



Independent Reviewing Officer

# **Child Protection Annual Report Summary 2018/19**

# Role of the IRO within Child Protection

When there is a worry that a child is at risk of significant harm a Child Protection Conference will take place. This is a meeting to discuss the worries and concerns around the child. Decisions will be made around what needs to happen to make the child safe.

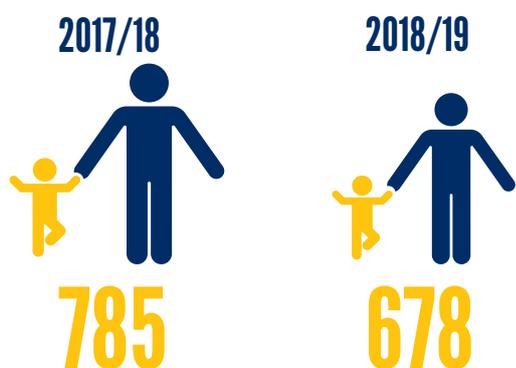
The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will be responsible for chairing the meeting, making sure that the statutory functions required within child protection conferences are delivered in a robust way, in line with Durham's Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) Child Protection Procedures.

The law provides guidelines in relation to safeguarding children and sets out the responsibilities of the chair of the child protection conference (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018). This states that the chair is:

- Accountable to the Director of Children's Services. Where possible, the same person should chair subsequent child protection reviews.
- They should be a professional, independent of operational and/or line management responsibilities for the case.
- They should meet the child and parents in advance to ensure they understand the purpose and the process.

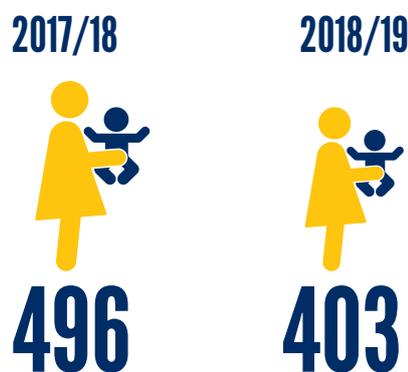
## Children and young people in the Child Protection Process (CPP) 2018/19

### Total number of children subject to a CPP during the year.



### Children subject to a CPP.

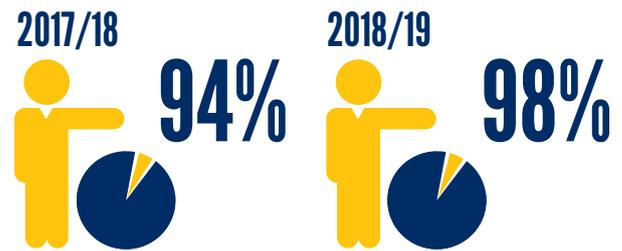
\*As of March 31st



## Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences.



## Timeliness of Review Child Protection Conferences.

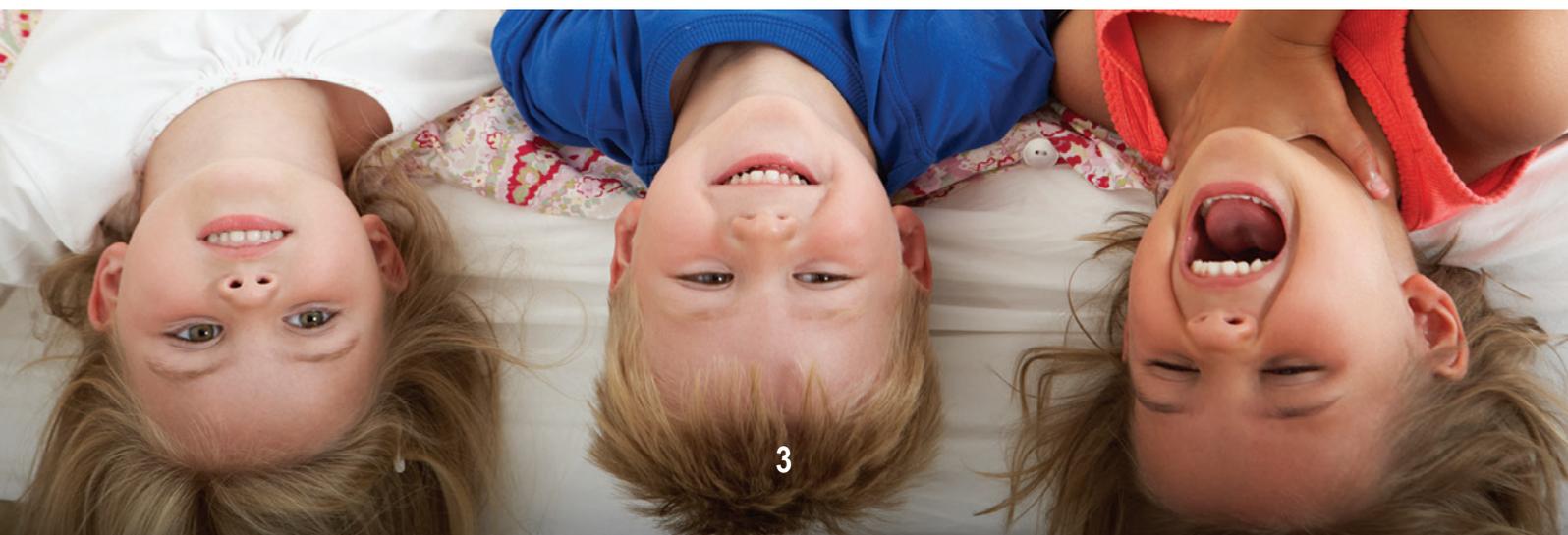


## The child's journey

The child's journey through the child protection process can be daunting and confusing. It is the role of the IRO to ensure that the child or young person's wishes and feelings are taken into account and that their needs are met through appropriate and proportionate challenge and scrutiny. The information at the end of this report details the key stages in the child's journey through the child protection process and how the IRO assists the child or young person to cope.

## Timeliness of Child Protection Reviews

It is important that child protection meetings take place within timescale. Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) should take place within 15 working days of the strategy meeting. This ensures that plans are put in place, which makes it clear what needs to happen and by who to keep children safe. Child Protection Reviews (CPR) look at progress made and consider whether the Child Protection Plan (CPP) needs to continue. IROs work hard to make sure there are no delays in reviews taking place. Some of the reasons reviews cannot take place are outside of anyone's control. This may be due to availability of interpreter, children wishing to attend and needing time to prepare and other issues beyond control. Not all child protection meetings took place within the timescale and IROs will make this a priority for the next year.



## When IROs have worries

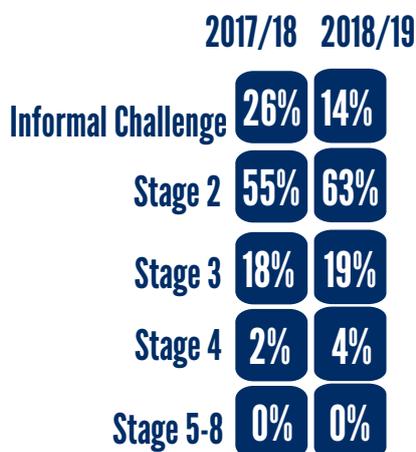
When an IRO has a worry about a child or feels that the plan is not progressing as it should be, they have a responsibility to raise this with Children's Services managers. This is done through the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP). The social worker will work with the IRO to try to resolve any differences they may have in relation to a child's or young person's plan. The idea is that issues can be resolved quickly without the need to escalate to senior managers. The main DRP themes are in relation to delays in progressing plans.

When an IRO has concerns that other professionals working with the child and their family are not doing what is expected of them, they raise a multi-agency challenge (MACP). This report is sent to the DSCB who will send it to the professional's manager.

### Number of children where a dispute was raised;



### The Dispute Resolution cases were resolved via:



### Reasons for submitting a dispute:



# How are we doing?

## Engagement with children and young people

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) is available for children and young people who receive services from Durham County Council. The IRO service works closely with children's services to promote the use of advocacy. All IRO's will discuss with children and young people the use of advocacy. This has led to an improvement in the voice of the child being heard within Child Protection Conferences through advocates. There has been a significant increase in the use of advocacy within Child Protection Conferences. Since introducing a strength base approach to chairing meetings, we have found that planning for young people to attend meetings has been much easier and accessible. Furthermore, direct work which has been completed with the children and young people has been brought to meetings to capture the voice of the child and their views.

The number of young people who attend their Child Protection Conference remains very low. It is a priority for the IRO service in the coming year to work with children and young people to understand the reasons for this and ensure meetings are child friendly.

## Working with others

IROs work with partner agencies and participate in multiple working groups to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The IRO Service work with a lot of different agencies and groups. This includes:

- Other IRO Services across the region and nationally.
- National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS).
- Children & Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) is well embedded into practice.

The IRO service work with social work teams with the focus being on improving practice and outcomes for children and young people. Each IRO is allocated to a team within children's services to offer advice, guidance and feedback in team meetings. They have produced monthly and quarterly performance reports to senior managers to support improvement work. However, due to a new recording system introduced in January 2019, these reports have recommenced in August 2019. They feed into the strategic groups to support wider service improvements and identify any possible training needs

The IRO service continue to support the DSCB to facilitate Child Protection Conference Training following the strength based approach.



“ ‘The IRO was really good with the family. They explained the process and encouraged them to share their views.’ ”

Professional

“ ‘The meeting was conducted in a professional manner and gave time for the family to understand the worries and concerns.’ ”

Professional

“ ‘The new strength based approach felt more inclusive, focus was on the worries and harm to the child.’ ”

Professional

Mother following strength based conference:

“ ‘Much better way than the old way. I felt like you wanted to listen to what I thought and wanted to involve me.’ ”

## What needs to be done next?

The IRO Service action plan sets out what needs to be done during 2019/20 including:

- a) Increase the numbers of children and young people who want to attend their child protection meeting.
- b) Continue to ensure that plans for children and young people are robust and progress without delay. Make sure plans are written in a way that families and children can understand with a focus on impact on children and young people..
- c) IROs will continue to work alongside social workers and other professionals to promote better outcomes for children and young people at risk of harm.
- d) Continue to embed the strength based approach when running meetings, to allow children and their families to fully participate.

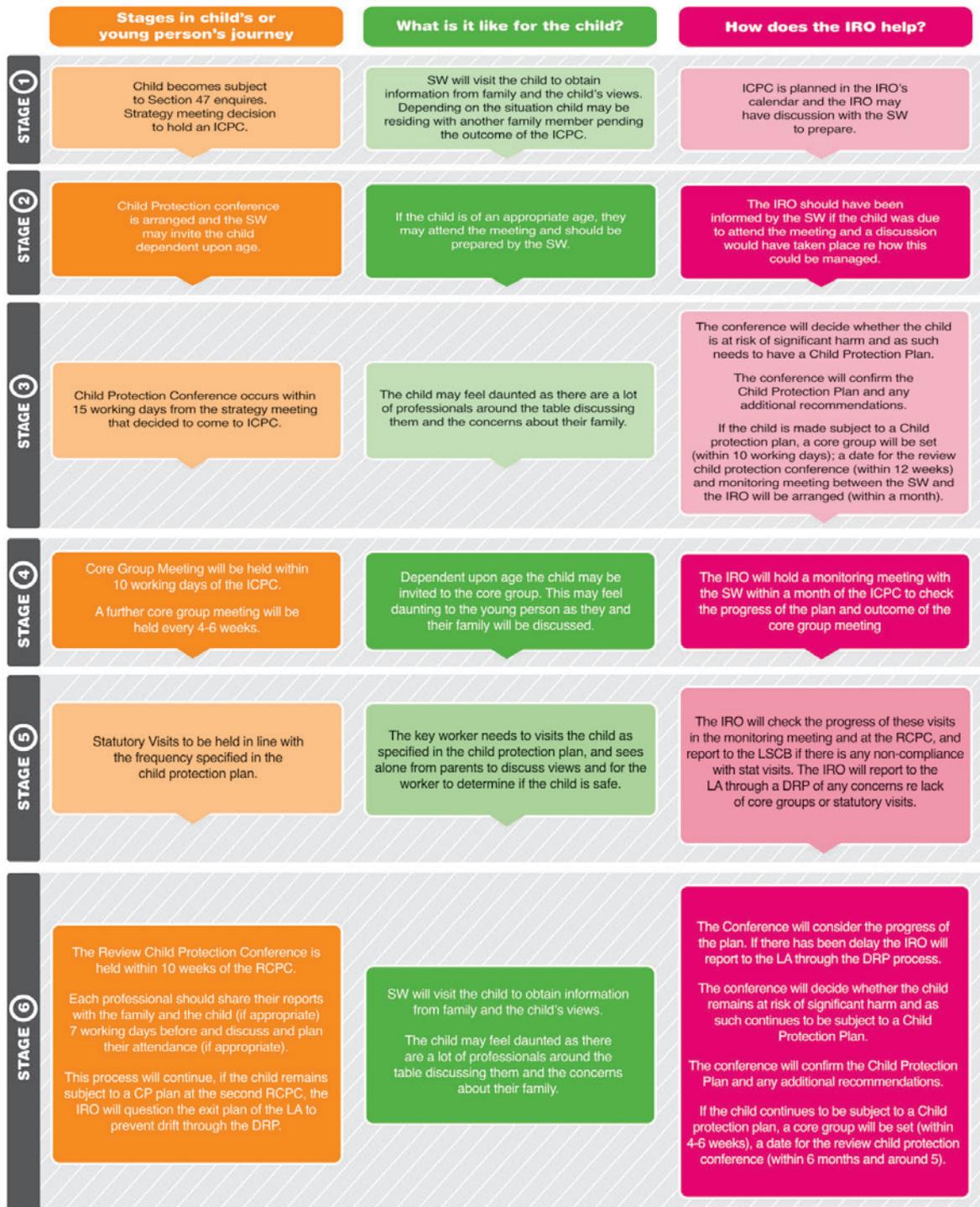
**For further information or to discuss anything in this report please contact**

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# The Child's Journey

This child's journey through the child protection process and how the IRO assists in the process.



Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.



Braille



Audio

AAA

Large print

|                 |                    |                 |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| العربية Arabic  | (中文 (繁體字)) Chinese | اردو Urdu       |
| polski Polish   | ਪੰਜਾਬੀ Punjabi     | Español Spanish |
| বাংলা Bengali   | हिन्दी Hindi       | Deutsch German  |
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