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**One Minute Guide:**  
**The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer in Respect of the Looked After Child**

There are now two clear and separate aspects to the function of the IRO: chairing a child's review to ensure that the Care Plan for a **Looked After Child** continues to be appropriate and responsive to the child's individual needs and monitoring a child's case on an on-going basis including whether any safeguarding issues arise. As part of the monitoring function, the IRO also has a duty to identify any areas of general concern around service delivery (not just around individual children). The IRO should immediately alert senior managers if any such areas are identified. The IRO should also record areas of good practice and bring this to the attention of the relevant manager.

The specific responsibilities of the IRO are:

- To consult the child about his/her Care Plan at each review and at any time that there is a significant change to the Care Plan;
- Ensuring that care plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date and provide an effective response to each child's needs;
- Identifying gaps in the assessment process or delivery of service;
- Offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning and the delivery of services;
- Monitoring the activity of the Local Authority: that Care Plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's current views, wishes and feelings and that he/she fully understands the implications of any changes to their Care Plan, and
- Ensuring that, having regard to age and understanding, the child has been informed of the steps he/she may take under the Children Act 1989, and in particular, where appropriate, of

- The right to apply, with leave, for a Section 8 Order/discharge of a Care Order
  - The right to access representations/complaints procedures
- To consider whether an Independent Visitor should be appointed.
- That the child has access to Viewpoint as a means of consultation prior to their Child Care Review.
- Making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his or her entitlement to one.

The IRO **must** consider whether it is appropriate to refer a case to CAFCASS if:

- a) In his/her opinion, the Local Authority has failed in any significant respect to prepare the child's Care Plan; review the child's case or effectively implement any decision in consequence of a review; or are otherwise in breach of their duties to the child in any material respect;

and

- b) Having drawn this to the attention of persons of appropriate seniority in the Local Authority, the issues have not been addressed to the IRO's satisfaction within a reasonable period of time.