



Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service

IRO Annual Report 2017/2018

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Contents	Page
1. Purpose of the Service and legal context	3
2. Role and Function of the Service	3-4
3. Role and Profile of the IRO Service	4
4. Activity and Key Performance Indicators	5-11
5. IRO caseloads	11
6. Signs of Safety	12
7. Participation	12
8. Advocacy	13
9. LADO	13
10. Management Oversight, Quality Assurance and Dispute Resolution Process	13-14
11. Training	14
12. Achievements 2017-18	14
13. Future Plans	15
14. Review of 2017/18 Annual Action Plan and Planned developments and key priorities for 18/19	15-18

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 People's 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 and Disruption Meetings. The Head of Service is also the LADO and the IROs provide a duty service to primarily support the LADO function.

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
 - 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)
- CDOP (child death overview panel)
- Risk Management Panel
- Corporate Parenting Board
- Practice and Performance Board
- 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 but the scope of the service in Enfield 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 Independent 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 Director of Children and Family Services.

- 3.3 The current staffing structure includes:

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

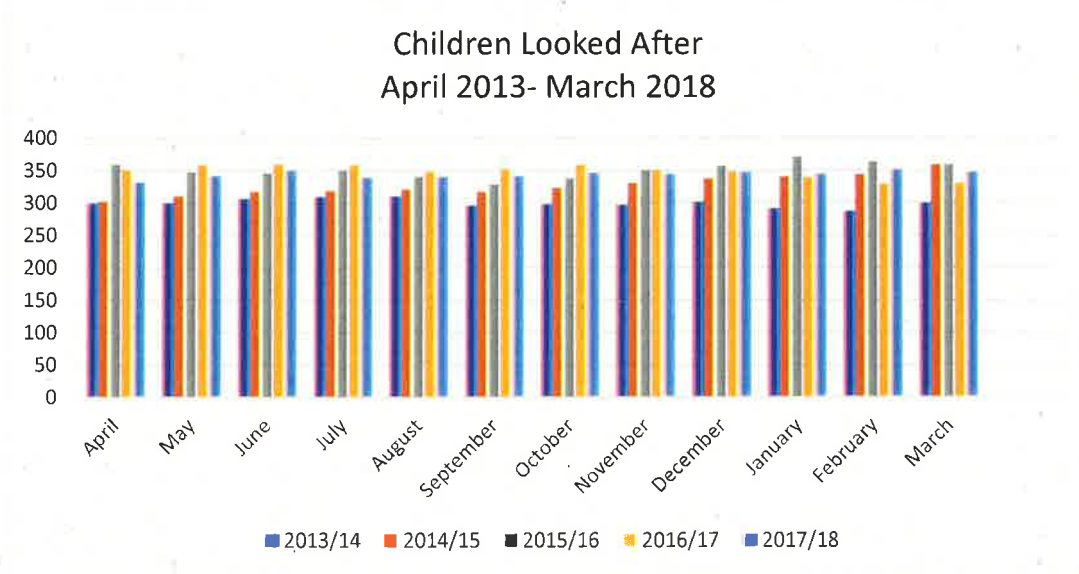
- 3.4 The IRO guidance makes it clear that an effective IRO service requires IROs who have the right skills and experience, working within a supportive context. The Enfield IROs have many years of relevant social work and management experience, and professional expertise.

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

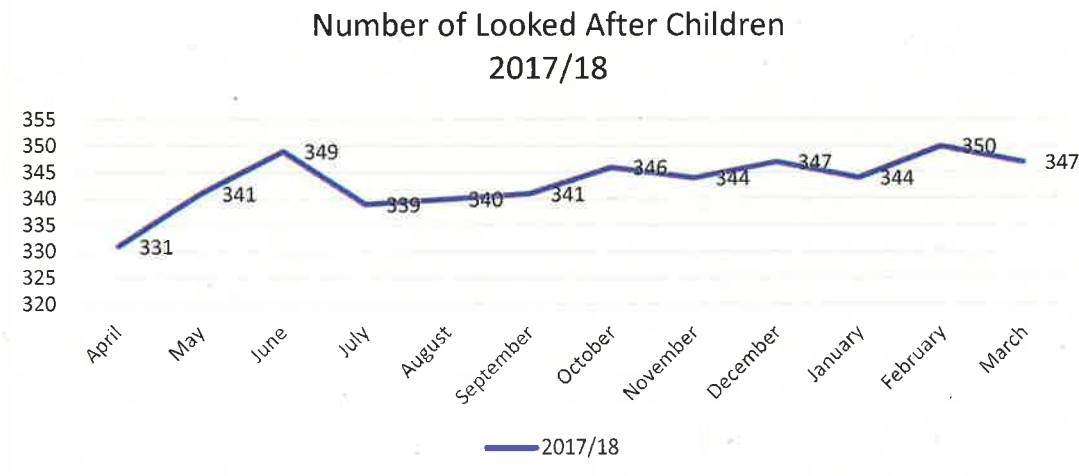
The service is appropriately diverse. The service is located at Charles Babbage House which supports effective work with the social work teams within Child in Need Service and where child protection conferences are convened. IROs, due to the nature of their statutory role have strong links with the Looked After Service and the Joint Service for Disabled Children.

4. Activity and Key Performance Indicators

4.1 Looked After Children (April 13 - March 18)



4.2 Looked After Children April 2017- March 2018



The above charts provide numbers of children who became looked after at the end of each Month since April 2013. The number of LAC has been stable over the year, but gradually increasing with the highest number in February 2018 (350).

4.3 Key information for LAC

4.3.1 There were 20 remand placements and one secure welfare placement.

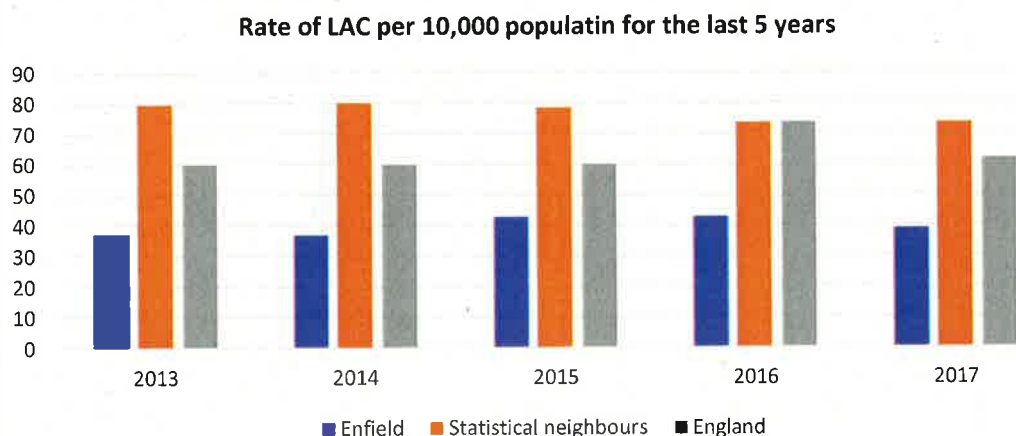
4.3.2 The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) looked after at the 31st March 2018 was 63. (this is 18% of the total LAC population in Enfield). The current Enfield benchmark has been 59 since April 2018. The figure before April was 64. This is based on 0.07% of the child population on DfE estimate. Cases over 59 are transferred to other local authorities in line with the National Transfer Mechanism. This is monitored on a weekly basis. It has been noted that there have been delays in processing some of these cases by the Home Office. On occasions, young people have settled in placements and are provided with services in Enfield pending the transfer to another local authority and the delay has had an adverse impact on them.

4.3.3 The number of children with disability who were looked after at the end of March 18 was 34 (9.8% of the total LAC population).

4.3.3 16 Adoption Orders were granted in 2017-18 which is an increase from last year (ten) 32 Special Guardianship Orders were granted, the same figure as last year. 19 of these orders were in relation to children who had previously been looked after. It has been noted that SGO numbers are increasing as more children are placed permanently with their family or friends. More information about these trends can be found in the annual fostering and adoption report.

4.3.4 It is good to see that the stability of placements for children looked after has remained consistent in the last three years and has increased in 2017/18 to 72.2%(67.8% in 16/17). This figure would suggest that the local authority continues to strive to ensure that children and young people are placed in placements which meet their needs when they become looked after and provided appropriate support to placement and children to avoid the placement disrupting or breaking down. The IROs contribute to this by ensuring robust plans are in place and intervening early when placements are showing fragility.

4.3.5 Rate of LAC per 10,000

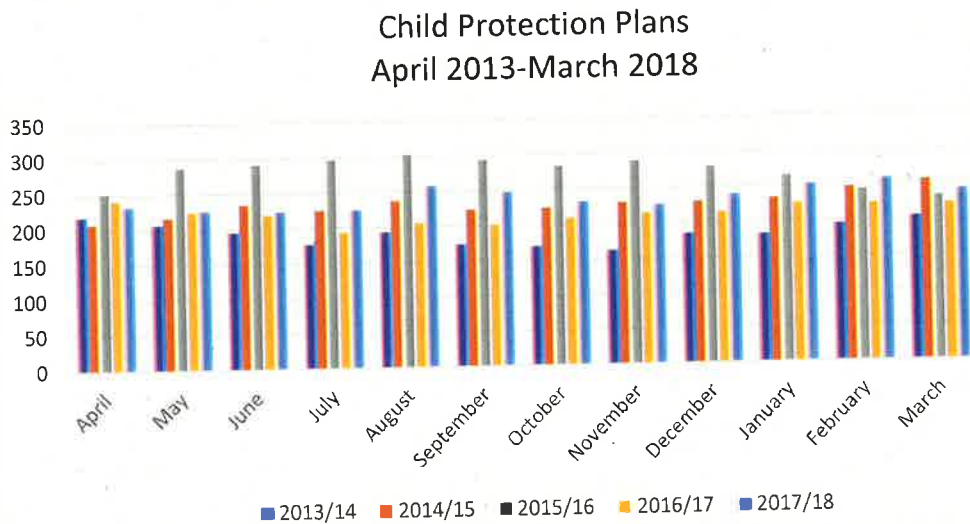


4.3.6 Timeliness of LAC Reviews

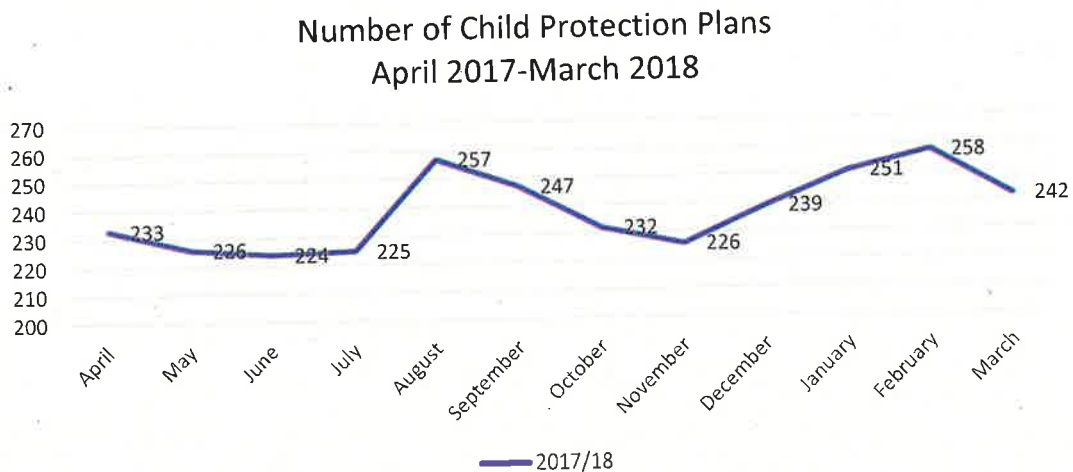
The percentage of LAC reviews recorded to be within statutory timescales has decreased significantly in 2017/18 from 97.6% to 80.9%. The number of LAC reviews taking place within the required timescales is high with only a very small number of reviews were overdue. The timeliness of the reviews is measured on the basis of the record of the meeting being completed on our electronic system and there have been delays in completing records, by social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Service and the Head of Looked After Children Service are currently considering ways of ensuring records are completed in a timely fashion, in order to provide the evidence that children who are looked after are reviewed regularly.

4.4. Child Protection Plans (April 13 - March 18)



4.5 Child Protection Plans April 2017 – March 2018



4.5.1 The above charts provide the numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plan at the end of each month since April 2013. The increase of CP plans in August 2017 is attributable to three sets of large sibling groups (two families of six children and one family of 4) and an unusually high number of initial child protection conferences.

4.6 Key Information about Child Protection Plans (CPP)

4.6.1 At the end of March 2018, of the 242 children subject to Child Protection Plans (CPP):

- 104 were female, 136 were male and 2 unborn
- 17 were under the age of 1
- 64 were between 1-4 years old
- 69 were between 5-9 years old
- 82 were between 10-15 years old
- 8 were 16/17 years old
- 11 were CPP for children with disabilities.

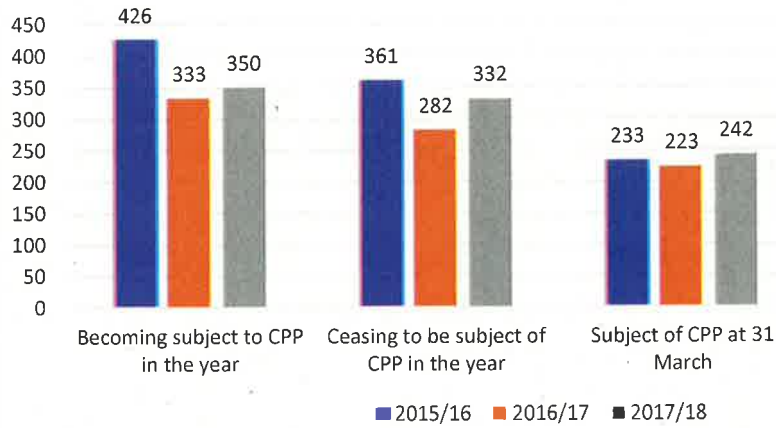
4.6.2 Categories of CPP

- 57.43% (139) were under the category of neglect
- 36.36% (88) were under the category of emotional abuse
- 1.2% (3) were under the category of physical abuse
- 1.65% (4) were under the category of sexual abuse
- The remaining CPPs were under a combination of neglect/physical abuse, neglect/sexual abuse and physical/emotional abuse.

The percentage of CPP under neglect has increased by approximately 10% since last year, but the percentage of CPP under emotional abuse is approximately the same. There has been a significant decrease of CPP under physical abuse (from 5.38% in 2016/17 to 1.2% in 2017/18) and sexual abuse (from 4.04% in 2016/17 to 1.65% in 2017/18). A piece of work is being undertaken to understand the reasons for these low figures.

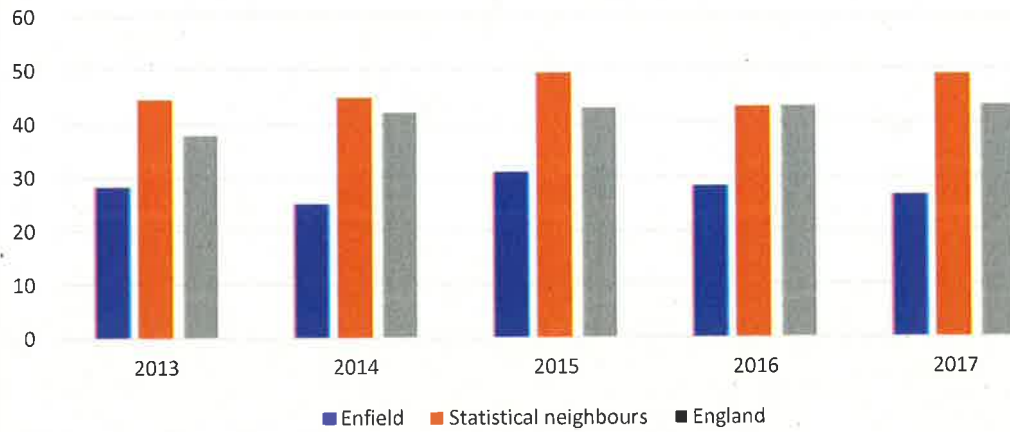
4.6.3 Child Protection Conferences and Key Performance Indicators

CPP Activity 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18



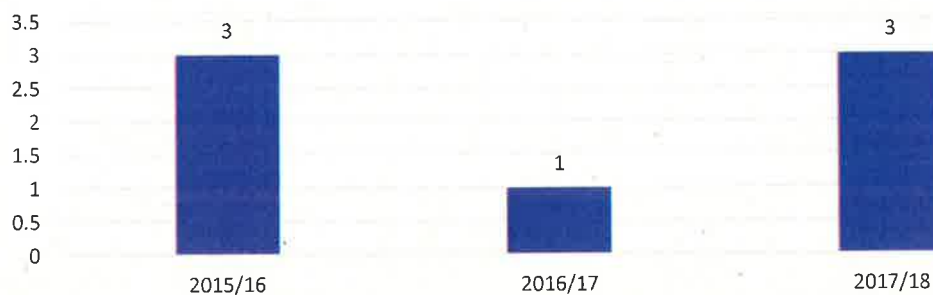
4.6.4 Child Protection rates per 10,000

Rate of CPP per 10,000 for the last 5 years



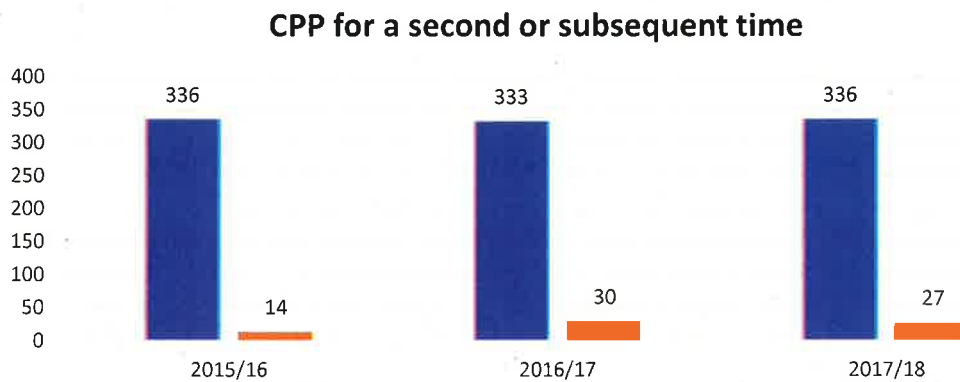
4.6.5 Duration of Child Protection Plans

CPP for 2 years or more



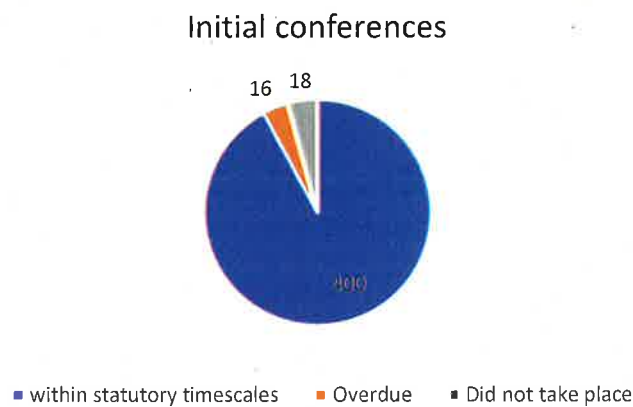
Performance for the indicator CPP 2 years or more has been consistently good over the last few years, good performance is typified by a lower number. Performance at the end of March 2018, to 0.9%. This indicates that we continue to be robust in our planning and that triggering a legal pathway at the second review CP conference review is a contributory factor in avoiding drift in cases. The Signs of Safety (SoS) framework enables families to devise a safety plan within the extended family network and this is also a contributory factor.

4.6.6 CPP for a second or subsequent time



Performance for the indicator CPP for a second or subsequent time is now 8%, a slight decrease from last year's figures (9%), but still relatively high compared to the figures in 2015/16. An audit has been undertaken to consider the contributing factors which led to ceasing of the CP plan and what led to subsequent decision to make children subject to CP plans. An action plan has been devised. This area will be re-audited to ensure there has been an improvement in this indicator.

4.6.7. Timeliness of CP Conferences 2017/18



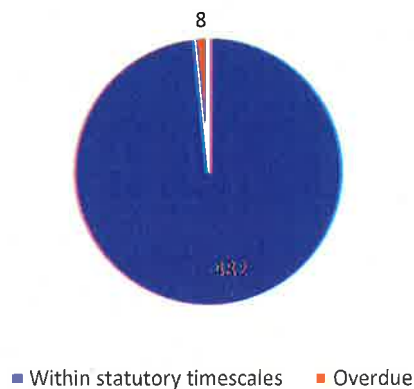
In total, there 416 children were subject to initial child protection conferences.

92.17% were within statutory timescales and 3.69% were overdue

4.15% did not take place. Reasons for the conferences not going ahead were families moving out of the borough before the conferences took place (conferences taking place out of borough as a result); further assessment during child protection conferences concluding that the children were not suffering significant harm or care proceedings agreed.

In addition, 29 transfer in conferences took place (in relation to 58 children) who were subject to CPP in other Local Authorities and moved into Enfield to live.

Review CP conferences



In total, 490 children were subject to Review Child Protection conferences

98.37% were reviewed within the statutory timescales 1.63% were out of timescale

5 IRO case loads

The IRO Handbook recommends that caseloads for IROs should be between 50-70 Looked After Children (LAC) cases. The size of caseload alone does not indicate the overall workload for each individual IRO as individual roles and responsibilities vary within the service. At the end of March 2018, the average LAC caseload per IRO was 46. The average CP caseload was 32 cases per IRO.

The IRO guidance puts an emphasis on ensuring that IROs have sufficient time to provide a quality service, monitoring cases to avoid drift, undertaking follow up work after the review, consulting with the social worker following a significant change in the child's circumstances and meeting with the child before the review.

In addition, IROs have additional responsibilities, such as chairing child protection conferences, representing the Service in panels, working groups and other meetings, outlined in section 2.

6. Signs of Safety (SoS)

The Signs of Safety framework is now embedded in child protection processes and all conferences are chaired applying the key principles. All the IROs have attended the two and five-day SoS training. The IRO's work closely with the SoS Practice Coordinator and are involved in delivering training.

Changes have been made to the conference format and Microsoft Hubs are being used by IROs in all conferences. This new technology enables chairs to visually display information shared in the conference including the decisions of the conference.

7. Participation

A key role of the service is to seek regular feedback from children and young people, families and carers about their experience in care and the child protection process.

Ensuring looked after children can participate as fully as possible in planning and reviews remains a key priority for the Service. There is still room for improvement especially in relation to children and young people with additional communication skills.

Participation figures for looked after children in their reviews this year was 74.2%. This is a relatively low figure, and a decrease from last year's figures (85.7%). Further analysis is needed to establish the reasons for this decrease. Contributing factors could be in relation to recording and several adolescents who refuse to participate in their reviews. The Head of Service plans to sample cases with specific focus around participation.

The Service has had several meetings with the Consultation and Participation Officer in relation to KRATOS (Children in Care Council). Future meetings will focus on increasing participation in reviews.

The department procured MOMO app (Mind of My Own) in 2016 to help children and young people create a statement of their views, wishes and feelings. It has provided children who are looked after or subject to child protection plans with an additional option to facilitate participation in reviews and conferences.

At the end of 2017, 138 young people had MOMO accounts. 155 responses were received via MOMO on a number of issues (some young people had several responses; therefore the number of responses were higher than the number of children/young people); however, it was difficult from these responses to elicit any particular key messages which could inform our practice.

MOMO continues to be promoted at LAC reviews and social workers continue to encourage young people to use the app during visits, but given the level of response so far, the department may need to consider if this is a useful and effective way of eliciting views from young people.

The IROs conducted a survey for 40 parents attending child protection conferences in early 2018.

36 parents (90%) reported that they were aware about the child protection conference process in advance of the meeting. 31 parents (77.5%) understood the reason for the outcome of the conference. 30 parents (75%) had been given the social work conference report prior to the conference but only 13 parents (32.5%) had been given reports prior to the conference by other agencies. This has been discussed with agencies in the ESCB.

8. Advocacy

Enfield agreed to joint tendering to deliver advocacy for children looked after and children subject to Child Protection Plans at the beginning of the year and Barnardos were successful. This contributed to savings for the department and the transition from Action for Children to Barnardos was completed smoothly.

9 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

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

The total number of allegations between 1.4.2017 and 31.3.2018 which met the threshold for LADO involvement was 62. 22 (35%) allegations were substantiated. In addition to the above, there were 80 consultations with the LADO where the threshold for formal LADO intervention had not been met.

A LADO annual report has been completed which provides more detailed information about the work of the LADO and a work plan.

10. Management Oversight, Quality Assurance and Dispute Resolution Process

All children subject to child protection plans and children who are looked after 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.

The quality of the effectiveness of the IRO service is closely monitored through supervision (every six weeks and ad hoc when required) case file audits and dip sampling, 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.

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.

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 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.

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.

Examples of proactive IRO intervention include a case when a young person contacted her IRO to

ask if the IRO could liaise with the social worker to progress an issue around her immigration status as she was becoming more anxious. IROs raise issues about placements and on occasions attended placement panel to express their views on cases.

There have been occasions when the Head of Service has raised matters with other senior managers and reminded all staff of the consultative role of the IRO, there is evidence that social workers and their managers are liaising and consulting with IROs more consistently and effectively.

The service carries out various audits most recently completing audits on cases where children had been previously been subject to child protection plans. The summary and findings were presented to the Practice and Performance Board and an action plan has been developed.

11. Training

The IROs have attended training via Making Research Count (MRC) and have all completed the on line GDPR training.

IN 2017/18 three half day training sessions for IROs and team managers across Children's Services took place. The topics were:

- Neglect in adolescence
- Evidence significant harm with a specific focus on emotional harm
- Permanency planning in adolescence

These sessions were very well attended and well received. Future joint training sessions with Team Managers are being considered for 2018/19

12. Achievements

The Service has continued to make significant steps in implementing and maintaining improvements in practice and performing consistently well. Members of the service are very experienced, highly skilled and motivated they deliver an excellent service to children who are looked after and children subject to child protection plans.

A significant development in 2017/18 has been the improved working relationship with CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service). The CAFCASS Service Manager has attended two team meetings with IROs and has also met separately with the Director of Children and Family Services and Heads of Service. This has provided a constructive forum for discussing good practice and improved communication with Guardians. Plans have been made for CAFCASS to provide workshops for newly qualified social workers so there is an understanding of the roles of the Guardians and court related issues.

IROs were members of a working party to develop a policy around savings for looked after children which has now been agreed by senior managers. This will ensure that there is more clarity and consistency.


13. Future Plans





Two significant developments are in the process of being finalised by end of September 2018.

- The creation of a part-time LADO post. The Head of Service is also the LADO and all the IROs also undertake some LADO work on a duty basis. The creation of a LADO post will provide capacity for the Head of Service to have a more strategic overview of the service, particularly around quality assurance and will free IROs to focus more closely on work with looked after children and children subject to CP Plans.
- From 1st October 2018 the Service will be responsible for undertaking independent return interviews for children looked after and children subject to child protection plans when they are found following a missing episode. Statutory guidance (2014) specifies that these interviews should be carried out by an independent person (ie someone not involved in caring for the young person). All IROs will be responsible for completing these interviews and ensure the issues are addressed through care planning. An apprentice will support the service in gathering statistical information and supporting the Head of Service in producing quarterly and annual reports.

REVIEW OF THE 2017/18 ANNUAL ACTON PLAN AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2018/19

Action Plan 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	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 latest OFSTED improvement plan and the Children and Family Services continuous 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 This was delayed until early 2018 due to IT issues	
Contribute to plans to reach the savings targets	SQS to have a representative in working group	ART/LAC/SQS	March 18	
Quality Assurance	Audit cases of children who have been subject to CP plans for a second or subsequent time in the past 2 years Audit cases where children over the age of 12 have become Looked After in 2016/17	Maria Anastasi/OMG	October 17 December 2017 (deferred to 2018/19)	

The Key Priorities and areas of developments for 2018/19

Areas for development	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	RAG status
Appointment of a part time LADO to enable IROs to have capacity to focus on LAC and CP cases	Recruitment of part-time LADO Full implementation of LADO workspace	Maria Anastasi	September 18	
To improve the quality of de-briefing interviews and produce quarterly reports to identify trends and patterns and improve outcomes for children and young people	IROs to undertake de-briefing interviews of children subject to CP plans or who are looked after, following missing episodes	Maria Anastasi	September 2018	

	Recruitment of an apprenticeship to support the gathering of information from interviews and produce statistical information			
Increase participation in LAC reviews and the numbers of children and young people that participate in child protection conferences Focus specifically on children with additional communication skills and develop strategies to increase their participation	Continue to promote the use of MOMO in LAC reviews and CP conferences Evidence the use of Child Friendly Conference Plan Improve recording around children's participation in LAC reviews Work with the Joint Service for Disabled Children (JSDC) to develop tools so that disabled children's views and feelings are captured	Maria Anastasi/JSDC	Ongoing	
Continue to apply SoS principles in child protection conferences and LAC reviews	Continuous focus upon improvement and quality of SW reports and safety plans and representation in Practice Lead Group	Maria Anastasi OMG	Ongoing	
Quality Assurance	Thematic and case audits as agreed by OMG, Performance and Practice Board and Head of Service	Maria Anastasi/OMG	Ongoing	
Increase evidence of impact of the challenge from IRO in children's files	IROs to ensure their consultations and discussions with SWs and other key professionals are recorded on children's records To create "escalation" case note on Liquid Logic for IROs to record	Maria Anastasi	Ongoing December 2018	

<p>Improve the timeliness of LAC Reviews</p>	<p>IROs and Team Managers to be more proactive in ensuring that SW reports are completed 5 days before the LAC review is due to take place.</p> <p>IROs to upload outcomes and record of reviews within 20 working days after the completion of reviews</p> <p>Sampling of cases on a quarterly basis</p>	<p>OMG/Maria Anastasi</p> <p>Maria Anastasi</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
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