

**Lincolnshire County Council – Children’s Services
Independent Chairs Annual Report
1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020**

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

This IRO report provides evidence relating to the IRO Services in Lincolnshire as required by statutory guidance. Due to the core business of the team also including child protection, short breaks and Regulation 44 (inspection of children's homes), where appropriate this report contains information relating to those areas.

The IRO report must be presented to: Corporate Parenting Board and the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Purpose of service and legal context

The IRO Service is set within the framework of the IRO Handbook which provides the statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers and Local Authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for children in care.

The guidance is issued as part of a suite of statutory guidance which sets out how local authorities should carry out the full range of responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and review for children in care. The aim is to provide children in care with the most appropriate placement to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

The Child Protection Chairs role is described within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 which is a guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Following section 47 enquiries, an initial child protection conference (ICPC) brings together family members (and the child where appropriate), with the supporters, advocates and practitioners most involved with the child and family.

The purpose of the CPC is to analyse all relevant information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child with the family and their network taking the lead. It is the responsibility of the conference to make recommendations on how organisations and agencies work together to safeguard the child in future.

Update on the priorities for 2019 – 2020

Priorities for 2019-20

- **Further embed Signs of Safety (SOS) across CP and LAC - to promote use of Family Network Meetings, genograms, eco maps and safety plans, promote family and friends time.**

All Independent Chairs are SOS Practice Leads and they have attended Practice Lead sessions with SOS Consultant Tracey Hill. Learning is then shared at Team Meetings, in Professional Supervision and Group Learning.

The Quality and Standards Management Team are also Practice Leads and continue to ensure that this approach is embedded at a practice level and in their interactions with team members.

An SOS Practice Adviser linked to the team has attended Team Meetings and Group Learning to offer guidance and support. She has also observed child protection conferences and shared feedback, supported the updating of information leaflets and consultation documents for children, family and professionals.

Group Learning sessions occur on a rolling basis in both the North and South of the county every 6 weeks. The team practice SOS skills, Best Questions, Scaling Questions and Restorative Practice (RP) skills.

Professional Supervision includes Appreciative Inquiry and Case Supervision has been developed to better reflect the specific roles of the IRO and Chairs in relation to their impact upon plans and outcomes for children and young people, SOS, Reflection and Best Questions.

Reviews are child focussed and follow the SOS framework to ensure continuity and consistency of approach from CP to LAC in working with families and children. Chairs role model SOS within CP & LAC; preparing best questions, scaling questions and using genograms and ecomaps. The team continue to develop new ways of working with children within Looked After Reviews, changing language within reports and meetings i.e. "family and friends time, foster parents, foster home." The IRO's and CP Chairs have responded to national feedback from children and young people in relation to what they expect from their reviews and changing the way professionals talk about children in care (TACT Project "Language that Cares" March 2019).

A new Agenda for Child Protection Conferences was developed in a group workshop with the team and the SOS & RP Lead Manager Partners in Practice. This session was introduced by Roz Cordy, Assistant Director and Carolyn Knight Quality and Standards Manager in February 2019 and is now embedded in current practice.

A new template has been developed to integrate SOS into a 'Record of the Meeting' report which now replaces CP minutes. This incorporates the learning from recent Serious Case Reviews and was also later supported in the OFSTED Report June 2019

in relation to the previous format "Child protection minutes are over detailed which makes it difficult for parents and children to pick out the pertinent risks and understand the main concerns."

The Agenda and Record templates have both been reviewed on two occasions now (November 2019 and February 2020) and improved with feedback from the Chairs, the Meeting Support Assistants, the Safeguarding and Review Team and Partners in Practice. Representation by a FAST Team Manager was also included in November 2019.

The IRO's and Chairs have undertaken Restorative Practice (RP) training and the Practice Leads cascade RP techniques to the team. RP is integral in the management of the meetings undertaken by the IRO's and Chairs and in their contact with children and families outside of these. One example of this is that they now contact families prior to Initial Child Protection Conferences in order to ensure that families feel comfortable about the child protection process and that they can ask questions and allay fears to ensure it is more inclusive.

Chairs continue to have their pre meetings with families just prior to the Conference and are now inviting families into the Conference Room ahead of professionals wherever venues allow this to happen.

The Quality and Standards Management Team have attended Restorative Practice Deep Dive sessions – "developing a restorative mind-set and building community."

- **To engage parents more pro-actively and if they don't attend LAC reviews, to make efforts to contact them and if necessary and/or appropriate to write directly to them.**

When parents attend Reviews and Conferences the IRO's and CP Chairs encourage them through SOS, RP and child centred reviews to be part of the plan; to contribute rather than be a spectator. Plans are future focused – specifically for teenagers – promoting changes to family time and relationships particularly if there is a possibility of young person returning to family when they are 18 or possibly younger.

The Chairs continue to make concerted efforts to engage parents in the LAC review process, on some occasions going the extra mile, by offering them transport, or advocating for support with transport to be offered by the social work team, if that was felt to be a barrier to attendance. The Chairs also call parents to gain their views should they be unable to attend. There are many examples of good practice that is aimed to become an established and consistent approach across the whole team.

- **Promoting referrals to Life Links.**

Life Links

In April 2019 it was agreed that the Family Group Conferencing (FGC) Team would support young people transitioning into adulthood. Life Links is offered to young people who are children in care at 15.9 years and care leavers up to the age of 21 years that continue in education and 25 years for young people with Learning Disabilities. An FGC practitioner will be allocated to the young person who will work with them to develop a lifelong network that will support them in their transition into adulthood.

A Family Finder approach is utilised, in particular a calendaring tool. This enables the practitioner to explore the support networks available for the young person to strengthen their support for the future.

The feedback below was received from a Clinical Psychologist working with a Young Person where Life Links has been offered.

'I just wanted to feedback some really positive work I feel one of your staff members has been doing.

I have been supporting a young lady, C, intermittently for 1 year and IF (FGC Practitioner) has been involved for some time. I think the work she has done in connecting C to family support and in the planning and organisation of this has had a significant positive impact on C. As C transitions out of care, she now has a much larger family network to support her moving forward which I know she is very thankful for. Today, C has commented that she feels loved by her family, which is the first time she has said this.'

Since April 2019, 22 referrals have been received into Life Links. Three young people declined the service as they felt that they did not require the support as already had a support network in place and were already having regular contact with family members. 14 young people have worked with their Life Links worker to explore the support networks available for them to strengthen their support for the future. 5 young people remain open to the FGC Team.

- **Ensure that mental health is focussed on particularly in LAC reviews. All IROs to undertake the LSCP mental health course.**

The Chairs are live to the challenges that a young person in care has to face, in terms of their management and healing from the trauma experiences that led for them to be taken into care. The Chairs are taking long term view of the care plans to be geared towards the healing process, even when on the surface a young person appears to be doing well and be settled.

The expectation was for all Independent Chairs to have completed the mental health training offered within the council by 31st March 2020. As there have been new starters within the year, compliance with this will be ascertained at their appraisal reviews throughout June and July.

- **Recommendations from permanence and CP audits to be translated into practice. To include: Chairs reports to further embed clarity around permanence options, timescales, what needs to happen.**

The Quality Assurance Board has been in place since September 2018 and is a strategic decision-making forum to better understand, monitor and progress a number of quality assurance strands within the service area. This includes the coordination of and learning from audit outcomes as well as identifying the key actions to be taken and areas for consideration across the service areas. Feedback and learning takes place during individual supervisions and team meetings.

QA's specific to the role of the Chairs have included observations of CPC's undertaken in Feb & March 2019 and two Audits of CPC plans that ended in less than 3 months in April and September 2019.

A QA of 2nd Review and Permanency of LAC was undertaken in April 2019. The audit identified that the vast majority of the reports seen were of an acceptable standard. Variable practice remains one of the main issues to ensure further improvement but had not resulted in any delay in progressing the care plan for permanence. A repeat QA is planned for April 2020 to ensure that learning is impacting upon practice.

Peer QA of participation was completed in Jan and Feb 2020 to ensure that the IRO's had established the child's wishes and feelings and had taken them into account, where appropriate: promoting the voice of the child; making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his/her entitlement to one.

- **Review external escalations process to improve the effectiveness of the process and improve attendance and performance around CP conferences**

This has been completed with LSCP and the new process commenced in September 2019 – a quarterly email is now sent to the Senior Liaison Officer's (SLO) to make them aware of any escalations raised for staff or areas that they cover. The SLO's are also expected to provide a response to how the themes of concerns have been addressed within their area. The Procedure is being updated on LSCP website. A six monthly report about conferences is presented to the LSCP and contains the data on escalations and attendance. In December 2019 a quality assurance activity was undertaken led by Children's Services to address multi-agency reports to child protection conferences. The learning from this was shared with the LSCP and this audit has now been planned to be undertaken annually by the LSCP.

- **To visit children in care within 6 months and maintain/promote on-going contact between reviews.**

This remains a key focus for the team who find creative ways to keep in touch including offering children an opportunity to meet with their IRO in a surgery style arrangement in a particular school.

Visits to children are included in case supervision, professional supervision and appraisal.

- **Chairs to undertake chairing of adoption and SGO disruption meetings. Training to be provided to support this on new procedures.**

Extensive work has been completed drawing on the Independent Chairs' experience and knowledge and lead by Paul Fisher, to develop the framework of managing disruption meetings. The procedure for SGO meetings was agreed by DLT in July 2019. Agenda, guidance, referral process and report templates have been developed and the wording of the policy/procedure has been finalised.

Upon the service agreeing to undertake disruptions meetings, it was believed that these will represent only a very small number of 4-5 meetings a year. However from April 2019 to March 2020 the team received 19 referrals. These referrals have been scrutinised against the newly agreed criteria and allocated if they meet the criteria. An annual QA of disruption meetings is planned for April 2020, the process will have been in place for over 6 months at this point and it is envisaged that the new process will have made an impact for the children involved.

Disruptions meetings for foster care are undertaken by the FGC Service but all disruption meetings are included within the scope of the annual audit. Any learning from this will be addressed in the subsequent year.

- **Feedback from young people and parents is an on-going priority in order to QA the service and identify potential learning which will impact on outcomes for children.**

We offer young people and parents an opportunity to give their feedback in a variety of ways:

- All of the consultation and information leaflets have been updated to reflect SOS and RP and will now be reviewed annually. This has resulted in an increase in responses for looked after reviews.
- When managers undertake practice observations they always attempt to meet with parents/children following the meeting.
- IRO's support young people to complete consultation docs if carers or SW's have not been able to.
- IRO's contact young people before reviews to check how they want their reviews to be managed
- Feedback sheets are given to young people and their family and carers after every LAC review and conference. We have developed a spread sheet that will collate this feedback for analysis using a rag rating and any comments. This will then inform future work programmes, helping us to better understand the impact upon children and families.

- The Young Inspectors were due to undertake qualitative interviews with a number of children in care but due to their staffing difficulties this was postponed. An Independent Chair was tasked to do this in September 2019 and undertook 4 qualitative interviews in the time available.

"Emily said that the reviews have made a 'big difference' to her care, she feels confident to have her say, generally."

"Charlotte finds it positive as people can work together to solve a problem. She was also aware that her IRO is independent."

A qualitative interview will be undertaken by each of the team, the Participation Team and Young Inspectors Project Manager in April and May 2020.

- We have trialled a follow up scheme through Business Support to contact parents post conference to seek their views with mixed success. Further consideration will be given over the forthcoming year regarding how this can become established practice.
- A Snap Survey is being developed to gain feedback from family and professionals after conferences (to replace the current paper based feedback) and it is anticipated that this will go live in May 2020 and will increase participation.
- The Tell Us What You Think survey was designed to capture the views of Children in care about various aspects of their care experience. The intention is to identify the extent to which services are meeting quality standards and the needs of young people. It is also intended to give children and young people a voice to help identify how services can be improved. The outcomes in relation to the IRO role are shared in team meetings.

Other work completed

Two different age appropriate LAC leaflets "All About Your IRO" explains to children and young people the role of the IRO and the review process including details of the IRO, Advocacy and Counselling. They are posted out to all children and young people who become looked after from primary school age to age 18. IRO's also take copies out with them when visiting children.

A similar leaflet has been developed for young people subject to Remand.

A leaflet has been developed for CWD and for Short Term Breaks using a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). This is an alternative communication system developed to help children understand information and also convey their thoughts and needs.

A leaflet is being developed in conjunction with the Barnardos Leaving Care Team for use with UASC's.

For CWD short term breaks the IRO's update is included in the Child in Need Plan and they now have their own Activity Step in which to capture their involvement. An aide memoir is in place (developed with the CWD team in 2019) to support the IRO's reporting of the LAC or STB review meeting. An audit was completed by CWD and Team Manager which has resulted in updated guidance being sent to both teams in March 2020.

IRO's and Chairs continue to attend Children's Services locality team meetings every 6 months. This has been received very positively by the teams both in having the opportunity to explore the role and expectations of the IRO and Chairs but also to raise matters and find solutions therefore improving practice.

Six monthly meetings with colleagues from CAFCASS have continued and the existing Protocol has been reviewed and updated again. A joint workshop and problem solving session took place in May 2019 to develop care planning around family time within the PLO process and SGO support planning. A further workshop took place in November 2019 with the focus on Adoption and SGO developments in relation to plans and support for carers. The feedback from these events is positive; working relationships and communication between services has improved.

The Manager of the QA Service also now sits on the local Family Justice Board and this has served to raise the profile of the IRO Service within the court arena. A recent survey by the National IRO Managers Partnership around IRO views in the court arena has recently been shared with them and there may be scope for a further twilight session to the Family lawyers and court staff (including Judges) on the role of the IRO in 2020.

One Team Manager attends the Sector Led Improvement Regional IRO and CP Managers group meeting every quarter. This group developed and rolled out a set of Regional IRO Practice Standards across the East Midlands in order to support consistency of IRO practice across the nine Local Authorities.

Members of the Regional group also arrange regional workshops across the year for IRO's and Chairs. Workshops in 2019 have included;

14th May, Derby – Participation and Engagement.

10th September, Leicester- Contextual Safeguarding, Modern Slavery & Trafficking.

19th November, Lincoln – Outcome Care Planning, communication, language.

In addition the Team Manager also attends the National IRO Managers Partnership, as one of the two regional representatives of East Midlands.

Lincolnshire Children's Services is an Improvement Partner for Northamptonshire. A peer review of SQAS (Safeguarding, Quality Assurance Service) in Northampton took place over 3 days in July 2019 and 3 auditors present from the Q&S Team. The auditors were provided with a scoping document by Northamptonshire with key lines of enquiry.

The review was been undertaken collaboratively to include the IRO's, CP Conference Chairs, LADO, Business Support, Advocates and Independent Visitors, Virtual School Head, the Assessment, LAC & Leaving Care Team Managers, and the Safeguarding Business Manager.

The newly appointed CP manager and the Safeguarding Business Manager from Northampton visited Lincolnshire for the day 17th October to meet with the team managers and business support services manager; sharing best practice and ideas.

In November 2019 senior members from West Sussex visited Lincolnshire for the day to see how Signs of Safety has been implemented from the front door through to adoption. One Team manager and a Chair from the service provided a presentation and supporting documents in order to share how we have made changes to our day to day work, paperwork, processes and practice to align to Signs of Safety as our overarching practice framework. The day enabled West Sussex to gain a real feel of what the vision and practice looks like in Lincolnshire.

In July 2019 one Chair was seconded from Lincolnshire to Northampton for 9 months as part of a team to support an improvement programme. The secondment was extended to July 2020 but was ended in March due to Covid. This enabled the seconded Chair from Lincolnshire to return to frontline practice and update her practice. It also allowed her to share her knowledge, skills and experience of being a Chair with Northampton Social Workers.

OFSTED

Lincolnshire County Council were Inspected by OFSTED 29th April – 3rd May 2019. Services for children and families in Lincolnshire are judged to be "Outstanding".

There were two recommendations from the inspection, one of which had implications for the service. This related to the quality and consistency of Pathway Plans for care leavers. In response, the LA led by the Corporate Parenting Manager has developed a new Pathway Plan Assessment and template, to which our service has also contributed by participating in developing and testing the process on the case management system.

The assessment and plan will be reviewed in June 2020 following feedback from young people and professionals. The Chairs report will also be reviewed at this point in order to ensure that it best reflects the needs of the young people and is compatible with the Pathway Plan.

The OFSTED report specifically commented on the impact of IRO's and CP Chairs:

- Children's progress is closely monitored through the use of scaling tools, at regular, well attended Child Protection Conferences.
- Families are central to the planning to reduce risk.
- Plans are effective and improve children's experiences and outcomes.

- For those children unable to return to their birth families or live within family networks, alternative permanence options are carefully considered with parallel planning occurring from the earliest opportunity.
- Minutes are sensitively written to children following reviews, this means that children have a better understanding about how decisions were made about their lives.
- Staff feel well supported in their roles and are unanimously positive about and committed to working for Lincolnshire.

Learning Day 19th September 2019

Learning Days are undertaken on a regular basis for all teams with the main objective of each day to provide a dedicated reflective learning opportunity for the team. They also provide an opportunity for strengthening relationships between Senior Managers and the Children's Services workforce, Ensuring messages from senior management are being filtered down to the workforce and from the workforce are being share with senior management; providing assurance to senior managers that children and young people feel safe.

The Learning Day for Independent Chairs and LADO teams took place on 19th September and included a collaborative audit in relation to a looked after child and an observation of the LAC review, an observation of an ICPC, discussion with the Reg 44 Officer and LADOs.

The Learning Day was undertaken by one Assistant Director and a Head of Service. Feedback received on the day included the following:

"It was a privilege to hear from such an impressive, values-driven set of professionals, and to observe some of the work. I left feeling humbled by it. Thanks to all involved"

"I would echo all of Mary's comments I had a fabulous day. I will with Mary pull together some more detailed feedback but you have a very child focused, highly motivated and passionate team! "

More formal feedback has since been received and this is being fed into the on-going work of the teams.

Professional Profile of the IRO Service

The Independent Reviewing Service continues to be embedded within the Quality and Standards Service Area of Lincolnshire County Council.

The Independent Chairs Team is made up primarily of two distinct roles: Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and Child Protection Chairs. In a number of Local Authorities these roles are separate roles, often located in separate teams; however this is not the

case in Lincolnshire. Currently there are 18.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Independent Chair posts within the team that cover the county as a whole.

The team also has responsibility for reviewing CWD Short Term Breaks and Regulation 44 Inspections. Both of these roles are also statutory requirements.

In addition there are 3 LADOs within the wider team who are line managed by the Quality and Standards Manager. Two of these posts are permanent and one is a temporary due to the need to manage increased demand. These roles are filled by qualified Social Workers at the same grade as the IRO's and Chairs and are able to assist with covering work on occasion.

Short Term Breaks (STB's)

Short breaks are part of a continuum of services which support children in need and their families. They include the provision of day, evening, overnight and weekend activities for the child or young person, and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, or in a residential or community setting. In Lincolnshire the users of short breaks are disabled children and their families. The breaks usually have two aims: to enable the child to participate in fun, interesting and safe activities; and to provide a break from caring for the parents.

The role of the IRO for children looked after in a series of short breaks is more limited than for children looked after longer term. It is important that IROs are sensitive to the close and active involvement of parents. Given this sensitivity, parents as well as children and young people can highly value their contribution and independent perspective, especially in helping to resolve any difficulties with the placement. IROs have a responsibility to alert the local authority if the placement is not meeting the child's needs.

The performance of this part of the service can now be reported within the OMG reports when needed.

Number of Short Term Break meetings held

Apr 18	May 18	Jun 18	Jul 18	Aug 18	Sep 18	Oct 18	Nov 18	Dec 18
8	12	8	8	1	7	4	9	8
Jan 19	Feb 19	Mar 19	Apr 19	May 19	Jun 19	Jul 19	Aug 19	Sep 19

6	4	5	5	3	11	5	0	8
Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	Apr 20		
6	6	4	6	4	4	4		

Regulation 44

The Regulation 44 Officer continues to be based within the team. The role is a statutory one to act as an independent person, visit and report on the children's homes. Lincolnshire has 7 residential homes with a wide range of specialism – 1 secure unit, 2 homes accommodating children with disabilities for short breaks, 1 long term home for children with disabilities and 3 children's homes that offer long term placement for children who are looked after.

There has been the launch of new supported living schemes in Grantham and Gainsborough providing accommodation in two houses for 5 young people aged 16-18 for a period of up to six months. This accommodation is to be inspected under the Regulation 44 process however this is 'a light touch' exercise every 4 months.

For details in terms of the service please see the individual report provided for the Corporate Parenting Board.

Staffing

Management Team

Chris Sharp has been a Team Manager during the reporting period. Ildiko Kiss returned from maternity leave in August 2019 and her absence had been covered by Paul Fisher (LADO) who was seconded from April 2018 to August 2019.

From January 2020 Paul Fisher became the second permanent Team Manager.

Chris Sharp is due to leave her post at the end of March 2020 and a new Team Manager, Debbie Johnson has been successfully recruited.

Independent Chairs

The team has experienced a number of changes since April 2019; 3 team members have retired; one temporary Chair left the team to secure a permanent position at another Local Authority; three IRO/Chairs are seconded out of service; one into the LADO Team, one to Learning and Development (both these roles are within the wider service), and another to Northamptonshire to support the council as part of Partners In

Practice. Two further Chairs left in November, one due to maternity leave, another Chair (Independent SW) who had reduced hours in the team, left for personal reasons.

The team experienced further pressure in the summer and autumn of 2019 due to sickness and bereavement absence.

Three full time positions were recruited, two of whom started in June (Cheryl and Drasute) and another (Hayley) at the end of October.

One seconded Chair (Lyndsay) was successfully interviewed in Feb 2020 for a permanent post. The secondment was back filled in the same recruitment drive (Richard) who is due to start in July (some delay due to covid).

Two agency workers have been recruited, one in July 2019 to cover for the Northampton secondment and the second in October 2019.

Looked After population and the IRO service

The numbers of children in care show an upwards trend from March 2019 (615) to March 2020 (626)

In the year April 19-March 20 the IROs have conducted 1620 reviews involving 1914 children

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Number of Reviews	1513	1501	1587	1623	1547	1620
Number of children	1916	1879	1963	1983	1872	1914

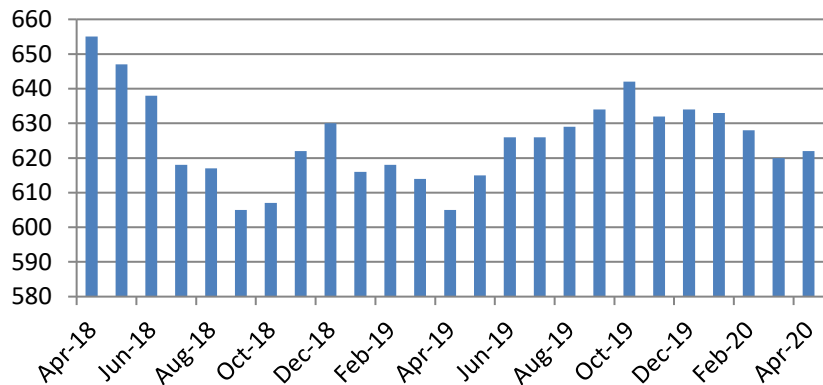
5 young people have been subject to Secure Accommodation under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989 and 8 Secure Accommodation Reviews have been held.

Eight young people have been subject to Remands in the reporting period. Nine reviews have been held to date for these young people. Five young people were placed at Wetherby YOI and 3 at Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre.

100% of looked after reviews have been held in timescales and 100 % of children in care have participated in their reviews.

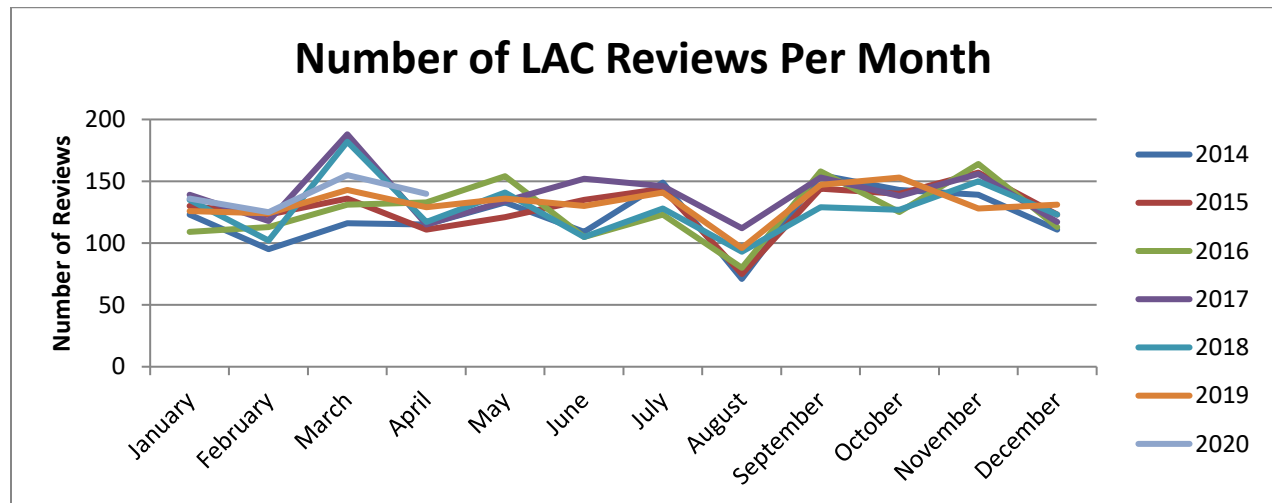
Looked After Population

LAC Population by Month

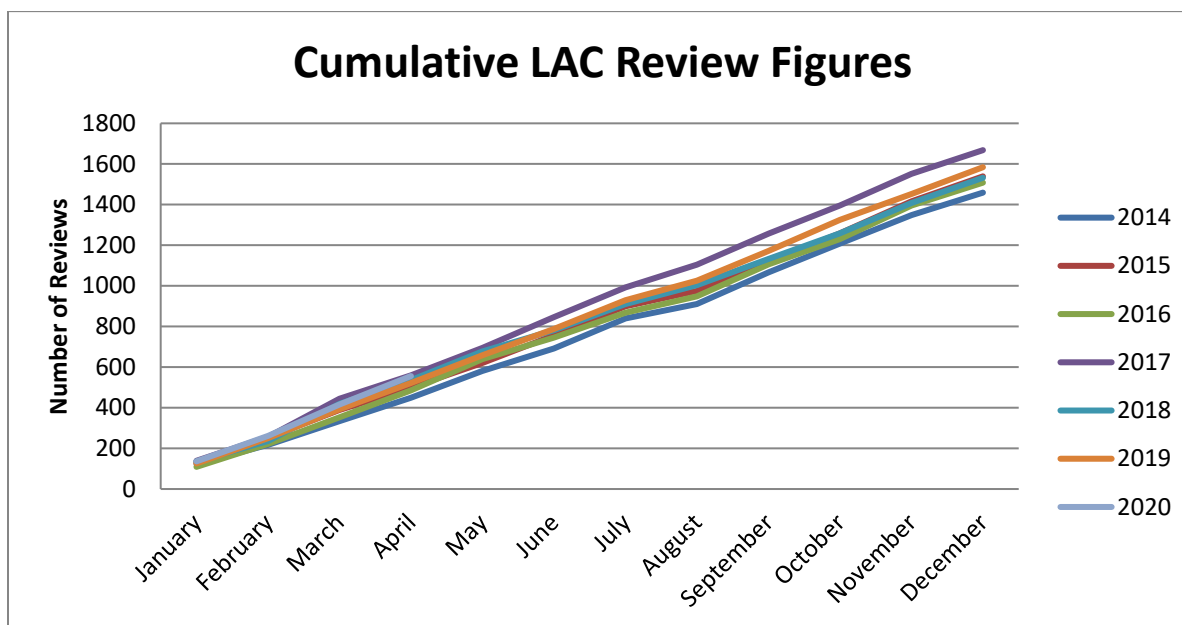


Number of LAC Reviews							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	123 (161 Children)	130 (155 Children)	109 (135 Children)	135 (201 Children)	134 (169 Children)	122 (153 Children)	138 (151 Children)
February	95 (119 Children)	123 (162 Children)	113 (132 Children)	117 (144 Children)	102 (120 Children)	124 (143 Children)	126 (156 Children)
March	116 (145 Children)	136 (172 Children)	131 (179 Children)	186 (226 Children)	181 (226 Children)	145 (176 Children)	155 (179 Children)
April	115 (149 Children)	111 (136 Children)	133 (150 Children)	112 (145 Children)	118 (136 Children)	129 (146 Children)	142 (157 Children)
May	133 (160 Children)	120 (156 Children)	154 (190 Children)	135 (165 Children)	142 (178 Children)	134 (151 Children)	
June	109 (145 Children)	135 (161 Children)	105 (127 Children)	146 (183 Children)	145 (183 Children)	130 (170 Children)	
July	149 (192 Children)	144 (179 Children)	119 (154 Children)	145 (180 Children)	128 (152 Children)	143 (170 Children)	
August	71 (87 Children)	75 (93 Children)	80 (96 Children)	111 (127 Children)	95 (115 Children)	95 (109 Children)	
September	155 (199 Children)	144 (182 Children)	158 (180 Children)	150 (184 Children)	128 (152 Children)	153 (183 Children)	
October	142 (174 Children)	139 (173 Children)	125 (166 Children)	135 (160 Children)	127 (150 Children)	156 (188 Children)	
November	139 (179 Children)	157 (197 Children)	163 (193 Children)	156 (182 Children)	150 (185 Children)	128 (149 Children)	

December	111 (142 Children)	123 (156 Children)	112 (136 Children)	116 (142 Children)	123 (149 Children)	133 (162 Children)
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Cumulative LAC Review Figures 2014- 2020							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	123	130	109	139	135	126	136
February	218	253	222	257	237	250	261
March	334	389	353	445	419	393	416
April	449	500	486	560	536	522	556
May	582	621	640	694	677	658	
June	691	756	745	846	782	788	
July	840	900	868	992	910	929	
August	911	975	948	1104	1003	1025	
September	1066	1119	1106	1257	1132	1172	
October	1209	1259	1231	1395	1259	1325	
November	1348	1416	1395	1551	1409	1453	
December	1459	1539	1508	1668	1532	1584	



Advocacy

Advocacy provision in Lincolnshire is currently provided by Total Voice as part of a commissioned service. The Senior Advocacy Practitioner, Barnardo's, attended a Team Meeting in August 2019 and feedback has been given to the LA Manager of the Advocacy contract to identify changes that could be made to ensure that all young people are appropriately supported and have a voice within their Care Plan and Safety Plan.

IROs routinely check that children and young people know about advocacy and how it can support them in having a real say in decisions affecting their lives. LAC children are opted in to the Advocacy Service who are also automatically invited to LAC Reviews for children aged 8 and over. The advocacy service has worked with 192 young people since 1st April 2019 (125 CP and 67 LAC).

Children and young people's preparation and involvement in reviews

Participation includes attending and/or contributing to their Review. All children and young people are sent a consultation form with their invite. Some have phone calls, emails and separate visits from their IROs in between reviews or in anticipation of a forthcoming review. This is to enable the IRO to build a relationship with the child, ensure that they have the opportunity to discuss any issues/talk about the positives in their lives and to determine how they want the next review to be conducted.

Attending a review is the child or young person's decision and not mandatory.

100% of looked after reviews have been held in timescales and 100 % of children in care over the age of 5 have participated in their review meeting in some form, either through attendance or more indirect means, such as consultation booklet, or their views being represented by a trusted adult or advocate.

Signs of Safety, Restorative Practice and Social Pedagogy are being utilised by staff in partnership with SW colleagues in their planning for reviews and engagement with children and young people. This remains an important strand of work to ensure we can reach out to young people who do not attend to gain feedback and improve participation.

Chairs continue to promote and adapt reviews to ensure that they are relevant and appropriate in line with the wishes of the child or young person. This has meant that reviews can be incredibly varied dependent on the age, circumstances and wishes of the young person, from the more "traditional" review to some very interesting variations.

There still remains the limitations of venues, timing of reviews and working around school holidays that will continue to impact on attendance, however participation still remains a core focus for the Chairs.

Further work will be undertaken over the coming months to identify if there are specific age ranges or groups that are more or less likely to attend their reviews. If there are any specific identifiable trends we would then be looking to identify whether we need to focus our efforts to engage more effectively and identify barriers to attendance that would be relevant to them.

Looked After Review Plans

The Chairs continue to focus on checking the availability and quality of Plans and to escalate if they are missing or are not up to date/relevant to the children's needs. The integrated Care Plan/Chairs Report was launched at the beginning of April 2019, as a cooperative system workflow between Social Work and IRO team. This initially caused difficulties, as one or both parties may have not completed their step in a timely manner, which in turn impacted on the other team's workflow. Following intensive work and collaboration with the other teams, there have been improvements made and it is due for review in May 2020.

Children seen in separate interviews and children attending their reviews

At this time no accurate data can be provided in respect of children/ young people seen in a separate interview by the IRO prior to the review, or with regards to the number of children who attended their reviews. Changes to Mosaic made in April 2019, as detailed above, had some unintended consequences, which has impacted on the data collated. The report that the Performance Team run is being updated but given there is a plan to review the workflow for children in care this may need further amendments in the coming months. There have been on-going meetings with performance to resolve these issues.

Progress-chasing Activities between Looked After Reviews

All IROs have a duty to monitor the progress of their allocated children and young people between reviews. This is to ensure the care plan is progressing and allows them

to intervene and escalate issues where matters are drifting. All young people are provided with the IROs name and contact details at the initial meeting and routinely at reviews

Identifying good practice, problem resolution and escalation

IRO's identify and share good practice with colleagues but also raise concerns with social care teams via positive challenge and formal escalation.

The majority of concerns are still raised by the IROs through positive challenge, and these are recorded on MOSAIC.

The team have been focusing on improving consistency in terms of escalations made and to ensure a better monitoring, reducing drift and delay. Systems are in place to support managerial oversight as well as helping the IRO's in their duty of tracking escalations. The IROs now are sent weekly reminder emails of open formal escalations so that they can follow these up with the respective teams. Also escalations have been included into the individual IROs appraisal goals and are actively discussed during supervisions. The drive is to make the escalations more robust and to increase the use of positive challenge, whenever this is warranted to approve care planning and outcomes for young people.

All Independent Reviewing Officers are required by the regulations to have access to legal advice. Clearly, given the independent nature of the Service, it would not be appropriate for any such advice to be provided by the Children's Services Legal Department. Therefore, arrangements are in place for this service to be delivered by barristers' chambers in Nottingham. To date, this service has not been accessed.

Number of formal LAC Escalations (by month)

April 2016	May 2016	June 2016	July 2016	Aug 2016	Sept 2016	Oct 2016	Nov 2016	Dec 2016	Jan 2017	Feb 2017	Mar 2017
9	4	0	3	1	3	4	3	6	2	5	8
April 2017	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	Aug 2017	Sept 2017	Oct 2017	Nov 2017	Dec 2018	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018
2	5	7	5	1	9	4	5	5	8	4	7
April 2018	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	Aug 2018	Sept 2018	Oct 2018	Nov 2018	Dec 2018	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019
4	4	4	5	2	4	1	1	0	3	2	3
April 2019	May 2019	June 2019	July 2019	Aug 2019	Sept 2019	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019	Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020
8	3	1	0	0	6	1	2	0	2	7	1
Apr 2020											

3										
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Theme of LAC Formal Escalations (April 2019 to March 2020)

Theme	Number Raised
Drift & Delay	10
Practice Issues (Multiple Issues)	8
Safeguarding Concerns	7
Placement/ Accommodation Concerns	2
Provision of Service	2
Transitions	2
Total Escalations Raised	31

LAC Escalations – 31 Raised, 24 Completed/resolved.

In relation to good practice, Chairs feedback directly to individual workers, copied to Managers when good practice is identified.

Management oversight

The Guidance states that operational social work managers must consider the decisions from the Review before they are finalised. This is due in part to the need to ensure any resource implications have been addressed. Once the decisions are completed the

Manager has 5 days to raise any queries or objections. Managers rarely ask for any amendments to be made and this process appears to work well.

IROs have continued to monitor the quality of care plans, adoption plans and pathway plans and social reports to review. Where any issues were identified, IROs have attempted initially informally to address these and on a few occasions have formally escalated concerns.

Leaving Care – Director's Decision

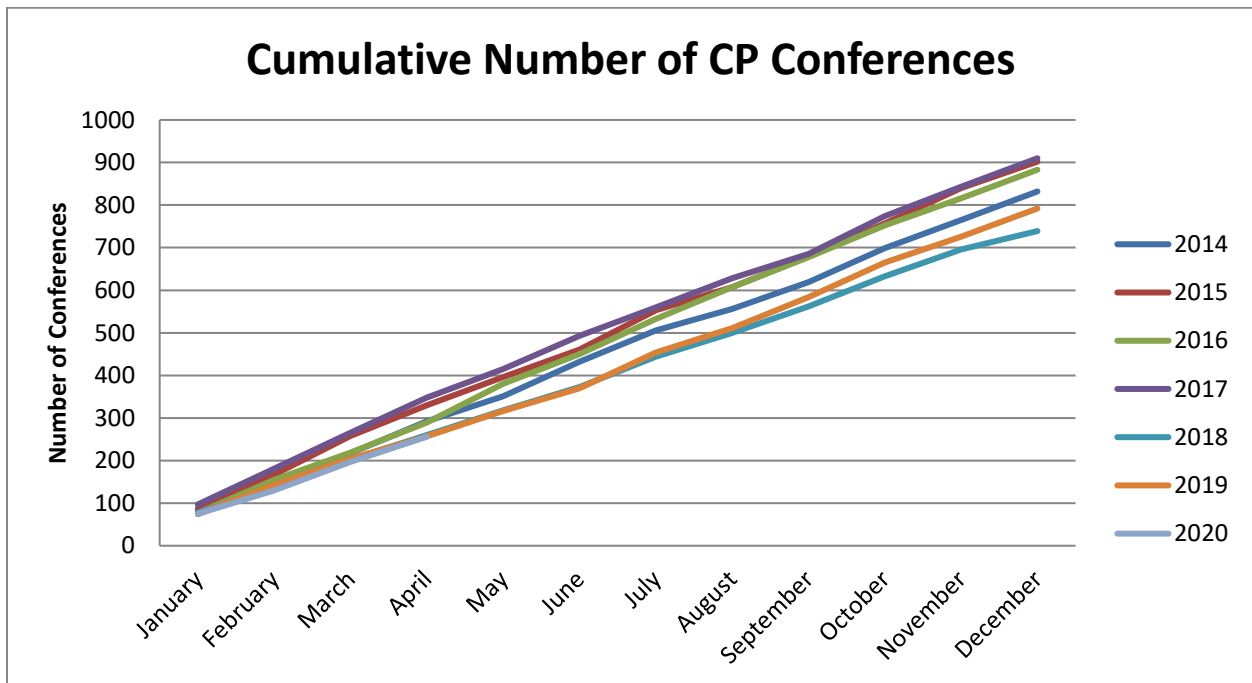
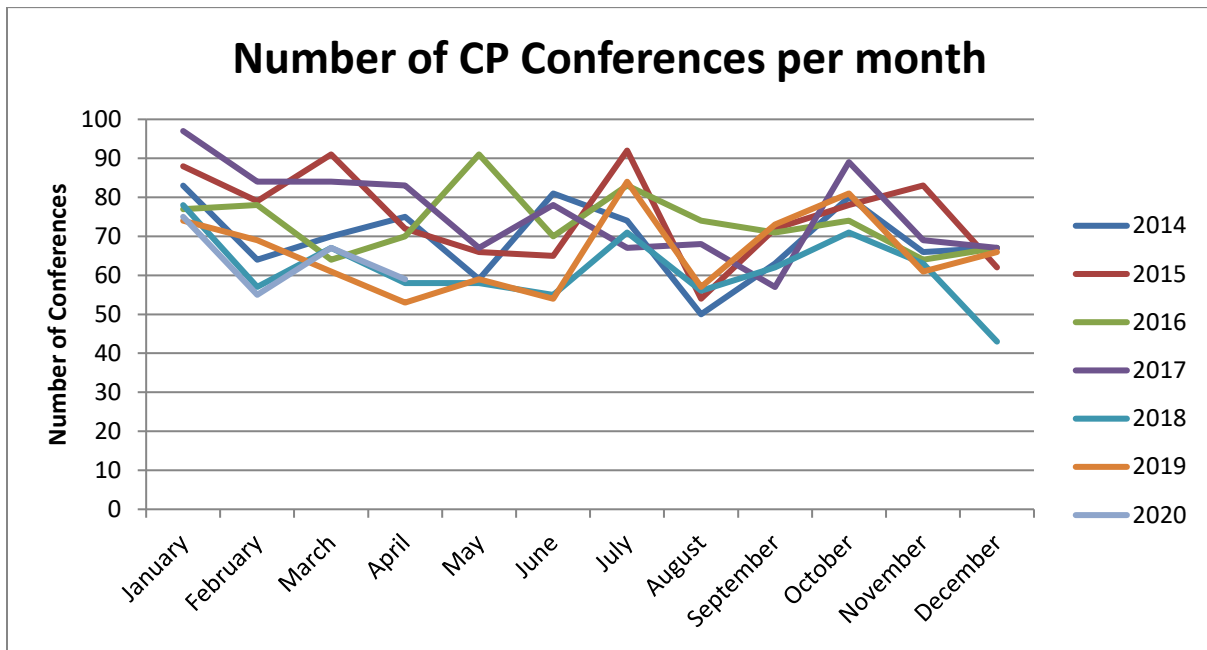
Month	Total	Month	Total	Month	Total
Apr 18	1	Jan 19	0	Oct 19	0
May 18	3	Feb 19	0	Nov 19	0
Jun 18	2	Mar 19	0	Dec 19	2
Jul 18	1	Apr 19	0	Jan 20	0
Aug 18	2	May 19	1	Feb 20	0
Sep 18	0	Jun 19	0	Mar 20	0
Oct 18	1	Jul 19	1	Apr 20	0
Nov 18	1	Aug 19	2		
Dec 18	0	Sep 19	0		

The procedure with regards to Sec. 20 Accommodated young people leaving care before their 18th birthday is understood by Chairs and is discussed within reviews as part of the Care Planning process and Recommendations. Any young person who has been accommodated for more than 20 days and is aged 16 or 17 and wants to leave care has to have this decision considered by the Director.

Child Protection

The numbers of children subject to a CP Plan steadily increased between 1st April 2019 (303) and 31st October 2019 (405) before reducing to 350 by 31st March 2020. This is compared to a consistent period between April 2018 (303) and March 2019 (315).

Cumulative Number of CP Conferences 2014/20							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	83	88	77	97	78	74	75
February	147	167	155	181	135	143	130
March	217	258	219	265	202	204	197
April	292	330	289	348	260	257	256
May	351	396	380	415	318	316	
June	432	461	450	493	373	370	
July	506	553	533	560	444	454	
August	556	607	607	628	500	511	
September	619	679	678	685	562	584	
October	699	757	752	774	633	665	
November	765	840	816	843	696	726	
December	832	902	883	910	739	792	



Number of CP Conferences							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	82 (159 Children)	88 (187 Children)	76 (140 Children)	97 (184 Children)	78 (157 children)	74 (129 children)	72 (128 children)
February	64 (122 Children)	79 (132 Children)	78 (144 Children)	84 (142 Children)	56 (115 children)	69 (133 children)	55 (106 children)

March	70 (132 Children)	91 (190 Children)	64 (112 Children)	83 (157 Children)	66 (128 children)	61 (135 children)	67 (134 children)
April	75 (167 Children)	72 (130 Children)	70 (133 Children)	81 (162 Children)	58 (99 Children)	52 (101 children)	59 (120 children)
May	59 (113 Children)	66 (123 Children)	89 (174 Children)	67 (123 Children)	58 (107 Children)	59 (108 children)	
June	81 (158 Children)	65 (108 Children)	70 (134 Children)	79 (151 Children)	55 (99 Children)	53 (109 children)	
July	74 (143 Children)	92 (172 Children)	83 (162 Children)	67 (141 Children)	71 134 Children)	79 (164 children)	
August	50 (88 Children)	54 (92 Children)	74 (144 Children)	68 (118 Children)	56 (96 Children)	57 (110 children)	
September	63 (134 Children)	71 (136 Children)	71 (129 Children)	57 (124 Children)	62 (118 Children)	73 (166 children)	
October	80 (156 Children)	78 (135 Children)	74 (136 Children)	89 (169 Children)	71 (130 children)	81 (169 children)	
November	66 (113 Children)	85 (163 Children)	64 (120 Children)	69 (136 Children)	63 (110 Children)	60 (120 children)	
December	68 (149 Children)	62 (117 Children)	67 (113 Children)	67 (112 Children)	43 (72 Children)	66 (119 children)	

Timeliness of reviews

100% of child protection meetings were held in timescale.

Children and young people's preparation and involvement in conferences

A number of young people attend conferences and are supported by advocates if they choose to be and the service has worked with 125 young people subject to CP since 1st April 2019. Advocates also attend meetings on behalf of children.

Activities between Child Protection Reviews

Chairs undertake a monitoring check at the midway point between Conferences and a check when preparing for reviews. This is to ensure that statutory tasks have been undertaken and that the plan is progressing and having a positive impact for the child and family. Where there are concerns the Chair will alert the relevant member of the team SW, PS or TM.

For children who are reaching 12 months on a child protection plan a process is in place to review progress, prevent delay and agree a way forward. This discussion has a formal agenda and is led by a different CP Chair to include the allocated Chair, SW, PS and TM. The record of the discussion is saved on the child's case file.

Identifying good practice, problem resolution and escalation

There is a separate and newly updated process in place for child protection escalations relating to reports and attendance which are completed immediately after a child protection. The new process commenced in September 2019 – a Quarterly email is now sent to the Senior Liaison Officer's to make them aware of any escalations raised for staff or areas that they cover.

For the period April 19 to March 20 there were 325 escalations to the following agencies, compared to 284 for the same period in 2018/2019.

Escalations Raised in period Apr 19 – Mar 20

Organisation	Number of Escalations
GP's	134
Education (Schools, Nurseries etc.)	56
Other External*	16
Social Workers / Practice Supervisors	15
Housing (LA's, charities)	14
Hospital Based Worker	14
We Are With You (formerly Addaction)	13
Probation	13
Other Internal*	11
Health Visitors	10
Early Help Worker	5
Police/PPU	5
Midwives	4
Advocate	4
Other Health	3
P3 Charity	3
Child & Young Person's Nurses	3
CAMHS	2
Total Escalations Raised	325

*other internal and other external are comprised of lots of individual job roles where there is only 1 escalation per role, so for the sake of a concise summary these have been grouped

CP Escalations commenced throughout the year

Apr 18	15	Jan 19	26	Oct 19	35
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May 18	33	Feb 19	22	Nov 19	30
Jun 18	27	Mar 19	30	Dec 19	14
Jul 18	27	Apr 19	23	Jan 20	32
Aug 18	20	May 19	24	Feb 20	30
Sep 18	26	Jun 19	14	Mar 20	27
Oct 18	18	Jul 19	33	Apr 20	6
Nov 18	26	Aug 19	15		
Dec 18	12	Sep 19	46		

The overwhelming reason for escalation was no report and no apologies provided. Good practice is reported on in the same way as it is for LAC reviews.

As previously explained, currently this data reflects only the formal escalations made; positive challenge is recorded in the Chairs activity form. The formal escalations are monitored by the Chairs with the support of a weekly report and reminder from the Safeguarding Team. These measures will support the team to reduce any further drift and delay. A total of 325 escalations were raised but only 76 were responded to by Senior Liaison Officers. This was addressed in a report to LSCP in February 2020 and it is hoped that the response rate will improve. One of the issues is that the escalations relate to conferences that have already occurred so the issue for that meeting cannot be resolved. Its primary goal is to raise awareness to SLOs about issues within their agencies, so they can identify staff that persistently either fail to provide a report or do not attend and then address this. SLO's then do not see the need to advise Children's Services (Safeguarding and Review) that they have addressed the issue.

Quality Assurance of the IRO Service

Auditing and observations undertaken by the IRO Manager

Each Team Manager supervises ten members of staff. They undertake two observations of each member of staff; one child protection meeting and one LAC review. Written feedback is provided and discussed in supervision. The observation is undertaken against the Knowledge & Skills Statements.

Conferences are also observed by a number of different professionals, both internal and external staff who want to familiarise themselves with the conference process and learning – this has included colleagues from Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, LCC LSCP Trainers, SOS Practice Advisers.

A comprehensive audit of each chair undertaking a conference was conducted in March 2019 and the learning from this carried forward into this year. A further QA started in March 2020 but was put on hold due to Covid 19 as observations of conferences became more problematic.

Children's Services undertake a programme of QA throughout the year and many themed audits impact on the work of the Chairs. There have been audits around the child and family assessment and also safety planning which Chairs play a part in.

A recent audit of LAC Chairs reports by the Team Managers was fed back to individual members of staff and demonstrated positive progress in this area with some excellent examples that really capture the voice and participation of the child.

Supervision and training

IROs have scheduled monthly supervision (pro rata) and informal supervision as and when required. All IROs have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) and are encouraged to attend training through Lincolnshire Learning and Development Team, Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and the Regional Workshops.

All Independent Reviewing Officers are social workers and registered with the Social Work England (SWE), previously Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). As part of their continued registration, workers are required to undertake five days training/development each year and upload a minimum of 3 pieces of reflective practice per year.

The National Assessment and Accreditation System (NASS) is for child and family practitioners and practice supervisors. It is designed to enhance social workers' knowledge and skills, create a national standard of practice in relation to the post-qualifying standards: help social workers gain a better understanding of their practice, prompt employers to review how they support social workers. The Quality and Standards Manager and the two Team Managers successfully completed and passed their accreditation assessment days in November and December 2019.

The Team Managers have implemented a system to record the training attended by the team to ensure that mandatory training is completed and that training is completed in a timely and co-ordinated way.

Team Meetings are held monthly and include guest speakers and workshops. To date these have included Advocacy, the Corporate Parenting Manager, SGO and Kinship Team, Barnardos Leaving Care Team, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and LAC team.

Priorities for 2020 - 2021

1. As a result of Covid 19 and as lockdown restrictions are lifted, recovery plans will be implemented which will take into account the learning from the lockdown period.
2. There is currently a significant piece of work being undertaken by the Participation Team calling children and young people to get feedback on their experiences. Over the next few months we will conduct a themed audit to capture the voice of the child.
3. Work is planned to review young people's participation in conferences as numbers continue to be low.
4. A review of work flows on Mosaic for children in care and pathway plans to support more timely recording.
5. Further work with the Performance Team to ensure reporting requirements are met, this will need to be reviewed and amended in line with any work flow changes
6. A piece of work to address the engagement of father's with child protection conferences.
7. For children leaving care a 'later life' letter to be written by their IRO and consideration to be given to providing them with a copy of all the review reports if they do not already have these.
8. Review quality assurance across the service to ensure this supports driving up standards of practice in Social Care.
9. Explore alternative methods for obtaining feedback from parents and young people, through the use of snap surveys and telephone contact.

Any resource issues that are putting at risk the delivery of a quality service

None

Carolyn Knight
Quality and Standards Manager