**ESSEX INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) SERVICE UPDATE**

The IRO Service in Essex has been working closely with members of the Children in Care Council to refresh our approach to reviews for children in care. We are making some changes to the way we complete the review process and this update gives you information about the changes and how they may affect you.

1. We want to make review meetings more engaging and purposeful for children in care. We need to ask children who they would like at their meeting and what they want to talk about.

This might mean that fewer people are invited to the child’s meeting and the IRO may need to meet or speak with you separately, or ask for a written report. Children have asked us to keep meetings short (about 40 minutes) so we will need to make sure that we prepare well and share information in advance.

1. We will be using a “Strengths Based Approach” within review meetings as well as in the forms that we use to gather information from families and professionals.

We will ask participants to tell us:

* What is going well?
* What is going less well?
* What needs to happen?

1. We will be using a new recording tool to help us capture key information and wherever possible we will encourage and support young people to chair their own reviews.

Please help us make reviews more engaging and purposeful. Things that will help include:

* Being focused and respectful in meetings
* Remembering that the review is focused upon the young person, how well the plan reflects their needs, and how well they are being cared for and supported.
* Submitting reports in advance
* Recognising that many issues should be dealt with outside of the review process

We have implemented these changes in stages, starting in South Quadrant from October 2016 and then across the whole county from January 2017. If you would like to discuss the review process please contact: Tom Anthony 07809314782 Merthlyn Rochester-King 07748623633 or Dave Easterbrook 07919624338.