



## Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

### Independent Reviewing Officer/Team

For the purpose of this evaluation Shelly Gill, 'Children's Rights Officer' met with Sara, Sandra and Mark, and I met with Alex, Lewis, Luke and Zoe who all attended looked after reviews.

It is the legal, responsibility, under the Children's Act, 1989, for local authorities to encourage children and young people to have a say and to be actively involved in the care they receive. For example, care plans, looked after reviews and foster carer reviews.

The teams, within the Independent Reviewing Officers Team are starting to enter into dialogue with children and young people, and ensuring children's and young people's views are taken into consideration and that they are involved in decision making regarding the review's they attended.

This report below will highlight opportunities young people have had, through different methods of dialogue, with independent reviewing office teams (IRO). This has allowed some young people the opportunity to discuss their views and opinions on the reviews they attended and, as a result, the IRO team has started to make some changes to this service they provided to children and young people who attended looked after reviews.

#### Opportunities for Dialogue and Change.

##### Multi Agency Looked After Partnership 'Agenda Day' and 'Looked After' Agenda Day.

The independent reviewing officers, in accordance with the Listening to Children Strategy, approached Investing in Children to gain the views of children and young people who attend reviews. This was part of the strategy to assist and facilitate the involvement of children and young people in service development.

Below are some of the questions discussed at the 'Looked After' Agenda Day.

"How do you feel about your 'looked After Reviews'? Some of the responses to this question by the young people who attended were:

- Boring.
- Take too long.
- Always get to be there.
- I would like them at home.

And, "Do you know about carers review's?" The response to this question was:

- **Don't know about my foster carers reviews**

The above was highlighted in the South Social Care and Health - Looked after Review Agenda Day Report, January 2005.

The Mulit Agency 'Looked After' Partnership, agenda day allowed young people to discuss with the Independent Review Officer what they thought of reviews they attended.

Mark explained, "**I attended both agenda days**", He also went on to explain, "**I felt that it did give me a chance to say what I thought of reviews**".

This allowed some young people who access the 'Looked after Review' system the opportunity to discuss with the Independent Reviewing Officer's how this service works and to look at developments made to the review through this method of dialogue.

What would be positive to discover, next year when coming to evaluate the team for membership, is how this approach to participation by the IRO for the 'Looked After' reviews is developed further in accordance with children and young people who access reviews.

### **Foster Carer Annual reviews**

IRO team members for Foster and Adoption, who chair these annual reviews, have drafted a new proposal document, giving children and young people the opportunity to discuss with their social worker about what they think of their foster carers and the placement they are in.

Zoe explained, "**I think this is a good idea as it will get young people's views across and they will be listened to. Young people should have the chance to say what they think of foster parents**".

IRO's have now approached the MALAP steering group to gain the views of these young people, giving their perspective and account of this new format and giving ideas to support the effective development of this document. This can be used by children and young people to give an account of the individual care they receive from foster carers.

It will be interesting to discover how the IRO team incorporate the views of children and young people from the Foster and Adoption service when coming to re-evaluate for Investing In Children membership next year.

### **My Review My Views Document**

This change came as a result of the IRO team responding to the feedback from the 'Looked After' Reviews Agenda Days. The team developed this document so young people could be more inclusively involved in their review and, where possible, direct plans and discussions about their individual support and care.

The young people did have direct experiences and recommendations about filling in this form. Below are some examples:

Sara explained, **"I write stuff down in it and think it is ok and have used it at my reviews"**.

Mark added, **"I like using it but would like to spend more time with my key worker to fill it in"**.

Mark also added **"I do not like talking about drugs and alcohol at my reviews"**.

Luke also stated, **"My reviews document never gets to me on time so I can't write down what I want from my reviews. They have even arrived after my review has take place and that needs changing"**

Sandra added, **"I do not like filling it in with my Foster carer"**.

Mark added, **" My last review was during school time and I did not go to my last one, but my mother did. The reviews in the school holiday are better than in school time. School is important but the reviews are important and I would like to go to both"**.

All young people were aware of this form and felt that it did allow them the opportunity to make further contributions to the reviews they attended, but felt that this could be developed further to allow children and young people to contribute further to their reviews. It might be encouraging next year when coming to re-evaluate, young people and myself could look at how many 'My reviews , My views ' forms were completed, a summary of the issues raised, and what the team have done about them.

### **Looked After Reviews Quality Insurance Checks List**

The IRO team have redefined the quality insurance checklist to reduce the amount of time spent by adults doing paper work at reviews, as many children and young people had highlighted that the review process was "boring".

Mark, Sara and Sandra felt that the reviews were short in time and that it was not as boring since the changes took place.

Independent Reviewing Officers have started to develop opportunities where some children and young people can discuss their individual experiences through agenda days. They are now developing links with different groups of young people within the care system, which is a necessary and a valuable approach to making the review process a positive experience.

There have been some changes made to how the reviews work in order to meet the needs and ideas of the children and young people who access this service. This is shown with the introduction of the new format to "My Review My Views" document and a reduction in paper work.

All young people agreed that IRO should get Investing Children membership for the developments they are making, but as suggested by Alex, **"That they should invite more young people to express their views to make them even better in the future"**

For these reasons I would like to recommend that the IRO team receives its Investing in Children Membership. I look forward to seeing further developments made over the next year in partnership with children and young people who access this service of the Independent Reviewing Officer's team service.

This report has been read and agreed by the following young people Alex, Luke, Zoe, Lewis and Mark.

**Rob Johnson**  
**IiC Project Worker**  
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