

# **Safeguarding and Quality Assurance**

## **Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report**

**2021/22**

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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 2021 to 31 March 2022.

The key highlights of this report are:

- The number of children in care fell by 20 this year (from 364 at the end of March 2021 to 344 at the end of March 2022)
- A total of 933 Child in Care Reviews were held this year
- Timeliness of Reviews continues to be excellent at 99.7%
- The IROs Escalation Protocol continues to be fully embedded across the service.

The report concludes with the highlights of the IRO Service for 2021/22 and outlines areas for further development for 2022/23.

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The 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 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 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 Service 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 Chairperson for child protection conferences (CPC) and Looked after Children responsibilities. For the purposes 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 Service 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 2021/22 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 Each 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 findings are sent to the Quality Assurance Team looking at themes and areas for improvement.

## 6. Quantitative Data up to 31 March 2022

- 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
2019/20	73.0
2020/21	71.2
2021/22	67.4

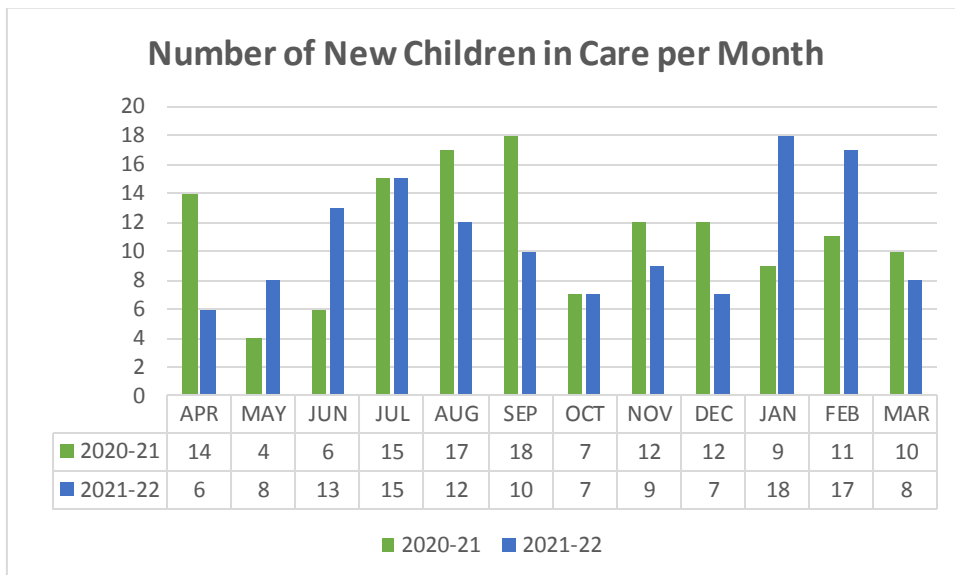
6.2 Peterborough City Council’s rate per 10,000 children in care for 2021/22 was 67.4, which is lower in comparison with last year. There were 344 children in care during 2021/22.

6.3 The table below details the number of *new* children coming into care per 10,000 in the last three years for PCC:

Year	PCC Result
2019/20	30.0
2020/21	26.4
2021/22	23.8

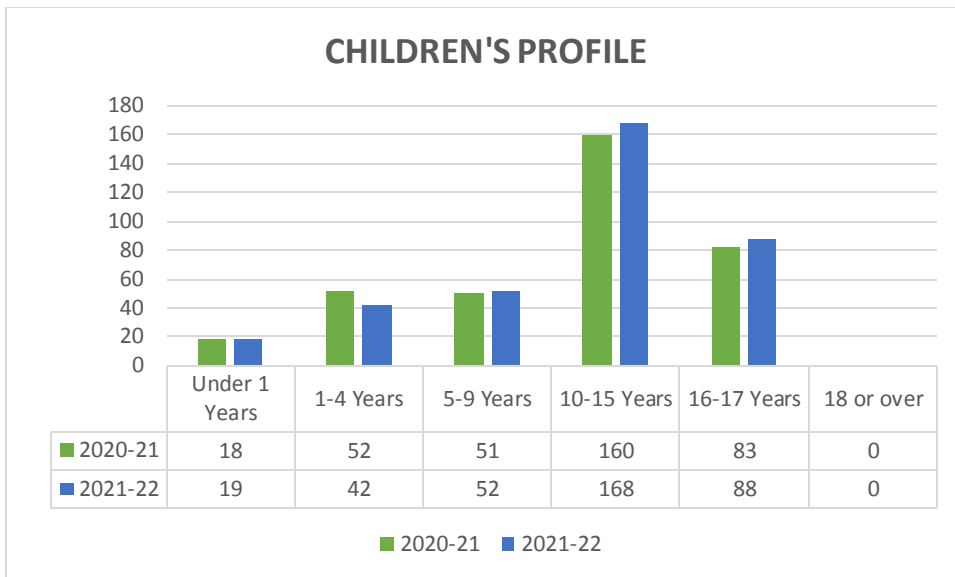
6.4 There were 123 new children who came in care during 2021/22. It could be assumed that the Family Safeguarding model implemented in 2017 is responsible for the decrease over the period. There were a total of 113 children who ceased to be looked after during the year.

6.5 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 2021/22 in comparison to 2020/21. There was a total of 344 children in care in 2021/22, of which 216 were male and 152 female, compared to 364 in 2020/21 where 212 were male and 152 were female.

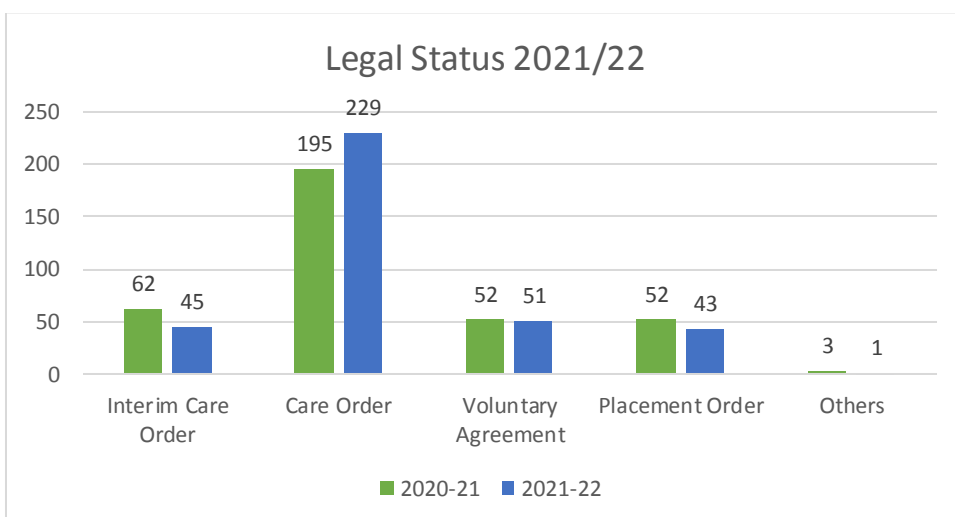


7.2 There continues to be a larger population of boys looked after in Peterborough which reflects similar consistencies within other Local Authorities.

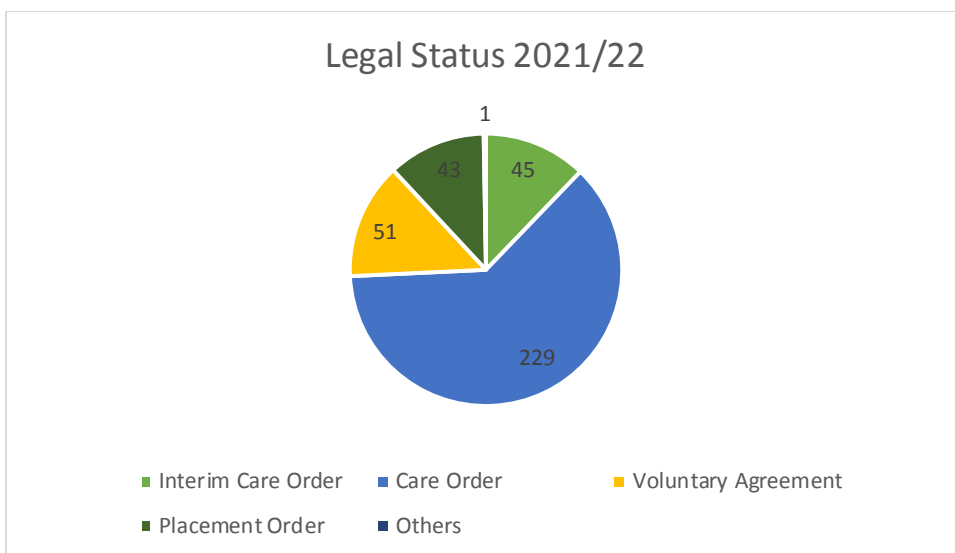
There were 44 unaccompanied children seeking asylum (UASC) looked after during 2021/22 which is 36 more than 2020/21.

During the year, 3 young people were remanded in custody and one young person was supported in a Secure Accommodation Unit.

### 7.3 Legal Status

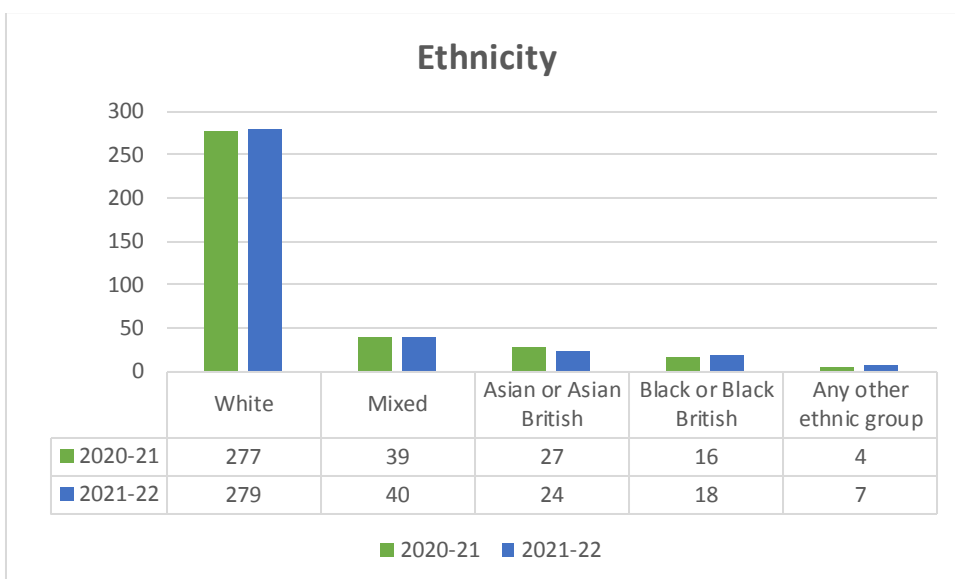






The number of Interim Care Orders have decreased whilst full Care Orders obtained for children have decreased over the year compared to 2020/21. Voluntary Agreements and Placement Orders have decreased. The decrease is reflected in the lower numbers of new children coming into care during the year.

#### 7.4 Ethnicity



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

## 8. Children in Care Reviews

- 8.1 Between April 2021 and March 2022, 99.7% of reviews took place within statutory timescales which continues to be excellent. The majority of reviews took place virtually during the year in response to restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A total of 933 CIC reviews were held in 2021/22.

<b>CIC Reviews held within timescales</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
	99.3%	99.9%	99.7%

- 8.2 The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service 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 a 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 During 2021/22, 933 Child Care Review meetings were held. The vast majority of these were held in a hybrid manner with the IRO and Social Worker meeting face to face with the Child or Young person in placement and others joining via TEAMS. All children over the age of four participated in their CCR to inform the shaping of their plan, in the way that best suits them, attending part or all of their meetings, using the paper consultation booklet, the Mind of My Own app, or sending their views through their IRO or another trusted adult. 31% of children over the age of four years attended part or all of their meeting in person which is 3% less than the previous year. Of the children who did not attend their review, 36% sent their views in advance and 15% briefed their advocate with their views. Others gave their views via other means including meeting with the IRO prior to their review.
- 9.3 During the period, 706 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) consultation/visits with children and young people were held. During 'lockdown', face to face consultations were reduced and risk assessed on a case-by-case basis. Face to face consultations increased as restrictions eased and IROs endeavoured to consult with their young people via Teams, telephone call or other virtual methods during periods where a face-to-face visit was not possible. The service continues to encourage older children to chair or co-chair their CCRs. This has been particularly effective with young people planning their transition to independence, in empowering them and helping

them to take increased ownership of their independence. However, during the year, there was a reduction in the number of children chairing and co-chairing their reviews. This is an area for improvement following lockdown restrictions easing as more reviews occur face to face.

- 9.4 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.

- 9.5 There were 143 statements received in the year.
- 9.6 Young people sent in 26 statements and the remaining 74 statements were sent in by workers. The One app was used to send statements in relation to a variety of situations in the year, the most popular being in relation to 'preparation' 36% and 'about me' 36%.
- 9.7 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.
- 9.8 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.
- 9.9 There have been 890 monitoring activities carried out by IROs throughout the year.
- 9.10 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.

9.11 Parental participation is noted within the minutes of the review and monitored by the IRO manager. There were a total of 933 CIC reviews completed in 2021/22. The level of participation by parents has remained fairly consistent over the year; 40% for mothers and just 20% of fathers. 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. A number of parents have commented that they felt more able to attend meetings when permitted to join virtually as they would not have ordinarily been able to physically attend.

## 10. Feedback on the IRO service

10.1 Owing to increased pressures on capacity and adjustments required during the Covid-19 pandemic, Professional feedback forms were put on hold. Since restrictions have eased, we have started to see an increase on the number of these being completed (82 in total for the year), although this is still an area we would like to see increase further. Parental feedback forms have been sent out routinely where an email address has been provided to encourage feedback from parents' perspectives on the CCR process. The completion of these was minimal throughout Covid restrictions but we have started to see a slight increase in these being returned but still an area for vast improvement. We received a total of 16 for the year. IROs have been encouraging young people to complete feedback forms via email and where possible have supported in person to complete. Although uptake on these has also been poor, the few that have been completed all agree that they feel supported by their IRO; feel their IRO listens to them and all but one felt comfortable attending their meeting. We received a total of 21 during the year.

### Some comments from young people included:

*My IRO is always here for me and listens to my wishes*

*My iro is fantastic! She always listens to my opinions and wishes'*

### Some of the feedback from parents included:

*'It was good to see the IRO in person'*

'I feel really supported by everyone'

And below some examples of feedback received from professionals:

'Good meeting' In person attendance appreciated'

'A is very warm and friendly, very child centred and professional. She has been A's IRO for a long time and fully understands his needs'

'H is extremely efficient and professional throughout the review. She actively listens and takes on board comments, observations and the wishes and feelings of the child. She will challenge if required. All documentation is received in a timely manner '

'I feel we have another excellent IRO'

### 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...**

<p>X is pregnant and under a care order. She wished to remain with her foster carers once the baby was born .</p>	<p>A case alert was escalated to Senior Managers who assessed the situation and approved for X to remain in the foster care placement with her baby.</p>	<p>X is able to remain within her supportive environment with her baby as she wished.</p>
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The IRO expressed concerns about the state of a placement.	Concerns were escalated to the Commissioning Team who will be completing a full inspection of the property and other properties owned by the same company.	Young people in care are given a clean, safe and homely environment.
X did not want to have a new social worker.	The IRO emailed X's views to team manager, and they agreed not to reallocate.	X is now confident to continue to work with their current social worker with whom they have a good relationship.
X raised concern around post-18 plans in relation to a move to a new home that would disrupt her education.	The IRO initiated the dispute resolution process and supported X to understand how to make a complaint.	X's Pathway Plan was amended, and they moved to provision they were happy with and in an area where they could continue at college.
X raised that he wanted to go back home. There was delay in assessments being completed to make this happen.	The IRO raised a dispute and monitored until all identified actions were progressed.	There is now a rehabilitation back home plan and all assessments have been completed to enable this to happen. X is happy with the return home plans.
X raised concern about the quality of care they received from their carers.	The IRO intervened and supported the YP in understanding the complaints procedure. X's concerns were escalated to senior managers.	The YP has moved to a new foster placement, is happier and settled.
X said that they would like to start living with their brother.	The review endorsed the change of Care Plan from adoption to long term foster care. A Case Alert was raised when the necessary paperwork was not completed in a timely way.	The IRO monitored progress to ensure a swift resolution. X is now able to stay living with his brother, whom he has a strong relationship and bond.
X did not want to move away from their family.	The IRO raised a dispute regarding the proposal to move X from extended family into a foster placement. The IRO ensured X had access to an advocate and could make a complaint.	X was not moved away from family and was able to continue to attend the same school.
B was living in a placement that was of poor quality.	IRO reported concerns to the SW and to ART who completed a full inspection and found further issues around safeguarding	The young person has since been moved to an appropriate placement and is doing well.
You told your IRO that the only present you wanted for your birthday was to spend time with your Mum.	The IRO contacted the mothers' interpreter to let her know that it would be looked into and contacted the team.	Contact was changed to nearer G's birthday which he was extremely happy about.

You did not understand why your allowance had been stopped..	The IRO raised this with the TM explaining that his needs hadn't changed in this regard and asked for this to be resolved.	X is now receiving his allowance again.
X is in foster care who has significant health issues and disabilities and is non- verbal. J's foster family advocated on his behalf to use part of his DLA money towards more appropriate equipment.	The IRO raised a case alert with the team manager and provided a copy of the DLA policy. As a result, the use of the DLA funds was agreed.	X is much safer and happier. He is also able to fully participate in family life which he loves.
X is a 17-year-old living in semi-independent accommodation. X requested overnight stays with her grandparents.	A case alert was sent and was resolved the same day with agreement for a viability assessment and PNC check completed.	X now has overnight stays with her grandparents as requested.

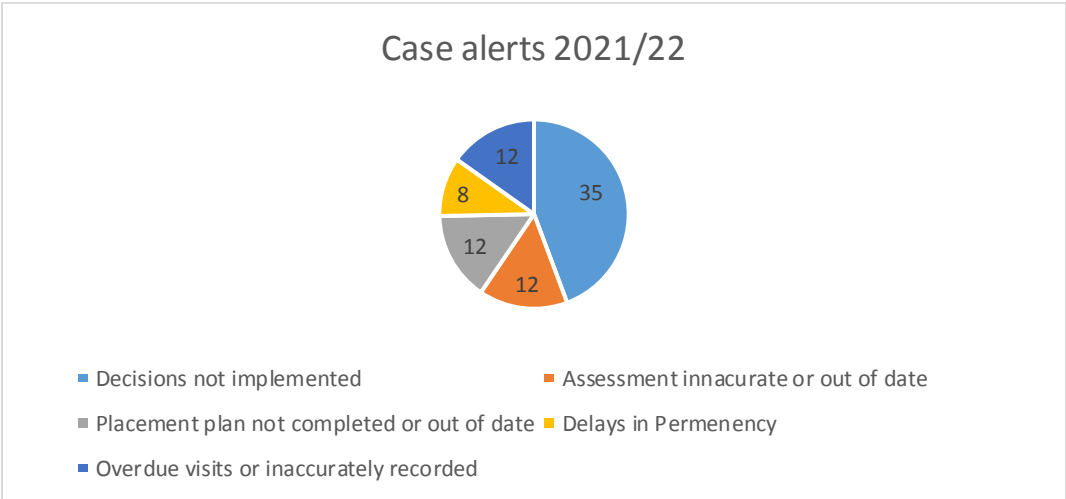
## 12. Quality Assurance and Audit of Children in Care Arrangements

- 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 are 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 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.



### 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 2021/22, the Independent Chairs raised 143 case alerts. Six formal DRP cases were raised throughout the year; most of which were addressed within timescale and two are outstanding with further discussions taking place. Of the 6, 2 were escalated to Stage 3, 1 was escalated to stage 2 and 3 were resolved at stage 1.
  
- 13.3 Updates are sent to Heads of Service and Service 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:
  - Decisions not being implemented.
  - 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.
  - Delays in achieving permanence.
  - Lack of supervision or management oversight.



13.4 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. IROs have shown continued strength and resilience throughout a very difficult year and have contributed to a creative and high delivering service.

## **15. Independent Reviewing Officer Achievements in 2021/22**

15.1 IROs have:

- Ensured robust oversight of all vulnerable cohorts in light of Covid-19 through enhanced audit activity.
- Maintained oversight of all key decision making and milestones in the child's journey.
- Worked to ensure all essential meetings were able to go ahead via a combination of face to face, virtual and hybrid meetings, providing additional support to families where required.
- Remained proactively responsive to the changing situation by leading the way and developing creative solutions.

15.2 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. They have challenged as

denoted within the IRO Handbook and ensured 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. We have also improved the system for completing feedback forms via an electronic link to maximise the feedback we receive from young people.
- e) Themed audits – The Quality Assurance team continues to undertake a significant number of thematic audits across Children’s Social Care 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.
- 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 IROs 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 2021/22.

## 16. Objectives for 2022/23

- 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) Review the existing mechanisms for a constructive feedback loop between the IRO Service and social care, so that the broader picture of what is working for children in care and what areas of practice may need attention in order to improve outcomes on a wider scale.
- e) Review the format of consultation forms for children so that they can be completed quickly and easily via an online form as well as through paper consultation forms.
- f) Continue to support placement stability as key to emotional wellbeing of our children and young people.
- g) Strengthening our oversight of pathway planning to support successful timely move into independence.
- h) Continue to ensure permanence plan identified at second review with clear robust contingency plan.
- i) 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.
- j) 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.
- k) To continue to build established relationships with partner agencies.