



Derby City Council

Appendix 2

Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Service 2015 – 2016

**Pervez Akhtar
Corporate Parenting Lead
July 2016**

Classification: OFFICIAL

Contents		
1.	Introduction	2
2.	Purpose of Service and Legal Context	2
3.	IRO Service	3
4.	The Children in Care Population	3
5.	The Age and Gender of Children in Care	4
6.	The Ethnicity of the Children in Care	5
7.	The Legal Status of Children in Care	6
8.	Entrants and Exits from Care	7
9.	Children in Care Placement Provision	8
10.	Reviews Completed and Timeliness of Reviews	10
11.	Number of Children Participating in their Reviews	10
12.	Dispute Resolution Process – Quality Assurance Notification Forms	11
13.	Case Tracking	13
14.	Feedback from Young People and Parents	14
15.	Health Assessments	15
16.	Personal Education Plans	16
17.	Liaison with Social Care Teams and Learning and Development	17
18.	Business Support Arrangements	18
19.	Childrens Rights Service	18
20.	Quality Assurance Activity	19
21.	Key Successes and Challenges in 2015/16	20
22.	IRO Service Action Plan 2016/17	22

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 that care plan within legislative timescales (Care Planning and Case Review Regulations 2010)

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 with 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 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 2015/16 had a total establishment of 6.1 fte IRO and a 0.5 fte specialist IRO for children receiving short breaks as at 31/3/2016. The IRO team headcount is 7 IROs, with 2 males and 5 females. It is an experienced and stable team; there has been some staff change over the last year with a half time IRO leaving the service in December 2015. The service undertook a recruitment process and was able to recruit a 0.8 IRO who joined the service in January 2016

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 73, this is slightly higher than the guidance recommends. However over the year the number of children in care has been considerably higher and this has impacted on average caseloads for IRO's. Children and Young People's Services (CYP) and the IRO service are working hard to ensure that we have the right children in care and that care plans for permanence are achieved in a timely manner.

An additional IRO post was agreed for the service during 2015/16 and a recruitment campaign for this post was started in January 2016. A successful appointment was made and the new IRO started in the service in May 2016. Upon the commencement of this post it was agreed that a 0.8 member of staff would be allowed to reduce their hours to 0.5. The total establishment for the service is now 7.3; this includes the 0.5 specialist IRO for short breaks. It is expected that in line with the steady numbers of children in care over recent months that the additional post will bring the IRO caseloads to within the national guidelines. Based on the year-end figures for 2015/16 numbers of children in care the average caseload would be 66, this is just below the national guideline of between 50 and 70 cases per IRO.

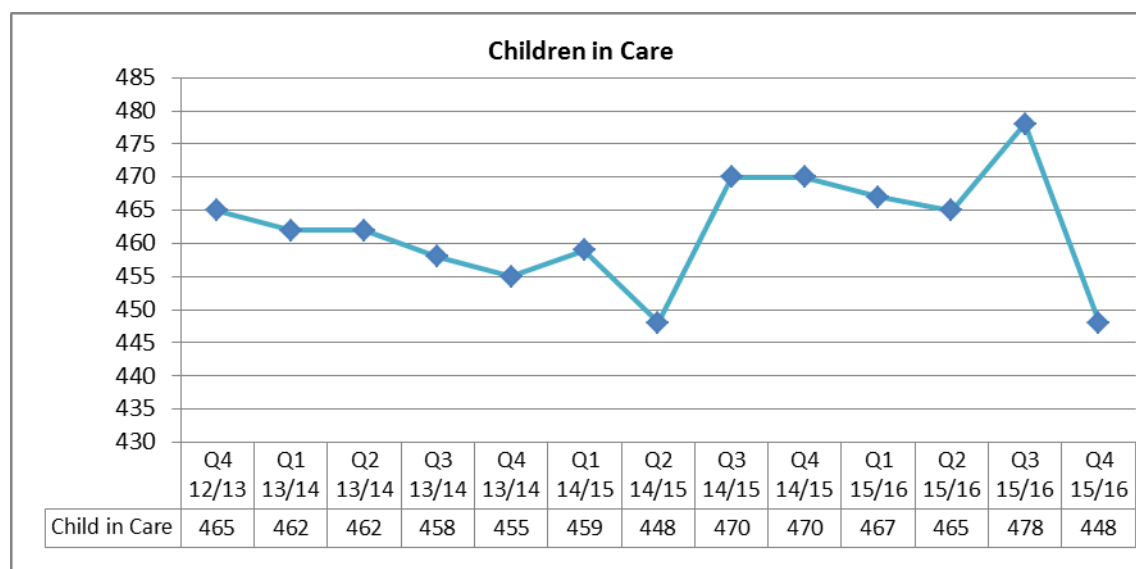
The status of IROs in Derby continues to be an issue for the service. IROs are graded and paid below team manager level. They have been graded at the same level as senior social work practitioners. The IRO handbook is clear in stating that an IRO should be at least team manager level. This is to ensure that IRO's carry the appropriate seniority and status in order for them to undertake their role effectively. IRO's have reported that they feel this sometimes impedes on their authority, effectiveness and impact when chairing reviews or making challenge with senior practitioners and team managers.

4. The Children in Care Population

Over the last year the number of children in care in Derby has fluctuated. At the end of 2013/14 the number of children in care was 455, whilst at the end of 2014/15 the number was 470. The number of children in care at the end of 2015/16 was 448. The table below demonstrates the quarterly changes in the number of children in care throughout the last three years. It is interesting to note that there was a peak of children in care in Q3 2015/16

of 478. Following this peak the children in care population generally continued to decline resulting in the lowest number of 448 in Q4 of this year. The graph shows a significant peak between Q2 and Q3 of this year when an additional 20 children came into care over the three month period however there was a considerable dip in the final quarter. There does not seem to be any obvious factors as to what has caused the increase between Q2 and Q3. There have been a large number of young people who have and will be reaching 18 in 2016. This may go some way to explain the reduction in children in care numbers.

Children in Care over the last three years



5. The Age and Gender of Children in Care

The majority of children in care in Derby at year end 2015/16 are aged between 10 to 15 years old, 163 or 36% of the total. There are 22% or 93 children who are aged between 5 and 9 years old. There are 20 children or 5% who are under 1 years of age and a further 78 or 17% are between 1 and 4. It would be reasonable to expect the majority of the children that are under five to be either adopted or other permanence exit options to be secured for them 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 of more than 50% 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 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 now also implemented the '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	31/03/2016	31/03/2016
Under 1	20	5%
1 to 4	78	17.7%
5 to 9	93	22.2%
10 to 15	163	36.3%
16+	94	21.1%
Total	448	100%

The majority of children in care in Derby at year end 2015/16 were male, 270 making 60% of the total with 178 females which equates to 40% 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, with only a couple of percentage figure variations at most.

	31/03/2016	31/03/2016
Male	270	60%
Female	178	40%
Total	448	100%

6. The Ethnicity of the Children in Care

As at the end of March 2016 out of the 448 children in care, the largest group of children, 349 were reported as being white, which was a total of 78% of all children in care. The next largest group were children of dual heritage who made up 14% of the population with 64 children in care, followed by 4% or 16 categorised as Asian or Asian British. There were 11 children, 2% of the population categorised as Gypsy/Roma/Traveller and finally 10 children, 2% categorised as black or black British.

Ethnicity Recorded	Number	Percentage
Asian or Asian British	16	3.6%
Black or Black British	10	2.2%
Dual Heritage	64	14.3%
Gypsy/Roma/Traveller	11	2.5%

Not Known/Recorded	5	1.1%
Other	6	1.3%
White British	306	68.3%
White Other	30	6.7%
Total	448	100%

7. The Legal Status of Children in Care

As at end of March 2016, 238 or 53% of children in Derby were looked after under a full care order. There were 49 children or 11% 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 77 children or 17% 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. 79 or 17% of the total population were voluntarily accommodated under s.20. This means that these children were accommodated at the request of and or in agreement with parent/s or those with parental responsibility. It is important to highlight that in Derby there is still one child who has been freed for adoption, the application for these orders ended in December 2005 and were replaced with placement orders. The plan for this child was adoption at the time, this has obviously not materialised and plans have had to be changed. It is not appropriate or acceptable for this child to be still on a freeing order. Application has been made to court with a view to revoking the freeing order.

Legal Status	31/03/2016	31/03/2016
C1 Interim Care order	49	11.%
C2 Full Care order	238	53%
D1 Freed for Adoption	1	0.2%
E1 Placement Order Granted	77	17%
J1 In Local Authority on Remand, or Committed for Trial or Sentence	4	1%
L1 Under Police Protection, in LA Accommodation	0	0.0%
L2 Subject to Emergency Protection Order	0	0.0%
J3 CYPA 1969 Supervision Order with Residence Required	0	0.0%
V2 Accommodated under Section 20	79	17%

Total	448	100%
--------------	------------	-------------

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 2015/16 has been abuse or neglect, this was also the case in 2014/15. There were 154 children and young people entering care in 2015/16 compared to 200 in 2014/15. Out of this, a total of 107 were due to abuse and neglect, this totals 69% of all entrants. 11 children and young people came into care due to disability, followed by a further 10 for absent parenting. According to the records two children came into care because of low income. There were 7 children that came into care for socially unacceptable behaviour. There were a further 12 children that came into care due to parental illness/disability.

Children in Care - reasons for children starting care				
Reasons for children starting care	Quarter End - numbers starting care during the quarter			
	30/06/2015	30/09/2015	31/12/2015	31/03/2016
Abuse Or Neglect	27	26	32	22
Disability	4	1	1	5
Parental Illness/Disability	1	8	2	1
Family In Acute Stress	0	0	2	2
Family Dysfunction	0	1	0	0
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	3	0	3	1
Low Income	1	0	0	1
Absent Parenting	1	1	7	1
Total	37	37	47	33

According to the data currently available in 2015/16, 172 children and young people exited care. This is slightly less than those that entered throughout the year. There was a significant drop in the number of children adopted when compared to 2014/15, when there were a total of 41, in 2015/16 there were 26 children that were adopted.

Classification: OFFICIAL

60 children returned to live at home with parents or relatives or other persons with PR, this made 35% of the total. This was highest reason for exits form care

Quite a large number, 29 young people, exited care by moving into independence, this made 17% of the total number There has also been quite considerable success in getting children and young people exited through the use of SGO's which totalled 21, compared to 10 SGO's in 2014/15. There were 17 children and young people who ceased care for any other reason, this may need further investigation regarding accurate recording.

Reason Ceased (grouped)	Quarter End - numbers			
	30/06/201	30/09/201	31/12/201	31/03/201
	5	5	5	6
Adopted	5	2	10	9
Care taken over by other LA	2	0	0	0
Residence/Child Arrangement Order	1	0	0	7
SGO	8	3	6	4
Returned Home	13	17	17	13
Independent Living	7	8	1	13
To Adult Social Care	1	1	1	0
Any other reason	3	4	3	7
Sentenced to custody	0	1	1	4
Total	40	36	39	57

9. Children in Care Placement Provision

There were a total of 227 placements with Derby City Council or other provision, making a total of 51% of all placements. There were 221 placements with private agencies, making a total of 49% of all placements. From the total 141 or 31% of placements were with our in house foster carers and 163 or 36% with independent fostering agencies. If we just look at fostering placements this breaks down as 46% of all fostering placements are in house and 54% are with independent fostering agencies, this is a lower percentage then in 2014/15, when it was 285 and 52% respectively. The number of children placed with private fostering agencies is higher than what is desired, at the moment there is a higher number of Derby children placed with independent fostering agencies then with its own in house fostering services furthermore this has increased from last year by 2% points.

There are 33 children that are placed with parents. These will be children who are on care orders or interim care orders. The number of children placed with parents has considerably risen over 2014/15 as at the end of 2013/14 it was 16 and the year before that 2012/13 it

Classification: OFFICIAL

was 18. It was 37 in 2014/15 and hence there has been a slight decrease over the last year. A detailed audit was undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Lead on this group of young people and an action plan was agreed with senior managers to address issues in this area. Children and young people would usually be placed with parents as part of a process to return a young person back to care of the parents with a view to assessments to discharge the care order or as part of proceedings to decide what the plan should be for the child or young person. 33 children and young people placed with parents is still high and this area will require ongoing close monitoring and scrutiny.

Derby City Council or Other

Placement Groups - provision of placement	31/03/2016
Foster (U1-U6)	141
Homes and Hostels (K2)	26
Independent Living (P2)	3
Placed for Adoption (A3-A6)	17
Residential School/Hospital (R1/R2/S1)	5
Other Placement	2
Placed with Parents (P1)	33
Total	227

Private Agency including Independent Fostering Agencies

Placement Groups - provision of placement	31/03/2015
Foster (U1-U6)	163
Homes and Hostels (K2)	20
Independent Living (P2)	5
Placed for Adoption (A3-A6)	19
Residential School/Hospital (R1/R2/S1)	9
Secure Units, YOI or Prison (K1 and R5)	5
Other Placement	0
Placed with Parents (P1)	0
Total	221

10. Reviews Completed and Timeliness of Reviews

The IRO team completed 1,174 reviews in 2015/16 this 61 less than in 2014/15 when 1,235 statutory reviews were completed. The small decrease in reviews is mainly due to the reduction in the number of children in care in the late part of 2015/16. At the end of 2015/16 there were 448 children and young people in care, whilst at the end of 2014/15 there were 470, a total decrease of 22 at year end.

The number of reviews that have been within timescales has slightly dipped from 94% in 2014/15 to 90.4% for 2015/16 which is under by 5% of our target of 95%. This is disappointing and the IRO service will work hard to ensure that we improve on this for 2016/17.

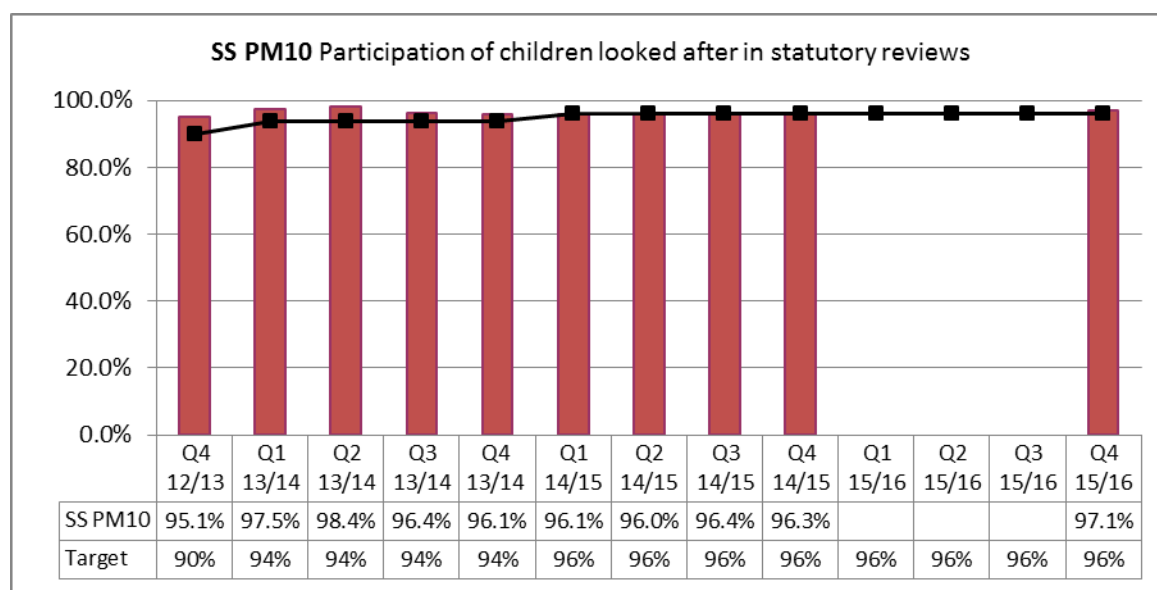
In exploring the reasons for the delays, a number were delayed due to sickness either of the IRO or social worker. An experienced IRO in the team was off for a significant period due to a serious illness during the year, this will have contributed to a number of reviews having to be rearranged.

Because of recording purposes for DfE 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 very hard to ensure children and young people participate in their review. In 2014/15, 96.3% of all reviews had children and young people participating in them. For 2015/16 this has improved to 97.1%, this is above our target of 96%.

The service continues to strive to improve on this, 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. We have 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:

Work was undertaken in 2015/16 to update the QA notification process and an informal QA notification stage was included in the 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. 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. If there is no response or the response is unsatisfactory then the issue will go to stage two of the process whereby the Corporate Parenting Lead 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 2015/16 there were 107 formal QA notifications, this is an increase of 54 from 2014/15 when there were a total of 53 stage one QA notifications; The number of QA notifications for 2015/16 has more than doubled. Work has been undertaken in the service to ensure that appropriate challenge and use of the notification process. There has been instability in the social work workforce which has impacted on the quality of social work and this may also explain the increase in QA notifications. The notifications were made up as follows:

Reason	Number
Drift or Delay	26
Excellent Practice	10
Non completion of Significant Tasks	46
Persistent Poor Practice	10
Statutory Requirements Not Met	15
Total	107

The greatest numbers of QA notifications 46, were generated for non-completion of significant tasks, 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 second largest numbers of notifications were raised for delay and drift, these totalled 26. These have included concerns regarding progressing of permanence or revoking particular orders or discharging care orders.

There were 15 QA notifications 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.

There were 10 notifications for good practice, whilst it is important for IRO 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 10 notifications for persistent poor practice, where there may be a number of actions that have not been completed over review period or beyond.

There were 6 cases which were escalated to stage two of the dispute resolution process; this included a case where there was significant drift to a plan for a child due to lack of progress by children in care team in relation to therapeutic services. There were 4 QA notifications escalated to stage two for delays in applications to court and 1 for poor practice by fostering service

The IRO service has generated a considerable number of informal QA notifications through the electronic LCS system. Informal QA notifications were introduced on 1st October 2015. Unfortunately due to technological limitations and IT capacity it has not been possible to generate report on the number and reasons for these at this time. Work is underway to try and generate a report on these in the coming months.

13. Case Tracking

In addition to monitoring the child's care and progress with 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 introduced 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 (D)HoS.

Examples include delay in issuing proceedings, delays in homefinding, 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 clear footprint of the IRO involvement within the child's or young person's LCS record. Whilst there is still further work to do on improving this, there has been considerable improvement in this area.

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. The feedback forms were launched in October 2015.

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

There was one young person, 7 years old, who stated in his feedback that he felt he did not understand the purpose of the meeting and was unsure about whether he had been listened to and hadn't been given an opportunity to say what he had wanted to. The issues raised by the young person were picked up and addressed by the young person's IRO following the review.

There were no comments from young people about whether anything could be done differently or additional support required for the meetings by young people.

On reviewing the feedback forms from parents they have all been positive. The feedback has been unanimous 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

There were no comments from parents about how the reviews could be improved or anything that could have been done differently.

This is an area of work that that IRO service needs to continue to further imbed and develop. We plan to continue to improve on this in 2016/17.

15. Health Issues for Children in Care

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

The Corporate Parenting Lead 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.

The 2015/16 data for children receiving their health assessments, dental checks and immunisations is as follows;

- 88% had their annual health assessments. This is same percentage figure as last year which was the highest performance over the previous 5 years. Nationally in 2014-15 the figure was 89.7% and comparator authority figures were 90.9%. There is room for improvement in regards to annual health assessments.
- 85% had their health development checks. This is the highest performance seen over the past 5 years, last year it was 77% and in 2013/14 it was 58%. Health development checks are undertaken for children who are aged up to 5 years of age and done on a 6 monthly basis.
- 99.4% had up to date immunisations, last year it was 97.8% – Derby have been performing at over 95% for the past three years and remain well above the 2014-15 national average (87.1%) and comparator average (91.3%)
- 79% had their dental checks completed. This is significantly lower than last year when it was 92.5%. Nationally in 2014-15 the figure was 84.4% and the comparator average was 80.3%.
- As an average of three health measures 83.7% of children had their statutory health needs met (a low percentage of dental checks has seen this fall slightly from last year)

- The average score for SDQ's in 2015-16 was 16.3, there was slight increase from last year when it was 16.1. It has dropped from 16.9 in 2012, 16.8 in 2013 and 16.3 in 2014. The national average for 2014-15 was lower at 14 and the comparator average was 14.5. The score represents the emotional and behavioural health needs of the child or young person, the higher the score the more the needs. The aim of the process is not necessarily to get the score in line with national or regional averages but to ensure that they are being done consistently with people who know the child and young person and hence fairly reflect their needs.

It is encouraging to see that progress is being made in all areas, although further work needs to be done to increase health development checks in line with comparator authorities and the national average. It is pleasing to note that 99.4% of children in care in Derby have up to date immunisations and this has been consistently high over the past few years.

There has been on-going work to ensure that health assessments are recorded accurately. 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 Sinfon 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.

One of the issues that may have contributed again to not getting an higher percentage of health development checks/assessments on time is relating to children who are placed out of Derby. For these children the assessment has to be usually done by their local health nurse or doctor. Due to logistical issues in arranging these, there is an increased chance of these assessments being late. The Corporate Parenting Lead is working closely with health colleagues to explore how we can improve this area of work.

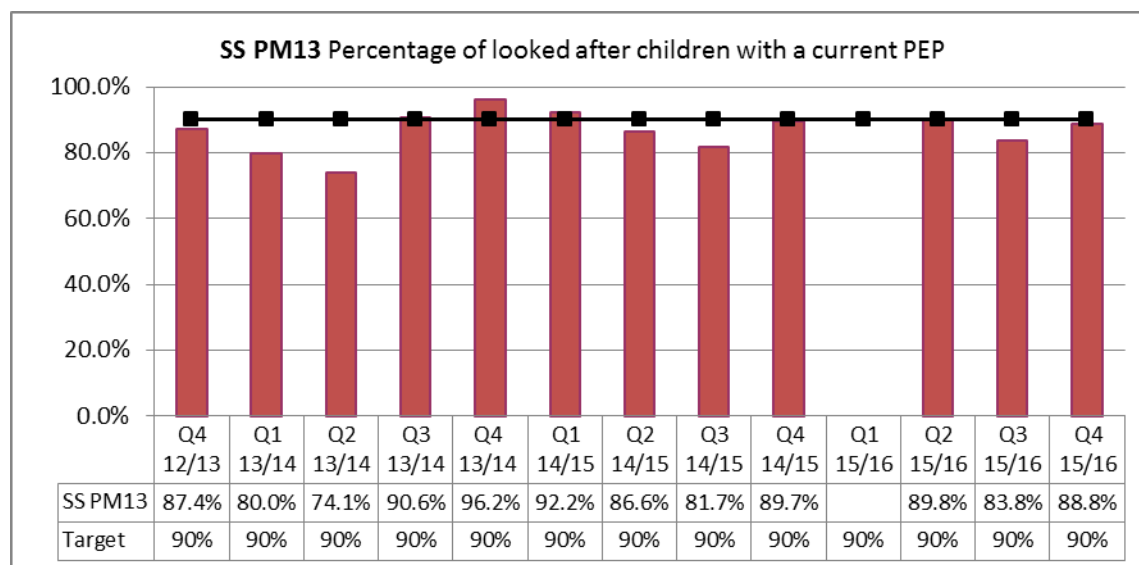
16. Personal Education Plans

All children and young people that come into care and 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.

The Virtual School Head Service has introduced a new e PEP system in 2015/16. All PEPs are now done using an electronic system that the school have direct access to. To support this the Virtual School Head has introduced a robust system of quality assuring e PEPs. The

IRO's use the e PEP to inform the review and make decisions about educational focus and attainment as part of the review meeting.

To support the educational attainment and attendance of Derby children in care the Virtual School Head has also introduced a 100 day challenge scheme, this scheme rewards children and young people at various stages in the school journey and rewards good attainment and attendance.



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. An annual joint team meeting takes place and this has helped.

The Corporate Parenting Lead meets quarterly with the Service Manager CAFCASS and the IRO manager of Derbyshire County Council to discuss issues and improve partnership working as well as plan the annual workshop for IROs and Children's Guardians.

The Corporate Parenting Lead meets regularly with the IRO Manager from Derbyshire County Council.

There is a quarterly regional IRO managers meeting which the Corporate Parenting Lead 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 2015/16 these have included:

- Four regional workshops which many of the team members have attended. Topics for these have included:
 - Care Planning and Permanence
 - Participation - Promoting the voice of children and young people in care
 - Evidence of IRO Effectiveness
 - Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- An IRO doing refresher Practice Educator Training
- Many of the team attending the national NAIRO conference in London
- Two IRO's attending the Prevent training
- A service development day for the QA service
- A joint training event with Derbyshire IRO's and local Cafcass on working with emerging communities and legal developments
- IRO attending training on Honour based violence and forced marriage
- IRO attending training on CSE
- IRO attending Asylum Seeker and Refugee Training

Many of the team are members of National Association of Independent Reviewing Officers (NAIRO).

18. Business Support Arrangements

There is currently 2.3 fte business support staff available to the service.

Following the business support reorganisation in early 2015/16 the IRO service had a complete change of business support personnel. Following a brief transition period the new team quickly got to grips with their roles. The business support that the IRO service has received over the last year has been good with a productive working relationship developed. Reports are circulated in a timely manner and support task completed efficiently and effectively.

The business support has helped to improve the overall performance of the IRO service during 2015/17

19. Children's Right's Service

Services for children's rights have been commissioned to Volunteering Matters. They provide services which include:

Independent Visitors, Independent Advocacy Service, Child Protection Conference (support and ascertain views of children for initial conference) and facilitate the Children in Care Council which is made up of children who are in care or recently left care. The children in care council meetings are held on a monthly basis.

A full detailed annual report will be provided by Volunteering Matters which will outline the activity undertaken and impact in each of the areas identified.

The Children's Rights Service facilitates/provides:

- 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
- Children in Care Council

The Corporate Parenting Lead regularly attends the children in care council meetings, this provides an opportunity for children in care to raise issues directly with the Corporate Parenting Lead as well as an opportunity for the Lead to discuss possible service developments and get the views of young people.

The Children in Care Council have worked closely with the Corporate parenting Committee over 2015/16. This has included the children in care council updating the Pledge for children in care and launching this at a special committee in January 2016.

20. Quality Assurance Activity

The Corporate Parenting Lead completed an audit in 2015/16 about children and young people placed at home with parents whilst on a care order (PWP). The audit identified that there had been an increasing number of young people being placed with parents over the last three years, with a total of 30 at as 1st March 2016. Whilst there had been a slight dip between 2014/15 and 2015/16 the overall trajectory was an upward trend.

The audit found that there had been a number of children and young people who had been placed with parents for over a year and in some case over two years. Recommendations were made to address the issues identified in audit. It was agreed that the IRO service would continue to robustly challenge and scrutinise the appropriateness of these placements as well ensure that there is no drift in revoking care orders where there has been appropriate progress or bringing children back into care where they may be at risk. Furthermore actions were agreed for social care children's services managers to continue to review children placed with parents and ensure timely progress as well as improved working and decision making with legal services and Cafcass.

During 2015/16 work has also been undertaken to review the appropriateness of children and young placed in care under s20, at the request or in agreement with parents. In these circumstances the local does not attain/share parental responsibility, this remains with the parent. The IRO service will continue to robustly review these arrangements and require the initiation of legal proceedings for a care order where an order is appropriate.

Work has also been undertaken across children's and young people's services to review the appropriateness of placement orders. Placement orders are obtained through the courts where the plan for the child is adoption. If it has not been possible to progress to adoption, for whatever reason, in many cases this is because appropriate adopters could not be identified, then the plan is reviewed, if it is decided that adoption is no longer a viable plan then the placement order needs to be revoked through the courts. The decision is agreed through the review process. As part of their role, IRO's will monitor and challenge to ensure where appropriate applications are made to revoke the placement orders.

21. Key Successes and Challenges in 2015/16

Our key successes and challenges have been:

1. Maintaining and strengthening the team of experienced, motivated and committed IRO's. There has only been one IRO change in the last year, with a new IRO joining the service in January 2016. A further appointment has been made and an additional full time IRO joined the service in May 2016.
2. The introduction of the new LCS in May 2015 has been a major development. The various reports and forms are all now electronic. The IRO service has taken on this challenge and adapted their practice to incorporate these changes. All IRO reports are now on LCS and can be accessed via the child's file on LCS.
3. The IRO service has improved and developed its QA notification process. A New informal process has been introduced. Both the formal and informal processes are integrated within LCS. The new processes were introduced on 1st October 2016.
4. The IRO service has introduced feedback forms for young people and parents about their experience of the review. This will continue to be further imbedded in IRO practice in 2016/17
5. The status of IROs in Derby continues to be an issue for the service. IROs are graded and paid below team manager level. The IRO handbook is clear in stating that an IRO should be at least team manager level. IRO's have reported that they feel this sometimes impedes on their authority, effectiveness and impact when chairing reviews or making challenge with senior practitioners and team managers.
6. There has been a dip in the timeliness of reviews for 2015/16 compared to 2014/15. This has been particularly disappointing. The Corporate Parenting Lead to work with IRO's to ensure that reviews are done in a timely manner.
7. 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 73, this is lower than year-end for 2014/15 when it was 81, however this is still higher than the guidance recommends. The service is striving to be handbook complaint.
8. There has been an improvement with business processes and capacity in 2015/16. This has ensured a more timely circulation of review reports.
9. 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.
10. Regular input from and liaison with the Children in Care Council. Corporate Parenting Lead attends the Children in Care Council meetings on a regular basis to discuss care issues with young people and progress any matters.
11. The IRO service has worked hard to challenge and appropriately evidence the work they do by ensuring there is a footprint of their work on LCS. There has been some

very good progress on this area of work, the service will continue to build on this this during 2016/17.

22. IRO Service Action Plan 2016/17

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.	Corporate Parenting Lead	Ongoing
	Work with CYP and partners to improve the completion & recording of Health Assessments for children in care. Work to develop an electronic module on LCS so that health information can be recorded directly		To be completed by February 2017
	Work with schools & Virtual School head to monitor and improve completion, quality and effectiveness of e PEPs as well as ensuring that the PPP+ grants are being used appropriately.	Independent Reviewing Officer	On going
	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 are removed.	Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) CP Lead	Ongoing
Quality assurance of individual casework is robust, with both recognition of outstanding practice and challenge of poor	Maintain IRO QA notification system; benchmark regularly to ensure robustness & consistency; analyse and report	IRO, CP Lead	Ongoing June and December
	Create a system to monitor and	CP Lead	August

practice or decision-making across the partnership, escalated as necessary, and challenging management for evidence of action and learning.	report on informal challenges by IROs from LCS.		
	Extend use of notifications to partner agencies where appropriate	IRO	September
	Collate and report on evidence of action and learning from QAs	CP Lead	June and December
	Meet with DHoS on a bi monthly basis to discuss QA notification issues and themes as well as practice issues	CP Lead	Bi Monthly
	Meet with Cafcass on a quarterly basis to discuss and improve working together between IRO and Cafcass officers	CP Lead	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; analyze and use to inform improvements in practice	IRO CP Lead	Ongoing
Quality Assurance staff and Business support staff work effectively together to ensure internal processes are compliant, consistent, high quality and efficient.	Implement internal QA processes to ensure meetings and processes are sensitive, robust and effective, e.g. peer observations, group supervision and user feedback.	CP Lead IRO	Various
	Ensure every child in care is seen either at their review or prior to/ after their review - sample audit to be completed.		Ongoing

	Work with business support to meet timescales for circulation of minutes. Ensure minutes are to an acceptable standard consistently		Ongoing
	Take part in joint training events with CAFCASS/ Derbyshire IROs/ LFJB / regional CPMs & LADO and attend regional events to promote and share good practice.	IRO, CP Lead	As available
	Audit tracking activity between reviews and recording of IRO contacts on child's file.	CP Lead	Ongoing