You and Your Independent Reviewing Service

Annual report 2018/2019 for children and young people
Why is this booklet important?

Hi, I’m Jo the Manager of the Independent Reviewing Officers (sometimes called IRO for short).

Every year I write a report to the Corporate Board - this a big meeting with senior councillors, the big bosses in the council and Trust whose job it is to make sure we are doing a good job for you. The report talks about how my team of IROs are making sure you are well cared for and your voice and your wishes have been heard and listened to.

We talk about what has worked well, what has not worked so well and what needs to happen to improve things in our service and for you. This is a shortened version of the report to share the key bits with you.

If you want to speak about this more or you have any questions please contact me or your Independent Reviewing Officer.

Jo

Wording will vary from IRO Annual Report due to changes to make the language child friendly

Did you know?

If you or your IRO don’t agree with things that are happening for you or are worried something is taking too long this can be raised with the big boss of the Trust!
What’s the job of your IRO?

Our first job is to see if someone else in your family can care for you and can make sure you are safe, well cared for and happy before we think about you living somewhere else - like with a family friend, foster carer or in a residential home.

If you have to live somewhere else (we call this being a looked after child) we will:

- Check that your Social Worker is doing everything that they can to make sure your needs are being well met.
- Make sure everything happens when it should.
- Most importantly, make sure your wishes, feelings and your voice is being heard when decisions are being made about how you are cared for!

We will also chat to you about your care plan - that’s what your social worker writes with information about how you should be cared for. And we will check with you that you understand your care plan and how you might benefit from having an Advocate – someone else who can also make your voice heard.

You can find out more about having an Advocate by speaking to your IRO or speaking to the advocate team by calling 01302 735540 or emailing AdvocacyService@doncaster.gov.uk

Did you know?
The Trust must make sure every child in care has an IRO. It’s the law!
Facts about your IRO service
From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

366 school children in care of the Trust
99.4% of looked after reviews were held on time. All children leaving care had a final health care summary within 3 months.

There was 47 less children in care on 31 March 2019 than the year before.

There are 10 IRO’s in the team, three males and seven females.

From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019
Keeping in time

242 children left care during 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. 13 of these children were aged 16 to 17 years old. 148 children entered cared during 2018 to 2019.

There were 1,515 reviews of children’s care plans, 7 more than the year before.

92% of children attended their reviews, this is 1% less than the year before.

We raised 19 less disputes. The nature of these were:

- 11% (4) Breech of statutory requirements
- 11% (4) Breech of Human Rights
- 78% (29) Breech of Care Planning Regulations

99.4% of looked after reviews were held on time. All children leaving care had a final health care summary within 3 months.

Timeliness of initial health assessments need to improve.

90% were seen before or during your reviews.

Call 01302 737777
Visit doncasterchildrenstrust.co.uk
Did you know?

Good practice says that IROs should have responsibility for between 50-70 children. In Doncaster your IRO supports on average around 65 children and young people.

Why do we carry out audits?

An audit is an inspection or examination of the work the Trust is doing to make sure you are safe, well, and are reaching your full potential.

The audit looks at the work and the processes involved checking for things like quality, fairness and accuracy. We also make sure we are following the law!

We do audits as they help us to learn what we are doing well, what we can do better and how we can get better at working with you.

From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 we did 77 audits of children in care case files. Of these files 37.66% (29) were rated ‘Outstanding’, 53.25% (41) were rated ‘Good’ and 9.09% (7) were rated ‘Required Improvement’.
Seeing you before your review

If you are aged 5 years or above, your IRO will invite you to your review. Your IRO will meet with you, if you wish, before your review to talk about what has gone well, what you are worried about and anything that you think needs to change or happen.

Speaking to your IRO

You can also contact them by emailing Safeguarding@dcstrust.co.uk or calling 01302 734819.

The total number of children who stopped being looked after between 31 March 2018 to 31 March 2019 is 242, this is 47 more than the previous year (195).

Involving your parents in your review

Your IROs continue to encourage parents to get involved in reviews. In some cases, it is not appropriate for parents to attend the review.

We often see mothers attending reviews more than fathers. Work has been completed to ensure fathers are invited where appropriate or provided with a chance to have their say ahead of the meeting.

Keeping you healthy

When a child comes in to care we make sure that their health needs will be met. A Doctor (sometimes called a GP) will carry out an Initial Health Assessment within the first 28 days of child becoming looked after. This is then repeated every six months. It is the job of your social worker to request this assessment.

During 2018/2019 98% of Initial Health Assessments were requested by social workers in time.
Helping you with your education

Every child in care should have a Personal Education Plan (sometimes called PEP for short). This is where your social worker and school meet to discuss your education and what is needed to help you achieve your potential. These meetings take place every six months. In March 2018, 80% of PEP meetings had taken place in timescales.

Did you know? From March 2018 to April 2019 the Trust cared for 366 children aged 4 to 16 years old. Of which:

- **37%** were educated in schools outside Doncaster (down from 64% in 2017/2018)
- **63%** were educated in schools within Doncaster
- **65%** were in education settings judged as Good or better by Ofsted

The year before 85% of children cared for by the Trust were going to schools in Doncaster. This shows us that less children are being educated in Doncaster schools. There are lots of reasons for this - such as some children do not live in Doncaster or some go to schools which best meet their needs.
What has **worked well** in 2018/2019?

We have seen an increase in the number of children and young people attending their **review** – up to 242.

Less children are in care. The number of children in care has gone down from 569 on 31/03/2018 to 533 on 31/3/2019.

Personal education plans have improved in timeliness and quality – better outcomes for children.

**Did you know?**

Every child in care must have a Personal Education Plan. It’s the law!

A **Personal Education plan** is put in place to help you achieve your educational ambitions.
Some children in care move to other houses or carers. However, it is better if you stay in the same place. There are times when a move is in the best interest of a child – such as when a child returns home or if they are adopted.

Children living in the same place has decreased to 70.9% from 73%, but more children have left care.

The number of children who have remained living in the same home for two or more years has increased to 72%. And the number of children who have had three or more homes in a year is 10.3%.
What should the IRO service and other professionals do in 2019/2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are our main challenges?</th>
<th>What are we doing to improve it</th>
<th>By who and When</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making sure where you live is right for you</td>
<td>Understanding why some homes don’t always work out. Regularly speaking with big bosses to make sure you’ve got the right home for you and your needs.</td>
<td>IROs will check this throughout 2019/20</td>
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<td>Making sure your social worker does things on time</td>
<td>Challenging your social worker if they don’t happen on time.</td>
<td>IROs check this throughout 2019/2020 as part of our regular reviews</td>
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<td>Making sure your voice heard</td>
<td>Working with the Trust’s communication to find new ways of using technology so you can easily talk to us.</td>
<td>Throughout 2019/2020</td>
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<td>Develop a website for children living in care.</td>
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<td>Make sure more children know about our advocacy service.</td>
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<td>Encourage young people to be the chair at their own reviews.</td>
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<td>Making sure children who come into care have their health needs met</td>
<td>Improving the timeliness of initial health assessment.</td>
<td>Your IRO Manager will do this by meeting with big bosses in health and other organisations throughout 2019/2020</td>
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<td>Making sure that children who live outside of Doncaster have the same quick access to GPs with the support of their social worker.</td>
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<td>Helping to improve your education and get good results for you</td>
<td>Your IROs will make sure all children cared for by the Trust are getting 25 hours a week of education and if they aren’t we will raise our concerns with the big bosses</td>
<td>Throughout 2019/2020</td>
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Your IRO will monitor whether the actions from your reviews are happening, we will also write to you when we are doing this so that you know what we are doing and speak to the person responsible for making things happen if they are not.

This plan has been amended to use child friendly wording.
Delivering social care and support services for children, young people and families.
What young people are telling us...

The TOP 3 things that are good in their lives are:
- Where I live
- My friends
- My school/college

Things they feel are not so good in their lives are:
- Where I live
- My school/college
- My family

Top 3 things young people are telling us about:
- Foster care review
- Prepare for a meeting
- My worker is visiting
467 statement sent: 324 were sent through young people’s accounts and 143 through worker accounts.

94% of young people said they felt positive about where they live.

79% of young people said they were feeling positive.
66 feedback forms were received from children between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019

47 of these children/young people who wanted to speak during their review shared that they were given the opportunity by the Independent Reviewing Officer.

What young people are telling us about their Looked After Children’s Reviews...

“"I was listened to about my plan"

“"Everyone listened to me when I wanted to speak"

“"My review was very friendly, fun and it was great to meet new people"

“"The review was quick and simple and I put my feelings across"

What you’ve told us

Feedback from children’s reviews is obtained following each review. This was introduced during 2016/17. During 2018/19 we received views from:

• 540 professionals - like social workers, teachers and health workers
• 74 parents
• 66 young people
• 165 carers

Call 01302 737777  
Visit doncasterchildrenstrust.co.uk
The attendees are requested to provide feedback to ensure the service is aware of its performance from the perspective of those individuals accessing the services. This feedback informs service improvement.

“Excellent and reviewed all issues addressed”

“Constructive discussions”

“Flowed really well throughout review all voices heard and listened to”

“Positive meeting, feel like we all have a plan and know what is happening”

“A much better review, more at ease and progressive”

“The meeting went well and everyone seems to want the best for the child”

“Very informative and focused on areas of need”