

## Corporate Parenting Panel

6 December 2024



### Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service - Child Protection & Children in Care

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#### Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director Children and Young People's Services, DCC

##### Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

##### Purpose of the Report

- 1 The annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service is provided in accordance with the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 and subsequent statutory guidance published by the Department for Children Schools and Families in 2010 as set out in The IRO Handbook.
- 2 This report covers the period April 2023 to March 2024 and provides analysis and evaluation relating to the function of the IRO Service during this reporting period.

##### Executive summary

- 3 The IRO service maintained a high level of service delivery in 2023/24 with 85% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) held in timescale and 99% of Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPCs) held in timescale.
- 4 Despite an increase in the number of children in our care, 96% of cared for reviews were held in timescale and we have continued to deliver a consistently high level of performance for timeliness of Foster Carer Reviews with 95% held in timescales.
- 5 Children's participation or contribution to their meetings has been maintained at a high level with 95% of children with a child protection plan and 98% of children in our care either participating in or contributing their views within their meeting.
- 6 We have had a focus on permanence planning and have seen the number of children with a plan for permanence agreed within six months of coming into our care increase from 51% in 2022/23 to 72% in 2023/24.

- 7 We have listened to children in our care and updated all of our IRO profiles in accordance with their preferred template and these are now being used.
- 8 We have introduced a new feedback process for children and families who have been involved in the child protection process and we are working on improving how this is used to support a better understanding of their experiences and develop our service further.
- 9 We have consistently contributed to the Local Authority's Quality Assurance Framework with all IRO's undertaking a collaborative audit each quarter. In this reporting year, the IRO service has completed 100% of audits within the required timescale.
- 10 We have recruited to all permanent posts within the service and maintained a stable staff team which supports positive and consistent relationships with children and families.
- 11 Although our number of informal and formal challenges have decreased overall using the Dispute Resolution Process, we have maintained a high level of scrutiny and oversight on practice through participation in panels, monitoring meetings, review meetings and effective conversations with social workers and managers.
- 12 A key area for development over the coming year is to increase IRO visits to children in our care. We have had development sessions with a group of young people, involved them in our Team Meeting and we are starting to see this having an impact on our practice. Our caseloads remain higher than recommended and this coupled with the number of meetings we chair, and the very large geographical area of County Durham have an impact on our performance in this area.

## **Recommendations**

- 13 The Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to:
  - (a) Note the content and recommendations of this report.

## Background

- 14 Legal context and purpose of the Independent Reviewing Officer service in Durham:

The appointment by the Local Authority of an IRO is a statutory requirement of the Local Authority. The statutory duties of the IRO are set out in Section 25B (1) Children Act 1989 which are to:

- (a) Monitor the performance by the Local Authority of their functions in relation to the child's case;
- (b) Participate in any review of the child's case;
- (c) Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority; and
- (d) Perform any other function which is prescribed in Care Planning Regulations.

- 15 The IRO handbook sets out the statutory roles and duties as well as the strategic and managerial responsibilities of Local Authorities in establishing an effective IRO service. In summary the IRO has several specific responsibilities, including;

- (a) promoting the voice of the child;
- (b) ensuring that plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs;
- (c) making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and their entitlement to one;
- (d) offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning for children in our care and the delivery of services to them;
- (e) monitoring the activity of the Local Authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands.

- 16 In Durham, all IRO's are employed in a dual role chairing both Child Protection Conferences and Children in our Care reviews. There is a benefit of combining these roles as it means there is a greater level of consistency for children and young people who transition from being subject to a child protection plan and subsequently becoming children in

our care. These children and families will benefit from the oversight and relationship already established with the IRO.

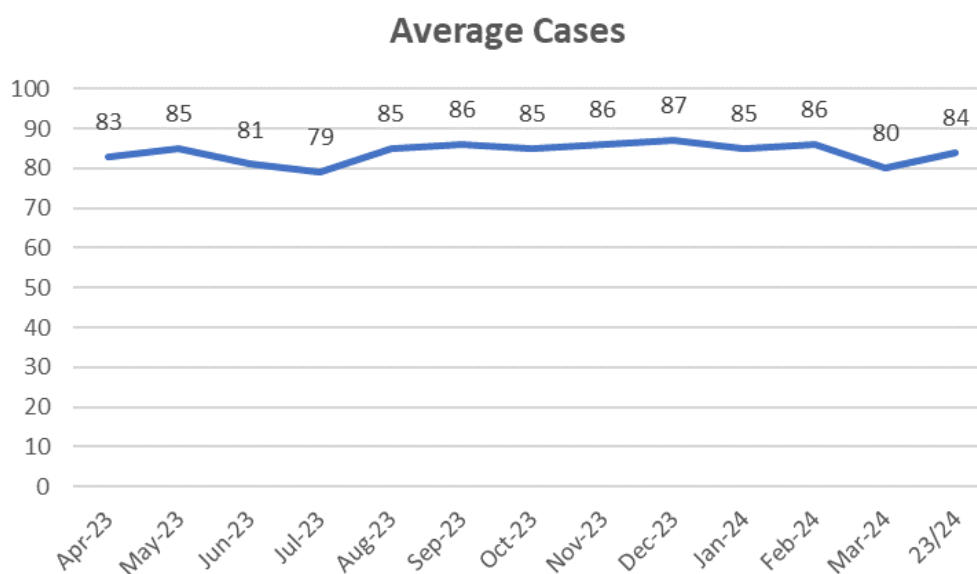
- 17 Local Authorities are required by Regulation 29 (The Fostering Services Regulations 2001) to review the approval of foster carers at least once a year. The Foster Care Review Officers (FCROs) also have responsibility to chair Disruption Meetings for children in care whose permanent placement ends in an unplanned way.

## **Staff Profile**

- 18 The IRO service is managed by two Service Managers who provide line management to 23 IROs and 2 Foster Care Review Officers (FCROs) and support the delivery and development of the IRO Service. The IRO Service Managers report to the Strategic Manager for Safeguarding and Professional Practice.
- 19 The staff structure includes:
- (a) 1 x Strategic Manager;
  - (b) 2 x Service Managers;
  - (c) 20.6 FTE Independent Reviewing Officers;
  - (d) 1.6 FTE Foster Care Review Officers.

## **Caseloads**

- 20 The overall average caseload for our IROs for 2023/2024 was 84 which is an increase from 80 the previous year. The government has set statutory good practice guidance of a caseload of 50 – 70 children for a full-time equivalent IRO (The IRO Handbook DfE) however in Durham IRO's have the additional role of chairing Child Protection conferences as well as being appointed IRO's for children in our care.



## Learning, Development and Practice Improvement

- 21 The service is committed to the ongoing learning and development of our staff. All roles within this service require registration with Social Work England and to have the required annual Continuing Professional Development (CPD) evidenced as part of their continued registration as Social Work practitioners.
- 22 All workers within our service receive individual supervision at least every 6 weeks and have access to informal supervision when required. Group supervision is arranged monthly, and this provides the IROs with a reflective space to develop and practice their skills in using the Signs of Safety model. There continues to be a real commitment by the management of the service to ensure that the level of supervision and support is of the highest standard and our performance in this area is reported at monthly Children's Social Care (CSC) performance meetings.
- 23 Individual training and development requirements for IROs are identified through team development sessions, supervision, and annual appraisals. The Local Authority has a dedicated portal for learning and development that offers an extensive range of both mandatory and voluntary training.

## Regional, National and Local Links

- 24 Our management team meets quarterly with IRO managers from across the North East. This regional group considers changes to policy and practice, gathers relevant statistical information at a regional level and a work plan aimed at delivering consistent IRO practice across the region.

- 25 Quarterly interface meetings are held with a range of partner agencies, including Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) and Durham Constabulary.
- 26 We continue to meet regularly with Durham County Council Children’s Social Care service to support effective communication and strengthen relationships, in the best interest of the children and families with whom we serve.
- 27 The IRO Service Managers offer an advisory role within several panels and working groups in Children’s Social Care. The service is also represented in a range of Task and Finish groups that are aimed to develop and shape developments in service delivery for children and families.

### Challenge and Escalation

- 28 Challenge and escalation are key aspects of the IRO role. Our aim is to work closely with the social worker and the care team to resolve issues, however there are times when IROs need to highlight issues or concerns and escalate these to managers. This is typically where there is drift or delay or a disagreement about a child’s plan.
- 29 The number of informal challenges that have taken place this year for a child with a child protection plan or a looked after care plan was 61.
- 30 The table below shows the number of formal challenges raised in 2023/24 which decreased from 222 in 2022/23 to 161 in this reporting year.

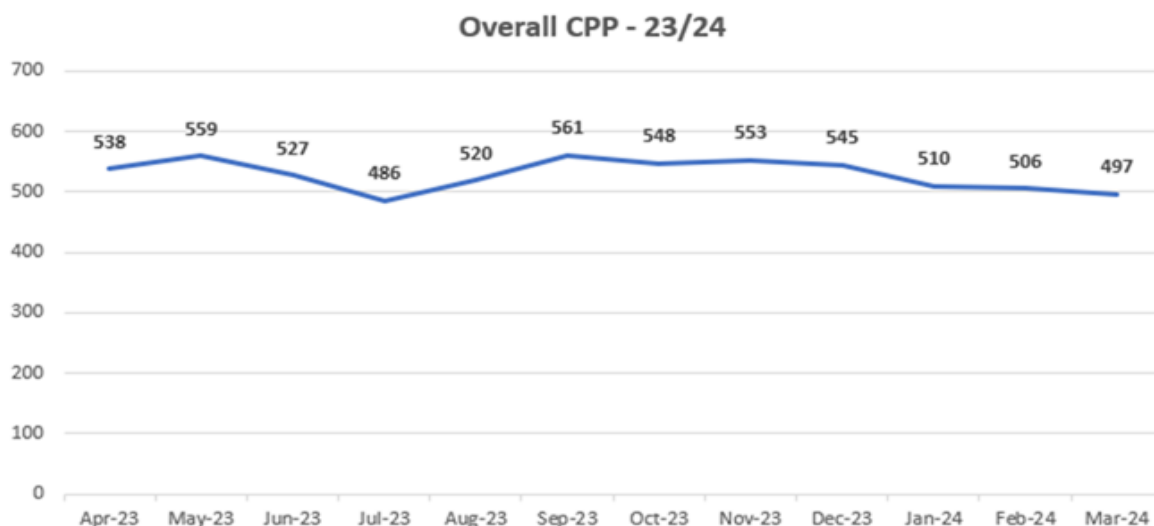
<b>DRP Level</b>	<b>Total number of challenges</b>	<b>CLA</b>	<b>CP</b>
2	101	84	17
3	33	29	4
4	23	23	0
5	4	4	0

- 31 The most common reason for IRO challenge has been due to a delay in achieving a plan of permanence for a child. Other challenges have been raised due to children being in unregistered provisions or reports or social workers not being available for meetings. There is a robust

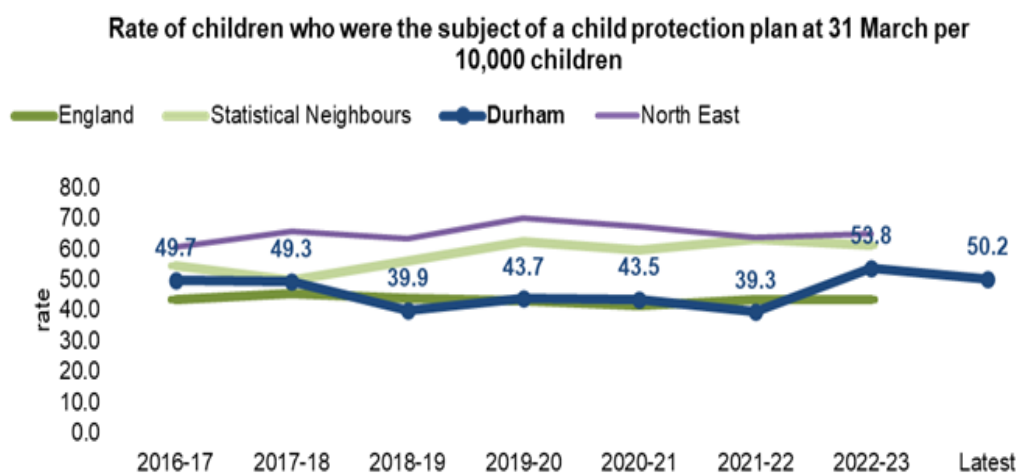
system in place where we hold regular meetings with Strategic Managers and Head of Service where challenges have escalated to a Level 4 or 5 which ensures senior leadership oversight and scrutiny.

### Child Protection - Performance Summary

32 As of 31 March 2024, there were a total of 497 Children in Durham who were subject to a protection plan, an overall reduction on the previous year.

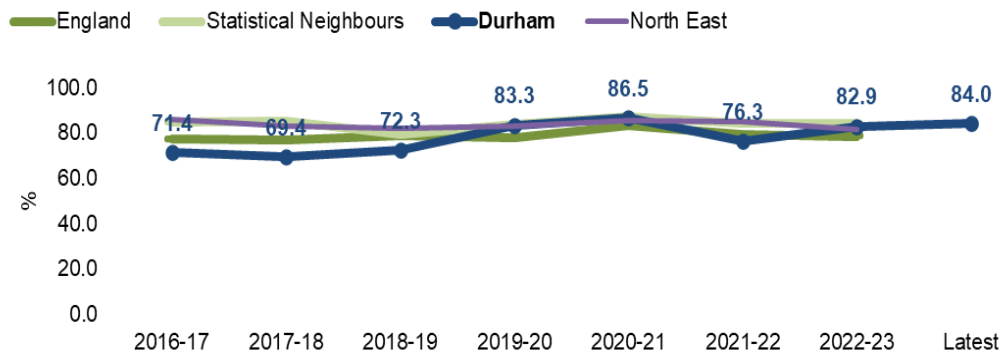


33 This equates to a rate per 10000 Children of 50.2 (down from 54 in 2022/23) and a consistent trend with national and regional north-east comparators and statistical neighbours.



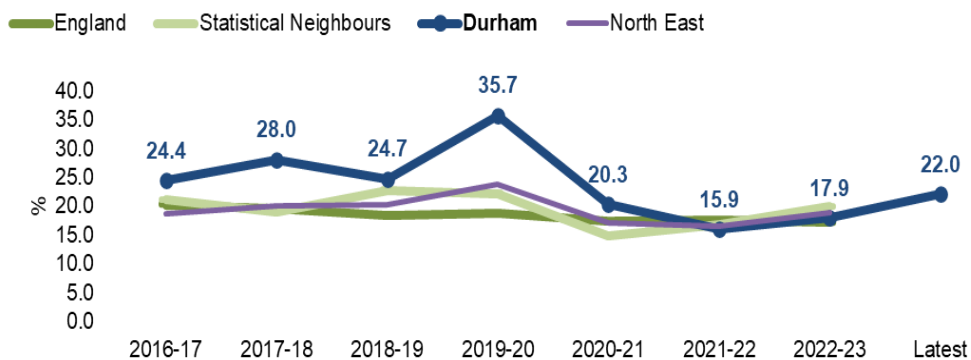
34 In 2023/24, 84% (714/850) of Initial Child Protection Conferences were completed within 15 working days. This is in line with both regional and national benchmarks.

**% ICPC timeliness: within 15 working days**



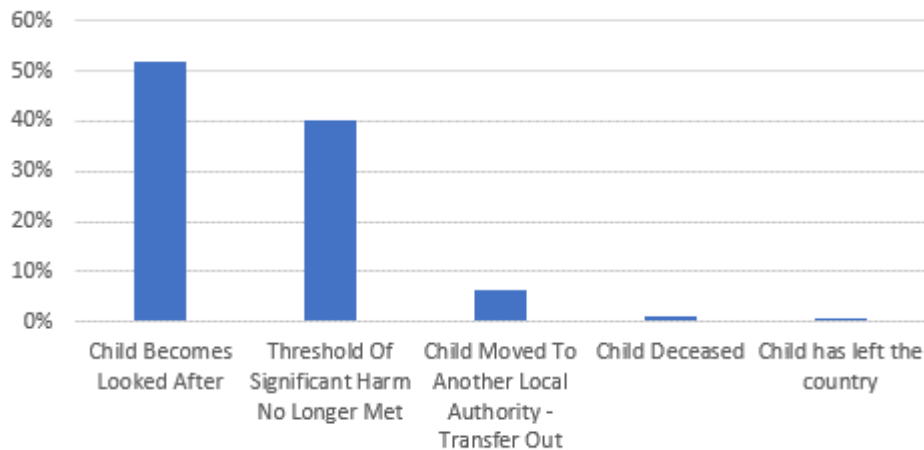
- 35 In 2023/24, 99% of Review Child Protection Conference’s (RCPC) (1521/1534) were held within timescales. This is an increase from 98% in 2022/23 and an increase of 157 in the total number of RCPC’s child held this year.
- 36 Children who were subject to a child protection plan for over 18 months accounted for 4.8% (24 children). This is a small increase from 4.1% in 2022/23 but a reduction from 5.2% in 2021/22. The proportion of children who were subject to a child protection plan for over 24 months in 2023/24 was 3.2% (16 children) which is an increase from 0.3% last year and 0.4% in 2021/22. This increase is attributable to three families with large sibling groups.
- 37 In 2023/24 the number of children subject to child protection plans for a period of 0-3 months was 22% (185/832) which is an increase year on year (18% 2022/23 and 16% in 2021/22).

**CPP ceased in year plan duration: % 3 months or less**



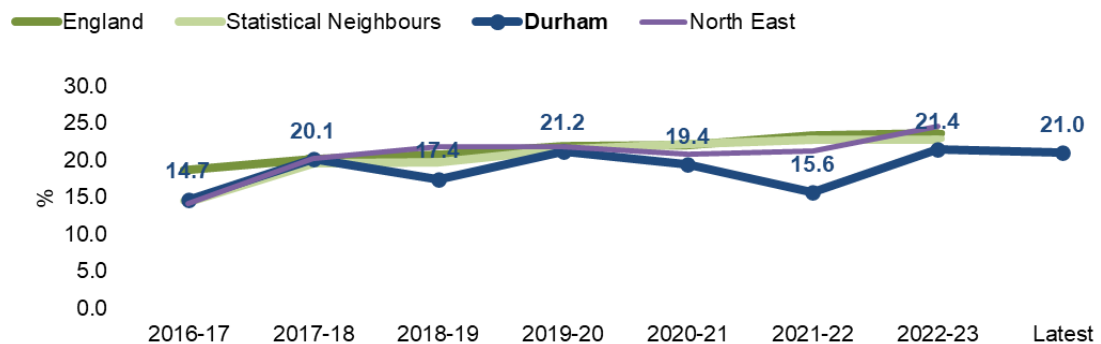
- 38 More than half of all children who ceased to be subject to a protection plan within 3 months of one starting, have become children in our care.





39 Whilst the number of children on a protection plan for over 18 months has reduced, the number of repeat child protection plans in 2023/24 has remained unchanged from the previous year at 21% (165/791), including 9% (70/791) within two years of a previous plan. This is up from 6% in the previous year; however, the overall repeat rate is consistently in line with comparators and below benchmarks.

**% CPP starters who became the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time**



## Participation and Views – Child Protection

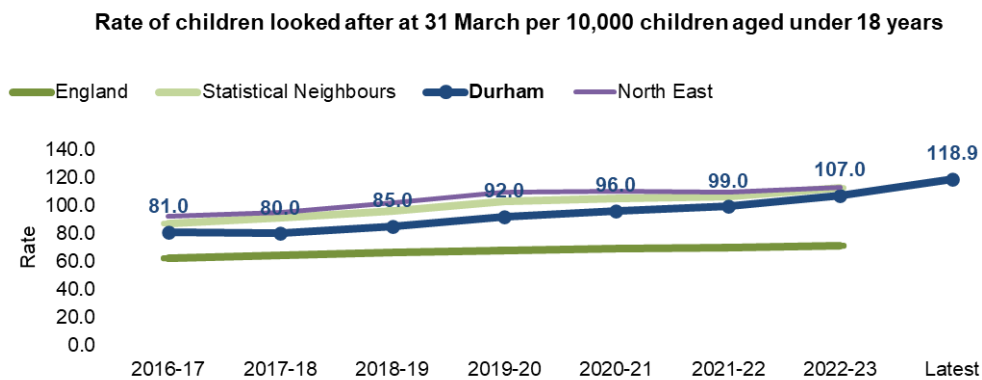
40 In this reporting year, 95% of children and young people participated or had their views represented in some way for their child protection conference.

41 When children attend a conference, the Conference Chair will invite them into a pre-meeting before the beginning of the meeting to support their engagement via several methods including telephone contact, conference calling, Microsoft Teams, and face-to-face meetings. Where a child is not attending a conference, the Conference Chair will encourage the professionals working with the child to collect their views using a suitable participation tool and recommend a referral for advocacy where appropriate.

- 42 The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) received 0 complaints regarding multi-agency child protection conferences in 2023/24.
- 43 In 2023/24 the response rate from electronic parental questionnaires has remained low despite an updated form and feedback process. We will continue to review and develop the ways in which we seek feedback from children and families in the year ahead.

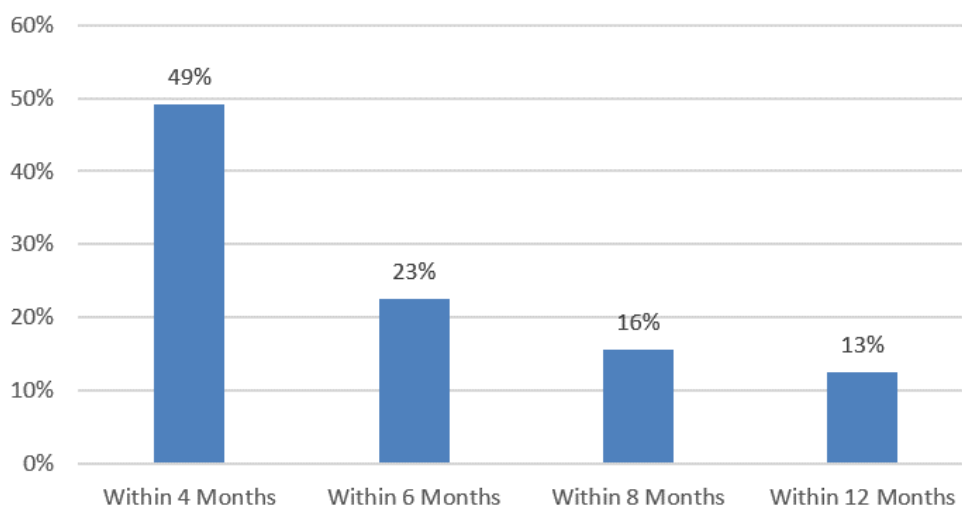
### Children in our Care - Performance Summary

- 44 As of 31 March 2024, there were 1213 children in the care of Durham County Council, an increase of 141 children from the previous year. This equates to a current rate of 123 per 10000. The data has not yet been published in relation to regional or national comparators however Durham tends to be consistently above the national rate and slightly below the regional rate, in previous reporting years.



- 45 Despite this increase, the timeliness of children in our care reviews has remained consistently high with 96% (2800/2916 meetings) of children having a review within timescales in this reporting year (same as 2022/2023).
- 46 A key objective for the IRO service is to ensure children have a plan of permanence agreed without delay and it is positive that in this reporting year 72% of children had a permanence plan agreed within six months of becoming cared for compared to 51% in 2022.

### Plans that were ratified timescales 23/24



- 47 The IRO service chair all Secure Accommodation Reviews and on occasion another IRO will act as a panel member. These IROs are not the child's allocated IRO and to ensure independence, have not been involved in their care planning. During 2023/24 we chaired 7 Pre-Secure Planning Meetings (16 in 2022/23) in relation to 5 children (8 in 2022/23). We have chaired 20 Secure Accommodation Reviews (33 in 2022/23) in relation to 7 children (10 in 2022/23) living in secure accommodation throughout the year.
- 48 The IROs chair Private Fostering Reviews on an annual basis. There have been 4 new private fostering arrangements between April 2023-March 2024 (decrease from 15 in previous year). At the end of this reporting year there were 8 children in Private Fostering arrangements in Durham.
- 49 We have one full time and one part time Foster Care Reviewing Officer (FCRO) within the service who chair annual reviews for Local Authority foster carers. The timeliness of foster care reviews continues to be a real strength with 95% of mainstream foster carers having a review within the previous year.
- 50 The Foster Care Reviewing Officers also chair Disruption Meetings for children who have moved in an unplanned way from their home after living there for two years or more and who are permanently matched with their foster carers. In this reporting year, 8 Disruption Meetings were held. The key themes from these meetings have been around capacity issues within both the fostering and children's social work teams and the impact this has had on the timeliness of supporting the placement.

51 IRO's are consistently providing court statements for final hearings; these are comprehensive and valued by the court and CAFCASS.

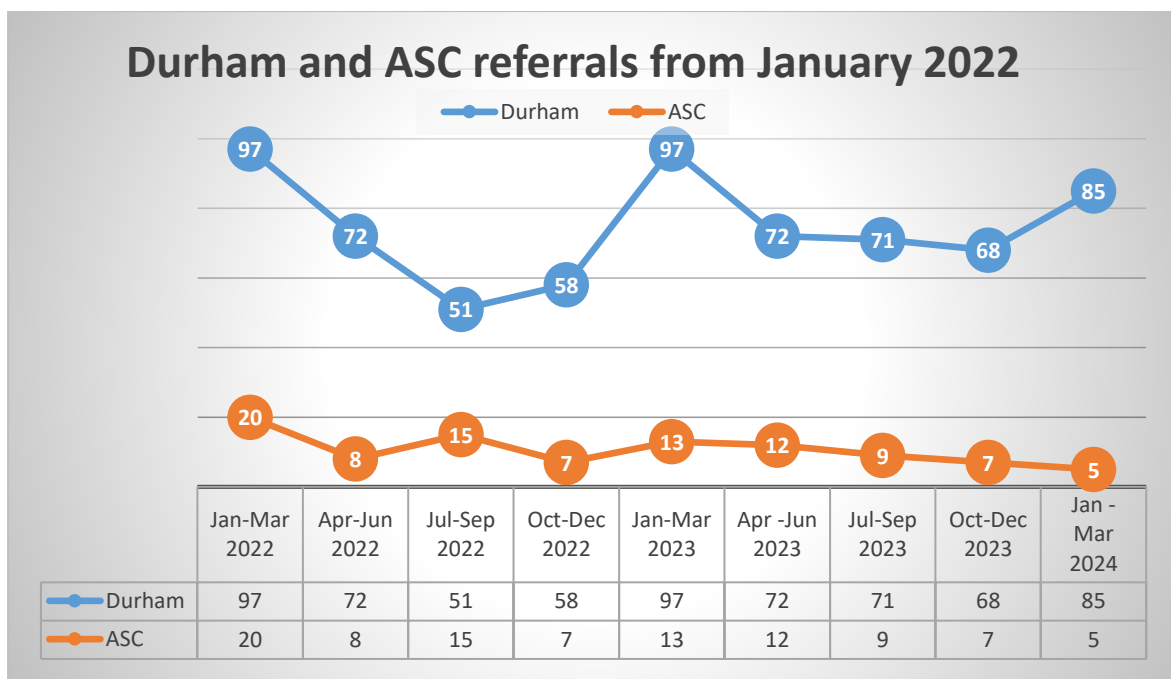
### **Participation and Views – Cared for Children**

52 Child in care reviews provide an important opportunity for children to tell us their views about the care they receive and their care plan. During 2023/24, 96% of review meetings occurred within timescales. Meetings should take place face to face, however virtual reviews are an option if the child prefers this. Face to face meetings strengthen relationships with children, which is a core function of the IRO role.

53 The table below shows how children in our care participated in their meetings throughout 2023/24. More children attended their review meeting and spoke for themselves (38%) than any other way of participating. 32% of children shared their views though either their carer or social worker rather than attending in person. Only 2% of children and young people did not share any views for their review meeting.

<b>How child participated in their child in care review meeting</b>	<b>Number of children 2021/22</b>	<b>Number of children 2022/23</b>	<b>Number of children 2023/24</b>
Child under four at the time of the meeting	561	637	667
Child attended and spoke for themselves	968	1256	1608
Child attended and advocate spoke	40	58	61
Child attended and gave views non-verbally	9	20	18
Child attended without contributing	19	48	60
Child did not attend, advocate shared views	493	461	378
Child did not attend, views sent	783	979	1340
Child did not attend or share views	38	68	93

- 54 We have worked hard with the Children in Care Council and our Participation and Engagement Officer this year, to review and update our IRO profiles, all of which have been completed and shared.
- 55 We are currently working with a group of children and young people on how they want to be consulted about their review meetings and updating our consultation forms, with a further session planned with them in September 2024.
- 56 Our children have told us that they want to see their IRO before their review meetings and as a service we are working on improving our visiting frequency to our children in care. We are also working on developing a 'Pledge' around what children tell us they want from their IRO at the request of our children in care.
- 57 IRO's support the use of the Independent Visitor (IV) Service in their role and at the end of this reporting year 70 children were matched with an Independent Visitor; an increase from 55 children at the end of 2022/23.
- 58 In Durham, advocacy is available to all children who are open to Children's Social Care, and this is commissioned through the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). IROs have a specific responsibility to ensure children in our care are aware of their right to access advocacy services. NYAS have undertaken many promotional activities within the IRO service and across Children's Social Care as a whole and there is a recognised need to increase the number of children accessing advocacy. The table below shows the number of children referred from Children's Social Care and Aycliffe Secure Centre (ASC) each quarter, since January 2022.



## Snapshot of IRO contact with their children

- 59 The following extracts demonstrate some of the key contact between a child and their IRO which evidences the strength in that relationship.

S – aged 13.

I explained to S what her CIC Review is about and who will be attending. S agreed she will be attending via Teams. S could not think of anyone else who needed to attend when I went through those who will have been invited. S had two questions, and these were 1) is she allowed to see her little brother 2) can she see her step sister and brother? I explained we can discuss this in her review. S said it is 'good' living with (her carers) and that she gets along really well with everyone.

S said she had no worries, but if she did, she would let either her SW, Foster Carer's, Head of Year or Assistant Head of Year know.

I – aged 8 with a plan of adoption.

I introduced myself to I and we talked briefly about all of the lovely things which had been said in the meeting. She was eager to tell us about what has been happening at home with her new Mum and dad. She had been on a bike ride this morning and fell off, but she was fine. There is a lot of secret planning happening this afternoon as it is Dad's birthday tomorrow. I told me she was looking forward to starting her new school and that she had already been to a friend's pool party, there were 27 people at the party, and it was great fun! We heard that she had been watching High School Musical with Mum and Dad, they pretended that she was Gabriella and Dad was Troy, they got up and were dancing to the musical and it sounded like great fun. I agreed that I could come to their house for the next meeting and she would be able to tell me all about the holidays and her new school.

E – aged 9

In her review E shared she “understands her plan, is happy with the way things are and scored a 10 out of 10.

N aged 17

N spoke to me about her future plans she is waiting for a date to join the army as a nurse, she has done exceptionally well and is excited and a little bit anxious about going out. She feels really supported at home with (carers) but feels she has not had the right support from the LA. She has had a number of social workers and is disappointed that her sisters name change has not happened.

K aged 12 – discussion with his IRO regarding a reunification plan to mothers care.

K shared he was super excited about maybe moving to his mam's care, he stated that he would be super excited "if I move" I asked about the word if. K shared that it was like 80% he would be going to live with mam but 20% he might not depending upon the big boss agreeing. I spoke to K about it being normal to be really excited but also maybe scared as well, as it will be a really big change and move for him. K shared that he sometimes is worried and that he will miss his carer and his school / friends and current cadets, but also that he is really excited. K shared that he has had big changes before so he feels like he will manage this one really well.

Follow up visit by the IRO after returning to mum's care.

K shared that everything is going really well. K shared that he was settling into school really well. He told me it is better that school in England, he has more friends now that he did at his secondary school previously. K.....spoke a lot about his new favourite drink being Iron brew!

L aged 12

When L was to share his views around what he likes about current placement, he replied “basically everything”. When asked about any worries, or anything that he wanted to change, and he said none. He shared that he wants to be able to work with animals, he shared that he would want to look after them. L was able to identify with some staff and so he does have people that he's beginning to build up trust within placement and that he can talk to if he wants to, although he did go on to say he doesn't really like to talk. When asked if he gets to spend time with the important people in his life, L replied he does, he shared that he spent the right amount of time with people at the minute.

## **Impact of Independent Reviewing Officers**

- 60 Assessing impact is essential for all services, to consider areas of strengths, identify areas for improvement and understand the impact and effectiveness of service delivery.
- 61 There are a range of ways in which we collate information to assist in evaluating impact including the Dispute Resolution Process, feedback through complaints, feedback from service users, informal feedback shared by children with IROs and their managers.
- 62 During the last year, through the scrutiny of children's care plans and service delivery for children in our care, IRO's have identified where there has been drift or delay, as well as other areas for service development.
- 63 Over 200 IRO challenges have been raised by the IRO service where planning has not progressed as it should, with conversations being a catalyst to ensure it is brought back on track. Without the oversight of the IRO bringing these issues to the Local Authority's attention, the risk of the child's voice going unnoticed and worries unaddressed would be increased.
- 64 Consistent attendance at weekly Strategic Legal Panels and the Permanence Monitoring Group by IRO Service Managers has created opportunities for increased oversight of planning for children and reducing the potential for drift and delay.
- 65 Through conversations in these forums care plans have progressed, children have moved to more appropriate placements, care proceedings have been issued where required, and permanence achieved for children who have experienced delay.
- 66 There has been 1 complaint received by Durham County Council in relation to the IRO service during this year. This complaint was not upheld and resolved at stage 1.
- 67 The IRO Service continues to be a stable and consistent service for children in our care, with a high occupancy rate, low turnover in staff and minimal use of agency staff.

## **Conclusion, summary, and key areas of focus for the coming year**

- 68 The IRO Service's key priorities and practice standards are;
- (a) Standard 1 - To actively seek, encourage and promote the voice of the child and their family in planning;



- (b) Standard 2 - To provide challenge, scrutiny and oversight of care planning and challenge where things have not progressed for a child or young person;
- (c) Standard 3 - To promote effective working relationships where practitioners work systemically to improve outcomes for children and young people;
- (d) Standard 4 - 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;
- (e) Standard 5 - To have meaningful positive impact for the children and young people we seek to serve;
- (f) Standard 6 - We will invest in our workforce to ensure social worker practice will flourish.

69 This report evidence that the IRO Service has achieved much against these key priorities and our commitment to continue our progress, is set out in our Development Plan for 2024/25 (Appendix 2).

70 This reporting year has continued to be a very busy year for the IRO Service, with the increase in the number of children in the care of the Local Authority having a significant impact on capacity. Overall IRO's and FCRO's have chaired approximately 5,500 meetings within this reporting year. This is in addition to associated monitoring, quality assurance functions and role expectations for IROs. The geographical size of County Durham and the number of children in our care residing in other areas, has a further, significant impact on IRO time and capacity. Business support capacity and some staffing changes have also impacted on service delivery at times. Despite these challenges, we have continued to deliver stability, consistency and continuity for our children in care, through the relationship they have with their IRO.

71 Key areas of focus for 2024/2025 include:

- (a) promote active participation of all children in their review meetings to ensure their views are shared and listened to. We want to engage better with more vulnerable children such as our children with special educational needs and disabilities, our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and our vulnerable teenagers;
- (b) promote Advocacy for all children involved with Children's Social Care;

- (c) promote our relationships with children in our care using our IRO Profiles and increasing our visits to children before their review meetings;
- (d) develop new consultation forms in collaboration with a group of children in our care, with support from our Participation and Engagement Officer;
- (e) develop a Pledge which outlines what children and young people can expect from their IRO;
- (f) provide consistent and effective challenge to practice through our Dispute Resolution Process by keeping the child's needs at the centre of our interventions and actions. We will participate in a review on how IRO's challenge within our neighbouring Local Authorities, to develop a consistent regional approach;
- (g) we will work in partnership with our colleagues in Children's Social Care and IT Systems Teams to develop and improve LiquidLogic, to be more child focused and aligned with our Signs of Safety Framework.

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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**

None

### **Consultation and Engagement**

This report will be shared with the DSCP.

### **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.

## Appendix 2: Planned development activity against the Key Priorities and Practice Standards 2024/25

Area for Development	Key Actions
<p>Standard 1</p> <p>To actively seek, encourage and promote the voice of the child and their family in planning.</p>	<p>Increased evidence of IRO visits to children and young people.</p> <p>Ensure all children are supported to attend their review meetings when they want to attend in person.</p> <p>Develop new consultation forms in collaboration with children in our care and our Participation and Engagement Officer.</p> <p>Ensure all children are aware of and supported to use Mind of My Own (MOMO) as a tool to support them share their views about their experiences and plans.</p> <p>Ensure all children know they have a right to an advocate and promote and encourage referrals to our advocacy service NYAS.</p> <p>Ensure direct work with children is evidenced in assessments and plans for children and young people?</p> <p>Ensure children's views and experiences are gathered to inform annual Foster Carers Reviews and Disruption Meetings.</p>
<p>Standard 2</p> <p>To provide challenge, scrutiny and oversight of care planning and challenge where things have not progressed for a child or young person.</p>	<p>IROs/Conference Chairs will review and challenge where there is drift and delay in progressing child protection or care plans for children and young people.</p> <p>Monitor the impact of challenges and feedback themes and patterns to the Local Authority.</p> <p>Escalate challenges that are not resolved in a timely manner</p>

Area for Development	Key Actions
<p>Standard 3</p> <p>To promote effective working relationships where practitioners work systemically to improve outcomes for children and young people.</p>	<p>IRO's will continue to embed the Signs of Safety Model and have curious questions with practitioners to progress planning for children and young people subject to a child protection or care plan, in a timely manner.</p> <p>We will arrange and hold monitoring meetings and pre review discussions with social workers to ensure care planning is progressing appropriately and in a timely manner, for our children.</p> <p>We will support effective communication between Children's Social Care teams and the IRO service through our team meetings and through practice development sessions.</p>
<p>Standard 4</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>	<p>We will complete quarterly collaborative audits which will directly inform and impact upon practice.</p> <p>We will ensure assessments, care plans and records that are written about children and young people are accurate, analytical and of good quality.</p> <p>The IRO service will provide quality assurance and learning from dip samples to the Quality Improvement Board (QIB).</p> <p>The IRO Service Managers will attend weekly Strategic Panels to provide consistent oversight of assessment and planning for children in our care and children subject to child protection plans.</p>
<p>Standard 5</p> <p>To have meaningful positive impact for the Children and young people we seek to serve.</p>	<p>We will develop a Pledge with children in our care that outlines what they can expect from their IRO.</p> <p>We will improve on the consistency and quality of IRO oversight for children on files. This is to include pre review meeting discussions, monitoring meetings and visits to children and young people by their IRO.</p>

Area for Development	Key Actions
	<p>We will have a continued focus and scrutiny on monitoring and supporting placement stability and permanence planning so that children in our care have a stable, permanent home in a timely way.</p> <p>We will use the Dispute Resolution Process to challenge and escalate drift and delay.</p> <p>We will promote the use of MOMO and advocacy for children and young people, so their voice is heard, and they share their views about decision making.</p> <p>Maintain our Investing in Children Status</p>
<p>Standard 6</p> <p>We will invest in our workforce to ensure social work practice will flourish.</p>	<p>All IROs have access to the Council's annual training and development programme which supports their continuous professional development and renewal of their SWE registration.</p> <p>We will continue to work with the Regional North East Partnership to support learning and development of our IRO's.</p> <p>We will be active participants in development work across the service to ensure our IRO's play a key role in service delivery.</p> <p>We will keep our IRO's informed of local, regional and national developments or policy change to ensure they execute their roles accordingly.</p>