

**Lincolnshire County Council – Children’s Services  
Independent Reviewing Service yearly report  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

*The governments range of Covid 19 restrictions that had previously posed some challenges on how the Quality & Standards Service has continued to deliver crucial services over the past 2.5 years are no longer in place. Meetings and visits have now fully resumed as the Local Authority embraces new ways of working which are outlined within the body of this report.*

*This report sets out the updates in relation to the Local Authorities Children in Care. Given the Independent Chairs have a dual role and also chair Child Protection conferences, a separate Appendix A is attached to this report as supplementary reading.*

*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-term breaks, and Reg 44 visits, 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 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 looked after (known as Child 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 looked after children. The aim is to provide looked after children with the most appropriate placement to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

The CP 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 Child Protection Conference 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 going forward.

### **Priorities 2022-2023 – Taken from the Quality & Standards Team Action Plan 2021-2023**

- **Recording of escalations on Mosaic is amended to enable the recording of the narrative where there is genuine resolution dialogue to avoid taking to the next level.**

This is a piece of ongoing work. At the current time positive challenges are fully recorded within the Chair/ IRO activity step which evidences the way in which issues are narrowed down, often avoiding formal escalations. The formal escalation step needs to be revised

to allow the dialogue between individuals to be fully recorded to demonstrate how escalations are managed prior to progressing to the next management level if they remain unresolved.

- **The service will be undertaking a review of Conference and CiC physical participation by families and professionals with a road map for attendance.**

All ICPCs are now held in person with the minimum of the Social Worker, Chair, parents/ carers, Health and Early Help colleagues and other key individuals that work closely with the family. This is intended to form those initial supportive relationships around building a safe and robust plan for the child/ren and to engage with parents / children. Once this has taken place, the platform for subsequent meetings is agreed, taking into account the family's level of engagement, learning needs and other variables such issues of domestic abuse where it benefits victims, to be able to express their views away from a perpetrator in a safe setting.

Children in Care meetings follow a similar pathway, however, for those children and young people old enough and who are able to express their views independently, the platform for the meeting always takes into account their preferences. The service very much holds a 'it's my CiC meeting, it's my choice' ethos, ensuring that children and young people are always listened to.

- **Analysis and development of procedures and IT support required for post covid CP and CiC hybrid meetings. Hybrid meetings being those attended by invitees in person and via electronic means.**

There is still some way to go before all conference facilities around the County have hybrid working equipment available, similar to those already installed and working such as County Offices. All chairs now have individual Logitech conference cam units. These are portable and allow hybrid meetings to take place more effectively, where there is

enhanced quality of sound and vision to support more effective meetings. This was procured after a successful business case was presented and is already having a positive impact. This model is particularly benefiting CiC as the equipment can be used in a range of locations such as schools and foster carers homes which again allows more of our children and young people to have choices in relation to their meetings, who attends in person and who attends remotely.

- **Integration of current feedback from CP and CiC utilising "Engagement HQ" (centralised feedback development and recording system) when this comes online.**

The Local Authority are just moving onto the generic feedback platform through the Let's Talk system. This generic platform allows all feedback to be gathered in a central location in order for it to be evaluated. However, given the specific nature of the role, some evaluation is currently being undertaken to understand whether the new platform would provide the right level of feedback required to continue to fully understand the needs and views of our children and parents/ carers or whether this needs to be service specific.

- **Based on Engagement HQ, review of feedback forms and analysis of lessons learnt to effect service delivery.**

As above this is currently ongoing, however whichever platform the services elect to use, we continue to monitor the impact of the services we deliver and how these can continuously be improved to meet the needs of those we seek to support.

- **Initial trial and review of progress of the new Pre-Birth Protocol, implementation of any subsequent amendments from the review.**

This piece of work is now completed and fully embedded into practice. Since its initial stages the Pre-Birth Protocol has evolved into a confirmed model of practice and there is clear guidance around this. On occasions, CP Chairs still chair some of these meetings but

it has become more embedded into front line social work practice and Practice Supervisors often chair their own Pre-Birth Strategy Meetings. The Safeguarding & Review team still coordinate the administration for this important piece of work. This has resulted in many more unborn babies avoiding CP plans with an alternative Child in need / Pre proceedings pathway being implemented which has resulted in a less oppressive and stressful experience for the expectant mother and father. There are of course those unborn babies, where despite this positive way of supporting families, the risks elevate. In these cases, further consideration of an ICPC and potential CP plan is always considered to manage any risks.

- **Promotion of the role of the Independent Chair service through the LSCP and individual partners to ensure clarity and accountability.**

This is an ongoing piece of work. One of the Team Managers who takes a lead for CP is in regular attendance at LSCP meetings and events, and promotion of the role together with gathering important feedback is always present to enhance and promote the role.

- **Exploration and assessment of the categories of harm by the Independent Chairs within conference, ensuring that sexual harm is captured effectively.**

This is a piece of ongoing work. The introduction of the Sexual Harm Pathway which has been a significant piece of work together with the current delivery of updated Sexual Abuse training delivered by the Practice Advisors is enhancing understanding, knowledge, and practice in this area to ensure that for those children experiencing sexual harm, this is fully acknowledged as a key category.

- **Challenge and focus by the Independent Chair on ensuring active participation and engagement with any "absent" parent within the child protection framework. With particular emphasis on Fathers.**

This is an ongoing piece of work within the service. Managers frequently consider this in case supervision to ensure the issues remains live. Chairs are now fully back completing peer audits and there is an expectation that this area is fully considered and reflected upon. Chairs, where necessary are discussing absent parents with locality social work teams to ensure that where there is an absent parent, every attempt is made to include them. Further to this a Team Manager in the Quality & Standards Team is involved in a discrete piece of work between the LSCP and Children Services to look at the current ways of working, practice development and training to ensure that this very important group of individuals is always fully considered.

- **A review, analysis, and any appropriate change to the 12 Month Conference Review process.**

The 12-month meeting has now been changed to an 18-month meeting. FAST Team Managers are expected to attend all CP conferences at the 9-month point, and as such have a broader understanding of any issues relating to CP plans not progressing. The 18-month point felt more appropriate to review those children still subject to CP plans. This is now fully embedded with a revised agenda that seeks to review progress and any challenges within the S.O.S framework. A CP chair independent of the child's CP chair, facilitates the meeting to ensure independence and objective oversight and seeks to support colleagues to analyse a child's circumstances and their plan to highlight any changes required to move plans forward.

- **Working Collaboratively with FAST TM's to improve preparation for Initial Child Protection Conferences in a re-design of ICPC requests**

This is an ongoing piece of work. There are some significant challenges within some of the FAST teams at the current time in terms of staffing movement which continues to impact on the quality of preparation in some instances. Chairs are using a restorative approach

to support colleagues to navigate these issues to minimise impact on children and their families.

- **Develop Practice Champions within the Chairs Service to support continuing professional development and assist with implementation of the various practice stream updates. Valuing Care, Graded Care -Neglect; CSA; Family Finding; Restorative Practice; Signs of Safety; UASC**

This is an ongoing piece of work. Individual chairs are involved in these pieces of work which are used as a platform to enhance practice within the team and the wider social care teams and partners. Practice champions are expected to share good practice examples, guide and coach staff in these areas and act as a mentor for those less experienced. As an example, the team has 2 IRO's who predominantly deal with UASC children, who are experienced in this area and often coach and support colleagues to enhance practice.

- **Implementing recommendations from the IRO dip Sample Audit in relation to the upholding of children's participation in their care plans and reviews**

This is a piece of ongoing work. There is a service expectation that IRO's fully engage with their children and families prior to review. To further quality assure this, IRO's are now completing peer audits to provide independent overview of practice, and this also remains a live subject in regular case supervision.

- **The development of the Valuing Care Toolkit and how this impacts on the information that is provided to reviews and how care plans are constructed is an ongoing workstream and IRO service needs to be actively engaged in the implementation and review of VCT**

The Valuing Care Toolkit continues to develop. This has recently had further developments in its use and the guidance provided for all staff. It has become a frequent addition to the CiC care planning steps and is included in each child's care review. There is an expectation that IRO's use this information to consider an individual child's needs and use it to promote conversations within and outside of reviews to ensure that children's plans always reflect their needs as these change over time. A Team Manager from the Quality & Standards Service sits on the Valuing Care Governance Board to ensure that the service is always at the heart of any developments and how these impact on the children and young people that the service oversees.

### **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. The service has recently secured further funding for an additional IRO post in relation to the rising UASC numbers which has raised the full time equivalent to 19.6 Independent Chairs. Due to some movement within the team, there are currently 4 vacancies advertised with an anticipated closing date on 16.10.22. 4 agency workers are supporting the team whilst these vacant posts are filled.

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

In addition, there are 3 FTE Local Authority Designated Officers within the wider team who are line managed by a Team Manager. 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. The



restructure has resulted in all the Chairs and LADO's being on the same job description, which means there is more resilience across the service.

COVID, sickness absence, secondment and recruitment continue to be challenging over the course of the year; this has necessitated the use of some agency staff as outlined above to ensure that service capacity is not impacted upon, and standards are maintained. One member of staff retired recently and has returned to work on a sessional basis, working 3 days per week to support the team given the current service challenges and pressures.

### **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 longer term CiC. 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. A large number of short breaks occur that do not require oversight by the IRO due to not meeting the statutory requirements. A referral form has been developed with CWD to ensure that information and rationale for IRO involvement is captured effectively.

### **Number of Short-Term Break meetings held**

Apr 18	8	Apr 19	5	Apr 20	4	Apr 21	4	Apr 22	4
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May 18	12	May 19	3	May 20	4	May 21	6	May 22	10
Jun 18	8	Jun 19	11	Jun 20	6	Jun 21	7	Jun 22	4
Jul 18	8	Jul 19	5	Jul 20	7	Jul 21	6	Jul 22	7
Aug 18	1	Aug 19	0	Aug 20	2	Aug 21	1	Aug 22	0
Sep 18	7	Sep 19	8	Sep 20	4	Sep 21	7	Sep 22	3
Oct 18	4	Oct 19	6	Oct 20	4	Oct 21	4		
Nov 18	9	Nov 19	6	Nov 20	9	Nov 21	9		
Dec 18	8	Dec 19	4	Dec 20	2	Dec 21	6		
Jan 19	6	Jan 20	6	Jan 21	4	Jan 22	3		
Feb 19	4	Feb 20	4	Feb 21	3	Feb 22	5		
Mar 19	5	Mar 20	4	Mar 21	5	Mar 22	4		
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>

#### Regulation 44

(For details in terms of the service please see the individual report provided for the corporate parenting board).

The Regulation 44 Officers continue to be based within the wider team. The role is a statutory one to act as an independent person, visit and report on the children's homes. Lincolnshire currently has 7 residential homes with a wide range of specialisms – one Secure unit, two homes accommodating children with disabilities for short breaks, one long term home for children with disabilities and 3 children's homes that offer long term placements for children in care. Lincolnshire is due to shortly open a new task centred home bringing the Local Authorities provision to 8. There are 2 supported living schemes, one in Grantham and the other in Gainsborough providing accommodation for 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.

#### **Staffing**

Management Team

There are four Team Managers in the Service. The Chairs are predominantly managed by Debbie Johnson and Richard Stone. Paul Fisher has responsibility for the LADO's and Reg 44 Officers and Philippa Gallop has responsibility for Quality Assurance, Learning and Development, Participation and Liaise.

Independent Chairs

The team has experienced a number of changes over the past 6 months. A further staff member has retired, and one member of staff was seconded to Lincoln FAST for the whole year to support front line practice pressures has now returned to the team. We have one further member of staff seconded to SK FAST to support practice pressures there, and one part time member of staff seconded to the Fostering Service. The 2 staff members who were on long term sick have now returned to work. We currently have 2 other members of staff on long term sick, 1 Independent Chair and 1 Team Manager. We have recruited 1 new member of staff from within Children's Services who started on 19.9.22 and was offered a full induction. We have also secured 1 further Independent Chair Post through funding secured in relation to the rising UASC children. There are currently 4 agency workers supporting the team and there are 4 vacant posts advertised with a closing date on 16.10.22.

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Cheryl Govier	Drasute Kay	Horia Astalos

07786 275265 cheryl.govier@lincolnshire.gov.uk	07900 607894 drasute.kay@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Agency 07385 468338 horia.astalos@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Julie Vincent 07833 236464 julie.vincent@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Tina Pearce 07825 833035 tina.pearce@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Graham Nicholson 07920 182384 graham.nicholson@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Renita Lancaster 07767 212825 renita.lancaster@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Denise Lyon 07388 854634 denise.lyon@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Colin Pennington 07823 753545 colin.pennington@lincolnshire.gov.uk
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Chloe Booth Agency 07920 792082 chloe.booth@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Stephanie Morris 07909 535853 stephanie.morris@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Lyndsay Hewitt (LADO) 07900 607725 lyndsay.hewitt@lincolnshire.gov.uk

### **Children in Care population and the IRO service**

There continues to be an upward trend in the number of young people being in care, 730 (September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022) as opposed to 688 (September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

In the year 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 the IROs have conducted 1750 reviews. In the same period in 2020-2021 there were 1634 reviews. Workload has been increasing year on year.

Due to the current drift and delay within the court and the impact of a number of foster care changes for some children, reviews are often rescheduled to accommodate this. As an example, between September 30<sup>th</sup> 2021 and September 30<sup>th</sup> 2022, 920 reviews were re arranged which has had a further impact on workload.

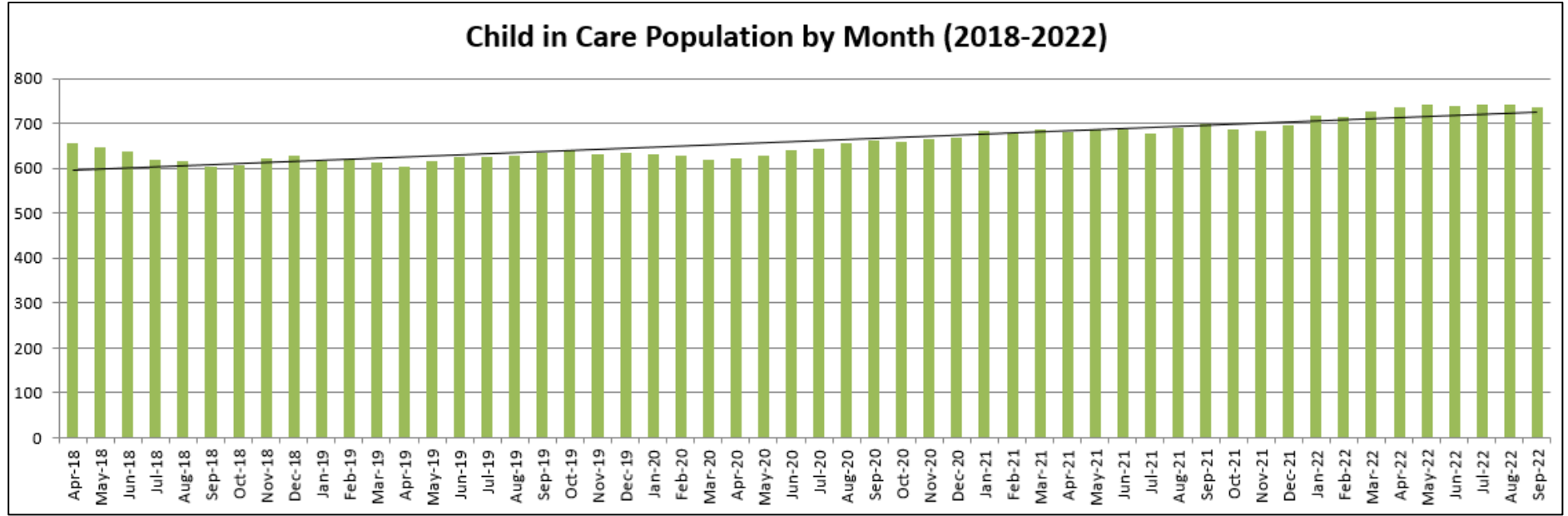
The Children in Care population has seen an upward trend resulting in the highest Children in Care population in the last 3 years.

In the year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 4 young people have been subject to Secure Accommodation under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989. The reviews are chaired by the Independent Chairs Team Managers.

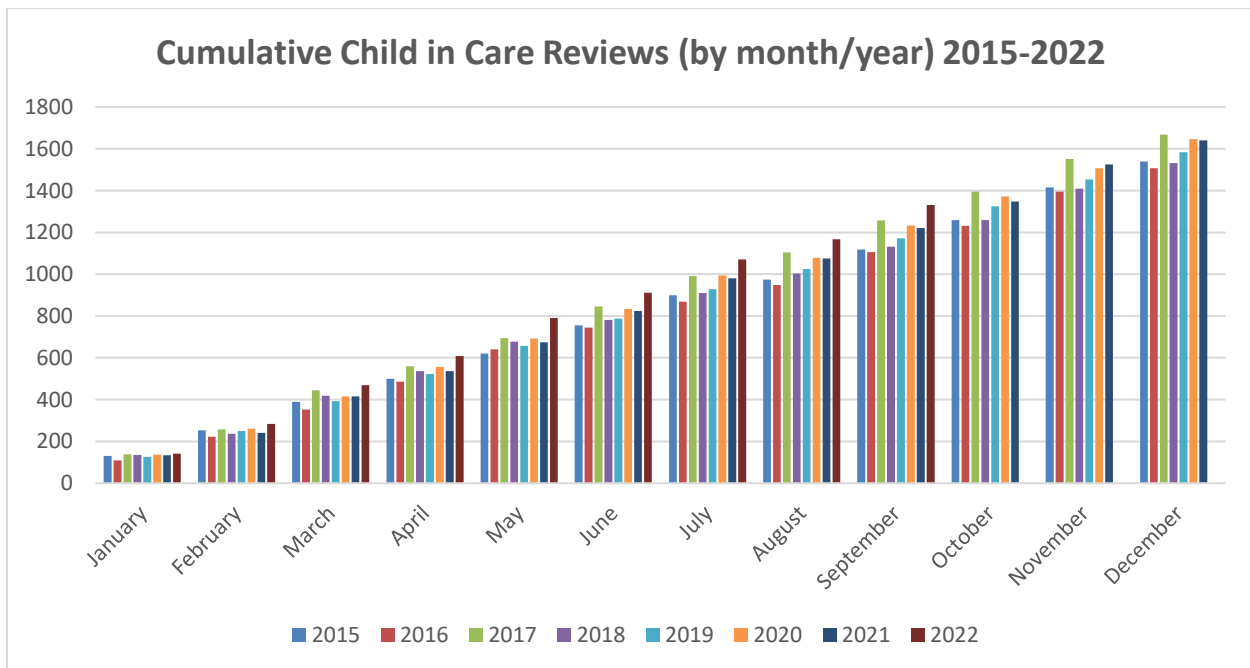
Of the 4 young people subject to secure accommodation, 3 of these are young women with complex trauma histories who require specialist psychological input and therapeutic environments for move on placements, and these have not been available nationally despite extensive searches.

Despite being a small percentage of the CIC population, they represent a significant challenge both in terms of professional time, intervention, and budget.

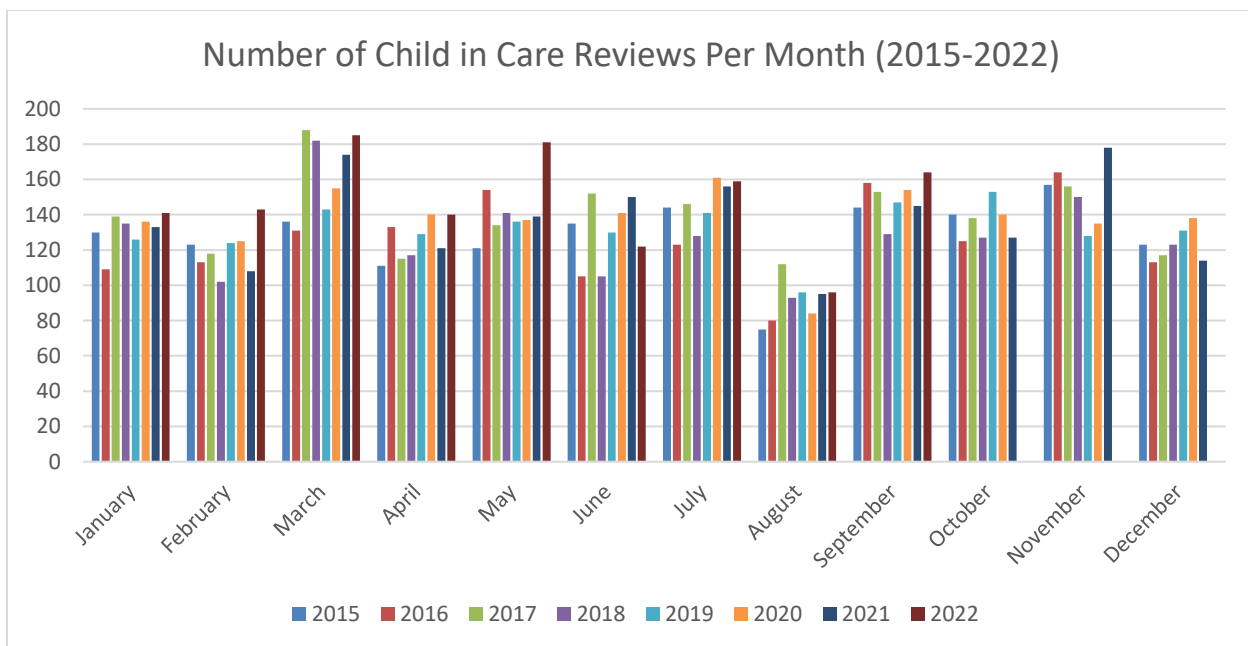
**Child in Care Population**



Cumulative Child in Care Review Figures (2015- 2022)								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	130	109	139	135	126	136	133	141
February	253	222	257	237	250	261	241	284
March	389	353	445	419	393	416	415	469
April	500	486	560	536	522	556	536	609
May	621	640	694	677	658	693	675	790
June	756	745	846	782	788	834	825	912
July	900	868	992	910	929	995	981	1071
August	975	948	1104	1003	1025	1079	1076	1167
September	1119	1106	1257	1132	1172	1233	1221	1331
October	1259	1231	1395	1259	1325	1373	1348	
November	1416	1395	1551	1409	1453	1508	1526	
December	1539	1508	1668	1532	1584	1646	1640	



Number of Child in Care Reviews Per Month (2015-2022)								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	130	109	139	135	126	136	133	141
February	123	113	118	102	124	125	108	143
March	136	131	188	182	143	155	174	185
April	111	133	115	117	129	140	121	140
May	121	154	134	141	136	137	139	181
June	135	105	152	105	130	141	150	122
July	144	123	146	128	141	161	156	159
August	75	80	112	93	96	84	95	96
September	144	158	153	129	147	154	145	164
October	140	125	138	127	153	140	127	
November	157	164	156	150	128	135	178	
December	123	113	117	123	131	138	114	





## Advocacy

Advocacy provision in Lincolnshire is currently provided by Voiceability as part of a commissioned service.

IRO's 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. Children in Care children are opted in to Voiceability who are also automatically invited to Children in Care Reviews for children aged 8 and over. There appears to be some challenges around provision, with some young people not being able to secure an advocate if required in a timely manner. The Quality and Standards Head Of Service has taken over the contact management for Advocacy and is currently completing a piece of work to evaluate the actual provision against the service level agreements in order to identify any complicating factors that may be affecting the availability of provision.

## Timeliness of reviews

Between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 a total of 1750 individual review meetings were held. As reported in the last whole year report, as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 there were 4 reviews held out of timescales. An explanation was provided within this report. As of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 there has been 1 review held out timescales since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

This was a complicated group of siblings, one of whom was accommodated under Section 20, 2 days prior to Interim care Orders being granted for the whole sibling group. Due to the varying accommodation dates the CIC review for the younger sibling was 2 days out of timescales.

Any recording errors are identified and resolved on a weekly basis to ensure that the performance reports are an accurate representation of "actual" performance.

## Children and young people's preparation and involvement in reviews

When we consider how young people participate in their reviews, we look at their attendance at their meetings, and how they contribute towards the agenda and how 'their review' is run. Our bottom line is that however they choose to contribute, their voice should be at the forefront.

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 depending on their age and development. This is to enable the IRO to build a relationship with the child, ensure that they can 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.

Now that there are no Covid restrictions in place, IRO's are routinely visiting their children and young people in person prior to and in between their reviews. However, given that the landscape has changed, many young people are now requesting that they speak with their IRO over the phone, through video calls or text messages. Whilst an in person experience would be the preferred model, IRO's are clearly listening to their children and young people and really taking their preferences into account when communicating with them.

As identified previously we are looking at the impact of this way of working on participation to ascertain whether this encourages young people to attend or proves to be a barrier.

Signs of Safety, Restorative Practice, Social Pedagogy and Valuing Care are being utilised by staff in partnership with Social Work 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.

## Plans for Children in Care

The Chairs continue to focus on ensuring the availability of high-quality plans for every child in care. The Chairs raise professional escalations if care plans are not completed or are not of sufficient quality. Work with the MOSAIC team is ongoing to ensure that recording of escalations is robust and can be reported on effectively.

There is an ongoing workstream involving IRO's, Team Managers, CIC service and MOSAIC to develop how Valuing Care is integrated into the care planning and review workflows and this is outlined further in the updates on service priorities at the start of this report.

Team Managers are continuing to work within the Valuing Care Governance Group to support the rollout and integration of this way of working.

Additional work is continuously ongoing with the Children in Care Teams, IRO's and MOSAIC to support better working between SW's and IRO's to continually improve quality of care planning records.

#### 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 that 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 a positive challenge, focussing on a restorative approach with social work colleagues without the need for a formal escalation. These are recorded on MOSAIC.

The team continues to focus on improving consistency in terms of escalations made and to ensure better monitoring and 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 are sent weekly reminder emails of open formal escalations so that they can follow these up with the respective teams. 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. We have made amendments to the Chairs Activity record to enable more accurate recording. As the figures below outline, there is a significant drop in the number of formal escalations made. One would assume that this is due to the rising numbers of positive restorative challenges and conversations held to resolve and narrow down issues before they require a formal escalation. Over the next 6 months a piece of work will be completed to further understand this changing picture.

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. To date legal advice has been sought twice. An ongoing area of development is clearer guidance and processes regarding access to independent legal advice.

Number of formal escalations per month

Apr 16	9	Apr 17	2	Apr 18	4	Apr 19	8	Apr 20	3	Apr 21	2	Apr 22	0
May 16	4	May 17	5	May 18	4	May 19	3	May 20	0	May 21	4	May 22	0
Jun 16	0	Jun 17	7	Jun 18	4	Jun 19	1	Jun 20	3	Jun 21	0	Jun 22	1
Jul 16	3	Jul 17	5	Jul 18	5	Jul 19	0	Jul 20	4	Jul 21	8	Jul 22	0
Aug 16	1	Aug 17	1	Aug 18	2	Aug 19	0	Aug 20	5	Aug 21	1	Aug 22	2
Sep 16	3	Sep 17	9	Sep 18	4	Sep 19	8	Sep 20	5	Sep 21	1	Sep 22	1
Oct 16	4	Oct 17	4	Oct 18	1	Oct 19	1	Oct 20	0	Oct 21	4		
Nov 16	3	Nov 17	5	Nov 18	1	Nov 19	2	Nov 20	3	Nov 21	1		
Dec 16	6	Dec 17	5	Dec 18	0	Dec 19	0	Dec 20	3	Dec 21	3		
Jan 17	2	Jan 18	8	Jan 19	3	Jan 20	2	Jan 21	5	Jan 22	7		
Feb 17	5	Feb 18	4	Feb 19	2	Feb 20	7	Feb 21	1	Feb 22	1		
Mar 17	8	Mar 18	7	Mar 19	2	Mar 20	1	Mar 21	1	Mar 22	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>

Themes of Child in Care Formal Escalations (for the period **April - September 2022**)

Theme	Number of Escalations
	Raised
Safeguarding concerns	3
Placement/ Accommodation concerns	1
<b>Total Escalations Raised</b>	<b>4</b>

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 for the need to ensure that 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.

Leaving Care – Director's Decision

Apr 18	1	Apr 19	0	Apr 20	0	Apr 21	0	Apr 22	0
May 18	3	May 19	1	May 20	0	May 21	1	May 22	1
Jun 18	2	Jun 19	0	Jun 20	0	Jun 21	0	Jun 22	1
Jul 18	1	Jul 19	1	Jul 20	0	Jul 21	0	Jul 22	0
Aug 18	2	Aug 19	2	Aug 20	0	Aug 21	0	Aug 22	0
Sep 18	0	Sep 19	0	Sep 20	0	Sep 21	0	Sep 22	1
Oct 18	1	Oct 19	0	Oct 20	0	Oct 21	1		
Nov 18	1	Nov 19	0	Nov 20	0	Nov 21	0		
Dec 18	0	Dec 19	2	Dec 20	1	Dec 21	0		
Jan 19	0	Jan 20	0	Jan 21	0	Jan 22	0		
Feb 19	0	Feb 20	0	Feb 21	0	Feb 22	0		
Mar 19	0	Mar 20	0	Mar 21	0	Mar 22	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 must have this decision considered by the Assistant Director with a lead for safeguarding.

### Quality Assurance of the IRO Service

Auditing and observations undertaken by the IRO Manager

Conferences are 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 LCC, LSCP Trainers and SOS Practice Advisers.

### Supervision and training

Chairs have scheduled monthly supervision (pro rata) and informal supervision as and when required. All Chairs have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) and are encouraged to attend training through Lincolnshire Children's Learning and Development Team, Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and the Regional Workshops. Each Chair undertakes annual mandatory training and follows the 6-year Children's Services development training plan.

All Independent Reviewing Officers are social workers and registered with Social Work England. As part of their continued registration, workers are required to evidence their continuing professional development.

Team Meetings are held monthly and include guest speakers and workshops. Given the impact of Covid 19 over the past 2.5 years, and geographical split of the Independent Chairs, Team Meetings have changed to full days once per month and these are now all held in person to promote staff being together and to enhance practice discussions.

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

The chairs continue at full capacity under the new ways of working. Due to a large amount of drift and delay in court proceedings and revised timetabling, Chairs are frequently having to rearrange meetings in order ratify plans prior to QAAG and filing dates. This is having a further impact on time and capacity. As identified above in this report, in the past 12 months there has been 920 reviews rearranged.

Chairs are under increasing pressure due to the additional admin tasks involved in new ways of working and also taking into account the increased travel time to in person meetings. Additional capacity has been created through the recruitment of 4 agency members of staff to cover vacancies in the team as outline within this report. It should be noted that the Chairs are at the upper limit in terms of children allocated as set out in the IRO Handbook, which provides guidance around case capacity in order to carry out their duties effectively. We are currently reviewing the best way to increase long term capacity in the service given the year on rising numbers of children subject to CP plans and Children in Care.

Supplementary to this some locality FAST and CIC teams have experienced, and continue to experience staffing challenges and a turnover of some agency social workers. This is making preparation for conferences and CiC meetings a challenge as on occasions reports are not completed in a timely manner nor plans updated. Despite this impacting on the chairs sometimes not having the correct information when they need it, they continue to work in a restorative way with locality teams in order to 'work around' these changes to minimise the impact of children, young people and their families.

### **Service Priorities 2022-2023**

The service priorities are outlined within the initial section of this report and are taken from the Independent Chairs section of the Quality & Standards Service Action plan 2021-2023. An overview of progress against actions are contained within the body of the text.

**Carolyn Knight**

**(Quality and Standards Manager)**

**Debbie Johnson, Paul Fisher & Richard Stone**

**(Independent Chairs Team Managers)**