

6 May 2026

Dear

## **ATISN 26864 –Complaint - Independent Reviewing Officers**

I am responding to your email which was received on 16 April 2026, in which you asked us to review the response issued to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). This letter is to inform you of the outcome.

In your Freedom of Information request dated 02 April, you requested the following:

1. *Copies of any statutory guidance, codes of practice, or official guidance documents issued by the Welsh Government that relate to the role, function, or duties of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)*
2. *Any guidance or framework documents relating to:*
  - *the oversight and governance of the IRO function dispute resolution or escalation by IROs monitoring of local authority performance in relation to looked after children*
3. *Any documents describing expectations placed on local authorities regarding:*
  - *the independence of the IRO function recording, reporting, or auditing of IRO challenge or oversight activity*
4. *If no single consolidated document equivalent to the “IRO Handbook” used in England exists, please confirm this explicitly and identify the documents in which the relevant duties and expectations are set out*

It was noted that you were not requesting case-level data or the creation of new information.

### **Our Response**

I can confirm Welsh Government does not hold any additional operational guidance, frameworks, or internal documents which address the governance and functioning of the IRO role beyond those previously identified in the original response.

The 2018 ‘Practice Standards and Good Practice Guide’, endorsed by Welsh Government, referred to in the initial reply does perform the same function in Wales as the IRO Handbook in England. The 2018 ‘Practice Standards and Good Practice Guide’ is designed to inform good practice by IROs in Wales, and includes reference to the primary legislation, secondary legislation and Part 6 Code of Practice relevant to the work of IROs in Wales.

The Part 6 Code of Practice, referred to in the initial reply, is regularly updated to reflect changes to practice development and underwent a recent consultation, which included updates to the role of the IRO. The consultation has now closed but a link to the documents is available here: [Changes to two codes of practice: Part 6 and Special Guardianship Orders | GOV.WALES](#) .

I have reviewed our response to your FOI request in accordance with the procedure outlined in the [Welsh Government's Practical Guide for Making Requests for Information](#)

which is available by post on request or via the internet. In my view this was a reasonable response, and therefore I do not uphold your complaint.

### **Next Steps**

If you remain dissatisfied with this response you also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745

Fax: 01625 524 510

[FOI and EIR complaints | ICO](#)

Also, if you think that there has been maladministration in dealing with your request, you have the option to make a complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales who can be contacted at:

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae  
Pencoed  
Bridgend  
CF35 5LJ

Telephone: 0845 6010987 (local rate)

Email: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

Yours sincerely

**Albert Heaney CBE**  
**Chief Social Care Officer for Wales**