

# **Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Unit**

## **Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report**

**2019/20**

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## **Executive Summary**

This Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence in relation to the IRO service in Peterborough as required by Statutory guidance. This report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

The key highlights of this report are:

- The number of children in care rose slightly from 370 at the end of March 2019 to 373 at the end of March 2020.
- A total of 1046 Child in Care Reviews were held this year
- Timeliness of Reviews continues to be excellent at 99.3%
- The IRO's Escalation process has been further developed to improve analysis of key themes to address with Children's Social Care

The report concludes with the highlights of the IRO Service for 2019 – 20 and outlines areas for further development for 2020-21.

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Services in Peterborough as required by statutory guidance. This report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.
- 1.2 The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is a legal requirement under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. In March 2010, the government issued the 'Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Statutory Guidance.' They also published the: 'IRO Handbook, Statutory guidance for IROs and Local Authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review of looked after children.'
- 1.3 In respect of this report, the IRO Handbook states: 'The manager should be responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the corporate parenting panel. This report should identify good practice but should also highlight issues for further development, including where urgent action is needed.' (IRO Handbook 2010, page 48, paragraph 7.11).

## **2. Legal Context**

- 2.1 The appointment of an IRO for every looked after child is a statutory requirement of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Review of Children's Cases Regulations 2004, the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
- 2.2 The IRO Service sits within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit with its core functions consisting of reviewing plans for children in care and monitoring the Local Authority in respect of its corporate parenting and safeguarding responsibilities. Independent Chairs in Peterborough operate a dual role and undertake both the role of the Independent Chair Person for child protection conferences (CPC) and Looked after Children responsibilities. For the purpose of this report we will refer to the Independent Chair as the IRO.
- 2.3 Every child who is looked after by Peterborough City Council must have a Care Plan, which details the long-term plan for the child's upbringing, and the arrangements made to meet the child's day-to-day needs. All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to regularly review that Care Plan within legislative timescales (Care Planning and Case Review Regulations 2010).
- 2.4 It is the responsibility of Local Authorities to develop Care Plans and provide care that gives children in care positive life experiences and the best short and long-term life opportunities. The Children Act 1989 [amended 2004] and the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010, set out the duty of the Local Authority to appoint an IRO when a child first becomes looked after.

- 2.5 The IRO should ensure that the Local Authority gives due consideration to any views expressed by the child and the IRO has a responsibility to monitor the Local Authority's performance of its functions in relation to the child's case. Statutory guidance and regulation clearly defines circumstances when the Local Authority should consult with the IRO; for example, proposed change of placement, change of education plan, or serious incident. The actions that the IRO must take if it is felt that the Local Authority is failing to comply with the regulations, statutory guidance and/or is breaching their duty to the child are also clear.
- 2.6 Every Local Authority is required to have a dispute resolution procedure that reflects the process for effectively resolving areas of disagreement raised by the IRO in respect of care planning. This includes access to independent legal advice for the IRO and referral to the Child and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass).

### **3. Structures and Management of the Team**

- 3.1 The team sits within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit, and is accountable to the Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance. There are two Deputy Safeguarding Leads within the service who are responsible for the team of Independent Chairs who are all permanent staff. The Deputy Safeguarding Leads line manage the Independent Chairs and will be referred to as Managers throughout this report.
- 3.2 All IROs are qualified social workers with the required knowledge and experience to fulfil the requirements of the role.

### **4. Supervision and Quality Assurance**

- 4.1 IROs receive monthly supervision and have access to informal supervision as and when needed. Managers remain committed to ensuring the level of supervision and support to IRO is effective, supportive and of a high standard.
- 4.2 The IROs attend team meetings twice a month. The meetings alternate between Practice Meetings and Business Meetings. Focus within business meetings is placed upon emerging legislative/ organisational changes and issues, and implementing processes which impact on the service; current themes and expectations and organisational agenda. The practice meetings give the IROs opportunities to identify, analyse and discuss practice issues, present research and professional information, give feedback from individual meetings with partners and social workers, identify areas of learning and development and define and support the implementation of good practice. Partner agencies and organisations such as Cafcass, NYAS and the Lead for UASC in the eastern region are regularly invited as well as others.

## 5. Workload Demand

- 5.1 The IRO Handbook recommends that a caseload of 50-70 children in care for a full time equivalent IRO is appropriate. This means the IRO is able to fulfil all of their statutory functions to the best of their ability; thus providing a high quality service for all children in care. During 2019-2020 the average caseload per FTE IRO was consistently between 60 and 67 cases.
- 5.2 Effective business support staff use established systems to support the IROs, this does not include the typing of minutes, which the IROs complete themselves. All IROs ensure that they distribute the decisions from Children in Care (CIC) review meetings to the responsible Team Manager within five working days of the review; this is in accordance with the IRO Handbook and enables the responsible manager to identify any areas of disagreement, and use the provision for challenging the decisions of the meeting in accordance with the IRO Handbook.
- 5.3 The IROs monitor the performance of the Local Authority, the progress of the plan and any decisions made at the review between reviews. This will include oversight of initial health assessments and other general health check-ups; missing episodes and other key issues, so as to mitigate risk of drift and promote timely and optimum outcomes for children.
- 5.4 The IRO will also aim to complete a young person's care plan audit bi-monthly. This is completed in conjunction with the young person and the findings sent to the Quality Assurance Team looking at themes and areas for improvement.

## 6. Quantitative Data up to 31 March 2020

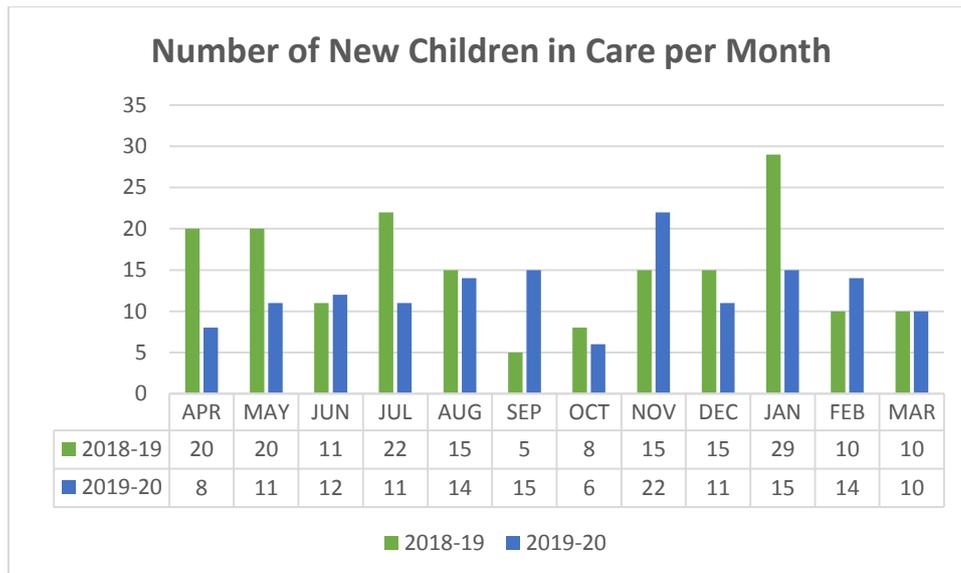
- 6.1 The table below details the *total* number of children in care per 10,000 in the last three years for PCC.

Year	PCC Result
2017-18	74.0
2018-19	72.0
2019-20	73.0

- 6.2 Peterborough City Council's rate per 10,000 children in care for 2019-20 was 73.0, which is slightly higher in comparison with last year but relatively consistent with the last two years. There were 373 children in care during 2019-20.
- 6.3 The table below details the number of *new* children in care in the last three years for PCC.

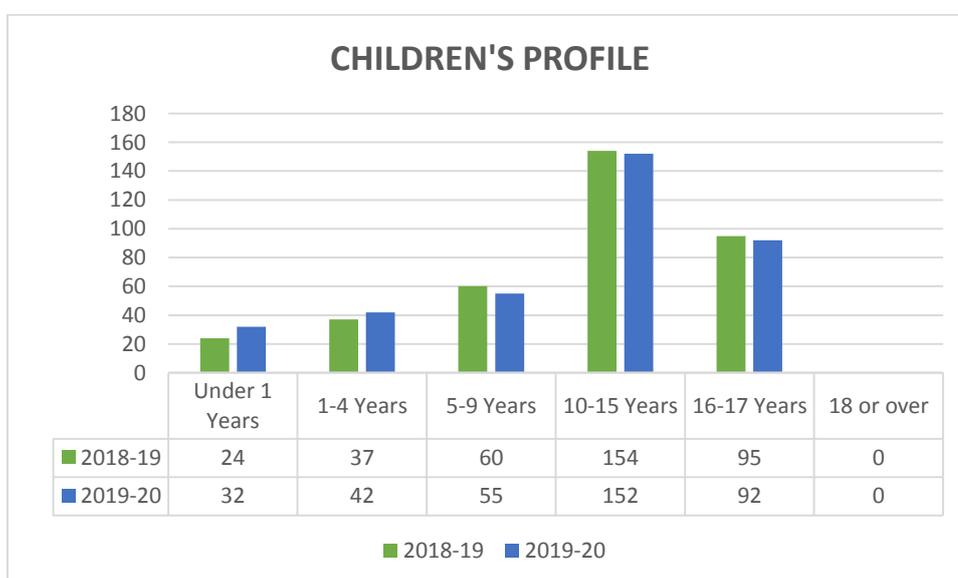
Year	PCC Result
2017-18	35.0
2018-19	34.0
2019-20	30.0

- 6.4 Peterborough City Council's rate of *new* children in care for 2019-20 was 30.0 per 10,000 children; which is significantly lower than the previous two years.
- 6.5 There were 153 new children in care during 2019-20. It could be assumed that the Family Safeguarding model, implemented in 2017, is responsible for the decrease over the period.
- 6.6 The graph below shows the number of new children in care per month:



## 7. Children's Profiles

- 7.1 The graph below shows the age of children in care covering 2019-20 in comparison to 2018-19. There was a total of 373 children in care in 2019-20 of which 223 were male and 150 female compared to 370 in 2018-19 where 216 were male and 154 were female.



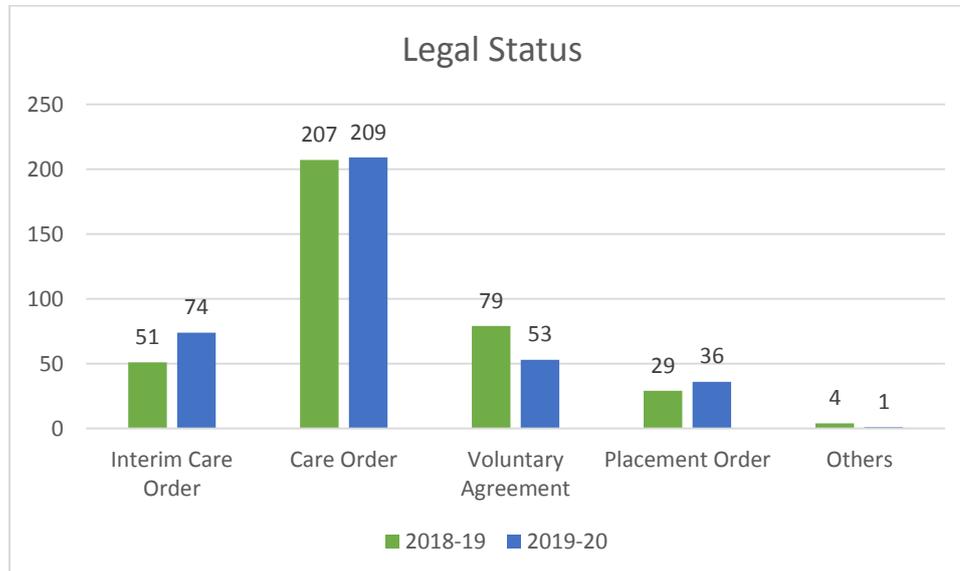
7.2 Generally the number of children in the younger age groups has increased slightly since 2018-19 but we have seen a reduction in age groups upwards of school age. This again could be a result of the effectiveness in the Family Safeguarding Model and work being completed with families at an earlier stage.

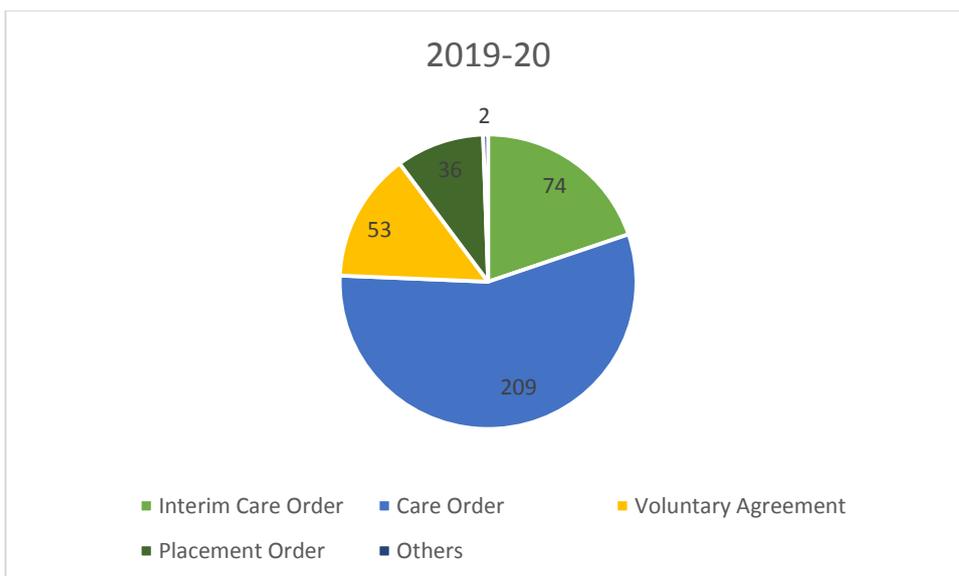
Age at 31 March 2019	Boys	Girls	Total
Under 1 year old	23	9	32
1 – 4 years old	25	17	42
5 – 9 years old	36	19	55
10 – 15 years old	85	67	152
16 – 17 years old	54	38	92
18 years and over	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>373</b>

There continues to be a larger population of boys looked after in Peterborough which reflects similar consistencies within other Local Authorities.

There were 13 unaccompanied children seeking asylum (UASC) looked after during 2019-20 which is just 1 more than 2018-19.

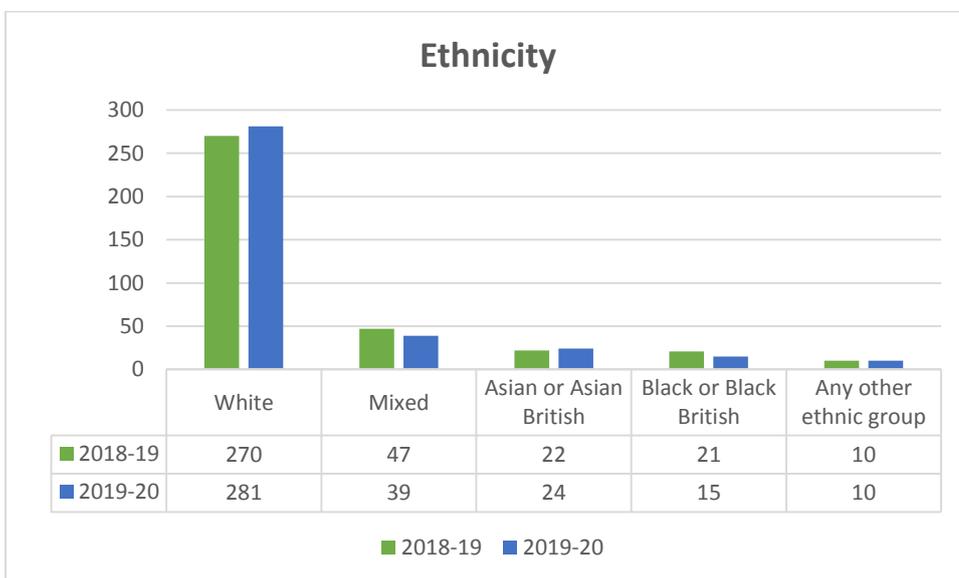
### 7.3 Legal Status





The number of Interim and Full Care Orders obtained for children has increased over the last two years with a significant increase in 2019-20 compared to 2018-19 whilst Voluntary Agreements and Placement Orders have decreased. Care Orders accounted for around two thirds of all Orders granted in 2019-20.

#### 7.4 Ethnicity



The graph above indicates a consistent reflection in the ethnicity of children in care across the last two years.

7.5 At year end March 2020, 5 children were subject to Placement Orders where adoption was no longer the plan with the Placement Order needing to be revoked, which is the same figure as reported for 2018-19. Effective tracking is in place to monitor these cases.

## 8. Children in Care Reviews

- 8.1 Between April 2019 and March 2020, 99.3% of reviews took place within statutory timescales in comparison to 99.8% in 2018-19. This is roughly the same percentage as at the time of the last reporting period and means that eight reviews took place outside of timescale. The reason for five of these as a sibling group was attributed late notification from the Children’s Social work team; for another sibling group of 2 there was a system error in terms of calculating due date over a Bank Holiday period; and for one child who was due to be transferred out of County but then remained resulting in late notification from the Social Work team.  
A total of 1046 CIC reviews were held in 2019-20.

CIC Reviews held within timescales	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
	98.9%	99.8%	99.3%

- 8.2 The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit has systems in place, which enable CIC reviews to be held within timescales. These are as follows:
- At the beginning of each calendar month, business support staff send out the statutory due date for all CIC reviews. This means that responsible operational team managers, the manager of the conference and review service and IROs can monitor and ensure reviews do not go out of timescale.
  - Only the managers can authorise a change in a CIC review date. This endeavours to ensure that if a change of date is unavoidable, the new date is scheduled within statutory timescales. Where necessary and appropriate, meetings are adjourned or the review held over more than one meeting to ensure the review is child centred and involves all of the necessary professionals.
- 8.3 IROs focus on the steps taken to progress adoption and permanency planning at CIC reviews. They address delays by raising their concerns with social workers, responsible team managers and heads of service using the well-established case alert process and where appropriate the Dispute Resolution Process – see also section 12.
- 8.4 IROs complete and update a spreadsheet record of remedial actions and the Deputy Safeguarding Leads monitor this for timely completion. Where remedial actions are not completed in timely manner, IROs commence the dispute resolution process where appropriate.
- 8.5 IROs will arrange for CIC reviews to take place more frequently in certain circumstances, such as for children who live at a significant distance from Peterborough; and ‘where permanence planning is not being progressed in a timely manner’. These reviews include a high level of scrutiny and monitoring of decision-making and actions. This ensures they are in the best interests of the child and that there is minimal delay.

- 8.6 There is an ongoing arrangement between the Local Authority children's Social work teams and IROs. This helps to ensure that IROs receive copies of all documents including statements and reports that are filed with the court as part of care proceedings relating to children in care.
- 8.7 All IROs continue to deliver culturally competent practice and the child's individual needs, wishes and feelings are central to all reviews. IROs closely monitor the integration of a child's identity including culture, religion, ethnicity and birth family values to care planning.
- 8.8 IROs continue to fulfil their responsibility to children remanded into youth detention accommodation (YDA). The key to this role is to ensure that all of these children have active individual care plans that meet their needs. In developing the care plan for children who become looked after solely as a result of being remanded, the IRO will be aware that some children will only be looked after for the period they are remanded. In many cases this period will be relatively short. However, consideration will be given to what longer term support or accommodation the child will need following the remand episode should the young person continue to be looked after at the end of the remand period.

## **9. Children in Care Reviews – Participation**

- 9.1 It is the role of the IRO to encourage and promote the participation of children aged four years and over on the review process. IROs record the method at the end of each CIC review and these are coded in line with national guidance.
- 9.2 At year end 2019-2020, 100% of looked after children over the age of 4 had participated in their review to some degree and informed the shaping of their care plan. The locally set target is 95%. 43% of children over the age of four years attended part or all of their meeting in person. Of the children who did not attend their review, 79% sent their views in advance and 20% briefed their advocate with their views.
- 9.3 The Mind Of My Own 'One' App is an app that helps young people communicate their views in a way that suits them. Young people create their own account, which can be used on any device at any time. The Mind Of My Own 'Express App' is a co-designed, innovative and user-friendly app that helps children with learning disabilities and younger children express their views, wishes and feelings in a fun digital way that's easy for workers to understand and evidence.

The Mind Of My Own 'One' App was launched in Peterborough in April 2016 and the Mind Of My Own 'Express' App was introduced in December 2017.

There are currently 92 young people with Mind Of My Own accounts. 106 members of staff have Mind Of My Own accounts which are used to

support children to use the system. A total of 194 statements were received in the year, which is a decrease on the 229 received in the preceding year.

152 of the statements received in 2019/20 were via the Mind Of My Own 'One' App and 42 were received via the Mind Of My Own 'Express' App. The majority of statements were received in relation to worker visits and preparation for meetings.

- 9.4 The feedback from the consultation forms provide valuable information about the experience of children in care. In the main, the information suggests that most feel safe, listened to and well cared for. The consultation document is discussed with the child and with their consent, the IRO shares it with review participants.
- 9.5 IROs will always aim to spend time individually with children prior to a review to determine their wishes and feelings to identify if they have any concerns; and find out how they would like to participate in the meeting. This includes the time, venue and attendance at their meeting though it should be noted this remains primarily the social worker's responsibility. It is noteworthy that many young people do not want their reviews to disrupt their school day or leisure activities for example. Each child is given the opportunity to engage with an advocate, particularly if this maximises the young person's contribution to their reviews. In 2019-20, 522 IRO consultations/ visits to children prior to their review took place. This is exemplary.
- 9.6 IROs document their consultations with children on Liquid Logic to form a permanent record of the consultation. Consultation takes various forms, which includes face-to-face meetings, texting, telephone calls and emails. Children who have English as a second language always have an interpreter available and children with additional needs always have the support of their carers, specialist worker or an advocate. IROs actively encourage children to chair/ co-chair their reviews, and over this year there has been an increase in number of children to co-chair their reviews, this is particularly effective as children reach their teens and wish to have greater control over their meetings.
- 9.7 The Children in Care Participation Officer coordinates and facilitates the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and liaises with the Corporate Parenting Panel and Cabinet Members to facilitate dialogue between all parties. Peterborough City Council's Looked after Children's Strategy reflects the council's priority for children in care. This strategy lists priorities for the children and young people ensuring that good outcomes are pivotal to processes. Children in care in Peterborough benefit from the continued robust commitment of elected members of the council.
- 9.8 Parental participation is noted within the minutes of the review and monitored by the IRO manager. There were a total of 1046 CIC reviews completed in 2019-20. The level of participation by parents was approximately 40% for

mothers and just 20% of fathers in the year. In accordance with the Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations 2010, IROs offer to meet with parents outside of the main review meeting. This is particularly evident where a parent is prevented from attending. Parents are also given a consultation form to complete their views, wishes and feelings to inform the review.

## 10. Feedback on the IRO service

- 10.1 Parental and Child Feedback forms were introduced in March 2018 which aim to maximum the voice of the parent or child and also to seek to evaluate and improve practice within the service by identifying with the experiences of the CIC review process. We are still experiencing low numbers of these being completed and are looking into raising the profile.

*I am glad to be part of it as it is important to know what been decide in my childrens care plan*

*My plan allowed me to stay in my placement instead of where I used to live where I might have got into trouble.*

*Chair was nice and listened to everything I had to say.*

*I am very happy with the way things are going at the moment*

*Great meeting.*

*I feel my views were listened to and that all reports from professionals were fair and correct.*

10.2 Professional feedback forms were introduced in March 2018. During 2019-20 a total of 151 feedback forms were completed by professionals attending CIC reviews. This is a significant decrease on last year where over 700 were received. Although the outbreak of Covid-19 would have undoubtedly impacted on the completion of these, we are currently exploring with the IRO's why numbers have decreased so significantly.

The following areas of good practice were identified:

- The voice of the child is discussed and made clear.
- Professionals have the opportunity to give their views and feel heard in the CCR.
- The IRO takes into consideration the views of the child/young person, carer and social worker.
- All the issues from the child/young person's care plan are discussed in the CCR.
- Professionals are able to contact the IRO between reviews to discuss issues and notify relevant changes.

10.3 Professionals agree that the child's voice is well represented in CCR and also felt that they were able to express their opinions. Professionals noted that the IRO gave consideration to the views of the child, the social worker, the carer, other professionals, and to a slightly lesser extent, the parents and family. Professionals reported that the child's care plan was discussed, and that decisions progressed the plan. Scores in relation to the quality of IRO oversight and IRO availability were notably high.

*XXX is a competent professional who will always command respect with other professional colleague - outstandingly reliable!.*

*Very positive review.*

*Very well managed review*

*It is clear the IRO has a good understanding of this family and the child's wishes and feelings*

*Very child focused review*

## 11. Positive Impact – ‘You said, we did’

11.1 Within the service, we produce a report to highlight some of the examples of impact that IROs have on children’s lives. Below are some examples:

### YOU SAID...

### WE DID...

*X wanted to feedback his experiences as a LAC to TM to improve services for other children*

IRO arranged this call and now he has been put forward to QA to offer further insight

*your court order had your wrong name on the order*

The IRO highlighted this with Legal and your social worker. When the final order is made about your permanent home your order will be correct for the carers that you are being cared by

*you were very worried about the court process and unsure about what was going to happen to you*

The IRO challenged the LA about you returning home to your parents and they completed new parenting assessments and changed their view and they now want you to remain in care

*you asked for you belongings to be collected from your previous placement*

The IRO suggested that you gave them written permission to pick up your things and your things were then collected

*you were feeling very stressed and unhappy in your placement shortly after lock down. You spoke about running away but we agreed when I spoke to you that getting permission to visit and stay with your friend for a few days was a better plan*

The IRO spoke to the SW team and they contacted you later and agreed a short stay with your friend. This meant you were not reported missing

*X said that she wanted to go trick or treating with her friends*

IRO agreed a decision and a plan in the review around how this could happen as it was very important for X to be able to go with her friends.

*X did not want to be moved to the Foyer accommodation post 18.*

IRO escalated the proposed plan to senior management and as a result X placement was extended.

*X was stressed and worried and she did not know where she was moving too. There had been drift in planning*

With the support of the IRO, X placement was extended to aid proper transition planning.

*I am not happy with my Care Plan the information is not up to date even my carers are wrong.*

IRO completed a young person's Care Plan audit and escalated to management the concerns raised by the young person regarding the Care Plan. As a result the Care Plan was updated.

*I have been told I need to go home to Mum, I don't want to go back. Mum isn't working with people. I don't know what is going on.*

The IRO escalated to senior management identifying that the rehabilitation back home plan was not appropriate and causing stress to the young person. Agreement was made for the young person to remain in foster care until further assessment had been completed.

**12. Quality Assurance and Audit of Children in Care Arrangements**

12.1 The effectiveness of the IRO service and the difference they make to children's experiences of being in care in Peterborough is monitored through the activity of the Quality Assurance Team including the ongoing thematic audit programmes. In addition, team and senior managers undertake a programme of case file audits and use Ofsted judgements to grade cases. All cases where remedial actions are identified and monitored by the QA Team to ensure that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner. Audit themes and areas for development inform service improvement plans for each service.

12.2 Established organisational systems contribute to good practice. IROs

routinely receive minutes of the Peterborough Access to Services Panel (PASP) and can challenge decision making with the PASP chairperson following discussion with their manager and the Head of Service.

- 12.3 All IROs complete a monitoring form after each statutory meeting. This is sent to the social worker and responsible team manager. If the IRO identifies an immediate cause for concern they will raise a case alert. They will always discuss their concern with the case responsible manager/senior manager and agree a course of actions with timescales. This will then be followed up with an email to the responsible manager and Head of Service and any other managers as appropriate. This ensures that immediate action is taken to safeguard and protect the child.
- 12.4 As part of the Quality Assurance and Learning Framework, young people's audits of their care plan were introduced in 2016 in order to identify and evidence the effectiveness of the whole system surrounding the child and to obtain their views about the service they receive. The IROs are asked to complete these with children during the visits where the child is age appropriate and agrees and they are collated and reported on by the Quality Assurance Team. Audits received this year did report positive experiences for children.

### **13. Dispute Resolution**

- 13.1 The IRO Handbook clearly describes the role of the IRO where there are areas of disagreement: 'One of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process. It is expected that IROs establish positive working relationships with the social workers of the children for whom they are responsible. Where problems are identified in relation to a child's case, for example in relation to care planning, the implementation of the care plan or decisions relating to it, resources or poor practice, the IRO will, in the first instance, seek to resolve the issue informally with the social worker or the social worker's managers. The IRO should place a note of this initial informal resolution process on the child's file. If the matter is not resolved in a timescale that is appropriate to the child's needs, the IRO should consider taking formal action.
- 13.2 During 2019/20, the Independent Chairs raised 205 case alerts. Twelve cases went to formal DRP; most of which were addressed within timescale and three are outstanding with further discussions taking place. Of the 12, 3 were escalated to Stage 3. The method of recording was also updated in 2020 to enable better scrutiny of themes and issues raised which will further tie into the Manager and Group Manager meetings. In addition, updates are sent to Heads of Service and Group Managers on a two-weekly basis to ensure management oversight and to bring attention to outstanding alerts. The following themes were noted with regard to the case alerts raised:
- Practice issues, which include assessments and other paperwork not being completed;
  - Drift in care planning;

- Statutory visits;
- Placement issues;
- Pre-meeting reports not completed, shared or of adequate quality;
- Issues regarding placement;
- Poor quality care plans.

13.3 Relationships between Cafcass and the IRO service continue to be positive with a named guardian and IRO providing a link between the two services. Cafcass attend the IRO team meeting twice yearly and the named IRO reciprocates this arrangement. This ensures joined up working and the sharing of information continues to be a priority between the professionals who maintain albeit differing degrees of independence from the operational social work teams.

## **14. Summary**

14.1 The IRO Service has continued to provide effective provision for reviewing and monitoring the Care Plans for children in care. It contributes to improved outcomes for children in care through increasing participation of children and young people in the decision making about their care, as well as making independent representations to operational teams and management on planning and practice issues. The independent scrutiny provided by the team is valued by social workers and management.

## **15. Independent Reviewing Officer Achievements in 2019/20**

15.1

- a) Caseloads – Independent Reviewing Officers’ caseloads have remained within the recommended guidelines of between 50 and 70. This has enabled the IROs to meet expectations for a high quality service whereby all aspects of their role are undertaken.
- b) Oversight and Quality Assurance – IROs have actively addressed concerns, poor practice and non-compliance in a systematic and professional manner to promote the improvement of standards amongst social work teams and partner agencies. Challenging as denoted within the IRO Handbook and ensuring that timescales are adhered to.
- c) IRO footprint – There has been clear evidence obtained throughout case audits, supervisions and dataset analysis of the consistent presence and oversight of the IRO and clear demonstrations of the IRO footprint on their caseloads.
- d) Children’s voices – There has been a consistent approach by IROs to maximise the engagement of children and the evidence within reports demonstrates an awareness and objective to ensure that the voice of the child is heard achieving 100% in the year.

- e) Themed audits – the Quality Assurance team continues to undertake a significant number of thematic audits across Children’s Social Care (CSC) and a number of audits across the IRO service have evidenced robust systems and competent and effective practice and established performance.
- f) Learning and development – The IRO service continues to promote good practice and to develop and embed learning and supportive relationships within the wider sector. IROs take responsibility in organising and managing meetings with operational team managers to identify impacts and issues within the service and to recognise areas of good practice as well as areas for improvement. They work together in maintaining a respectful, transparent and learning abled forum within which to identify and design models of ideal working.
- g) The IROs also take turns to represent Peterborough City Council at the Eastern Regional IRO network. Unfortunately the annual IRO conference due to take place in May 2020 has been postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak but discussions are ongoing in relation to setting a new date in 2021.
- h) The IROs have contributed to the increase in dental checks and health assessments for children in care due to increased monitoring. They have also been instrumental in the increased oversight of children at risk of CSE or Missing episodes.
- i) The IRO’s have shown remarkable professionalism, dedication and creativity since the outbreak of Covid-19 and have risen to the challenges of the virtual world, engaging young people in care, carers, parents and professionals in timely and effective reviews. No reviews were cancelled as a result of implications caused by the pandemic in March 2020.

**16. Areas of Development for 2020/21**

- a) IROs will continue to proactively contribute to improving outcomes for looked after children through rigorous monitoring and challenge of care planning and promoting timely permanency planning.
- b) To support the service in identifying and implementing effective and creative strategies for involving children and young people in the review process in a way that suits them.
- c) To increase the number of children/young people chairing/co-chairing their review.
- d) To continue to contribute to the early identification of children/young people who may be able to return home safely to their families.
- e) IROs will continue to raise awareness amongst Social Workers of the need to keep the IRO informed of significant events between review

meetings and to consult the IRO before important decisions are taken in respect of changes to the child's care plan.

- f) To continue to support in establishing good working relationships with Cambridgeshire County Council and to continue to improve processes and services across the two Local Authorities.
- g) To continue to build established relationships with partner agencies.