

Children's and Young People Services IRO Annual Report

1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Professional Profile of the IRO Service

The IRO Service sits within Quality Assurance and Service Improvement with its core functions consisting of reviewing plans for children in care and monitoring the Local Authority in respect of its corporate parenting and safeguarding responsibilities.

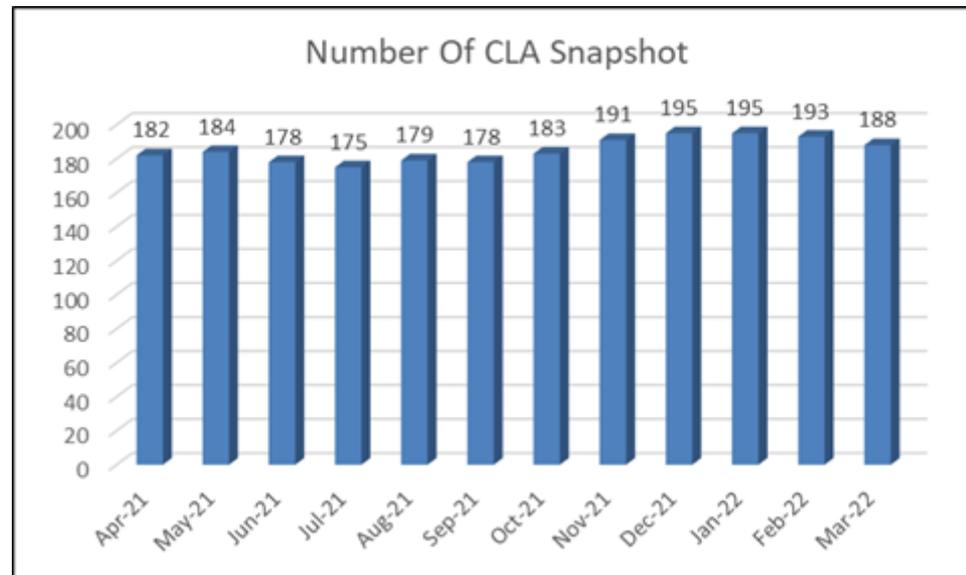
The IRO's primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child to ensure his/her current wishes and feelings are given full consideration.

The IRO ensures there is an independent support/challenge to ensure that children live in a loving home, and have positive long term relationships.

Key Messages

The Looked After population for 2021/2022 has ranged from 182 to 188. IRO caseloads have remained within the recommended case load of no more than 70 young people as stipulated in statutory guidance.

A total of 548 Reviews were Chaired by IROs in the year ending 31st March 2022. During this year there was an increase in young people who started to be Looked After were aged at 16 plus (37.2%). This is a higher percentage from last year where 26.5% of young people coming into care were over the age of 16.



- 23 Looked After Reviews concerned children and young people with a disability. A large majority of these children are placed in long term residential boarding school provision. The complex needs of these children require increased time required to elicit the wishes and feelings of a child.
- In terms of permanency outcomes during 2021/2022, 32.1% of children and young people returned home to live with parents or relatives; 2.3% left care to live with a person outside of immediate family, and 3.8% were adopted. This shows a higher figure compared to the period 2020/2021 with 28.8% of children and young people returning to live with parents or relatives and 1% adopted.

In the period 2021/2022, most children have achieved permanency through a return home to live with their parents (32.1%).

The profile in terms of children leaving care as at 31st March 2022:

- 32.1% Returned home to live with parents
- 13.2% Moved into Independent Living
- 14.2% Special Guardianship Order granted
- 3.8% Adopted
- 1.9% Sentenced to Custody
- 1.9% Transferred to Adult Social Care

Young people's involvement in Reviews

IRO's encourage and support young people to be actively involved in their review including a role in part chairing or setting their own agenda

In the period 76% of children and young people over the age of 4 participated in their review during the period. This includes attending or contributing to their Review

Less than 6% of children and young people did not participate in their Review for the year ending 31st March 2022 (either not attending or conveying their views)

Monitoring, identifying good practice, problem resolution and escalation

There continues to be a process in place to highlight good practice and to identify and resolve practice issues through monitoring and dispute resolution:

- 86.5% of children and young people had up to date Health Assessments
- 70% of children and young people had a Permanency Plan in place by their second review.
- 78% of children and young people had up to date Personal Education Plans in place at the time of their review.

Throughout the year Dispute Resolution Protocols were raised and 100% resolved at Stage 1 & 2 between IRO, Team Manager/QA Manager.

Annual work programme for April 2023 – March 2024

- Maintaining standards of good quality IRO reports and recommendations which are SMART
- To continue to monitor Health Assessments/SDQ's
- To continue to monitor the quality of Personal Education Plans
- To continue to monitor Care Planning and escalate through the Dispute Resolution Protocol and Care Planning Group
- To continue to see children/young people face to face, in placement; via WhatsApp video calls, phone calls; to continue to operate a Hybrid model for some Child Looked After reviews held in Children's Centres in the community

Overview and Summary

Using a hybrid model for the child/young persons' review; Teams, and having face to face reviews has worked well during this business cycle. Children and young people, parents and other agencies all have engaged contributed effectively to the CLA review process to ensure the best planning for the child.

The effective IRO service has enabled the LA to achieve improved outcomes for children, and the IRO service continues to provide independent scrutiny to ensure that care planning for looked after children progresses in a timely manner. The review process ensures we hear the voice of the child, and there is regular/formal there is consideration of their physical/emotional health needs, education, stability of their home and where possible maintaining contact with their family.