



## **Corporate Parenting Panel**

**Date**      **Friday 25 November 2022**

**Time**      **9.30 am**

**Venue**     **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

##### **Items which are open to the press and public**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2022 (Pages 3 - 12)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Number of Children Looked After and Care Leavers - Verbal Update from the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
6. Ofsted Updates - Verbal Update from the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
7. Proud Moments - Verbal Update from the Strategic Manager
8. Children in Care Council Update - Presentation of the young people from the Children in Care Council (Pages 13 - 16)
9. Update on Progress Against Themes from the Joint Meeting in May 2022 - Verbal Update from the Practice Lead and young people from the Children in Care Council
10. Language Update - Activity facilitated by the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
11. Independent Reviewing Officer Children in Care Annual Report Summary - Report of the Strategic Manager for Safeguarding and Professional Practice (Pages 17 - 32)
12. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
13. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

## Part B

### **Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)**

14. Regulation 44 Visits - Report of the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children (Pages 33 - 44)
  - a) Regulation 44 Discussion - led by the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
15. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

**Helen Lynch**

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
17 November 2022

To: **The Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel**  
Councillor M Simmons (Chair)  
Councillor M Walton (Vice-Chair)

Councillors R Adcock-Forster, C Bell, J Charlton, I Cochrane, B Coult, S Deinali, J Griffiths, O Gunn, T Henderson, C Hunt, B Kellett, J Miller, A Reed, I Roberts, K Robson, K Rooney, A Sterling, S Townsend and C Varty

#### **Co-opted Members**

J Bell, C Brown, J Gamble, S Neale, W Taylor and R Woods  
Young persons representative of the Children in Care Council

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**Contact: Jill Hogg**

**Tel: 03000 269 711**

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## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 21 October 2022** at **9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor M Simmons (Chair)**

**Members of the Panel:**

Councillors M Walton (Vice-Chair), R Adcock-Forster, C Bell, J Charlton, B Coult, J Griffiths, B Kellett, K Rooney, S Townsend and C Varty

**Co-opted Members:**

Billie-Leigh, S Neale and W Taylor

**Also Present:**

Laura Armstrong - Professional Practice Manager  
Laura Counce - Service Manager, Children and Young People  
Sharon Davey - Strategic Manager (Looked After & Permanence)  
Mark den Hollander – Independent Visitor Coordinator  
Molly Foster - Lawyer (Children, Adults & Health)  
Anne Haigh – Acting Centre Manager, Aycliffe Secure Centre  
Rebecca Harrison and Lauren – Investing in Children  
Hazel Ostle – Workforce Development Manager  
Martyn Stenton – Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children  
Dave Summers - Youth Justice Service Manager  
Jayne Watson – Senior Partnerships Officer

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Cochrane, S Deinali, O Gunn, T Henderson, C Hunt, J Miller, A Sterling and from Co-opted Members C Brown, Luke and R Woods.

### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute members in attendance.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising in relation to Regulation 44 visits would be picked up during the private part of the meeting.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **5 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)**

The Panel received a presentation on the support provided for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence, Sharon Davey, explained that the National Transfer Scheme enables the safe transfer of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people (UASC) from one local authority to another. Currently 31 UASC young people, predominately male, aged between 15 and 17 years and 20 care leavers are supported by the service. The Strategic Manager described activities to support these young people including translation services and access to Independent Visitors and advocacy services. Support is also provided within education settings and the Virtual School has a dedicated UASC caseworker. Foster carer support groups enable carers to share experiences and offer each other practical support and work is also carried out with strategic partners, young persons advisers, health practitioners, and in the community, to promote social inclusion. The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence agreed to advise on how many UASC have moved from Durham to other areas and to provide a breakdown of the home countries of the UASC.

#### **6 Number of Children Looked After and Care Leavers**

The Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children reported a slight increase in the number of children in care which stood at 1034.

#### **7 Ofsted Updates**

The Panel heard that the inspection of Coxhoe Children's Home which took place in September was very positive. The full inspection of Aycliffe Secure Centre has now been completed and the outcome will be provided in due course. Members were advised that a further action plan has been implemented for Framwellgate Moor.

#### **8 Children in Care Council Activity**

The Chair welcomed Rebecca, Billie-Leigh and Lauren to the meeting, representing the Children in Care Council.

Lauren delivered a speech on behalf of Luke in which he spoke of his admiration for the foster carer training facilitated by the young people of the Children in Care Council and how their input has been a force for positive change. Luke commented that the impact of the lived experiences of children and young people themselves help foster carers understand how important quality of care is to a young person's future development.

Luke also referred to the experience of coming into care and the significance of this event in a young person's life. He highlighted his concerns regarding worries that children and young people have regarding being judged simply because they are looked after and he spoke of his commitment to continue to strive to combat negative perceptions of children and young people looked after.

The young people then led the Panel on an exercise which forms part of the foster carer training. During the exercise, one of the young people shared a real life account of the day a child came into care. In the account, the child was allowed to take one item from the family home to their foster home. Panel members discussed how they would feel if they were a child in this situation and how difficult it would be to decide which item to choose.

The young people then spoke about a project that they would like to launch, with the support of the Panel. They explained they would like to create care packs to be distributed to children and young people when they first become looked after. The packs would be age-appropriate and would include small tokens which would be relevant to the individual young person, to provide them with reassurance that they are supported. The young people explained the packs would be particularly useful when emergency protection measures are required. Supporting the suggestion, officers commented on the practical processes in place for those entering care and how changes are often implemented through feedback from the Children in Care Council, for example, the work undertaken to improve wi-fi in children's homes. The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence agreed to investigate how the project could be progressed. The Panel expressed their support and requested that officers look into whether contributions from Members' neighbourhood budgets could be used to fund the project.

## **9 Proud Moments**

Officers reported the following proud moments.

A care leaver who has moved into a home of their own is part of the 'staying close' pilot and is making excellent progress, staying in touch with the key workers at their previous children's home who are providing assistance and companionship as the young person gradually adjusts to the transition.

One of the workers leaves her dog with the young person to provide company for them throughout the day.

A young person with disabilities was thrilled to be selected to star in the TV programme 'Saturday Mash Up' to fulfil their dream of becoming a police officer for a day.

Another young person with disabilities is hoping to go on a holiday abroad and they have been offered the opportunity to prepare for the flight by using a flight simulator to overcome their fear of flying.

A young person has been selected to join the Royal Navy and they paid tribute to their foster family for all their support.

A young person resident in a children's home who had previously had anger management issues had benefited from the long-term support provided by their Independent Visitor. The support had helped the young person to address their issues, to feel more positive about their future and engage in education. Furthermore, the young person is showing empathy and is keen to help others with their welfare.

Councillor Varty expressed her pride at the young people and carers who had attended a recent event held at Durham Town Hall and commented on how impressed she had been at the artwork on display.

## **10 Aycliffe Secure Centre Update, including Maple House**

The Panel received a report which provided an update on Aycliffe Secure Centre including the new transition home, Maple House (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Acting Centre Manager, Anne Haigh, spoke of how the Covid-19 pandemic had presented unprecedented challenges for the Centre. Despite this, the young people found innovative ways to overcome the difficulties of lockdown for example through writing letters to new residents to introduce themselves. Throughout the pandemic, the young people's learning experience continued and online vocational courses were introduced.

The Panel heard that as young people often find the transition to a community placement difficult, a new transition home, Maple House, funded by the Council and the Department for Education had been built to provide a stepping stone, to ease the transition from the secure environment back into the community.

A further development was the Centre's participation in the Secure Stairs framework which supports young people and staff with trauma informed care.

A recent annual review found the young people are receiving trauma informed care and the young people themselves report feeling safe and secure with the staff caring for them.

The Acting Centre Manager also explained the Centre has piloted a sleep/Fitbit project as many young people report difficulties with sleep. Information gathered on the quality of sleep is being shared with the psychological team and there are plans to extend the project across all the houses.

The Acting Centre Manager confirmed that 'My Space' had continued throughout the Covid-19 period, although it had been necessary to hold sessions virtually. This provided the young people with the opportunity to discuss issues with staff from Investing in Children.

The Panel congratulated all staff and young people at the Centre on their recent outstanding Ofsted achievements.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **11 Youth Justice Service**

The Panel received a report and presentation on the Youth Justice Service (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Youth Justice Service Manager, Dave Summers, informed the Panel that the service supervises all young people sentenced by the courts, those receiving a police caution and all those remanded in secure accommodation awaiting trial or sentencing. In addition the service delivers targeted work to prevent young people from entering the youth justice system and the Service Manager outlined the pre-caution disposal (PCD) process which provides police officers with an alternative to 'formal' police action. The Panel heard that there had been a 65% reduction in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system and currently approximately 75% of the young people receiving a PCD do not go on to reoffend. In addition, the Ministry of Justice had recently awarded funding to further develop the early help and pre-caution disposal functions.

The Youth Justice Service Manager outlined that approximately 13% of the cohort supervised by the service are children and young people looked after and a small number of those had become looked after due to being remanded in youth detention. Work is undertaken with the Children Looked After service to ensure that the young person's care needs are taken into account alongside the factors for their offending.

The Service Manager also referred to the service's engagement in research by Cardiff University to investigate criminalisation and children looked after. Further information on the research will be fed-back to the Panel in due course.

The Service Manager informed the Panel that close work is undertaken with the police, with police officers seconded to the Youth Justice service.

Of the 58 young people entering the youth justice system in 2021/22, approximately 83% of those were male and the age group most likely to offend had reduced from 16-17 years, to 15-16 years, and the service was seeing increasing number of 14 year olds.

The Service Manager explained that in recognition that not being in education, employment or training is a risk factor in offending behaviour, the service works with each young person in their education setting and the service is part of the Strategic Management Board which also includes representation from education establishments.

The Service Manager informed the Panel that the number of cases progressing to court had reduced over the past 10 years with the help of early intervention schemes and increasing opportunities for issues to be dealt with outside of court, however a slight increase had been observed during the past twelve months.

**Resolved:**

That the report and presentation be noted.

**12 Transfer of Young People from Police Custody to Local Authority Accommodation**

The Panel received a report and presentation on the transfer of young people from police custody to Local Authority Accommodation under the Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Youth Justice Service Manager, Dave Summers, explained that Police and Local Authorities are required to transfer young people who have been charged and denied bail to appropriate Local Authority accommodation which will be either non-secure accommodation, or, if the young person is deemed to pose an imminent risk of significant harm to the public, this will be secure accommodation.

Durham had been at the forefront of this protocol, when nationally the approach was varied, however over the last few years more young people have been detained in police stations. To address this, in Autumn 2021 the protocol / procedures were reviewed, refreshed and re-launched and over the past year, performance has improved with a greater understanding between agencies and there has been an increased number of referrals and the development of shared practice between the police, the Emergency Duty Team and the Youth Justice Service.

In response to questions and comments, the Service Manager informed the Panel that of the 28 transfer requests made since 2021, 20 of those transferred to appropriate accommodation and 8 remained in police custody. He explained that sometimes this may be the most appropriate and least disruptive option for the young person, especially if they are charged very late at night and need to be at court early the following morning.

Following the refresh of procedures staff receive regular training to ensure all parties understand their statutory duties and performance is subject to joint monitoring.

**Resolved:**

That the report and presentation be noted.

### **13 Review of the Independent Visitor Service**

The Independent Visitor Co-ordinator, Mark den Hollander delivered a report and presentation which provided information on the Independent Visitor Service (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Information was provided on the role of Independent Visitors (IV) who are trained volunteers who provide trusted and consistent relationships to children and young people looked after. The IV Coordinator explained the challenges faced by the service on its inception in April 2020, which coincided with the national lockdown and how working practices were reviewed in order to develop the service. The Panel heard that at the end of August 2022 there had been 93 referrals to the service for a match, with 70 matches being made and 37 matches concluded. Focus for the future includes the continued development of the service and the aim to meet the National Independent Visitor Service target of 10% of children in care being matched by June 2024.

The IV Coordinator explained that the service requires that students who volunteer must be able to commit to the role for at least one year and preferably two years in order to provide continuity.

When transitions occur from one IV to another, these are managed very carefully in order to minimise disruption.

In response to a question, the IV Coordinator explained that training to become an IV takes approximately 5 weeks.

**Resolved:**

- a) That an update on the Independent Visitor Service be included in the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report.
- b) That the Corporate Parenting Panel receive biennial updates on the Independent Visitor Service.

## **14 Research in Practice**

The Workforce Development Manager for Children and Young People's Services, Hazel Ostle, delivered a presentation and gave a demonstration of the Research in Practice partnership licence (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

The licence allows all those with a Durham County Council email address to access a range of information and resources, including digital resources, podcasts, webinars, caselaw and publications which support evidence based practice with children and young people. The Panel received a 'walk through' of the website which enables the user to develop their knowledge by searching on specific topics.

## **15 Any other business**

The Senior Partnerships Officer informed the Panel of a stakeholder event taking place on 27 October 2022 from 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm at Sherburn Hill Care Leaver's Centre and the Children in Care Council's Halloween event, also taking place on 27 October, from 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm. Members were encouraged to attend the events.

## **16 Exclusion of the public**

**Resolved:**

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**17 Regulation 44 Visits and Regulatory Body Ratings of Children's Residential Homes**

The Service Manager for Children and Young People presented the monthly update on Regulation 44 visits and regulatory body ratings and answered questions from Members (for copy of report see file of minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**18 Maple House - Aycliffe Secure Centre Transition Home**

The Acting Centre Manager for Aycliffe Secure Centre presented photographs of the Centre, including the new transition home at Maple House.

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Presentation by Billie-Leigh and Luke  
CiCC CPP representatives  
and Robert Johnson ~ Investing in Children



Promoting the Rights of Children and Young People

# Don't talk to strangers?







“Who are you to go to if you are at home and you don’t feel safe? Home is meant to be our safe spot and if that is taken away then the child or young person may be at risk of being in danger physically or emotionally and mentally.”

What about young people who are not in Care, do they know who to go to if they don't feel safe at home?



**Corporate Parenting Panel**

**25 November 2022**

**Independent Reviewing Officer Children  
in Care Annual Report Summary  
2021/2022**



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**Report of Chris Ring, Strategic Manager, Safeguarding and  
Professional Practice, Durham County Council**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service covering the period from April 2021 to March 2022.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The annual report, attached as Appendix 2, has been produced under the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. This report provides an overview of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service with regards to Children in Care and provides assurance that we are discharging our statutory duty effectively.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 3 Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to:
  - (a) Note the contents of the attached report.

## **Background**

- 4 The IRO service has continued to discharge its statutory functions effectively throughout 2021-22. We have started to form a recovery plan in response to the Covid-19, embracing technology to enable us to continue to communicate and engage with children and young people, and ensuring that children and young people's reviews took place in a timely way.
- 5 We have continued to work with the Children in Care Council (CICC) to inform service development activity, created preparation tools to try to engage young people in their reviews and achieved Investing in Children (IIC) status gold award.
- 6 We have continued to effectively support timely care planning for children and have seen an increase of children with plans of permanence in a timely way.
- 7 We have embedded our Resolution Process with IROs, social work teams and senior management, having a greater number of challenging and supportive conversations that make a real difference for children and young people.
- 8 We have maintained a high level of performance for children with 99% of CLA reviews held in timescales.
- 9 We continue to provide an increasing level of performance with 94% Foster Care Reviews held in timescales.

## **Conclusion**

- 10 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be assured that we are effectively discharging our statutory duty to Children in Care under the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

## **Author**

Sharon Davey

Tel: 03000 266214

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The statutory duties of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) are set out in section 25B (1) Children Act 1989 with further statutory guidance contained in the IRO handbook, which sets out the IRO in relation to case management and review for looked after children.

There are two clear and separate aspects to the function of the IRO:

- i. chairing the child's review; and
- ii. monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis.

### **Finance**

There are no Direct Financial Implications within this report.

### **Consultation**

None

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

None

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Risk**

None

### **Procurement**

None

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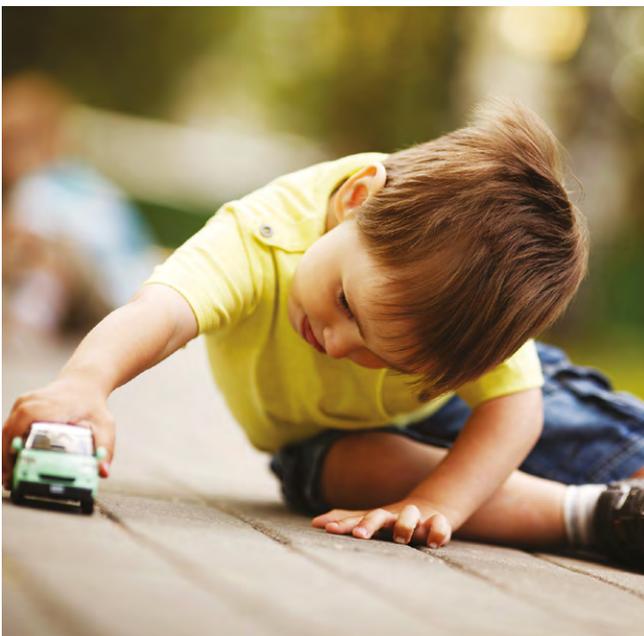


Independent Reviewing Officer

# Children in Care Annual Report Summary 2021/22

# What do Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) do?

The IRO service works within the guidelines of the IRO Handbook (2010). IROs monitor care planning to make sure the plans meet the needs of our children and young people, helping them to thrive and achieve their full potential. We want all of our children and young people to have aspirational goals that build on their strengths. If care plans are not helping our children achieve their goals, then we have a responsibility to challenge the system to ensure that the child/young person remains central to all our work, and that we find solutions as quickly as possible to any barriers that may be identified.



IROs make sure that they talk to the council when they are worried about whether plans are progressing for children/young people. If we disagree with a council's plan for a child/young person we will challenge the council. We will also tell the council about things that they are doing particularly well.

IROs in County Durham also chair child protection conferences and work within the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP).

## Children and young people in the care of County Durham

The IROs chair Child Looked After Reviews (CLA) for all children, including those placed for adoption, those in short break respite care and young people who are remanded into the care of the council.

# The Child's Journey

The information below contains the key stages in the child's journey when being care for by the Local Authority and how the IRO assists the child or young person in this process.

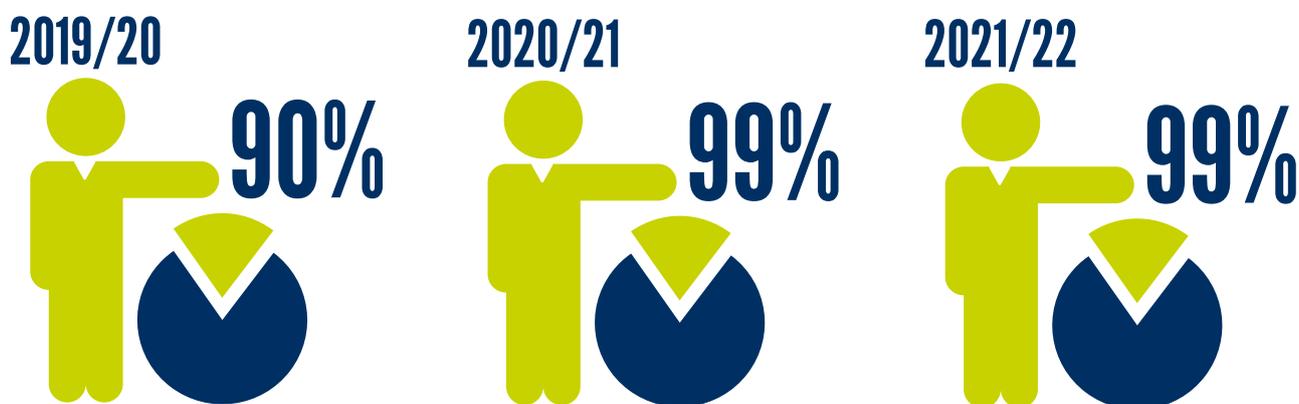
	Stages in child's or young person's journey	What is it like for the child or young person?	How does the IRO assist?
STAGE 1	Child or young person becomes Looked After.	Confusing to be placed away from parents and unsure what is going to happen.	Contact is made with the child or yp within 5 working days to inform them who their IRO is and what they do. The IRO will contact them to arrange a visit.
STAGE 2	Child or young person meets with the Social Worker (SW) to plan their Looked After Review (LAR) 15 days before the looked after review takes place.	Confusing to meet someone new and will not know what to expect.	Social Worker and IRO conduct a pre review discussion together to consider the issues for the looked after review.
STAGE 3	A pre review visit is arranged between the child/young person and the IRO.	Confused by process and not sure what the review is about.	<p>IRO visits the child/young person to prepare for the looked after review, obtain views and help the child/young person chair the review if that is what they would like to do.</p> <p>Wherever possible it will be the same IRO who conducts all subsequent reviews.</p>
STAGE 4	Within 20 working days a looked after review is held and short term plan is agreed with recommendations.	Young people comment that they like to chair their own meeting.	<p>The IRO supports the child to provide their views and chair the meeting if appropriate.</p> <p>The IRO will provide a contact slip for the child to contact and will negotiate the time and place of the next review and who will attend.</p> <p>The IRO will challenge the local authority on the plan if appropriate, read the assessments and consider if the plan is appropriate for the young person.</p>
STAGE 5	3 month looked after review and permanent plans agreed.	May be confused about the plan and what happens next.	<p>The IRO supports the child to provide their views and chair the meeting if appropriate.</p> <p>The IRO will provide a contact slip for the child to contact and will negotiate the time and place of the next review and who will attend.</p> <p>The IRO will read the court bundle and all assessments, discuss with the Children's guardian to determine views on the plan.</p> <p>If the IRO is unhappy with the progress of the plan they can instigate the DRP process to challenge the LA. If the case is in court the court need to be made aware of the IRO's concerns.</p>
STAGE 6	6 month reviews and permanent plans.  The process continues every 6 months until the child is no longer looked after.	<p>Young people comment that they like to chair their own meeting.</p> <p>The following is a quote for a young person who chairs their own review: <i>"Think it's a good thing and allows me to talk about what I want!"</i></p>	<p>The IRO supports the child to provide their views and chair the meeting if appropriate.</p> <p>The IRO conducts monitoring and pre review discussion with the SW and is updated on any significant event. The IRO will consider if a review needs to be held as a result.</p> <p>The IRO will read the court bundle and all assessments, discuss with the Children's guardian to determine views on the plan.</p> <p>If the IRO is unhappy with the progress of the plan they can instigate the DRP process to challenge the LA. If the case is in court the court need to be made aware of the IRO's concerns.</p>

# Summary of Development Activity 2021/22

Issues identified 2021/22	Response
<p>To improve on the quality of care plans for children and young people and ensure these plans are formed with children and their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IROs check the quality of care plans and if a plan for when a child will return home is not in place (linked to Signs of Safety framework), they will challenge the council.</li> <li>● Continued to focus on the timeliness of care planning for children.</li> <li>● Improvements have been made within Care Proceedings to ensure the views of IROs are represented in court. Regional work has been carried out and within the North courts the IRO views are a standing agenda required for Final Hearing.</li> <li>● An animation video has been created to explain the child looked after review meetings and how children and young people can feed into this reviewing process. This is on the Children in Care Council (CiCC) website and was shared at the Corporate Parenting Panel. The timeliness of plans ratified.</li> </ul>
<p>Continue to support Children's Services and the IRO Service to embed Signs of Safety as the practice model.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The IROs continue to have monthly Signs of Safety group supervisions, and this will remain a key priority for the service. IROs promote the practice framework of Signs of Safety in aspects of care planning. We have seen some lovely examples of picture books created for young people moving on to adulthood.</li> </ul>
<p>Use the Signs of Success framework to structure review meetings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IROs continue to work with the CiCC to promote the children and young people's voices in care planning. This includes creation of the video, IRO Guide, IRO role words and pictures and regular meetings with the IRO Consultation Group.</li> <li>● IROs work with the Pathways/Young Peoples Service to ensure young people leaving care have a plan with aspirational goals. This includes looking at care arrangements such as 'Staying Put', 'Supported Lodging' and going back to their family. They meet quarterly to look at how this can be done consistently for all young people leaving care.</li> <li>● The IRO service are looking into whether the service can review care planning for young people moving into adulthood. This has been a more complex piece of work and requires further time to review alongside any changes with the current Care Review Process published in June 2022.</li> </ul>
<p>To support Children's Services to make continuous improvement to the service they provide for children and young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The IRO service update the Quality Improvement Board (QIB) with any lessons they have learned or trends, from sampling, resolutions meetings and audits.</li> <li>● The IRO service is working with the Children's Homes to make sure care planning meets the needs of all our children. This work will continue into 2022/23.</li> </ul>

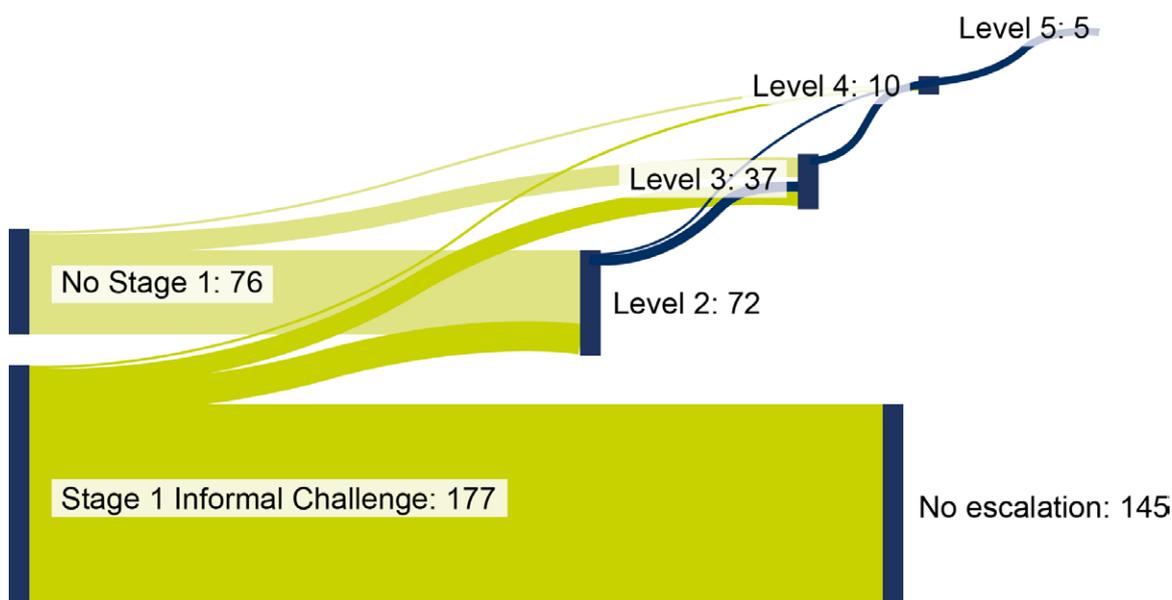
## Timeliness of reviews

We have maintained a high level of performance for child and young people CLA Reviews with 99% of CLA reviews held in timescales.



## Challenge from the IRO Service

The IRO service continues to have a challenge process. The aim is to have a greater number of challenging but effective conversations between IROs and social work teams that make a real difference for children, and help to change how work is carried out. Where children have delays in care planning which cannot be agreed or progressed by their social worker, formal challenges are raised and discussed in a Resolution Meeting. The Ofsted Inspection May 2022 stated, "IROs know their children well and provide effective oversight of children's care plans."



The number of formal resolutions that have taken place this year has increased, with the majority of these in line with a national lack of placements.

2020/21

2021/22

100



136

The number of resolution conversations

### Secure Reviews

The IRO Service provides the Independent Panel Chair for all Secure Reviews. This is a separate IRO to the child's allocated IRO for care planning.

2020/21



2 children have required secure accommodation

2021/22



7 children have required secure accommodation

### Private Fostering Reviews

The IROs carry out Private Fostering Reviews on an annual basis. There have been 8 children between March 2021 - April 2022 who have required a Private Fostering review. These have all been held within timescales.

### Disruption Meetings

The IRO Service chair disruption meetings for children who have moved in an unplanned way who have been in their placement for 2 years or more, permanently matched or the issues are complex and require an independent chair. This is to ensure that children and young people's views are shared and heard. But also to support with any issues or worries raised can be resolved.

2020/21



The IRO Service has chaired 4 disruption meetings

2021/22



The IRO Service has chaired 2 disruption meetings

Disruption meetings are undertaken by the Fostering Service and the IRO service

### Foster Care Reviews

There were 285 Foster Care Reviews carried out, 94 % of which were within timescales. This is an increase from 87% the previous year 2020/21 and 84% completed in timescales during 2019/20.

87%

2020/21



94%

2021/22



## Feedback from children and young people

The participation of children and young people in their own reviews is vitally important and the table below shows how successful we have been in promoting this participation:

How child participated in their CLA Review	Total Number of children
Child was under 4 years of age at the time of the meeting	561
Child attended and spoke for themselves	968
Child attended and advocate spoke	40
Child attended and gave views non- verbally (Children with Disabilities)	9
Child attended without contribution	19
Child did not attend, advocate shared views	493
Child did not attend, views sent	783
Child did not attend or share views	38

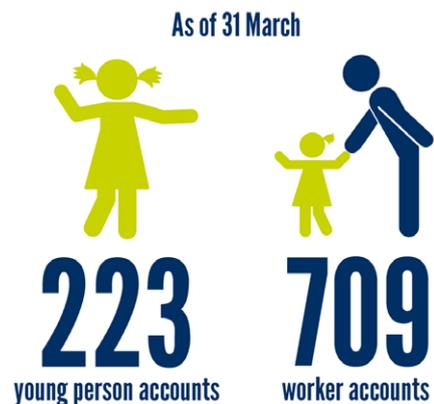


We have established a CiCC IRO consultation Group which meet termly to review changing practices within the IRO Service. The consultation group has made an animation video to explain what a looked after review is and what to expect from the IRO Service. Children in our Care (CIC) ([durham-scp.org.uk](http://durham-scp.org.uk)).

We have created an IRO Guide for young people and families to understand what the role of the IRO is.

We have created an IRO Words and Pictures which is a visual road map of what an IRO does during the review process.

We have started to use the Mind of My Own (MOMO) App to gather meaningful feedback. This has taken off well in Foster Care Reviews and our next steps are to look at preparation for meetings and feedback on how the meeting has gone.



## Feedback

“ The best thing about the IRO is that they listen , there is nothing they can improve on, just keep listening to us, thank you! ”

Feedback from a Foster Carer and their panel young person.

“ D and I would like to thank you for a most illuminating meeting this morning. ”

Feedback from a Foster Carer and their panel young person to an IRO .

“ I wanted to pass on my gratitude for your approach with S at the CLA meeting last Thursday. You were extremely person-centred, empathetic, and explained things very clearly to S taking into account her learning disability and her level of understanding. You were very clear on the plans moving forward which was very helpful for both me and S. ”

Feedback from a social worker.

# Key Priorities for 2022/23

Core Standard	Key Actions
<p><b>Standard 1</b></p> <p>To actively seek, encourage and promote the voice of the child and their family in care planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IRO Service to work in partnership with the CiCC to map the CLA Review process and create a more child friendly, outcome focused review process for all children and young people.</li> <li>● Collate feedback from MOMO statements to review and strengthen the voice of the child within CLA Reviews.</li> <li>● Develop a feedback loop to review and strengthen the voice of the child’s parents within these meetings and how satisfied they are with the care provided to their child/ren.</li> <li>● Launch the Journey Through Care Review Road Map (IRO Words and Pictures)</li> <li>● Raise profile of NYAS/Independent Visitor and use of advocacy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 2</b></p> <p>To provide challenge, scrutiny and oversight of care planning and challenge where things have not progressed for a children or young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IROs will review and challenge where care planning regulations have not been complied with.</li> <li>● IRO monthly practice clinics will focus on the quality of Pathway Plans and the transitions for our older young people.</li> <li>● IRO Service Manager will produce a quarterly report with findings and practice themes to “hold Children’s Services to account as corporate parents” IRO Handbook.</li> <li>● Establish a “What good looks like” framework for reporting views of the IRO within the court process taking into considerations from the Public Law Working Group (PLWG) recommendations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 3</b></p> <p>To promote effective working relationships where practitioners work systemically to improve outcomes for children and young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IRO case allocation system to be reviewed.</li> <li>● We will strengthen working relationships with partner agencies such as the DSCP for our children in care services.</li> <li>● Review how we quality assure and review a child’s care planning journey to be ‘more than just a meeting’ but a holistic review of the child’s journey.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 4</b></p> <p>To promote quality assurance as an expert practitioner from a ‘birds-eye view’ of practice, which will feed into change and shape service delivery for children and young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IROs will start to complete collaborative audits and the outcomes will directly inform and impact upon practice.</li> <li>● IRO’s to be part of multi-agency audits.</li> <li>● The IRO service will provide quality assurance and learning from dip samples to the Quality Improvement Board (QIB).</li> <li>● IROs will undertake peer observations of practice to inform learning and bring consistency.</li> <li>● Streamlining the reviewing process for CLA reviews within LCS system to ensure all documents such as PEP, EHCP, SDQ and LAHA as part of the overarching care plan for the child/young person.</li> </ul>

## Key Priorities for 2022/23 continued

Core Standard	Key Actions
<p><b>Standard 5</b></p> <p>To have meaningful positive impact for the children and young people we seek to serve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improve on the consistency and quality of IRO oversight for children on files. This is to include a clear rationale for decision making and written in a language the child understands. To include the evidence of impact for children and young people.</li> <li>● Increase the usage of advocacy and move to an 'opt-Out Service' as a longer-term goal from the Care Review 2022.</li> <li>● All children to receive a letter as the notes of their meeting, to explain what was discussed, the decisions that were made and who they can talk to if they are not happy with this.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 6</b></p> <p>We will invest in our workforce to ensure social worker practice will flourish.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Launch the IRO Development plan.</li> <li>● Strengthen the Regional IRO Management Partnership. Feed into national research, development and debates through the NIROMP working group.</li> </ul>

**For further information or to discuss anything  
in this report please contact**

**Sharon Davey, Operations Manager, IRO Service**

 [sharon.davey@durham.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.davey@durham.gov.uk)

 03000 266214

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