Standards** are the rules that describe the (minimum) service or practice that can be expected by the children, young people and their families. Most of them are legally set through government legislation and guidance, or are based on evidence based research. They are mandatory for IROs/CP Chairs. These standards are based on our legal responsibilities but set out the high quality expected of our staff through the continuum of need when supporting our families to be safe and achieve to their full potential.
- **Procedures:** These are the steps that describe the actions needed to deliver that service or practice – the what, how, when, where and who. They are mandatory;
- **Policies:** These provide the strategic context for shaping the standards and procedures, and answer the question of why the service is delivered in particular way and why the service is important. The delivery of the policy requirements, as set out by Knowsley Council is the responsibility of all staff.

The management standards in this document have been designed to ensure consistency in practice across The IRO Service and to ensure IROs are compliant with the IRO Handbook and all their strategy responsibilities.

Standards

Standard 1 – Working in a Child Centred Manner

1. IROs will be tenacious, committed, passionate, aspirational and challenging in order to ensure children's needs are being met.
2. The IRO will ensure that each child knows who their IRO is and how to contact them between reviews and this should be clearly recorded in the record of the review.
3. IRO will demonstrate a commitment to working in a child centred manner and will communicate with children in an age appropriate way.
4. IRO will check with the child as to their preferred language/method of communication.
5. Arrangements for reviews will be based on need of the child and consult them on their views and wishes.
6. The IRO will ensure that the child's wishes, views and feelings are given full consideration.
7. The IRO will visit or communicate directly with the child prior to the review to gain their views and wishes and plan the review.
8. The IRO will encourage the child to chair their own review, where appropriate.
9. The IRO will engage with the child's guardian in line with the Cafcass protocol in order to ensure effective communication about the child's care plan.
10. The IRO will ensure that the child knows about the council's complaints procedures and has the help they need in using those procedures if they want to.
11. The IRO will ensure that the child receives a copy of all decisions in a child friendly format and fully explained to the child according to their age and understanding.
12. Where necessary the IRO will take steps to assist children in pursuing their rights through, for example, access to advocacy service (NYAS).

Standard 2 – Monitoring the Child's Plan to Permanence

1. The IRO will be satisfied that each placement is meeting the needs of the child and if not escalate as required.
2. All decisions to have a timescale attached that meets the child's needs and a named person to implement them and to be monitored at least 3 monthly.
3. The primary focus of the IRO will be to quality assure the care planning and review process to assess the quality and effectiveness of assessment, analysis, reports and planning to secure better outcomes and challenge poor practice.
4. The IRO should be satisfied that plans for permanency have been identified by the second review.
5. The IRO will be satisfied that the local authority is meeting the requirements of the care planning regulations including fulfilling its duty as corporate parent.
6. The IRO proactively tracks and monitors the progress of the care plan and the implementation of the review decisions and to raise disputes if required in a timely manner.
7. The IRO will determine whether a review needs to be convened when there is a significant change/event in the child's life.
8. The IRO will take independent legal advice if necessary.
9. IROs will prepare timely minutes according to the requirements of the Local Authority within 20 working days and outcomes will be inputted within 5 working days.

Standard 3 – Working with Partners

1. Each review process will have the necessary information available and people attending, to ensure clear, robust and informed judgements are made about the progress of the care plan. This will be achieved through consultation with the child and all professionals supporting the care plan.
2. IROs will address concerns with the partnership to improve outcomes for children and promote aspirations for children in care and challenge agencies who do not.
3. The IRO will challenge where there is drift in care planning and alert using the local authority formal dispute resolution process.

4. The IRO will provide both positive and constructive feedback to all partner agencies in order to achieve good outcomes for children.

Standard 4 – Working with Parents

1. IROs will ensure that parents are fully involved in the plans for their children.
2. IRO to ensure, where appropriate, birth parents/others with parental responsibility are empowered to participate in their child's review.
3. IROs will meet with parents if they cannot attend CLA reviews to ensure that they are fully informed of what is happening with their child/ren.

Standard 5 – Improving Practice

1. IROs to fully understand their role in improving the quality of services locally.
2. IROs to only approve good quality reports to reviews (pre-meeting reports) and care plans.
3. IROs to quality assure the work from audits and reflect on practice to improve outcomes.

Standard 6 – Escalation Process

1. The IRO will use the 'dispute resolution procedure'/standards to achieve the best outcome for the child/young person.
2. The IRO will consider referring the matter to Cafcass at an early stage if that appears to be the most effective way of resolving the issue. Outcomes will be inputted within 5 working days.

Child Protection Chairs Practice Standards in Relation to Monitoring the Child's Plan

Standards

Standard 1 – Monitoring the Child's Plan

1. CP Chair to ensure that the child's Child Protection Plan/permanence plan is fully focussed, SMART, fully reflects the current risks and circumstances of the child and each child has an individual plan.
2. CP Chair to complete Child Protection Plans within 24 hours of the Child Protection Review.
3. CP Chair to ensure that they monitor the progress of core group in developing the plan and working together with the family to reduce risks.
4. CP Chair to make sure that Child Protection Conference minutes are amended and ready for distribution within 15 days of the Child Protection Conference.
5. CP Chair to regularly track the case to ensure no drift or delay.
6. CP Chair to do a 3 months mid-point check on the child's Child Protection care plan as a minimum.

Standard 2 – Engaging with Children and Families

1. CP Chair to meet with parents before the Child Protection Conference so they fully understand the process.
2. CP Chair to promote child participation through attendance at the conference, written form, and or NYAS advocacy representation.
3. CP Chair to ensure that the child's overall needs are met to an outstanding standard and that the risk of harm is reduced. CP Chair will expect that partner agencies are aspirational about children.
4. CP Chairs will consider visiting children who have been on a Child Protection Plan for 12 months plus.

Standard 3 – Working in Partnership

1. CP Chair make sure that all conference attendees are aware of the threshold of significant harm and the likelihood of significant harm, so that they can make informed decisions regarding the appropriateness of a child being made subject to a plan.
2. CP Chair to ensure that all agencies provide their information in a manner that reflects the family's strengths, areas of risks and impact and is in jargon free, plain language so parents understand.
3. CP Chair to ensure that decisions made at conference are explained and the outcome to be achieved is clear.
4. CP Chair to challenge professionals in meetings where decisions made are not reflective of the risks or strengths of the family and they inform their manager so work around thresholds can take place.
5. Where risks are not reducing CP Chair to ensure that agencies reflect on their involvement and the support provided to families in order to reduce the risk of drift and delay.
6. CP Chair to make use of Knowsley's escalation procedure to improve outcomes of children subject to Child Protection Plans.

Standard 4 – Improving Practice

1. CP Chairs to fully understand their role in improving the quality of services locally.
2. CP Chairs to ensure that good quality reports are provided for Child Protection Conferences from all partner agencies.
3. CP Chairs to quality assure the work from audits and reflect on practice to improve outcomes.