
Strategic Vision & Priorities 2019-22



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- Voices of children** - loud, proud and entitled
 - Secure love and care** - children feel loved and securely cared for
 - Relationships** - a focus on people, networks, wellbeing and resilience
 - Public Affairs** - clear vision, leadership and direction

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Executive Summary

NIROMP's work programme centres around four high-level priorities:

1. Voices of children - loud, proud and entitled

For children's views to be sought and for their views to be at the heart of care planning, the review process and decisions that are made about them - that they are fully aware of their care plan and all decisions are fully explained to them.

2. Secure love and care - children feel loved and securely cared for

IROs will ensure best practice in early permanence planning and promote stable care for all children who have entered the care system. This will focus on minimising harmful delay and involving parents and family members.

3. Relationships - a focus on people, networks, wellbeing and resilience

A stronger focus on change and development that is focused on children, their wellbeing and the factors that help to build resilience at the individual, family and community level. We will have the right conversations, with the right people, at the right time.

4. Public Affairs - clear vision, leadership and direction

Working together will allow us to achieve consistently effective IRO Services across England.

Key ambitions - the change we want to see

We have identified key ambitions for the coming years which will represent important milestones of success.

1. The rights of children are a central focus in all decision making about matters of importance to every child.
2. Increased participation of children in their care plans for their lives, including consistently meaningful participation in all meetings.

3. Children's voices are consistently sought and heard - there is evidence that their wishes and feelings influence their care plans.
4. Championing the rights of every child and challenging where appropriate to ensure these are integrated in policy and practice.
5. Children's views, wishes and ideas inform continuous improvements to service design and delivery.
6. Young people are involved in the design and delivery of corporate parenting messages.
7. IROs will ensure all options for care by family have been considered.
8. IROs will ensure children's return home to family is considered and pursued without delay where this is in the best interests of the child.
9. IROs will ensure that the legal status of every child in care is appropriate and that the correct steps have been taken to secure the immigration status of every child in care.
10. IROs will ensure that robust plans are made in good time as young people approach adulthood.
11. IROs will ensure that the care of children with additional needs and children in secure establishments are fully recognised and met.
12. Relationship building within and between agencies, with the family justice system; within families and, between families and practitioners will be prioritised.
13. Partnership with parents and viewing long term voluntary accommodation and shared care (between extended family and state) as a valuable alternative to Court.
14. A national learning programme for IROs, to help develop the consistency of practice within and between local authorities across England.
15. Sufficient financial, organisational and staff resources and support for IROs. All IRO services should have the necessary systems in place to enable them to carry out all their statutory support, scrutiny and challenge functions.

Some Key Actions – how we will make a difference

Achieving these outcomes will require concerted action by NIROMP, working with and alongside others. Amongst the actions are:

- We will ensure children and young people's interests; voices and rights are always front and centre of our local, regional and national agenda.

- We will champion the rights of children and young people with care experience.
- We will actively promote children and young people's views about 'what works' in relation to their participation and involvement in planning and review of the things that matter most to them.
- We will listen to children and young people's views and explain all decisions made.
- We will offer opportunities to feedback from meetings.
- We will make sure children and young people know what they can do and what they can have.
- We will establish advisory groups to enable young people to meet with NIROMP's leads, to ask for and discuss their views.
- We will establish a national template for IRO's core training.
- We will ensure the right decision is secured for every child.
- We will work with sector partners to better understand need and ensure the money spent on children in care is making a positive difference.
- IROs will provide feedback about foster carers – in this way helping efforts to secure suitably supported, trained foster carers and family carers well matched to the child's needs.
- We will promote use of case law, research, findings from consultations and good practice guidance and tools to support effective care planning and review.
- We will promote the use of the LGA guidance to councillors and help them to understand their corporate parenting responsibilities so that they can effectively scrutinise services for looked after children.
- We will promote the good practice in relationship-based work with the whole family and their network.
- We will promote more active consideration to the collateral impact and harm caused by poverty and inequality.
- We will always make sure every child or young person has the right support, at the right time, in the right place.

- We will make sure that children and young people know what has happened in response to any complaint they make.
- We will promote relationship-based and strengths-based practice with the significant people in the child's life.
- We will share experiences and promote learning from ideas about 'what works'.
- We will support the call from the ADCS for Government to commit to a full assessment of the overall funding needs of local Government and a national child poverty reduction strategy.
- We will promote approaches that support the untapped resource within a child's community.

Delivering actions – the process

The working plan is not an exhaustive list of everything that will be done to deliver our ambitions over the next 3 years. Responsible leads will report back to a meeting of NIROMP's regional leads each quarter, ensuring that our activities are reviewed and working plans updated. As part of this process:

- Actions will be monitored against timelines
- Each quarter the Working Plan will be developed in consultation with regional leads and Advisory Groups to help us to further our plans.
- Three advisory groups will help us with support, assurance and challenge as part of furthering our plans. The three groups will involve: children and young people with care experience; independent reviewing officers; safeguarding and public law professionals.
- Responsibility for actions will be clearly assigned to regional leads with overall responsibility for progressing key actions and priorities.

Opening Message by the Minister for Children and Families

“I am delighted to throw my support behind this action plan from NIROMP. It offers something that is very welcome: a positive and proactive, child-focused plan to improve services for children and their families by addressing challenges locally, but under a coherent national vision. I want to see IROs realise their potential to make a real difference in the lives of all looked after children across the country. They have an opportunity to improve practice and I am really pleased to see them embrace this. It is crucial that we hear the voices of children and their families to drive better decisions, taking their views on board in care planning in a meaningful way, to ensure that they can experience stable lives and have access to the same opportunities that we would want for our own children. I know that this will take some hard work and demands the sponsorship of local leaders and politicians so I am calling to those people to stand up for the voice of their children and families and lend their support to this important programme.”

Nadhim Zahawi MP, Minister for Children and Families

Foreword by the Children's Commissioner for England

"As Children's Commissioner I have, all too often, borne witness to the devastation that results from adults neglecting to listen to a child's voice. A fraught care-planning process will, quite rightly, incite loud debate among professionals and relatives alike. However, it is crucial that the young person's voice does not get lost amid this noise; when a child is made to feel invisible, opportunities to protect them become easy to miss.

Help at Hand, our advice and advocacy service, has routinely demonstrated the importance of a robust champion for those in the care of authorities. We regularly hear from children who feel lost and overwhelmed by circumstances beyond their control, while crucial decisions, including where they will live and who should be responsible for their care, are taking place all around them.

Therefore, the role of an Independent Reviewing Officer, to act as both a voice and guide to a child through complex care-planning processes, is indispensable. As is an emphasis on the independent function of an IRO, in their capacity to hold local authorities to account when a child's rights are not duly upheld.

I welcome the priorities laid out in NIROMP's strategic vision for the forthcoming years. The focus on empowering children's voices and placing them at the heart of care-planning is an aspiration I have long shared. The renewed emphasis on stability also chimes with evidence gathered by the CCO office in the last year.

Our 2018 Stability Index found that almost 2,400 children changed home, school and social worker over the last twelve months; it is undeniable that these disruptions will, in the majority of cases,

compound their existing hardships. I therefore affirm NIROMP's prioritisation of security in care, preservation of networks and resilience.

In essence, it is crucial that all children are put at the heart of their own care plans. I hope for a situation in which, with the guidance of NIROMP, local authorities are able to treat each child as any trustworthy parent or guardian would; providing the safe space for children to voice their concerns, feelings and wishes for the future."

Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner for England

Introduction and Acknowledgements

I am pleased to introduce NIROMP's Strategic Vision and Priorities 2019-2022. Our work programme and call to action, is based on the key principles of securing better life chances and choices for all children and young people with care experience – constantly striving for more.

Our working plans set out targets for each priority and it is our intention to meet these. IROs have an important role in making sure that children and young people with care experience have lifelong links, love and care.

Children and young people deserve the same life chances and opportunities, protection and care whatever their experience, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities, size, shape or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background, wherever they live, they should have equal opportunities to fulfil their potential.

Promoting equality of opportunity, securing better life chances and choices for every child and young person are the pivot around which a fair and caring society should revolve. This should be our common aim and we will continue to make this call – for a unifying commitment to improve the life chances and choices for those children, young people and families who are being held back, or worse, completely failed.

Our call coincides with an important anniversary year for children's rights. This year marks the 30th anniversary of two significant breakthroughs in children's rights legislation: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children Act 1989. Children's rights legislation successfully changed the standing of children and young people in law, but the protection of children's rights remains a constant challenge.

A combination of poverty, poor housing, domestic violence in the home, addiction or parental mental ill health continue to disadvantage the life chances of hundreds of thousands of children and young people in England. Despite this, the Local Government Association estimates that the overall funding gap faced by councils overall will amount to £3.1 billion in 2019/20. They estimate that this gap will rise to £8 billion by 2024/25. The pressures are particularly acute in adult social care, children's services, public health and

homelessness support. Finance is a major issue. But, the solutions run broader than finances alone.

In 2019 the first ever Care Experienced Conference was born. The visionary force behind the Conference was Ian Dickson, a retired social worker, Ofsted Inspector, residential manager and children's rights advocate. Ian also happens to be care experienced. In the recent past Ian said to me, "There cannot be real improvement until everyone involved in providing and shaping the care system and those who use and used it join hands and work towards a common aim. Not there yet, but I see green shoots."

As a profession we must comply not only with children's rights and related legislation, we must be seen to comply. We should not undermine trust in IROs commitment, our duty, to uphold children's rights. Crucially, we should not lower our standards and expectations of and for children, young people and young adults with care experience. Upholding social work values and ethics remains paramount to the effectiveness of the IRO role and the social work profession. Our commitment to this must not get lost amidst debates about the pressures facing services.

And there does need to be, as Ian Dickson and many others rightly state, a joining of hands and an emphasis on prevention and support over time. We all need to do more to learn from the voices of people who use or have used local services and to get better at incorporating their voices into all our work.

My view is that for a children's rights perspective and duty to be successful, we must continue to work together to tackle contextual factors. This is just as vital as responding effectively to every child and family's specific needs. We are seeing progress, but we need to pick up pace.

Solutions to the problems we are seeing are complicated and are far broader than LA finances alone. But I think most of us agree that properly funded local services, which emphasise prevention and support over time, are a good place to start.

Interested individuals and groups took the time to share their vision and experience as part of NIROMP's public consultation, and I want to thank all of them. While resources remain challenging, I am confident that the interest we have seen will be sustained, and that we will work together over forthcoming years to deliver consistently higher quality services to achieve this ambition.

I want to thank all those whose assistance proved to be a milestone in the accomplishment of this report. NIROMP's work could not be achieved without the kind support and help of many individuals, LAs, groups and organisations. I would like to extend sincere thanks to all of them, including interested folk who contributed anonymously and via NIROMP's regional networks.

I would like to give special acknowledgement to the following individuals:

Abbie Kniveton; Amanda Checkley; Andi Brierley; Angela Murray; Anna Gianfresco; Charlotte Ramsden; Deb Austin, Delma Hughes; Ian Bowden; Ian Dean; Ian Dickson; Ian Gould; Izzy Martin; Alan Clifton; Ashley Smith; Caroline Dunn; Caroline Knight; Catherine Seiderer; Claudia Megele; Ed Nixon; Frederika Van-Rooyen; George Elliott; Imran Cheema; Jac Tyler; Kathi Gittens; Kathy Peacock; Kim Burrowes; Jackie Brown; Laura Newman; Lee Pardy-Mclaughlin; Linde Webber; Lisa Cherry; Lucy Doyle; Lydia Bailey; Mary Eccleston; Mark Owers; Mark Riddell; Matthew Brazier; Moira Stone; Nathan Smith; Nicola Doyle; Nicola Hale; Nicola Horn; Nikki Ledingham; Otilia Broadhurst; Paul Yusuf; McCormack; Pinaki Goshal; Pritpal Sodhi; Ruth Kingdom; Sarah Caton; Sarah Holtom-Fawcett; Scott Lanaghan; Shannon Downing; Sharon Keenan; Stuart Carlton; Vicky Metheringham; Yvette Stanley.

Huge thanks also go to the children and young people not named here, who contributed via their Children in Care Council. I would also like to thank the staff involved in these for their support.

And finally, I want to express special thanks to Jenny Briggs and Nicola Doyle at the Department for Education for their continuing support, and to Become for their continuing support and relentless efforts to promote the voices of, and to improve the everyday lives and future life chances of every child, young person and young adult with care experience.

Sharon Martin, Chair of the National IRO Managers Partnership

A View from Care

“As an older person with lived care experience and a retired probation manager, it is a joy/privilege to be asked to share a few thoughts about this Strategy. Loud proud and entitled, feeling loved, securely cared for and listened to and significantly being understood. What is there not to be liked?

With a growing momentum for real change across our Care family, this document epitomises the hopes and aspirations behind a language that cares, the centrality of our children and young people, the growing movement which calls for compassion/kindness to be at the root of children and social care policy and, actions designed to bring the voices of our children and young people to the very core of their care Journey whilst ensuring the accountability of all those involved.

With a focus on children and young people's rights and being a critical friend, the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer is viewed as integral to their journey of 'Becoming' the very best they can be through, careful planning, agreed goals and aspirations and holding others to account as carers, enablers, encouragers and facilitators. The affirmation of 'We Will' are to be commended and provide the additional safeguards / protective factors which underpin the hopes and aspirations of NIROMP's key priorities. “

Ian Gould, Every Child Leaving Care Matters Ambassador

Support from the Children's Sector

Become - national charity for children in care and young care leavers:

"Become welcomes the publication of NIROMP's strategic priorities. It has a clear child-focused vision that emphasises the importance of both listening to and acting on the views of children in care.

We know that many children in care and young care leavers do not fully understand their rights or have access to advocacy and other support; empowering children to understand their rights and influence decisions made about their lives is vital.

NIROMP's ability to work across England to protect and promote children's rights is crucial, and we must all continue to work to ensure every child in care has equal access to high quality advocacy and review services that meet their needs and allow them to make their views heard in the way most appropriate for the individual child".

Alan Clifton, former Virtual School Head and past Chair of the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH):

"The National IRO Partnership's strategic vision provides a critical independent view: to both challenge and support local authorities, to meet the core principles of Corporate Parenting. It is pleasing to read that the voice of children and young people are central to the principles set out in the NIROMP strategy.

Any policy that has at its heart to 'Promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.' is to be welcomed. As a former Virtual School Head and past Chair of the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) a commitment to stability is critical. NIROMP has a key role to play in securing stability around education and care ensuring the commitment

to 'Provide for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.' really is a commitment to loving care."

Claudia Megele, Co-Chair - National Principal Children and Families Social Worker Network. She is also Head of Quality Assurance, Improvement and Practice, Hertfordshire County Council.

"Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) champion the voice of the child and provide independent scrutiny to ensure care plans for children in care are in the child's best interest and play a key role in deciding what happens next for children in care.

Therefore, this is a much welcomed document that outlines some of the key strategic and practice variations and challenges and outlines NIROMP's strategic vision for 2019-2022. It is a testimony to IROs' dedication to enhancing the experiences of children in care that NIROMP's strategic priorities are informed by and rooted in relationship-based practice and acknowledge the importance of positive and stable relationship for children and their need to feel loved and securely cared for.

Championing the voices of children and ensuring best outcomes and quality of care and support for young people are a central focus and key priority for the Principal Children and Families Social Worker Network and NIROMP. Therefore, at a time of significant changes, opportunities and challenges in practice landscape, we welcome this strategic document and look forward to collaboration in ensuring the best quality of care and support for children in care."

Promoting Equality and Diversity

Equality Matters



National IRO Managers Partnership

Every child and young person, whatever their care experience, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities, size, shape or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background, should have equal opportunities to fulfil their potential. Promoting equality of opportunity, securing better life chances and choices for every child are the pivot around which a fair and caring society should revolve.

NIROMP will actively promote equality and diversity in every part of our work recognising that all children need to develop their own identity, self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. We will promote the voice of the child and for children's views to be expressed and discussed recognising that children deserve the best experiences in life and to receive parenting that is pro-active and aspirational to improve their outcomes and life chances.

We will make sure that due regard is given to the [Equality Act 2010](#) to effectively tackle disadvantage and discrimination and we will call for IRO services and their employers to consider how staff are treated, recognising the importance of staff wellbeing on how services are delivered.

Call to Action - Strategic Priorities

Voices of children - loud, proud and entitled

Outcome: For children's views to be sought and for their views to be at the heart of care planning, the review process and decisions that are made about them - that they are fully aware of their care plan and all decisions are fully explained to them.



Picture by George, age 9

Secure love and care - children feel loved and securely cared for

Outcome: IROs will ensure best practice in early permanence planning and promote stable care for all children who have entered the care system. This will focus on minimising harmful delay and involving parents and family members.

Relationships - a focus on people, networks, wellbeing and resilience

Outcome: A stronger focus on change and development that is focused on children, their wellbeing and the factors that help to build resilience at the individual, family, community level. We will have the right conversations, with the right people, at the right time.

Public Affairs - clear vision, leadership and direction

Outcome: Forging links with a range of stakeholders, using a multi-media strategy to continuously review the progress of our strategy, priorities.

Voices of children – loud, proud and entitled

Inconsistencies across the care system are resulting in some children having little or no awareness of their rights. They want to know about advocacy. They want “one person to fight their corner” (NYYP, 2019).

Children and young people want information about their rights and help to understand their rights and what they can have. They also want strategies and tools to help them speak out more confidently at meetings and they need people to take the time to explain to them what or why decisions have been made.

Securing better life chances and choices

Young people's participation in decision-making provides opportunities for them to influence or have their say on issues of importance to them. Getting involved also means young people have opportunities to learn new skills along the way. Actively engaging young people in finding solutions to issues that impact on their lives and that of their community makes good sense and NIROMP believe it is critical to achieving a better future for everyone.

What the research says

Research carried out by Our Lives, Our Care (2017) found that young people in care who do not feel included in decisions made about their lives are 3 times more likely to feel low well-being. ('Our Lives, Our Care' 2017).

55% of children in care do not know that they can access an independent advocate. ('Helping children get the care experience they need' 2015).

50% of children aged 4 – 7 have not had an explanation of why they are in care. ('Our Lives, Our Care' 2017)

Holding others to account

Building opportunities for children to engage in issues of concern to them in their local community can also strengthen capacity for holding government departments to account. Children and young people's knowledge of their rights, learning how to communicate to different audiences and situations, and understanding the responsibilities of government are all vital elements in creating an articulate citizenry. (Every child's right to be heard (2011))

Relevant, effective and sustainable decision-making

"Children have a unique body of knowledge about their lives, needs and concerns, together with ideas and views from their direct experience. Decisions that are fully informed by children's own perspectives will be more relevant, more effective and more sustainable". ('The right to be heard' 2011, p.5)



Taking the time to explain things and to check understanding is vital

"If we were encouraged to understand more then I feel that we could be empowered to participate in decisions that affect us. But we can't because things are not explained to us properly and we often get lost with all the big words and use of jargon. I think that assumptions are often made - that because we are children we cannot understand or we're not mature enough to understand. But what people do not realise is that quite often because we have experienced so many traumas that we tend to mature a lot sooner – much more than those who have not been traumatised". (Young person, Care Crisis Review (2018))

PRIORITY

**Voices of children –
loud, proud and entitled**

For children's views to be sought and for their views to be at the heart of care planning, the review process and decisions that are made about them - that they are fully aware of their care plan and all decisions are fully explained to them.

The change we want to see

- The rights of children are a central focus in all decision making about matters of importance to every child.
- Increased participation of children in their care plans for their lives, including consistently meaningful participation in all meetings.
- Children's voices are consistently sought and heard - there is evidence that their wishes and feelings influence their care plans.
- Championing the rights of every child and challenging where appropriate to ensure these are integrated in policy and practice.
- Children's views, wishes and ideas inform continuous improvements to service design and delivery.
- Young people are involved in the design and delivery of corporate parenting messages.

How we will make a difference

- We will ensure children and young people's interests; voices and rights are always front and centre of our local, regional and national agenda.
- We will champion the rights of children and young people with care experience.
- We will actively promote children and young people's views about 'what works' in relation to their participation and involvement in planning and review of the things that matter most to them.
- We will listen to children and young people's views and explain all decisions made.
- We will offer opportunities to feedback from meetings.
- We will make sure children and young people know what they can do and what they can have.
- We will establish advisory groups to enable young people to meet with NIROMP's leads, to ask for and discuss their views.
- We will establish a national template for IRO's core training.

Secure love and care - children feel loved and securely cared for

Local Authorities take on the responsibility to be a “corporate parent” for children in care, and those leaving care. This means that when caring for children they adhere to seven key principles which outline a commitment to loving care (Oakley 2018, pp.12-13):



Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people;

Encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;

Take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;

Help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the Local Authority and its relevant partners;

Promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;

Provide for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and

Prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

PRIORITY

Secure love and care – children feel loved and securely cared for

IROs will ensure best practice in early permanence planning and promote stable care for all children who have entered the care system. This will focus on minimising harmful delay and involving parents and family members.

The change we want to see

- IROs will ensure all options for care by family have been considered.
- IROs will ensure children's return home to family is considered and pursued without delay where this is in the best interests of the child.
- IROs will ensure that the legal status of every child in care is appropriate and that the correct steps have been taken to secure the immigration status of every child in care.
- IROs will ensure that robust plans are made in good time as young people approach adulthood.
- IROs will ensure that the care of children with additional needs and children in secure establishments are fully recognised and met.

How we will make a difference

- We will ensure the right decision is secured for every child.
- We will work with sector partners to better understand need and ensure the money spent on children in care is making a positive difference.
- IROs will provide feedback about foster carers – in this way helping efforts to secure suitably supported, trained foster carers and family carers well matched to the child's needs.
- We will promote use of case law, research, findings from consultations and good practice guidance and tools to support effective care planning and review.
- We will promote the use of the LGA guidance to councillors and help them to understand their corporate parenting responsibilities so that they can effectively scrutinise services for looked after children.
- We will promote the good practice in relationship-based work with the whole family and their network.
- We will promote more active consideration to the collateral impact and harm caused by poverty and inequality.
- We will always make sure every child or young person has the right support, at the right time, in the right place.
- We will make sure that children and young people know what has happened in response to any complaint they make.

Relationships - a focus on people, networks, wellbeing and resilience

Some of the contextual considerations

Applications for care proceedings in England and Wales reached record levels in 2017.

Beneath the national average statistics there are significant regional and local variations in rates of children looked after and in care order applications.

The reasons for these local and regional differences are not fully understood but, in addition to deprivation and other socio-economic factors, how legislation, policies, practices and services are implemented at local and regional levels are thought to be determining outcomes for children and their families.

In all UK countries the rates of children looked after are increasing year on year. In

England, the number has risen from 50,900 in 1997 to 72,670 in 2017. However, not all local authorities have seen a rise and the reasons for this need to be better understood. A study by the What Works Centre

Mounting pressures within systems

The numbers and rates of looked after children have been rising in both England and Wales since the early 1990s.

There are also marked variations in the rates of children in care across the nine government regions of England. The evidence suggests differences in the likelihood of some children becoming looked after are strongly linked to areas' levels of deprivation.

There are serious concerns about the mounting pressures within the systems. There is much uncertainty about whether the children's social care and family justice systems can be sustained with the current levels of demand and resourcing for care.

(Reference Bywaters, P. et al (2017).

for Children's Social Care indicates that both economic factors and service quality matter.

Lessons from Inspection – building on solid foundations

During inspections Ofsted look for the impact a model has on children's progress and experiences. According to Ofsted, any model of practice needs to be implemented on solid foundations. Solid foundations include:

- a stable workforce
- manageable caseloads
- effective management oversight and frequent supervision
- highly visible leaders and managers
- a strong culture of learning
- good qualitative assurance, performance monitoring and performance management arrangements
- mature partnerships with other agencies
- clear focus on core social work tasks.

PRIORITY

Relationships - a focus on people, networks, wellbeing and resilience

A stronger focus on change and development that is focused on children, their wellbeing and the factors that help to build resilience at the individual, family and community level.

We will have the right conversations, with the right people, at the right time.

The change we want to see

- Relationship building within and between agencies and the family justice system; within families, and between families and practitioners.
- Partnership with parents, and viewing long term voluntary accommodation and shared care (between extended family and state) as a valuable alternative to Court.
- A national learning programme for IROs, to help develop the consistency of practice within and between local authorities across England.
- Sufficient financial, organisational and staff resources and support for IROs. All IRO services should have the necessary systems in place to enable them to carry out all their statutory support, scrutiny and challenge functions.

How we will make a difference

- We will promote relationship-based and strengths-based practice with the significant people in the child's life.
- We will share experiences and promote learning from ideas about 'what works'.
- We will support the call from the ADCS for Government to commit to a full assessment of the overall funding needs of local Government and a national child poverty reduction strategy.
- We will promote approaches that support the untapped resource within a child's community.

Public affairs - clear vision, leadership and direction

A key priority for NIROMP involves the forging of links with a range of stakeholders, using a multi-media strategy to continuously review the progress of our strategy, priorities.

Building on the collective contribution and agreeing a common aim, we will work across England to better influence government departments and politicians in the interests of children in care and care leavers.

We are particularly keen to strengthen communication with the following people and groups:

- children, young people and adults with a range of care experiences;
- work with our networks to engage with parents, grandparents, and foster carers;
- work with professionals such as social workers, supervising social workers, virtual school, principal social workers, lead practitioners, and voluntary sector practitioners;
- work with sector leaders and experts such as ADCS, Ofsted, Local Government Association; and academic professionals and institutions.
- work with the voluntary and community sector such as representatives from the voluntary and charitable sector.

PRIORITY

Public affairs - clear vision, leadership and direction

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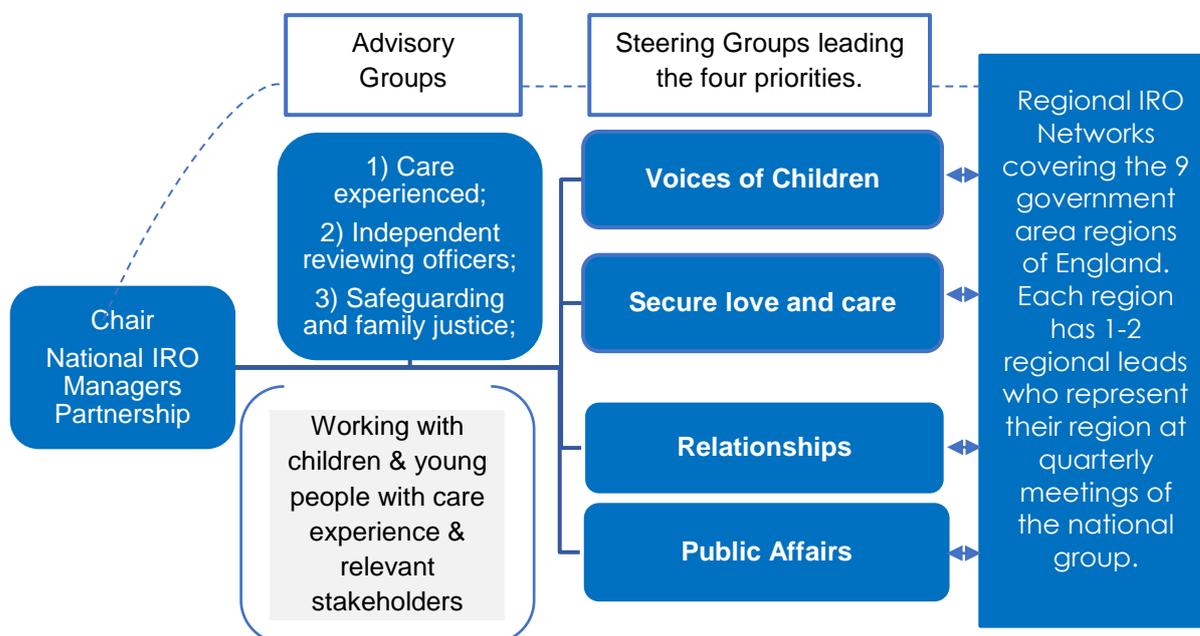
Building on the collective contribution and agreeing a common aim, we will work across England to better influence government departments and politicians in the interests of children in care and care leavers.

How we will make a difference

- Ensure representation of IROs voices through our work, NIROMP is seen as a strong collective voice for IROs and IRO Managers.
- Where relevant provide scrutiny in relation to research, policy, practice and legislation.
- Meet with the Department for Education and other government departments to inform, promote dialogue and represent the interests of children and young people with care experience.
- By contributing to Advisory Boards and working groups to share knowledge, skills and experience.
- Build on the strength of existing partnerships such as NIROMP's membership of the Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers.
- Pursue the development of new alliances and approaches to collaborative working and shared aims and improvement.
- Strengthen IROs contributions to our regional networks.

Delivering actions – the process

Working in partnership across systems to achieve stated ambitions.



NIROMP's Chair will meet quarterly with the Advisory Group Leads; Steering Group Leads and Regional Leads about the progress of NIROMP's overarching work plan.

During 2019 we will see the introduction of advisory groups and steering groups in addition to regional leads attached to the nine government area regions across England.

NIROMP, through the involvement of advisory group members, steering groups and regional leads, will bring a broad knowledge, experience and skills base to secure better life chances and choices for all children and young people in care and leaving care.

Advisory Groups

Our advisory groups will provide an important link between, for example, the lived experience of children, young people and the independent reviewing officers here to serve them. Aiming to provide

the vital assurance necessary to achieving greater consistency of IRO services, advisory groups will help shape ideas and solutions. Importantly, they will also provide an important assurance and challenge function.

Regional networks

NIROMP has an established network of regional alliances made up of IRO managers and IROs. Our regional networks cover the nine government area regions of England.

NIROMP's regional networks aim to:

- help IROs achieve continuously better and more consistent practice;
- be responsive to policy and practice updates, consultation exercises and research projects - keeping members up to date with developments and service issues;
- ensure contributions from IROs draw on their expertise - to use this towards the effective learning, development and consistently effective delivery of IRO services at local, regional and national level;
- to use the regional networks to understand local variations and challenges to practice which are driving regional priorities;
- allow flexibility for local, regional and national priorities;
- provide leadership of task and finish groups which can be called on for specific support by DfE, local authorities and other key stakeholders, as required.

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National IRO Managers Partnership

**Securing better life chances and choices for all children
and young people with care experience.**

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