



National IRO Managers Partnership

Press release for Community Care, 25 May 2022

The Children's Social Care Review needed to be unequivocal about the harms caused by poverty, structural racism, and the underfunding of preventive and universal services. Escalating need brought about by austerity, the cost-of-living crisis, and significant inequalities between areas, have pushed many capable families to breaking point. It is this context that has fundamentally undermined social protection for the poorest and most at-risk children and families.

Some of the proposals have the potential to make life much better for children and families, but the recommendations require full commitment across whole systems and substantial financial investment from national as well as local government. The Review will be judged on whether recommendations are both credible and realistic in tackling the conditions required for effective family help.

The implications of the opt-out approach to the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) role and advocacy requires more detail and a consideration of issues such as how this will fit with the intention to build an 'empowered workforce' and 'expert' child protection practitioners.

The withdrawal of the IRO relationship for some children could result in their voices being less heard in the decisions that affect them, and an important relationship lost. Children in Care can have too many different professionals moving in and out of their lives. IROs are consistently there for them, unequivocally on their side and able to amplify their voice. It is vital that children have a powerful voice.

The measures that recognise the needs of young people after 18, including the entitlement to Stay Put or Stay Close to the age of 23 are welcome. Councils will need proper investment from central government to empower all departments to see these young people as 'their' children, to whom they owe them priority care and consideration across all policies.

The implementation of the 2016 Taylor Review recommendations on Youth Justice are welcome. Alarm bells have been ringing about the Youth Secure Estate for too long. Measures to challenge discrimination, harm, and oppression, including the fact that so many black and minoritised Children in Care continue to experience structural racism says much about why a strength and rights-based focus is crucial.

Careful attention to the implications of wider legislative reform is needed including very careful consideration to the ['British' Bill of Rights](#) and dilution of some protections. The Review's recommendations will need to work in harmony with newly introduced or incoming reform programmes such as the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act](#), the SEND green paper, the Schools Bill and reforms within the NHS.

Over the weeks NIROMP will be analysing the Review's final report - particularly in the context of our strategic priorities and submission to the Review's Case for Change - consulting with our members on the details of the report and its recommendations.

Sharon Martin, Chair - National IRO Managers Partnership (NIROMP).