



2021

NAIRO 10th Annual Conference Report

Short Summary

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NAIRO



Key Messages – Short Summary Report
NAIRO 10th National Conference – 18.03.2021

Improving The IRO Service In The Time Of COVID

This conference was held virtually and was attended by 82 delegates. The delegates included IROs, Managers of IROs, young people, academics and 4 patrons of NAIRO.

The conference was Chaired by Carolyne Willow who is the Director of Article 39, a National Children's Rights Charity.

Conference Programme

Time	Agenda
09:00 – 09:25	Registration
09:15	(Zoom event open)
9:30 – 9:40	Opening Welcome and Introduction Chair Carolyne Willow
9:40 – 9:45	Statement from the Children's Minister Vicky Ford
9:45 – 10:15	'Planning for Improvement beyond Covid' Jacky Tiotto CE CAFCASS
10:15 – 10:30	'Language that Cares' Films from CICs Barnsley and Gloucestershire
10:30 – 11:00	Public Law Reform Mr Justice Keehan High Court Judge
11:00 – 11:25	How might the IRO service in England and Wales be improved? A presentation of the analysis and proposals of NAIRO's improvement report Jon Fayle Co- Chair NAIRO. Poll of Conference participants



11:25 – 11:40	Break
11:40 – 12:25	<p>Breakout Rooms</p> <p><u>‘Covid and the impact for contact for children and young people’</u> Ruth Copson, Post graduate University of East Anglia</p> <p><u>‘Participation and Decision making with children and young people in care’</u> Dr Clive Diaz, NAIRO Trustee</p> <p><u>‘The Challenges faced by Black Children in Care’</u> Kwaku Afram, NAIRO Trustee</p> <p><u>‘What do we mean by ‘permanence’ in the context of foster care?’</u> Paul Adams, Coram/ BAAF</p> <p><u>‘Challenge and Escalation’</u> Allison Cumberbirch, NAIRO Trustee</p> <p><u>‘Improving the IRO service - responding most effectively to the government review of Children’s social care - NAIRO’s response to the Care Review’</u> Jon Fayle, Co- Chair NAIRO</p>
12:25 – 12:30	Feedback of key messages
12:30 – 1:00	<p>‘The Placement Game’ Sharing a creative tool kit designed and delivered by Sheffield Children in Care Council’ Film and presentation by Sheffield CIC Clare Holdsworth and Rhia</p>
1:00 – 1:20	<p>A National Children in Care Council A film and presentation from A National Voice Ambassadors. Stephanie Butcher Participation Co-ordinator and ANV Ambassadors</p>
1:20 – 1:30	<p>Chair Closing Remarks</p> <p>Evaluation</p>



Key Messages

Vicky Ford - Children's Minister

The role that IROs play, in ensuring that children living in Care have their needs met, and relentlessly pushing for the best quality care for those children is invaluable. It is also imperative that they each have a dedicated and experienced IRO to ensure that their rights are protected and that their care journey is in their best interests.

"I look to you as the Statutory Guardians of those voices to take on the mantle and help to give our most vulnerable children and young people the opportunities, care and love they deserve."

Jacky Tiotto - CEO CAFCASS

- 68% of applications are currently not PLO compliant – this contributes to the court delays as a result of Covid, average case duration is now 41 weeks.
- Local relationships between IROs, local leaders, services and children give the highest chance of successful impact.
- There are the most children/young people in care that there has ever been. How often do IROs argue for reunification?
- Children and young people need to have fewer adults in their lives. How can IROs use the space that they have in their role to have more collaborative discussions to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people as opposed to escalations?

Sir Michael Keehan - High Court Judge

- The importance of pre-proceedings collaborative work.
- A culture shift from risk averse to risk responsible.
- Care proceedings should be the last, not the first resort. A specific recommendation of the report of the working party is that any decision to instigate care proceedings should be made at a senior level in the LA.
- The questions that should be considered are: What order? For what purpose? Why now? The aim should be to limit the number of care proceedings that are issued.



Key Messages from The Breakout Workshops

- The Review of the Care Plan is not necessarily confined to one meeting: it is a process. It is the child or young person's meeting, for which they need preparation so that they do have a voice, including deciding who else attends, and therefore being better able to participate effectively and meaningfully.
- IROS have a responsibility to understand the cultural needs of **all** children and young people and challenge when the response is inadequate.
- What do we mean by permanence in the context of foster care? – Is it a placement or a home?
- There is no substitute for actual face to face family time which needs to be more flexible than the standard arrangements usually offered.
- Young People's views should always be taken into consideration (in relation to spending time with family and friends who are important to them), and they should be offered a variety of options from which to choose the arrangement.
- IROs need to be well supported to be able to exercise effective challenge training is always welcome.
- The value of an empowering, challenging, consistent IRO in what is frequently a chaotic and everchanging scenario. The need to preserve this role.

Videos and Contributions from Children and Young people

- How the "afterlife" and negative language in describing a child or young person can have a long-lasting effect: 'The things I've been called constantly echo in my mind'.
- The way in which jargon is used can be in an unhelpful and confusing way.

Sheffield Children in Care council have developed a workshop / training package for Social Workers and foster carers. Click link here to access Sheffield Children in Care Council's film, game, and training resources.

NAIRO is the national charitable association for Independent Reviewing Officers. Membership is also open to Social Workers, academics and others who are not IROs.

www.nairo.org.uk