

Statement regarding ICHA



In January 2017, the Independent Children's Home Association (ICHA) informed the sector that it was to conduct an evaluation of placement tools, consisting of "half day sessions with the twin focus of evaluation and development." The promised recommendations from ICHA, with its valuable experience and representation, would have been helpful for authorities and their providers currently exploring the options available, as well as for platforms themselves.

The review took place in March and in fact consisted mainly of [written questions](#), followed by a 40-minute slot for discussion. Link Maker took part, and felt that many of the questions were not appropriate in the context of an objective evaluation. Platforms were asked for their thoughts on ICHA creating a national DPS (dynamic purchasing system), their willingness to fund this development, their evaluation of ICHA, their view on a partnership agreement with ICHA, and any additional benefits offered to ICHA.

Link Maker declined to be drawn on these questions, but did provide [additional answers](#) covering how the platform is child focussed, how it supports different practice, and its track record and impact within children's social care to date.

Link Maker had been clear with ICHA from the outset that it would only engage in the evaluation on the basis of sharing its responses. There was good reason to insist on transparency, as ICHA had recently issued a [statement](#) listing what it saw as deficiencies with Link Maker's platform, despite a detailed specification being available that proved the assertions to be misleading.

After Link Maker shared its responses as promised, ICHA made it clear that they were unhappy about this. The following day ICHA announced that it had 'agreed to explore and develop the opportunities that were available from CHARMS', another of the platforms that responded. Transparency around the responses that led to this action would be welcomed, along with the recommendations, based on an objective assessment, that had been expected.

In the absence of this Link Maker hopes that authorities, together with their providers, will feel able to continue exploring how their own needs may best be met, and where the best potential for improved outcomes for children lies. For its own part, Link Maker remains committed to independence within the sector, and to meeting its [social aims](#) free of any vested interests.

Link Maker
April 2017