

## IRO Annual Report April 2013 – March 2014

*The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Children in Care*

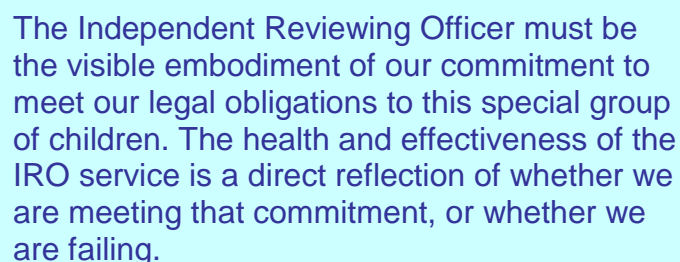


## Purpose of service and legal context

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 the 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 (CLA) and for challenging drift and delay. The IRO's have a duty to consult with and represent the interests of the child/young person and to ensure each looked after child/young person is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care. The recently published National Children's Bureau research entitled 'The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) in England' (March 2014) provides a wealth of information and findings in regards to the efficacy of IRO services and outlines a number of important recommendations.

- Professional status and respect, demonstrated both by resourcing the service properly and by openly giving IROs 'permission' to challenge.
- IROs with the right skills, particularly the ability to communicate with children and young people, and to know how and when to challenge.
- Access to expert advice, including independent legal advice and opportunities for reflective practice.
- Dispute resolution protocols that work, from informal conversations to the escalation of cases to senior management.
- Child-centred IROs, who demonstrate their commitment to each child and work out the best way to seek their views.
- Having a focus on outcomes, and holding agencies to account for their contribution towards these, rather than 'box-ticking'.

The foreword, to the March 2014 document was written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson; in it he makes the following comment



The Independent Reviewing Officer must be the visible embodiment of our commitment to meet our legal obligations 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.

## What are we doing about it?

- IRO's in Portsmouth all have substantial post qualifying experience in social work and therefore are regarded as having the status and expertise to challenge professional practice. Senior managers encourage IRO's to identify and challenge professional practice that leads to drift and delay in the plans made for and with children and young people.
- IRO's are encouraged to consult with children prior to their review to ensure the review is responsive to the child's wishes and feelings. Practice meetings, introductory letters and a resource toolkit have all been produced to support IRO's direct engagement with children and young people.
- IRO's have had access to independent legal advice when this has been required and an inter-authority agreement is now established with another Local Authority to provide a reciprocal legal advice service and also develop bespoke reciprocal legal training developments for the service.
- The Dispute Resolution Process is in place to support and clarify the process for IRO's escalating concerns through the management line and ultimately to CAFCASS.
- Themes from the reviews are monitored on a monthly basis so that these as well as issues can be picked up and addressed. This highlights the IRO role of quality assuring the plans and services for children and young people in care.

This Annual IRO report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Services in Portsmouth City Council as required by statutory guidance.

## Professional Profile of the IRO Service

The Child protection and Independent Reviewing Service is based in the Civic offices in Portsmouth. It sits within Children's Social Care & Safeguarding.

The team are responsible for looked after children reviews and chairing child protection case conferences as well as undertaking monthly Regulation 33 inspections of the city's four children's homes. The responsibility for Regulation 33 visits has now moved from the team and children's services in line with the implementation of new guidance. Within the last year we appointed a full time case conference chair and 2 IRO's to allow focus on looked after children casework. This has allowed some specialism to develop in the team in line with the experience and skills the individuals bring to the role.

The service comprises of 5.5 full time equivalent IROs/Child Protection Chairs and 3 FTE Specialist IRO posts (one lead for child protection, the second lead for looked after children and the third lead for allegations management. The specialist IRO's hold a 0.5 caseload and undertake some management duties and development work as required. The overall management of the service has been undertaken by the Safeguarding Monitoring Commissioning Manager. The capacity is therefore that there are 6.5 FTE posts in Portsmouth.

The Team had held 2 vacancies since November 2013 when a specialist IRO and an IRO left the service. The posts have been filled by 2 locum workers. These posts have proved hard to recruit to leading to a job evaluation exercise with the JEQ for the IRO having just concluded.

We have had a predominantly white female workforce with a black female locum IRO and a locum male IRO having been part of the staff group. The team acknowledges that permanent recruitment of a male and of an IRO from more ethnically diverse backgrounds would be more closely aligned to our CLA population of 44%/57% girls and boys and 11% BME looked after population.

We have a team manager and 6 business support officers who provide the administrative support to the IRO and Child protection conference work as well as an additional business support officer to support the LADO and the Safeguarding Monitoring Commissioning Manager.

### **Progress from previous year's business plan**

- IRO's are now represented on the Corporate Parenting Board and the Permanence Panel
- Review records have been amended to include specific reference to the care plan and the child's views
- Adult advocacy has been delivered to parents with additional needs
- IRO links to teams have now been put in place to share learning from reviews
- The LAC review audit form has been revised to include more qualitative information
- Practice meetings are in place to promote team learning and share best practice ideas
- The dispute resolution process has been revised and is regularly monitored through performance reporting
- Introductory letters go out to all young people coming into care to inform them of who their IRO is and what they do with an accompanying photo. This is in response to previous years LAC survey when 71% said they knew who their IRO was
- There have been audits of care plans and review records

## Quantitative information about the IRO service

*A total of 468 children have been through the care planning and reviewing system in the last 12 months*

*A total of 851 reviews were held in the year*

	Numbers of children entering care				
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Change (12/13 to 13/14)	% Change (12/13 to 13/14)
AGE 0-5	50	60	75	15	25.00%
AGE 6-13	32	25	48	23	92.00%
AGE 14+	40	44	41	-3	-6.82%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27.13%</b>

**Fig. 1. Numbers of Children entering Care**

In Portsmouth, there were 165 children coming into care and 151 who left care. The table above shows the increase in children coming into care in 2013/14 compared to previous years. 20% of the leavers left as they had reached the age of 18 years. 43% of leavers were aged under 5 years and reflects the significant increase in the numbers of children achieving permanence through adoption. Over the last year, 26 children have been adopted compared to 15 the previous year.

The IRO Handbook recommends that case loads for IROs need to be between 50 and 70. Nationally, the average caseload for a IROs ranges between 50 and 95 identified in a recent (December 2013) national benchmarking survey. The size of caseload alone does not indicate the workload for each IRO as case complexity, children out of city and other responsibilities all have an impact on workload. Caseloads have generally fluctuated between 60 and 75 which is within the recommended case load of 50-70 within the IRO Handbook, as noted above.

**Fig. 2. Current Breakdown of caseload in team.**

IRO	Looked After Children Cases	Child Protection Cases
Lead IRO (Manager)	6	16
IRO FTE	73	8
Locum IRO FTE	73	0
IRO FTE	57	0
IRO FTE	33	47
Locum IRO FTE	30	29
CP Chair	1	121
IRO 0.5	29	10



Service delivery has been maintained throughout the year and there have been no unallocated cases. Staff sickness and vacancies has had an impact on managing the work as it is a small team. The impact has been that some children and families have experienced changes of IRO and case conference chairs.

Although review decisions are recorded within 5 days of the review, the distribution of the complete review record has at times exceeded the 15 day timescale set. A process has been established to monitor timescales on a monthly basis to improve performance in this area.

The IRO service has been engaged in training and developing their own skills as IRO's and as experienced social work practitioners.

### **Training attended over the year is as follows:**

Legal Update for IRO

Systemic Ideas for Management and Supervision in a Safeguarding Context:

Not Just Talking: An Introduction to Non-verbal Communication

Introduction to the Leadership and Management Programme (LAMP) - Course 1

Crucial Conversations - Leadership and Management Programme (LAMP) - Course 2

ESCR - Viewing & Indexing

ICS V26 Overview Seminar

Performance Development Review (annual appraisal form)

Positive Handling of Complaints in Social Care

Influencing Change - Leadership and Management Programme (LAMP) - Course 3

Contact in Adoption and Long Term Fostering

Action Learning Programme

Community Care Inform Briefing

Outcome Focused Planning

Analysis in Assessment

Care Planning (Children's Services)

Domestic Abuse Level 2

Domestic Abuse Level 3

Safeguarding Children Refresher

Intro to Training Skills Train the Trainer

Child Neglect

Working with Family's Difficult, Dangerous or Evasive Behaviour

Chairing Sensitive Meetings

Coaching for Performance - Social Care

Child Sexual Abuse Awareness

Fostering For Adoption and Concurrent Planning

Loss and Bereavement - Working with Children

Parental Mental Health and Child Protection

Developing your Staff

Childhood Obesity Workshop

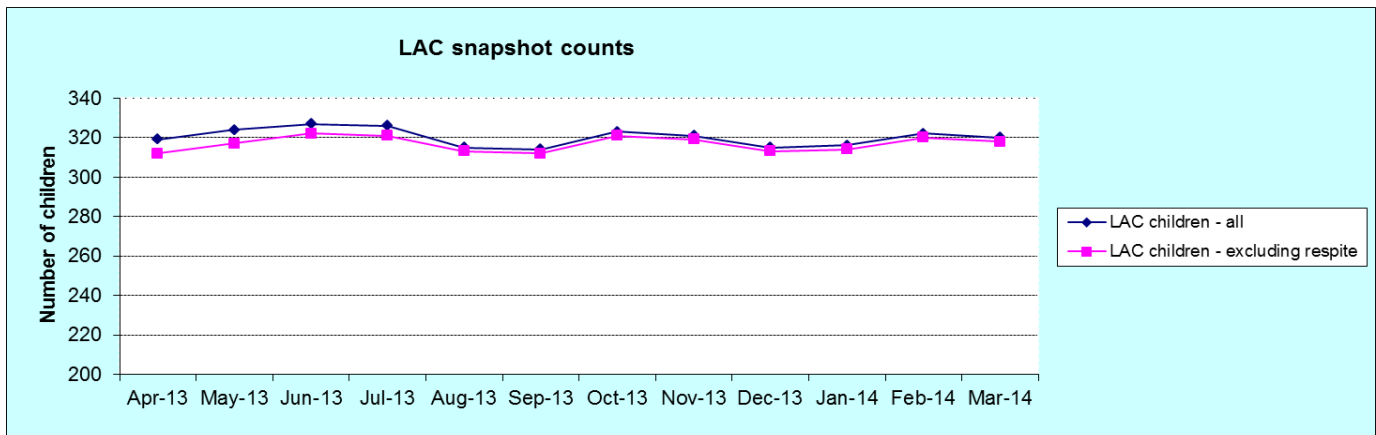
Developing Supervision Skills

Safer Recruitment Workshop: Context and Outline

Managing Risks

Child Trafficking Awareness

## Children Looked After



**Fig. 3. LAC Snapshot**

The graph shows that the looked after children population has remained fairly stable over the past year. Statistical neighbour comparison data is not available yet for 2013/14. For 11/12 and 12/13, stat. neighbour per 10,000 figures were 78.1 and 81.3 respectively. Portsmouth's figures for these two years were 70.0 and 73.0 respectively. For 11/12 and 12/13, Portsmouth's snapshot figure means we were below the statistical neighbour average figure for both years and had the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest per 10,000 figure for our statistical neighbour group in both years. There has been a rise in the looked after children population from the previous year.

The following graph shows the breakdown of looked after children in terms of their legal status represented as a snapshot at the end of the financial year 31 March.

	11/12	12/13	13/14
ACCOMMODATED S20 SINGLE PERIOD	65	69	78
EMERGENCY PROTECTION ORDER	0	0	0
FULL CARE ORDER	137	125	141
IN CARE PROCEEDINGS - NO ICO (SECTION 20 ACCOMMODATED)	5	2	0
INTERIM CARE ORDER	64	59	36
ON REMAND/COMMITTED TRIAL/SENTENCED AND ACCOMM BY LA	3	1	1
Placement ORDER	23	51	62
POLICE PROTECTION - LA ACCOMM	1	0	0
<b>Sum:</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>318</b>

**Fig.4. Legal Status Breakdown at year end**

The table shows a rise in S.20 accommodation, full care orders and placement orders. As stated above there has been an increase in adoption activity that reflects the work that has taken place over the year to ensure early identification of the appropriate permanence plan for the child and the IRO's have been key in driving forward the progression of these plans. The increase in adoption placements has also meant that IRO's are having to travel out of city for the children's reviews.

	11/12	12/13	13/14
Under 1	14	27	19
AGE 1-4	63	53	52
AGE 5-9	65	61	73
AGE 10-15	107	104	113
AGE 16-17	49	62	61
AGE 18+	0	0	0
<b>Sum:</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>318</b>

**Fig. 5. Age Groups at year end**

Breakdown of age groups have remained fairly stable apart from a slight increase in the 5 to 15 years age group.

Fig. 6 and 7 shows the breakdown of placement by type and the numbers of placements over 20 miles from the city. The numbers of children placed over 20 miles from the city is lower than the statistical neighbour average.

	31/03/2011	31/03/2012	31/03/2014
External Residential	6	13	14
IFA	64	78	76
In-House Fostering	172	160	165
In-House Residential	14	12	10
Lodgings	3	2	7
Other	39	42	44
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>318</b>

	31/03/2011	31/03/2012	31/03/2014
External Residential	2.0%	4.2%	5.0%
IFA	21.5%	25.4%	23.9%
In-House Fostering	57.7%	52.1%	51.9%
In-House Residential	4.7%	3.9%	3.1%
Lodgings	1.0%	0.7%	2.2%
Other	13.1%	13.7%	13.8%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Fig.6. Placement type**

	31/03/2011	31/03/2012	31/03/2014
PCC	9.0%	10.0%	13.1%
Stat. neighbour average	15.5%	15.8%	16.1%

**Fig. 7 Percentage of LAC placed 20+ miles from home**



## Qualitative information about the IRO service

Final outcome in respect of **timeliness of reviews is 93.49%**

The statutory maximum timescales for the timeliness of reviews are outlined in the care planning regulations 2010. A first review must take place within 20 working days of a child becoming looked after. The second review should take place within 3 months of the first review and the third review and reviews thereafter should take place within 6 months of the previous review.

The IRO will frequently decide that a review should be held at more frequent intervals or that the review should be brought forward, particularly, if there are changes of placement or changes to the care plan or the IRO has concerns about a child.

The end of year performance stands at 93.49%, which falls short of our target figure of 100%. 19 children had their reviews held slightly late due to either the IRO miscalculating the timing of the review, staff sickness which meant that other IRO's have had to pick up the review and reschedule it or the social worker not informing the IRO service that the child had become looked after soon enough for the review to be scheduled in time.

### What are we doing about it?

**Timeliness of reviews has been identified as a priority for improvement in the team business plan 2014/15. Systems to ensure timeliness have been reinforced, including those to give managers early alerts to reviews within one week of their due date.**

### Final Outcome for the child's participation in their review is 94.32%

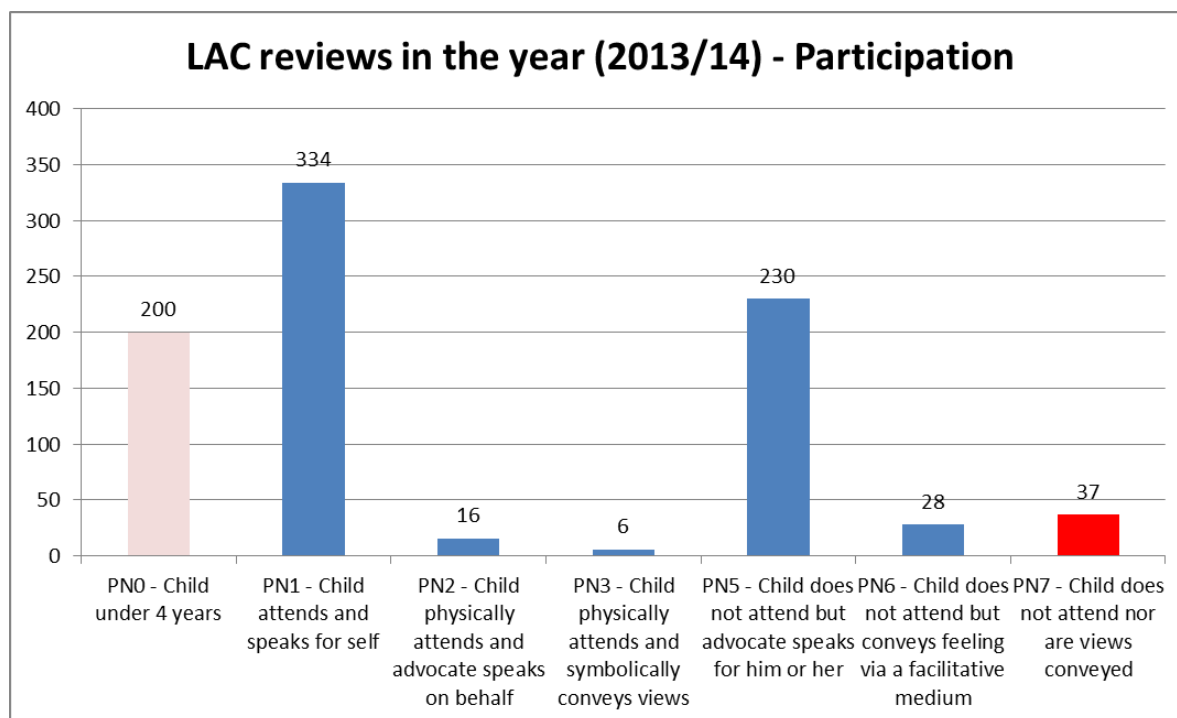
The indicator for participation is measured by the numbers of looked after children who contributed to their statutory review. There is no available benchmarking data to compare Portsmouth's performance against statistical neighbours and the England average.

	% of children aged 4+ who contributed to their statutory review
2011/12	95.09%
2012/13	97.54%
2013/14	94.32%

**Fig.8. Percentage of children aged 4+ who contributed to their review**

IRO's consult with the children and young people prior to their review to encourage their positive participation in their review. Children are also encouraged to discuss with the IRO how and where they want their review held and who they want invited. They are also asked what they want discussed in their review and what they would like to see as an outcome of the

review. In the last year we have sent introductory letters to the child with a photo of the IRO giving them information about the IRO role and what they can expect from the service.



**Fig.9. LAC Participation**

There has been a reduction of children attending their reviews from 390 last year to 334 this year but an increase in the use of advocacy from 209 last year to 230 this year. There has also been an increase in children who neither attend nor have their views conveyed from 29 last year to 37 this year. IROs make strenuous efforts to try to meet with the children concerned to discuss with them their wishes and feelings. There is further work the team need to do to understand the reasons and promote better engagement in the review process.

### What are we doing about it?

**IRO's to consider electronic communications for children/young people who do not wish to engage in their review**

**IRO's are also observing children in placement where verbal communication is problematic; this includes children under 4 years**

**Lead IRO is leading on strategies around improved attendance and contribution at the review**

**Final Outcome for Parents Attendance in their Child's Review is 37%**

Parents' active participation is higher with parents being involved in reviews either through attendance, completing a consultation booklet or meeting the IRO separate to the review meeting. This is an area of improvement highlighted in the 2014/5 business plan.

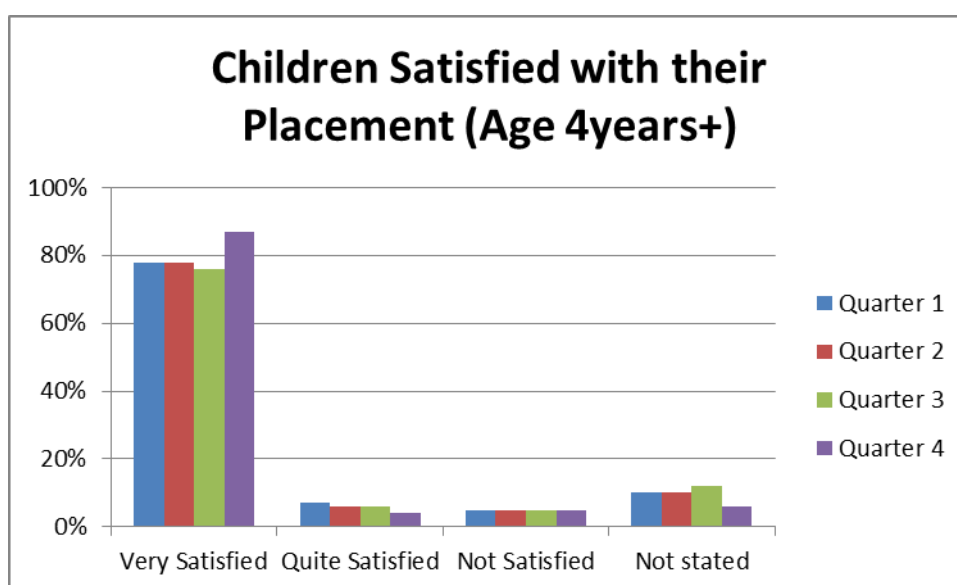
### **Final Outcome for Receipt of Care Plan in 3 Working Days Prior to the Review is 74%**

There has been improvement from previous year of 10%. This can be attributed to the focused work by IRO's to ensure there is a good quality care plan for each child reviewed. IRO's have also worked with individuals and teams on what a good quality plan looks like and will continue to quality assure plans for children as part of the review process.

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## **Achievements and impact of IRO service**

### **Children's Views**



**Fig. 10 LAC Satisfaction**

Children generally showing a high level of satisfaction with their placements particularly in the final quarter. Below are some of the children and young people's comments:



**"Placement is awesome"**

Living with family, well attached

K presented as confident, displayed warm relationship, was clear in identifying what was good about living here

Very happy in placement, behaviour improved out of all recognition

Positive warm interaction observed between child and foster carer

Child likes the pictures on the walls, the fact that there are heaters

Very happy and wants to stay until he finishes college

Happy in placement. Happy in school. Happy with contact

He has been heard to say he wants to stay until he's 40

Very settled part of the family

L reported that she was the happiest she has ever been in the placement



**"Everything's good"**

Not so positive comments were:

There is now some degree of engagement with the placement and carers. Building slowly, less episodes of missing

She likes her room and the carers but misses her mother and worries about her

Would rather live at home but understand reason why

Young person unhappy and feeling very unsafe due to locality

Wants either to return home or have 'new mummy and daddy'

Wants to be placed in Portsmouth

Wants contact with family

## **IRO Impact**

The IRO's in Portsmouth provide independent oversight of the plans for children and work with social workers and partner agencies to improve outcomes for looked after children. IRO's have had a positive impact on:

- Timely permanence planning and increased adoption rates
- Quality care plans leading to service delivery and improved outcomes
- Placements that meet the child's needs promoting stability and good outcomes
- Coordination and oversight of services to meet the child's assessed needs including a review of safeguarding arrangements. Visits being undertaken in line with statutory requirements to ensure children are seen their views heard to improve placement planning and provision.

## **Case Studies**

### Case study 1

"Following the breakdown of her supported lodging placed I advocated that S should be provided with another supported lodging placement as she did not have the independent living skill to move to hostel accommodation. I supported S to change social worker after all attempts to build a relationship between them was not achieved. I also ensured that all social work visits were outside of S work hours as this was making her worried about the impact these visit could have on her job. I also ensured that she had additional funding for clothing and contact with her mother."

### Case study 2

Siblings were living apart and one of the siblings had unresolved issues about the aggression and bullying he had received from the other child and was frightened to have direct contact. The IRO suggested that contact be developed slowly through a contact newsletter between the siblings. This worked to develop the relationship and reduce fears. The siblings are now having good quality face to face contact.

### Case study 3

An IRO supported the child to discharge her care order by arranging legal advice and supporting her through the process.

### Case study 4

An IRO stopped a rehabilitation plan to a parent due to the historical neglect the child had suffered. The IRO encouraged the team to think about the risks around the plan and this later influenced a change of plan

### Case study 5

Contact between G and his mother had been supervised for some years and did not appear to have taken into account George's wishes to have time on his own with his mother. The contact was changed in accordance with G's wishes.

### Case study 6

"The Local Authority is parallel planning and at this early stage and subject to assessment is considering as options a return to parents or birth family or due to his age permanency through foster care for H. However, it should be noted that H is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and subject to a Child Protection Plan. The IRO is of the opinion that to properly safeguard H consideration should be given for an application to be made for an Interim Care order.

Following the review the decision for H to remain accommodated under section 20 was reconsidered and application for an Interim Care Order in respect of H and his siblings was made and orders granted"

The IRO's are committed to improving their own practice through:

- Regular monthly supervision
- Training
- Peer observations of practice
- Practice meetings once a month
- Regional meetings
- Management audits of review records and care plans
- Learning from case file audits
- Team business meetings have been attended by the Virtual School Head delivering training on education issues and personal education plans, CAFCASS and Homestart.

### **Contributions and participation of partner agencies**

The table below shows the actual agency attendees at the child's review expressed also as a % figure. Work will be undertaken to ensure parents' contribution to the conference is also included in performance data.



	Y	N	Grand Total
Care Manager	8	0	8
Carer	71	2	73
Education	31	7	38
Family Centre Worker / Therapist	5	0	5
Family Placement Social Worker	58	1	59
Health	4	0	4
Key Worker (Residential)	4	0	4
Other Worker	21	3	24
Private Fostering Social Worker	2	0	2
Relative / Friend	2	0	2
Team Manager	1	0	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>227</b>
Percentages	Y	N	Grand Total
Care Manager	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Carer	97.3%	2.7%	100.0%
Education	81.6%	18.4%	100.0%
Family Centre Worker / Therapist	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Family Placement Social Worker	98.3%	1.7%	100.0%
Health	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Key Worker (Residential)	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Other Worker	87.5%	12.5%	100.0%
Private Fostering Social Worker	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Relative / Friend	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Team Manager	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>94.3%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Fig 11. Attendance of Partner Agencies**

### **Monitoring and tracking of Care Plans between LAC Reviews**

The IRO's set timescales for review decisions to be actioned and have developed systems for follow up. In between reviews all IRO's set a midway review at the statutory review. This is not a formal review but it is an opportunity for discussion with the social worker, the child or scrutiny of case records. Some reviews are arranged more frequently particularly when there are transitional issues requiring closer IRO scrutiny.

## Quality of Care Plan

The IRO's quality assure the care plans and as stated above have developed workshops for the Young Person's Support Team who were identified as having particular needs due to new workers joining the team. The IRO's have also supported individuals across all the teams and participated in the performance development forum earlier in the year attended by team managers and practice leaders. The IRO has a key responsibility to monitor the progression of the care plan

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## Quality Assurance of the IRO Service

### Management Oversight

The Safeguarding Monitoring Commissioning Manager manages the IRO service. The team have 3 operational managers, called lead IRO's, who have a supervisory, developmental role in the team with one of the lead IRO's being responsible for allegations management against persons working with children. The other 2 are leads for looked after children and child protection case conferences respectively. A period of vacancy is noted for the looked after children lead IRO post since November 2013 with the retirement of the post-holder; this post has recently been recruited to and responsibilities have been held by Specialist IRO's within the interim although additional locum support has been in place for IRO duties.

The management role involves:

- Supervision, consultation and support of team members
- Timely allocation of work
- Monitoring of team performance including key performance indicators
- Audits of reviews and care plans as well as being part of the wider case file auditing programme
- Peer observations have been conducted and management observation has been focused on observation of chairing skills, mainly through case conferences although review observations are scheduled. Observations have been undertaken by senior managers including Head of Service and the Director of Children's and Adult Services.

### Audits

The issues arising from the audits undertaken have led to improvements to the review record of discussion. These can be summarised as follows:

- Care plan must be quality assured prior to the review and IRO to check amendments post review have been addressed. Care plan needs to align with review decisions.
- Child's views need to be incorporated into review decisions and if not a clear rationale should be in place. The review needs to follow up on children who are unable to verbalise their views due to age or disability and for children who are choosing not to engage.
- Changes of plan need to be accompanied by a clear rationale and a process that needs to be adhered to.

## Dispute resolution and escalation

This process was put in place to ensure there was a clear route for escalating cases that are a cause for concern. Over the year there have been 116 manager alerts on behalf of looked after children with the majority being resolved at team manager level. Informal challenge is captured via case note recordings.

From 01/04/2013 to 31/08/2013 all manager alerts, informal and formal, were recorded on a case note on the child's file. Whilst all data is carefully recorded it lacks reportable detail as to levels and issues. This has been addressed by moving the recording to "Contacts" which contains reportable fields for key dates and actions. The "Contacts" recording is to be further enhanced by adding a questionnaire to the template to aid clarity and reporting.

The breakdown of issues is shown in the table below.

Issue	Total %
Statutory requirements not being met	16%
Delay for the child	17%
Assessments and care plans incomplete	47%
IRO not informed of significant changes	3%
Lack of follow through on review decisions	4%
Legal process not followed through	<1%
LAC preparation documents not available or of poor quality; or meetings not able to proceed	12%

**Fig. 12. Dispute Resolution Issues**

The table clearly shows that issues regarding the currency of Assessments and Care Plans were the greatest areas of focus. Although within this a greater theme was the currency of plans. There has been substantial emphasis on the quality of planning and a bespoke redesign of our IT system (implemented June 2014) has supported this.

Casework delay has been the second highest issue of concern. IROs are rigorously following through on all areas of delay.

Statutory requirements not met are most usually to do with the timing of meetings and visits.

The other category of note is LAC preparation documents not available or not meeting departmental standards.

The dispute resolution process has been revised to ensure greater clarity for managers and IRO's and to promote more rigour in relation to follow through to ensure resolution occurs within 20 days. No cases were formally passed to Head of Service for resolution but some informal case discussion has taken place.

### Progression of care plans

IRO's monitor the progression of the plan for the child in relation to 4 key domains; education, health, placement and contact.

Education	%
Quarter 1	71%
Quarter 2	78%
Quarter 3	74%
Quarter 4	79%

Fig. 18. Education arrangements progressing as required

Main Issues of concern have been:

- Child disengaged and not attending school
- PEP needing to be updated
- Greater support needed in school
- Transitional issues or delays in identifying the most appropriate provision

Fig. 19. Health arrangements progressing as required

Health	%
Quarter 1	92%
Quarter 2	90%
Quarter 3	92%
Quarter 4	89%

Main issues of concern in relation to health have been:

- Refusing health assessment appointments
- LAC health assessment not arranged

Fig 20. Placement arrangements progressing as required

Placement	%
Quarter 1	89%
Quarter 2	87%
Quarter 3	87%
Quarter 4	86%

Main issues of concern in relation to placement have been:

- Long term /adoption placement needs to be identified
- Post 18 provision needs to be secured
- Sibling assessment needs to be completed
- Child missing from placement

Fig. 21 Contact arrangements progressing as required

Contact	%
Quarter 1	79%
Quarter 2	82%
Quarter 3	76%
Quarter 4	80%

Main issues of concern in relation to contact have been:

- Parents disengaged
- Further assessment required

Progression of contact plans has improved from previous year's position of 75%.

## Annual work programme for next year April 2014 – March 2015

OUTCOME	SERVICE ACTIVITY	TEAM LEAD OFFICER	TARGET	ACTIONS
1. Reduction of IRO changes for Looked After Children	Looked after children reviews	Mary Brimson	No Locum IRO by 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2014  100% Permanent staffing in place	Recruitment strategy & marketing Job evaluation to support permanent recruitment
2. Increased participation of children in their reviews	Looked after children reviews	Lead IRO	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2014  Target 95% participation of Children & Young people in their statutory review.	IRO Consultations in place for all children and young people  Children's reviews to be planned around the wishes and feelings of the child on a consistent basis. Lead IRO to lead on performance review and team development  Lead IRO to develop strategy to support improved practice with revision of consultation documents
3.Improved parents contribution to their children's reviews to support continued engagement and reunification for children when this is considered to be in the child's best interests	Looked after children reviews	Lead IRO	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2014  Target 80% parental contribution to their children's reviews.	Strategy to be developed to support improvement based on best practice
4. Revised information materials for parents and young people	Looked after children reviews and child protection case conferences	Lead IRO's	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2014	Booklets and consultation documents to be reviewed and discussed and agreed at Children in Care Council
5. Themes from dispute resolution collated are fed back to operational teams and senior managers	Looked after children reviews and child protection case conferences	Lead IRO's	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2014	Review of key themes with associated report on quarterly basis
6. Improved timeliness of LAC reviews	Looked after children reviews	Lead IRO	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2014  Target 100% of LAC reviews held within required	Process in place to monitor performance within team and give alerts to reviews about to go out of timescale with exception reporting



			timeframes.	
7. IRO links in place with feedback loop with operational teams	Looked after children reviews and child protection case conferences	Lead IRO	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2014	IRO links have been identified but implementation and messages need to be consistently delivered
8. Improve care planning process to ensure care plans are developed and updated in a timely way	Care planning	Safeguarding Monitoring Commissioning Manager	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2014  100% updated care plans in place at statutory review.	Introduction of care planning meetings prior to the child's review

## Overview and Summary

The team have delivered many changes and contributed to the improvements made to care planning, timely permanence planning in particular adoption and ensuring a child centred review through IRO consultations, advocating for the child, more robust care planning and ensuring that their independent role makes a difference to children's lives. Greater rigour and consistency has been brought into the reviewing process to address drift. The team have set up peer observation, practice meetings and audits to improve their practice as IRO's.

There are some areas of practice identified that require more development such as parents contribution to their child's reviews, sharper focus on timeliness of reviews and the dispute resolution process needs to be strengthened through tighter escalation and timescales.

The IRO service has worked with schools, CAMHS, Health professionals, CAFCASS, the virtual school and the operational teams to deliver high standards of care to looked after children.

The team business plan above highlights our priorities for 2014/15

Mary Brimson  
Safeguarding Monitoring Commissioning Manager  
June 27<sup>th</sup> 2014