



**Independent Reviewing Officer
Looked After Children Annual Report
2016/17**

Purpose of the Annual Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the performance of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 in accordance with requirements within the IRO Handbook (2010). In line with the requirements, the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) will also be requested to consider the contents of the report and the recommendations in their role as Corporate Parent.
- 2 This report focuses on performance in relation to Looked After Children (LAC) only. A separate report focusing on Child Protection is published separately and considered by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).
- 3 The report has been reviewed so it is more accessible for children and young people.

What do IROs do?

- 4 The law states that all children and young people that become looked after must be appointed an IRO. The IRO Handbook (2010) tells IROs what they should be doing for children and young people who are in care. An IRO has an important role in making sure that children and young people's care plans meet their needs. *IROs are there to make sure that reviews are run properly; that children and young people's views are listened to and their best interests are protected (Young People's Guide to the IRO Handbook).* Further information around the legal and statutory context of the IRO role is in Appendix 1.
- 5 IROs also make sure that they tell the Local Authority when they are not doing enough for children and young people as their corporate parent. IROs will challenge the Local Authority if they disagree with the Local Authorities plan for a child or young person. IROs will also tell Local Authority about things that are going particularly well.
- 6 In Durham, IROs also chair child protection conferences and work within Durham's LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children's Board) Child Protection Procedures.

IRO Service in Durham

- 7 The IRO Service is now positioned in Early Help, Assessment and Child Protection Durham County Council. The Operations Manager for the IRO Service is managed by the Strategic Manager, Children's Quality Reform.
- 8 The IRO Service is managed separately from Children's Looked After Service, which strengthens independence and objectivity. This allows the IROs the opportunity to independently challenge in the best interests of the child.
- 9 There were 12.6 full time equivalent IRO posts in Durham at the end of the reporting year, including 2 vacancies. IROs are based in 3 offices across County Durham: Seaham, Durham and Spennymoor. The IROs in Durham have a broad range of appropriate knowledge and experience. This includes social work team management, adoption, training, fostering and adoption, disabilities, therapeutic services, safeguarding, and looked after services. The stability of the IROs is good and the majority have worked in social work for over 10 years.
- 10 The IRO Handbook advises that the LAC case load for each IRO should be between 50 and 70. The average LAC case load at 31 March 2017 for IROs in Durham was 65.8 LAC, although the IROs also carried a caseload of 39.7 child protection cases which corresponds

to an average of 105 cases per FTE. This is an increase from an average of 89.1 cases per FTE as at 31 March 2016. There has been a review of caseloads and this has resulted in a full time IRO.

- 11 The IRO Handbook states that ‘sufficient’ administrative support should be provided to the IRO in relation to the Looked After Review (LAR). The IROs are supported by a team of dedicated Administration staff that ensure administrative support is provided to deliver an excellent service.
- 12 The IRO handbook states that the IROs must have access to independent legal advice. Reciprocal arrangements have been established between Durham and Darlington Local Authorities’ Legal Services to fulfil this duty. Access to independent legal advice is also provided by Durham’s senior legal advisor, if they are not directly linked with the case in question. The reciprocal arrangements with Darlington Local Authority have not been used in Durham within 2016/17.

Children and young people in the care of County Durham

- 13 The IROs chair Looked After Reviews (LARs) for all children, including those placed for adoption, those in short break respite care, young people who are remanded into the care of the local authority and those children on Care Orders and placed with their families. The child’s journey through the looked after process is in Appendix 2.
- 14 At 31 March 2017, there were 829 looked after children in County Durham including children receiving respite care. This figure is an increase from 700 overall LAC on 31 March 2016. Appendix 4 provides further information on the LAC profile.
- 15 At 31 March 2017, there were 12 children who received respite care. This is a decrease from 20 children on 31 March 2016.

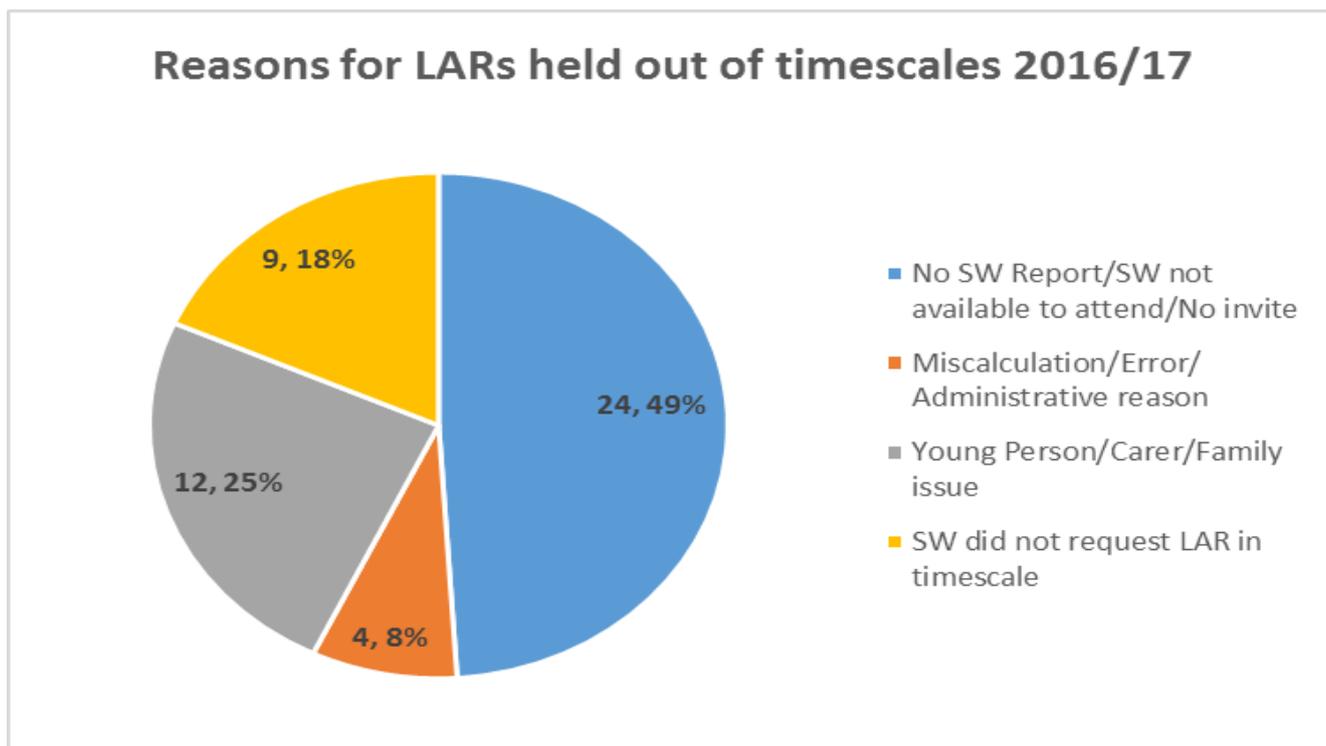
Timeliness Of Looked After Reviews

- 16 The performance relating to LARs held in timescale is reported using an indicator which calculates how many reviews were undertaken in timescales for children who were looked after for at least 20 working days at 31 March 2017. Table 1 below shows that the vast majority of (93.7%) of reviews were held within timescales. Thirty reviews were held out of timescale which involved 49 children.
 - Ensuring LARs are put in diaries in sufficient time to provide contingency and allow for unexpected requests for changes of date or circumstances out of the control of all parties.
 - Tightening up of escalation procedures for cancelling meetings and Strategic Manager approval.
 - Bringing any meetings rearranged more than twice to the attention of the Strategic Manager for the IRO Service and the relevant Children’s Services Strategic Manager.

Report Period	31 March 2017
Children looked after for at least 20 working days	778
Children looked after cases reviewed within required timescales	729
NI66 Performance	93.7%
Children looked after cases NOT reviewed within required timescales	49

Provisional until Statistical First Release by DfE in Autumn 2017

- 17 There are a wide variety of reasons why reviews were not held within timescale, which have been broke down into 4 main areas. In the 49 cases above, these were due to the following reasons:



Dispute Resolution Process (DRP)

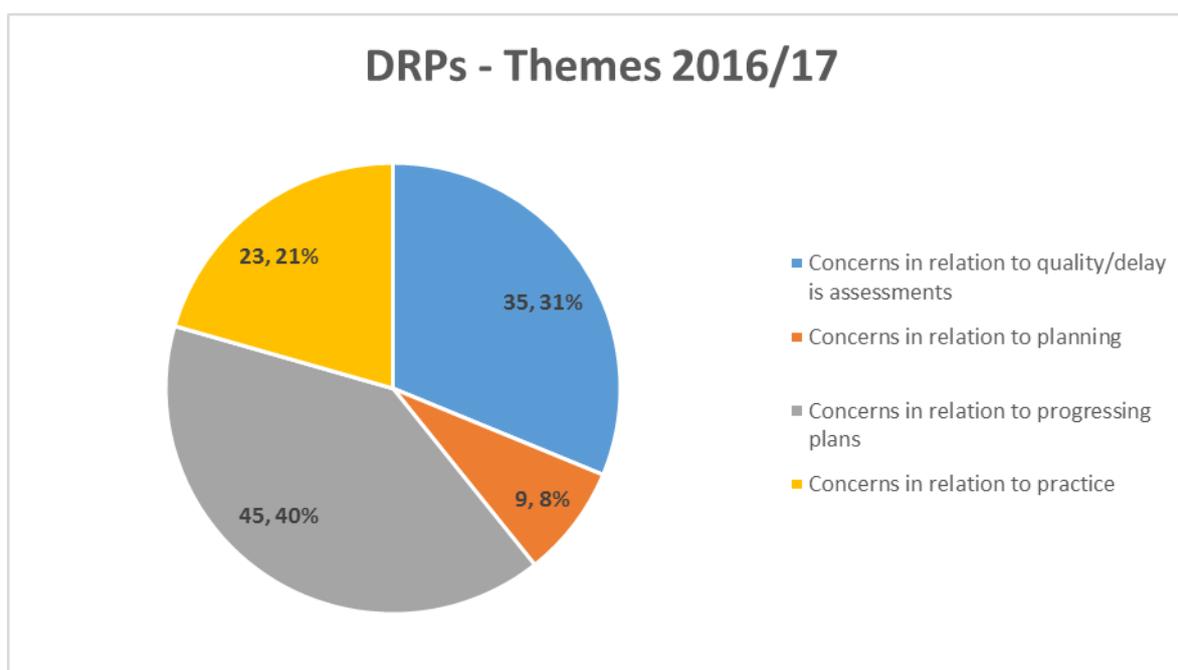
- 18 The Government wants IROs to challenge poor practice. The IRO handbook states that all Local Authorities must have a Dispute Resolution Process (DRP). This is where the Local Authority must work with the IRO to try to sort out any differences they may have in relation to a child's or young person's plan. The idea is that issues can be resolved quickly without the need to escalate to senior managers or for the need to go to court.
- 19 In Durham, the DRP is an 8-stage process that covers both child protection and looked after children and young people (see appendix 3)
- 20 There has been a 33% decrease in DRP's compared to the previous year. There were 112 disputes dealt within 2016/17, amounting to 10.1% of the 1109 LAC during this period. This is in comparison to 164 in 2015/16 representing a decrease of 52 disputes (31.7%). As the table below shows, the vast majority were dealt with via the first stage of the procedure which is informal challenge, indicating the commitment by all parties to the swift resolution of concerns raised by the IRO. There were no disputes dealt with at stages 5-8 of the procedure. Due to a change in recording, these figures cannot be directly compared to 2015/16.

Disputes raised in relation to LAC – 2016/17

	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4		Total	
Informal Challenge	9	39.13%	10	28.57%	13	50.00%	14	50.00%	46	41.07%
Stage 2	8	34.78%	14	40.00%	7	26.92%	8	28.57%	37	33.04%
Stage 3	5	21.74%	10	28.57%	5	19.23%	4	14.29%	24	21.43%
Stage 4	1	4.35%	1	2.86%	1	3.85%	2	7.14%	5	4.46%
Stages 5 - 8	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Totals	23	100.00%	35	100.00%	26	100.00%	28	100.00%	112	100.00%

DRP themes

- 21 DRPs are raised in relation to 3 main areas: practice, resources and/or process. The main themes raised this year for LAC within the DRP process are shown below:



- 22 This information is shared on a monthly and quarterly basis with Children's Services Management Team.

Recommendations & Notes

- 23 Performance of IRO Service around circulating information following looked after reviews is monitored and reported on quarterly. The IRO Handbook states that decisions should be made within 5 working days and the notes of discussion must be circulated within 20 working days of the looked after review being held. This information is collated for both child protection conferences and looked after reviews and is recorded as an overall figure for both child protection and looked after. In 2016/17 there were 92.3% of recommendations and decisions circulated within timescales and there were 73.9% of notes circulated within timescales. The decline in performance is largely due to staffing issues with IRO admin officers. The team is now fully staffed and performance has improved.

How are we doing?

24 Reach Out Care undertook an evaluation of consolation booklets from the region. The young people who participated stated they found our looked after consultation booklet *'the most user friendly and that the matters contained within, were relevant and creative. They liked the design and the way that it was set up, such as the page detail'*.

25 IRO development sessions have been rolled out with social work teams, with the focus being on improving practice and outcomes for children and young people. These have been well received and there has been a noted improvement in communication and quality of reports/plans.

26 When a child or young person becomes looked after they receive a letter advising them of their IRO and how they can get in contact with them. All children who have a review are offered the opportunity to speak to their IRO prior to and between their reviews. Children and Young People contact their IRO's between reviews via phone, text and email.

27 The following are case examples of the impact of the IRO role:

- The IRO challenged the need of a Care Order for a 16 year old young person who lived with his grandmother and had clearly stated that he did not want to be looked after. The IRO requested that a referral was progressed to NYAS and the young person was supported seek his own legal advice. The Local Authority supported him with an application to court, and the order has now been revoked.
- A 15 year old young person raised dissatisfaction with the IRO around her plan as she wanted this to progress to a return to mother's care, which was not supported by the social worker. The IRO addressed this with the social worker and clear timescales for the completion of assessments were agreed. The young person has since returned home.
- The IRO raised a DRP due to concerns around the proposed plans to reintroduce contact between a 6 year old child and his mother. No preparation work had been undertaken and no assessment around how this may impact upon his emotional wellbeing. A planning meeting took place, where clear expectations were agreed. The overall outcome was a successful contact which took place 3 months later.

28 Professionals have provided examples of the work of the IRO as follows:

- *"I found the IRO to be very good at her job. She was brilliant with the child and made him feel at ease and she was very clear and helpful throughout the meeting"*.
- *"I think that the LAR meeting was conducted in a relaxed yet professional manner. The young person was able to feel part of the meeting, hence she contributed very well and felt part of the decision making process"*.

29 Parents and carers have provided examples of their views of IROs as follows:

- *"The IRO does a great job and I feel she is a good support for the child we look after"*.
- *"My child's IRO was very professional, practical and understanding towards the growing needs of my child and our family. He took on board the individual needs of all services and people involved in my child's care and provided practical advice and*

support that ensures he and our family get the positive outcomes we need to continue providing a great future for us all”.

30 Children and young people have provided examples of their views of IROs as follows:

- *“She has my best interests at heart”*
- *“She puts my wishes across to my social worker and carer which sometimes I cannot do myself.”*

Engagement with children and young people

31 It is the role of the IRO to ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to participate within their review, to ensure their voice is heard and they have the opportunity to contribute to decision making.

32 Within Durham, IROs have utilised a number of ways and tools to engage children and young people in their review process. When a child or young person becomes looked after, they are sent a letter from the allocated IRO which contains their contact information. IROs undertake placement visits to children and young people prior to their reviews. In addition, IROs have a contact slip which is given to all children and young people in care.

33 Children and young people are given the opportunity to chair their own reviews. In 2016/17, 56.2% (1224) were deemed not appropriate to chair their own meeting due to age or circumstance. There were 30% (654) of children who were offered but declined to chair their own meeting and 13.8% (300) partly or fully chaired their own meeting.

34 With the input from the Children in Care Council a child friendly agenda has been developed to support young people to chair their meeting. With the support of the IRO a number of children and young people now devise their own agenda. For those children and young people who do not wish to participate within the review process or have a placement visit, the IRO will afford them the opportunity to share their views via the telephone, written or by another facilitative means. Children and young people are offered the opportunity to have an independent visitor or advocate.

35 The IRO Service hold the Investing in Children Award and, over the past 12 months, the IROs have continued to work with the Children in Care Council to assist in developments within the team. Recent feedback from young people was that the care plan was too big. The IRO service has worked alongside Children’s Services to develop a child friendly care plan which is being implemented in September 2017.

36 IROs regularly attend Children in Care Council meetings. This is an opportunity to share information and updates with the children and young people and to seek their views on an ongoing basis. It also provides an opportunity to listen to what the priorities are for the children and young people.

37 Some of the comments received from young people are provided below:



“if you want anything done they (IRO) always try their best to make it happen”



“we get invited to all our meetings and decide who we want there”



“my IRO comes out before my review to talk to me. They tell my social worker to get things done.”



“they always ask if I want to chair my review”.

Outcomes for looked after children

Health

38 In relation to children looked after for 12 months or more at 31 March 2017, 87.1% had a dental check during the year and 84.8% had the required number of health assessments during the year. The IROs challenge this within looked after reviews to ensure that this happens.

Education

39 As at the 31 March 2017, 66% of care leavers (relevant and former relevant young people) aged 17 – 21 were in education, employment and training (EET), of these 5.4% were in higher education. There were 34% were not in education, employment and training (NEET). This is an increase from 2015/16 where 56.5% of care leavers were in EET, with 4.0% in higher education.

Placement stability

40 The IRO monitors the child’s care plan in-between looked after reviews and is informed of any significant events within the child’s life. Placement stability for looked after children in Durham has very slightly declined, however this remains a positive picture for looked after children in Durham. The predicted percentage of children looked after at 31 March 2017 with 3 or more placements during the year (NI62) is 6.6%. This compares to 6% as at 31 March 2016.

41 The percentage of children looked after continuously for 2.5 years or more at 31 March 2017 who were living in the same placement for 2 years or more (NI63) has increased with a final predicted figure of 72.6%. This compares to 69% as at 31 March 2016.

42 The IRO Manager attends the permanency review group which meets quarterly to consider how placement stability can be improved upon. One such development includes consideration of findings from disruption meetings chaired by IROs to plan improvements in placement stability.

43 The number of children who exited the looked after system was 303 in 2016/17. Of all children who left the looked after system, 35.6% returned to the care of their parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility. This must be seen as being a positive outcome. The IRO ensures that each child has an exit review upon leaving the looked after system with an appropriate plan. A more detailed breakdown of the reasons children ceased to be looked after is attached as Appendix 5.

- 44 Of the care leavers (relevant and former relevant young people) aged 17 – 21 (at the 31 March 2017), 88% were in suitable accommodation. IROs ensure that when a young person leaves the looked after system they have a looked after review which scrutinises the exit plan, ensuring there is a contingency plan.

Partnership working

- 45 The IRO Service is committed to working in partnership with a range of agencies and groups. Strategic work takes place with the Regional and National IRO Managers groups and the IRO Service in Durham takes the lead on benchmarking for the region. Work is undertaken with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS).
- 46 Work has been ongoing with Children & Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) and development workshops have taken place for CAFCASS workers and IROs. A communication process is well embedded between the IRO and CAFCASS.

Corporate Parenting

- 47 The IRO service support the Local Authority by monitoring and scrutinising the performance in relation to the planning for looked after children and young people. They achieve this by producing monthly and quarterly reports which are shared with senior managers.
- 48 IROs hold quarterly communication meetings with Child Protection, Fostering and Looked After Team managers. This enables timely identification of themes for concern for children and young people who are looked after, so remedial action can be taken by Children's Services.
- 49 IROs attend the Children's and Young Peoples Services Team Managers' events, which take place every two months. This is an opportunity for the IROs and the social work team managers to meet to share relevant key issues and current themes.

What we have achieved?

- 50 The IRO Service set a number of priorities for 2016/17. A summary of progress is provided below.
- a) **Priority: Development of the new approaches for the engagement of children and young people, where it is envisaged that children and young people will be able to compile their own agendas and share views in preparation for their reviews.**
Update: Work to develop an app has been put on hold due to the forthcoming implementation of new IT system.
- b) **Priority: Development a process in line with the changes brought about by the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review published in June 2015.**
Update: The Looked After Procedures have been updated to reflect the changes set out within Care Planning, Placement and Case Review. The changes are to be implemented in September 2017
- c) **Priority: Continue to ensure children and young people are fully engaged in the process of their reviews and are able to contribute their views and opinions through a range of methods.**
Update: IROs have the use of electronic tablets which has proved to be a positive tool to engage children and young people within their reviews. Children and young people are

supported to compile their individual agendas which assists them in preparation for chairing and sharing views at their reviews. Looked After consultation booklets are sent to child in advance of their reviews.

- d) Priority: Continue to work with Children's Services to develop child-friendly plans.**
Update: The Children in Care Council have been fully involved in the design of the template for the child-friendly care plan. Feedback from social workers and children & young people involved in the pilot of the child friendly care plan was extremely positive, this is being implemented in September 2017.
- e) Priority: Continue with an audit programme of IRO performance to achieve a better and more consistent service.**
Update: The audit tool has a 4 point scale of 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate' to all audits undertaken. Four audits are carried out for each IRO per year. Findings and themes are shared with the IROs in team meetings and individually in supervisions to ensure identified actions are achieved. The overall audits have been graded as good or above.
- f) Priority: Identify themes which impact on placement stability using findings from disruption meetings analysis.**
Update: The IRO service has continued to work closely with Looked After Services and Fostering Services in the scrutiny of permanency planning and challenge in relation to placement stability. A review of the disruption process has taken place; this has recommended the process be updated, and a tracker to be introduced to identify themes. IROs continue to participate in Permanence Review/Placement Stability Meetings which are held every two months.
- g) Priority: Continue to implement the training programme which has been developed for the IROs and promote access to the social work development programme led by Workforce Development.**
Update: IROs have continued to have the opportunity to participate in training tailored to their role. A training plan is developed for 2017/18 which includes access to management qualifications and support.
- h) Priority: Continue to promote a collaborative and resolution-focused approach to conflicts, disputes or disagreements and ensure communications meetings with Children's Services continue to be promoted and held.**
Update: Communications meetings between IRO Service and Children's services have continued to take place on a quarterly basis. Lead Officers and IRO manager has continued to participate in various meetings/projects with partner agencies.
- i) Priority: Promote the role of the IRO by undertaking presentations to partner agencies and the judiciary.**
Update: IROs have undertaken several presentations and training events around the role of the IRO. Feedback has been very positive.
- j) Priority: Undertake a lean review of the invite process.**
Update: The introduction of a more stream lined and efficient invite process is now embedded. Further changes will be introduced with the introduction of new IT system.
- k) Priority: Work with Children's Services on their audit programme.**
Update: The IRO services has been involved with undertaking themed audits, which has contributed the quality and performance clinics within children's services.

What needs to be done for 2017/18?

51 There are a number of priorities for the IRO Service during 2017/18. These are:

a) Increase the numbers of Looked After Children who are actively involved in their review;

- Development of approaches for the engagement of children and young people in preparation for their reviews.
- Continue to ensure children and young people are fully engaged in the process of their reviews and are able to contribute their views and opinions through a range of methods.
- Implementation of 'virtual reviews' in line with recommendations within the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Contribute to a review of the Looked After Procedures.

b) Ongoing professional development of IRO's and the IRO Service;

- Attend and contribute to the North East IRO managers group and take on board the national developments, legislation and guidance.
- Implement the training programme which has been developed for the IROs and promote access to the social work development programme led by Workforce Development.
- Undertake a review of Quality and Review team structure and functions.
- Monitor IRO allocations and consistency of IRO for children looked after.
- Continue with an audit programme of IRO performance to achieve a better and more consistent service.

c) Continue to undertake robust quality assurance and oversight of practice and care planning to ensure stability requirements are met and good outcomes achieved for children and young people, to include;

- IRO's to undertake robust quality assurance and oversight of practice and care planning to ensure statutory requirements are met.
- There is clear evidence of the IRO 'footprint' on the child's record to reflect the impact of the IRO and improving outcomes for children and young people.
- IRO Service continue to develop measures to prevent data breaches from occurring in the course of organising and co-ordinating looked after review conferences.
- Continue to promote a collaborative and resolution-focused approach to conflicts, disputes or disagreements and ensure communications meetings with Children's Services continue to be promoted and held.
- Review the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) and ensure that evidence of informal resolution is captured more effectively.
- Provide detailed analysis of themes from DRPs identified to Children's Services Management Team.
- Identify themes which impact on placement stability using findings from disruption meetings analysis, to promote stability for children within their placements.
- Monitor the performance in respect of LAR held within timescale to further improve performance against indicators.

d) Promote the IRO Service and contribute to wider service development and improvement activity by;

- Contribute to the early permanence planning strategy group.
- IRO development sessions with social work teams and academy will continue to be delivered.
- Undertake workshops and seminars to partner agencies.

Conclusion

- 52 This annual report provides details of the work and performance of the IRO Service.
- 53 During 2016/17 93.7% of looked after reviews were held within the required timescales. The reasons for looked after reviews being held out of timescale were due to having no social worker report, no invite or the social worker being unable to attend, the social worker not requesting a first looked after review within timescale, a miscalculation, error or administrative reason, or for young person/carer/family reasons. A number of actions have been put in place to address this. These include the tightening up of escalation procedures, regular meetings between the IRO Service and Children and Young People's Services and a positive, proactive approach to resolution by the IRO and Children's Services Operations Managers.
- 54 There were 112 disputes raised via the DRP during 2016/17. This figure cannot be directly compared to 2015/16 due to a change in recording. During 2017/18 the IRO Service will continue to work in collaboration with Children's Services to reduce the numbers of re-arranged reviews and seek early resolution to disputes and ensure good outcomes are achieved for children and young people.
- 55 There has been an improvement in placement stability for children looked after continuously for 2.5 years or more as at 31st March 2. The predicted percentage of children looked after at 31 March 2017 with a final predicted figure of 72.6% living in the same placement for 2 years or more.
- 56 IRO development sessions have been rolled out with Social Work teams and have been well received.
- 57 IROs regularly attend the Children in Care Council meetings which provides an opportunity to share information and listen to the priorities of children looked after. New approaches are also being developed for the engagement of children and young people, where it is envisaged that children and young people will be able to compile their own agendas and share views in preparation for their reviews
- 58 Work undertaken will include the development of systems and processes which ensure that the Care Planning Regulations and IRO handbook are fully implemented and children's plans are progressed in a timely and effective way.

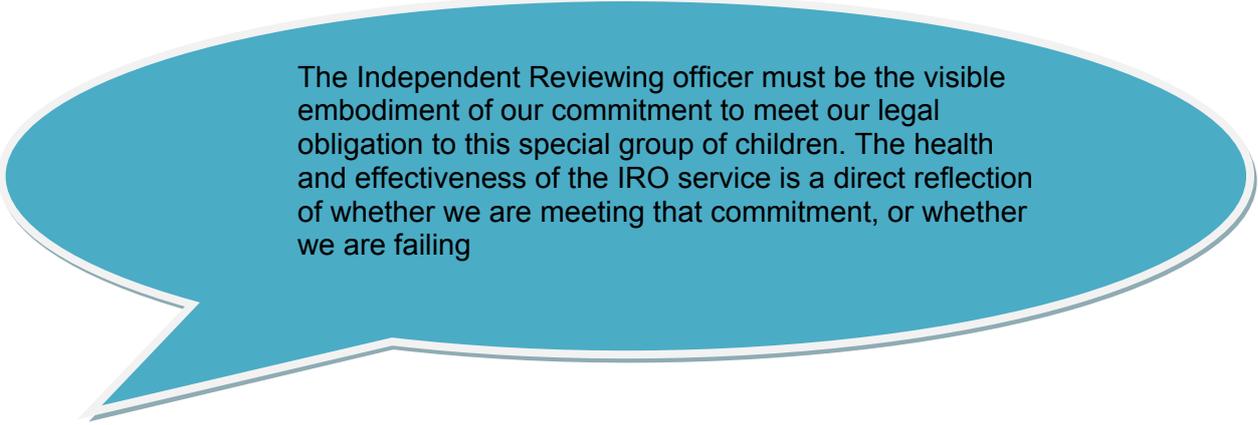
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Appendix 1

The Legal and Statutory Context of the IRO Role to Looked After Children

The Independent Reviewing Officers' (IRO) service is set within the framework of the updated IRO handbook, linked to revised Care planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011. The responsibility of the IRO has changed from management of the Review process to a wider overview of the case including regular monitoring and follow-up between Reviews. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of care planning for children Looked After and for challenging drift and delay.

The National Children's Bureau (NCB) research 'The Role of the Independent Reviewing officers in England' (March 2014) provides a wealth of information and findings regarding the efficacy of IRO services. The foreword written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson; makes the following comment:



The Independent Reviewing officer must be the visible embodiment of our commitment to meet our legal obligation to this special group of children. The health and effectiveness of the IRO service is a direct reflection of whether we are meeting that commitment, or whether we are failing

The NCB research outlines a number of important recommendations with three having a particular influence on IROs work plan priorities:

- a) Where IROs identify barriers to their ability to fulfil their role, or systematic failures in the service to looked after children, they must raise this formally with senior managers. These challenges and the response should be included in the Annual Report.
- b) IROs method for monitoring cases and how this activity is recorded should be clarified.
- c) A review of IROs core activities and additional tasks should be undertaken. There is a need to establish whether IROs additional activities compromise independence or capacity.

Appendix 2 The Child's Journey

The child's journey through the looked after 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 care plans meet their needs through appropriate and proportionate challenge and scrutiny. The information below contains the key stages in the child's journey through the LAC process and how the IRO assists the child or young person in this process.



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.

The IRO supports the child to provide their views and chair the meeting if appropriate.

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.

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.

STAGE 5

3 month looked after review and permanent plans agreed.

May be confused about the plan and what happens next.

The IRO supports the child to provide their views and chair the meeting if appropriate.

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.

The IRO will read the court bundle and all assessments, discuss with the Children's guardian to determine views on the plan.

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.

STAGE 6

6 month reviews and permanent plans.

The process continues every 6 months until the child is no longer looked after.

Young people comment that they like to chair their own meeting.

The following is a quote for a young person who chairs their own review:

"Think it's a good thing and allows me to talk about what I want".

The IRO supports the child to provide their views and chair the meeting if appropriate.

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.

The IRO will read the court bundle and all assessments, discuss with the Children's guardian to determine views on the plan.

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.

Appendix 3

DRP Stages

Stage	IRO to send to	To be Copied in for information	Type of Contact	Response required within?
Informal challenge	Social Worker	n/a	Record to be made on IRO index page. Ideally, this stage will involve a 1-1 discussion between the SW and the IRO. The IRO will follow up in an email and make a decision whether to copy the team manager into the correspondence.	1 Working Days
2	Team Manager	Social Worker; Relevant Operations Manager; IRO Operations Manager; Legal Advisor (in PLO or care proceedings).	Form to be emailed. DRP monitoring meeting to be held if required.	3 Working Days
3	Relevant Operations Manager	Strategic Manager Children's Services; Strategic Manager SQD; Legal Manager for Children, Adult & Health; Plus all of above.	Form to be emailed. DRP monitoring meeting to be held if required.	4 Working Days
4	Strategic Manager Children's Services; Strategic Manager Service Quality and Development;	Social Worker; Relevant Operations Manager; IRO Operations Manager; Legal Advisor (in PLO or care proceedings).	Form to be emailed. Meeting to be arranged by IRO Operations Manager. Attendance to include IRO, IRO Operations Manager, Strategic Manager Children's Services; Strategic Manager Service Quality and Development; others to be determined by the Strategic Managers. Outcome to be recorded on DRP Form by IRO.	5 Working Days
5	Head of Children's Services and Head of Planning and Service Strategy	Operations Managers Strategic Managers Legal Advisor (as appropriate).	Form to be emailed. Meeting to be arranged by IRO Operations Manager. Attendance as: Strategic Managers Operations Managers Outcome to be recorded on DRP Form by IRO.	5 Working Days
6	Corporate Director of Children and Young Peoples Services; Head of Legal Services	Strategic Managers Legal Advisor (as appropriate). Heads of Service	Form to be emailed and meeting to be arranged by IRO Operations Manager. Attendance as: Heads of Service Strategic Managers	1 Working Day

			Outcome to be recorded on DRP Form by IRO.	
7	Chief Executive	Heads of Service Corporate Directors	Form to be emailed and meeting to be arranged by IRO Operations Manager. Attendance as: Corporate Director Heads of Service Outcome to be recorded on DRP Form by IRO.	1 Working Day
8	Referral to CAFCASS	All above to be advised by IRO Operations Manager.		

Appendix 4 - Looked After Children Profile

Breakdown of Looked After Children at 31 March 2017

	31 Mar 08	31 Mar 09	31 Mar 10	31 Mar 11	31 Mar 12	31 Mar 13	31 Mar 14	31 Mar 15	31 Mar 16	31 Mar 17
Respite	68	66	64	70	46	37	21	17	20	12
Other LAC	414	444	510	534	657	629	604	619	680	817
Total LAC	482	510	574	604	703	666	625	636	700	829

LAC Demographics as at 31 March 2017 By Gender, Age Group and Ethnicity

Gender	31-Mar-14	31-Mar-15	31-Mar-16	31-Mar-17	Difference to previous year
Male	338	352	385	462	+ 77
Female	266	267	295	355	+ 60
Total	604	619	680	817	+ 137

Age Group	31-Mar-14	31-Mar-15	31-Mar-16	31-Mar-17	Difference to previous year
Aged under 1	69	57	45	70	+ 25
Aged 1 - 4	93	97	118	130	+ 12
Aged 5 - 9	136	153	170	207	+ 37
Aged 10 -15	220	225	263	312	+ 49
Aged 16 - 17	86	87	84	98	+ 14
Aged 18	0	0	0	0	0
Total	604	619	680	817	+ 137

Ethnicity	31-Mar-14	31-Mar-15	31-Mar-16	31-Mar-17	Difference to previous year
White	592	604	664	793	+ 129
Mixed	8	11	10	10	0
Asian or Asian British	0	0	2	1	- 1
Black or Black British	1	1	1	1	0
Other	3	3	3	12	+ 9
Information refused or not obtained	0	0	0	0	0
Total	604	619	680	817	+ 137

Breakdown of Looked After Children by Legal Status at 31 March 2017

Legal Status	Number of children at 31 March 2015	Number of children at 31 March 2016	Number of children at 31 March 2017	Difference to previous year
Interim Care Order	35	64	78	+ 14
Full Care Order	328	366	424	+ 58
Voluntary agreement under section 20 single period of accommodation	197	167	239	+ 72
Freed for adoption order	0	0	0	0
Placement order	59	80	74	- 6
On remand, committed for trial, or detained	0	3	2	- 1
Emergency protection order, police protection order, or child assessment order	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	619	680	817	+ 137

Children and Young People Contributing to their Looked After Reviews

	31-Mar-08	31-Mar-09	31-Mar-10	31-Mar-11	31-Mar-12	31-Mar-13	31-Mar-14	31-Mar-15	31-Mar-16	31-Mar-17
% of children and young people who communicated their views for each of their statutory reviews	98.40%	97.90%	99.40%	99.50%	99.90%	100.00%	99.70%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Provisional data only, official figures are published by DfE in Autumn

Appendix 5 - Children who ceased to be looked after (excluding respite cases) between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2017

Reason	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-2017	Difference to previous year
Adoption	73	45	28	53	+ 25
Residence order granted	16	9	13	20	+ 7
Special guardianship order granted	31	54	50	60	+ 10
Returned home to live with parent(s), relative(s) or other person with PR	87	70	103	108	+ 5
Returned home to live with parent(s), relative(s) or other person with no PR	-	-	2	26	+ 24
Moved into independent living	24	23	25	25	0
Died	0	1	0	1	+ 1
Other reason	56	59	31	10	- 20
Total children who ceased to be looked after	287	261	252	303	+ 51
Rate of children who ceased to be looked after per 10,000 population	28.6	26	25.1	30.2	+ 5.1
% of children who were adopted	25.40%	17.20%	11.10%	17.50%	+ 6.4 %
% of children who ceased due to special guardianship	10.80%	20.70%	19.80%	19.80%	0.00%

Provisional data only, official figures are published by DfE in Autumn

**Independent Reviewing Officer
Looked After Children Annual Report 2016/17**

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