

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT 2

Corporate Parenting Board

To: Councillors Orrell (Chair), Fitzpatrick (Vice-Chair),
Heaton, Hunter, Musson, Rowley, Runciman and Baker

Date: Tuesday, 19 January 2021

Time: 5.00 pm

Venue: Remote meeting

The Agenda for the above meeting was published on 11 January 2021. The attached additional documents are now available for the following agenda item:

**6. Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) (Pages 1 - 20)
Annual Report 2019-20**

Members will be presented with the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2019-20. Every child in the care of the City of York Council must have an allocated Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). This is a legal requirement under s.118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. An IRO is an experienced Social Worker employed by the Council but independent of Children's Social Care. Their role is to have oversight of a child's case and ensure that a child's interests are protected throughout their time in care.

**7. Highlight report from last CYPIC Strategy (Pages 21 - 28)
Group**

This report updates Members on the last CYPIC Strategy Group meeting.

This agenda supplement was published on 15 January 2021



Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2019 / 20

1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

Executive Summary

It is a statutory requirement for the IRO Manager to produce an Annual Report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Board regarding the structure and performance of the IRO Service and the delivery of services and outcomes for children in care.

This report outlines the positive impact of wide reaching reform of Children Social Care Services undertaken in York during 2019-20. York was established as a Social Work Academy with new Frontline Service. Services were reconfigured with a new Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, separate Assessment Teams, integrated Social Work and Family Support Teams and Court Team. The Quality Assurance Service was expanded to include a team of Advanced Practitioners reporting to the Principal Social Worker alongside the IRO Service to help embed clear practice standards and robust learning culture Responsibility for oversight of children in need of family support services transferred from IROs in June 2019 to the newly integrated safeguarding teams, enabling the IRO service to focus on children in care and subject to safeguarding arrangements.

Recalibration of social work services resulted in an anticipated peak in the number of safeguarding enquiries and children being made subject to child protection plans and coming into care. Consequential rise in caseloads was matched by expansion in the IRO service to help maintain robust scrutiny and service development.

Prior to the above the ratio of children in care in York had been lower than National, Regional and comparator levels but by 31st March 2020 it was more aligned with other authorities (70.8 per 10,000 - sitting between the 2018-19 comparator average of 61 and the regional average of 74 per 10,000).

94% of children in care who participated in the CYC 2019 Tell Us Survey reported that they feel safe and happy where they are living, although availability of local provision is an ongoing issue, resulting in some children needing to be placed outside of the city, contrary to their assessed needs. On 31st March 2020 there were 262 children in care, but just 114 CYC fostering households with reliance on a high number of externally commissioned residential and foster placements.

The 2020-2023 Sufficiency Duty Strategy, the Permanence Strategy and the Adolescent Strategy will set out plans to address these gaps in local care provision and ensure that the right children are in care for just the right amount of time. IROs will be instrumental in helping to implement these strategies, providing additional safeguard to ensure robust intervention to maintain children with their families where this is right for them, that there is no drift in children coming into care when this is required and that the most appropriate long term home is swiftly secured for them for them, including supported return to family where this can be safely achieved.

The Corporate Parenting Board are respectfully asked to note the continued need to:-

1. Maintain IRO caseloads within recommended statutory guidelines to enable IROs to undertake effective consultation with all children, robustly oversee implementation of plans and escalate any issues of potential concern.
2. Raise placement stability by increasing sufficiency of local placement provision and reduce use of out of area and independent care provision as outlined in 2020-2023 Sufficiency Strategy.
3. Build in social work sufficiency to reduce reliance on agency workers as is being achieved by the local recruitment drives and expansion of the Frontline and social work academy

The 2020-21 IRO service plan sets out how the IRO are taking these developments forward into 2021.

- **Promote the voice and influence of children in care** – ensuring we listen to children and act on what they tell us
- **Achieve permanency for children in care**- ensuring all children are living and being cared for in suitable arrangements that they are happy to call home.
- **Promote positive Family Relationships and Identity** – helping children who can safely remain or return to their families to do so, whilst helping those who can't to stay in touch with the people who are important to them
- **Promote best outcomes for children in care**- ensuring that we support all children and their carers to be ambitious and supported in what they seek to achieve and celebrating all successes.

1. In accordance with York CYC mission statement 'Every conversation starts with the child'.

1.1. No one knows better how we are doing for children in care than the children themselves. In York there is a well-established Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum and younger children's participation group (Show Me That I Matter, I Still Matter and I Matter Too). The groups provide frequent information about what works well for children in care and how they would like services to be developed. Key messages from these groups are that children should be listened to more and that workers need to be honest, reliable, and consistent and fun.

1.2. CYC's Advocacy Service facilitate a bi-annual survey for children in care. Key messages from the 2019 U Matter Survey were that 94% of children in care who completed the survey felt happy and safe where they are living and have an adult they can talk to and trust, most knew how to contact their social worker and knew how to access support. Most had a good awareness of their rights and entitlements, with care leavers being particularly positive about the support they receive. 76% (44) of young people said if they had ever been unhappy about a placement, they were able to talk to their social worker or carers about this. 93% (52) of the young people who responded felt that they have received the help and support they need to keep in touch with their family and 87% (47) stated that they had the support that they needed to keep in touch with their friends.

1.3. The 2019 U Matter survey also highlighted that some children in care had not received written information about the support available to them, or opportunity to visit before they move somewhere new, and some wanted to be more involved in planning their personal education and child care review meetings. 76% said they attend their review, but only 68% said they know who their IRO is, only 63% said they had opportunity to speak to their IRO ahead of their review and only 53% felt they had been involved in the decisions made about them. This feedback influenced work undertaken in 2019 to update the 'New to Care Packs' and Child Care Review toolkit and was a driver in restructure of the IRO service.

2. Legal Context

2.1 The roles and responsibilities of the IRO are defined in statute via:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children and Young People's Act 2008
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- IRO Handbook 2010

2.2 The IRO's statutory responsibilities are to;

- monitor the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent and alert senior manager's to any issues of concern / report on good practice
- ensure that children's care plans are based on a current and informed assessment, and provide an effective response to the child's individual needs and aspirations ;
- identify and address any gaps in the assessment process or provision of service;
- provide a safeguard to prevent 'drift' in care planning and the delivery of services;
- ensure that the child's voice, wishes and feelings are reflected in the plan and that the child fully understands the implications of any changes to their care plan
- ensure that the child understands how an advocate could assist them and their entitlement to one

2.3 To help achieve this

- All Looked after Children have a named IRO who remains a consistent figure during the child's journey through care as far as is reasonably practicable.
- The IRO chairs a meeting to review the child's care plan within 20 working days of any new care episode, then within 3 months and then at least every 6 months or sooner if a change to the care plan is proposed.
- The IRO consults with the child as part of their review process, making sure that the child understands and can make a genuine contribution to plans for their care; understands the implications of any changes and understands their entitlement to legal advice or independent advocacy and how these could help
- The IRO provides challenge and support to social workers, their managers and partner agencies to help ensure pursuit of best life chances for the individual and collective child in care
- The IRO service oversees the formulation and implementation of care plans, tracking progress against planned outcomes, identifying any potential drift and raising challenge via a formal resolution process which includes the ability to access independent legal advice and refer concerns to Children and Families Court Advisory Support Services.

3. Profile of the IRO Service

3.1 The Independent Reviewing Service is sited within the Quality Assurance Group in Children's Social Care, based at the city centre CYC office alongside the CSC management team, social work teams and Children's Rights and Advocacy Service. This co location of services significantly assists with the maintenance of strong links and effective integrated working practices across the directorate.

3.2 In summer 2019 significant reform of Children's Social Care Services in York was implemented to help ensure swift and focused intervention for children at every stage in their care journey. More specialist social work teams were established including establishment of a new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, new Assessment Teams working alongside the Immediate Response Team and Family Group Conference coordinator, new integrated Safeguarding and Child in Need teams (where social workers and child in need practitioners worked together rather than in separate teams) and establishment of a new court team, in addition to the pre-existing Children in Achieved Permanence team and Assessment / Commissioning and support teams.

3.3 As part of this service restructure IROs were regraded to the level of team managers and the Quality Assurance Service was expanded to include a team of Advanced Practitioners reporting to the Principal Social Worker alongside the IRO service to help embed a learning culture and drive improved expectations and standards across the directorate. IROs increased impact was further enabled by reduction in average caseload size achieved by transferring oversight of planning for children receiving family support services from the IROs to the new integrated CIN and Safeguarding teams, enabling the IROs to focus on children in care and those subject to child protection plans.

3.4 During the course of the year the IRO service has recruited an additional 2 full time equivalent posts, such that by 31st March the IRO team consisted of:

- 1 FTE Service Manager who reports to the Quality Assurance Group Manager – independent of CSC service delivery
- 6 FTE IROs undertaking the Children in Care reviews and Child Protection Conferences (made up of 5 full time workers and 2 part time workers)
- 2 FTE IROs on fixed term contracts, temporarily employed in response to the rising number of children in care
- 1 FTE IRO (Placements) undertaking the foster carer's annual reviews, inspection of CYC's registered provision (The Glen) and quality assurance of externally commissioned residential care provision (two part time workers job share this post)

3.5 All 12 workers are White British, 10 are female and two are males, ages range from mid-30s to early 60s. Two members of the team taken on during Q3 were agency workers employed on a temporary basis to cover absences arising from maternity, sickness and bereavement leave that had arisen within the team. Two permanent posts were successfully recruited to during Q4, in addition to short term retention of the additional agency cover to future proof the service and help address anticipated additional demands arising from COVID19.

3.6 All IROs have at least 5 years post-qualifying social work experience and are registered with Social Work England. 7 current members of the unit have previously held manager roles in social work services including three who have held Head of Service roles. The other IROs have extensive experience working in referral and assessment, child in need, adoption and fostering services.

3.7 IROs and their manager access a diverse range of training appropriate to their development needs and the service also participate in the regional IRO practitioner's group and the regional IRO manager's group. In 2019 all substantive members of the team undertook 3 day training in change management / leadership to strengthen the team's capacity to drive service development and best practice initiatives.

3.8 All members of the team have monthly supervision and contribute to weekly team meeting and peer supervision sessions. IROs have also contributed to thematic service wide audits. Learning arising from these audits is reviewed in individual supervision and the collective data arising from the audits is shared and discussed with the team as part of team meetings to help inform ongoing service development.

3.9 The Independent Reviewing Service has contributed to practice improvement activity via delivery of multi-agency child protection training delivered on behalf of CYSCP, induction sessions for social workers and social work academy, participation in the Speak Up task group, Fostering Gateway meetings and active promotion of Advocacy Service and Service representation in Senior Management Team, Legal Planning and Permanence Tracking Meetings, Permanence Panel, Children in Care Partnership meetings, Child's Voice and Influence Forum and Mosaic User Group and Improvement Board. The service is also represented in a number of task and finish groups and the IROs each have a designated CSC service area link role to help disseminate 2 way information between the IRO team and other service areas about any emergent issues or new Team / Service area developments.

3.10 From mid-March 2020 restrictions on social contact arising from the COVID19 pandemic has been such that the IRO team have been working remotely from home undertaking consultations, meetings and resolution activity predominantly via telephone and audio / video enabled skype. The service was able to make the transition to remote working seamlessly without any tangible detriment to the timeliness or output of meetings although the process of remote meetings is very time intensive and has inevitably created some additional challenges. The team are currently looking at how they can continue to deliver relevant training via remote means during COVID 19 restrictions and make better use of e-based media to facilitate indirect consultation with children who can't be visited. The impact of COVID19 will clearly feature in next year's annual report.

4. IRO Caseloads and outputs

4.1. The IRO Handbook 2010 (Statutory Guidance) states that in order to carry out the IRO responsibilities as laid out in the Care Planning Regulations 2010 a full time IRO should have a caseload of between 50 and 70 looked after children. In York no IRO has ever been allocated more than 70 children in care, but they have always been allocated other work too.

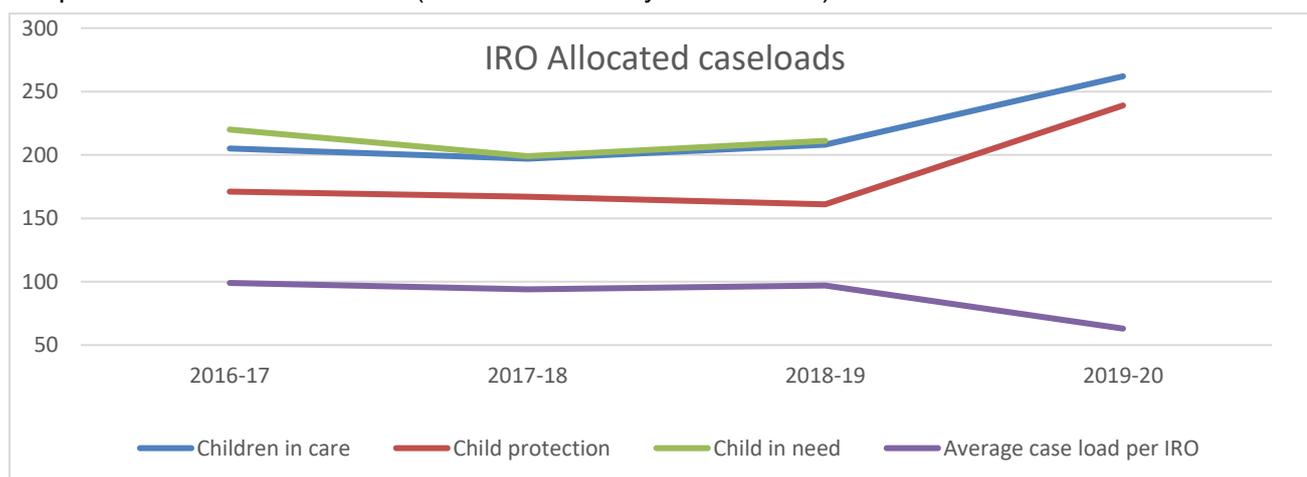
4.2. At the end of Q1 IROs were overseeing the planning for children subject to Child in Need plans and Child Protection Plans as well as Children in Care, and the team had an average caseload of 100. From June 2019 oversight of the CIN moved to the newly configured safeguarding teams so the IRO caseload immediately dropped by 200.

Table 1 : IRO caseload

Snap shot at period end	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2019-20
Children subject to CPP	171	167	161	172	228	235	239	239
Children In Care	205	197	208	224	235	240	262	262
CIN allocated to IRO	220	199	211	204	NA	NA	NA	NA
Number of IROs	6 FTE	6 FTE	6 FTE	6 FTE	6 FTE	6 FTE	8 FTE	8 FTE
Average caseload size	99	94	97	100	77	79	63	63

4.3 Impact of the reduced caseload was not immediately felt by the team, as loss of the CIN work coincided with rise in the number of children coming into care and sharp spike in the number of children becoming subject to protection plans.

Graph 1: IRO allocated work – (based on end of year statistics).



4.4 This also coincided with some long term sickness and bereavement leave that arose within the IRO team which contributed to a reduction in the timeliness of some review meetings. This was particularly disappointing given the progress that the team had made in raising timeliness of meetings since the dip in timeliness that arose as part of the 2016 restructure. This is an area of improvement that has been subsequently addressed.

Table 2 Timeliness of IRO meetings chaired by IROs

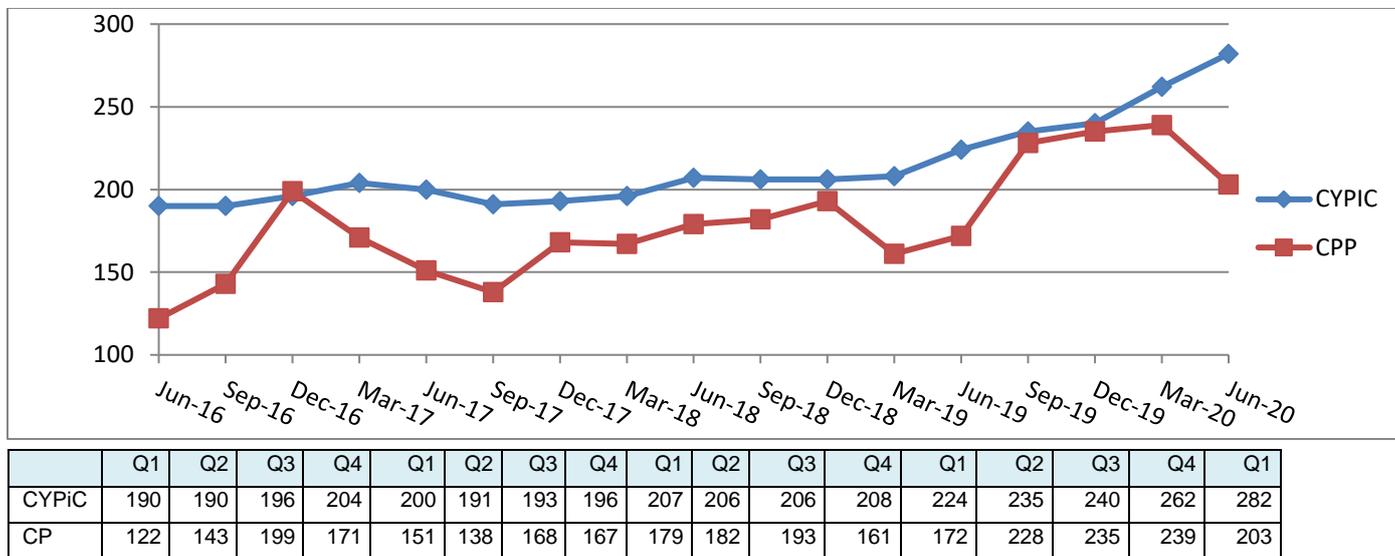
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018- 19	2019-20
Children who had all reviews in timescale	155	133	178	193	212
Children who has any reviews out of timescale	28	66	9	12	37

% children in care who had all reviews within timescale	84.7%	100.8%	95.1%	94.1%	85.1%
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5. CYPIC Profile, trends and placement sufficiency

5.1 Prior to the current reporting period the number of children in care in York had been fairly static for a number of years, and below the national and comparator local authority level, whilst the number of children subject to protection plans has been much more variable, and above the national and comparator LA levels.

Graph 2 : 4 year trend re children in care and children subject to child protection plan in York



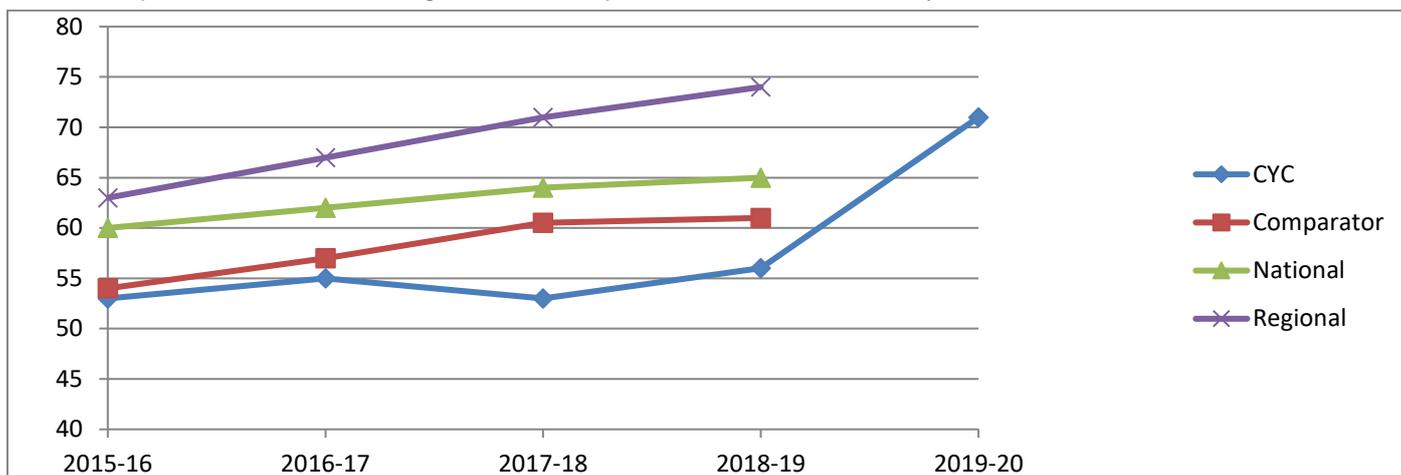
5.2 The static number of children in care had previously been regarded as a positive indicator of effective early intervention achieved via the Immediate Response Team, Family Group Conferencing and Local Area Teams. Extensive audit activity undertaken during 2019 evidenced that whilst this was a positive factor for some children, there had also been some drift in interventions for a cohort of children who experienced a high turnover of agency social workers. This resulted in delayed progress being made for some children subject to protection plans – this was a primary driver in the wider service reconfigurations and driver for reduction in IRO caseloads to increase the level of IRO scrutiny, challenge and impact.

5.3 There was a marked increase in the number of children being made subject to protection plan in York during Q2 and in the number of children coming into care in Q3. These increases were part of a conscious recalibration of social work intervention in response to the audit findings and coincided with reconfiguration of the IRO team, launch of new practice standards and launch of a new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The MASH was set up to robustly process new referrals and initiate immediate safeguarding processes or referral for other services as appropriate. This included brokered step down to early help services in the Local Area Teams or transfer to more specialist high intervention services such as the Immediate Response Team or newly formed Child Exploitation Team, where high intensity work is undertaken to address emergent concerns and help maintain children in their families, where this is the right thing for them.

5.4 The number of children subject to protection plan was still above comparator levels at the end of March 2020, (it has since come down), but the number of children in care was more aligned to rising national and regional trends. There were 262 children in care in York on 31st March 2020, equating to a rate of 70.8 per 10,000. This is above last year’s national average of 65, but still below the Regional average of 74.

Graph 3 : The number of children in care per 10,000

York's comparison with national, regional and comparator LAs over the last 5 years.



2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	End of year snap shot data
53	55	53	56	70.81	CYC
54	57	60.5	61	Available Dec 2020	Benchmark - comparator Data
60	62	64	65	Available Dec 2020	Benchmark - National Data
63	67	71	74	Available Dec 2020	Benchmark - Regional Data

5.5 To help ensure that all children are getting the right support at the right time the IROs are overseeing decision making pre Initial Child Protection Conference to help ensure that there is consistent application of threshold and effective early interventions undertaken by Early Help, Immediate Response Team, Family Group Conference, Child Exploitation Team and Child in Need teams to help maintain children in their family's care where appropriate. IROs are also contributing to permanence and legal tracking meetings and routinely undertaking compliance audits as part of every child in care review, child protection conference and mid-point review, to help ensure that any potential for drift is quickly identified and addressed.

5.6 This increased scrutiny and diversion has resulted in a reduction in the number of children being accommodated under section 20 voluntary accommodation arrangements, with a higher percentage of children coming into care being children who were subject to abuse or neglect requiring court action to help secure permanence for them. Ongoing audit activity being undertaken by the IRO service is reviewing trends regarding conference activity and permanence planning to help ensure that high intensity services are targeted at the right children to improve parenting and divert the need for children to come into care wherever possible, or to help initiate robust pre proceedings interventions and contingency planning to move children onto alternative permanent carers as quickly as possible where this is the right thing for them.

Table 3 Legal status of children in care.

CYPIC by LEGAL STATUS Snapshot at end of reporting period	2015/016	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	
Interim care order -	30	20	30	28	63	↑↑
Full care order -	106	126	132	144	162	↑
Placement Order	9	5	5	13	11	
Accommodated under S20 -	44	52	29	22	26	↓
Youth Justice legal statuses	0	1	1	0	0	
Children in care detained on CP grounds	2	0	0	0	0	

5.7 The overall profile of children and young people in care in York has been broadly consistent across the last 5 years with little variation in the gender and just a small increase in those who are not White / British. (less than 5% variance). The changing demographics in York are not currently matched by the ethnic profile of the IRO team, wider substantive staff or foster carers, who currently continue to be almost exclusively white British. Increased use of agency social workers and managers has increased diversity amongst the

work force, with ongoing work being undertaken to try to encourage these workers to apply for permanent contracts. More work is being undertaken across the directorate as part of the Black Lives Matter initiatives to understand how well our care population reflects the changing demographics in York, and how we can best support any demographic minorities.

Table 4: Trend in age and gender of children in care 2016-2012 Number of CYPIC by Ethnicity

Snapshot profile at end of reporting period	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	Trend over 5 years
% of children in care - Male	51.30%	52.90%	54.30%	54.33%	51.53%	3% variance
% of children in care, - Female	48.70%	47.10%	45.70%	45.67%	48.47%	3% variance
% of children in care, Under 1	6.80%	5.40%	5.10%	9.13%	8.02%	4% variance
% of children in care, 1-4 years	9.90%	11.80%	13.70%	14.42%	19.85%	10% variance upward trend
% of children in care, 5-9 years	19.40%	17.20%	16.80%	19.23%	22.14%	5% variance
% of children in care, - 10-15 years	40.80%	40.20%	43.10%	36.54%	30.15%	10% variance downward trend
% of children in care, 16+ years	23.00%	25.50%	21.30%	20.67%	19.85%	5% variance
% of children in care white British	95.18%	93.56%	90.35%	90.47%	91.02%	< 5% variance downward trend
% of children in care other white	1.06%	0.49%	0.50%	0.95%	0.33%	<1% variance
% of children in care Asian	0.53%	-	0.50%	0.47%	0.33%	<1% variance
% of children in care Asian and white	2.13%	1.48%	1.79%	1.42%	0.66%	<2% variance
% of children in care Black caribbean	-	-	-	0.47%	0.33%	<1% variance
% of children in care Black carib and white	0.53%	0.49%	0.50%	0.47%	0.99%	<1% variance
% of children in care other black	-	-	-	-	0.66%	<1% variance
% of children in care other mixed	0.53%	1.98%	3.55%	4.28%	3.98%	3.5% variance
% of children in care other ethnic	-	1.98%	3.04%	1.42%	1.66%	<2% variance
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker	-	4	6	4	3	

5.8 The most notable change in the profile of children in care has been an increase in the percentage of younger children, the greatest increase being in children aged between 1 and 4 years and decrease in those aged between 10 and 15 years. This is reflective of recalibration of safeguarding arrangements with reduced incidence of children coming into care or remaining in care under voluntary agreement due to targeted interventions by Family Group Conference, Immediate Response Team and Child Exploitation Team.

5.9 Whilst the number of teenagers starting to be looked after is reducing, the cohort of children aged 15+ years still constituted 27% of the overall care population on 31st March. 71 of these young people will be turning 18 and leaving care due to age within the next 3 years. IROs are working with these young people and their social workers to help promote the need for robust pathway planning to facilitate supported moves to suitable accommodation. The revised sufficiency strategy is looking at how their predicted accommodation and support needs can be best met.

5.10 The IROs work proactively with all social workers to ensure the right permanence plan, legal status and living arrangement is in place for every child and young person in care. The Quality Assurance Monitor completed by IROs as part of every child care review confirms that IROs continue to be satisfied that almost all children have an appropriate legal status. Where concerns have been identified they have generally

reflected the increased focus on converting some voluntarily S20 arrangements to care orders for children for whom a return to their family's care is not feasible, or concerns about delay in achieving discharge of care order for children who are successfully rehabilitated back to the care of their parent.

Table 5: QAF Data: Is the current or proposed legal status / placement appropriate for the child?

Appropriateness of care arrangements	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
In the IRO's view is the current legal status is NOT appropriate	1.04%	2.8%	2.24%	1.2%	1.7%
In the IRO's view current placement does NOT fully meet child's assessed needs	3.7%	2.3%	2.07%	2.2%	3.9%

5.11 IROs continue to report that almost all children are living in a placement that fully meets their needs. Where concerns are raised it is generally because a child has needed to be placed in a temporary bridging placement outside of York, due to absence of anything suitable within the immediate vicinity.

Table 6 : Proximity to York

Children in care living outside of York	2015/016	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
children in care living outside of York	70	79	80	83	122
% of children	36.65%	38.54%	41.03%	40.10%	46.56%

5.12 Some children are placed outside of the immediate locality for very positive reasons (for example to live with an extended family member, to distance them from particular safeguarding risks or to access specialised care), but there are a number of children whose needs would be better met if they could remain closer to family, friends and pre-existing support networks. Focused needs analysis has highlighted specific shortages in provision for children aged 9-11 who have experienced trauma, young people aged 12-16 who have experienced sequential placement breakdowns and no longer wish to live with foster carers and young people aged 16+ who require semi supported accommodation to help them make the transition into their own tenancies. The 2020-2023 CYC sufficiency policy sets out ambitious plans for how CYC intend to commission specific provision for these groups of children. In parallel with this CYC are also running a robust new recruitment campaign for foster carers and revising the Special Guardianship Support arrangements to avoid connected carers taking on the status of local authority foster carers as means to access support, where the local authority does not need to share parental responsibility with family members.

5.13 Despite the identified sufficiency difficulties, positive progress has been made in the current reporting period in the level of placement stability that has been achieved, with a reduction in the percentage of children experiencing multiple moves and a higher percentage remaining settled within the same placement for at least 2.5 years.

Table 7 Placement stability

% children in CYC care having 3 or more moves in the last 12 months snap shot at year end	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	8.9%	7.4%	11.7%	12.2%	7.63%
Benchmark- National data	10%	10%	10%	10%	avail Dec '20
Benchmark – Regional data	10%	11%	11%	11%	avail Dec '20
Benchmark – comparator data	12.6%	12.2%	12.2%	13%	avail Dec '20
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20

% children in CYC care who have been continuously looked after for at least 2.5 years and have been in the same home for at least 2 years or are placed for adoption (snapshot at year end)	63.0%	66.8%	58.8%	56.5%	68%
Benchmark- National data	68%	70%	70%	69%	avail Dec '20
Benchmark – Regional data	70%	71%	70%	68%	avail Dec '20
Benchmark – comparator data	67.3%	68%	67%	69%	avail Dec '20

5.14 The majority of care episodes in York continue to end positively as part of a successful permanence plan, with the biggest cohort being children and / young people being supported to make a planned return / move to the care of parents or relatives, (20) children being adopted (10) or young adults moving into independent accommodation (15).

Table 8 : Reason care episode ended

REASON CARE ENDED	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/20
CLA Ceased, - Total - (YTD)	65	74	73	57	63
Adopted	3	9	10	8	10
To live with parent/ relatives without PR	9	3	4	3	5
Remand to LA ended	0	4	1	0	0
Age assessment determined aged 18+	1	2	0	1	3
Died	0	0	0	1	0
Care taken over by another LA	0	2	0	0	0
Return to parents/relatives	17	15	8	11	10
Returned to parents/relatives other than part of their agreed care plan	2	7	6	4	8
Child arrangement order granted	1	0	3	3	0
SGO made to former foster carers	1	6	7	0	0
SGO made to former foster carer who was a relative or friend (New 2018/19)	-	-	-	3	5
SGO made to other carers	5	1	5	0	0
Supported independent living	2	5	9	19	12
Unsupported independent living	0	1	3	0	3
Sentenced to custody	0	3	1	0	1
Ceased for any other reason	20	13	12	4	3
Transferred to Adult residential care	1	1	4	0	1

5.15 On 31st March 2020 95% of care leavers aged 19-21 years were deemed to be in suitable accommodation and 63.75% were in employment or training, both higher than national and regional comparators.

Table 9: Suitability of accommodation and employment arrangements for care leavers

	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/20
Number of CYC care leavers aged 19-21 years (snapshot)	86	88	80	78	80
% of CYC care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	89.5	88.0%	82.0%	77.0%	95.0%
Benchmark - National Data	81.6%	84.0%	84.0%	85.0%	avail Dec 2020
Benchmark - Regional Data	84.0%	86.0%	88.0%	87.0%	avail Dec 2020
Benchmark - Comparator Data	83.7%	84.8%	85.1%	83.3%	avail Dec 2020

% of CYC care leavers aged 19-21 in employment education or training	67.0%	74.0%	65.0%	56.0%	63.75%
Benchmark - National Data	49.0%	50.0%	51.0%	52%	avail Dec 2020
Benchmark - Regional Data	52.0%	50.0%	53%	51%	avail Dec 2020
Benchmark - Comparator Data	49.5%	52.0%	55.4%	53.4%	avail Dec 2020

6. The Review Process and Resolution activity.

6.1 A key responsibility for IROs is to ensure that the child's wishes and feelings are known and are influential in formulating the child's care plan. As part of every review process IROs must establish whether the child understands what the plan for their care is, and understands their rights and entitlements in law, for example that they can make a complaint, have an advocate to help represent their views or be supported themselves to apply to court under S8 of the 1989 Children Act regarding residence, contact, prohibited steps or specific issues. To achieve this it is expected that IRO's will directly consult every child as part of their review process to ascertain their understanding and views about the plans being made for their care, to clarify if the child feels any changes need to be made and to help the child understand the reasons why any changes are or are not made, ensuring that the child is supported to access advocacy if they are unhappy about any of the plans made on their behalf. Where the child's age or level of understanding are such that they are not able to directly communicate their views, it is expected that the IRO will still visit the child and their carers to make independent observation of the living environment and interactions with the carers to independently verify the social worker's view about the suitability of the arrangements.

6.2 Despite the teams' enthusiasm and commitment to undertake these direct consultations and better promote direct participation of children and young people in their care planning, the level of IRO's direct consultation reduced this year. This is the primary area for development moving forwards, which we intend to address despite the additional challenges of COVID19, via increased use of remote media and electronic resources (skype / facetime / Mind of My Own app etc).

Table 10 : IRO consultation

Percentage of Children separately consulted by IRO prior to Review	2015-16	2016-17	2017- 18	2018-19	2019-20	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	35%	34.5%	34%	33%	26%	22%	30%	28%	25%

6.3 To help address this dip in consultation IROs continue to offer a consultation visit ahead of every review and they are now also seeking to undertake a mid-point catch up in between reviews. Where the IRO has not succeeded in speaking to the child it has usually been because the child or young person has declined the offer of a visit either because they are planning to attend / directly contribute to their meeting and don't feel that they need to speak to the IRO ahead of the meeting or because they prefer to have their views represented via their social worker, advocate or carer. It is essential that IRO caseloads are maintained within statutory guidelines to enable IRO's to spend the time required investing in and developing these qualitative relationships.

Table 11 : CYPIC participation in their reviews

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Child under 4yrs at time of Review	18%	17.4%	19.4%	25.5%	24%
Child attends and directly participates	41.3%	43.4%	40.7%	34.1%	28.9%
Doesn't attend but views conveyed	38%	31.3%	35.2%	39.7%	45%
Does not attend or convey views	4%	9.5%	6.3%	1.04%	1.9%

6.4 During the reporting period IROs reported that the majority of children and young people chose to participate in their review indirectly, sending their views either in writing or via third party consultation, with only 29% actually choosing to attend their meeting and directly participate (24% were aged under 4 years so didn't participate due to their age). Less than 2% children didn't participate in their reviews at all. These are usually the children and young people who don't want to identify themselves as being children in care, either because they feel they have outgrown the processes or because they are extremely well settled in a long term placement – often with connected carers). Ongoing work is being undertaken to try to promote the level of direct participation by children and young people in their review process.

6.5 In the period since the COVID19 restrictions on social contacts were introduced, IROs have been undertaking almost all consultations and meetings via indirect means, usually via a range of telephone, skype, zoom or whatsapp consultations. Some children have been receptive to video based consultations,

and a wider spectrum of children and young people are now choosing to talk to their IRO via these medium, however others report that they much prefer the face to face meetings. The IRO team are developing increased skills in using remote communication medium, and anticipate using a much more blended approach to reviews post COVID19, whereby those children who prefer not to physically attend their review meeting or physically meet with their IRO will be encouraged to share their views, and contribute virtually instead.

6.6 IROs are also seeking to encourage those children and young people who still prefer not to directly participate to share their views via whatever medium best suits them. This includes encouraging the sharing of a range of direct work tools (work sheets / drawings / consultation papers) , electronic consultation apps such as the Mind of My Own App and increased use of the Speak Up advocacy service. Intention in 2020-21 is also for IROs to be proactive in promoting use of the Mind of My Own App to collate feedback from children in care about their review process and how it can be better improved.

6.7 A key IRO function is to identify issues and trends in services provided to CYPIC, and report these to senior managers and elected members. IROs do this by routinely completing Quality Assurance monitoring data as part of every review process. The individual information arising from each review forms part of the child's review record and is immediately available to the child's social worker and manager to help inform practice, and collective data is available to the wider management team via live KPI reports and a weekly bulletin shared by the IRO service with the full management team.

6.8. Social workers have a statutory responsibility to advise the IRO of any significant changes impacting on a child's care arrangements , so that the IRO can independently consult the child and or other parties and make a determination about whether an early review is required to confirm any significant changes to the care plan, or whether any form of resolution activity is required to address potential issues of concern. In addition to this IROs are now also undertaking at least one mid-point check in between review meetings, where they also complete a dip sample checks to confirm the quality of compliance with practice standards. By actively monitoring progress in this way IROs are able to identify and address any potential issues of concern or drift and reduce the likelihood of the IRO being faced with unexpected developments negatively impacting on children. The outcome of these compliance checks and mid-point reviews are discussed with the child's allocated worker and their manager at point of completion and uploaded onto the child's case file, with recommended actions or resolution activity arising, where required. Collective information arising from the compliance checks is available as part of a live KPI report to all managers.

6.9 IROs continue to report that the placement, legal status, care plan and quality of corporate parenting are good for the vast majority of children , with the expectation that resolution activity is promptly initiated to address any shortfalls. Information about the issues raised in resolution is available to the full management team via live KPI report, and Formal Resolution Tracker and the IRO team provide summary information about this via weekly bulletin to the Senior Management Team.

6.10 Effective communication and escalation processes within children services management structure (and across agencies at a senior level) are such that major practice or resource issues impacting on a child's care experience tend to be quickly escalated and addressed without IRO needing to intervene. Issues taken into formal resolution have generally been raised with front line team managers or group managers - that have more generally arisen where a succession of workers has resulted in drift in some processes being completed that managers have not then been able to prioritise as part of informal resolution activity – such as delay in initiating health assessments, updating care plans / placement plans or drift in commissioning specialist assessment to help inform care planning, drift in seeking discharge of care orders for children who are successfully rehabilitated to parents care, or drift in pursuing conversion to Special Guardianship Orders for children very successfully placed with connected carers. Introduction of a permanence tracker reinforced by regular Permanence Panel meetings are now seeking to make it much easier for all members of the management team (and the IRO team) to easily plot and monitor where individual children sit on their permanence journey, so that any such drift is avoided or is easier to identify and address.

See Annex A for breakdown of issues raised by IROs during 2019-2020

6.11 IROs have raised concerns relating to poor preparation for the review (12.7%) poor quality or out dated Care Plans (8.8%), Health Assessments (5.3%), Education Plans (3.4%) and Placement Plans (3.9%). This year has seen a rise in the number of times that IROs have raised issue regarding frequency of social work visits (5.8%), and concerns about drift in completing recommended actions from the preceding review (6.8%). Introduction of the midpoint reviews and compliance audits, supported by introduction of a live IRO bulletin of issues arising, compliance tracker and resolution tracker and weekly reporting to SMT is helping to ensure that there is more robust and better evidenced tracking of case intervention. The senior management team continues to drive and support the need for improved reporting of completed resolution of agreed actions.

6.12 The most prevalent practice issue continues to be drift in timely assessments, social work reports and preparation for reviews, which is often linked to transfer of social worker. Children and families continue to make representation about the high turnover in social workers which arises either between social work teams, or because of social work sickness / vacancies and consequent reliance on agency social workers, or sometimes a combination of the two. The revised workforce development strategy seeks to address these issues.

Key issues that the corporate Parenting Board and executive are asked to note

1. It is essential that the IRO caseloads are maintained within recommended levels (50-70 children) to enable effective consultation with children and young people, robust oversight of intervention and effective challenge to expediently highlight and address any emergent issues of concern affecting children in care and subject to safeguarding processes in York.
2. Some of York's children in care continue to live further away from York than is in their best interests. It is a priority that the council increase sufficiency of local placement provision and reduce use of out of area and independent care provision as outlined in 2020-2023 Sufficiency Strategy. It continues to be a priority to recruit, train and appropriately support a larger and more diverse pool of local authority foster carers and provide more generous and robust support for Special Guardians.
3. Some children continue to experience multiple changes of social workers and interim cover by different agency and duty social workers as a consequence of recruitment issues. It remains a major priority to maintain the significant investment being made within children's social care to improve recruitment, training, support and retention via the expanded Frontline Program and social work academy and enhanced employment benefits.

The 2020-21 IRO service plan sets out how the IRO service intend to achieve the following service priorities

- **Promote the voice and influence of children in care** – ensuring we listen to children and act on what they tell us
- **Achieve permanency for children in care**- ensuring all children are living and being cared for in suitable arrangements that they are happy to call home.
- **Promote positive Family Relationships and Identity** – helping children who can safely remain or return to their families to do so, whilst helping those who can't to stay in touch with the people who are important to them
- **Promote best outcomes for children in care**- ensuring that we celebrate all successes and support all children in care and their carers to be ambitious and supported in what they seek to achieve

Sarah Olorenshaw Service Manager Independent Reviewing Service

Appendix

Annex 1 - IRO QA data arising from Child in Care Reviews

Annex 2 - IRO service plan 2020-21

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IRO SERVICE ACTION PLAN FOR CHILDREN IN CARE 2020- 2021

PROMOTING THE CHILD'S VOICE and INFLUENCE

The IRO service will ensure that children are actively consulted and supported to participate in planning for the care and services they receive. We will listen and act on what children in care tell us.

Every conversation and every review process will explicitly start and end with the child,

	Area for development	Current situation / progress made	Specific actions to drive change	Current Performance	Target Data & Date	
1	IROs will make direct contact with every allocated child in care to explain the 'IRO promise to children in care' and will provide a tailored IRO letter of explanation / introduction.	In consultation with SMTIM and CIC participation group the IROs have developed a template letter of introduction from the IRO which includes basic information about / photo of the allocated IRO and the IRO pledge to children in care	1. All IROs will complete a proforma Letter of Introduction that they tailor to individual children . 2. The IRO letter will be hand delivered on the IRO's visit or sent out following the review meeting with a personalised letter where applicable	Currently only 3 out of 12 IROs are writing to children in care / promoting the IRO promise	By end Oct 2020 100% children in Care over 5 years will have received a personalised letter from their IRO. 2021 Tell Us Survey will confirm >80% children aged over 5 know who their IRO is.	Amber
2	IROs will visit or attempt to make contact with every child in care ahead of their review to consult them (in an individually tailored way) about their care arrangements to clarify the child's views and any changes or explanation that the child is seeking.	IROs are making flexible use of phone, skype and e-media to maximise the level of direct consultation 'IRO visits' during COVID19 restrictions - for those declining direct consultation and the very young this representation of the child's voice and lived experience is sought via other contributors to the review process including direct consultation with the carers, social worker, parent(s) and other key professionals	1. All IROs will always make direct call to the child and / or their carer at least 15 working days before a review meeting to agree how this consultation is best undertaken . 2. All IROs will promote and support use of phone, text, powerpoint, e-media, and Mind of My Own App to maximise children's direct participation in their planning process.	In 2019-20 IROs reported that they only succeeded in separately consulting 34% children aged over 5 years outside of their review meeting	>80 % children in care aged over 5 years will have been directly consulted by their IRO as part of their review process.	Amber
3	IROs will ensure that every child in care has access to a current copy of the 'New to Care' Packs and a good understanding of the support and services available to them	The Speak Up Service send a pack to all new children in care aged over 8 years within a week of the care arrangement starting - IROs check as part of the review process that this has been received and understood and will reissue if the pack has been mislaid	The IROs will check as part of every review process whether the child still has access to a current version of the care pack or needs one sending to them, data about this is included in the weekly bulletin to managers.	There was no quantitative measure of this prior to August 2020, so there is no baseline on which to base projections	This data will be collated and available as part of a live tracker report available to all managers and IROs	Green
4	IROs will plan with each child in care how they want their review arranged and how they want to be supported to share their views, supporting every child to lead their review as much as they feel comfortable doing.	It is a statutory requirement that IROs consult with all children ahead of their reviews - resource constraints have been such that when a child has declined this first offer of consultation the IRO has not always been able to persist in exploring more innovative ways of engaging children - this will now be a priority for development	1. All IROs will always liaise with the child's social worker at least 15 working days ahead of the review date to confirm how the child's participation is best achieved taking into account the child's expressed wishes about this - emphasis will be on maximising the child's direct input however they feel most comfortable achieving this.	In 2019-20 IROs reported that they had only succeeded in undertaking direct consultation with 35% children aged over 5 yrs ahead of the review meeting	Target for >80% children aged over 5 years to be directly consulted by their IRO as part of the review process.	Green
5	IROs will be very flexible with children in care about how they wish to participate in their review, and will proactively promote use of electronic media , advocacy and direct work for any children who do not want to directly participate in a 3+ way discussion / meeting.	IROs are promoting a blended approach during COVID19 restrictions , where reviews are undertaken as a process using a flexible range of telephone, written, electronic, skype or direct meetings for some or all of the review participants, dependent upon the individual circumstances of all involved	1. IROs will promote understanding by all parties that reviews are a process not a one off meeting, and that most important part of the process needs to be centred around hearing the child's views as shared by the child themselves - however this is achieved	29% children directly participated in their review during 2019-20 , 45 % contributed indirectly and 1.9 % did not participate at all	Target for > 50% children aged over 5yr to directly participate in their reviews. 0% not to have their views represented at all.	Amber
6	IROs will write an individually tailored letter to every child in care following their review (if of an age to understand it) to confirm what was discussed and agreed at the review meeting, and to seek the child's feedback about this, if they wish to respond.	From June 2020 trailblazing IROs started writing review records to the child not about the child, and sending to the child (via their carer with a tailored letter encouraging them to make contact if they wish to discuss / give feedback re the review	1. IROs to write review records in the first party (to not about) children wherever this is appropriate 2. All IROs to consistently send a personalised letter to the child after their review encouraging feedback and promoting advocacy service	Prior to September 2020 feedback regarding CYPIC reviews was not directly sought	IROs will report monthly on feedback received	Amber

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7	Each IROs will routinely seek direct feedback from at least two children each every calendar month- one who participated in their review and one who did not, to improve understanding about what works well and what can be improved to encourage more direct participation	Prior to September 2020 children's direct feedback about the review process was not sought- intention is that this should now be embedded QA work that is reported on monthly	1. All IROs to register and be taught how to use the Mind of My Own App in November 2020. 2. All IROs to self select two children to 'Rate my Review' with ever calendar month - encouraging them to use the MOMO app , or to provide verbal feedback re the MoMo app questions. 3. IROs to develop a separate word version feedback form for those children who prefer to giev their views verbally / not on line. 4 IRO manager to collate information from above feedback to inform monthly report to managers	Prior to launch of MoMo 2020 feedback regarding CYPIC reviews was not directly sought	Feedback from at least 16 children each month to inform monthly report to SMT and inform service development	RED
8	Where a review makes a decision that the child does not fully agree with, the IRO will provide age appropriate explanation to the child about the reasons for this, and will help them understand how they can be supported by an advocate to complain or have their views reconsidered.	As part of the review process IROs confirm who will share the outcome of review with the child, and additionally the IRO will write a personalised letter- including reference to the advocacy service	1. IRO to be explicit in every review about thow the review decisions will be shared with the child and about promotion of the advocacy service	In 2019-20 IROs made 10 direct refereals to the advocacy service	It is expected that the referral rate to advocacy service will increase	Amber
9	Where any individual or collective concerns are raised about the services being experienced by a child in care the IROs will consult the child and relevant others and seek resolution and / or referral to advocacy services, escalating to appropriate managers to achieve quick resolution if required.	There are a high number of informal resolutions arising from reviews but relatively few escalated to formal escalations . IROM reports weekly to SMT on the issues in formal resolution to help achieve expedient resolution / avoid need for further escalation	1. All IROs will make consistent and expedient use of the formal resolution process to escalate issues that are not promptly resolved through informal resolution. 2 IROM to continue reporting to SMT weekly and to provide monthly / quarterly composist report about issues in resolution.	In 2019-20 there were 266 informal resolutions issues resolved at SM level issues resolved at GM level issues resolved at AD level.	Aim is to reduce number of informal resolutions , but to increase use of formal resolution process to speed up resolution activity.	Amber
9	IROs will undertake at least one mid point check on every child between their formal review meetings to consult them about how they are doing and if any different or additional support is required ahead of their next review/conference	IRO's caseloads were reduced in Q4 2020 to support the expectation that at least one midpoint check is undertaken by the IRO with the child and / or relevant othere between reviews	1. All IROs will always schedule the date for proportionate mid point review and the date for next review as part of every review process. 2. All IROs will undertake compliance audit to and offer direct consultation with every child ifor whom potential concerns are evident as part of the mid point review - consistently recorded using Mid Point Review case tab and tracker.	Unable to report on mid point reviews previously	Target is for >80 % children in care to have at least one recorded mid point review within every 6 month review cycle.	Green
10	IROs will liaise with social workers to ensure that every child is fully consulted and provided with information about any proposed placememt move before the move takes place, (with opportunity to visit in advance unless an emergency move is required)	Social worker has a statutory duty to advise IRO of any changes toplacement before they arise, so tat IRO can consult the child and determine if cahnge warrants an early review / change of care plan = as part of these consultations IRO will nsure that children are appropriately informed and consulted about moves	1. IROs will escalate any instances where a child has not been appropriately consulted , informed or prepared for a move, and will request postponment of the move until this is achieved where concerns warrant this.	This issue does not appear to feature in any of the resolutions raised in 2019-20	IROs will specifically check re quality of information and consultation when advised of any proposed change	Green
11	IROs will readily attend the SMTIM, IM2 and I Still Matter groups upon invitation to help answer or address any specific issues that any of these groups raise, and will respond to any releveant requests or actions responding from these groups.	IROs have not been invited to attend SMTIM since launch of the review toolkit in 2019- however the SMTIM group did provide direct feedback upon request for the National IROM network re use of advocacy in reviews.	1. IROM to produce child friendly version of annual report 2 IROM to offer to visit the groups to share annual report and service plan seeks views re production of a child friendly version.	Child friendly version of annual report has not been preduced previously	October 2020 ??	Red
11	IROs will continue to seek feedback from Child in Care and care leavers through the U matter survey and to act on what it tells us - an additional survey will be introduced to collate the views subject to safeguarding interventions	IROs are aware of the National research projects findings from 2019 survey and identified areas for development. Currently there isn't the equivalent data source for children subject to safeguarding interventions.	1. All IROs will encourage the children allocated to them to participate in the 2021 survey so current feedback is as broad and as inclusive as possible. 2. Additional survey to be developed through Survey Monkey to collate the views of children subject to safeguarding interventions 3 Specific feedback will be sought regarding what works and does not work so well for children regarding remote or blended metings, arising from COVID restrictions.	83 children participated in the 2019 survey	Desire is to get at least 50% Children in Care to participate, and and least 30% children agead 8+ years subject to CP plans.	Green

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12	The IRO service will maintain live reports for operational managers, weekly update and monthly / quarterly report to CSC Senior Management Team and Annual report to the Corporate Parenting Board, Children in Care Strategic Partnership, with thematic update to Multi agency Children's Voice and Participation Group to help raise and address any emergent issues on behalf of children in care.	Live reports are available to the management team re QA monitors, weekly meeting bulletin, compliance audits and the IRO resolution tracker, the IROM provides weekly composite data about this to SMT and front line managers and monthly / quarterly overview reports to inform service performance meetings.	1. IROs to complete QA data with 24 hours of any meeting to facilitate prompt reporting 2. Based on the above IRO Service to maintain live tracker reports, weekly bulletins and monthly service reports. 3. Monthly report to be expanded to include the 'Rate my Review' feedback from children and young people. 4. Quarterly service reports to provide additional analysis and overview of any wider audit activity.	Maintenance of 3 x live trackers, and production of weekly bulletin and monthly service report.	Monthly service report to be completed by first Friday of every successive month.	Amber
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Objective 2 - PROMOTING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITY. IROs will help to ensure that children in care maintain and develop positive relationships with the people who are important to them, and that children who can safely remain with or return to their families do so, with as much support or as little intrusion as is right for each individual child.

	Area for development	Current situation / progress made	Specific actions to drive change	Current Performance	Target Data & Date	
13	Where child protection plans indicate that it may not be safe for a child to remain with their parents, IROs will oversee that that early consideration is given to other family or friends who may be able to provide care or support, in parallel with robust support to try to raise standards of parenting.	There is a contingency plan as part of all child protection plans, but these are not always sufficiently clear about the need to consider contingent permanent carers.	1. IROs to drive the expectation that there is a well informed cultural genogram to help inform understanding about the family support network 2. The IRO will ensure that proactive use is made of Family Group Conference where appropriate to help maximise understanding and use of informal support networks 3 IROs will ensure that every child's plan includes explicit contingency plans in the event that a child can not safely remain with their parents.	Dip sampling and audit has indicated the need for more consistent and explicit reference to ecomaps, FGC and contingency planning / early viability assessments	Dip sampling and routine compliance audits to indicate consistently high standard of practice	Green
14	IROs will proactively consult children and their social workers to consider if there are any family or friends who could safely care for a child in preference to them remaining with unconnected carers. IROs will promote this wherever it is thought to be right for the child.	As part of all interventions IROs oversee that due consideration has been given to the child's own network of connected carers - sometimes absent fathers and paternal family members are not involved / consulted as soon as they could be.	1, IROs to oversee that embedded use of cultural genograms informs interventions. 2. IROs will robustly address any such gaps in assessment / consultation if identified, so that there is no drift or delay for children.	Audits currently show 30% open cases have a genogram that is judged to be of good standard	Target is 100% genograms on open cases	Green
15	IROs will promote the importance of meaningful ecomaps, assessment and life story work being undertaken with children to help them have a secure sense of identity, to inform who the important people are in their life and how they wish to stay in touch.	All children in long term care should have access to age appropriate information to help them understand their culture, life history and care journey - where this is not the case IROs should identify who will do this work.	1. IROs will promote the need for current and reflective chronology on all open cases to help inform ongoing assessment and therapeutic work. 2. IROs will promote proactive consideration of the need for life story work as part of every child's care review. 3. IROs will ensure that the social worker writes a sensitive and informed 'later life letter' for any child deemed to benefit from one in child care review.	Audits currently indicate the 28% open cases have a reflective chronology judged to be of good standard	Target is 100% reflective chronologies on open cases	Green
16	IROs will make immediate and direct referral to advocacy service and / or the IRO resolution process if ever routine planning and review processes do not immediately resolve any concerns raised by the child or any party on their behalf, about the nature, quality or frequency of how a child stays in touch with the people important to them.	As part of every review IROs promote proactive consideration of how well the local authority is helping the child to remain in touch with all those people with parental responsibility and identified by the child as being important to them and each review actively considers if any changes need to be made in accordance with the child's expressed view and assessed need. IROs will proactively address any difference of opinion via use of resolution process or advocacy.	1. Review records and care plans will evidence how the child is being supported to develop and maintain significant relationships. 2. Resolution process and referrals to advocacy service triggered by the IRO will evidence how any differences of opinion are being addressed.	In 2019-20 IROs made 10 referrals to advocacy services of which 5 related to plans re them seeing family / friends	It is expected that their referral rate may increase if more proactive focus is given to promoting the child's wishes and feelings re family visits	Green

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17	If there is reason to believe a child can safely return to the care of a parent or other family member, the IRO will proactively work with the child and all other parties to ensure there is a tight plan to ensure that this is achieved safely and within a timescale that is right for the child	As part of permanence / care planning IROs oversee that full consideration is always given to the viability of any family placements before alternatives are considered, and where rehabilitation is identified as a likely prospect IROs oversee that there are very clear parameters and timescale for what needs to be achieved by whom, by when and how this is being supported, measured and reviewed.	1. IROs will ensure that as soon as any child care review confirms that reunification with family is a viable outcome that they are identified as such on the reunification tab of the permanence tracker to ensure close oversight and tracking of the intervention and support to achieve this by relevant senior managers. 2. IROs will oversee that very explicit timesframes and goals are listed in the care plan and review record about how and when reunification is to be achieved - the IRO will oversee that this is closely progressed by sw and team manager, and proactive consideration is given to discharge of care order at every review. Any drift will be quickly identified and escalated	In 2019-2020 20 children returned to the care of parents	An increase in the number of children being successfully rehabilitated to family would be seen as an indicator of positive intervention	Green
18	Where a child subject to care order is being well cared for by parents or connected carers or long term foster carers and the local authority no longer needs to share parental responsibility for any reason the IRO service will be proactive in promoting timely application for discharge of the care order / promotion of the new Special Guardianship Support Offer.	Where children subject to care or interim care orders are living with family members the IRO is proactive in overseeing that consultation and consideration is regularly undertaken with all relevant parties to ascertain if CYC need to retain parental responsibility, with evidence based assessment undertaken to inform application to discharge care order in a timescale that is right for the individual child,	1. IROs will promote timely application to seek discharge of care order for any child no longer requiring the safeguards of a care order - using the resolution process to escalate if there is delay in relevant assessments / court papers being completed or disagreement about recommended post care support arrangements.	In 2019-20 children ceased being looked after because their carers gained Special Guardianship orders for them, 5 of whom were relatives	An increase in the number of children being made subject to Special Guardianship Orders would be seen as an indicator of positive intervention	Green
Objective 3; ACHIEVING PERMANENCY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE						
IROs will help to ensure that all children in care have somewhere suitable to live and be cared for that they are happy to call home						
How will we do this						
19	IROs will help to ensure during Public Law Outline process and / or at first review that it is clear what needs to be achieved to help determine the child's long term care plan with the aim that all children in care have a defined primary plan of permanence by the time of their second review	There has been an increased instance of permanence plans not being confirmed at 4 months due to high reliance and late commissioning of expert assessments to inform court proceedings, and drift in external assessments linked to COVID	1. During preproceedings / public law outline process and at 1st CIC review IROs will ensure that evidence based assessment establish parents' capacity to change in the child's timeframe, and that there is parallel identification and assessment of potential viable support / carers within the child's connected carers to as contingency plan if parents are not able to safely care for the child(ren) 2. IROs will clearly establish at 1st review what evidence based assessments are completed / outstanding, including capacity to change assessment and viability of alternate carers, 3. IROs will undertake mid point review within 6 weeks of 1st review and initiate resolution activity if all is not on track to confirm permanence at 4 months	Timeliness of 4 month decision making dropped since COVID 19 restrictions have delayed court work. >50% children who have been made subject to ICO since March 2020 did not have a confirmed permanence plan at 2nd review.	Timeliness of 4 month decision making will be closely monitored via permanence tracker, All children will have a primary plan confirmed by 2nd review- this might need to include clear contingents.	Green
20	IROs will use the Permanence Tracker to help plot and illustrate where individual children are on their individual care journey to help ensure there is no drift at any stage in pre proceedings intervention, permanence planning, or reunification.	The IROs are assisting in embedding use of the permanence tracker, which was introduced in 2019-20 as an additional safeguard to help reduce risk of drift.	1. IRO will update relevant sections of the permanence tracker immediately following child care review in which a child is identified as being on the edge of care, in PLO, subject to proceedings, moving to permanence placement, likely to be successfully reunified to family, ready for care order to be discharged	The permanence tracker was newly introduced in 2020- it's use is not yet embedded	All children in and on the edge of care will be represented on the permanence tracker, and their care journey will be proactively tracked by SMT, front line managers and IROs	Green
21	IROs will routinely undertake mid point reviews on all open cases to help ensure that there is no drift and help promote understanding about effective pre proceedings, permanence planning and reunification to help reduce the number of children in the authority who remain subject to S20, Placement Orders, or who are Placed with Parents or connected carers on full Care Order for longer than 6 months.	IROs are expected to complete a proportionate mid point review at least once for every child between every formal review meeting to ensure that all agreed actions are being robustly progressed and emergent issues addressed. Issues arising from the reviews and mid point reviews form part of a live tracer and weekly reporting to the management team.	1. The permanence tracker and key KPI reports will continue to be proactively reviewed with the IRO team as part of weekly performance meetings, and with individual IROs monthly as part of supervision, to help identify potential drift and need for IRO intervention.	Currently 30% of the children allocated to IROs for over 3 months have had a recorded midpoint review	Target is 100% children allocated to an IRO for >3m having a recorded mid point review	Green

Corporate Parenting Strategy November 2018 – March 2020 Delivery Plan

22	IROs will proactively review all young people aged 16/17 in residential care with a view to stepping down to semi independence or supported lodgings where appropriate and safe to do so.	IROs oversee that a robust pathway needs assessment is completed ahead of a young person's 16th birthday that identifies the support the young person requires to facilitate their move to independent / post 18 accommodation. IRO oversees implementation of a robust Pathway care plan from 16 years, ensuring that the support provided is consistent with child's assessed needs and escalate if they have concerns about drift or delay in preparing the young person for independence	1. IROs will contribute to the new Permanence Panel- which will scrutinise transition planning for all 16/17 year olds in residential care. 2. IROs will maintain weekly oversight and reporting to AD regarding suitability of provision for any young people in unregulated placements. 3. IROP will undertake additional QA review of any unregulated provision at least ever 12 weeks.	Of the 52 16/17 years olds in care on 31st March 11 were in regulated children's homes, with 7 in semi supported accommodation/ unregulated accommodation	Permanence panel will confirm that only those young people who require a high level of care remain in residential provision, others will have appropriate packages of community based support to help maintain them in their own accommodation.	Green
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Objective 4; Promote best outcomes for children in care, ensuring that we celebrate all successes and support all children in care and their carers to be ambitious in what they seek to achieve

	Area for development	Current situation / progress made	Specific actions to drive change	Current Performance	Target Data & Date	
23	IROs will take robust action to escalate concerns if ever there is a delay in a child having initial / Review Health Assessment or Personal Education Plan, if ever there are concerns about the quality of the plan arising from these or if any party is not doing all that they should to address the recommended actions in the plan	In preparation for all child in care review and as part of any mid point review IROs check that sufficiently robust and current assessment of need has been undertaken, with SMART health / education / placement / care plan clearly citing what needs to be done, by whom, by when and for what end result.	1. IROs to maintain live report regarding issues arising from statutory meetings and mid point review. 2. Any drift or statutory non compliance to be identified and addressed through IRO escalation process.	Variable compliance with practice standards across all service areas, but particularly in court and safeguarding teams	100% compliance with statutory requirements and practice standards across all areas of the directorate.	Green
24	Where children are reluctant to directly participate in the health assessment , review of their Personal Education Plan or Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, the IRO will ensure that someone appropriate is tasked with talking with the child about this to help them better understand how these services can support them	1. IROs routinely report on and seek to address non compliance through live tracker , review recommendations and IRO escalation process.	1, Where IROs identify drift or statutory non compliance they will undertake robust consultation to help identify and address barriers to participation. 2. In undertaking review of the care plan IROs will consult all parties about whether the targets / desired outcomes are sufficiently ambitious to help achieve optimal outcomes and improved life chances.	On 31st March 2020 79.64% CIC had current HA and 91.2 % had a current PEP	Target is 90%+ PEP and Health Assessment	Amber
25	IROs will ensure that the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (assessment tool) is used as an active tool to inform care planning arrangements, ensuring that there is effective reflection and that the care plan addresses the need for intervention if year on year SDQs scores indicate any cause for concern.	All children in care of statutory school age should have a triangulated SDQ completed with them by carers and school staff at least every 12 months to help identify if they have emotional / behaviour issues requiring support - this should be proactively reviewed as part of the statutory child care review- Dip samples indicate that explicit reference to the SDQ is not made in all records of review	1. IROs will make explicit reference in the record of review to the SDQ score, whether it is more / less than previous years and whether appropriate support is in place- if not the gap will be addressed through review recommendations.	The average SDQ on 31.3.2020 was 14.15- just marginally above the national average 14.	SDQ to be below the national / regional average, and all children accessing therapeutic help for who this is indicated as relevant.	Green
26	IROs will ensure that work is undertaken with children throughout their childhood to help promote age appropriate self care skills and preparation for eventual independence, ensuring that they are fully informed from an early age about the full range of post care support that will be available to them	Reference should be made in all children's assessment and review actions to how carers are helping to develop age appropriate self help skills , and all 16+ year olds will have a current and robust pathway needs assessment and pathway care plan	1. Specific reference to be made to age appropriate development and life skills in all review records, and actions being taken to encourage ambitious aspirations. 2. IROs to specifically check that all children in care are being proactively encouraged and supported to pursue extra curricular hobbies / activities / community based groups to increase their life experiences	There is no current measure of the extra curricular activities / expenditure by carers.		Amber
27	IROs will ensure that children's reviews are also used as a process to help identify, promote and really celebrate the success and achievements that young people make	Reviews routinely consider the significant events that have arisen / impact on a child - IROs are seeking to ensure that this includes emphasis on positive achievements and cause for celebration,	1. IROs will ensure that every meeting starts and ends with the child - include celebration of achievements and future goals. 2. IROs will write a personalised message to children and young people after any review meeting celebrating achievement and confirming agreed actions, and encouraging the young person to 'rate your review' 3. Each IRO will collate feedback from 2 c/YP each calendar month- one from someone who directly participated and one from someone who did not, to inform ongoing service development about what works well and what needs to be improved.	Dip sampling evidence that child's voice is becoming more prevalent, but still needs to be better emphasised.	Dip sampling will evidence clear and strong focus on the child's own spoken voice, achievements and personal aspirations.	Green

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Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership – Highlight Report

Introduction:

The purpose of the report is to provide information to the Corporate Parenting Board regarding the delivery of the City of York Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy and Action Plan and items of discussion with partners and actions agreed. This report covers the partnership meeting of the 13th January 2021 and focuses on updates from key teams including response to Covid 19.

Leaving Care Service Update:

The Pathway Team:

The Team are currently working with 135 young people, 124 care leavers and 11 YPIC preparing for leaving care.

7 Care leavers are age 16-21 & 47 are age 21-25. (The approximate cohort of 21+ is 80)

Current average worker caseloads have increased to above 22, which is the DFE recommendation. This is in part due to an increase in care leavers post 21 requesting (Social Work Act 2017) to continue pathway support but also due to a higher than usual cohort of young people aged 18. The number generally averages 20 per annum but this year is 30 + and highlights that almost 25 % of children in care are age 15-17 and will be leaving care in the next 2 years

The service reports to the DFE on the following data:

In Touch

The Team is in touch with all but 3 care leavers

Pathway Plans

Total Plans 124

In date = 111, out of date = 13

Plans are reviewed 6 monthly.

Not all care leavers are enthusiastic about reviewing their pathway plans however we strive to keep them all up to date whilst also acknowledging Covid continues to be an issue when trying to arrange appointments.

Education, Training and Employment (ETE):

Prior to lockdown the national ETE figure was 52% and in York the average was 60%.

The first Covid lockdown saw the ETE figures drop to 50% in ETE, some young people laid off rather than furloughed. The Pathway ETE officer and Personal Advisor's (PA's) have targeted and encouraged young people to explore other options resulting in the ETE figure now increasing to 67.5% .

12 young people across the age range attending HE courses either at University or college. We continue to focus on the 32.5 % NEET group 9% are young mums, 6.5% % are unable to work due to illness or disability and the 16.5% who are actual NEET.

Accommodation:

Suitable accommodation

16-21: 92% are in suitable accommodation.

34% are living in independence, 19% are staying put, 4% in supported accommodation 18% with parents, 10% in community homes and 8% (6 YP's) are in custody. Positively we are experiencing an increase of young people staying put with former foster carers mirroring family life and providing the opportunity to develop and mature at a gradual pace building on positive attachment; the figure is now 17 = 14%

21–25: 91% are in suitable accommodation.

66% are living independently, 11% are in semi-independent accommodation, 5% are in community homes, 10% with parents and 9% (4) are in custody. Again to note we are working with approximately 50% of care leavers 21+.

Covid 19: Support and experiences.

The team has continued to visit care leavers and keep in touch via a number of media types, including email, text, Zoom & WhatsApp. The team received a number of donations from local businesses for Christmas presents.

The ISM and Care leaver Newsletter continues to offer the opportunity for care leavers to share their views and experiences and for us to share important information such as Covid safety guidance and payments they can apply for because of the impact of the virus.

Quote from a care leaver;

Hi

Thank you for keeping us connected through this time of uncertainty. You have helped me feel a sense of community whilst being isolated during this pandemic.

For arranging activities to still keep us all a little sane when the world has fallen apart.

I love the fact of feeling part of something when the world is choosing to break apart.

Thanks again

Children in Permanent Placements Update:

The meeting heard a case example which highlighted the challenges and risks in supporting young people during Covid but also the commitment of social workers. In this case 2 young people ran off to Newbury and it was assessed that the only way to return them was for staff members to collect them at a time of national lockdown.

Upon arrival one of the young people indicated that they were symptomatic for Covid, risk assessments eventually determined that they would still be transported back by car, no easy task when they kept removing their masks throughout the journey. The following day a member of staff had to take the young person for a test which came back negative. At no point did staff waiver in their commitment to undertake their role, focusing on their objective of returning the young people to York and ensuring their health needs were met, they were not rash in their decision making but equally they were placing themselves at risk during the course of their work. Subsequently, the young person tested positive and the staff members had to self-isolate.

Following their return to placement in York, the two young people were determined to be together and on two occasions their refusal to cooperate with the requirements and to self-isolate, instead choosing to meet up with each other, led to two consecutive short term placements for one young person having to be ended with immediate effect as the carers would not permit her to return after being in contact with someone who had the virus. At every turn what was already a difficult situation was overlain with layers of complexity due to the impact of Covid.

This third lockdown has been impactful with staff aware that their own resilience is depleted and that for young people the degree to which they will continue to accept the restrictions may wane. All children are being reviewed to determine whether visits will be face to face or virtual. Every child has a risk assessment on file, which sets this out and is endorsed by the manager and reviewed every 2 weeks. Updating risk assessments has been easier with the key issues well understood and then taking forward the learning from the previous lockdowns.

Since the start of lockdown 3, discussions have taken place with all carers, children and young people to ensure that effective plans are in place for their ongoing attendance at school or access to on line provision. An understanding of young people's needs and areas of progress during the last year have been pivotal in helping to inform the decision making.

All of our children and young people are wholly aware of the current circumstances in which everybody is living and their engagement with the restrictions imposed varies from total to blatant. Both bring challenges. Young people are living with a degree of fear and for some coaxing them back to a fuller engagement in their day to day lives will be challenging when a degree of normality resumes. For a few others we are aware that current legislation to limit their movement may need to be invoked and sadly a fine may follow. The level of compliance is the primary aspect of anti-social behaviour we are currently dealing with.

Where the team is involved in supporting family time between children, siblings and parents this has in the main continued to take place outdoors, with good use being made of the quieter city centre and local resources such as Museum gardens for picnics. Those arrangements which require a greater level of oversight were accommodated on a case by case basis at Hamilton House. The latest restrictions will impact again but young people, carers and families have accepted this well. Where we are not able to undertake contact in line with the agreed care plan the majority of parents generally agree with the decisions not to proceed.

Use of the electronic PEP continues to be embedded with the PEP being reviewed each term. Work to change the reporting mechanism within MOSAIC to capture this has been progressed and the changes are now waiting to be built. Current completion rate for the team is 92%. Current completion rate across all teams for the last term is 87, supported recently by training to workers from the VSH and regular monitoring.

Dental appointments have resumed but it will take a considerable time to deal with the backlog of 70 appointments which have accumulated and further cancellations are likely to occur.

Health Assessments are taking place, there are currently now only 19 where the completed assessment is awaited, the overall completion figure is buoyant at 86.4%, with around 5% of young people declining their HNA this is taking us closer to the required figure.

Court Team Update:

Court hearings remain a mixture of entirely virtual, hybrid (some in physical attendance others on video call), and in person hearings at either the family court or Hilton Court.

Virtual hearings, although clearly safer, can sometimes be a challenge due to technical issues and pre hearing discussions being limited which can lead sometimes to additional statements or amended care plans for example after hearings, as matters aren't always agreed or discussed beforehand between parties.

There has been some longer term delay with finishing cases already in proceedings due to the impact of all three lockdowns, particularly where there is a final contested hearing which needs to be in person, such as Adoption cases.

Contested hearings where evidence is required tend to take place in person or via hybrid hearings.

Virtual hearings can at times take their toll emotionally on staff as at times they feel they are not able to clarify any queries, which is not helped by the fact they do not get the natural opportunity to 'de brief' like they would when not working remotely. The manager makes time after hearings with staff to de brief.

Contact arrangements have continued to be at the centre of our care planning for children. Particularly during lockdowns this has been a challenge and at times plans that have been made with safety as the priority have been challenged for not

providing the same level of contact between parents and children or sibling groups pre- lockdown. Hamilton House remaining open is positive but their capacity is more limited due to additional safety measures to ensure it is Covid secure.

All children are being reviewed to determine whether visits will be face to face or virtual. Every child has a risk assessment on file, which sets this out and is endorsed by the manager and reviewed every 2 weeks. Updating risk assessments has been easier with the key issues well understood and then taking forward the learning from the previous lockdowns.

A tracker of all open cases in care proceedings is now in place and which captures dates for filing evidence and plans. The tracker is overseen and updated by the legal department and greatly assists in maintaining oversight of court timescales.

Fostering Service Update:

Approved Foster Carers:

At the 1st January 2021 we have 118 approved foster carer households:

- Mainstream carers: 69
- Connected carers: 39
- Short breaks carers: 10

Placement sufficiency:

We continue to have limited vacancies within our cohort of mainstream CYC carers. Most mainstream carers already have placements, and we have a number of carers who will only take younger children, which means it is a challenge to find placements for older children with our City of York Carers. If we are unable to find placements with our own carers we will consider IFA foster carers on the White Rose Framework. The Framework Agreement is led by Leeds City Council but involves 14 Local Authorities (including York) across Yorkshire and Humberside. It increases the ability to identify placements within the constraints of an agreed contract specification, and lays down terms and conditions against which quality foster care provision should be provided. All external IFA placements need senior management authorisation and a funding agreement.

City of York Council have re-negotiated a contract with Hexagon Care to provide three residential placements in Wenlock terrace in York, from December 2020. Wenlock terrace provides care and accommodation for up to three young people, male and female, aged between 11- 17 years on admission, at any one time. The new admission criteria supports young people with more complex needs who require a medium to long term placement. Currently the needs of young people who have been referred is being risk assessed by Hexagon prior to them being offered a place. Two of the young people will transfer back from other residential provision, which will be a budget saving.

Whilst the provision of three placements from Hexagon in Wenlock is a positive, it does mean that once the home is full we have no other residential provision in York

and will require us to commission placements regionally and nationally. We are currently consulting with children and young people in care and care leavers on developing semi-independent living accommodation for 16/17 year olds to further support young people in preparing for independence.

Reducing Service Costs Board

As part of our budget management the fostering team is now reporting to the reducing service costs board. We provide information on our in-house capacity (carers on hold, vacancies, areas of demand, recruitment) and also external IFA and residential placements and consider if we are getting the best outcomes for children and young people in that provision, with robust consideration given to whether costs can be reduced.

Covid 19 response

We are now in lockdown 3 due to an increase in Covid 19, overall foster carers have responded well to the Covid 19 situation and associated restrictions. During lockdown 1 carers were risk assessed in terms of their family Covid 19 vulnerability, we worked within this and carers were supported via Skype when home visiting was temporarily halted. Due to the new lockdown restrictions the Covid family risk assessments are in the process of being updated and support to carer households have reverted back to being virtual for the time being, unless the placement has significant issues which require a home visit. Foster carers on the whole have managed the Covid situation well.

Recruitment:

The digital recruitment campaign to attract new carers to foster for City of York Council has been significantly impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic, the media advertising was halted during lockdown, although the CYC resources were still in place. There have been some frustrations as the calibre of many of the applicants has been low and we have been unable to proceed with large numbers. This appears to be due to people being furloughed or having lost their jobs, but not having really thought through what fostering is.

The initial recruitment plan was to run the campaign for 1 year – January/20 – December/20, however as the campaign was paused in April 2020, and re started in June 2020 it has been extended to February 2021. Unfortunately since the new National restrictions have been implemented in January 2021 the decision has been made to halt the recruitment campaign again. This is a shame as towards the end of last year we started to see the calibre of applicants improve. Despite the challenges of the Covid, pandemic, we will have recruited 6 new foster carers by 31st March 21, against an original target of 8.

Assessing Permanent Carers Team Update:

The team is responsible for completing Viability Assessments, Connected Carer assessments, Special Guardianship assessments, and Step Parent Adoption assessments.

Since October we have continued to receive referrals into the team from all areas of Children's Social Care. It was anticipated that there would be a significant increase in the number of referrals once we came out of the first lockdown and schools returned. This hasn't really borne out and it has been possible to respond to referrals into the service and meet the demand.

There has been a noticeable increase in Step Parent Adoption enquiries into the service in the last 10 months. In the summer months we were responding to over three times the number of enquiries as we normally would do and this has led to an increased demand on the service. This appears to be down to people being concerned about Covid.

In recent months we started to complete some assessment sessions face to face (but Covid secure) where we felt it was necessary to evidence the applicant's interactions with the children in their care. Due to the new lockdown we have had to revert to all assessments being done via video calls. We are now better placed in using this technology and assessments remain of a good enough quality for both Fostering Panel and for the courts.

Essential checks such as DBS and Medical checks were delayed during the first lockdown and this had an impact on the average length of our assessments. On a number of occasions we used the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) regulations 2020 that were brought in in March. These were amended again in September with many of the provisions being withdrawn.

The new way of working has highlighted the over reliance on paper forms within both the Assessing Permanent Carers Team and the Fostering Service in general. With this in mind we have been working with the Web Services team to bring all our applications onto an online system. This is currently in its test phase but confident we will be able to roll this out in the coming months.

Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel has continued to be held online since March last year.

The technology has been a challenge but there has been improved attendance from Social Workers and discussion has been robust. Evidenced decisions have been made and the quality assurance feedback has been positive.

In November we tested the Attend Anywhere system as we had previously had issues with Skype and understood this was a more user friendly platform for our meetings. Unfortunately we encountered some issues with this new system as with the previous one so we have paused this and continued to use Skype. We plan to revisit this with the ICT in the next month.

The Central List of Panel members has been diversified and consists of independent members with a background in health / education and also someone who has experience of being a 'child looked after'. All Panel members have received an appraisal in 2020.

A Fostering Panel development day took place in November 2020 with presentations from Legal services, the Registered Manager for Fostering, and the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO). The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and Panel Members felt they learnt a lot on the day. There will be another panel development day in spring 2021.

Quarterly meetings continue to take place between the Assistant Director, the Agency Decision Maker, the Fostering Panel chair, the Panel Adviser and the Team Manager for Fostering. This ensures effective communication between Panel and Senior Management. An Advice Tracker is also in place to ensure that issues arising from panel are addressed.

Since October there have been 5 Fostering Panels held. We would normally hold them once a month but we have found that cases are taking much longer to discuss online so we have needed to convene more frequently with smaller agendas. We will again be holding two Fostering Panel's in January due to increased demand with 6 Connected Carer assessments being considered.

City of York Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy and Action Plan:

The strategy and action plan have been presented to the partnership and which will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on the 19th January. An Operational Group is in the process of being established and which will take forward the action plan and report progress back to the Partnership. A report on the approach to Corporate Parenting in York is also being presented to the Corporate Parenting Board and which was discussed at today's meeting. Feedback from the partnership is positive, in particular, taking into account the views from children in care and care leavers.

Simon Fisher

Group Manager – Achieving Permanence.