

Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service
IRO Annual Report 2016/2017

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1. Purpose of Service and Legal Context

- 1.1 The Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report is produced by the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Service which sits within the Children's Services division of Enfield Council and has been approved for publication by the Executive Director of Children's Services management team (DMT). The report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Service within the Local Authority as required by statutory guidance. This report should be read in conjunction with the Enfield Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) annual report.
- 1.2 Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) were introduced nationally to represent the interests of looked after children. Their role was strengthened through the introduction of statutory guidance in April 2011. The Independent Review Officers (IRO) service standards are set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010) and linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011.
- 1.3 This report identifies good practice as well as highlighting areas for development in relation to the IRO function. The responsibility of the IRO is to offer overview, scrutiny and challenge about case management and regularly monitoring and following up between reviews as appropriate. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of Care Planning for Looked After Children (LAC) with emphasis upon challenging drift and delay.
- 1.4 In Enfield, the IROs are also responsible for chairing Child Protection conferences, Disruption Meetings and final reviews of Supervision Orders. The Service Manager is also the LADO and the service provides a duty service to primarily support the LADO function.
- 1.5 This report includes some historical analysis and information from 2016-2017.

2. Role and Function of the Service

- 2.1 The Service promotes continuous improvement in safeguarding performance and service delivery and is committed to achieving the best outcomes for all children and young people in Enfield, particularly the most vulnerable, such as those children who are looked after and those subject to Child Protection Plans.
- 2.2 The Service has an independent role to ensure that all children, whatever their background, receive the same care and safeguards about abuse and neglect.
- 2.3 The Safeguarding Service is responsible for the following statutory functions:
 - Convening and chairing of child protection conferences
 - Convening and chairing of reviews for looked after children
 - Convening and chairing of reviews for children placed for adoption
 - Convening and chairing of complex abuse meetings
 - Convening and chairing the final review for Supervision Orders
 - Carrying out the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) functions in respect to allegations against staff and volunteers
 - Chairing disruption meetings

2.4 In addition to the above the Service has responsibility for participation of children and young people including promoting MOMO (Mind of My Own) app which is a modern, tech-savvy way to engage with young people. It makes it easier for them to express their views and have a say in decisions about them.

The Service has representation in the following meetings:

- MAPPA (multi-agency public protection arrangements)
- Placement Panel
- CDOP (child death overview panel)
- Risk Management Panel
- Corporate Parenting Panel
- Strategic and Operational Signs of Safety Steering groups
- Signs of Safety Practice Leads Group
- London IRO group
- London LADO Network
- London IRO Managers Forum
- London Child Protection Managers Group

2.5 The statutory Independent Reviewing function of the Service is core business, meeting the Government's requirements and performance indicators, but the scope of the service is far wider than this. The IROs chair child protection conferences which strengthen continuity of care planning and promote sustained professional relationships for children and young people. The child protection conference chair becomes the LAC reviewing officer should a young person need to come into the care system.

3. Professional Profile of the IRO Service

3.1 Responsibility for the activity and development of the Service lies with the Service Manager of Safeguarding, Quality who reports directly to the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

3.3 The current staffing structure includes:

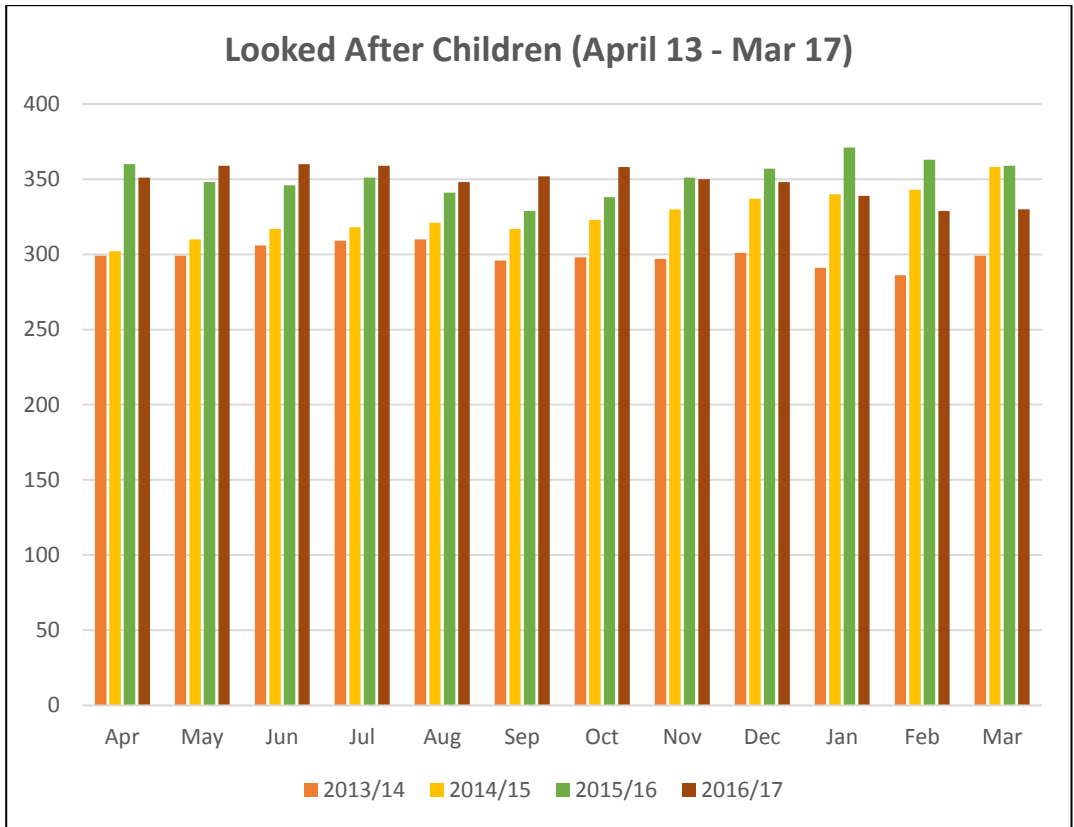
- Service Manager and LADO
- 7.5 Independent Reviewing Officers (6 full time and 3 part-time)

3.4 The IRO guidance makes it clear that an effective IRO service requires IROs who have the right skills and experience, working within a supportive context. The Enfield IROs have many years of relevant social work and management experience, and professional expertise.

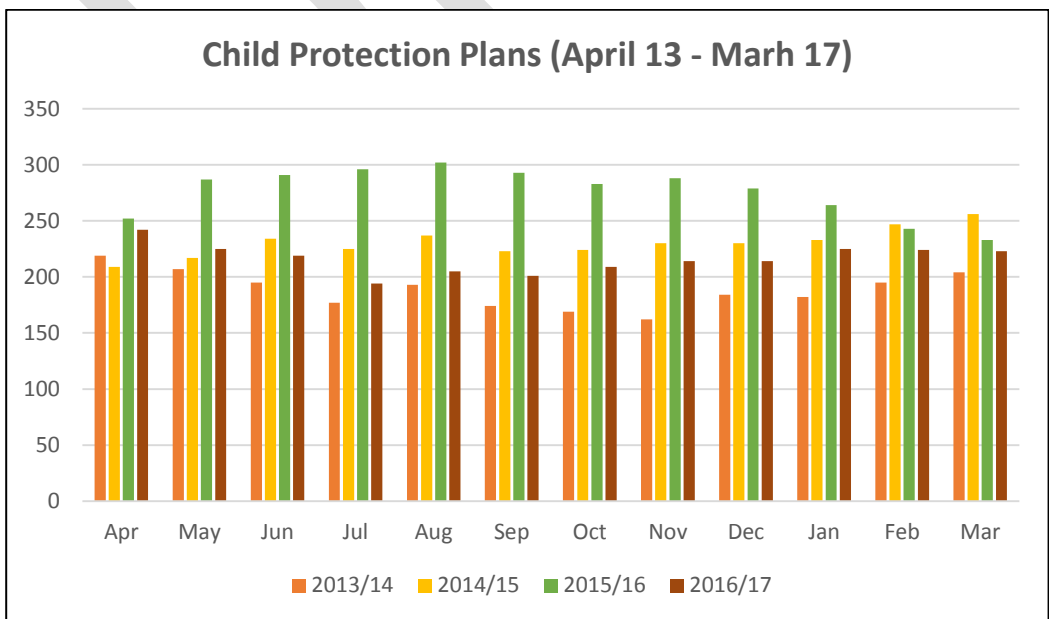
The IROs are all at an equivalent level to Children's Social Care Team Managers in Enfield. The service is appropriately diverse.

4. Activity and Key Performance Indicators

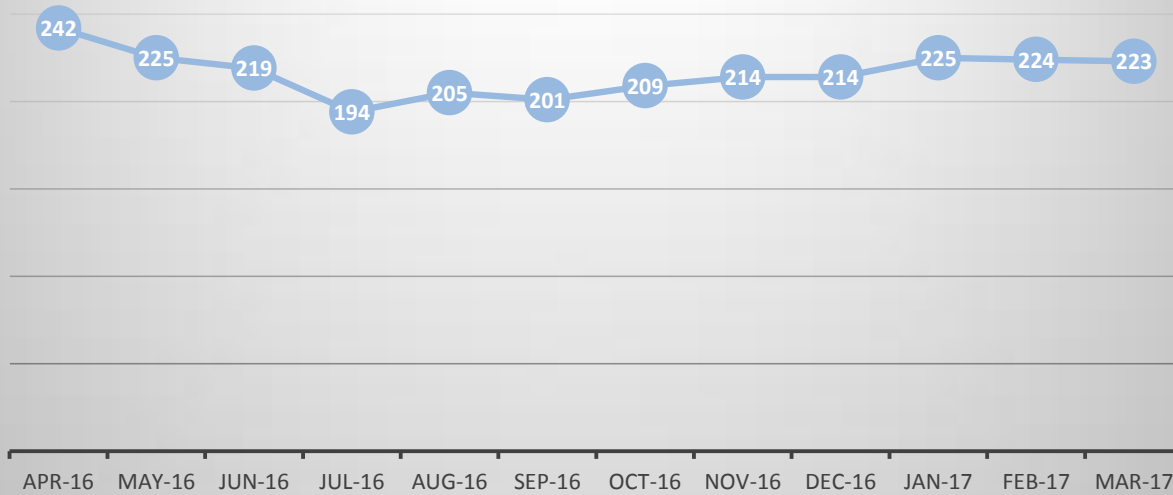
4.1 Looked After Children (April 13 - March 17)



4.2 Child Protection Plans (April 13 - March 17)



Number of Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan

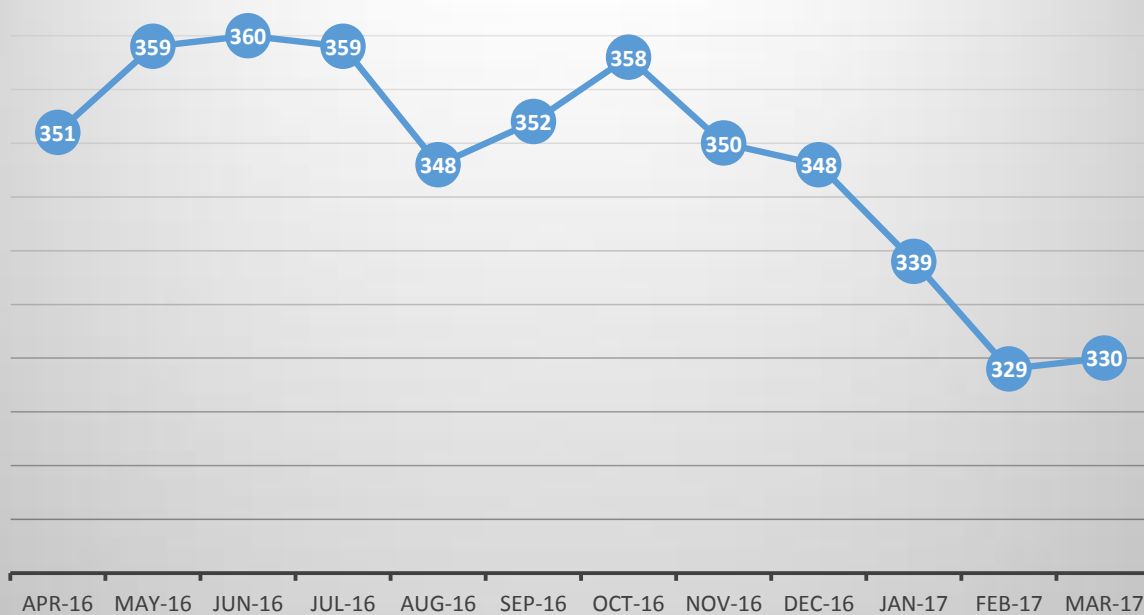


4.3 The charts above provide the numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) and Looked After (LAC) at the end of each month since April 2013.

2016/17 saw a steady decrease from April 2016 of approximately 10% from 242 children subject to plans in April 2016 to 223 at the end of March 2017.

The number of LAC has had a small rise and fall during 16/17, peaking at 360 at the end of June 2016, followed by a steady decrease to 330 at the end March 2017.

Number of Looked After Children



4.1.2 There were 16 remand placements to the secure estate, 3 remands into local authority care and 3 secure welfare placements

4.1.3 There were 192 children who became Looked After during 2016/17
35 were aged 0-4
41 were aged 5-22
116 were aged 12-18

The number of children who became looked after over the age of 12 is significantly higher than the younger age groups. In 2017/18 the Department is planning an audit of these cases to consider if other strategies/support can be explored to avoid accommodation without compromising the welfare of children and enable them to remain with their families.

4.1.3 The number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) looked after at the 31st March 2017 was **70**. 5 were transferred to other local authorities in line with the National Transfer Mechanism as the Enfield benchmark has been agreed to be 64. This figure has remained consistent and monitored on a weekly basis.

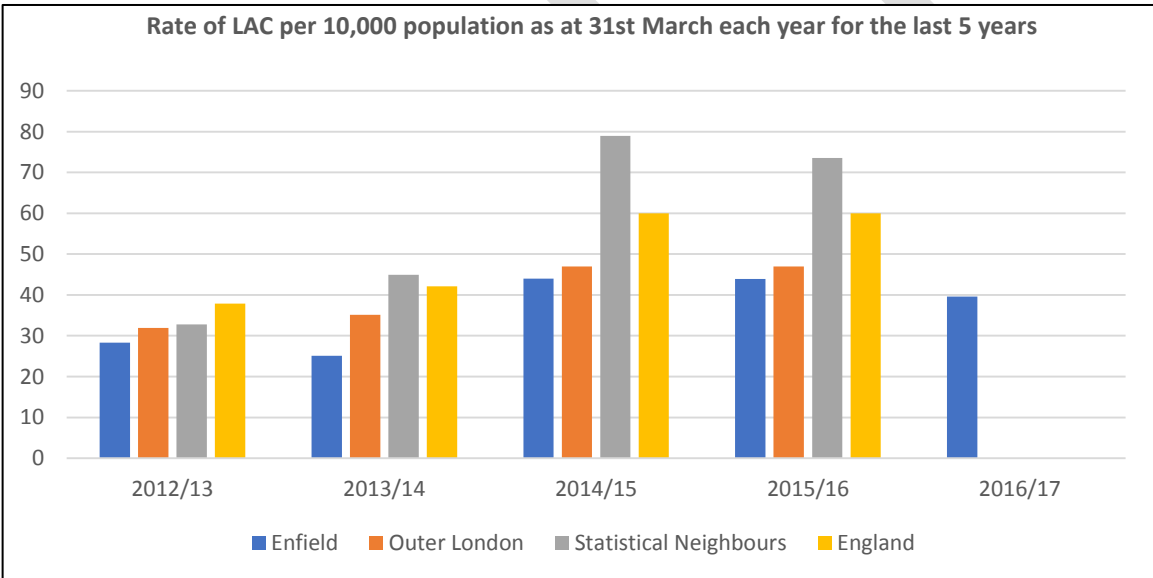
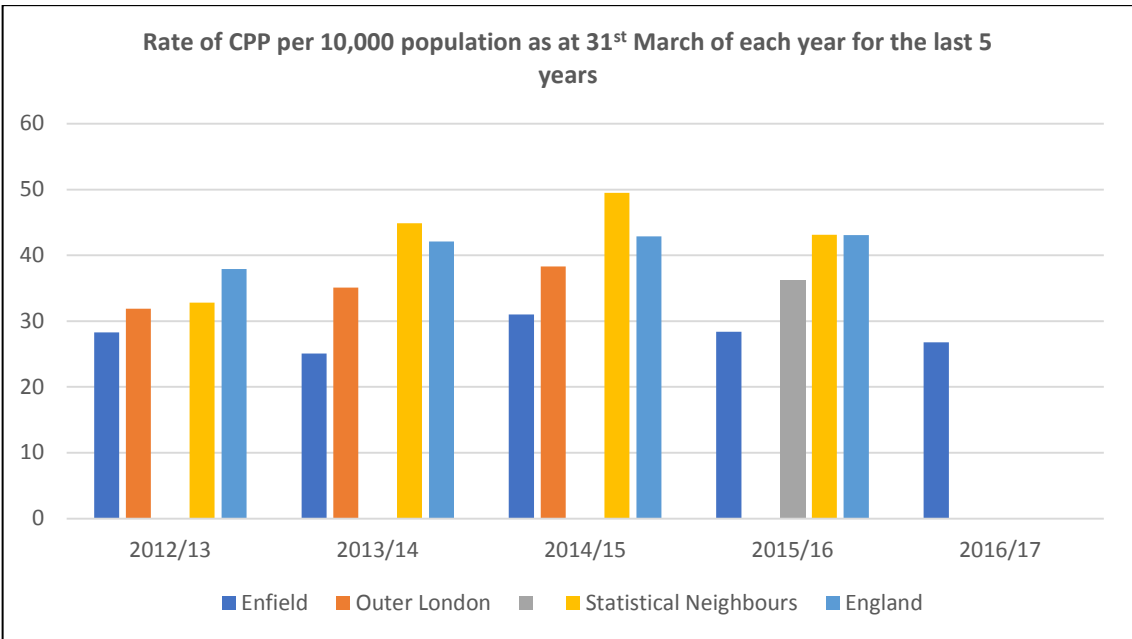
4.1.4 There are 30 children with disabilities who are looked after. Seven of these children are placed in residential schools.

4.1.5 There were small numbers of children adopted in 16/17 (10) compared to Special Guardianship Orders (32) in relation to children who had been looked after. It is expected that SGOs will continue to rise as more children are placed permanently with their family or friends. There is also a growth in the number of children placed with long term foster carers. More information about these trends can be found in the annual fostering and adoption report.

4.1.6 It is good to see that the stability of placements for children looked after has remained consistent (slight decrease from 15/16, at 69.7%) at 67.8% at end of March 17. The slight increase could be attributed to the changing characteristics we are seeing in the LAC population with more young people presenting with complex and challenging behaviour. The IROs contribute to this by ensuring robust plans are in place and intervening early when placements are showing fragility

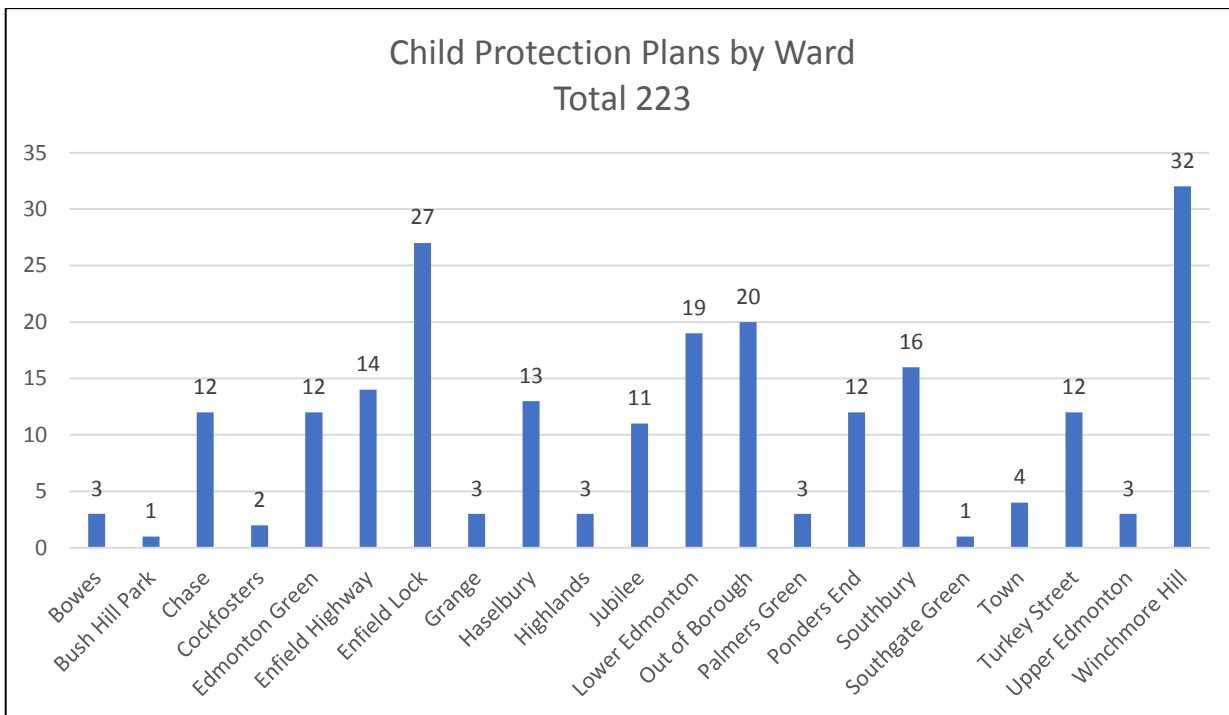
4.2 Child Protection and Looked After rates per 10,000

4.2.1 Rates per 10,000 are used as a method of benchmarking local authorities CPP LAC numbers against each other, using a more comparable method than simply comparing actual numbers. Figures are expressed as a ratio and are calculated by dividing the local authorities' actual numbers by its total 0-17 child population estimate sourced from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The 2 charts which follow benchmark Enfield's rates per 10,000 of Children subject to a CPP and rates per 100,000 of LAC against average rates for its 3 comparator groups of Outer London, Statistical Neighbours and England. The data was not available for 16/17 at the time of writing this report.



4.2.2 The charts above show Enfield has historically had lower than average rates (and therefore numbers) of children subject to Child Protection Plans (CPP) and LAC compared to various local authority comparator groups, and continues to do so.

4.2.3 At the end of March 2017 mapping has shown that the 223 children subject to a Child Protection Plan lived in the following wards

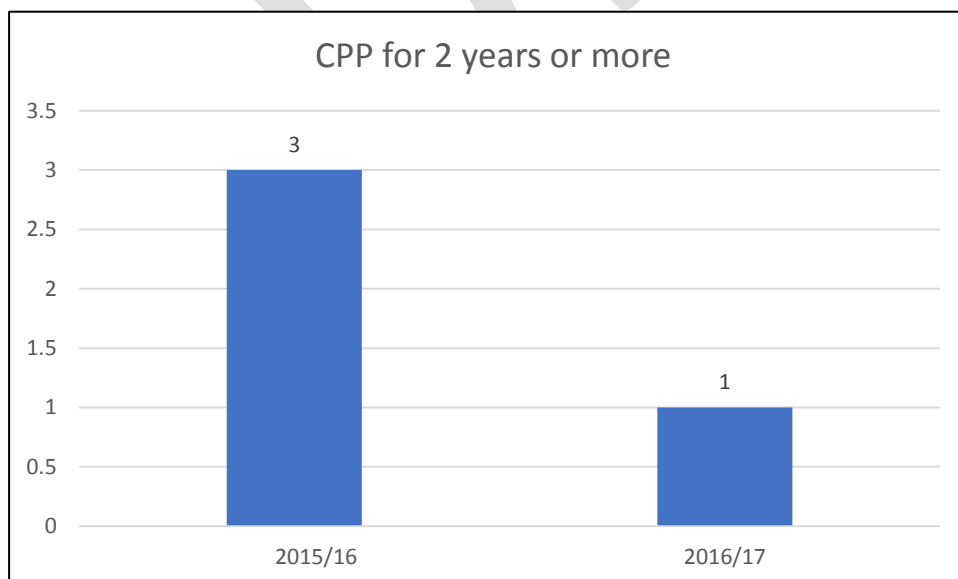
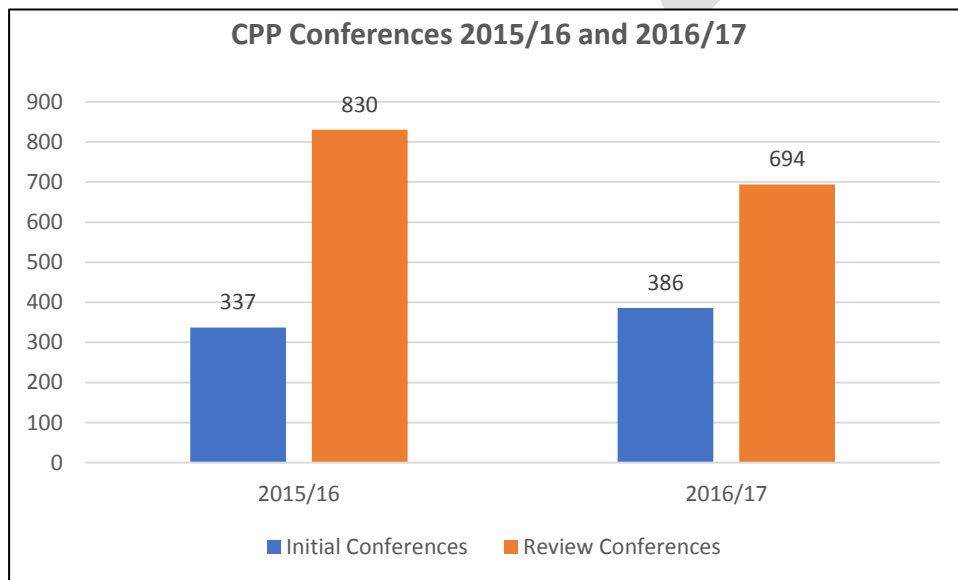
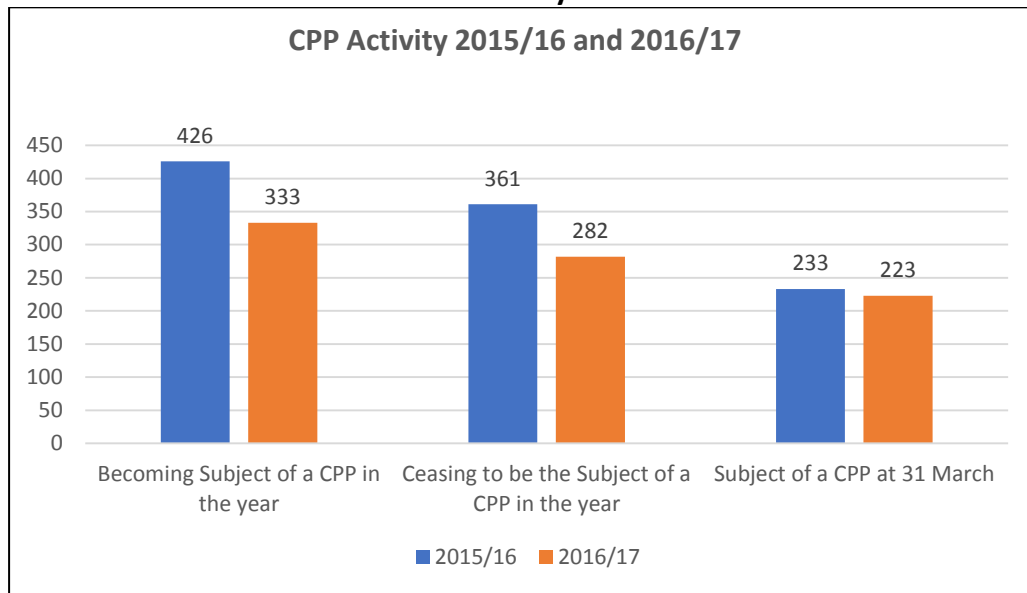


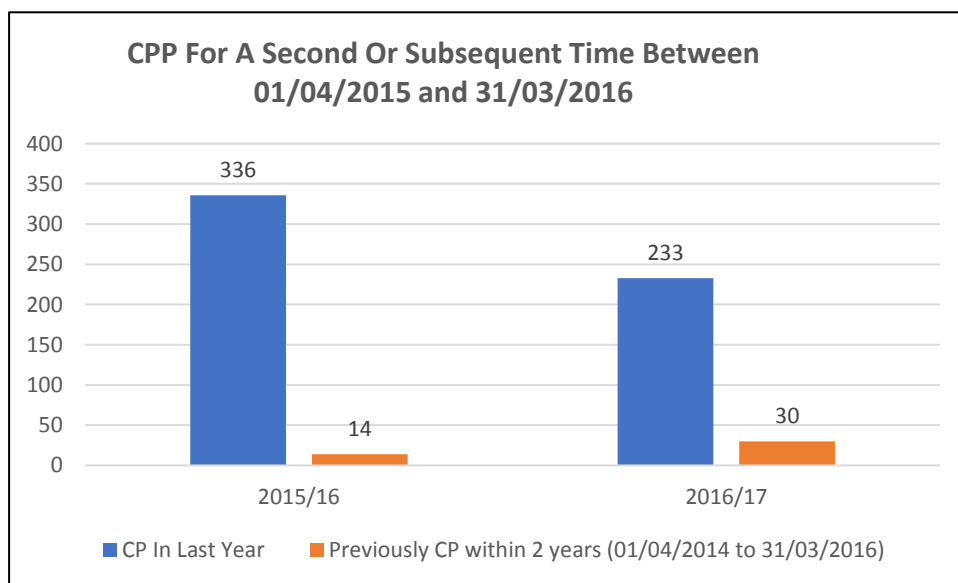
4.2.4 At the end March 2017, of the 223 children subject to CPP:

- 110 were female 110 were male 1 unborn
- 48.43% had a category of Neglect
- 39.91% had a category of Emotional Abuse
- 5.38% had a category of Physical Abuse
- 4.04% had a category of Sexual Abuse
- 1.35% had categories Physical Abuse and Emotional Abuse
- 0.90% had categories Neglect and Emotional Abuse

9 children were recorded as being a Child with one or more Disability (physical, emotional, behavioural or learning).

4.3 Child Protection Conferences and Key Performance Indicators





- 4.3.1 Performance for the indicator CPP 2 years or more has been consistently good over the last few years, good performance is typified by a lower number. Performance at the end of March 2016 was 0.9%. At the end of March 2017 this was decreased to 0.4%. This is an excellent performance indicator and would indicate that we continue to be robust in our planning and that the Public Law Outline process which is usually triggered at the second CP conference review is a contributory factor in avoiding drift in cases.
- 4.3.2 Performance for the indicator CPP for a second or subsequent time is now 9.1%, a significant increase from last year's figures (4.2%). This needs further analysis to consider the contributing factors which led to ceasing the plan and what led to subsequent decision to make children subject to child protection plans.
- 4.3.3 There were 49 additional initial conferences in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16, but 136 less review conferences. This would suggest that either cases were progressed to initial child protection conferences prematurely, or the conference developed a robust child in need plan. Another contributory factor is that in some cases, care proceedings were initiated soon after the initial conference. ESCB procedures are now in place to allow the Child Protection plan to cease quickly, without the need to have a review conference.

4.4 Looked After Reviews and Timescales

LAC reviews within timescales

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
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	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Reviews within the year	910	953	806
Reviews in timescale	890	948	787
Percentage	98%	99%	97.6%

The percentage of Looked After Children reviews completed within timescale continues to be high, as shown in the table above. IROs completed some reviews in a series of meetings to ensure the relevant people were involved and the meeting remained child focused and friendly. There has been a slight decrease in the number of reviews held within timescales in 2016/17 due to administrative errors and late notifications.

4.5 Signs of Safety (SoS)

The Service has been at the forefront, embracing and embedding the Signs of Safety model in social work practice. The model is now embedded in child protection processes and all conferences are now chaired applying the key principles. The Service has representatives on the operational and strategic SoS steering groups and two IROs attend the Practice Leads Group.

All the IROs have attended two day and five day SoS training. IROs have worked closely with Enfield the Signs of Safety' Practice Coordinator/Programme Manager delivering training and supporting good practice.

Changes have been made to the case conference format: Microsoft hubs have recently been purchased by the local authority and are being used by IRO's in all conferences. This new technology enables chairs to visually display words and pictures during the conference including capturing the decisions and record of conference.

4.6 IRO case loads

4.6.1 The IRO Handbook recommends that caseloads for IROs should be between 50 and 70 Looked After Children cases. The size of caseload alone does not indicate the overall workload for each individual IRO as individual roles and responsibilities vary within the team. The IRO guidance puts an emphasis on ensuring that the size of the case load enables IROs to have sufficient time to provide a quality service, monitoring drift, undertaking follow up work after the review, consulting with the social worker following a significant change and meeting with the child before the review. At the end of March 2017, 223 children were subject to Child Protection Plans and 330 children were looked. The average case load was approximately 45 LAC cases per IRO. In addition, IROs in Enfield chair child protection conferences.

4.7 Participation (including MOMO)

4.7.1 A key role of the Service is to seek regular feedback from children, young people, families and carers about their experience in care and the difference the IRO has made to the lives of the children with whom they work. This information is collated and used to drive improvement.

- 4.7.2 Ensuring LAC can participate as fully as possible in planning and reviews remains a key priority for the Service. This has included more children being supported to attend their reviews, and more ways children can participate. There is still room for improvement especially in relation to children and young people with additional communication skills.
- 4.7.3 Participation figures for Looked After Children in their reviews has been consistently high over a long period, however there has been a decrease this year of 10%. This could be related to the change in demographics linked to the rise in the number of adolescents coming into care some refuse to participate in their reviews.
- 4.7.4 Enfield Children's Services procured MOMO app (Mind of My Own) in 2016 to help children and young people create a statement of their views, wishes and feelings. The app can be accessed on mobile phones or computers. The app gives 8-17 year olds and care leavers the ability to express their needs and views and it is aimed to compliment other tools used by social workers and other staff undertaking direct work with children and young people. The MOMO has provided an additional option to facilitate participation for children in reviews and conferences
- 4.7.5 The MOMO implementation plan was led by the Participation Steering group and fully supported by the Director of Children's Services and the respective senior managers who have all attended a MOMO workshop and had an opportunity to test the app. The MOMO app was initially introduced in May 2016 with children in care and care leavers. It has now been rolled out widely to children subject to Child Protection and Child In Need plans.
- 4.7.6 The IROs and KRATOS have had a key role in promoting and encouraging the use of MOMO in LAC Reviews. Awareness sessions have taken place with foster carers, residential units and semi-independent providers to encourage young people to use it.
- 4.7.7 This year Enfield have been one of the best authorities in London at receiving documents from children in care. Enfield have recently commissioned Action for Children to deliver advocacy for children looked after and children subject to child protection plans.

5 [Local Authority Designed Officer \(LADO\)](#)

- 5.1 The Enfield LADO is the Service Manager of the Safeguarding and Quality Service. The role of the LADO is to provide management and overview of cases where there are allegations against staff and volunteers who work with children from all agencies.

The LADO ensures that advice and information is given to Senior Managers within organisations and monitors the progress and timescales of these cases. The LADO ensures that there is a consistent approach to the application of policy and procedures, when managing allegations, and maintains a secure information database for all allegations.

All referrals are considered in line with Pan London Child Protection procedures and follow the local Enfield protocol, which was updated in September 2015.

- 5.2 The total number of allegations between 1.04.2016 and 31.03.2017 which met the threshold for LADO involvement was 50. 10 allegations (20%) were substantiated.

5.3 In addition to the above 50 allegations, there have been approximately 80 consultations with the LADO, where the threshold for LADO intervention had not been met, and advice was offered on managing low level concerns. A system has now been put in place to record this activity and report. A significant number of the consultations relate to incidents when school staff need to use positive handling (under section 93 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006). The other significant factor is around conduct and professional boundaries. In these circumstances, the LADO will evaluate the information in consultation with the Head and the police and investigate in circumstances when restraint has not been appropriate.

5.4 A LADO annual report (2016-17) has been completed which provides more detailed information about the work of the LADO and a work plan which can be found on the ESCB website.

6 Management Oversight, Quality Assurance and Dispute Resolution Process

6.1 All children looked after and children subject to child protection plans are allocated a designated IRO from the moment they enter the system with the key aim that the allocated IRO will remain consistent, until the child is no longer looked after or subject to a Child Protection Plan.

6.2 The quality and effectiveness of the IRO service is closely monitored through supervision, case file audits, together with performance reporting which highlights good practice as well as any areas of concern, therefore enabling prompt action to rectify any poor IRO performance.

6.3 The statutory 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. Managers have five days to raise any queries or objections. This rarely happens which would indicate that managers are generally satisfied with the decisions made at the review

6.4 One of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process. IROs within Enfield continue to have positive working relationships with social workers and team managers of the children for whom they are responsible. Where problems are identified in relation to a child's case for example in relation to care planning, resources or poor practice, the IRO will, in the first instance, seek to resolve the issue informally with the social worker or the social worker's manager. If the matter is not resolved in a timescale that is appropriate to the child's needs, the IRO will escalate the matter accordingly following the local dispute resolution process.

6.5 Staff together with IROs recognise that any problems or concerns regarding care plans need to be addressed initially through negotiation before instigating the escalation resolution process.








6.6 The escalation process gives weight and strength to the role of the IRO and emphasises the need for the IRO to be accountable for the recommendations that are made at reviews. IROs will refer to the process when actions or recommendations have not been followed up on behalf of a child/young person or where care plans have been delayed and whilst in the main the majority are dealt with at Social Worker/Team Manager level, there are some examples of where there has been escalation to Heads of Service. There has not been the need to escalate to the Assistant Director, Director or externally to CAFCASS as issues have been resolved at an earlier stage.


- 6.7 As part of the monitoring function IROs have a duty to monitor the performance of the local authority's function as a corporate parent and identify any areas of poor practice. This includes identifying patterns of concern emerging not just around individual children but also more generally in relation to the collective experience of looked after children and the services they receive. Equally important, the IROs recognise and report on good practice.
- 6.8 See case examples of IRO intervention and the impact of their role by reading the case studies in Appendix 1
- 6.9 The Service undertook a thematic audit in February/March 2017 in relation to young people, over the age of 15, who had been made subject to Child Protection Plans. The purpose of the audit was to consider whether threshold for intervention is appropriate and the decision to make young people who are over the age of 15, is proportionate to risk. In 76% of cases the threshold for intervention was appropriate and proportionate to the risks identified, and necessary changes were made to reduce the risk of harm. 24% of these young people could have been supported to reach positive outcomes with a clear safety Child in Need plan in place thus avoiding child protection processes.

7 Achievements in 2016-17

- 7.1 The last 12 months have been challenging as always but the Service has continued to make significant steps in implementing and maintaining improvements in practice.
- 7.2 This year the service had two long-standing and experienced members of staff retire, the service continues to maintain very high standards and performing consistently well. Members of the service are very experienced and highly skilled and deliver an excellent service to children subject to child protection plans and children who are looked after.
- 7.7 The Service continues to attend MAPPA and CDOP meetings and members of the service are involved in the Participation Steering Group and have links with KRATOS.
- 7.8 Members of KRATOS and IROs collaborated and developed the Child Friendly Child Protection Plan. (see Appendix B). This is an additional tool for social workers to use when completing direct work with children subject to child protection plans, ensure children are aware of the worries professionals have and support them in contributing to their safety plans.
- 7.9 As highlighted in previous sections, the Service has been at the forefront of promoting MOMO and implementing Signs of Safety across the Department.

Review of the 2016/17 annual action plan and planned developments and key priorities for 2017/18

ACTION PLAN 2016/17					
Area for development	Action	Lead officer	Timescale	RAG Status	Outstanding actions for 16/17
Pilot and implement the Signs of Safety Model in child protection conferences	All IROs to attend the 2 and 5-day training	Maria Anastasi	February 2017		
	Review all documentation for CP conferences to make them compliant with SoS model	Grant Landon/Sam Seddon/Maria Anastasi	March 2017		
	Introduce new technology for conferences	Grant Landon/Maria Anastasi/IT Service	April 2017		
Maintaining the high levels of participation in LAC reviews and improving where possible the numbers of children and young people that participate in Child Protection conferences.	Promote the use of MOMO in LAC reviews	Maria Anastasi	Ongoing		
	Promote participation of young people in conferences via advocacy service	Maria Anastasi			
	Increase the number of young people supported to chair their own LAC reviews				
Embracing the Enfield 2017 transformation agenda while fulfilling the statutory requirements of the service.	Identify key areas for IRO's that will require specific specialist support and ensure all statutory functions are met whilst implementing new ways of working	Anne Stoker Assistant Director Maria Anastasi Simon Gardner Head of Operational Support	Ongoing		

IROs to attend social work knowledge and skills workshops over the forthcoming year in order to identify learning and development needs specific to the role.	Collaborate with Organisational Development to develop a programme for Area for development IROs	Corporate learning and development team Maria Anastasi	2017/18		Programme has now been developed and will be delivered September 17-March 18
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8.1 The key priorities and areas of development for 2017/18

Areas for development	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	RAG status
Continue to apply SoS principles in Child Protection conferences	Training in use of Microsoft Hub for all IROs	Maria Anastasi Grant Landon Corporate IT Sam Seddon	September 17	
	Continuous focus upon improvement and quality of SW reports and Safety Plans		Ongoing	
	Representation in Operational, Steering and Practice Lead Groups		Ongoing	
Increase participation in LAC reviews and improving where possible the numbers of children and young people that participate in Child Protection conferences	Continue to promote the use of MOMO in LAC reviews and CP conferences Improve quality of direct work with children by increasing the use of Child Friendly Conference Plan	Maria Anastasi	Ongoing	
Contribute to the OFSTED Improvement Plan	As agreed in Social Care Operational Management Group (OMG)	Anne Stoker OMG	Ongoing	
Implement LADO process on ICS to improve management information process and systems and to improve LADO recording, monitoring and tracking of cases	Testing and full implementation of LADO Workspace	Corporate IT Maria Anastasi	September 2017	
Contribute to plans to reach the savings targets	SQS to have a representative in	ART/LAC/SQS	March 18	

	working group			
Quality Assurance	<p>Audit cases of children who have been subject to CP plans for a second or subsequent time in the past 2 years</p> <p>Audit cases where children over the age of 12 have become Looked After in 2016/17</p>	Maria Anastasi/OMG	<p>October 17</p> <p>December 2017</p>	

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APPENDIX 1 – Case Examples

All case studies below are provided in very broad, slightly changed terms to preserve anonymity.

CASE 1

Following the first LAC review the IRO made representations about the young person's bursary. This had been stopped as the young person had been leaving school within the hours of 9-3.30 but was outside of class time to attend therapy. The IRO wrote to appeal this, setting out issues and was successful. She received full bursary which was backdated.

CASE 2

The independent reviewing officer was involved with three teenage children who had previously been subject to child protection plans and the public law outline. Parents had alcohol and drug addictions. The children were not attending school, the oldest became pregnant by a young person involved in criminality and drugs, and another becoming involved in gang-related activities. The independent reviewing officer, who felt that the children could do well in the care of the local authority supported the social worker to gather evidence to instigate care proceedings. The local authority subsequently gained a Care Orders. The oldest is now over 18 and the two younger ones are doing extremely well in their respective placements, benefiting from consistent and nurturing care whilst being able to enjoy positive contact with their parents and other siblings.

CASE 3

An initial child protection conference was convened in relation to a 14-year-old girl. The worries presented to the conference were that there was little parental supervision and she was often left on her own. There were no routines in place, her school attendance was poor, her mother was not reporting her as missing to the police and there were worries she was at risk of child sexual exploitation. She was known to youth offending subject to a Referral Order but had no attended youth offending appointments.

The conference established that when the mother was at work, her adult daughter was at home, that there had only been one occasion when this young person had not been reported as missing, as mother believed her daughter was with a friend.

The professional network agreed that the threshold for child protection processes was not met, and the outcome was that the young person was made subject to a Child In Need plan. The rationale was that the mother was in fact trying to put a safety plan in place, but was not fully aware of what she needed to do and how to access support from other agencies.

APPENDIX 2 Child Friendly Child Protection Plan



LBE Child Friendly
Child Protection Plan