



## Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service

### IRO Annual Report 2018/2019

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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 and Family Services, in People, of Enfield Council. 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 The IRO Handbook provides local authorities with statutory guidance on how the IROs should discharge their duties. The primary role of the IRO is to ensure that *"the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child"*. The IRO is responsible for promoting the voice of the child, offering a safeguard to prevent any drift in care planning and monitoring the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 In Enfield, the IROs are also responsible for chairing Child Protection conferences and Disruption Meetings. The LADO (part-time) is a member of the service and the IROs provide a duty service to primarily support the LADO function. The dual role provides a greater level of consistency and oversight for children and young people. The benefit of continued and sustained relationships is a key strength of the service.

## 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.

2.5 Since September 2018, the Service has been responsible for undertaking Return from Missing Interviews for Children Looked After and children subject to Child Protection Plans. The report will elaborate on this area under a specific heading.

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 Head of Safeguarding and Quality Service who reports directly to the Director of Children and Family Services.

3.2 The current staffing structure includes:

- Head of Service
- 8 Independent Reviewing Officers (7 full time and 2 part-time)
- Part time LADO

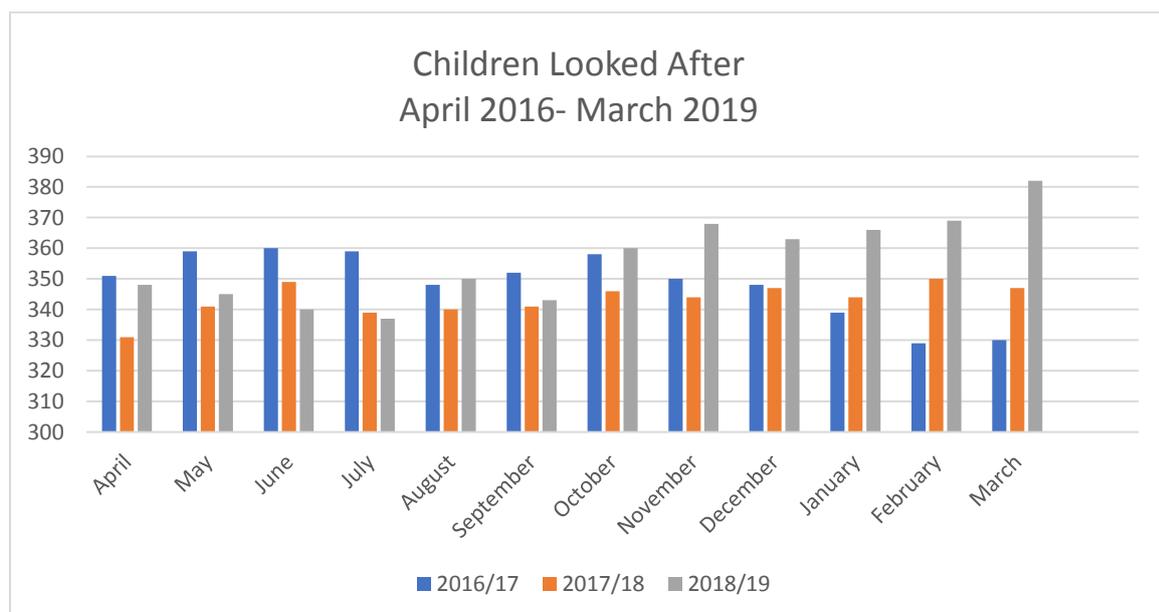
3.3 The IRO guidance makes it clear that an effective IRO service requires IROs who have the right skills and experience, working within a supportive context. The Enfield IROs have many years of relevant social work and management experience, and professional expertise.

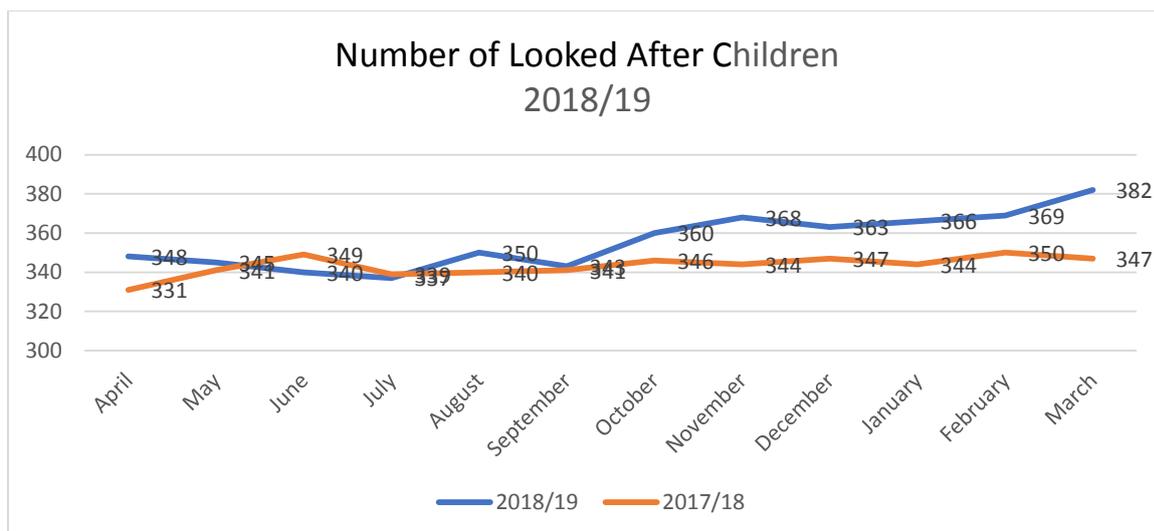
The IROs are all at an equivalent level to Children’s Social Care Team Managers in Enfield.

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 16 - March 19)





#### 4.2 Looked After Children April 2018- March 2019

The above charts provide numbers of children who became looked after at the end of each month since April 2016. The number of LAC has been stable over the year, but gradually increasing with the highest number at the end of March 2019 at 382. This is an increase of 35 children (10%) since last March.

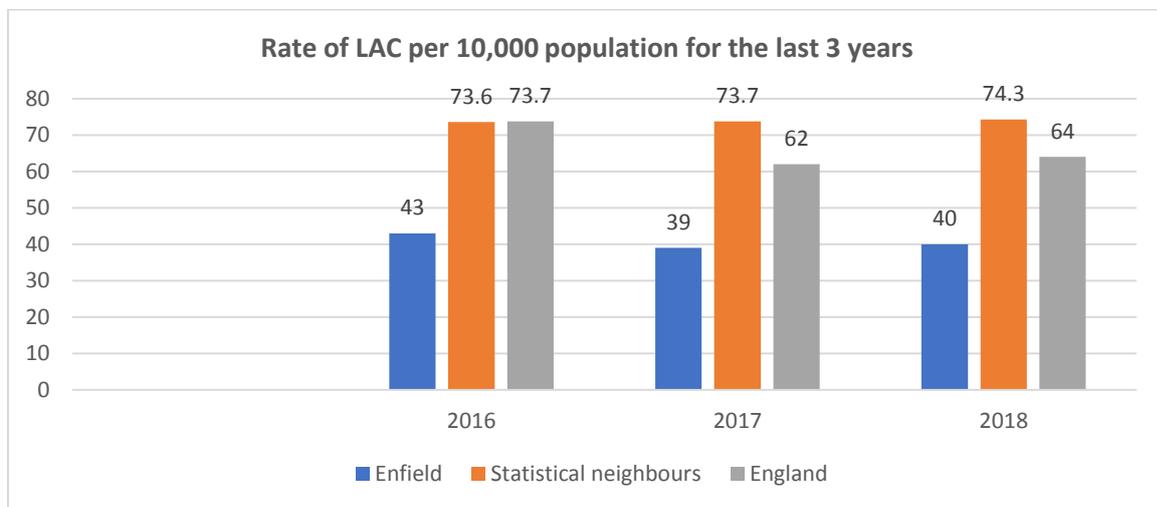
#### 4.3 Key information for LAC

- 4.3.1 There were 39 remands in total in 2018/19, a significant increase from last year (20). There were 23 remands to Young Offenders' Institutions, 9 to Secure Training Centres and 7 to Local Authority Accommodation. There were no secure welfare placements during this period.
- 4.3.2 The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) looked after at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 was 71 (compared to 63 in 2017-18) This figure represents 18.6 of 18% of the total LAC population in Enfield, slight increase last year, which was 18%) There have been significant delays in transferring to other local authorities. The current Enfield benchmark is 65, an increase from 59 in April 2018. This is based on 0.08% of the child population on DfE estimate. However, the National Transfer Scheme is not working and although we continue to refer young people, the reality is that they are not moving, and other councils are reluctant to accept young people who have already settled in placements and education. The local authority is continuing to raise this issue with the Home Office.
- 4.3.3 The number of children with disability who were looked after at the end of March 19 was 38 (9.98% of the total LAC population), a slight increase from last year (34 children).
- 4.3.4 Stability of placements for children looked after has remained fairly consistent in the last three years. Placement stability is strongly correlated to the progress that children and

young people make in care and moves can negatively impact on emotional resilience and can be disruptive to developing friendships and educational outcomes. The IROs contribute to this by ensuring robust plans are in place and intervening early when placements are showing fragility. Placement stability meetings are appropriately recommended in reviews for Looked After Children and reviews may be brought forward or held more frequently to address any difficulties in placements.

4.3.5 13 adoptions and 29 Special Guardianship Orders (20 in relation to children who had been looked after prior to the order) were granted.

#### 4.3.6 Rate of LAC per 10,000



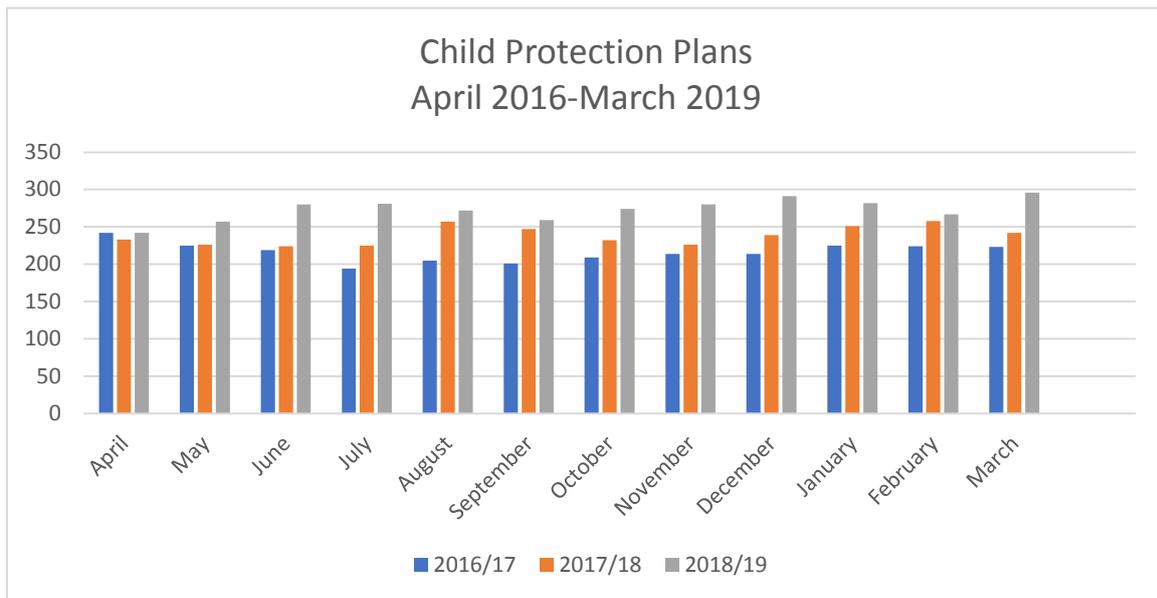
The rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 has been fairly consistent over the last 3 years, and significantly lower than our statistical neighbours and England figures. Considerable efforts are made to support children to remain in the care of their families and if not possible, action is taken so that children are brought into care in a timely manner.

#### 4.3.7 Timeliness of LAC Reviews

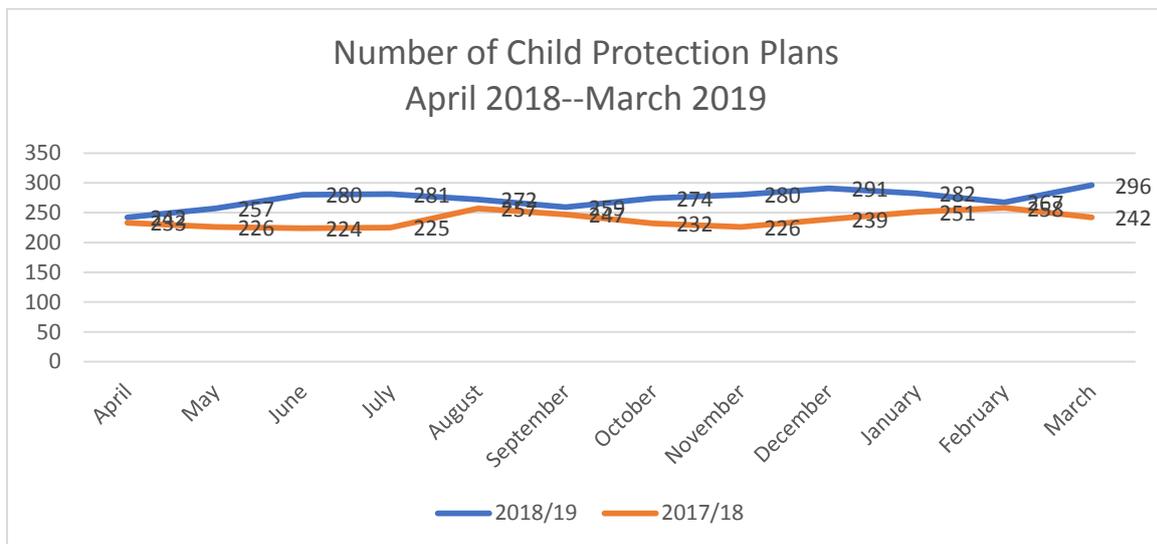
The percentage of LAC reviews recorded to be within statutory timescales has significantly improved from last year, from 80.9% to 88.6%.

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 based on 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. In addition, there have been some issues with ICS which is being addressed with IT. The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Service and the Head of Looked After Children Service Have been monitoring this activity on a monthly basis and continue to address this.

#### 4.4 Child Protection Plans (April 16 - March 18)



#### 4.5 Child Protection Plans April 2018 – March 2019



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 2016. There has been a steady increase since last year culminating to 296 at the end of March 2019. A recent audit of 25 initial child protection conferences (66 children) found that the outcomes were 46 CP plans and 20 CIN plans and that the CP chairs were managing risks appropriately and overall, making appropriate decisions. A contributory factor to the increase of CP plans has been the number of conferences of large sibling groups.

## **4.6 Key Information about Child Protection Plans (CPP)**

4.6.1 At the end of March 2019, of the 296 children subject to Child Protection Plans (CPP):

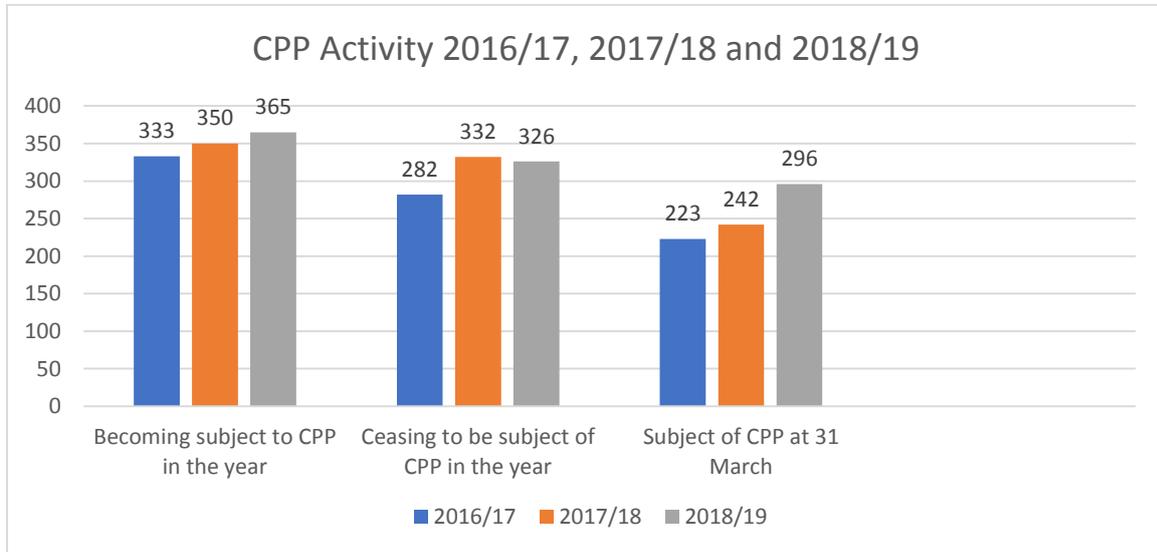
- 142 were female, 150 were male and 4 unborn
- 24 were under the age of 1
- 81 were between 1-4 years old
- 85 were between 5-9 years old
- 90 were between 10-15 years old
- 12 were 16/17 years old
- 11 were CPP for children with disabilities.

4.6.2 Categories of CPP

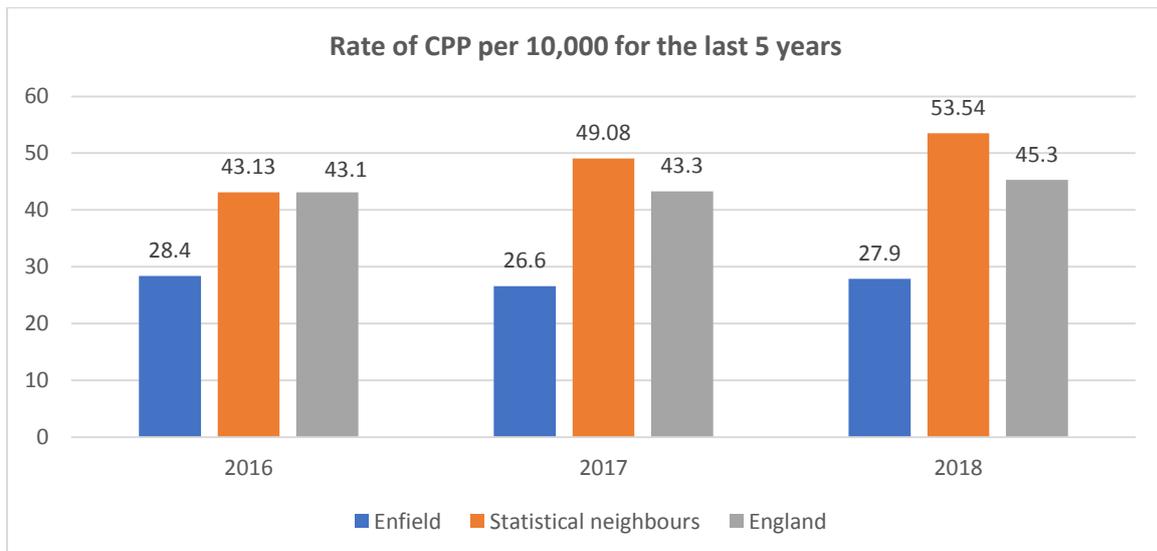
- 50.3% (149) were under the category of neglect
- 27.7% (82) were under the category of emotional abuse
- 9.79% (29) were under the category of physical abuse
- 3.37% (10) were under the category of sexual abuse
- The remaining CPPs were under a combination of neglect/physical abuse, neglect/sexual abuse and physical/emotional abuse.

There has been a significant increase in CP Plans under the category of physical abuse since last year, from 3 (1.2%) to 29 (9.79%) and sexual abuse from 4 (1.65%) to 10 (3.37%). There has been more focus on the impact of domestic abuse on children, particularly younger children and the risk of physical harm during incidents of domestic abuse. The two practice weeks focussed on domestic abuse and sexual abuse, and likely to have also been a contributory factor, with specific activities, team discussions and workshops on these two areas. The percentage of CPP under neglect and emotional abuse has slightly decreased.

#### 4.6.3 Child Protection Conferences and Key Performance Indicators



#### 4.6.4 Child Protection rates per 10,000



The rate of CPP per 10,000 compared to our statistical neighbours and England figures has been consistent over the last 3 years.

It remains relatively lower than both figures. However, findings of audits and the OFSTED inspection indicate that child protection enquiries are timely, and our decision making is appropriate.

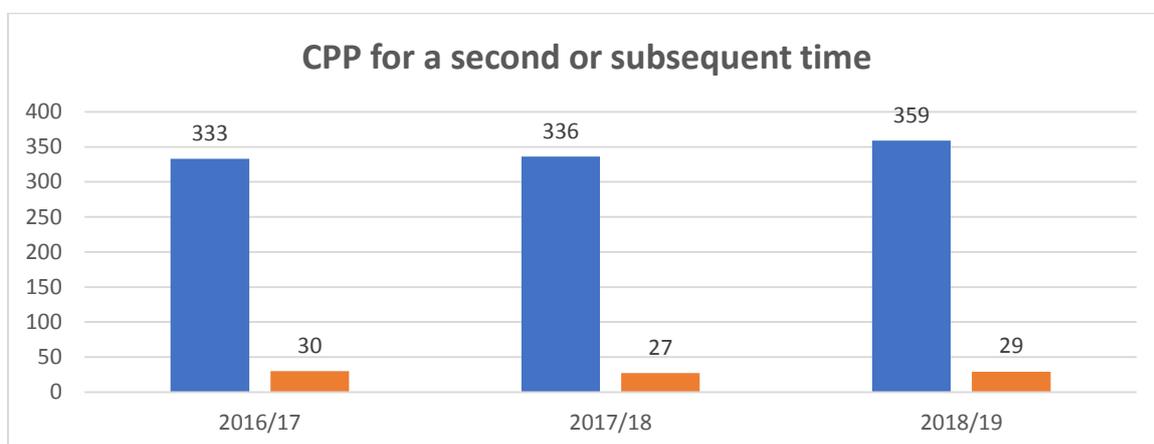
The offer of early help and the focus to support families develop safety plans have been contributing factors.

#### 4.6.5 Duration of Child Protection Plans



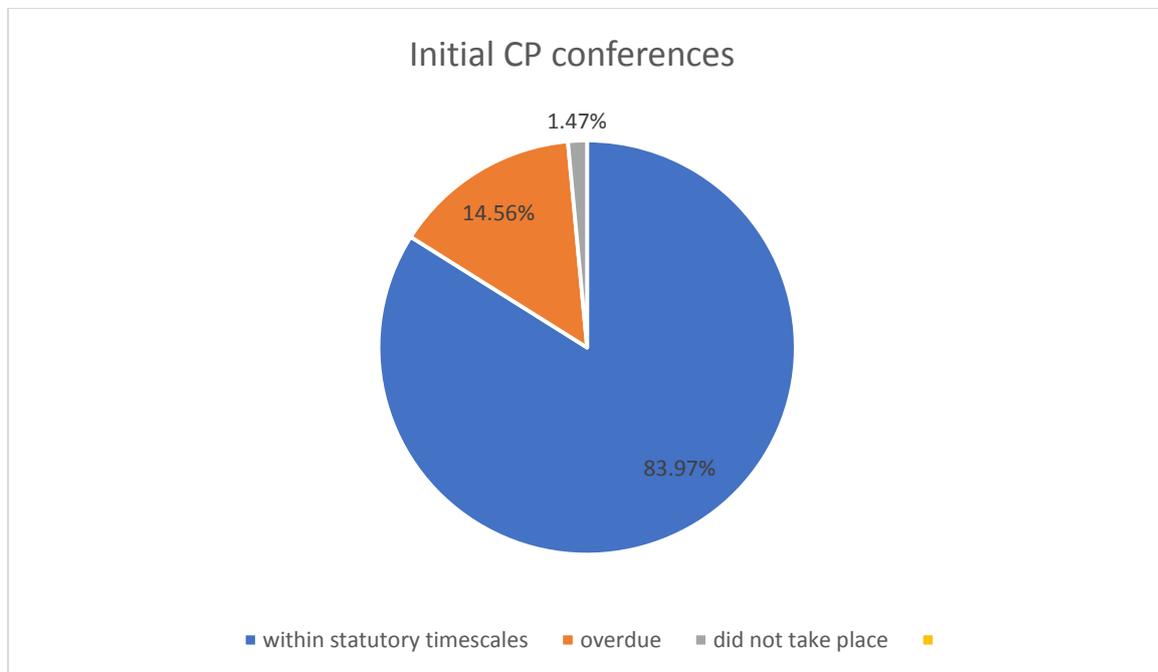
Performance for the indicator CPP 2 years or more has been consistently good over the last few years, good performance is typified by a lower number. Performance at the end of March 2019, 1.68%, a slight increase from last year's figures (1.23%). This indicates that we continue to be robust in our planning and that triggering a legal pathway at the second review CP conference review is a contributory factor in avoiding drift in cases. A factor contributing to the slight increase is sibling groups. 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 8.1%, a slight increase from last year's figures (8.1%), but still relatively high compared to the figures in 2015/16. This is an area which is monitored closely. An audit was completed last year 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. One of the significant factors was several large sibling groups. The audit also highlighted that in some cases, families had made significant changes and the threshold for CP plans was no longer met, but the changes they had made had not been sustained over a period of time. In some of these cases, legal planning meetings had been convened.

#### 4.6.7. Timeliness of CP Conferences 2018/19



83.97% initial conferences were within statutory timescales and 14.56% were overdue. Despite the fact that this is good performance, we continue to strive to improve this. Factors which have contributed to this figure are the non-availability of key agencies to attend conferences, such as schools during school holidays; there have also been rare occasions when parents have had prior commitments (such as court hearings or key health appointments). Decisions to delay initial conferences are made by the Head of the Service after serious consideration.

1.47% initial conferences 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, 34 transfer in conferences took place (in relation to 64 children) who were subject to CPP in other Local Authorities and moved into Enfield to live. This is an increase from 2017-18 (29 conferences in relation to 58 children)



97.78% were reviewed within the statutory timescales and 2.2% were out of timescale.

This is an excellent performance, but our aim is to achieve 100%.

## 5. Return from Missing Interviews

The Service has been responsible for undertaking Return from Missing Interviews for Children Looked After and children subject to Child Protection Plans since October 2018. This followed the decision not to continue with St Christopher’s Fellowship who had previously delivered this service. The department has now reviewed these arrangements, and this service will be delivered by an officer based in the MASH. The new officer will complete interviews for all children who meet the criteria for an interview. This will enable the department to offer a good, timely and consistent service and identify trends and patterns and inform practice.

## 6. 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 children and young people’s circumstances vary in complexity and in distance of placements. At the end of March 2019, the average LAC caseload per IRO was 47. The average CP caseload was 37 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 working groups and other meetings, audits and other tasks outlined in section 2

## **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 85.3%, a significant improvement from last year's 74.2%. Significant efforts were made by IROs to ensure children who are looked after participate in their reviews and that this is accurately recorded. Reviews are often held in more than one meeting, to ensure that children have the opportunity to contribute to their review.

The Service has had several meetings with the Consultation and Participation Officer in relation to KRATOS (Children in Care Council) and this will continue.

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. The contract with Mind of My Own has been extended for another year; during this period, we have been working on the Children's Portal, which will offer the opportunity for children to give their views, wishes and feelings for LAC reviews and CP conferences. The introduction of the Portal will also enable parents and carers to contribute to LAC reviews and CP conferences.

## **8. Advocacy**

Enfield agreed to joint tendering to deliver advocacy for children looked after and children subject to Child Protection Plans last year and Barnardos were successful. This contributed to savings for the department and the transition from Action for Children to Barnardos was completed smoothly. The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Service, representatives from other services including commissioning, attend quarterly meetings with Barnardos.

## **9 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

A part time LADO was appointed at the beginning of 2109. The role provides management and overview of cases where there are allegations against staff and volunteers who work with children from all agencies.

The successful candidate was previously a full time IRO and the transition to the LADO role has been extremely smooth and successful.

The appointment of the part -time LADO has allowed the Head of Service to have a more strategic overview of the service, particularly around quality assurance.

The IROs continue to operate a daily duty system to support the role of the LADO.

The total number of allegations between 1.4.2018 and 31.3.2019 which met the threshold for LADO involvement was 66, a slight increase from last year (62) In addition there were 92 recorded consultations, an increase from last year (80) 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. Skylakes**

The local authority commissioned an “Edge of Care Service” in July 2018 for 18 months. The aim was to reduce the number of young people coming into the care of the local authority care by working intensively with young people (between the ages of 11-16) and their families to prevent family breakdown. The service worked with two cohorts of 40 children in each cohort, intensively for the first 6 months and for further 6 months targeted support to sustain the changes, with case responsibility returning to Enfield. Intensive work included direct individual support to young people, and intensive support to parents and extended network by a Family Support Practitioner and a Therapeutic Practitioner. The use of Family Group conferences (FGC) and review FGCs was very effective. The Head of the Safeguarding Service and the Team Manager for FAST (Family Accommodation Support Team) were the Strategic and Operational Leads respectively.

The project has been extremely successful in preventing young people coming into the care of the local authority and work is being undertaken to use some of the strategies by the local authority.

## **11. Enfield Safeguarding Children’s Arrangements**

These arrangements have replaced the Enfield Local Safeguarding Children Board, as detailed in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Working Together 2018.

The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Service is a member of the Practice Improvement Group, the Vulnerable Young People Group and the Child Death Overview Panel.

## **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 concerns about the quality of placements, delay in implementing recommendations of the child protection conference and the timeliness of identifying alternative placement for a looked after child.

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.

IROs complete 6 weekly peer reviews as part of the department's audit programme, the Head of the Service moderates a percentage of the audits and completes a report for the Executive Director, the Director and the Head of Practice Improvement and Partnerships. Findings of the moderation reports are disseminated to the Service and discussed in team meetings and individual supervision to support improving our practice.

The Head of Service has quarterly meetings with the Executive Director and Director to consider issues around practice across the department.

## **11. Learning and Development**

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

IROs participated in the two Practice Weeks, for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse. Activities included case discussions in team meetings with a particular focus on decision making in conferences.

A workshop on CIN plans was organised for the service to ensure there is constancy around CIN plans with SW teams, following the OFSTED inspection which highlighted the need to improve the quality of CIN plans.

The Service has team meetings on a fortnightly basis and on a monthly basis, the service will focus on particular themes as part of our continuing learning and journey to improve practice.

The IROs have had meetings with the Head of Practice Improvement and Partnerships and have discussed training needs for next year.

Arrangements will be further discussed once the Principal Social Worker is in post around embedding Professional Standards in our practice when Social Work England become our regulator on 2nd December 2019.

## 12. Achievements

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

The OFSTED inspection report in March 2019, included very positive feedback about the Service

*“in the stronger CP Plans, actions are child focussed and clear on timescales in order to help parents understand what needs to change”*

*“Children in Care benefit from regular monitoring of their plans at timely reviews by IROs with oversight at midway through.....there is clear evidence of IROs intervening and advocating appropriately and escalating issues to improve outcomes....”*

*“..management of allegations is timely and proportionate. A well-managed system prioritises ...in a timely manner in order to safeguard children”*

## 13 REVIEW OF THE 2018/19 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2019/20

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 Recruitment of an apprenticeship to support the gathering of information from interviews and produce statistical information	Maria Anastasi	September 2018	
Increase participation in LAC reviews and the numbers of children and young people that	Continue to promote the use of MOMO in LAC reviews and CP	Maria Anastasi/JSDC	Ongoing	

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

Improve the timeliness of LAC Reviews	<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>	Ongoing	  
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#### The Key Priorities and areas of developments for 2018/19

Areas for development	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	RAG status
Improve the quality of CP conferences	Development of document outlining expected standards for CP conferences for SW teams and Safeguarding and Quality Service	Maria Anastasi/CIN Service	November 2019	
Focus specifically on children with additional communication skills and develop strategies to increase their participation	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	
Embed local SW standards and ensure the Signs of Safety Practice model is understood and utilised consistently	Collaborate with the newly appointed Principal Social Worker to review/revise existing tools and practices.	Principal SW/ Maria Anastasi	ongoing	
Increase IRO oversight and scrutiny for CP and LAC	IROs to improve consistency of recording mid way reviews on ICS. Head of Service to dip sample	Maria Anastasi	ongoing	
Improve parental participation in LAC reviews	IROs to improve consistency in engaging parents in reviews and recording.	Maria Anastasi /LAC service	ongoing	

Improve multi agency input in to Child Protection conferences and quality of written reports	Re issue multi agency conference report to partner agencies  Audits to ensure compliance	Maria Anastasi /Enfield Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements	ongoing	
Increase customer feedback for LAC Reviews and CP conferences	Promote the use of Children's Portal	Maria Anastasi	ongoing	
Contextual Safeguarding	Consider the role of the Safeguarding and Quality Service and current processes	Anne Stoker, Director of Children and Families/Maria Anastasi	ongoing	