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**Safeguarding Quality Review Service**

**Issue Resolution Procedure**

**V3 November 2020**

**Issues Resolution Guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers / Child Protection Chairs**

**Introduction and Background**

This guidance outlines Blackpool’s SQR Issues Resolution Procedure. This is to be used when Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO’s) / Child Protection Chairs (CP Chairs) have a concern about drift of a child’s Plan or if the child is not being appropriately safeguarding by the partnership.

There are a number of ways in which issues may be identified through the roles and responsibilities. The Issues Resolution Process should promote the principles of Blackpool Families Rock. Through every stage of the Issues Resolution process we will be working with Children’s Social Care frontline teams and partners agencies to achieve improved lived experiences for children in Blackpool.

**Values and Principles:**

* All Issues Resolutions will focus on and evidence the impact for the individual child/young person.
* All Issues Resolutions will be written with respect and through a Blackpool Families Rock restorative approach.
* Relationship based practice is central to our approach, balanced with the SQR statutory requirements to quality assurance children’s plans.
* Issues Resolutions will always be aimed to be resolved informally first and addressed as soon, to prevent children experiencing drift.

Themes arising from Issue Resolutions will be reviewed monthly and reported in writing, on a quarterly basis, to senior leader’s responsibility for Children Services. Equally, evidence of good practice that impacts on improved outcomes for children/young people will also be recognised, celebrated, and shared to build upon what is working well and informed practice across the service.

**Child / young person’s Child Protection Conference / Our Children’s Review**

Monitoring and quality assurance activity between children’s Child Protection Conferences and their In Our Care Reviews. To be an effective IRO / CP Chair, there will be times whereby issues need to be raised with a professional / service area (single / multiple agency). This role and responsibility is set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and the IRO Handbook (2015). One of the key functions of an Independent Reviewing Officer is to oversee the needs and rights of every young person in the care of the Local Authority.

It is expected that professional judgement is used on each child / young person’s needs to exercise effective informal and formal Issues resolution and issues to be resolved in a proportionate, timely and purposeful way. In practice, it is not possible within the guidance to provide an exhaustive list of every ‘issue’ relating to practice and procedures that would require the intervention of an IRO / CP chair under the Issues Resolution Process. This will be informed by the impact that an issue has on the child / young person. For guidance overarching reason categories for the Issues resolution being initiated, include:

* Statutory requirements have not been undertaken
* Local Authority Procedures and Practice Standards have not been undertaken
* Plan recommendations agreed during In Our Care Reviews /Child Protection Conferences have not been undertaken within agreed timescales
* Considerations of where children in our care are living and statutory responsibilities e.g. Reg. 24 not approved
* The child is not being appropriately safeguarded
* The child or young person has raised concerns about their Plan, or this has been raised by their advocate
* Other areas identified where the child / young person’s needs are not met and the identified impact on the child/young person.

If there are immediate safeguarding concerns for the child/young person the IRO/ CP chair should contact Social Care Service Manager within 24 hrs of concern being identified.

**Issues Resolution Process**

The child / young person’s IRO / CP chair is individually responsible for activating and seeking resolution of the issues raised. Even if this is not in accordance with the young person’s wishes and feelings, but is in accordance with the best interest and welfare of the child/young person, including their human rights. The CP Chair / IRO should always aim to **work with** children and families.

It is expected that the IRO/ CP chair will discuss all Issues Resolutions at any stage, either by phone or in person with the allocated Social Worker.

All Issues Resolutions will be recorded on the child’s record by the CP Chair / IRO, using the case note template relevant heading which reflects the level in which the Issues Resolution is being raised; e.g. Stage 1, 2 3 or 4 (see attached Issues Resolution flowchart).

The Issues Resolution case note will include the following:

* Child/young person’s name
* Stage of Issues Resolution – 1,2,3 or 4
* Reason for the Issues Resolution
* Impact on the child/young person (considering the lived experience of the child / young person, their views and the current and long term impact)
* Details of the discussions with the Social Worker
* Actions requested - All responses/ resolutions will be recorded within the specific ‘Issues Resolution resolved case note’ template on the child’s records
* Response (relevant manager / leader response)
* Outcome (date resolved / Stage of Issue Resolution)

**Informal Issues Resolution**

Informal Issues Resolution will be initiated by the CP Chair / IRO and discussed with the Social Worker, with the support of their Team Manager, dependent on the experience of Social Worker (ASYE). This will then be recorded on the child / young person’s record by the CP Chair / IRO, using the case note – ‘Informal Issues Resolution’ template. The IRO will agree timescales for resolution with the social worker.

Informal Issues Resolution will be noted within the SQR Issues Resolution Clinic and discussed if the Issues resolution isn’t resolved within the agreed timescale.

On the occasions that informal has not achieved resolution and there is a need to escalate to a Formal Issue Resolution, the IRO/CP Chair records this within the child’s record and SQR Issues Resolution tracker.

**Formal Issues Resolution**

**Stage 1 – Formal Issues Resolution – CP Chair / IRO to Team Manager/ relevant partner agency**

Actions to be discussed with the allocated Team Manager in circumstances when the IRO / CP Chair is unable to resolve the issue they have informally raised, requesting a response within 5 working days. The CP Chair / IRO will discuss this with the Team Manager and will then record the ‘Formal Issues Resolution - Stage 1’ case note template on the child’s record.

The CP Chair / IRO will then track and monitor the progress of the resolution.

**Stage 2 – Formal Issues Resolution – CP Chair / IRO to Children Social Care Service Manager / relevant leader for partnership agency**

Actions raised by CP Chair / IRO which haven’t been resolved at Stage 1 within agreed timescales are escalated to Service Manager responsible for allocated Children’s Social Work Team / Partnership lead level, requesting a response within 5 working days. Responses will be recorded on the child’s file within case note types.

CP Chair / IRO will record on the child/young person’s record using the ‘Stage 2 Formal Issues Resolution’ case note template. If the actions and timescales are agreed, the CP Chair / IRO will monitor the progress of the actions.

If escalating to a partner agency this should be undertaken via e mail and telephone call and discussions and agreement must recorded on the child’s records by the CP Chair / IRO.

**Stage 3 – Formal Issues Resolution – CP Chair / IRO to relevant Head of Service for Children Social Care / relevant senior leader for partnership agency**

Actions agreed by the CP Chair / IRO which haven’t been resolved with agreed timescales are escalated to the Head of Service responsible for relevant Social Care Service or relevant senior leader for the partnership agency, requesting a response within 5 working days.

CP Chair / IRO will record on the child / young person’s record using the ‘Stage 3 Formal Issues Resolution’ case note template. If the actions and timescales are agreed, the CP Chair / IRO will monitor the progress of the actions.

If escalating to a partner agency this should be undertaken via e mail and telephone call and discussions and agreement must recorded on the child’s records by the CP Chair / IRO.

**Stage 4 – Formal Issues Resolution – CP Chair / IRO to Assistant Director Children’s services / Senior Leader Partnership agency, also sighting SQR Head of Service**

Actions agreed by the CP Chair / IRO which haven’t been resolved at the earlier stages of the process will be escalated by CP Chair / IRO to the Assistant Director Children’s services, for a response within 5 working days, also notifying the SQR Head of Service. Consideration will also be given to escalating to senior leadership re: partner agency where relevant. CP Chair / IRO will record on the child/young person’s record using the ‘Stage 4 Formal Issue Resolution’ case note template. The Children Social Care Assistant Director will be e mailed to inform them the case note is recorded on the child’s records and request they respond to this. If the actions and timescales are agreed, the CP Chair / IRO will monitor the progress of the actions.

If escalating to a partner agency this should be undertaken via e mail and telephone call and discussions and agreement must recorded on the child’s records by the CP Chair / IRO.

**External IRO escalation beyond stage 4**

If matter is not resolved and relates to a Child in our Care, the IRO will inform the SQR Service Manager & Head of Service, and HoS for the relevant chidlren’s service. The IRO will consider escalation to the Director of Children Services, seek Independent Legal Advice and consider notification to CAFCASS, supported by Service Manager and Head of Service SQR.

IRO has the authority to refer a child/young person to CAFCASS if the IRO considers it appropriate to do so, in consultation with SQR Service manager, in circumstances when the above stages are exhausted or if the matter is of sufficient urgency, the IRO can make such a referral. The IRO, in making this decision, has access to management advice and support and in additional to independent legal advice where necessary.

It is noted however that such a referral should be regarded as an exceptional step and will be used if, despite escalation, an acceptable and appropriate resolution of the issue identified has not been achieved.

**Ensuring Issue Resolutions have positive impact on children’s lived experience**

Issue Resolutions will only be finalised off when a formal outcome has been resolved and has impacted on the child’s lived experience and prevent them experiencing drift in their Plan being undertaken. The allocated CP Chair / IRO will monitor the progress and complete the recordings of the actions being undertaken and the impact of this on the individual child.

The IRO/ CP chair is responsible for recording all of their monitoring activity and the outcome of the issues resolution on the child’s record.

**SQR Issues Resolution Clinics**

Issues Resolutions are considered at fortnightly Issue Resolution Clinics, with the relevant SQR Team Managers (CP Chair Team and IRO Service) Service Manager, CP Chairs and IROs. During the clinic discussions there is also a focus on identifying good practice.

The purpose of the Issues resolution clinic is to support the IRO / CP Chair in retrospectively reflecting on issues resolutions that they have been raised, ensuring developing quality assurance practice consistency, identifying the issues resolution that have not been addressed and the impact of the issues resolution on the children lived experience.

The CP Chair / IRO is responsible for determining the issues resolution stage and should not wait for Issues Resolution Clinic to prevent children and young people experiencing delay in their plan.

An Issues resolution tracker will be reviewed during the clinics to focus on performance in achieving outcomes, generated from recording activity on Mosaic. This will be used as a performance tool with the IROs and CP chairs to understand their activity and link to the IRO and CP chair practice standards.

**Working with Children’s Services**

It is important that the Issues Resolution themes; social worker, team, service area and is shared with Children’s Services Managers and Head of Services, to support in learning and development in the individual service areas and inform Practice Development Leader Service support being provided to individual practitioners.

A monthly Issue Resolution Performance Report will be provided, stating the individual child data, the level of the Issue resolution raised re: social workers, teams and service areas. The Issue Resolution Performance Report will confirm which issue resolutions has been resolved and those that remain outstanding and need attention. A monthly meeting will be held between Service Managers for Assessment & Support Service, Supporting and Strengthening Families Service and Supporting Children in Our Care Service, Fostering Service and SQR Service, discussions will focus on tracking the Issue resolution Performance report, to prevent children experience further drift. Service managers will use this report with managers and practitioners within performance management activity and supervision.

A quarterly theme report will be provided to Heads of Service. The report will outline the themes CP Chairs and IROs have raised, the agreed actions with Service Manager leads to address the themes and evidence the impact the outcomes has had on children and young people. Good practice will also be highlighted.

Any themes highlighting particular practice issues at an individual or team level will be shared with Service Development Manager, to inform any auditing activity as part of the Quality Assurance Framework. Good practice will also be shared.

**Working with Partner agencies**

The Blackpool Families Rock multi-agency implementation group has co-produced the partnership response to the Issues Resolution procedures. The partner representatives are providing the relevant role titles for their organisations who would respond to the different stages of the Issues Resolution procedure.

A quarterly theme report will be taken to the BFR Implementation group to share the main themes IROs and CP chairs have raised across the partnership for discussion and plans/ actions in response to the themes are agreed.

**INFORMAL**

Issues Resolution from IRO/CP chair to Social Worker/Team Manager/ relevant partnership leader

Resolved

No response/ actions not addressing the issue

**STAGE 1**

Resolved

Formal Issues Resolution from IRO/CP Chair to Team Manager/ relevant Partnership Leader

No response/ actions not addressing the issue

**STAGE 2**

Resolved

Issues Resolution from IRO/ CP chair sent from Service Manager CSC/ relevant Partnership Leader

No response/ actions not addressing the issue

**STAGE 3**

Issues Resolution sent from IRO/ CP Chair to Head of Service CSC/ relevant Partnership Leader

Resolved

No response/ actions not addressing the issue

**STAGE 4**

Issues Resolution sent from IRO/ CP chair to Assistant Director/Director of Children’s services/ relevant Partnership Leader

Resolved

If unable to be resolved, consideration with SQR management for referral to CAFCASS