



**COVID-19 – Interim Arrangements for
Management of LAC Reviews**

THE MID AND WEST WALES SAFEGUARDING BOARD

April 2020

Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board

Regional Briefing for IRO Service, reviewing statutory care plans for Looked after and Accommodated children @ 13th April 2020

This briefing paper has been prepared to support staff across the region in the delivery of services to children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that normal service delivery will remain disrupted for several months. During this period, it is essential we continue to review and monitor the well-being and safety of all children in our care and continue to deliver the reviewing service.

Therefore, as of the 30th March 2020 the following will be in place until further notice;

- All Initial and Subsequent Care Plan reviews will remain business critical and will continue to be held, albeit remotely in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys.

Whilst it is important that IROs continue to review Care & Support; Pathway and Adoption Plans, the way they are undertaken will need to adapt based on anticipated changes to service capacity, the health of children and families and the impact of self-isolation. During this period, every effort should be made by professionals to engage children and families and to ensure that their voice is heard. Every effort will continue to be made to communicate with parents.

The position in relation to Looked after children's reviews will remain under constant review and any changes communicated via the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board.

It should be noted all local escalation and issue resolution protocols remain in place and should continue to be utilised where appropriate and necessary during this period.

TPG continue to offer a regional advocacy service remotely and children and young people should continue to be encouraged to access this service as required on an active offer principle and basis.

Initial Reviews – s76; ICO; Adoption

Initial reviews will continue to be held within timescales. Each Local Authority will set out and communicate a process for running the conference remotely; (see appendices) this will vary on resources available and may include using, email, Skype, telephone and other group chat platforms.

IROs will still require agency reports 2 working days prior to the review date. These can be emailed in the same way as previously.

The pre-review discussions with the social worker will occur through a telephone/skype call

The consultation visit to the child/young person will occur remotely using Skype/Telephone or other available social media platforms

Subsequent Reviews:

Subsequent reviews will continue to be held within timescales. Each Local Authority will set out and communicate a process for running the review remotely. (See appendices)

Reviews will still require agency reports 2 working days prior to the review date and all these reports should be shared with the IRO and Social worker before the review date, agencies will need to use remote methods to do this.

The pre-review discussions with the social worker will occur through a telephone/skype call

The consultation visit to the child/young person will occur remotely using Skype/Telephone or other available platforms

All reports sent remotely should be protected by password or encryption.

Timescales: The review can be delayed in exceptional circumstances e.g. if the child and family members are unwell and therefore unable to participate. If a delay occurs, the IRO must be satisfied that the child is safely cared for. In such circumstances, this discussion must be recorded on the child's record. This delay should not exceed 20 working days. If there are circumstances arising which could delay the review further, the child's and families wishes should be ascertained and shared with the IRO and the review should go ahead.

Recording of reviews: A record of the review will be made and the minutes will detail the methods used to come to the conference decision.

Appendix 1 – Carmarthenshire

- The IRO Service is currently operating a Skype for business service, which enables external partners, including foster carers, children and young people and their parents to access the meeting as a guest.
- The business support team will continue to email Invites for reviews. Clear guidance will be included in those emails on how to access the meeting, this will require the Skype for Business App to be installed on a smart phone/tablet; Laptop/PC beforehand. The guidance explains how to do this.
- In partnership with the Family Placement Team, it is expected that foster carers will allow children to use their devices to ensure children are able to attend their meeting for those children who do not currently have access to a smart device or computer. The same principle applies for video consultations to take place with their Independent Reviewing Officer.
- For parents who do not attend their child's review meeting, the IRO will make direct contact to arrange the most appropriate way to ensure your views are heard and included in the reviewing process for your child/ren.

Appendix 2- Ceredigion

- The IRO Service is currently operating a Conference Call or Skype for business service which enables external partners, including foster carers, children and young people and their parents to be on the phone or access the meeting as a guest.
- The IRO business support team will continue to email Invites for reviews. Clear guidance will be included in those emails on how to access the meeting, this will require the Skype for Business App to be installed on a smart phone/tablet; Laptop/PC beforehand. There is guidance that explains how to do this or if the meeting will be held via conference call.
- In partnership with the Family Placement Team, it is expected that foster carers will allow children to use their devices to ensure children are able to attend their meeting for those children who do not currently have access to a smart device or computer. The same principle applies for video or phone consultations to take place with their Independent Reviewing Officer.
- For parents who do not attend their child's review meeting, the IRO will make direct contact to arrange the most appropriate way to ensure your views are heard and included in the reviewing process for your child/ren
- In the event that skype for business or conference call is not possible for participants then email will be used to share information and gain views.

Appendix 3 – Pembrokeshire

- The IRO Service is currently operating a Skype for business service, which enables external partners, including foster carers, children and young people and their parents to access the meeting as a guest.
- The business support team will continue to email Invites for reviews. Clear guidance will be included in those emails on how to access the meeting, this will require the Skype for Business App to be installed on a smart phone/tablet; Laptop/PC beforehand. The guidance explains how to do this.
- In partnership with the Family Placement Team, it is expected that foster carers will allow children to use their devices to ensure children are able to attend their meeting for those children who do not currently have access to a smart device or computer. The same principle applies for video consultations to take place with their Independent Reviewing Officer.
- For parents who do not attend their child's review meeting, the IRO will make direct contact to arrange the most appropriate way to ensure your views are heard and included in the reviewing process for your child/ren.

Appendix 4 – Powys

- Invitations will be sent to children and families by post or secure access email
- Professionals will receive invitations electronically. Generic emails for partner agencies will also be sent invites.
- Children will receive electronic consultation booklets to return and complete via foster carers secure email if appropriate or verbal feedback via telephone can be gained.
- Social workers will continue to have pre-review contact with children to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child.
- IRO's will continue to have pre-review contact with the child by either video link or a telephone call. This should be undertaken in a private space wherever possible.
- Children may join the review via skype alongside their foster carers or be dialled in by the IRO.
- All CLA reviews will be held virtually. If required, this may occur as a part 1 and part 2 if circumstances require this.
- Minutes will be sent to professionals via email and posted to parents or sent via secure access email if necessary. Children will either be sent a copy via their foster carers secure email address or by post.