INTER-AGENCY REFERRAL DISCUSSION (IRD) - Information for the workforce in Edinburgh

What is an IRD?

IRD stands for **Inter-Agency Referral Discussion.**

The IRD is part of the Edinburgh and the Lothians Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures.

An IRD is initiated by Police, Health or Social Work, following information shared with one or more of these organisations that leads them to believe a child has or may have experienced significant harm or may be at risk of significant harm.

The purpose of an IRD is to discuss the concerns raised within the context of what is already known about the child, their family, and any other children or adults they are connected to in their day-to-day lives.

The IRD process involves information sharing, assessment and decision-making across local services about child protection concerns.

The IRD process is only used in situations of significant harm. The process is not designed to duplicate the work being undertaken by single agencies in their management and recording of cases.

Who is involved in an IRD?

Dedicated staff within Health, Police and Social Work services must participate in an IRD. Where a child is in an early years or school setting, Education must be consulted as part of the IRD.

Information must always be sought from other agencies and services working with the child and their family to support a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances. This will be fed into the IRD by one of the core agencies.

How are IRDs conducted?

In Edinburgh, IRDs are usually conducted by phone calls, a Teams call, or face-to-face IRD meeting between Police, Health and Social Work. Other agencies may also be invited where appropriate.

The service who initiated the discussion opens a record on the electronic IRD system, known as e-IRD.

The e-IRD is the framework for shared recording of information and decisions made, therefore supporting every stage of the IRD process. The e-IRD can be accessed by all 3 core agencies. It does not replace active discussion to share information and risk assess.

Out of hours, an IRD can still be initiated in the same way and focuses initially on the immediate protective actions and interim safety planning. The IRD will then be processed during normal working hours by all parties.

Involving Children and their Families

During the process, children and their families should be given as much information as possible about the level of concern there is for the child's safety; what is happening; and how they can be involved in decision making, unless doing so increases the risk to the child.

The IRD is a professional process and does not directly involve children or their family members but is informed by their views and understanding of the circumstances.

As the IRD proceeds, a number of decisions are agreed and recorded by the IRD Participants (see overleaf).

Involving Children and their Families (...continued)

The IRD explores and records:

1. Further information that is required to inform the assessment
2. Immediate Safety Planning and reviewing of the Safety Plan for a child
3. What to share with the child and parent/carers and who is responsible?
4. Whether Joint Investigative Interviews (JII) or Age of Criminal Responsibility interviews (ACR) are required?
5. Whether a Medical Examination takes place and what type of exam is required?
6. Consider and make links with other processes such as Adult Support and Protection, MARAC, Care and Risk Management; Risk outside the Home Meetings, Safety Mapping, referral to Prevent or Strategy Discussions.

The IRD must decide whether there is a risk of significant harm and Child Protection Planning Meeting (CPPM)is required.

Outcome of an IRD

The IRD should be closed when there is multi-agency agreement about the level of assessed risk, the need for a CPPM or other action, and an interim safety plan (where required) has been devised.

If the threshold is met, the child will be automatically referred to the Children & Young People's Reviewing Team to arrange an CPPM.

If the concern does not meet the threshold, the IRD will consider other measures of support or assessment for the child, such as intervention by universal services; GIRFEC Child's Planning processes; or a referral to the Children's Reporter.

How long is an IRD?

Once initial information regarding a concern has been gathered, an IRD must be carried out as soon as practicable in order to keep a child safe or protect them from further harm. Throughout the process, additional information should continue to be sought to allow for the most accurate assessment, robust decision making and safety planning around risk of significant harm.

The IRD process does not prevent any services from taking emergency measures required to protect the child.

Decision Making and Review

No one agency controls or chairs the IRD process. Information is shared, and the decisions are taken between all the participants to identify the best outcome.

The IRD participants should clearly identify who is responsible for progressing the follow-on actions and feeding this back to the child and parent/carers, referrer and other relevant staff. This should be recorded within the e-IRD.

A group of Senior Managers from Police, Health and Social Work meet once a week to review the IRD decision making process and sign off on all concluded IRDs.

If they establish there are gaps in the information available or further actions required, they will contact the IRD participants who carried out the decision making, identifying what requires to be addressed before closure.

Making Contact

If you are concerned that a child may be or is experiencing significant harm or is at risk of significant harm, don't hesitate. You should either contact:

Social Care Direct on **0131 200 2327**

or

the child's Lead Professional directly so they can consider the need for an IRD.

You can find out more about Edinburgh's Child Protection Procedures, Guidance and the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee at the following links:

Refer a child to Social Care Direct

Edinburgh and the Lothians' Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures

Edinburgh Child Protection Committee