

Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Service 2019 – 2020



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1. Introduction

The IRO Handbook 2010 provides the statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers and Local Authorities on their statutory functions in relation to case management and review of looked after children. As part of this statutory guidance there is a requirement for the manager of the IRO Service to produce an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

2. Purpose of Service and Legal Context

Every child who is looked after by Derby City Council must have a care plan which details the long-term plan for the child's upbringing and the arrangements made by Derby Childrens & Young Peoples Services (CYP) to meet the child's day to day needs. All local authorities have a statutory duty to regularly review the care plan within legislative timescales (Care Planning and Case Review Regulations 2015)

The appointment of an IRO for every looked after child is a legal requirement under section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The role of the IRO was strengthened in the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 and The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.

From December 2012 the Looked After Children (LAC) population was extended to include those children placed on remand in secure units or youth offending institutions under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) arrangements. This Act places a responsibility on Local Authorities to treat all children remanded to custody as looked after children up to the age of 18 years with each young person having a remand plan which is the equivalent of a care plan.

The IRO Handbook: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Independent Reviewing Officers on Reviewing Arrangements for Looked after Children specifies the following requirements:

Every child in care should have a named IRO to provide continuity in the oversight of the case and to enable the IRO to develop a consistent relationship with the child. The child's care plan must be prepared before the child is first placed by the local authority or if this is not practicable, within ten working days of the start of the first placement. The IRO must be appointed to the child's case within 5 days.

The statutory duties of the IRO are to:

- monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's case
- participate in any review of the child's case
- ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority, and
- perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations



The primary task of the IRO is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authorities legal responsibilities towards the child.

There are two clear and separate aspects to the function of the IRO:

- i. Chairing the child's review; and
- ii. Monitoring the child's case on an on-going basis

3. IRO Service

The IRO service in Derby at year end 2019/20 had a total establishment of 7.8 fte IRO's and a 0.5 fte specialist IRO for children receiving short breaks. The IRO team headcount is 9 IRO's, with 2 males and 7 females. It is an experienced team; it has been a stable team over the last year. Due to increasing numbers of children in care over 2019/20, which will be discussed later in the report, a temporary IRO post was agreed at the latter end on of the 2019/20 year. This post is initially for one year. This additional post will provide additional capacity to the IRO service to meet the demands of the increasing number of children in care.

The IRO Handbook 2010 (statutory guidance), states that in order to carry out the IRO responsibilities as laid out in the Care Planning Regulations 2010 a full time IRO should ideally have between 50 – 70 cases. Caseloads at year end for each IRO were approximately 75. This is the average caseload based on actual staffing numbers, however in reality the average caseload for each IRO was 86, this is because for the whole of 2019/20 a member of the IRO team was not in work. This is 16 more than the top end of the handbook guidance.

The working average case load at the end of 2019/20 was 86, in 2018/19 it was 82. There has been a gradual increase of children in care numbers over 2019/20 with a total of 588 in care at the end of the year whereas in 2018/19 there were 562. The IRO service is based at the Gatehouse with the rest of the Quality Assurance Service, including Child Protection Managers and Children in Need Reviewing Officers. This service has a strong identity and works very well across the Quality Assurance Service.

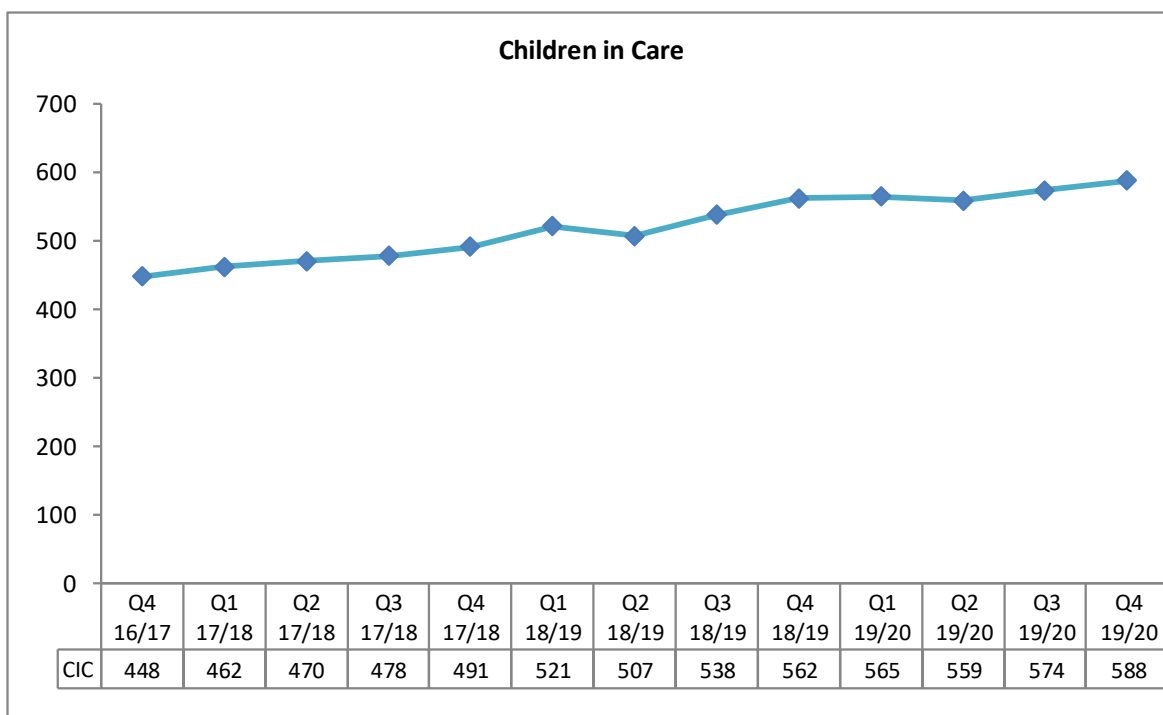
4.0 Children in Care over the last three years

The table below illustrates the quarterly changes in the number of children in care throughout the last three years.

There has been a continuing increase in the numbers of children in care over the last three years. At the end of 2017/18 there were 491 children in care rising to 562 at the end of 2018/19 and 588 at the end of 2019/20. This is a total increase 140 children in care since the beginning of April 2017. There was an increase of 26 children in care over 2019/20 from 2018/19

2019/20 started off with 565 children in care at the end of quarter one, this figure dropped by 6 at the end of quarter two to 559 and then from then on has continued to increase consistently with 574 at the end of quarter three and 588 at year end.



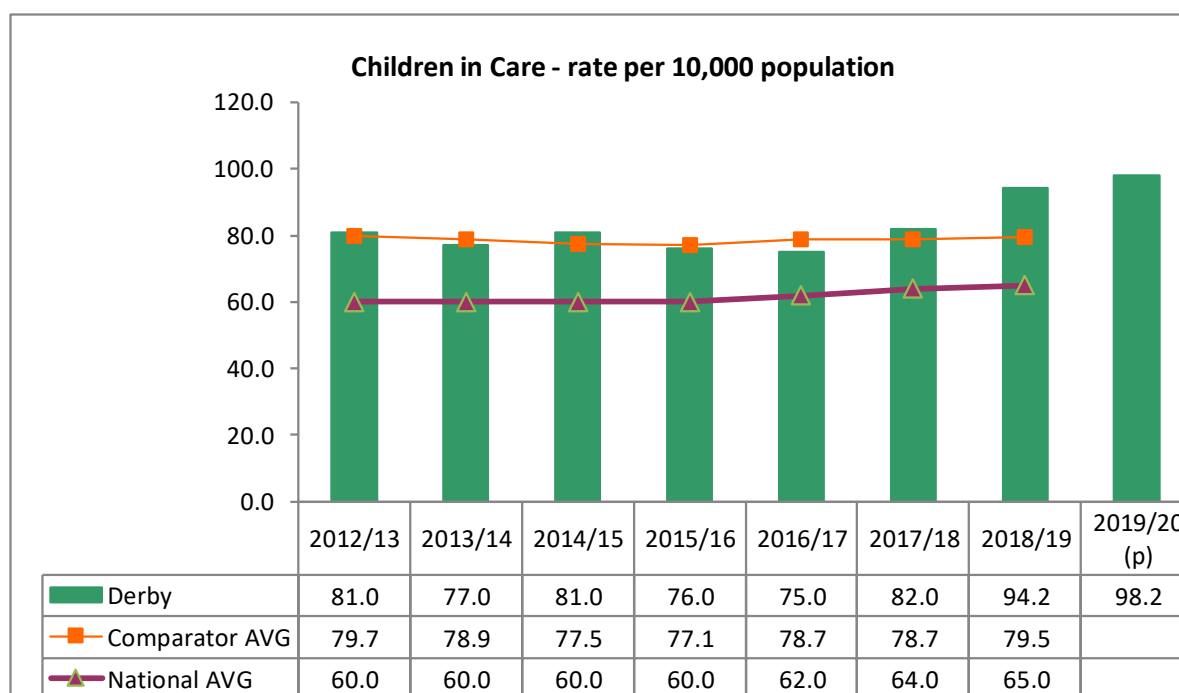


Derby City has a higher child in care rate per 10,000 population compared to its comparator authorities and nationally. At the end of 2017/18 Derby was at 82.0, comparator average was at 78.7 and nationally it was 64.

At year end 31 March 2020 Derby had 98 children in care per 10,000 people aged under 18.

Derby's rate (98) is above the 2018-19 comparator authority average of 81 per 10,000, above the national rate of 65 per 10,000 and above the East Midlands average of 58 per 10,000. Derby's average has risen from 94 per 10,000 seen in 2018-19 up to 98 per 10,000 in 2019-20. The national average has risen from 64 per 10,000 seen in 2017-18 up to 65 per 10,000 in 2018-19





5. The Age and Gender of Children in Care

The majority of children in care in Derby at year end 2019/20 are aged between 10 to 15 years old, 233 or 40% of the total. The numbers of babies aged less than 1 has reduced by a further 10 cases compared to the previous quarter and equates to 5% of the overall cohort. There has been a further increase in the number of children aged 1 to 4 years old, increasing from 69 children at 30 September 2019 to 97 at 31 March 2020. This age group equates to 16% of the overall cohort. This is the highest percentage we've seen in this particular dataset. The number of children aged 5 to 9 and young people aged 10 to 15 years old has been fairly stable during 2019-20. The number of children aged 16 or over has reduced to its lowest number since 30 September 2018; 108 children in care were aged 16 or over as at 31 March 2020. This equates to 18% of the overall cohort.

It would be reasonable to expect the majority of the children that are under five to have a plan for either adoption or other permanence exit, including a return home. As children get older it becomes more difficult to secure permanence through adoption and hence it is very unlikely that children in banding of 10 and over will leave care through this exit route, this banding makes up 58% of children in care. For these children it is important, where appropriate and safe to consider options for a return home or to extended family and friends via a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order. Permanence can also be achieved through fostering. For children that are leaving care age it is important to provide support, advice and training to prepare for independent living. Derby Childrens and Young People Services have a 'Staying Put' policy. This allows young people to stay in their foster placement beyond 18 as long as the foster carers agree and criteria are met. Whilst the young person is no longer in the care of the authority and the foster placement loses its status, the placement is funded through a combination of council funding as well as benefits.



This provides continuity and stability for the young person to move to independence when they are ready.

Age Band	31/03/2020	31/03/2020
Under 1	29	5%
1 to 4	97	16%
5 to 9	121	21%
10 to 15	233	40%
16+	108	18%
Total	588	100%

The majority of children in care in Derby at year end 2019/20 were male, 316 making 53.7% of the total with 272 females which equates to 46.3% of the total. Having looked at historical data dating back for the last three years, these figures in relation to gender of children in care seems to remain fairly consistent.

	31/03/2020	31/03/2020
Male	316	53.7%
Female	272	46.3%
Total	588	100%

6. The Ethnicity of the Children in Care

As at the end of March 2020 out of the 588 children in care, the largest group of children, 342 were reported as being White British, which was a total of 58.2% of all children in care, this is almost an identical percent to last year . The next largest group were children of dual heritage who made up 13.1% of the population with 77 children in care, followed by 53 Children or 9% classed as Gypsy/Traveller/Roma. There has been an increase of 22 children in care from the Gypsy/Traveller/Roma category from 2018/19 when it was 31 or 5.5%.

Ethnicity Recorded	Number	Percentage
Asian or Asian British	40	6.8%
Black or Black British	28	4.8%
Dual Heritage	77	13.1%



Gypsy/Roma/Traveller	53	9.0%
Other	14	2.4%
White British	342	58.2%
White Other ¹	34	5.8%
Total	588	100%

7. The Legal Status of Children in Care

As at end of March 2020, 307 or 52% of children in Derby were looked after under a full care order. There were 143 children or 24% that were on interim care order, this means that these cases were still in proceedings pending assessments or other work and a final outcome was yet to be determined through the courts.

There were 54 children or 9% of the total population who had a placement order granted, this means that a care plan for adoption had been agreed through the courts for these children. 82 or 13.9% of the total population were voluntarily accommodated under s.20. This is a decrease of 24 (5%) from 2018/19. It is positive to note the decrease in voluntary accommodations. One explanation is that it may be related to a decrease in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children over the year. Voluntary accommodation is when children are accommodated at the request of and or in agreement with parent/s or those with parental responsibility or were over 16 and had requested to be accommodated under the homelessness policy

Legal Status	31/03/2019	31/03/2020
C1 Interim Care order	143	24.0%
C2 Full Care order	307	52.0%
E1 Placement Order Granted	54	9.0%
J1 In Local Authority on Remand, or Committed for Trial or Sentence	2	0.3%
L1 Under Police Protection, in LA Accommodation	0	0%
V2 Accommodated under Section 20	82	13.9%
Total	588	100%

¹ White - Other includes: White - European, White - Non-European, White - Other European, White - Irish

8. Entrants and Exits from Care

Analysing the number of children entering and exiting care provides useful information about the reasons why children and young people have come into care and also how we exit them from the care system.

When analysing the reasons for children starting care the most overwhelming reasons for each quarter throughout 2019/20 has been abuse or neglect, this was also the case in 2018/19 and 2017/18.

There were 233 children entering care in 2019/20 compared to 292 children and young people entering care in 2018/19. Out of this, a total of 158 were due to abuse and neglect, this totals 68% of all entrants. This is 6% more than last year 2018/19 when it was 62%. 15 children came into care due to parental illness/disability, this is a reduction of 5 from 2018/19, when this has been broken down this has included parents abusing alcohol and drugs, parental disability, parents with problems and parents with learning disability. 9 children and young people came into care due to disability and a further 18 for absent parenting; this is an decrease from last year when it was a total of 46 young people. The decrease can be attributed to the reduction in unaccompanied asylum seeker children coming into care. According to the records 1 child came into care because of low income. When this has been explored further this is usually because young people have signed themselves into care due to being homeless. There were 5 children that came into care for socially unacceptable behaviour, last year this was 7. There have been a steadily increasing number of children entering care throughout 2019/20 starting with 35 in the first quarter and 54 in the final quarter.

Children in Care - reasons for children starting care				
Reasons for children starting care	Quarter End - numbers starting care during the quarter			
	30/06/2019	30/09/2019	31/12/2019	31/03/2020
Abuse or Neglect	35	29	40	54
Disability	0	1	2	6
Parental Illness/Disability	0	4	11	0
Family in Acute Stress	0	1	3	0
Family Dysfunction	3	1	2	2
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	2	0	1	2
Low Income	0	1	0	0
Absent Parenting	8	5	3	2
UASC	7	4	2	2



Total	55	46	64	68
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According to the data currently available in 2019/20, 192 children and young people exited care. This was a decrease from 2018/19 when there 221 young people that exited care. There was a decrease in the number of children adopted a total of 19 when compared to 2018/19 when there 30. 34 children returned to live at home with parents or relatives or other persons with PR, this was a significant decrease from 2018/19 when there 63.

Quite a large number, 57 young people, exited care by moving into independence, this made 30% of the total number. The number of children and young people exited through the use of SGO's has increased from 9 last year to 14. There has continue to be a decrease in the number of child arrangement orders from 38 in 2017/18 to 25 in 2018/19 and 13 in 2019/20

There were 12 children and young people who ceased care for any other reason, this may need further investigation regarding accurate recording with a further 4 exiting through being sentenced to custody, and this is significant decrease from last when there were 10. There have been 4 exits through the age assessment process whereby the person was assessed to be over 18 years old.

Reason Ceased (grouped)	Quarter End - numbers			
	30/06/2019	30/09/2019	31/12/2019	31/03/2020
Adopted	6	6	2	5
Child Arrangement Order	0	7	1	5
SGO	3	1	8	2
Returned Home with PR	3	10	8	13
Returned Home with no PR	12	5	5	8
Independent Living	17	15	10	15
To Adult Social Care	0	0	2	0
Any other reason	0	5	5	2
Sentenced to custody	2	0	1	1
Care taken over by another LA in the UK	1	0	0	0
Age assessment determined 18 or over	0	3	0	1
child moved abroad	0	0	0	0
Accommodation on remand ended	0	2	0	0
Died	0	0	0	0



Total	44	54	42	52
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9. Children in Care Placement Provision

There were a total of 149 placements with Derby City Council or other provision, making a total of 34% of all placements. There were 439 placements with private agencies, making a total of 66% of all placements. There has been a slight decrease in the use of private agencies from last years by 5% in total figures

From the total 105 or 18% of placements were with our in-house foster carers and 330 or 56% with independent fostering agencies. This shows that 24% of all fostering placements are in house and 76% are with independent fostering agencies. There has been a decrease in the percentage of in-house fostering over the last few years, this seems to have continued on a slow decline over the last year with another decrease 2% in the use of in house foster carers (in 2018/19 it was 4% decrease in the use of inhouse foster care) . The number of children placed with private fostering agencies continues to be a very significant amount. It must be recognised that there is a changing economy in relation to foster care provision and the market has significantly increased with private providers over recent years, this has made it increasingly difficult for the local authority to compete and increase its market share of foster carers. Derby City Council Fostering Service has recently set up an improvement board and started related activity to increase its stock of foster carers. The improvement board increased attention on fostering and resulted in an increase in fostering enquiries.

There are 29 children that are placed with parents. These will be children who are on care orders or interim care orders. This is an area that has had significant attention over the last few years. The number of children PWP at the end of 2018/19 was 29 so this has remained the same. Children and young people would usually be placed with parents as part of a process to return a young person back to the care of their parents with a view to completing assessments to discharge the care order or as part of proceedings to decide what the plan should be for the child or young person.

Derby City Council or Other

Placement Groups - provision of placement	31/03/2020
Foster (U1-U6)	105
Homes and Hostels (K2)	15
Independent Living (P2)	0
Placed for Adoption (A3-A6)	0
Placed with Parents (P1)	29
Total	149



Private Agency including Independent Fostering Agencies

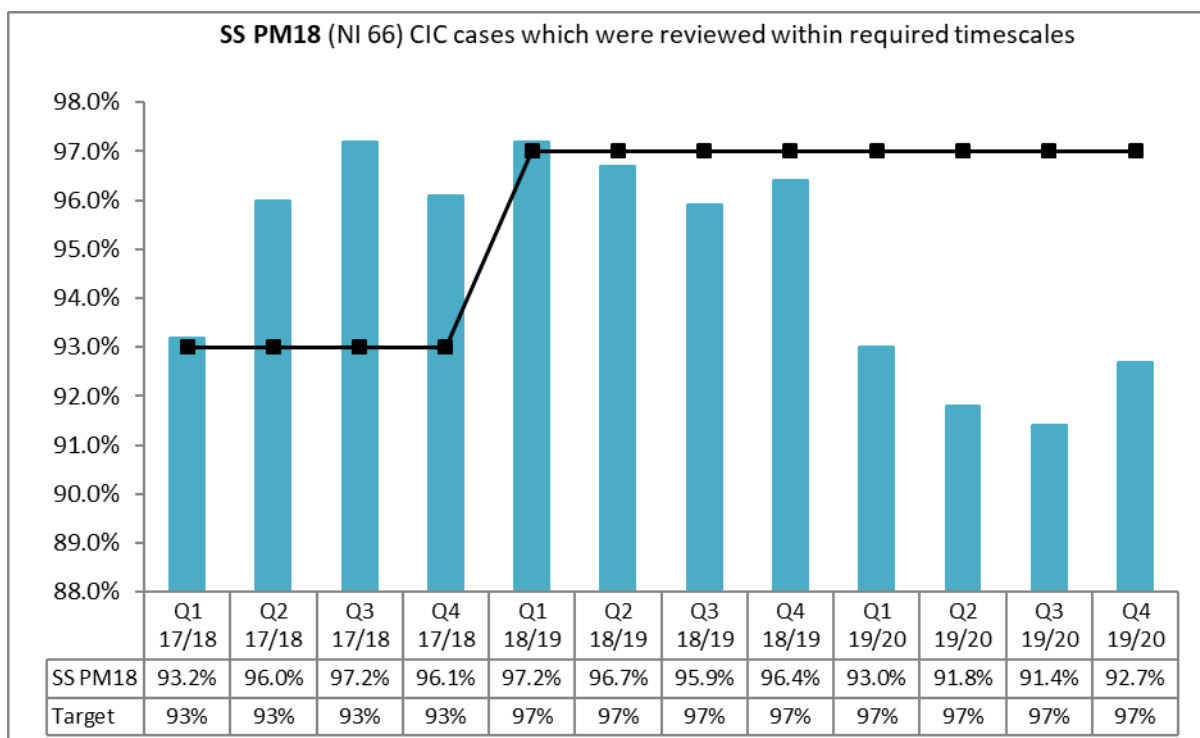
Placement Groups - provision of placement	31/03/2020
Foster (U1-U6)	330
Homes and Hostels (K2)	35
Independent Living (P2)	33
Placed for Adoption (A3-A6)	13
Residential School/Hospital (R1/R2/S1)	2
Secure Units, YOI or Prison (K1 and R5)	4
Other placements	22
Total	439

10. Reviews Completed and Timeliness of Reviews

The IRO team completed over 1,300 reviews in 2019/20. The number of reviews that have been completed within timescales has reduced from 2018/19 which was 96% to 92.7%. The 92.7% is below our target of 97% for the year. The achievement of 92.7 % has been remarkable as there has been a reduction in IRO capacity for a significant period. IRO colleagues have maintained the work necessary and reviews have been absorbed within the team. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase in the number of children in care, which results increased number of reviews. The IRO manager continues to work with operational managers to ensure timely notifications of young people coming into care.

It is of note to explain that the DfE guidance states that if one of the reviews is late for the child in the reporting year then all the reviews are classed as late.

The IRO service will continue to prioritise this area of work and work hard to ensure that all reviews are held within the statutory required timescales.



11. Number of Children Participating in their Reviews

The IRO service has continued to work hard to ensure children and young people participate in their review. In 2019/20, 97.5%% of all reviews had children and young people participating in them. This exceeds our target for of 97%.

The service has worked very hard over the year to improve on last year's excellent figures of 97.2%, however sometimes even after discussion with their IRO and SW there is still some young people who do not wish to participate in their reviews, in these cases this is recorded as non-participation and hence does affect the overall figures. In situations like this the IRO always tries to meet with the young person before the review to ascertain their wishes and feelings and ensures that these are reflected in the review. Furthermore, children and young people are sent review consultation documentation which they are asked to complete before their review and send back to their IRO. There is a separate documentation for children from 4 to 11 years of age and 12 to 17 years. The consultation documents are used to inform the discussion that the IRO has with the young person and also on the agreement of the young person to inform the discussion at the review.

12. Dispute Resolution Process – Quality Assurance Notification Forms

Where an IRO has significant concerns about practice or other issues affecting a child's care plan then the IRO can instigate the QA notification process:

In the first instance if appropriate the IRO will raise an Informal QA Notification, this will be in the form of an Informal Notification Case Note on LCS. The Case Note will generate a notification for the SW. The SW and TM are expected to respond in 72 hours.

The informal notification can be completed anytime and may cover



- Poor practice - this can include the SW not following up a decision from a statutory review, not keeping the IRO informed about changes, lack of preparation for the review, poor quality reports or failure to complete required tasks or lack of progress
- Non-attendance - SW not attending statutory review
- No reports – reports not generated through LCS on time for the review
- Child not supported to participate in the review process

If any of the above criteria for Informal Notification is repeated or where there are significant concerns a Formal QA Notification is instigated. The formal process has four internal stages, initially when the IRO has a serious concern about practice or issues affecting the care plan for the child (or the informal process has not been successful) the IRO instigates stage one of the process. This involves the IRO generating an electronic QA notification on LCS this generates a notification to the social worker and team manager. The IRO follows this up with an email to the team manager for a response to the issues raised; the manager has ten days to respond to the notification. The response has now been developed as a form on the LCS system. If there is no response or the response is unsatisfactory then the issue will go to stage two of the process whereby the Deputy Head of Service will meet with the deputy head or head of service responsible to agree an action plan with a view to resolving the issue. If an agreement is not reached, then the notification can be escalated to the third stage of the QA notification process. This involves a meeting between the head of service (QA) and head of service (Operational) and if required they can call a professionals meeting. Finally, if there is still no satisfactory resolution then the head of service QA will discuss concerns with service director or strategic director as appropriate, to agree if any further action can be taken before a referral to CAFCASS is made for external scrutiny and resolution.

There is a list of criteria that IROs use when deciding whether to use the dispute resolution process. To make the process consistent and more transparent it has been agreed that IRO's must raise a QA notification when:

- There has been drift or delay in implementation of the care plan
- Failure to complete significant tasks agreed in reviews within the review period where this will have a detrimental impact on the child
- Failure by any agency to comply with statutory requirements e.g. visits, sharing of court documents, school provision etc.
- Poor practice which is repeated or has a significant impact on child
- Example of excellent practice which has achieved a good outcome for the child

In 2019/20 there were 80 formal QA notifications this is eleven less than in 2018/19 when there were 91, in 2017/18 when there were 93 formal QA notifications, whilst in 2016/17 there were 84, in 2015/16 there were 107 and 2014/15 there were a total of 53 QA notifications.



The numbers of formal QA notifications have been generally consistent over the last three years. With a general downward trend, however the down trend was steeper in 2019/20 with 11 less. There has been a continued improvement and consistency in the activity of the IRO's in relation to their role. They have continued to ensure they have a good footprint on the system and have regular communications with case social workers. The good communication has continued to keep the formal QA's at a consistent level, by having thorough discussions and early informal challenge this will have resulted in the need for less formal QA notifications.

The notifications were made up as follows:

Reason	Number
Drift or Delay	9
Excellent Practice	8
Non completion of Significant Tasks	8
Persistent Poor Practice	2
Statutory Requirements Not Met	53
Total	80

The greatest numbers of QA notifications 53 a decrease of 6 from 2018/19 when there were 59, were raised for statutory requirements not met; these would include cases where there are concerns that a child has not been visited as per the statutory requirements or statutory assessments not completed or completed in a timely way.

The second largest number of QA notifications, 9 (11) was generated for drift and delay, this is an increase of 3 in 2018/19 when there were 6. These have included concerns regarding progressing of permanence or revoking particular orders or discharging care orders.

There were 8 QA notifications for failure to complete tasks, this is decrease of 3 from 2018/19 when there were 11. These included tasks such as contact not being agreed between siblings and/or parents or medical assessments/appointments not undertaken or completed in a timely manner.

The number of QA notifications for excellent practice was a total of 8, this is a decrease from last year when there was a total of 11 for the whole year. Whilst it is important for IRO's to raise concerns about poor practice it is equally important to highlight where practice has been excellent and has had a good impact on the outcomes of a child, this is particularly important in generating a culture of continuous improvement.

There were 2 notifications for persistent poor practice, where there may be a number of actions that that have not been completed over review period or beyond.



There were 4 cases which were escalated to stage two of the dispute resolution process (increase of 3 from last year's report); The cases escalated to stage 2 included 1 for no response to the QA notification at stage 1 and 3 for non-completion of review paperwork. Following a discussion between the Deputy Head of Service (QA) and relevant Head/Deputy of Service this issue was progressed satisfactorily.

13. Case Tracking

In addition to monitoring the child's care and progress within the plan at statutory reviews, IROs have a responsibility to monitor between reviews. In order for this to be effective and transparent in Derby the IRO Service has a tracking system.

Cases are identified as High, Medium and Low priority. The level is agreed and recorded at the review

High: where the IRO has concerns that time-critical elements of the care plan are becoming subject to drift or delay, and this is likely to have a significant impact on outcomes for the child, the IRO may set an early date for review, require an up-date from the social worker at regular intervals, and/or monitor activity on the child's file. They may also complete a QA notification and where the concern includes the manager's oversight of the case, they will alert the DHoS. Examples include delay in issuing proceedings, delays in home finding, critical assessments not completed impacting on permanence planning.

Medium: where the child or the situation would be vulnerable to any drift or delay, though none identified at present, or where less critical elements of the care plan are not being progressed, the IRO may require an interim up-date from the relevant member of staff, and/or check the child's file between reviews.

Examples include children with plans for adoption who may be hard to place or a placement has not been found by the second review post PO, criminal injuries claims, delays in arranging therapy or a school place, PEP not completed revocations of orders in PWP.

Low: where the child is in a stable permanent placement and/or the plan is progressing well, and the IRO is confident with the worker and management oversight.

Examples include the majority of children in long-term care and children subject to care proceedings

The case tracking process has now been implemented since April 2014. The IRO service is of the view that this has helped to identify cases that need closer monitoring and action. Depending on the priority level, especially when it is high, IRO's are feeding back that they are having increased communication, monitoring and discussion with the case social workers. In many cases due to the IRO following up on actions with the social workers this is ensuring that decisions from reviews are being actioned and hence reducing the need for QA notifications at the subsequent statutory review.

As part of the case tracking the IRO service has been working on evidencing the effective work that they do. With this in mind the service has worked on ensuring that there is a clear footprint of the IRO involvement within the child's or young person's LCS record. Whilst the



IRO service strives to improve on this, there has been considerable improvement in this area over the last year.

14. Feedback from Young People and Parents

As well as using consultation forms for young people and parents, the Derby IRO service has introduced forms to gather feedback after the review. In 2019/20 we received 7 feedback forms from young people and 24 feedback forms from parents.

On reviewing the feedback forms from young people, they have been almost unanimous in stating;

- They understand the purpose of the meeting.
- They felt that they had been listened to
- They were given a chance to speak and say what they wanted to

Some of the comments stated:

I felt listened to

Hot chocolate and biscuits would make the meeting better

On reviewing the feedback forms from parents, they have been positive.in parents stating:

- They understand the purpose of the meeting.
- They felt that they had been listened to
- They were given a chance to speak and say what they wanted to

Some of the comments back form parents stated:

I felt understood

Really happy with the meeting

Officials should have been better at sharing important information before the meeting

I like my IRO and the meeting was very informative

Everyone was very supportive and helpful

The IRO is a very nice person, made the atmosphere nice

I would like to see S more or increase contact time.

The above issue about contact was addressed by the IRO in the review and also discussed by the IRO with the SW post the review meeting.

Meeting went very well for me to understand.



15. Health Assessments

The IRO team continue to have a good working relationship with the children in care nurses, health visitors, lead nurse and designated nurse.

The Deputy Head of Service continues to attend the Children in Care and Adoption (CICA) steering group on a quarterly basis. This is a meeting which includes the lead doctor, LAC nurse and other key professionals to discuss and improve health issues and processes for children in care. As well as this the Deputy Head of Service meets with the designated LAC nurse on a quarterly basis.

The 2019/20 data for children receiving their health assessments, dental checks and immunisations is as follows;

- Derby's completion rate of annual health assessments has decreased from 96.1% in 2018-19 to 93.5% in 2019-20, a decrease of 2.6 percentage points. The 2019-20 percentage is higher than the national (89.9%), comparator authority average (91.6%) and the East Midlands average (91.1%). Derby would rank mid-table in our comparator group based on 2018-19 comparison data.
- Derby's completion rate of health development assessments has decreased slightly, decreasing from 91.9% in 2018-19 to 90.2% in 2019-20. This was a decrease of 1.7 percentage points. The 2019-20 percentage is above the national (88.1%) and comparator authority average (84.1%) for the third year running.
- Derby's completion rate of immunisations has decreased slightly during 2019-20 to 92.3% from 93.8% in 2018-19, a decrease of 1.5 percentage points. Even after a slight decrease Derby's 2019-20 performance remains higher than the comparator (91.1%) and national averages (86.8%) for the eighth year running.
- Derby's completion rate of dental checks (92.3%) has increased for the fourth year running. The 2019-20 percentage could place us mid-table in our comparator group. During 2019-20 Derby performed higher than the national average (85.5%), the East Midlands average (82.2%) and the comparator authority average (92.0%) for the first time since 2014-15.
- The percentage of children looked after with a completed SDQ in Derby during 2019-20 has decreased slightly from 92.9% to 92.5%. However, even with the slight reduction Derby remains significantly higher than the 2018-19 national average (78.1%), the East Midlands average (79.9%) and the comparator authority average (75.9%). The average SDQ score for Derby decreased further during 2019-20 and is now more in line with national and comparator scores. The average score has dropped year on year over the past four years and is now at its lowest score with 14.7. This would place Derby fifth highest in our comparator authority group. The 2018-19 average score nationally was 14.2, comparator authority average was 14.6 and the East Midlands average was 14.5.

It is encouraging to see that progress is being maintained in all area, a high percentage of children in care in Derby continue to have up to date immunisations and this has been consistently high over the past few years.



All health assessments for children placed in or very near to Derby (apart from the initial assessment which is done at the Royal Hospital) are done at Sinfin Health Centre. The initial health assessment has to be done within 20 working days of the child coming into care and then depending on the age of the child if they are under five they have six monthly development checks and if they are over five they have annual health assessment. Whilst children and young people are encouraged to have a health assessment if they decide to then they can decline.

16. Personal Education Plans

All children and young people that come into care and who are of school age have to have a personal education plan (PEP) completed for them. This is usually done by the school in conjunction with the social worker. The PEP outlines the educational needs of the child or young person and what will be done to ensure that the child or young person is supported to achieve best outcomes. Connected with the PEP is the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG), this is specific funding of £1900 for each academic year for a child in care to support his/her educational attainment. The Virtual School Head Service leads on ensuring that PEPs are completed and are of a good standard and the funding is also disseminated by the service. The IRO has a key role in the chairing the statutory review to go through the educational needs of the child or young person and review the PEP as well as ensure that the PPG is appropriately used.

17. Liaison with Social Care Teams and Learning and Development

Each IRO is linked to a Locality/ CiC team or service, including Youth Offending Service, Leaving Care Service and The Lighthouse (Children's Disability Service). An IRO also attends the Residential Managers meetings.

Work continues to strengthen the working relationship between IROs and Children's Guardians team.

The Deputy Head of Service meets quarterly with the Service Manager at CAFCASS and the IRO manager of Derbyshire County Council to discuss issues and improve partnership working. There is a quarterly regional IRO managers meeting which the Deputy Head of Service attends. As well as this there are regular events organised by the regional managers which the IRO team attend.

There have been a number of learning and development opportunities for IROs in 2019/20 these have included:

- Regional workshops which many of the team members have attended. Topics for these have included:
 -
 - Effective communication and care planning
 - Adoption training
 - Contextual Safeguarding
 - Outcome base care planning



- Several IRO's also involved in training including the Journey of the Child and fostering Training
- IRO service providing regular induction training to other social care staff as well external agencies.

18. Business Support Arrangements

The IRO Handbook 2010 provides the statutory guidance stating the local authority should provide sufficient administrative support to facilitate the delivery of an efficient and effective review process, enabling review meetings to take place in accordance with the Regulations and good practice. Invitations to reviews and consultation documents should be sent out to all those participating in the review at least ten working days before the meeting and the record of the review should be distributed within the required timescales.

There is currently 1fte and 1 term time only business support staff available to the service. There have been staffing gaps in the administrative service which have impacted on the admin support for the IRO's. Work is being undertaken to address this with the service in order to improve the service received by the IRO's.

Business support have continued to focus their efforts on ensuring that review reports are circulated in a timely manner as well arranging initial reviews and facilitating the written consultations from young people in care and their parents.

19. Children's Right's Service

The services for children's rights is commissioned to CGL (Care, Grow and Live) this excludes the role of the Participation Officer who provides support for the children in care council. The commissioned services to CGL cover:

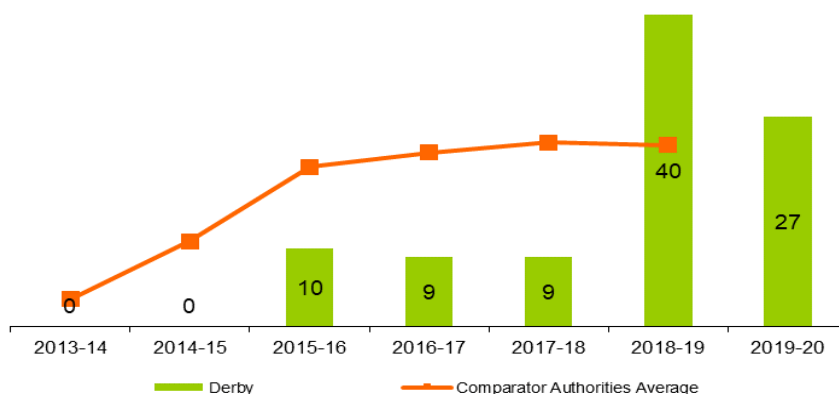
- Independent advocacy for all children in care
- Independent advocacy for all initial CPC conferences where agreed
- Independent visitor service, priority given to children placed out of authority and at a distance
- Independent advocacy for children that are privately fostered

20. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children

The number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) decreased in Derby during 2019-20. At year end 2019-20 Derby had 27 UASC children in care, this compares to 40 at the previous year end. This equates to a 32.5% decrease.



Number of UASC children looked after at end of year



21. Key Successes and Challenges in 2019/20

Our key successes and challenges have been:

1. At the latter end of 2019/20 the Covid 19 pandemic surfaced across the globe. The service users and staff of Derby City Council were inevitably affected by the lockdown imposed by Central Government. The IRO services resorted to continue their work electronically by the use of electronic technology. The primary method to undertake reviews was Skype as well as phone calls and direct messages. This allowed the IRO service to continue to chair their reviews and also ensure participation of young people, parents, carers and professionals.
2. The number of IRO's have increased by one. A temporary IRO post for one year has been appointed to at the latter end of 2019/20. This will provide much needed additional capacity in the service to meet the demand of steadily increasing numbers of children in care
3. The service continues to collect feedback forms completed by young people and parents. The feedback remains positive and complimentary about their experience of the review process.
4. The service has slightly dipped on the timeliness of reviews for 2019/20 to 92.7% from 96.4% in 2018/19. This is below of our target of 97%.
5. The service has also maintained improvement in the participation of young people in their reviews. In 2019/20 97.5 % children have participated in their reviews. This has exceeded the target of 97%.
6. The IRO Handbook 2010 (statutory guidance), states that in order to carry out the new IRO responsibilities as laid out in the Care Planning Regulations 2010 a full time IRO should ideally have between 50 – 70 cases. Caseloads at year end for each IRO were approximately 86; this is higher than year-end for 2017/18 when it was 82. The caseloads currently are much higher than where they should ideally be. However, it must be borne in mind that there is full time IRO currently not in work. If the team was fully staffed the average caseload would be approximately 75.
7. A regular partnership meeting with CAFCASS and Derbyshire IRO's to improve partnership working. This includes planning and facilitating an annual workshop for



IRO's in Derbyshire and Derby with CAFCASS officers to improve working together, practice and learning. The relationship and partnership working between IRO's and Cafcass Officers continue to improve.

8. Regular input from and liaison with the Children in Care Council. Deputy Head of Service as well as IRO's regularly attending the Children in Care Council meetings to discuss care issues with young people and progress any matters.
9. The IRO service has updated its consultation forms for 4-11years old's. This was in partnership with the children in care council. The forms are much more child friendly and have now been implemented. The feedback for the forms has been very positive.
10. The Deputy Head of Service has a schedule of quarterly meetings with the designated family court judge. This is building on the positive relationship that the IRO service has with the courts.

22. IRO Service Action Plan 2020/21

Objectives	Action	Lead	Timeframe
Children in care achieve an appropriate plan for permanence, through safe family arrangements, adoption or other means, as soon as possible, and receive high quality services whilst in care to promote good outcomes, including education and health.	Ensure all children in care have an appropriate permanence plan; including opportunities for children to safely return to their families are kept under continual review and challenge.	Deputy Head of Service/IRO's	2020/21
	Ensure all children have appropriate legal status, specifically: Placement Orders are discharged when the plan changes from a plan of adoption; Care Orders are discharged appropriately when children return home (within a year); Proceedings are issued promptly when young children	Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) DHoS	2020/21



	are removed.		
Quality assurance of individual casework is robust, with both recognition of outstanding practice and challenge of poor practice or decision-making across the partnership, escalated as necessary, and challenging management for evidence of action and learning.	Improve the IRO QA notification system; the response to the QA notification is now embedded as a form on LCS, benchmark regularly to ensure robustness & consistency; analyse and report	IRO, DHoS Lead	2020/21 June and December
	Continue to build on the use of notifications to partner agencies where appropriate	IRO	2020/21
	Meet with DHoS CiC on a bi monthly basis to discuss QA notification issues and themes as well as practice issues	DHoS	Bi Monthly
	Meet with Cafcass on a quarterly basis to discuss and improve working together between IRO and Cafcass officers	DHoS	Quarterly
Participation by children, young people and parents is expected, through input into their individual plans, and into wider partnership quality assurance, to improve practice and services	Continue to improve on obtaining views of service users about review meetings; analyse and use to inform improvements in practice.	IRO DHoS	2020/21
	Update/review the consultation paperwork that is sent to young people 11/17 years old before the review	IRO DHoS	December 2020
Quality Assurance staff and Business support staff work effectively together to ensure internal processes are	Ensure every child in care is seen either at their review or prior to/ after their review. This will include the use of electronic technology e.g. Microsoft Teams	IRO DHoS / Admin Managers	2020/21



compliant, consistent, high quality and efficient.	Monitor business support to ensure adequate level of support is available to meet the needs of the IRO service		2020/21
	Take part in joint training events with CAFCASS/ Derbyshire IROs/ CPMs and attend regional events to promote and share good practice.		As available
	Audit tracking activity between reviews and recording of IRO contacts on child's file.	DHoS	2020/21
	IRO's to continue to be involved in audit activity	IRO	Twice yearly

