

**Notice of a public meeting of
Corporate Parenting Board**

- To:** Councillors Rawlings (Chair), Cuthbertson (Vice-Chair),
S Barnes, Brooks, Gunnell and Runciman
- Date:** Monday, 26 September 2016
- Time:** 5.00 pm
- Venue:** The Thornton Room - Ground Floor, West Offices (G039)

A G E N D A

1. Declarations of Interest

At this point, Members are asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests,
- any prejudicial interests or
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of business on this agenda.

2. Minutes

(Pages 1 - 6)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2016.

3. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue within the Board's remit can do so. The deadline for registering is 5pm the working day before the meeting, in this case 5pm on 23 September 2016.

Filming or Recording Meetings

Residents are welcome to photograph, film or record Councillors and Officers at all meetings open to the press and public. This includes the use of social media reporting, i.e. tweeting. Anyone wishing to film, record or take photos at any public meeting should contact the Democracy Officers (whose contact details are at the foot of this agenda) in advance of the meeting.

The Council's protocol on Webcasting, Filming & Recording of Meetings ensures that these practices are carried out in a manner both respectful to the conduct of the meeting and all those present. It can be viewed at http://www.york.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11406/protocol_f_or_webcasting_filming_and_recording_of_council_meetings_20160809.pdf

**Strategic Theme: Health and Emotional Health and Wellbeing
[items 4 to 7]**

In accordance with the Board's work plan, to consider the following reports and updates and receive any updates from Board Members on their agreed areas of interest in relation to these:

4. Show Me That I Matter Annual Report 2015-16 (Pages 7 - 18)

This report will detail the issues identified by the Children in Care Council, how these issues are being addressed and what issues are still to be taken forward. The report also details professionals and partner agencies that met with the Children in Care Council (CiCC), the outcomes of these discussions and different projects that the CiCC is involved in.

5. Annual Advocacy Report 2015-16 (Pages 19 - 30)

This report provides Members with an overview of advocacy statistics and issues raised by children and young people in care, subject to child protection plan or wanting to make a complaint, during 2015-16.

6. Care Leavers Bill - Keep on Caring (Pages 31 - 88)

A verbal update will be provided by the Practice Manager for the City of York Pathway Team on the services for care leavers and the implications for the service of the Government's new care leavers strategy "Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence" which sets out a vision for the further reform of support for care leavers. The verbal update will also make reference to the briefing note prepared by ADCS (Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd) on the Government's proposals.

7. Making York Home - Update

A brief verbal update will be provided by the Lead Officer for the City of York's Making York Home Project regarding progress made.

8. Virtual School Update - GCSE and A Level results for children in care

To receive a verbal update from the Virtual School in relation to GCSE and A-Level results for children in care and any update from the relevant Board Member on their agreed area of interest.

9. Annual Report from Independent Reviewing Officers (Pages 89 - 148)

The presentation of the report to the City of York Corporate Parenting Board is a statutory requirement (*The IRO Handbook* DfE 2010 at para. 7.11). The report summarises the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers over the preceding twelve month period.

There will be an opportunity for the relevant Board Member to provide an update on their agreed area of interest if appropriate.

10. Inspection Briefing (Pages 149 - 158)

This report gives details of the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework and its implications for the Corporate Parenting Board.

There will be an opportunity for the relevant Board Member to provide an update on their agreed area of interest if appropriate.

11. Corporate Parenting Board Workplan 2016-17 (Pages 159 - 160)

To consider the Board's workplan for the current municipal year.

12. Urgent Business

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officers

Name: Catherine Clarke and Louise Cook (job-share)

Contact Details:

Telephone: (01904) 551031

Email: catherine.clarke@york.gov.uk and louise.cook@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officers responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

 **(01904) 551550**

City of York Council

Committee Minutes

Meeting	Corporate Parenting Board
Date	27 June 2016
Present	Councillors Brooks, S Barnes, Cuthbertson, Gunnell, Rawlings and Runciman

1. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Members were invited to nominate a Chair and Vice-Chair for the Board for the ensuing Municipal Year.

Resolved: That Councillor Rawlings be appointed as the Chair and Councillor Cuthbertson as Vice-Chair of the Board, for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

2. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting Members were asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in relation to the business on the agenda or any other general interests they might have within the remit of the Board.

Councillor Cuthbertson declared a personal interest as a Local Authority Governor of Headlands Primary School.

Councillor Stuart Barnes declared a personal interest as a result of the involvement of a close family friend in the adoption process at Scarborough.

3. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 18 April 2016 be approved as a correct record and then signed by the Chair, subject to the following points of clarification:

- (i) Minute 15 (iv): to note that the Children & Young People in Care Strategy 2016-2020 would be considered by the Executive in July and not June 2016;
- (ii) Minute 17: to note that the Children's Commissioners would be visiting York on 24 June 2016 and details of that visit would be circulated to Board Members, for information.

4. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Councils Public Participation Scheme.

5. Update on Show Me That I Matter Panel

Members considered a verbal update on the Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) Panel and the Bright Futures Scheme. This included a presentation from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel, focusing on their website and poster campaigns and the achievements of young people after leaving care.

Board Members were highly appreciative of the work of the Panel and its young people and were keen to ensure its continuing success and engagement. They enthusiastically questioned the young people on a number of issues including encouraging younger school children to get involved and young adults over the age of 18, as well as connections to business networks and contributing to the development of York's Strategy for Children and Young People in Care. In relation to the involvement of both younger children and young adults, Members were informed that groups for aged 9-13 year olds (I Matter Too) and post 18 year olds (I Still Matter) had also been set up.

Resolved: That

- (i) the update be noted and the Chair and Vice Chair of the SMTIM Panel, in particular, be thanked for their presentation and ongoing contributions to the Panel;
- (ii) the Panel be invited to contribute to and comment upon York's Strategy for Children and Young People in Care;

- (iii) Officers establish connections between Show Me That I Matter Panel and business networks, such as York Young Professionals, the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

Reason: To keep the Board updated on the work of SMTIM and the Bright Futures Scheme.

6. Corporate Parenting Board Programme of Work and Priorities

Board Members considered a report outlining a proposed operating framework and themed forward plan for the Board for coming meetings, aimed at developing and strengthening local corporate parenting arrangements. In addition, Members views were sought on developing 'link or champion' roles for Board Members to develop relationships and gain an oversight into activities between meetings in relation to key areas.

Members discussed and commented upon the proposed framework, forward plan and themed work areas in some detail and were keen to adopt practices which would help their work in shaping and mirroring young peoples' priorities. As a result of their discussion,

Resolved: That

- (i) As part of their development and rolling commitment to the activities of the Board, Members take individual responsibility for getting involved in developing understanding of and reporting back on progress in relation to the following areas:
- Show Me That I Matter - Councillor Rawlings;
 - Housing and Pathway Team - Councillor Stuart Barnes;
 - Education/Schools - Councillor Brooks;
 - Health - Councillor Runciman;
 - Placement Team, Fostering Service and Short Breaks – Councillor Cuthbertson;
 - Virtual Head and School for Children in Care – Councillor Brooks;
 - Connexions / Education, Training & Employment Councillor Gunnell

- (ii) the Board considers and takes on board good practice from elsewhere and as such, wherever possible, Officers compare that good practice to York in presenting reports and information to the Board;
- (iii) a standing invite be given to representatives from Show Me That I Matter Panel to secure the direct involvement of young people and that similarly appropriate officers or individuals be invited to attend specific meetings where themes are relevant to them;
- (iv) the Chair of the Board to attend Learning & Culture Scrutiny Committee together with the Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services, when the Board reports to that Scrutiny Committee for monitoring purposes;
- (v) the proposed themes for the Board's future work plan be endorsed, as set out in paragraph 25 of the report, subject to the inclusion of a theme around 'emotional mental health' and to Board Members being circulated with a template into which they could report back on their agreed responsible areas identified under (i) above
- (vi) Officers consult young people on an appropriate future engaging name for the Board, with York Corporate Parenting Board being suggested as one potential name from Board Members.

Reason: To develop a detailed suitable work programme for the Board.

7. Virtual School Development Updates

Further to the last meeting of the Board in April 2016, Members considered a report that highlighted the following key areas:

- the development of the 16/17 Virtual School Improvement Plan.
- the implications of the Rees Centre report.

- the outcome of a recent poetry competition which celebrated the creativity and talent of our Looked After Children.

Board Members were then invited to take part in an exercise helping to identify their future priorities for the Virtual School Improvement Plan 2016/17, based on findings from the Rees Report.

Undertaking the exercise engendered much debate and broadly speaking Members selected the same top three or four priorities throughout that exercise. These largely being around placement type and changes, school changes and educational support. They also expressed concern about the amount of time spent in care.

The Head of the Virtual School then explained that she was currently updating the Improvement Plan for 2016/17 and highlighted progress made during the lifetime of the 2015/16 Plan. She informed Members of and invited them to developmental activities taking place during Summer School (5-13 July 2016 at Moor Lane) and in relation to trauma and attachment in December. Further details would be circulated to Members.

Resolved: That:

- (i) the report and progress made since 2015/16 be noted; and
- (ii) the priorities identified by the Board be taken into consideration by the Virtual School Head when updating the Improvement Plan as outlined above for 2016/17

Reason: To help identify the key priorities for the Virtual School Improvement Plan 2016 /17

Cllr Rawlings, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 7.00 pm].

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Corporate Parenting Board

26 September 2016

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Show Me That I Matter Annual Report 2015-16**Summary**

1. The aim of this report is to detail the issues identified by the Children in Care Council, how these issues are being addressed and what issues are still to be taken forward. The report also details professionals and partner agencies that met with the Children in Care Council (CiCC), the outcomes of these discussions and different projects that the CiCC is involved in.

Background

2. Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) is the name of York's Children in Care Council. Monthly panel meetings are held for young people to raise and discuss issues that are important to them, with the aim of shaping and improving services for children and young people in care in York. Panel meetings are attended by Elected Members and Council Officers to listen to the views of young people and respond to issues raised.

Consultation

3. See Annex 1.

Options

4. See Annex 1.

Analysis

5. See Annex 1.

Council Plan

6. See Annex 1.

Implications

7. **Financial** (*Contact – Director of Resources*)

There are no financial implications to consider.

- **Human Resources (HR)** (*Contact – Head of HR*)

There are no HR implications to consider.

- **Equalities** There are no issues relating to equalities to consider.
- **Legal** There are no legal implications to consider.
- **Crime and Disorder** There are no issues relating to crime and disorder.
- **Information Technology (IT)** There are no IT implications.
- **Property** There are no issues relating to property.
- **Other** *No other known implications.*

Risk Management

8. There are no risks to consider.

Recommendations

9. Members are not being asked to endorse any recommendations but to be briefed on the work of the Children in Care Council.

Contact Details

Author:

Author's name:

Nikki Wilson
Children's Rights Manager
Children's Services,
Education and Skills
Tel No. 07769725174

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Eoin Rush
Assistant Director of Children's Services

Report Approved



Date 16.09.16

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *None*

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

No back ground papers submitted.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Show Me That I Matter Annual Report, 2015-16

Abbreviations

CiCC - Children in Care Council

SMTIM - Show Me That I Matter

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SHOW ME THAT I MATTER YORK'S CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2015- MARCH 2016

INTRODUCTION

Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) is the name of York's Children in Care Council (CiCC). Monthly panel meetings are held for young people to raise and discuss issues that are important to them, with the aim of shaping and improving services for children and young people in care in York. Councillor Jenny Brooks, Lead Member for Children's Services, and Councillor Carol Runciman attend the panel meetings, along with members of Speak Up, York's Children's Rights and Advocacy Service.

The aim of this report is to detail the issues identified by the CiCC, how these issues are being addressed and what issues are still to be taken forward. This report will also detail professionals and partner agencies that met with the CiCC, the outcomes of these discussions and different projects that the CiCC is involved in.

PANELS: SMTIM AND I MATTER 2

SHOW ME THAT I MATTER

SMTIM consists of up to twelve care experienced young people, aged between 13-19 years. The panel meets monthly at West Office to discuss issues that are important to children and young people in care in York. Any issues raised are fed back to senior managers, with the aim to help change and shape services for children and young people in York. Young people regularly invite professionals and agencies to attend the panel to discuss issues and give feedback on service provision. SMTIM hold a second meeting monthly, routinely used as an informal planning meeting or focus group, to organise work and meet the demands of ongoing projects.

SMTIM agreed that they would like members of SMTIM to chair meetings, therefore every twelve months the group vote for a new chair and vice chair to help lead meetings with the support of staff. Young people have also been encouraged to take on other formal roles within the panel but to date haven't taken up this opportunity.

I MATTER 2

I Matter 2 is a sub-group of SMTIM, jointly delivered by Speak Up and the Looked After Children's Support Team. This group meet monthly at Hamilton House and is aimed at younger looked after children aged 8-13 years. The group has a more informal, activity based approach, allowing a more relaxed environment for children and young people to share their views and raise any issues. Issues raised at I Matter 2 are shared with the SMTIM, who are then able to take these forward with senior managers and Councillors. In light of the difference in approaches of the two groups a degree of flexibility is needed to ensure that children and young people are able to participate in whichever group they feel more comfortable accessing.

WORK CARRIED OUT

Between April 2015 and March 2016 SMTIM carried out 10 formal panel meetings, 18 focus groups and 2 social events / activity days. In addition to this a number of panel members have participated in conferences, training sessions and interview panels throughout the year.

CONTACT WITH PROFESSIONALS

SMTIM have invited a number of professionals to attend panel meetings and focus groups, either to address specific issues raised by the panel or after an expression of interest to attend.

April 2015	Paul Kind, Chair of York Area Foster Carers Association
May 2015	Jon Stonehouse and Eoin Rush, Director and Assistant Director of Children's Service
June 2015	Debra Lane and Sarah Wild, Fostering Team
July 2015	Emily Taylor, Talent and Resource Advisor and John Thompson
Sep 2015	Lindsey Skelly, Youth and Community Development Team
Oct 2015	Sarah Furness, Castlegate
Nov 2015	Dave Purcell, Pathway Team
Jan 2016	Paul Murphy, author of the new Strategy for Looked After Children and Young People
March 2016	Luke Rodgers, Fostering Focus, Kev Curran, Inspired Youth

REGIONAL MEETINGS AND CONFERENCE

The Yorkshire and Humberside Children in Care Council meets periodically in various locations across the region. Young people's meetings and professionals meetings take place separately and are an opportunity for different authorities to meet, share and discuss their CiCC with neighboring authorities. Representatives from SMTIM and Speak Up have attended Regional CiCC meetings and in April 2015 hosted a young people's regional meeting at West Offices.

In 2015 the National Children's Bureau and A National Voice held a series of workshops across the country for CiCC members to attend with their Corporate Parents. SMTIM attended workshops in Newcastle, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds, where the following issues were discussed: Pathways to Adulthood and Independence, Raising Achievements, and Diversity and Inclusion. To conclude the work a national celebratory event took place in London in February 2016, which representatives from SMTIM and Speak Up attended.

Other conferences that SMTIM have been involved in include the No Wrong Door Conference that took place in January 2016, the National Conference for Virtual Schools in

March 2016, and a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group in Westminster in March 2016.

REWARD AND RECOGNITION

The work of SMTIM is rewarded and recognised in a number of different ways. SMTIM members are financially rewarded for their time and effort with a stamp system in operation, enabling young people to receive a £20 cash reward for attending 3 sessions. SMTIM members also have the opportunity to take part in social activities and to have their work recognised via the Vinspired Awards Scheme (nationally recognised certificates for various levels of volunteering). Members of SMTIM have also recently had their hard work recognised at the Lord Mayor's Shine Awards and the Coram Voice 2016 Awards.

KEY ISSUES RAISED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

STIGMA AND TERMINOLOGY

Stigma faced by children and young people in care and the terminology used by professionals was an issue identified by SMTIM during the previous year. As a result the Speak Up and Hear My Voice training was developed and remains an ongoing project of the CiCC. The matter was further discussed with Jon Stonehouse and Eoin Rush in May 2015 when it was agreed that the term 'LAC' in particular would no longer be used. This was reinforced at the No Wrong Door conference in January 2016 and reflected in the new Strategy for Children and Young People in Care (2016/2020).

SMTIM were keen to address the wider issue of stigma and embarked on a media arts campaign with Inspired Youth, which they named Aspire to More. The Aspire to More Project has been a huge piece of work for SMTIM and will remain a key priority in 2016-17.

IMPROVING FOSTERING PROVISION

SMTIM met with the chair of the York Area Foster Care Association in April 2015 to discuss the role of foster carers and share their views on what qualities and attributes they would want to see in a foster carer. Discussions also took place in June 2015 with members of the Fostering Team regarding this, as well as the issue of delegated responsibility for foster carers and specific issues relating to best practice. An outcome of this discussion was the committed to an improved partnership between the Fostering Team and SMTIM. It was agreed that there would be a named worker from the Fostering Team to attend the panel regularly, and that young people would actively be involved in foster carer training and the recruitment of workers for the Fostering Team. SMTIM have since delivered training as part of the Skills to Foster training for potential new foster carers and taken part in a young people's interview panel for the post of Fostering Social Worker.

SMTIM have also been actively involved in the Make York Home Project where their views have been represented by Speak Up and, when possible, young people themselves.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOCIAL WORKERS

Social Work Contact Cards were produced by Speak Up and distributed to social work teams in March 2015, in a response to concerns raised by SMTIM that young people often had difficulties contacting their social workers (in particular young people didn't always know how to contact their social worker or who to speak to in their absence). In August 2015 SMTIM raised the question of whether these were being routinely used and a further distribution took place.

SMTIM also raised concerns about relationships with social workers, and issues regarding communication and confidentiality. SMTIM came up with guidelines that they would like social workers to consider when communicating with young people. This guidance will be used for training purposes for Children's Social Care staff and also help to shape an agreement between social workers and young people. A draft agreement has been drawn up and will be further progressed with the new Permanence Team.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

SMTIM have raised a number of issues relating to the health and wellbeing of children and young people in care. In July 2015 they identified that not all young people have sufficient information about the kinds of health provisions they are entitled to, or how to access them. It was agreed that a focus group would take place in October 2015 when further discussions took place with representatives from Castlegate about young peoples existing knowledge of the Castlegate service, and their entitlements to accessing provision.

SMTIM also fed back some unhappiness about the way Health Assessments were conducted and did not feel there was always enough information provided about what this entailed. In February 2016 an opportunity arose to get involved in a piece of work with North Yorkshire County Council surrounding Initial Health Assessments. It was agreed that a LEGO themed health clip would be devised by young people, explaining what a health assessment was and what was involved. The project is still ongoing and further discussions are planned within senior health professionals within CYC about the wider issue of how Health Assessments could be conducted differently.

March 2016 SMTIM highlighted mental health as an issue they felt needed further consideration. Young people felt that there was a great deal of stigma surrounding young people's mental health, resulting in young people suffering in silence. They questioned what support was available to them and suggested that young people should be better informed so that they can support their peers who may be experiencing mental health problems. This issue will be taken forward in 2016-17.

PUPIL PREMIUM

In May 2015 SMTIM identified that they thought young people were unclear on the meaning of pupil premium and what it was suppose to be spent on. Subsequent discussions took place with the Virtual School for Looked After Children and in June 2015 it was agreed for details to be included in their Virtual School leaflet. A link to the Virtual School leaflet was also added to the SMTIM website so help to promote this information to young people.

WORK EXPERIENCE

In July 2015 SMTIM raised their unhappiness about the reduction in work experience opportunities routinely offered to young people. In February 2016 Speak Up sought funding from the Careers and Enterprise Fund to set up a new project with York Cares to deliver taster sessions, skills based workshops and work experience opportunities for young people in care. The Bright Futures Project will run from April 2016 – Aug 2017.

LEAVING CARE

In May 2015 SMTIM requested that consideration be given to care leavers having the same rights to free bus pass provision that young people in care have. Following discussions between Education Transport and Children's Social Care it was agreed that bus passes will be extended to those young people post 18 who are in an apprenticeship, education or training.

In September 2015 SMTIM raised concerns that young people approaching 16 didn't always have sufficient information about the Pathways service and their rights and entitlements. Some young people were unsure at what age they would be due to start working with the Pathway Team and what support they would receive. A subsequent focus group took place with the manager of the Pathway Team to discuss. It was agreed that steps would be taken by the Pathway Team to make information more widely available and the IRO team were asked to routinely check that young people approaching 16 felt they had sufficient information.

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT

In July 2015 SMTIM raised the question of the best way to celebrate the achievements of children and young people in care. In the past celebratory events have taken place, with children and young people receiving awards for their achievements, however there have always been mixed views as to whether this is the best approach or whether the achievements of young people should be acknowledged on an individual basis. The views of SMTIM members and those consulted via social media were split equally; with half of young people wanting a larger celebration group styled event and the other half preferring recognition on an individual basis. This is something that will be discussed further in 2016-17.

YOUNG PERSON FRIENDLY ROOM AT WEST OFFICES

SMTIM fed back to Jon Stonehouse their view that steps should be taken to make West Offices more young person friendly, by allowing them to lead on taking over the development of a space in West Offices. Following these discussions in May 2015 agreement was sought from Facilities Management for SMTIM to begin a Room Development Project which remains ongoing.

ONGOING PROJECT WORK

ASPIRE TO MORE – RAISING ASPIRATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Aspire To More is a creative project in partnership with Inspired Youth, the Children's Rights and Advocacy team and SMTIM. The aim of the project is to raise the aspirations of children and young people in care. By utilizing the learning and insight they gain from speaking to successful care leavers they will be equipped to create a positive campaign that will raise aspirations and open minds to the possibilities of promising and inspiring futures. It was agreed that 6 role models would be interviewed by SMTIM and feature in a poster campaign, along with a blog showcasing all the work. To find out more about this project you can visit aspiretomore.wordpress.com or follow the campaign on [twitter](#).

SPEAK UP AND HEAR MY VOICE TRAINING

The Speak Up and Hear My Voice training was developed in a direct response to SMTIM's views on the importance of reducing the stigma faced by children and young people in care. It was agreed that young people would co-design and deliver a training programme which would feature the Arts4Care film, "Listen to Me" that was produced in 2014. The training, whilst providing professionals with the opportunity to hear directly from children and young people in care about their experiences, also offers practical tools and resources as to how practice and service development could be adapted to embed participation. Seven young people were trained as young trainers and a total of eight training sessions took place, including three full day sessions, three workshop sessions and two bespoke sessions to York College and Out of Schools Club Network.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S INTERVIEW PANELS

In 2014-2015 SMTIM identified the need for more young people to be involved in the recruitment of staff working with children and young people. Training took place to create a team of young interviewers and the interview panels were launched in April 2015. Young person's interview panels have been in high demand throughout 2015-2016, with SMTIM sitting on 13 interview panels for roles in children's services including senior management.

TAKEOVER AND BRIGHT FUTURES

In March 2016, York Cares (an independent employee volunteering charity) successfully acquired funding from the Careers and Enterprise Fund to work in collaboration with Speak Up to provide further work experience and takeover opportunities for children and young people in care, as a direct response to issues raised by SMTIM. By providing an insight into the working environment, Bright Futures aims to support young people to further develop their skills, knowledge and attributes, providing experiences to enhance their curriculum vitae and potentially lead to future employment. The project aims to provide career guidance through a variety of ways, using the experience of employers to give practical and meaningful advice about careers in their area of work.

CONCLUSION

The work SMTIM have been involved in throughout 2015-16 illustrates the growth and value of the CiCC. SMTIM have invested a lot of time liaising with senior managers and partner agencies to tackle the issues raised in panel meetings; with the Assistant Director and Director of Children's Services, the Fostering team, Social Work team, and Elected Members attending meetings. This has resulted in a number of outcomes and an increased awareness of the role and functions of the CiCC.



Corporate Parenting Board**26 September 2016**

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Annual Advocacy Report 2015-16**Summary**

1. The aim of this report is to provide an overview of advocacy statistics and issues raised by children and young people in care, subject to child protection plan or wanting to make a complaint, during 2015-16.

Background

2. The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service (known as Speak Up) promotes children's rights entitlements and provides advocacy for children and young people who are in care, on a child protection plan or wanting to make a complaint against the council, in line with the Local Authority's statutory duties. The service provides issue-based advocacy and only exists for the time it takes to resolve the specific issue. It is a confidential service and is independent from Children's Social Care, in line with the National Standards for the provision of Children's Advocacy Services (2002).

Consultation

3. See Annex A.

Options

4. See Annex A.

Analysis

5. See Annex A.

Council Plan

6. See Annex A.

7. Implications

- **Financial** There are no financial implications to consider.
- **Human Resources (HR)** There are no HR implications to consider.
- **Equalities** There are no issues relating to equalities to consider.
- **Legal** There are no legal implications to consider.
- **Crime and Disorder**)There are no issues relating to crime and disorder.
- **Information Technology (IT)** There are no IT implications.
- **Property** There are no issues relating to property.
- **Other** No other known implications.

Risk Management

8. There are no risks to consider.

Recommendations

9. Members are not being asked to endorse any recommendations but to be briefed on the work of Speak Up.

Contact Details

Author:

Nikki Wilson
Children's Rights Manager
Children's Services,
Education and Skills
Tel No. 07769725174

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Eoin Rush
Assistant Director of Children's Services

**Report
Approved**



Date 16.09.16

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex A –Annual Advocacy Report, 2015-16

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ANNUAL ADVOCACY REPORT

APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016



INTRODUCTION

Advocacy is about providing individuals with support to help them express their own views, have their voice heard, access information and services and understand their rights and entitlements. It is based on the belief that all individuals are equal, with the same rights and responsibilities. Every Local Authority is required to provide advocacy services for children and young people who are looked after or wanting to make a complaint.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service (known as Speak Up) promotes children's rights entitlements and provides advocacy for children and young people who are looked after, on a child protection plan or wanting to make a complaint against the council, in line with the Local Authority's statutory duties. The service provides issue-based advocacy and only exists for the time it takes to resolve the specific issue. It should be noted however that children and young people often raise numerous issues, sometimes requiring advocacy for a significant length of time. It is a confidential service and is independent from Children's Social Care, in line with the National Standards for the provision of Children's Advocacy Services (2002).

The role of an advocate:

- Advocates should work for children and young people and no one else.
- Advocates should value and respect children and young people as individuals and challenge all types of unlawful discrimination.
- Advocates should work to make sure children and young people in care can understand what is happening to them, can make their views known and, where possible, exercise choice when decisions about them are being made.
- Advocates should help children and young people to raise issues and concerns about things they are unhappy about, including making informal and formal complaints.

National Standards for the provision of Children's Advocacy Services (2002)

THE SPEAK UP TEAM

The Speak Up team are made up of two Advocacy and Participation Workers (each 0.4 PTE), a Service Support Apprentice and a Children's Rights Manager (0.7PTE). Speak Up also have a small pool of trained volunteer advocates who also undertake advocacy with children and young people. However due to service pressures and an increased demand, a temporary increase in hours has been agreed for an additional 0.6FTE Advocacy and Participation Worker.

Advocacy referrals can be made directly by children and young people or professionals on their behalf, via telephone, email, Facebook or through the websites www.showmethatimatter.com and www.yor-ok.org.uk.

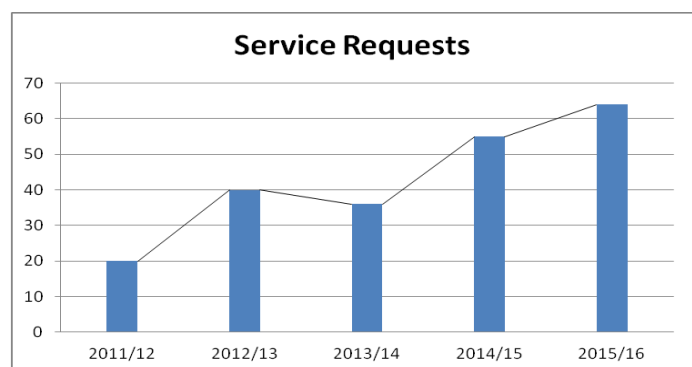
AWARENESS OF THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

For Speak Up to function effectively children, young people and professionals need to be aware of, and have an understanding of, the service. When a child or young person first comes into care they are issued with an information pack which includes information about their rights and entitlements and the Speak Up service. Speak Up also send quarterly newsletters to all looked after children and young people aged 7+ which include details of the service, with specific reference to advocacy and how to access this.

Children and young people are also made aware of the service through professionals. All professionals working with children and young people in care should be aware of the service so they can signpost and refer young people who may benefit from the support of an advocate. There is currently a varying degree to which professionals know when to seek advocacy, so it is important to ensure professionals have a clear understanding so they can make an informed decision about when to promote involvement of the service. The Children's Rights Manager regularly liaises with social work teams and attends team meetings to promote the service to professionals.

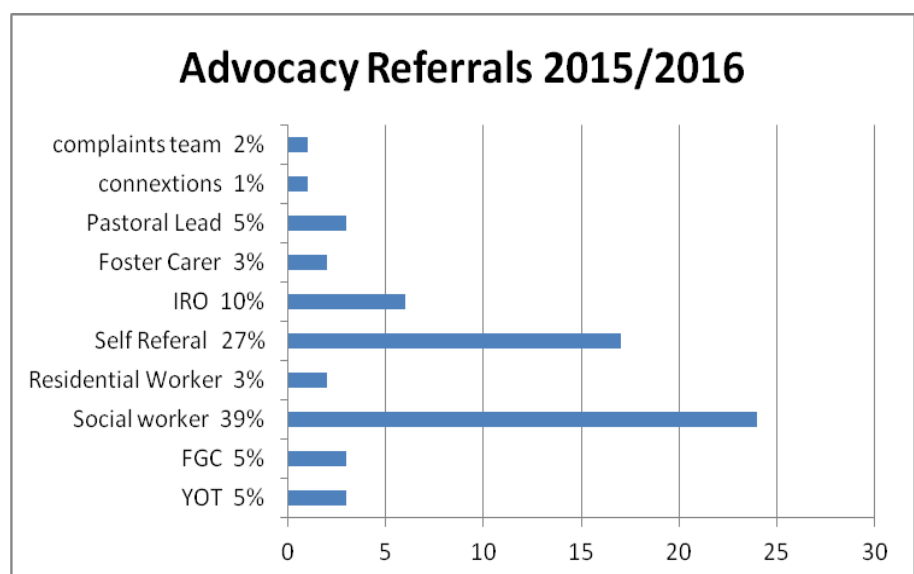
ADVOCACY STATISTICS

Referrals hit an all time high in 2015/2016 with 64 referrals for advocacy made. It is worth noting 14 of these referrals ended with no further action as the child or young person declined / no longer required the service, and 50 cases required ongoing casework. At the point of writing this report 34 of these advocacy cases had been closed and 16 remained open.



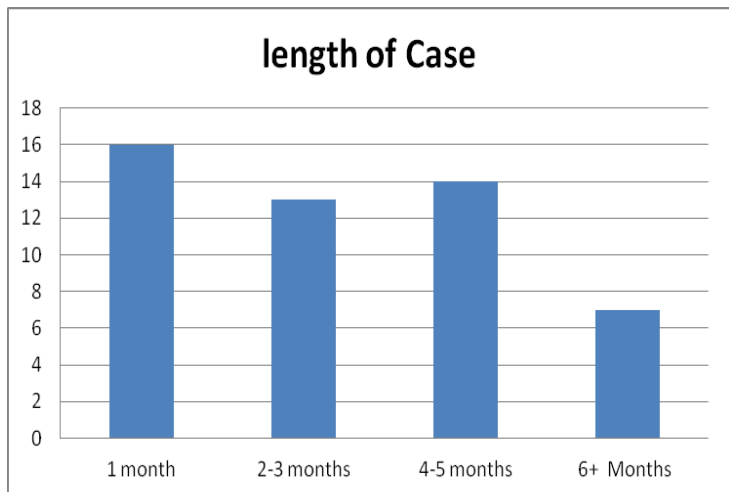
REFERRALS

Most young people were either referred by their Social Worker (39%) Independent Reviewing Officer (10%) or made a self referral (27%). There have been half as many referrals from IROs compared to 2014/15 but a significant increase in referrals from the social work teams at 39%, which is almost double the amount of referrals from 2014/15. Self referrals have remained similar to the previous year.



LENGTH OF TIME

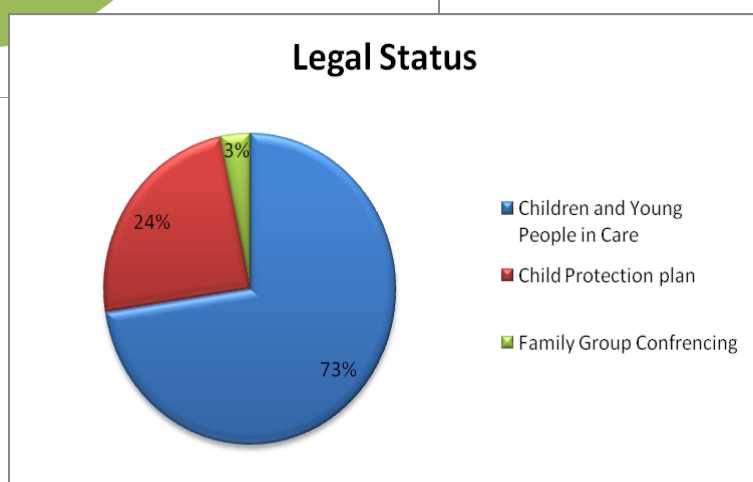
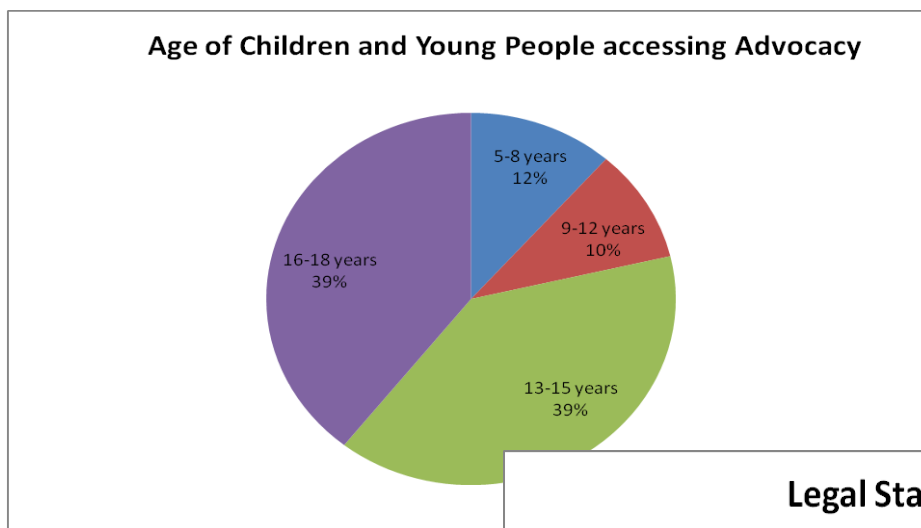
The length of time cases remain open depends entirely on the wishes of the child and the issues they raise and so varies accordingly, as can be seen from the table adjacent. To give an indication of length of time cases have remained open, a snapshot has been taken on 31st March 2016. However it is worth noting that some of these cases remain open and so cannot accurately be used to judge the average length of time a case has been open but gives the statistical status of the service at this given point. .



PROFILE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ACCESSED ADVOCACY

AGE AND LEGAL STATUS

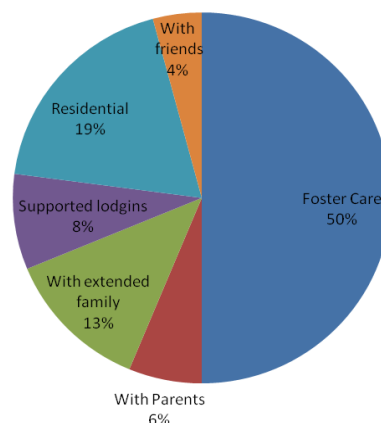
A large proportion of children and young accessing advocacy were aged 13+ (78%). 73% were children and young people in care and 24% were subject to child protection plan. 3% were children who requested independent advocacy whilst going through Family Group conference (previously polited but no longer in place).



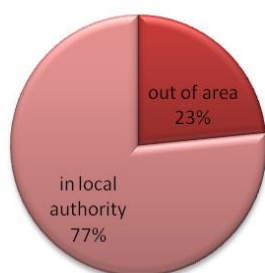
PLACEMENT TYPE AND LOCATION

Half of the children and young people in care who received advocacy were living with foster carers. 19% of children and young people were living in a residential settings and 19% looked after by family members.

Living Arrangement



Location of Advocacy Referral



23% of the advocacy referrals for children and young people in care were in relation to children and young people who were placed out of area. This may be attributed to

recent efforts to ensure service promotion is not only geared to children and young people placed locally but also those placed at some distance, in an attempt to target some of our more hard to reach children and young people. It is however worth noting that out of area advocacy has placed increasing pressures on the service in light if the additional time such cases inevitably require.

ADVOCACY REQUESTS

EMERGING THEMES

Each advocacy request is different and is specific to the young person in question, though there are some common underlying themes, outlined below and discussed in more detail overleaf:

Theme	No. of requests raised 2015/2016	Percentage 2015/2016	Percentage 2014/15
Contact issues	2	3%	13%
Unhappiness with social work service	11	17%	11%
Placement issues	7	11%	13%
Disagreement with Care Plan	3	5%	11%
Access to support/ services	5	8%	5%
Support to express views in decision making process	32	50%	45%
Other	4	6%	2%

Almost half of all advocacy request received were in relation to children and young people requiring support to have there views heard within the decision making process, similar to the previous year. Other requests in 2015/16 were made up of, 2 requests to be supported having name changed, 1 young person not happy with new school, and 1 for support with personal issues.

CONTACT ISSUES

Contact issues refer to any issues relating to the young person's contact arrangements with a person significant to their life, most often relatives and close friends. Only 3% of advocacy requests were in relation to contact issues, a 10% drop from the previous year.

UNHAPPINESS WITH THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

Young people identified difficulties in their relationships with social worker and spoke about general unhappiness with the social work service, including issues with confidentiality and accessibility. Requests included support when relations between young people and workers had broken down, on occasions resulting in a request to change worker, and frustrations about being unable to get in contact with their worker. 17% of advocacy requests were due to unhappiness with the social work service, an increase from the previous year (11% in 2014/15).

PLACEMENT ISSUES

Issues with placement include requests to change placement, unhappiness/disagreement with placement rules and regulations and general unhappiness with placement. 11% of advocacy requests were relating to issues with placement, a slight drop from the previous year (13% in 2014/15)

DISAGREEMENT WITH CARE PLAN

5% of advocacy requests were in relation to children or young people who were not in agreement with their overall care plan. These included support to access independent legal advise regarding a request to make an application to discharge a care order, as well as disagreements regarding planned placement moves. This was a drop from the previous year (11% in 2014/15).

ACCESS TO SUPPORT/SERVICES

Access to access support / services included request to challenge decisions regarding service provision and unhappiness regarding accessibility of services in light of being placed at some distance from the city. 8% of advocacy requests were in relation to this, a 3% increase from the previous year.

SUPPORT TO EXPRESS WISHES AND FEELINGS

This theme includes having support to attend or feed views into review meetings and Child Protection Conferences, as well as general support in establishing children and young person's view

at times when it has been identified that independent support is necessary. This category has the highest percentage of requests as to be expected, with 50% in 2016/17.

EVALUATION

Direct feedback is obtained from children and young people who have access the service in an attempt to evaluate and improve the service. During 2015/16 16 evaluation forms were complete by children and young people. This is a significant increase from previous years as obtaining feed back from young people has proved difficult, with young people being reluctant to complete evaluation forms once the work is concluded.

Children and young people are asked to complete an evaluation form once the work commences, to gather their feedback on the service and measure outcomes. A short series of questions are asked at the start of the work (documented on the child’s initial agreement form) and measured with their responses on the evaluation form.

WERE YOU HAPPY WITH THE HELP YOUR ADVOCATE GAVE YOU?

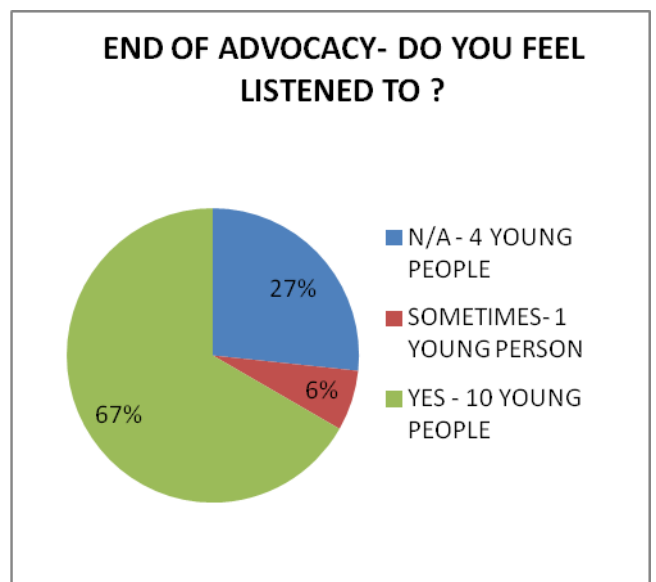
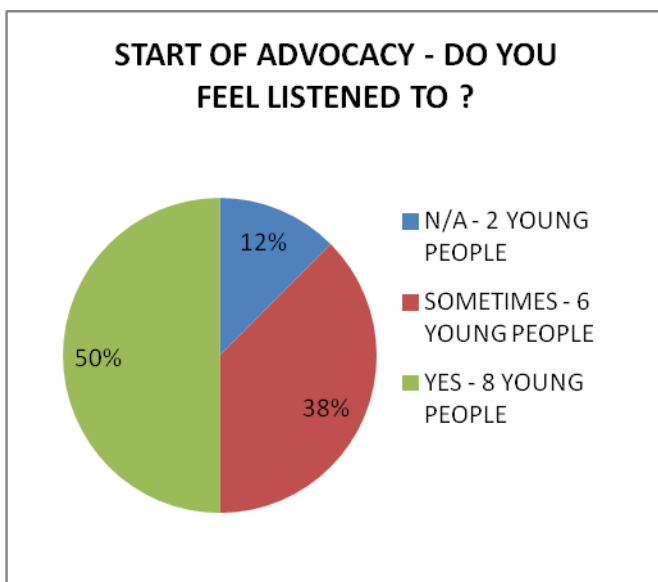
All young people stated they were happy with the help they received and would request an advocate again in the future if needed.

HOW CONFIDENT DO YOU FEEL IN BEING ABLE TO PUT YOUR POINT OF VIEW ACROSS?

8 young people felt very confident when asked if they felt able put their views across, 3 were confident, and 5 did not answer the question. This is the same result as when the young people were asked in the initial agreement.

ON THE WHOLE DO YOU FEEL LISTENED TO?

The charts below indicate an overall 17% increase in children and young people who felt listened after accessing advocacy.



AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

AWARENESS OF THE SERVICE

An ongoing area of development is raising awareness of the service. Speak Up will continue to raise awareness of the service by attending service meeting and briefings and circulate quarterly newsletters to all children and young people in care aged 5+. Information is regularly sent to social work teams via email updates and visits to team meetings. Speak Up also send out New to Care letters and Information Packs to children and young people shortly after they become looked after, containing information about rights and entitlements and the Speak Up s care. The packs include a variety of useful information as well as details of the Speak Up service. Information can also found on the Show Me That I Matter website (showmethatimatter.com).

REMIT OF ADVOCACY SERVICE

One area being looked at for future development is extending the advocacy remit to include provision for care leavers. Following feedback from the Children in Care Council steps are in place to explore how further capacity might be sought to enable this to be delivered.

Whilst offering advocacy to young people going through Family Group Conferencing has not been formally offered, this has been piloted over the last two years (2 cases during 2015/16). However it is not recommended that this continues in light of pressures on existing resources.

SUMMARY

This report has provided an overview of advocacy casework that has taken place during 2015/16. It has highlighted common advocacy themes and identified areas for further development. It is important that next year's annual report looks at the areas of development to establish if progress has been made and evaluate any changes made to the service.

REFERENCES

Department of Health (2002) *National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services*. Department of Health Publications.



Item **Note on the Government's new care leavers strategy, 'Keep On Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence'**

Prepared by **Esther Kavanagh Dixon (Policy Officer, ADCS)**

Purpose **For information**

Introduction

In July 2016, the Government published a new care leavers strategy, [Keep on Caring](#). To support a fundamental shift in the life changes of care leavers, the strategy focuses on three key areas:

- Developing new ways of supporting care leavers
- Making corporate parenting everyone's responsibility
- Driving system improvement

During consultation, care leavers raised five key issues and the strategy aims to make progress against these:

- Preparation and support for independence
- Barriers to accessing education, employment and training
- Lack of stability, safety and security
- Difficulties in accessing health support, particularly emotional health and wellbeing support
- Problems achieving financial stability

Below is a summary of the main points contained within the strategy.

Innovation and system reform

A new round of the DfE Innovation Fund has been announced, totalling £200m, with two priority areas of focus: rethinking children's social care – projects seeking to redesign the organisational systems and practice frameworks that underpin children's social care; and, rethinking transitions to adulthood for young people – projects seeking to develop and test new, more holistic ways of supporting young people making the transition to adulthood. The Innovation Fund will also support the:

- Development and commissioning of care leaver SIBs
- Piloting of 'Staying Close' arrangements
- Expansion of the PAUSE programme to work intensively with young women who have had multiple children taken into care

DfE will review the role of personal adviser (PA) and, via the Innovation Fund, test new approaches of support for care leavers such as: supporting continued relationships with former carers and professionals; mentoring; family-finding approaches (family group conferences to identify adults who are willing to make long-term commitments to support the young person); local area co-ordinators, working with care leavers to access community resources and support. In addition, employers will be encouraged to develop a PA apprenticeship.

The strategy reiterates the Government's promotion of different delivery models and partnerships with the voluntary sector. The strategy refers to city deals as an opportunity to explore different delivery models, e.g. a single care leavers service for Greater Manchester, and the creation of care leavers trusts and public service mutual as a means to increased freedoms and flexibilities.

There is a commitment to introduce 'Staying Close' as per Sir Martin Narey's recommendations and subject to evaluation, increase the number of local authorities adopting the New Belongings approach.

Embedding a culture of corporate parenting

The Children and Social Work Bill will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles applicable to all LAs and all LA services delivered to both children in care and care leavers. As part of the commitment to better support care leavers, support from a PA will be extended to all care leavers up to the age of 25. A voluntary care covenant will also be introduced allowing organisations to set out their commitments to care leavers. The Bill introduces a requirement for LAs to consult on and publish a local offer for care leavers, setting out their legal entitlements, the LAs policy on staying put and other non-statutory services specifically provided for care leavers.

Funding available to cover the training costs of apprentices aged 19-23 who are care leavers will be extended to all care leavers up to age 25.

New data is being collected which will provide a better understanding of the career progression of care leavers. For the first time, data is being collected on 17 and 18 year old care leavers (this will be available in October 2016). The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) has also included a care leaver identifier as part of HESA student record, this

will support better analysis, research and evaluation of care leavers who attend higher education.

To better support those who are unemployed, the Youth Obligation will be introduced from April 2017:

- From day 1 of their claim, 18-21 year olds will be required to take part in a three week 'Intensive Activity Period'
- If, after 6 months, they are not in work, on an apprenticeship or in work related training, they will be required to go on a mandatory work placement

The implementation of Staying Put will continue to be funded over the life of this Parliament and the £22m provided to LAs in 2016/17 will be used as the baseline for future funding. In the first year, 48% of eligible care leavers were still living with former foster carers three months after their 18th birthday.

The Ministry of Justice has established a National Care Leavers Forum within the National Offender Management Service. The Forum is exploring ways of ensuring local authorities are notified when a care leaver is moved to a different prison; and are notified in advance when a care leaver is released from prison, so they have time to put in place support available upon release. In addition, the Forum will explore ways in which direct work can take place with care leavers in prison to develop strategies to support them when they leave prison or probation services.

A national transfer scheme for UASC has recently been introduced and later this year, DfE intend to consult on revised guidance for local authorities on the care of UASC and trafficked children.

An Expert Reference Group (EAG), co-chaired by Alison O'Sullivan, has been established to produce care pathways, quality standards and models of care for looked after children and care leavers with mental health problems. The EAG will also consider transition to adult mental health services. A new Mental Health Services Data Set will collect a range of data regarding children and young people's access to, and outcomes from, mental health services, this will include children who are looked after.

The Care Quality Commission will shortly publish an overview report setting out their findings from the first 50 inspections of local health



services arrangements for promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers.

In April 2017, changes to Universal Credit will be introduced which remove the automatic entitlement to housing support for young people aged 18 to 21 who are out of work. Care leavers will be exempt from these changes. In addition, DWP and DfE will explore the benefits to care leavers of extending the exemption to the 'shared accommodation rate' of housing benefit to the age of 25 (therefore allowing them to continue to claim the higher one bedroom rate for self-contained accommodation). The Government intends to extend Local Housing Allowance Caps into the social rented sector, this will include the supported housing sector. Concerns have been raised about the implications of this, particularly for vulnerable people accessing supported accommodation (including care leavers). DWP and DCLG are currently undertaking a joint evidence review to better understand the implications of this policy and the review will be published shortly.

Driving System Improvement

The strategy references the What Works Centre for children's social care, Partners in Practice and the soon to be published evaluation of phase 1 of the Innovation Programme as way of promoting and sharing best practice across the sector.

The strategy also reiterates the Government's approach to addressing failure: where children's services are deemed inadequate and do not make sufficient progress towards improvement, a commissioner will be appointed to review whether services should be removed from council control (a commissioner will be appointed immediately where failure is persistent or systemic), and where this is considered to be the best option, services will be removed.

Measuring Progress

To gain a fuller understanding of the outcomes achieved by care leavers, the Ministry of Justice and DfE have a one-off data sharing agreement to link pupil level data to prison, probation and police data, this should be achieved in 2016. A separate agreement is in place with HMRC, DWP and BIS to explore the link between educational achievement and labour market outcomes.



DfE plan to establish a national care leaver advisory group, consisting of care leavers aged between 16 and 25, which will provide insights into the issues that affect their lives and inform the future development of the strategy and policy.

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HM Government

Keep On Caring

**Supporting Young People from Care to
Independence**

July 2016

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Ministerial Foreword

A good corporate parent should have the same aspirations for a child in care or care leaver as a good parent would have for their own child. It means providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress; and helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves. It means celebrating their successes, but also recognising that they will sometimes make mistakes and need help to get back on track. It also means supporting them to gain the skills and confidence to live independent lives, while letting them know that they have someone to call on for help if the going gets tough.

Earlier this week, the Secretary of State and I published our strategy for supporting all of our most vulnerable children and young people – *‘Putting Children First’*. This strategy sets out specifically and in more depth what it means to put care leavers first.

I know, from my own family, that care leavers will have faced many challenges in their lives and are likely to need much more support than other young people as they make the transition to adulthood. Yet, in most cases, care leavers are not only making that transition at a much younger age than their peers, but they also typically get far less support from their corporate parent than other young people get from their birth parents. That is why I am determined to ensure that the state and wider society play a much stronger and more active role in improving care leavers’ life chances. For me, it’s the hallmark of a compassionate society, something our country has in bucket-loads.

This strategy calls for a revolution in the way that we think about supporting young people coming out of care. It asks local and central government to up their game as corporate parents, using the level of support that we expect a reasonable parent to provide for their child as the benchmark for how they should approach their role. And it provides a call to arms for wider society to better support care leavers, through engagement with the ‘care leaver covenant’ that we plan to launch later this year.

It identifies three key ways in which we will drive improvements in leaving care services:

Firstly, it sets out how we will use the Innovation Programme to rethink how services are delivered and what support is provided, with a strong focus on finding new and better ways of helping care leavers develop the social networks that will sustain them not just in the years immediately after leaving care, but throughout their lives. We will also support new ways of delivering services, for example through Trusts, which have a clear and specific focus on improving care leavers’ life chances.

Secondly, it sets out how we will strengthen the culture of corporate parenting, both locally – through our planned legislative measures – and through changes to central government policies, so that they better respond to care leavers’ unique status and circumstances.

And finally, it sets out how we will support and challenge local areas, so that all deliver to the standards of the best.

By delivering the commitments outlined in this document, and applying the same reform principles and methods to care leavers that we are for the rest of children's social care, we can begin to drive the necessary improvements to the quality of support received by young people leaving care. But this does not mark the end of our ambition. We will continue to work across government during the remainder of this Parliament to make the life chances of care leavers something to celebrate, not denounce. If we keep on caring we can, together, give them the optimism and the future they deserve.



Edward Timpson
Minister of State for Children & Families

SUMMARY

The government is passionate about improving the lives and life chances of care leavers. Young people leaving care constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in our society, and both government and wider society have a moral obligation to give them the support they need as they make the transition to adulthood and independent living.

There has been much good work done over the past few years to improve that support, including the actions set out in the first cross-government care leaver strategy published in 2013¹, and the introduction of the Staying Put duty in 2014, which is already helping many care leavers to continue living with their former foster carers beyond age 18.

However, outcomes for care leavers remain much worse than for their counterparts in the general population and the quality of leaving care services provided by local authorities remains variable. The care leaver cohort is also changing, as more children enter care at age 16 and over, and with more unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) entering the care system. These changes present new challenges for service providers.

This document sets out a vision for the further reform of support for care leavers based on innovation, system reform, and the embedding of corporate parenting responsibility across society.

The strategy makes a commitment that the government will use the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme to rethink transitions to adulthood for young people in the children's social care system, with a focus on developing new ways to provide care leavers with the personal support networks they need to thrive; piloting 'Staying Close' – a variant of Staying Put for those leaving residential care; and testing out alternative models of delivery for leaving care services through the use of Trusts, Mutuels and other arrangements. It gives a clear commitment to test payment-by-results approaches, and commits the government to create the first care leaver-specific Social Impact Bond. And it also provides a commitment to support and test approaches that empower care leavers to have a greater say in the design and delivery of services.

The document goes on to identify and describe how the State, as corporate parents, will support care leavers to achieve 5 key outcomes.

¹ [Care Leaver Strategy. A cross-departmental strategy for children leaving care](#), 2013

The first of these is that all young people leaving care should be better prepared and supported to live independently. The actions that we will undertake in order to achieve this include:

- setting out in law for the first time what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent;
- creating a new care leaver covenant;
- introducing a new legal duty on local authorities to consult on, and publish information about, services for care leavers; and
- extending existing entitlements so that all care leavers will be able to access support from a local authority Personal Adviser to age 25.

The second key outcome is improved access to education, employment and training. In order to achieve this the government will:

- promote the take up of supported internships, including through the provision of targeted information to Personal Advisers;
- meet the training costs for care leavers undertaking apprenticeships up to age 25;
- support care leavers' access to, and achievement in, further and higher education, employment and apprenticeships;
- guarantee a place on the National Citizen Service to every child in care or care leaver aged 16 or 17; and
- consider how best to improve access for care leavers to employment opportunities in government departments and their agencies.

The third key outcome is that care leavers should experience stability in their lives, and feel safe and secure. We will help to achieve this by:

- committing to introduce 'Staying Close' provision for young people leaving residential care;
- continuing to fund local authorities to support Staying Put arrangements;
- providing support for the implementation of the Supported Accommodation Framework;
- raising awareness of care leavers' unique status and their entitlements among prison and probation staff through the provision of additional training; and
- increasing the funding local authorities will receive for supporting former unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

The fourth key outcome is improved access to health support. In order to achieve this we will:

- through a new Expert Group, produce care pathways, quality standards and models of care for looked after children and care leavers with mental health problems;
- use the new Mental Health Services Data Set to inform the future delivery of services to care leavers; and
- improve accountability regarding the local provision of health services, for example through Care Quality Commission and Joint Targeted Area inspections.

The fifth and final key outcome that we wish to promote through this strategy is that care leavers should achieve financial stability. We will help them to do this by:

- exempting care leavers from changes to eligibility for housing support for 18-21 year-olds in Universal Credit;
- reviewing the case to extend the exemption to the Shared Accommodation Rate of housing support within Universal Credit, for care leavers to age 25; and
- ensuring, through our review of the Personal Adviser role, that care leavers are able to access advice and support to help them manage their money.

In addition to identifying and implementing specific measures to improve outcomes for care leavers, this strategy makes it clear that the government has a significant role to play in driving reform and improvement. Partly, this will involve promoting and sharing best practice, through the creation of the new Children's Social Care What Works Centre, and our work with the 'Partners in Practice' group of local authorities. We will also continue to support and challenge local authorities and, where failure is found and services are found to be inadequate, we will intervene.

Finally, it is important that we should have effective means of measuring the impact of actions that we will be undertaking through this strategy. The Department for Education (DfE) will continue to publish care leaver outcome data annually and, for the year ending March 2016, will also publish data for 17 and 18 year-old care leavers for the first time. Work will also be undertaken to explore how data can be shared more effectively between relevant government departments. To ensure that care leavers' voices are heard more powerfully in the formulation of government policy, a new national care leaver advisory group will be created and facilitated by the DfE. And to ensure that the implementation of this strategy is managed effectively, a senior group of Whitehall officials will meet twice yearly to review progress and goals.

1 INTRODUCTION

A Brief History of Leaving Care Support

- 1.1 Before the Leaving Care Act (2000)², there was no statutory framework in place for care leavers, with each local authority determining what level of support it provided. With no nationally-set expectation about what was an adequate level of support, many care leavers received only minimal assistance. The 2000 Act introduced, for the first time, requirements on local authorities to: assess the needs of the young person once they left care; appoint a Personal Adviser for them; and develop a pathway plan. This support was available to care leavers up to age 18, or to age 21 if the young person was in education.
- 1.2 In 2008, the Children and Young Persons Act³ introduced provisions that required local authorities to provide assistance to care leavers in education (including a £2,000 bursary for those in higher education); and extended support from a Personal Adviser to age 21 for all care leavers; and to 25 if they remained in education.
- 1.3. During the last Parliament, there were three further key developments to improve the quality of support that care leavers receive:
 - The first cross-government care leaver strategy was published in 2013⁴. It recognised the need to work coherently across government to address care leavers' needs in the round; and introduced a number of changes to policies and practices so that care leavers were better supported. These included measures to better identify care leavers so that they could receive tailored support. For example, Jobcentre Plus introduced a 'marker' so that care leavers could be identified and offered additional help, such as access to the Work Programme from day one of unemployment;
 - The 2014 Children & Families Act⁵ introduced the 'Staying Put' duty. This requires local authorities to support young people to remain with their former foster carers to age 21 where both the young person and carer want the arrangement to continue – allowing those young people to enjoy continuity in their care arrangements and a more gradual transition to adulthood; and

² [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act, 2000](#)

³ [Children and Young Persons Act, 2008](#)

⁴ [Care Leaver Strategy – A cross-departmental strategy for children leaving care, 2013](#)

⁵ [Children and Families Act, 2014](#)

- The introduction of a new inspection framework for children’s social care in 2014⁶, which for the first time had a specific judgement on the quality of leaving care support.

Our Vision

- 1.4 We are determined to bring about the widest reaching reforms to children’s social care in a generation. We want a system staffed and led by the best trained professionals; dynamic and free to innovate in the interests of children; with less bureaucracy; new checks and balances designed to hold the system to account in the right ways; and new ways to intervene where services consistently fail some of the most vulnerable in our society. Our strategy – *Putting Children First* – published on 4 July 2016, sets out how we will achieve this.
- 1.5 The best children’s social care services in England deliver truly excellent help and support to children and young people. These services do not just improve their circumstances; they transform them completely. But whilst there is much excellent practice out there, evidence from Ofsted inspections points to continued variability in the quality of work with children and young people.
- 1.6 We do not underestimate the pressures that children’s social care faces: increased fiscal constraint; higher demand for services; and new threats to our children and young people as they become targets for radicalisation, child sexual exploitation or gang culture. But we know that these challenges are far from insurmountable. Ofsted’s analysis shows that the pattern of inspection outcomes is not about how deprived an area is, or even the amount of money being spent on children’s social care – some of the lowest performers are in fact the highest spenders. Ofsted’s inspections this year show that, regardless of context, providing outstanding services *is* possible, and ‘good’ is a standard that any local authority can achieve and maintain⁷.
- 1.7 To support this innovation and drive for excellence, by 2020 we want to see a more diverse range of children’s social care organisations, operating over new geographical areas, supported by meaningful data and an inspection regime that supports high-quality evidence-based front line practice. And crucially, the performance of these new organisations must be driven by challenging, sharp and practice-focused accountability. Our most vulnerable children and young people deserve nothing less.

⁶ [Inspecting local authority children’s services: framework](#), 2014, Ofsted

⁷ [Ofsted Social Care Annual Report](#), 2016, Ofsted

1.8 This vision applies just as much to the services and support that we provide to young people leaving care as it does to other parts of the social care system. The measures we introduced during the last Parliament have been important in driving up the quality of support that care leavers receive, but they have not resulted in the fundamental shift in care leavers' life chances that we want to see. To achieve that change, we believe that we need to focus on three key areas:

- Developing new ways of supporting care leavers;
- Making corporate parenting everyone's responsibility; and
- Driving system improvement.

Developing new ways of supporting care leavers

1.9 We do not believe that we can achieve the 'step-change' that is needed simply by providing more of the same. That is why we want to stimulate new thinking about how we help care leavers to make successful transitions to adulthood – both in terms of how services are delivered, and what support is provided.

1.10 We want to explore whether there are different models of delivery that can achieve better outcomes for care leavers. We can see the potential benefits of, for example, local services for care leavers being delivered via a Care Leaver Trust – a new organisation with a culture and objectives entirely focused on care leavers. A Trust model could provide an environment where there is greater scope to innovate; and greater flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of their care leaver cohort. Trusts could also operate across a bigger geographical area, providing a more consistent offer across neighbouring local authorities and result in more effective commissioning of services.

1.11 We also want to explore different ways of helping care leavers to develop the social networks that will sustain them during their transition to adulthood and beyond. Personal Advisers play an important role in helping care leavers to achieve their goals, but cannot always provide all the support that care leavers need. In the next section of this document we set out a range of alternative models that provide new ways of meeting the practical and emotional needs of care leavers that we believe will provide greater continuity of support.

Making corporate parenting everyone's responsibility

1.12 We know that there are many individuals and teams working in local authority leaving care services that are committed to supporting children in care and care leavers in a way that any other parent would. In some local authorities, like Trafford, that commitment starts at the top of the organisation and permeates through all of its services. But, in many other areas, there are examples of one

part of the council helping care leavers while another part of the organisation is acting in a way that undermines that work. We will **introduce a set of corporate parenting principles** that will require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.

- 1.13 We also want that corporate parenting responsibility to extend beyond what is provided by local authorities, so that government departments and their agencies, charities and private sector organisations play their part. Later sections of this document set out examples of how policies of individual government departments have been adapted to recognise the challenges faced by care leavers. And **we will introduce a ‘care leaver covenant’** that will enable organisations to make commitments to care leavers in a way that is most appropriate for them.

Driving system improvement

- 1.14 As the spread of Ofsted judgements about leaving care services illustrates, there is significant variation in the quality of support that care leavers receive. It is important that government takes an active role in highlighting best practice and sharing what works, as well as providing strong challenge where services are not good enough. The final section of this document sets out how we will do this.

What are we trying to achieve?

- 1.15 To achieve our ambitions for care leavers, we need to use the three drivers of improvement listed above to make progress against five key issues that care leavers raised during our consultation events:
- Not being adequately prepared or supported to deal with the challenges of living independently;
 - Barriers accessing education, employment and training;
 - Lack of stability, safety and security;
 - Difficulties in accessing the health support they need, in particular help to maintain their emotional health and well-being; and
 - Problems achieving financial stability⁸.

⁸ Source: Between January and March 2016 DfE officials led a series of consultation events with care leavers. See also page 17.

- 1.16 Many of these issues are inter-related. Problems with money are often exacerbated by the fact that many care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET). And the lack of a stable, safe place to live can impact negatively on a young person's emotional health and put them at greater danger of a number of safeguarding risks, such as sexual exploitation or involvement with gangs. This reinforces the need for a cross-government approach. The measures that local authorities and government departments have agreed to take forward are set out below under the five key outcomes that we are seeking to achieve.
- 1.17 As the following paragraphs illustrate, achieving those outcomes depends not just on what happens when young people leave care. The quality of care they receive earlier in their lives is also crucial. That is why, alongside this care leaver strategy, DfE has also published recently a wider children's social care policy paper, setting out what we will do to transform the children's social care sector⁹; as well as the report of Sir Martin Narey's review of residential care¹⁰.

How well is the system working at present?

- 1.18 Making an overall assessment of the quality of support that care leavers receive is not straightforward. In particular, it is challenging because of the significant variation in the quality of support provided at a local level – which is reflected in both the outcomes that care leavers achieve and in the spread of Ofsted judgements about leaving care services.
- 1.19 Our consultations with care leavers also illustrated a wide range of personal experiences. For example, some care leavers reported that their Personal Adviser had been the key person who had helped them to successfully navigate the challenges of living independently, while for others, support from their Personal Adviser had been limited and ineffective¹¹. It is also challenging because the nature of the cohort is constantly changing, making the drawing of comparisons with care leavers' outcomes in previous years less reliable.
- 1.20 This next section provides an overview of the current position, drawing on: the information we have on the cohort (and how it is changing); the national outcome data that DfE publishes annually; Ofsted reports and judgements about the quality

⁹ [Putting children first – Delivering our vision for excellent children's social care](#), Department for Education, 2016

¹⁰ [Residential care in England, Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care](#), Sir Martin Narey, 2016

¹¹ Source: Between January and March 2016 DfE officials led a series of consultation events with care leavers. See also page 17.

of local delivery; and feedback from the care leavers we consulted on the strategy while it was being developed.

A changing cohort

1.21 Around 10,800 young people left care aged 16 or over in the year ending March 2015, an increase of over 40% in the last decade. There are an increasing number of young people who enter care aged 16 or over, accounting for 16% of all those who entered care in the year ending March 2015, compared to 12% in the year ending March 2011. Changes to the law which require young people on remand to become looked after, along with the impact of the Southwark Judgement – which means that 16 and 17 year-olds who present as homeless also become looked after children – have both changed the nature of the cohort of care leavers that local authorities must support. And local authorities are looking after increasing numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and supporting more care leavers who are former UASC¹².

Care leavers' outcomes

1.22 Care leavers' outcomes are not determined solely by the quality of leaving care support that they receive – although this is clearly an important factor. But Care leavers' experiences before and during care are also important determinants of their outcomes, which means that comparisons between the outcomes of care leavers and other young people in the general population are of only limited value when making judgements about the quality and impact of the support that is provided when young people leave care.

1.23 The lasting impact of the events and circumstances that led to a child being taken into care; the high incidence of Special Educational Needs (SEN) among care leavers (around 60% of children in care for 12 months have SEN, compared to 15% of children in the general population)¹³ and emotional health problems (around half of children in care have a Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score that is borderline or cause for concern)¹⁴; the impact of placement moves while in care (including the resultant change in school that often occurs) – all contribute to low attainment, with only 14% of children in care achieving 5 good

¹² Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

¹³ Statistics about care leaver cohort taken from the Department of Education's [Statistical First Release Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2015](#)

¹⁴ Statistics about care leaver cohort taken from the Department of Education's [Statistical First Release Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England](#), 31 March 2014

GCSEs in 2015, compared to 53% of non-looked after children¹⁵. Leaving school with few qualifications adversely affects care leavers' progress into further or higher education, apprenticeships or skilled jobs.

- 1.24 As well as these historical factors, care leavers also face the added challenge of having to cope with the demands of living on their own at a young age: having to manage finances, maintain a home and manage their lives independently, often without the support from families that most of us take for granted. That is why it is incumbent on the state as the corporate parent to do as much as it can to give care leavers the support and opportunities they need to succeed. While we cannot mitigate the impact of all of the disadvantages that care leavers have experienced, we can ensure that as a society we do as much as we can to help care leavers overcome them.
- 1.25 Notwithstanding these points, the fact remains that the data on care leavers' outcomes is stark and there has been limited improvement over time. In the year ending March 2015, local authorities were 'in touch' with, and provided data to DfE on, 88% of care leavers. This is an increase from 84% in the year ending March 2014¹⁶. In many of the cases where no information was provided, this was because the care leaver had either refused contact, or had told the local authority that they no longer required support. Nevertheless, the wide variation in local authority performance on keeping in touch indicates that more needs to be done to maintain contact with care leavers in some areas.
- 1.26 In the year ending March 2015, 39% of 19-21 year-old care leavers were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) – an increase of 1 percentage point compared to the previous year. Of these, over a third were NEET due to either a disability, or because they were a young parent. Six percent of 19-21 year-old care leavers were in Higher Education; and a further 18% were in other types of education. Twenty-three per cent were in employment or training, an increase of 3 percentage points on the previous year¹⁷.
- 1.27 There is no national data that reports on care leavers' longer term outcomes, but research consistently shows that care leavers are over-represented in studies on people in custody, homelessness and other negative outcomes¹⁸, although those

¹⁵ Statistics about care leaver cohort taken from the Department of Education's [Statistical First Release Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2015](#)

¹⁶ Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

¹⁷ Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

¹⁸ Department of Education, National Audit Office *Care leavers' transition to adulthood*, July 2015

studies normally include people of all ages and so are not focused on the current cohort of care leavers.

Ofsted judgements on the quality of leaving care services



1.28 The two tables above¹⁹ show the spread of Ofsted judgements for both the 'care leaver sub-judgement' and 'overall effectiveness' judgement from inspections Ofsted has conducted under its Single Inspection Framework. They show that two-thirds of leaving care services, and three-quarters of overall effectiveness judgements were judged to either 'require improvement' or to be 'inadequate'. Although more care leaving services (36%) were judged 'good' or 'outstanding' than social care services overall (25%), the picture as a whole shows that the quality of care leaving support that local authorities provide needs to improve significantly.

1.29 The key messages from Ofsted inspection reports are that:

- The quality of pathway planning for care leavers is not good enough in around two-thirds of local authorities inspected, with a lack of clear, specific actions to drive care leavers' progress;
- Not enough is done to raise awareness among care leavers of their entitlements;
- In around half of local authorities inspected, not enough support was being provided to help care leavers to find and sustain education, training or employment;

¹⁹ Data provided by Ofsted

- In around a third of local authorities, care leavers did not have access to a suitable range of accommodation options; and
 - In too many local authorities, senior corporate parents did not consistently prioritise the needs of care leavers or have sufficiently high aspirations for them.
- 1.30 There were also a number of positive themes reported by Ofsted and many cases of good practice in individual authorities, or on particular aspects of leaving care support. In most local authorities care leavers themselves spoke positively about the support provided by Personal Advisers. In the best performing authorities, effective partnerships with Housing Services were providing care leavers with a range of independent and semi-independent accommodation options to reflect their different levels of readiness for independent living. And in the majority of recent inspections, Ofsted was identifying effective work being undertaken to improve local authorities' performance on keeping in touch with their care leavers.
- 1.31 Trafford and Kensington and Chelsea have shown that it is possible to provide outstanding support to care leavers. Their work is characterised by tenacious planning for young people's futures at all levels and across all key agencies. Young people particularly valued the caring and enduring relationships with Personal Advisers and from others that were responsible for their care and support. Significantly, in these local authorities, there is a strong track record of effective and ambitious corporate parenting of looked after children and care leavers.

Feedback from care leavers

- 1.32 During our many conversations with care leavers, a number of consistent themes emerged:
- Where they had developed a good relationship with an adult – a former foster carer, a member of staff at a residential home, an independent visitor or social worker – they wanted support to maintain those relationships once they left care, on an informal basis;
 - They wanted the professionals who support them to have high aspirations for them; and to encourage and support them to achieve their goals;
 - They reported that leaving care still felt like a 'cliff-edge', where they were suddenly responsible for managing budgets, running a home; and maintaining their participation in education or work on their own – with insufficient preparation for these challenges. The introduction of Staying Put was seen by care leavers as a positive way of smoothing out the process of transition to adulthood and provided for continuity of relationships and care arrangements;

- As well as not having been given the necessary life skills before leaving care, they also felt that the process of leaving care itself was often rushed and that planning for leaving care should start earlier. A number of care leavers wanted greater flexibility around the age of leaving care, to avoid their 18th birthday feeling like a 'point of no return';
- Care leavers said that they wanted more choice about where they lived and who supported them; and more information about the support that was available to them locally; and what they were entitled to from universal services such as Jobcentre Plus;
- They said that there were times when their emotional health and well-being was not positive, but when that was the case they found it difficult to access the support they needed. In particular, they found it difficult to access adult mental health services once they turned 18;
- A minority of care leavers reported that they felt scared – in particular when they did not feel that the place they were accommodated in was safe, either because of its location or because of the other people who lived there – or that they were vulnerable to a range of safeguarding risks, such as involvement in gangs, crime, or sexual exploitation;
- They said that they wanted to be empowered to do things for themselves and have opportunities to get on in life – but that there needed to be greater understanding among service providers about the different challenges they faced compared to young people their age in the general population – in particular that they often did not have the safety-net of a supportive family network;
- But overwhelmingly, the biggest issue raised by care leavers was one of isolation and loneliness; and the difficulty of navigating their way through their late teens and early twenties without a strong and stable social network to support them.

Developing the Strategy

1.33 In developing this strategy, we have taken account of the views of a broad range of individuals and organisations. Firstly, we have listened to what care leavers have told us. At eight separate consultation events we asked care leavers to think about their experience of leaving care and tell us:

- What were the most difficult challenges they had faced;
- In which areas they would have welcomed additional support; and
- In which areas did they felt well-supported and how this helped their transition to adulthood.

1.34 A summary of the key points that emerged from those discussions with care leavers is set out above. We also held discussions with the organisations that support care leavers, both individually and in a roundtable event that brought together all of the key voluntary sector bodies that work with these young people.

1.35 We were also keen to ensure that we properly understood the delivery challenges involved in providing services to care leavers and so have held detailed discussions with Ofsted (a summary of Ofsted's key findings in relation to leaving care support are set out above), as well as engaging with local authority colleagues who deliver leaving care services – through consultation with members of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (an association with members from over 80 local authority leaving care teams) and through working with Mark Riddell (Manager of the outstanding Children in Care and Leaving Care team in Trafford) who has worked with DfE as a 'critical friend', throughout the development of the strategy.

2. INNOVATION AND SYSTEM REFORM

2.1 Care leavers have told us that we need a system that puts the development of meaningful, long-term relationships and social networks at its heart. The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme is central to achieving this. The programme is already supporting local authorities and other organisations to develop new approaches to children's social care, through an investment of over £100 million, encompassing 53 projects. So far the Innovation Programme has focused on three areas:

- Rethinking children's social work: These projects have started to show evidence that giving social workers and other frontline workers freedom and support to design services that they know children and families need can have a dramatic impact;
- Rethinking support for adolescents in or on the edge of care: providing integrated models of support; and
- Other innovative solutions outside these two priority areas: – providing the opportunity for the sector to drive reform where it is most needed or come to us with innovative ideas falling outside of the two priority areas.

2.2 In April this year, we announced a further £200 million investment to extend the programme²⁰. We will use the next phase of the Innovation Programme to make progress on two fronts:

- Deepening our understanding of the conditions needed for excellent practice and supporting more local authorities to rethink their whole practice system around them; and
- Building our evidence base and understanding of how we can best support young people making the transition to adulthood.

2.3 This focus on transition to adulthood in the second round of the programme provides us with the opportunity to work with local authorities and charities to find new ways to deliver services and support to care leavers that result in them achieving better outcomes. There are a number of areas where we are keen to test new approaches.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/200-million-to-transform-life-chances-of-vulnerable-young-people>

Providing More Practical and Emotional Support

- 2.4 While we want all care leavers to benefit from high quality Personal Adviser support to age 25, we recognise that the support that care leavers currently receive is patchy; and even where it is good, Personal Advisers cannot always provide care leavers with as much practical and emotional support as they need. Just as social workers need to be supported to develop excellent practice skills, and given the freedom to work in innovative ways, so too do Personal Advisers.
- 2.5 **We are carrying out a review of the Personal Adviser role** to better understand how they spend their time and identify models of delivery that maximise contact time between them and the young people they are supporting, so that they can develop the trusting relationships that care leavers value so much. A second stage of the review will consider wider questions about the role, including: what skills, knowledge and qualifications are needed to perform the role effectively; how we can raise the status of the role; whether the name ‘Personal Adviser’ best describes what this important role encompasses; what are the routes into Personal Adviser work (including for care leavers); and whether there are enough opportunities for development training for those currently carrying out the role. Given how important it is that care leavers are able to manage their money effectively the review will also consider how Personal Advisers can best support them in this regard.
- 2.6 **We will also encourage employers to come forward to create a Personal Adviser Apprenticeship**, which would prepare people for the demands of this challenging role; and also open a route for care-experienced individuals to join the workforce and play a bigger part in the delivery of services to care leavers. We have had positive discussions with the employer that is leading the development of new children’s social care apprenticeships as part of the Trailblazer apprenticeship programme, and will announce further details in due course. We anticipate that the apprenticeship would be set at Level 3 (equivalent to A level) and would take between 12 and 18 months to complete.
- 2.7 **But we are keen to test out approaches that look beyond the Personal Adviser model**, drawing on other sources of support so that care leavers have a wider network around them.

“If it wasn’t for my independent visitor, I would not be where I am today – she raised my ambition and she has helped me by showing my opportunities, helping with applications. Most importantly she has stuck by me; even though the service ran out and still is here to this day!” Care Leaver.

2.8 Examples of the sort of approaches we want to invest in include:

- Supporting continuing relationships with former carers and professionals: during our consultations with care leavers, a number of participants spoke passionately about a key individual who had helped them in their childhood. For some it was a former foster carer, for others it was a member of staff at their former residential home; and for others still it was a social worker, or independent visitor. Staying Put allows for a continuing relationship with a former foster carer. But where Staying Put isn't the right answer, foster carers may still be able to provide ongoing emotional and practical support even if the young person does not still live with them – in the same way as parents do when their children leave home. And there is also the opportunity for continuing relationships between care leavers and other professionals they know and trust. We are keen to see projects that harness this potential support by helping those relationships to continue once the young person leaves care;
- Mentoring: Many local authorities will already have appointed mentors for care leavers, including adults with personal experience of the care system who have a unique understanding of the challenges that care leavers face in moving from care to independence. But we don't know enough about the successful features of the best mentoring programmes, which is why we are interested in identifying and scaling-up those interventions that have the most robust evidence of success.
- Family-Finding Approaches: Based on an approach first used in the United States, family-finding uses family group conferences to identify a range of adults, including family members and professionals who have known the young person during their childhood, who are prepared to make a life-long commitment to the young person. Each individual's contribution will differ, but in sum represents a robust package of support that the young person can draw on.
- Local Area Co-ordinators: We are keen to test an approach that has been used successfully in adult social care which involves area co-ordinators working with vulnerable adults to help them access community resources and support which, over time, reduces their reliance on statutory services and helps them to develop a supportive, community-based network of activities and personal contacts. This could be particularly beneficial to care leavers with a disability, who may need ongoing adult social care support to help them achieve positive outcomes.

Delivering Services Differently

- 2.9 **We also want to free-up local authorities to deliver services in new ways and in partnership with the voluntary sector.** New models can:
- refresh leadership and attract strong and ambitious people to organisations where new ways of doing things are needed;
 - provide a sharper focus on children’s social care as a whole or on aspects of the system;
 - enable existing strong organisations to innovate more easily and to create a distinctive culture of excellence; and
 - bring together different areas and organisations in robust structures which go beyond collaboration and into integration.
- 2.10 **City Deals** in particular provide an opportunity to test out new approaches and we are working closely with Greater Manchester to explore the possibility of delivering a single care leaving service across the 10 Greater Manchester authorities, using Trafford’s leading-edge service to drive an improved offer to all care leavers. This sort of innovation opens up new opportunities to commission services in a way that: provides greater value for money; creates greater flexibility in placing young people in accommodation in neighbouring boroughs; and has the potential to create a more consistent offer that reflects best practice across all participating authorities.
- 2.11 **Care Leaver Trusts, which give those working closer to the frontline the freedoms and flexibilities to operate more innovatively and creatively, represent an approach that we are keen to support through the Innovation Programme.** Trusts could provide the opportunity for new bodies focussed entirely on improving care leavers’ life chances, harnessing the power of the voluntary sector to provide the networks and relationships that we know are key to a successful transition.
- 2.12 We are also keen that local authorities, and the staff that work in them, should consider what scope there is to establish **public service mutuals** to deliver services to care leavers differently. One example of a mutual model which is already transforming the delivery of children’s services is Achieving for Children – a social enterprise working across the London Boroughs of Kingston and Richmond.
- 2.13 **Social impact bonds** (SIBs) are designed to help reform public service delivery by allowing social sector organisations to participate in ‘payment by results’ contracts. SIBs improve the social outcomes of publicly-funded services by making

funding conditional on achieving results. Investors pay for the project at the start, and then receive payments based on the results achieved by the project. Rather than focusing on inputs or outputs, SIBs are based on achieving social 'outcomes'. The outcomes are predefined and measurable.

- 2.14 Working with local commissioners, voluntary and community sector organisations and social investors, we believe that there is significant potential for SIBs to improve the way that care leavers are supported as they make a transition to independent living, and particularly to support their sustained participation in employment and training. **We will, therefore, make funding available from the Innovation Programme to support the development and commissioning of care leaver SIBs over the rest of this Parliament to test new approaches to support care leavers.** In order to enable bidders to submit expressions of interest, we will be running an additional bidding round into the Innovation Programme in the autumn in which organisations interested in running a care leaver SIB will be able to apply for funding to help to pay for its set up and to provide outcomes payments.

Providing a stronger offer for those leaving residential care

- 2.15 Care leavers have told us that having a safe, secure and stable place to live is essential if they are to sustain education, training or employment; experience positive emotional health and well-being; and avoid safeguarding risks. The *Staying Put* duty, introduced in 2014, requires local authorities to provide support so that care leavers can continue to live with their former foster carers. However, there has been no equivalent provision in place for young people leaving residential care.
- 2.16 Sir Martin Narey considered this issue in his recent report on children's residential care²¹. As he noted, young people leaving children's homes require as much support, if not more, than their counterparts who have been looked after in foster care. He was clear that the need for nurturing, consistent relationships does not stop when young people leave care; and that more needs to be done to avoid a cliff edge for those leaving residential care.
- 2.17 His report recommended that the government should introduce '*Staying Close*' – an alternative to *Staying Put* – designed specifically for young people leaving residential care. This would allow young people to live independently, but in a location very close to the children's home they lived in previously. They would

²¹ [Residential care in England, Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care](#), Sir Martin Narey, 2016

continue to have the support of the same team and same key worker, and would be able to visit the home frequently, to experience the continuity and more gradual transition to independence that those leaving foster care enjoy when they move into a Staying Put arrangement.

- 2.18 In response to Sir Martin's specific recommendation, **we are making a commitment to introduce Staying Close for young people leaving residential care**. As Sir Martin also recommends, we are first going to pilot variations of the scheme, through opening a specific stream of the Innovation Programme, in order to understand the costings, practicalities and impact of this measure.
- 2.19 Later sections of this document say more about the work we have been doing with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) more widely to ensure that accommodation for care leavers is both suitable and affordable.

Empowering Care Leavers to Provide and Design Services for Themselves

Being empowered was a strong theme in our consultations with care leavers. It is also judged to be a key component of many of the most interesting innovations that are currently being taken forward in the sector.

The 'HOUSE Project' in Stoke has involved setting up a housing co-operative led by young care leavers using homes owned by the council.

Care leavers lead the co-operative and have access to a purpose-designed skills and training programme to help them do this (and to build skills related to the co-operative), building their capacity, social skills and employability in the process. Young people are able to retain their tenancy as long as they want to. As they move out of the co-operative, but want to keep their home, new local-authority owned houses are released to the co-operative to maintain the stock of 10 tenancies for care leavers.

As well as helping care leavers with their accommodation needs, the project gives them the opportunity to experience the control, ownership and pride in doing things for themselves that have been missing from their lives.

- 2.20 The New Belongings programme is another example of care leavers themselves being empowered to drive change in the services they receive. A national group

of care leavers was paid as consultants to work with care leavers in the local area they were supporting, to audit what care leavers thought about the services they received and to work with the senior managers in the council to develop a stronger local offer. This DfE-funded programme worked with 29 local authorities over two years and many of the participating authorities continue to work together in clusters to share practice and what works. **Subject to the outcome of the independent evaluation of New Belongings, we are keen to expand this approach – which puts care leavers in the ‘driving seat’ – to an increasing number of local authorities.**

Preparing care leavers for the challenges of living independently

“When leaving care I was not ready or prepared for what lay ahead for me. Living in my own flat at the age of 18, I felt alone and unsupported. I always came across as older for my age so I think it was assumed I would be ok. However I was far from ok.” Care leaver.

2.21 Care leavers consistently tell us that they were not sufficiently prepared for the realities of living independently. In particular, they report experiencing difficulties in relation to budgeting, household maintenance and how to access universal services. Many local authorities already provide support of this kind and **we are interested in how we might use the Innovation Programme to scale-up approaches that have been successful.**

Supporting care leavers who are young parents

2.22 Section 3 of this document sets out the universal and targeted services that are in place to support care leavers who are parents to give their children the best start in life. However, for a minority of care leavers with complex problems, getting pregnant and subsequently having their children taken into care can become a pattern that requires a different response. Programmes such as PAUSE, which originated in Hackney and has been extended to six other local authority areas supported by funding from the DfE Innovation Programme, work intensively with young women in this situation to prevent repeat pregnancies and subsequent removal of their children into care. **We want to extend approaches like PAUSE into new areas to break this inter-generational cycle of care.**

3. EMBEDDING A CULTURE OF CORPORATE PARENTING

- 3.1 Everyone in society has a responsibility to help those who have been in care to overcome the difficulties that they experienced in their childhoods, so that they can lead successful lives – it is not something that government alone can achieve.
- 3.2 As this section will show, government departments and their agencies can play a vital role by shaping their policies so that they give care leavers a helping hand. The voluntary sector plays a unique role, providing opportunities for care leavers to develop skills, confidence and resilience through their programmes for vulnerable young people. Private businesses can offer care leavers opportunities to gain work experience or to take up apprenticeships; and individual volunteers, including those who have a care experience themselves, can act as mentors or champions for care leavers.
- 3.3 But more than anything else, the local help and support that care leavers receive from their local authority leaving care team is critical to whether care leavers make the transition from care to independence successfully.
- 3.4 This section sets out the action we will take to help care leavers to overcome the problems identified in Section 1:

Outcome 1: Better prepared and supported to live independently

“Over the past year the best thing for me has been my support worker with all the support she has given me I feel like you have built up a good relationship with her and I feel like if I have any queries I can always go to her about them so it has been nice to build up a good relationship with someone who I can trust.” Care Leaver

- 3.5 We want the legislative framework that applies to leaving care services to ensure that care leavers are given the high quality support they need to succeed. Building on the Staying Put duty that was introduced in 2014, we are introducing three new legislative provisions in the Children and Social Work Bill²² to add to the entitlements that care leavers already benefit from.

²² <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/childrenandsocialwork.html>

Corporate Parenting Principles

- 3.6 For the first time, we will set out in law what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent, through a set of corporate parenting principles that guide how local authorities should act when providing services and support to the young people leaving their care. The principles will apply to all of the services that the local authority provides – not just the Children’s Services department – so that, for example, Housing Services (including those delivered by district councils) and Leisure Services also deliver their services to care leavers in a way that: promotes their best interests; responds to their wishes and feelings; helps them to make the best use of local authority services; promotes high aspirations and the best possible outcomes for them; provides them with stability; and supports their transition to adulthood. These principles will apply to both children in care and care leavers.
- 3.7 The principles will embed in every local authority what we, and Ofsted, have already seen in the best performing local authorities like Trafford, where from the Chief Executive down there is a commitment within the council to giving care leavers the best possible chance to succeed, including ring-fencing apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers and giving them free access to the borough’s leisure centres.
- 3.8 Other authorities are thinking hard about what it truly means to be a corporate parent, looking at it through the lens of what any reasonable parent does to give their child the best start in life. For many of our young people that means providing some financial support when they first live independently and are in a job at the bottom of their career ladder. So, for example, North Somerset has taken the decision that its care leavers should not have to pay Council Tax until they reach age 22. **We would encourage all local authorities to consider how they can support their care leavers like this, using the flexibilities at their disposal.** Further examples are provided later in this Section.

Care Leaver Covenant

- 3.9 The corporate parenting principles will apply to local authorities. But we want other public, private and charitable bodies to be able to set out how, as members of civil society, they too will make a commitment to support care leavers. **So we will introduce a new voluntary care leaver covenant that organisations can sign up to in a way that makes sense to them. We plan to launch the covenant during ‘care leavers’ week’ in October 2016.**
- 3.10 The covenant will provide an opportunity for central government departments to set out the services and support that they offer care leavers. **The Cabinet Office, for example, has already made a commitment that every child in care or care**

leaver aged 16 or 17 has a guaranteed place on the National Citizen Service programme.

- 3.11 The voluntary and charitable sectors already play a key role in both supporting individual care leavers to develop skills and confidence, as well as providing support materials that allow frontline practitioners to develop ways of working with care leavers that take account of their unique experiences. We want to harness all this energy and enthusiasm, working in partnership with voluntary sector and charities to promote the covenant and to encourage others to get behind it.
- 3.12 We will also use the covenant to build on successful work with employers who have provided opportunities to care leavers, such as those provided by the Marriott Hotel chain through the 'From Care2Work' programme, funded by DfE. But the role of businesses could potentially go beyond offering work opportunities and we will be exploring how the private sector could help to make the transition to adulthood and independence easier for care leavers.

Care Leaver Local Offer

- 3.13 One of the most common concerns raised by care leavers is that they are not aware of either their legal entitlements, or the wider support that is available to them locally. **Our second legislative change, therefore, will be to place a requirement on local authorities to consult on, and then publish a local offer for care leavers.** This will complement the local offer already in place covering the education, health and social care services available for children and young people who have Special Educational Needs or are disabled.
- 3.14 Many local authorities already have forums that allow care leavers to feed back views on their leaving care support; and to find out more about what support is available to them. And many authorities also consult their care leavers about what additional support they would find helpful. Our legislation will formalise that process where it currently happens and extend it to every local authority, so that every care leaver in the country is aware of the support that they can expect.
- 3.15 As well as setting out care leavers' legal entitlements, including its policy on Staying Put, the local offer will describe the other non-statutory services that the local authority leaving care team provides specifically for care leavers, such as health drop-in sessions. It will also set out how relevant universal services could support care leavers' transitions to adulthood, such as careers advice services for all young people. The requirement to publish the local offer will bring greater transparency and allow local authorities to learn about services that are being provided in other local areas.

Extending support from a Personal Adviser to all care leavers to age 25

- 3.16 At present, all care leavers receive support from a local authority Personal Adviser to age 21. The Personal Adviser helps the care leaver to make the transition to independence, using a 'pathway plan' to identify the steps the young person needs to take to achieve their goals; and how the local authority will support them to do so.
- 3.17 If a care leaver remains in or returns to education, support from their Personal Adviser continues up to age 25. But other care leavers, including those who are (NEET), are not currently entitled to continuing support. **In recognition of the extra vulnerability of those who are NEET and the fact that many young people in the wider population continue to get support from their parents until their mid-twenties, we are extending support for all care leavers to age 25.** We will provide additional funding for local authorities to implement this new duty.

Outcome 2: Improved access to education, training and employment

"Instead of saying that all care leavers should be in education, employment or training, they should say, step-by-step, let's look at ways of doing it.....if we don't do that stuff (education and training) then we just continue the stereotype. We need to be encouraged to challenge the stereotype!" Care Leaver

- 3.18 For the period ending March 2016, we are collecting data on 17 and 18 year-old care leavers for the first time (to be published in October 2016). Combining this with the data that we already collect on 19, 20 and 21 year-olds will give us a much clearer picture of care leavers' career progression as they leave care and move towards independence.
- 3.19 What we do know about the activity of 19 to 21 year-old care leavers in the year ending March 2015 is that, at this stage in their journey: 6% are in HE; 18% are in other types of education; 23% are in training or employment; and 39% are NEET, of which around a third are NEET due to disability or young parenthood²³.
- 3.20 We want to help all care leavers to reach their full potential, whether that is going to college or university, taking up an apprenticeship or getting a skilled job. That will require a range of approaches: supporting those with high potential to achieve,

²³ Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

as well as removing barriers for those who have either fallen behind or need extra support to remain in education or training.

- 3.21 While we have introduced a number of recent reforms to improve the educational attainment of children in care – including making it a statutory requirement that local authorities appoint a Virtual School Head to raise attainment of looked after children; and providing £1,900 a year extra to schools to support the progress of every Looked After Child on their register, through the Pupil Premium Plus – it is still the case that only 14% of children in care achieved 5 good GCSEs in 2015, compared to 53% of non-looked after children²⁴.
- 3.22 This limits the options open to care leavers when they leave school and requires us to think creatively about how we provide the opportunities for care leavers to catch up on education that they have missed out on; and to develop the essential knowledge and skills that will enable them to make progress. This provision must be flexible enough to respond to the needs of individual care leavers (for example through allowing the length of courses to be extended so that additional support can be provided).

Work-based Learning

- 3.23 The government has asked Lord Sainsbury to review technical education, including the needs of young people who are not ready to access a technical qualification at age 16 (or older if their education has been delayed). The government's response to this challenge will be set out in 'The Skills Plan', which will be published shortly.
- 3.24 Care leavers with Education, Health and Care Plans or statements of SEN who need more help to make the transition from education into employment can access supported internship study programmes. Based primarily at an employer, they are tailored to the individual needs of a young person to equip them with the skills they need for the workplace. The young person and the employer will receive support from an expert job coach throughout. **We will provide Personal Advisers with more information on supported internships so that they can be promoted to care leavers who would benefit from this sort of intensive support.**
- 3.25 The government is committed to reaching 3 million apprenticeship starts in England by 2020. Under apprenticeship frameworks, funding for the costs of training is covered for all 16-18 year-olds. The same level of funding is in place for

²⁴ Statistics about care leaver cohort taken from the Department of Education's [Statistical First Release Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2015](#)

apprentices aged 19-23 who are care leavers. As an incentive to employers to recruit more care leavers, and in line with wider government policy, **we will now extend this further to all care leavers up to age 25**. This provision will also be in place for apprenticeships delivered under standards (the new employer-designed, higher quality apprenticeships). The introduction of the apprenticeship levy in April 2017 will mean that the way apprenticeships are funded will be changing. We will publish more information about the new funding arrangements shortly.

- 3.26 We have been asked throughout the development of this strategy document whether we can require companies bidding for public procurement contracts to offer apprenticeships for care leavers. Under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015²⁵, account can already be taken on a case by case basis of wider social benefits, including workforce composition, within the tendering process where these link sufficiently to the subject matter of the contract in question. **We have recently been successful in including apprenticeships and skills development considerations as a whole in government procurements with a value of £10 million and above.**
- 3.27 We are also aware that the Children's Commissioner's office will shortly be publishing a report on widening access to apprenticeships for children in care and care leavers. We welcome this and will give careful consideration to its recommendations so as to try to find new ways of increasing opportunities for children in or leaving care to take up apprenticeships.

Further Education

- 3.28 For many care leavers, their progression route from school will be to a further education (FE) college. All 19-23 year-olds are entitled to free education and training to achieve their first full Level 2 or 3 qualification, and all adults are entitled to free English and maths up to Level 2. Care leavers are a priority group for financial support through the 16-19 Bursary Fund administered by FE colleges, to help with the costs of studying and to help support care leavers' retention in learning. Following our recent reforms to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) system, those care leavers with SEN and Disabilities who need longer to complete and consolidate their education, are now able to maintain their Education, Health and Care Plans until the age of 25 where needed, so that they get the support that they need to achieve their education and training outcomes.

²⁵ [Public Contracts Regulations, 2015](#)

3.29 The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) is funding the Learning & Work Institute (LWI) to **deliver a programme of work to support care leavers' access to, and achievement in FE, employment and apprenticeships**. This will include:

- The development of an existing BIS guide for care leavers into an interactive resource which provides care leavers and their Personal Advisers with essential information about: what courses are available and their progression routes; sources of advice and support (including financial support); and case studies, all of which would support pathway planning for care leavers;
- Working with employers and others to identify effective approaches to enable care leavers to gain experience of the workplace and progress towards employment/apprenticeships, possibly through traineeship opportunities. The outputs will include case studies and a resource for employers;
- Promoting and sharing examples of best practice in engaging and supporting care leavers to succeed in FE.

3.30 We know that many care leavers' lives begin to become more settled when they reach their late teens and early twenties and it is only at this point that they feel ready to return to education. To support care leavers up to age 21 who wish to catch up on the education they may have missed out on when they were younger, Income Support/Universal Credit is available to care leavers who take up full time study in non-advanced education (i.e. secondary level education). Because Universal Credit work related requirements are tailored based on individual characteristics, care leavers who take up full time study will not have requirements applied.

"It's really important to give Care Leavers a chance to go to university when they are a bit older. When we first leave Care, just sorting out our life is the first priority - finding a home, a job, learning to function independently, finding friends, building a community, perhaps marriage and/or having kids-- all those things tend to come first when you don't have 'roots'. For many of us it's important to get these essentials sorted first, and then we can think about furthering our education." Care Leaver

3.31 The data we collect does not currently tell us how many care leavers have taken advantage of this opportunity; or allow us to evaluate the impact of this provision, but we are committed to continuing to work with DWP to provide this evidence. DWP is willing to explore what more can be done in the benefits system to support those wishing to return to education beyond age 21 and up to age 25.

Higher Education

- 3.32 The government is committed to widening access to higher education (HE) for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including care leavers. A key driver for widening participation is through ‘access agreements’ that are agreed by the independent Director for Fair Access (DfA). The DfA has agreed 183 access agreements for 2016/17, which **include plans for universities to spend more than £745 million on measures to improve access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds**. Support for care leavers in access agreements has grown considerably over the years, with around 80% of access agreements including specific action on supporting care leavers.
- 3.33 The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) **has included a Care Leaver identifier as part of the HESA student record, which will support better analysis, research and evaluation for care leavers**. This will also enable more robust monitoring of sector performance in supporting care leavers, including through access agreements. **The government has also funded a National Network for the Education of Care Leavers**, which provides HE activities and resources for care leavers, children in care and the people who support them, which can be accessed at: <http://nnecl.org/about/background>.

Employment

- 3.34 Care Leavers will often need extra help to find work. Jobcentre Plus has introduced a ‘marker’ that allows care leavers to be identified on their system and receive additional help. We want to ensure that as many care leavers as possible benefit from the support that is available, and **we will continue to work with DWP to explore the potential for better sharing of data, both between DfE and DWP analysts to support better tracking of care leavers’ long-term outcomes; and between local authorities and local Jobcentre Plus offices, to support better joint working**.
- 3.35 The benefits of that improved joint working at a local level is evident in the arrangements in Barnet, known as ‘The Barnet Hub Model’, where, funded by the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund, a Jobcentre Plus Work Coach is co-located in the local authority leaving care team, along with a care leaver charity called Drive Forward, who deliver an intensive, 1-2-1 employability programme. This model, which began in late 2014, has already helped over 70 care leavers into work. DWP has run a number of events to raise awareness of this model across the Jobcentre Plus network.

Barnet Care Leaver Hub Case Study

Kemi was placed in care at age 14. When she left college at age 18, staff at the Barnet Care Leaver Hub supported Kemi in finding full time work.

“Upon graduating from college at age 18, I met Patricia, my Jobcentre Plus work coach at the Barnet Care Leaver Hub. Patricia was a breath of fresh air, nice, calm and welcoming to my situation. I felt I could talk and engage with her and in doing so I saw my confidence grow. Patricia introduced me to Sam from the Drive Forward team and together they helped me work on my CV. They became a driving force in making me proactive with my job searches and with their help and support I am now working full time.

I can only say ‘thank you both’ for making all this possible, your interaction and commitment at the Hub not only makes me a success but is commendable. The support Patricia has given me goes far beyond anything I have received before; she’d call to check how work is going, advising me on financial matters and reminding me that rent has to be paid as always. Thank you Patricia and Sam.”

3.36 To support all young people aged 18 to 21 who are unemployed, the Youth Obligation will be introduced from April 2017. This will mean that:

- From ‘Day 1’ of their claim, 18 to 21year-olds will participate in a three-week Intensive Activity Period of support, learning job-search and interview techniques; and structured work preparation. They will be encouraged to apply for an apprenticeship, or take up work experience opportunities, sector-based work academy placements and other work-related training;
- If they are still claiming benefit after six months, and are not in work, on an apprenticeship or participating in work-related training, they will be required to go on a mandatory work placement to give them the skills they need to get on in work;
- Tailored, flexible support will be provided to those in work, but who need to increase their earnings.

3.37 Recognising that there will be some care leavers who need to address complex barriers in order to achieve sustainable employment and transform their life chances, Universal Credit is complemented by Universal Support. Universal Support is there to help people make and maintain their Universal Credit claim, and will assist people with their financial and digital capability throughout the life of their claim. Through Universal Support, DWP is transforming the way job centres work as part of their local communities to ensure they more effectively tackle the

barriers faced by harder to help people and get them into sustainable employment. DWP are considering how best to broaden this approach to help claimants with multiple, complex barriers into sustainable employment.

- 3.38 DWP introduced the Youth Engagement Fund (YEF) in April 2015, to deliver support to young people aged 14-17 years for up to three years. Two out of the four YEF projects target support on young people who are in care or on the edge of care. The aim is to enable young people to succeed in education or training, improving their employability and reducing their longer-term dependency on benefits as well as their likelihood of offending.
- 3.39 The new care leaver covenant will provide a way of expanding employment opportunities for young people leaving care. We know that many local authorities already offer opportunities for care leavers when they are recruiting to traineeships and apprenticeships. We would encourage all local authorities to do so. We also acknowledge that government departments and their agencies could play a greater role in offering work experience, traineeships, apprenticeships and jobs to care leavers and we will consider and discuss with stakeholders how best to ensure that this happens in practice.

Outcome 3: Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure

“Because I am worried about moving out and having to live on my own without a choice in the matter, people who are not in care get to stay with their parents until they feel ready to move out and I feel that I am nowhere near ready to leave but I don’t have a choice in the matter.” Young person in care

A safe and stable place to live

- 3.40 Local authority Children’s Services are responsible for accommodating 16 and 17 year-old care leavers. Statutory guidance²⁶ states that this accommodation must be safe, secure and affordable; and the guidance was updated in 2015 to make clear that ‘Bed & Breakfast’ (B&B) accommodation should only be used in exceptional circumstances and for no more than two working days. Ofsted reports that the use of B&B is rare in nearly all local authorities that it has inspected.
- 3.41 The majority of young people remain in care until 18 and are either in foster care or residential care. However, for some young people in care and all care leavers aged 16 or 17 who do not return home to their family, they are normally housed in

²⁶ [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers](#)

a range of different types of accommodation settings, including: supported lodgings, semi-independent accommodation, foyers, supported housing and hostels. Much of this provision is good quality and provides the sort of stepping-stone provision, with support, that care leavers need to transition successfully to independent living.

- 3.42 However, during our consultations with care leavers, we also heard examples of poor quality alternative accommodation, some of which had placed care leavers at risk of exploitation, or had led to deterioration in their emotional health and well-being; or to them experiencing problems with drugs or alcohol. It is vitally important, therefore, that local authorities commission accommodation services in ways that ensure that providers are equipped to respond to young peoples' complex needs and operate in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements.
- 3.43 When care leavers turn 18, Children's Services are normally no longer legally responsible for accommodating them unless they are in a Staying Put arrangement (see below). However, there remains a key role for local authority leaving care teams to continue to work closely with Housing Services colleagues to ensure that 16 and 17 year-old care leavers remain in suitable accommodation when they turn 18, using the sort of options listed above; or, if they are ready, to help them to secure and maintain an independent tenancy. Helping care leavers to understand the options available in their local housing market and to prepare for the challenges of maintaining their own home are a key part of the pathway planning process.

Staying Put

- 3.44 For those who leave care at age 18 from foster care, the option now exists for them to move into a 'Staying Put' arrangement where both they and their carer want to continue living together. Staying Put provides the sort of gradual transition to adulthood that is enjoyed by the majority of young people in the general population. It provides continuity of a supportive relationship and care arrangements and we want to maximise the number of eligible care leavers who do Stay Put.
- 3.45 In the first year following the introduction of the duty on local authorities to support Staying Put arrangements, nearly half (48%) of eligible care leavers were living with their former foster carer 3 months after their 18th birthday²⁷. **We will**

²⁷ Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

continue to provide funding to local authorities to implement Staying Put over the life of this Parliament, using the £22m provided in 2016/17 as the baseline. We also want to review the implementation of Staying Put and will work with the sector to iron out any implementation issues that the review identifies.

Staying Close

- 3.46 As highlighted in section 2, in response to Sir Martin Narey's recommendation in his recent report on children's residential care in England²⁸, **we are making a commitment to introduce Staying Close for young people leaving residential care.** Staying Close – similar to the Staying Put arrangements which exist for children in foster care – will enable young people to live independently, in a location close to their children's home with ongoing support from that home. As Sir Martin recommends we are going to pilot variations of the scheme first, through opening a specific stream of the Innovation Programme, in order to understand the costings, practicalities and impact.

Preventing homelessness

- 3.47 During the year ending March 2015, our data show that over 90% of care leavers for whom information was provided were in suitable accommodation. Less than 1% were recorded as being in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. Around 4% were in custody and 1% were recorded as having no fixed abode or were homeless²⁹. Where care leavers over 18 are homeless, in recognition of their vulnerability they are given automatic priority need within the homelessness legislation until age 22. Care leavers above the age of 21 who are vulnerable as a result of having been looked after also have a priority need. Care leavers are also a priority group within statutory guidance on the allocation of 'social housing'.
- 3.48 Whilst the legislation provides a crucial safety net, our priority is to stop homelessness happening in the first place. Government is investing over £500 million more over this Parliament to prevent and tackle homelessness. Local housing authorities are required to produce a strategy setting out how they will prevent and tackle homelessness in their area. As part of this process, they should work with Children's Services to consider the needs of care leavers who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness.

²⁸ [Residential care in England, Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care](#), Sir Martin Narey, 2016

²⁹ Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

3.49 This focus on prevention fits well with the approach that has been promoted in the ‘Supported Accommodation Framework’³⁰ for care leavers developed by Barnardo’s and St Basils, with funding from DCLG. We have been working with local authorities to bring Children’s and Housing Services together to focus on solutions to the housing problems that care leavers experience, using the Framework to guide that work; **and DCLG has committed funding to continue to support English local authorities to implement the Framework in 2016/17.**

NB: Issues related to the affordability of housing are covered in a later section on achieving financial stability.

Keeping care leavers safe from harm

3.50 A combination of care leavers’ previous experiences and their current circumstances can put them at greater risk of exploitation. The Home Office (HO) is leading work to help prevent children and young people from being recruited into gangs, being sexually exploited and/or abusing drugs or alcohol.

3.51 The exploitation of vulnerable young people and adults is often a feature of urban street gangs. Children in care and care leavers are at higher risk of being groomed and/or coerced into moving or selling drugs around the country (known as ‘county lines’). It is important that those looking after vulnerable young people understand about ‘county lines’, how to recognise it and how to prevent and protect young people from being targeted and exploited by gangs.

3.52 The Home Office’s approach to Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation was published on 13 January 2016³¹ and sets out the six key priorities for tackling this issue: tackling county lines; protecting vulnerable locations; reducing violence and knife crime; safe-guarding gang-associated women and girls; promoting early intervention; and promoting meaningful alternatives to gangs. The Home Office will work with DfE and DCLG to identify what more can be done to highlight the risks and tackle this issue locally, including identifying and spreading best practice.

3.53 The number of recorded child sexual abuse offences has increased rapidly over the last two years. Research regularly finds that children in care and care leavers are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse/exploitation. For example, based on submissions provided, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England’s enquiry into sexual exploitation in gangs and groups found that 21% of identified victims were in the care system. And we know from local intelligence that

³⁰ [Care Leavers Accomodation And Support Framework](#), Barnardo’s, 2015

³¹ [Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation](#), Home Office, 2016

children's homes are being targeted by perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. We know from speaking to local practitioners and victims that a person does not stop being vulnerable as soon as they turn 18. It is important that young people have access to support when leaving care.

3.54 The Home Secretary launched the report 'Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation' in March 2015³². This report sets out a national response to the failures seen in Rotherham, Manchester, Oxford and elsewhere, where children were let down by the very people who were responsible for protecting them. The Government has made significant progress since the report was launched:

- We have prioritised child sexual abuse as a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement³³, setting a clear expectation that forces should safeguard children, share intelligence and best practice and collaborate across force boundaries.
- We have delivered additional funding of £10 million in 2015-16 for further specialist teams in the National Crime Agency to tackle online child sexual exploitation, enabling a near doubling of their investigative capability.
- We have delivered a £7 million uplift in funding in 2015-16 for non statutory organisations which support victims and survivors of sexual abuse and confirmed continuation of this £7m fund in 2016-17.
- We have launched a new national whistle-blowing helpline, operated by the NSPCC, for any employee who wants to raise a concern about how their organisation is dealing with a concern about a child. This offers a new, additional, confidential route and will help shine a light on problems and help authorities to spot patterns of failure in order to address them quickly.
- We have piloted joint official health, police and education inspections in a series of six inspections which will be completed by July. This series of inspections will focus on the quality of frontline practice in dealing with child sexual exploitation.

3.55 The Home Office will continue to work closely with the DfE to ensure robust measures are in place to tackle child sexual exploitation including victimisation of children leaving care.

³² [Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation](#), Home Office, 2015

³³ [Strategic Policing Requirement](#), updated 2015

Supporting care leavers in the criminal justice system

- 3.56 We know that both children in care and care leavers are over-represented in the criminal justice system. The Prison Reform Trust's inquiry³⁴, led by Lord Laming, has examined why that is the case, including whether they are more likely to be criminalised for relatively minor incidents of criminal damage or aggressive behaviour that would not normally result in police involvement if they occurred in a family home. **We have welcomed the Prison Reform Trust's interest in this issue and will consider the findings from Lord Laming's inquiry alongside the recent report from Sir Martin Narey on residential care for looked-after children, and the forthcoming report by Charlie Taylor on the youth justice system.**
- 3.57 The Ministry of Justice is reforming the prison system so that offenders, including care leavers, can get the skills and qualifications they need to make a success of life on the outside. Central to the reforms is giving prison governors greater autonomy. Governors will have a greater role in determining rehabilitation services, providing the opportunity to innovate and tailor education and training approaches to the needs of offenders.
- 3.58 In September 2015, the Secretary of State for Justice announced that Charlie Taylor would be conducting a review of the youth justice system³⁵. The review is examining how children who offend are rehabilitated in the community and in custody, and whether the system remains fit for the challenges posed by today's young offenders. An interim report was published in February setting out emerging proposals for secure schools for young offenders remanded or sentenced to custody, and an ambition for a more devolved youth justice system.
- 3.59 In 2013, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) appointed a National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Care Leaver Champion – Teresa Clarke, Governor of Swinfen Hall Youth Offending Institute – and has built on this by putting in place a network of regional leads for custodial and probation services.
- 3.60 MoJ has also established a National Care Leavers' Forum within NOMS, bringing together key stakeholders to co-ordinate efforts to support care leavers in prison and probation. The forum has agreed five priority areas upon which its work will focus; identification, recording, entitlements, support and wider awareness. The Forum's efforts have resulted in new data fields being added to prison and probation systems to enable recording of care leaver status. **To ensure care**

³⁴ [In Care, Out of Trouble, an independent review Chaired by Lord Laming](#)

³⁵ [Written Statement to Parliament, Youth Justice, September 2015](#)

leavers receive the support they need, regional training events are being held to raise awareness of care leavers' unique status and their entitlements among prison and probation staff.

- 3.61 The NOMS care leaver forum provides a way of developing better joint working arrangements between local authorities, prisons and probation services. Local authorities are required to continue supporting care leavers while they are in prison and should visit them to see how they are getting on and to update their pathway plan. This has not always happened consistently. Last year we revised guidance to local authorities to make clear that those in custody who were pursuing a course of education should continue to be entitled to Personal Adviser support, up until age 25.
- 3.62 **The Forum will continue to explore ways of improving communication channels, so that local authorities are updated if a care leaver is moved to a different prison; and are notified in advance when a care leaver is released from prison, so that they have time to put a package of support in place when they return, including a place to live.** The Forum will also explore how best to integrate pathway and sentencing plans so that they are coherent and so that Personal Advisers can work together with those in prison and probation responsible for the young person's progress.
- 3.63 **As part of its commitment to better support the care leavers it looks after, NOMS will through the Forum pursue avenues for enabling direct work with care leavers in prisons which supports them to develop strategies that will help them to succeed when they leave prison or probation services.**

Supporting refugee and other foreign national care leavers

- 3.64 Unaccompanied children arriving in the UK are immediately transferred into the care of a local authority. The crisis in Syria and events in the Middle East have seen an unprecedented number of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Europe. Some have gone on to reach the UK via northern France, including many who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- 3.65 Local authorities are therefore looking after increasing numbers of UASC and supporting more care leavers who are former UASC. There were 3,206 asylum claims from UASC in the year ending March 2016, a 57% increase on the year ending March 2015³⁶.

³⁶ [Home Office Immigration Statistics, January to March 2016, Asylum Data, Volume 3](#)

- 3.66 This increase has placed pressure on some local authorities with high numbers of UASC in their care. That is why **we are introducing a national transfer scheme, underpinned by powers in the Immigration Act 2016. From 1 July 2016, the Home Office has also significantly increased the funding local authorities will receive for caring for UASC and for supporting former UASC.**
- 3.67 Most UASC are granted refugee status, humanitarian protection or some other form of leave to remain in the UK (73% of initial decisions in the year ending March 2016)³⁷. Effective pathway planning for UASC should take into account the child's immigration status, support timely engagement with the Home Office to resolve any outstanding immigration issues, and look ahead to their long-term future in the UK or to the possibility that they will be expected to make plans to leave the UK and resume life in their home country if they have no lawful basis to remain here.
- 3.68 For those former UASC care leavers whom the courts agree do not need our protection, and who have no lawful basis to remain in the UK, the Immigration Act 2016³⁸ makes alternative provision for any accommodation, subsistence or other social care support the local authority considers they need prior to their departure from the UK. This could include, for example, support from a Personal Adviser. The DfE and the Home Office will be working together with local authorities and relevant non-governmental organisations on the development of the regulations and guidance required to implement these new support arrangements. **DfE will consult on revised guidance for local authorities on the care of unaccompanied and trafficked children, later this year.**

Outcome 4: Improved Access to Health Support

“There should be more services to talk to when you just need help with your experiences – not necessarily CAMHS.” Care Leaver.

Mental Health

- 3.69 At our consultation events, care leavers reported a range of situations where they had experienced poor emotional health and well-being, but failed to get the support that they needed. For most, this was linked to feeling lonely and isolated, causing them to feel depressed, anxious or to have a lack of confidence. But some care leavers reported more serious cases of committing self-harm, suicidal thoughts or more serious personality disorders. Older care leavers reported

³⁷ [Home Office Immigration Statistics, January to March 2016, Asylum Data, Volume 3](#)

³⁸ [Immigration Act 2016](#)

particular problems accessing adult services, due to the higher thresholds involved.

- 3.70 We recognise that making the transition from being in care to living independently at a young age can be particularly challenging for care leavers who are receiving support to improve their emotional health and well-being, as it often coincides with a transition from CAMHS to adult mental health services.
- 3.71 The government set out its plans to improve our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in the 2015 report *Future in mind – promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing*³⁹. The report sets out that significant improvements can be achieved through better working between the NHS, local authorities, voluntary and community services, schools and other local services. It also makes it clear that many of these changes can be achieved by working differently, rather than needing significant investment.
- 3.72 **The Government is committed to implementing the vision set out in *Future in mind*, and is making available an additional £1.4 billion over the lifetime of this Parliament to support improvements to Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.** In October 2015, local areas in England were required to submit Local Transformation Plans (LTPs) for child and adolescent mental health, setting out how they will improve the emotional health and well-being of children and young people in their area, and support those with mental health problems, across the whole care pathway.
- 3.73 An Expert Group has been set up to produce care pathways, quality standards and models of care for looked after children and care leavers with mental health problems. This will consider the best way of improving outcomes for care leavers based on the evidence available. **Guidance will be produced for professionals working with care leavers and for commissioners responsible for their care.** The first meeting of the Expert Working Group, which will work with NHS England, Health Education England, and sector partners, will take place in July 2016. The Group will draw up care pathways and a quality standard and will consider the most appropriate models of care for these groups. Their work is expected to take approximately 18 months.
- 3.74 Transition to adult mental health services is something that the Expert Working Group will be considering. We are aware that some areas are already

³⁹ [*Future in mind - promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing*](#), Department of Health, 2015

reconfiguring their services. In Sheffield for example, a community psychiatric nurse is available to care leavers for consultation within the care leaver team to help them gain access to adult mental health if this is needed, as well as providing one-to-one support. And in Birmingham, services are being provided for children and young people with mental health problems up to the age of 25, to ensure continuity of care and to prevent people having to transfer to adult services automatically at the age of 18. The government encourages innovative local approaches to handling transitions. Whilst it has not mandated a 'one size fits all' approach, we are clear that the principles of good transition planning should be applied: built around the individual, commencing in good time and with strong inter-agency engagement.

- 3.75 **The new Mental Health Services Data Set will collect a comprehensive range of data about children and young people's access to, and outcomes from, mental health services, including for children who are looked-after.** These data will help inform future delivery of services to this vulnerable group of children and young people. In addition, we have asked the new Expert Working Group for looked after children to explore improving the use of information on outcomes for looked after children.

Wider health issues

- 3.76 Statutory guidance on *Promoting the health and well-being of looked after children*⁴⁰ requires local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS England to ensure that there are effective plans in place to enable looked-after children aged 16 or 17 to make a smooth transition to adulthood. The statutory guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies⁴¹ also require health and wellbeing boards to consider the needs of vulnerable groups (such as care leavers) in planning local services.
- 3.77 Since 2013, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has been inspecting local health service arrangements for promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers. **It will publish an overview report of the first 50 inspections shortly. CQC, Ofsted and the other inspectorates also commenced joint targeted area inspections** later this year.
- 3.78 A third of young people leaving care report problems with drugs or alcohol a year later; indeed, young women leaving care are particularly susceptible to

⁴⁰ [Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked-after Children](#), 2015

⁴¹ [Statutory Guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies](#), 2013

problematic substance use. Any young person who is at increased risk of substance misuse, including those who are leaving care, should be provided with targeted prevention support, which focuses on reducing risks and strengthening resilience. Clear referral pathways into specialist substance misuse services should be in place for those young people who are assessed as requiring structured drug and alcohol interventions. Young people's specialist substance misuse services are available in every local authority, commissioned by local public health teams.

- 3.79 A quarter of young women leaving care are pregnant, and nearly half become pregnant within 18 to 24 months. To support all young mothers better, the number of health visitors has increased by almost 50% since May 2010. Health visitors deliver the Healthy Child Programme (HCP), a universal service for all families. As part of the HCP, health visitors will identify where families need additional support, and the HCP states clearly that one of the risk factors for experiencing additional problems is where one or both parents grew up in care.
- 3.80 For disadvantaged teenage mothers, the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP)⁴² offers an evidence-based, intense programme of supportive visits. The FNP supports many teenage mothers who have a care background. In October 2015, robust new evidence was published on the FNP programme's effectiveness at improving short term outcomes in England. The FNP National Unit is using this evidence to adapt and strengthen the programme so that it provides more flexibility, supporting nurses to tailor the intervention to client needs, in order to help local authorities to develop a service that meets the particular requirements of vulnerable families in their local area.

Outcome 5: Achieving Financial Stability

"It's hard for someone (coming out of care) to live on their own, pay bills etc. Someone's not going to say 'here's a tenner – I know you're in arrears with your electricity.'" Care Leaver

- 3.81 Most care leavers who spoke to us talked about the problems they had making ends meet. Paying rent, Council Tax, household bills and transport costs meant that many care leavers had difficulty managing their finances and they had often experienced debt and arrears.

⁴² [Family Nurse Partnership](#), 2015

Financial Support

- 3.82 During the last Parliament, the Government introduced Junior ISAs (JISAs) for all children who are looked after for more than 12 months. JISAs are long term saving accounts which can be accessed by the account holder on their 18th birthday. At this point the account will mature into a standard (adult) ISA. Currently over 75,000 accounts have been opened.
- 3.83 Local authorities provide a range of financial support for care leavers. While they are 16 or 17, the local authority is responsible for all of the costs of accommodating them; and provides them with allowances to meet their day to day needs as they are generally not entitled to claim benefits. At the point at which they leave care, care leavers receive a 'leaving care grant' that helps them to furnish their first property. DfE recommends that this should be at least £2,000 and the vast majority of local authorities pay at least that amount. Where care leavers are in further education, they are a priority group for receipt of the 16-19 bursary of up to £1,200 a year; and if they go to University, the local authority is responsible for providing them with an HE bursary of £2,000.
- 3.84 Local authorities also support care leavers financially in lots of different ways. Earlier in this document we provided an example of a local authority – North Somerset – that does not require its care leavers to pay Council Tax until they reach age 22. Many local authorities provide care leavers with free travel passes if they are in education, employment or training. Others provide free access to all of the local authorities' leisure centres. And others still provide care leavers with help to buy clothes for interviews or with the costs of driving lessons where this will help their chances of finding work. We want all local authorities to be thinking creatively about how they can support care leavers in ways that reasonable parents would; and to set this out clearly in their local offers.

Housing Costs

- 3.85 Care leavers up to the age of 22 who rent privately, are currently exempt from a lower rate of Housing Benefit (known as the shared accommodation rate) which is usually applied to single people aged under 35. Instead, they are able to claim the higher one bedroom rate for self-contained accommodation, rather than the rate for a shared house or flat. Once they reach the age of 22 however, they are entitled to the shared accommodation rate unless one of the other exemptions applies. This could mean that some care leavers at age 22 may need to consider moving to a cheaper property, at a time in their lives when many of them are experiencing stability for the first time since leaving care. DWP and DfE will work together to explore if there is any benefit to care leavers from extending the exemption to the 'shared accommodation rate' to age 25, recognising that many young people in the general population are able to enjoy the stability of living in

the parental home until that age. We will also look at possible ways to collect the relevant data relating to the impact and cost of such a change.

- 3.86 The government plans to introduce changes in April 2017 that will remove automatic entitlement to housing support in Universal Credit in certain circumstances. This will only apply to those making new UC claims; who are out of work, and aged 18 to 21. This is intended to ensure that resources are targeted at those who are most in need, with an expectation that those who can should continue to live at home. This ensures young people on benefits face the same choices as those in work and unable to afford to leave the parental home. **The option to remain living in the family home clearly does not apply to care leavers and we have therefore decided that care leavers will be exempt from these changes.**
- 3.87 The government intends to introduce Local Housing Allowance caps, already an established feature in the private rented sector, into the social rented sector. The changes will take effect in April 2018 and will apply to new tenancies signed from April 2016 onwards (or April 2017 onwards in the case of supported housing).
- 3.88 The supported housing sector, most of which is part of the social rented sector, provides valuable support to some of our country's most vulnerable people, including care leavers. It helps them to lead independent lives or turn their lives around and is an investment which brings savings to other parts of the public sector – such as health and social care. The government has been clear that the most vulnerable will be protected and supported through welfare reforms.
- 3.89 We understand the concerns about the potential implications of the Local Housing Allowance cap; however, there is a need for more robust evidence about the sector, and so a joint evidence review by DWP and DCLG is underway. **Alongside this review, which is due to report shortly, we will continue to work with and listen to the supported housing sector in order to develop a long-term sustainable funding regime.**
- 3.90 We need to deliver a system that provides appropriate protections both for those living in this type of accommodation and those who provide it, whilst also making sure that the taxpayer is protected, the government's fiscal commitments are met and that we deliver value for money.

Advice and guidance

- 3.91 As part of care leavers' preparation for independence, it is important that Personal Advisers make those in receipt of benefits aware of what they need to do to continue to receive them. There are also many examples of effective local protocols between local authority leaving care teams and local Jobcentre Plus offices, which can help care leavers to understand the conditions around receipt of

benefits and ultimately remove the need to impose a sanction and ensure that they retain entitlement to benefit (including elements intended to meet their housing costs). Care leavers aged 18 or over who receive a sanction may qualify for a hardship payment. They should apply via Jobcentre Plus as soon as they receive their first reduced benefit payment.

- 3.92 Many care leavers will not be able to access advice about their personal finances from parents or family members in the same way that other young people can. It is therefore crucial that Personal Advisers are able to give them good quality information about managing their money, from budgeting to paying bills on time. Through our review of the Personal Adviser role we will consider how we can best ensure that Personal Advisers are equipped to carry out this role.

4. DRIVING SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

Promoting and Sharing Best Practice

- 4.1 We recognise the need to ensure that decision makers and front line practitioners working with care leavers understand what works – and what doesn't work – and use that knowledge to improve practice.
- 4.2 In the medium-term, we are establishing a new What Works Centre (WWC) for children's social care. It will be an authoritative source of evidence-based advice on what works. Like NICE, it will be able to say clearly which approaches are proven to be effective and should be used. The WWC will support wider reforms for the social work workforce, complementing and strengthening those reforms, in order to create an effective practice environment. We expect the WWC to play a role in harvesting and disseminating the learning from a wide range of interventions.
- 4.3 Before then, we will publish the evaluations of the projects funded from phase 1 of the Innovation Programme that relate to care leavers. We will also shortly be publishing the independent evaluation of the New Belongings project that was commissioned by DfE.
- 4.4 The DfE will continue to work with local authority delivery partners – primarily through the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum – to understand what new challenges local authorities are facing and to work with them to decide how best to address them.
- 4.5 In December 2015, the Prime Minister announced the Partners in Practice (PiP) initiative that will model excellence and innovation in the delivery of children's social care services. The aim is to foster deeper partnerships between the national and local government and to enable and support long-term improvement; the PiPs will be exploring greater freedoms in how they design and deliver their services; provide evidence about new structural models and innovations; and model best practice, share learning and support the wider sector.

Supporting and Challenging Local Authorities

- 4.6 It is important that central government, local authorities and children and young people know how well the care system is working, to share best practice and make improvements when needed. We know a lot about the characteristics of the looked after population but the data does not always give the information we need about the impact of the care system on children and young people, or the outcomes they achieve. To do this, we will focus on measuring the progress

made by children in care and care leavers, as well as continuing to understand their needs and characteristics.

Intervening in failure

- 4.7 We are strengthening our approach to intervening in councils where they fail to provide adequate services for children in need of help and protection, children in care, or care leavers:
- Wherever Ofsted find children's services to be inadequate, we will provide expert scrutiny to diagnose problems and support the council to produce an effective improvement plan within three months.
 - We would expect most of those councils to improve with support and challenge from experts, but councils' progress towards improvement will be reviewed every six months.
 - If these reviews find that insufficient progress has been made, we will appoint a children's services commissioner to review whether services should be removed from council control.
 - We will also immediately appoint a commissioner wherever council failure is persistent or systemic, with a presumption that the service will be placed outside of the council's control, unless the commissioner identifies good reasons not to do so.
 - Where a commissioner concludes that the council does not have the capacity or capability to make the required improvements, we will take action so children's services are removed from council control.

5. HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS

Outcome Data

- 5.1 DfE will continue to publish care leaver outcome data annually, through a statistical first release, based on data provided by local authorities. For the year ending March 2016, as well as data on 19-21 year-olds, we will also be publishing data for 17 and 18 year-old care leavers. While this data collection provides valuable information, DfE recognises that data collected by other Departments or providers offer the potential to gain a fuller understanding of the outcomes achieved by care leavers. A one-off data sharing agreement is in place with the Ministry of Justice to link pupil level data to prison, probation and police data. We expect the data match to be achieved in 2016. Conditional on the quality of the match and the benefits of the data share, we will consider if a more regular sharing of data would be justified.
- 5.2 A separate agreement is in place with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the DWP and BIS to explore the link between educational achievement and labour market outcomes. This will be used to improve the quality of destination measures. We will also explore the quality of outcome information this data sharing provides, for specific groups such as care leavers.

Ofsted Judgements

- 5.3 By the end of 2017, Ofsted will complete inspections in all local authorities under its inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers – *the single inspection framework*. This cycle of inspections will provide the most detailed baseline assessment of children's services to date.
- 5.4 Between June and September 2016, Ofsted will begin to consult on a new approach to the inspection of local authority children's services from 2018. The consultation will include proposals for a more risk-based and proportionate programme of inspection. It is expected that this programme will retain a sharp focus on the experiences and progress of care leavers.

The Voice of the Care Leaver

- 5.5 There are a number of regular surveys that capture the views and experiences of children in care and care leavers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) 'State of the Nation' report and Ofsted's survey of children in care. We will review how children and young people's views change over time as a way of assessing the impact of the strategy.

- 5.6 We also recognise and support the need for care leavers to have a direct say in shaping and designing the policies that affect them. **To this end, the DfE will set up a national care leaver advisory group, consisting of care leavers aged between 16 and 25, which it will use to gain insight into the issues that affect their lives and to inform the future evolution of this strategy and the development of care leaver policy.**

Reviewing Progress

- 5.7 The Social Justice Cabinet Committee (SJCC) will provide Ministerial oversight of the strategy. The Minister for Children & Families will produce a progress update to SJCC each year on the implementation of the strategy, as well as possible refinements and updates to it, following the release of the care leaver data that DfE publishes annually in October.
- 5.8 A senior Whitehall officials' group (representing the eight government departments directly contributing to the strategy) will meet twice-yearly to review progress and set new milestones for the next period. A separate officials group will meet quarterly to ensure momentum is sustained; and one meeting per year will be an 'open' meeting at which care leaver representatives from the advisory group mentioned above and voluntary sector organisations will be able to ask questions about progress and next steps.



HM Government

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Corporate Parenting Board**26 September 2016**

Report of the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills

Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2015/16**Summary**

1. The presentation of the Report to the City of York Corporate Parenting Board is a statutory requirement (*The IRO Handbook* DfE 2010 at para. 7.11). The Report summarises the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers over the preceding twelve month period.

The IRO Annual Report 2015/16 is appended as Annex A.

Additionally, the IRO Annual Report 2014/15 is appended as Annex B for reference only.

Background

2. The Report covers a number of areas. The information contained is for notification to the Corporate Parenting Board.
 - 1) Introduction and Purpose of IRO Annual Report
 - 2) Reporting Period
 - 3) The Legal, Statutory and National Context of the IRO role
 - 4) Local Context – the City of York Council as Corporate Parent
 - 5) The City of York Council IRO Service
 - 6) IRO Caseloads and Unit Performance
 - 7) Profile of Children and Young People in Care in York
 - 8) IRO impact on the outcomes for children and young people
 - 9) Update on the Seven Service Priorities 2015/16
 - 10) Service Work Plan 2016/17
 - 11) Summary
 - 12) Recommendations

Consultation

3. Details of the consultation which informed the Report are contained within the Report appended (Annex A).

Options

4. No options are presented to Members for their consideration.

Analysis

5. No options are presented to Members for their consideration.

Council Plan

6. The Report summarises the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers over the preceding twelve month period as is required by statutory guidance.

Implications

7. Implications for the Council are detailed as appropriate within the Report.

Risk Management

8. Risks for the Council are detailed as appropriate within the Report.

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that the City of York Council Corporate Parenting Panel consider the following:
 1. Note the areas of positive performance referred to within the Annual Report, particularly evidence that the Unit has directly contributed to improving outcomes for children and young people in care;
 2. Note and support the Unit's commitment to better deliver its statutory responsibilities to children and young people in care and their parents or carers, in particular increased consultation, participation and challenge;
 3. Use the annual reporting requirement of the Unit to inform the ongoing work of the Corporate Parenting Panel in

raising outcomes for the children and young people in the care of the City of York Council.

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Report Approved



Date 09/09/2016

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex A: The IRO Annual Report 2015/16
Annex B: The IRO Annual Report 2014/15

Abbreviations

IRO – Independent Reviewing Officer

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1. Introduction and Purpose of the Annual Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to meet the statutory requirement for the IRO Manager to produce a report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Board, established by the *IRO Handbook* (2010).
- 1.2 The specific purposes, content and format of this report will follow those set out in preceding Annual Reports.
- 1.3 Following presentation to the City of York Council Corporate Parenting Board and the City of York Safeguarding Childrens' Board, this report, and a Children and Young People's version, will be placed on the City of York Council website as publically accessible documents.
- 1.4 Where possible, this Report refers to Children and Young People in Care (CYPIC) in preference to Children Looked After (CLA) or Looked After Children (LAC). Such use reflects the views and wishes of children and young people in York about their own identity and the way in which they prefer to be referred to by professionals.

2. Reporting Period

- 2.1 This report covers the period from 01 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. Some of the data sets expressly omit Q4 data due to the impact upon reporting of the transition of processes to the new Case Management System within the quarter.

3. The Legal, Statutory and National Context of the IRO Role

- 3.1 The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for a child or young person in the care of the Local Authority is a legal requirement under s.118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- 3.2 In March 2010 the *IRO Handbook* was issued, providing Local Authorities with statutory guidance on how the IRO's should discharge their duties. Significantly, the *Handbook* stated:

The IRO has a new role conferred upon them to monitor the child's case as opposed to monitoring the review, effectively monitoring the implementation of the Care Plan between reviews (at para. 3.74)

The *Handbook* goes on to state that the primary role of an IRO is:

To ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child (at para. 2.10)

3.3 In discharging this role, the *Handbook* notes (at para. 2.14) that the IRO has a number of specific responsibilities, including:

- *promoting the voice of the child;*
- *ensuring that plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs;*
- *making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his/her entitlement to one;*
- *offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning for looked after children and the delivery of services to them; and*
- *and monitoring the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands*

4. Local Context - The City of York Council as Corporate Parent

4.1 The City of York Council IRO Service operates within the context of City of York Council as 'Corporate Parent' for all of the children and young people in its care. As Corporate Parent, the Council's ambition is not merely limited to ensure that children and young people in care are safe and their welfare promoted but that, as parent, the Council strives to achieve the best possible outcomes for its children and young people.

4.2 Within the reporting period, the City of York Council has implemented a new Strategy for Children and Young People in Care. The strategy introduces 6 strategic themes and a Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care. The six strategic themes are ambitious, challenging and well-placed to support the development of corporate parenting arrangements and the IRO Service in York.

The Six Strategic Themes for Children and Young People in Care:

- **Ambition:** *'good enough is not good enough'.*
- **Personalisation:** *'every child and every family is different'.*
- **Normality:** *'every child and young person is entitled to a normal, stable, caring family life'.*
- **Trust:** *'as professionals we need to trust each other better, and young people even more'.*
- **Accountability:** *'we need to be clear who is responsible for what'.*
- **Efficiency:** *'we have to live within our means'.*

4.3 To support the implementation of the new strategy, the City of York Corporate Parenting Board has reviewed its role and function, highlighting the following priorities to:

- Refresh the purpose and role of the Board, promoting closer direct engagement with children, young people and professionals working with children in care;
- Champion the rights, aspirations and achievement of children and young people in care, monitoring progress and outcomes;
- Raise awareness of the corporate parenting role, responsibilities and opportunities in order to extend the principles of corporate parenting to a wider group of officers and elected members;
- Actively engage with young people through existing forums, such as Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM), in order to stay connected to the experiences of young people and ensuring a sustained focus on the voice of the child, outcomes and progress.

5. The City of York Council IRO Service

- 5.1 During the reporting period, the IRO Unit has been subject to some changes in personnel. The Unit continues to comprise of three full-time, permanent Independent Reviewing Officers, all of whom are experienced and authoritative Social Work practitioners with management experience. Additionally, the Unit continues to benefit from a temporary full-time Agency IRO. On 31 July 2015, the 0.5 FTE IRO who had been temporarily appointed through secondment from another service area left the Council to take up work elsewhere. She was not replaced, resulting in a small reduction in capacity. The Unit has also, during the reporting period, relied upon limited additional sessional hours (0.2 FTE) from a part-time Independent Reviewing Officer.
- 5.2 All five IRO's working for the Unit are qualified Social Workers registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council and subjected to regular Disclosure and Barring

Service enhanced checks. All have relevant and appropriate skills, bringing to the role specialist knowledge and experience including Children's Social Care safeguarding management, youth offending management, fostering and adoption work, work in therapeutic and third sector services, residential services management and performance management and quality assurance work. All have substantial experience of effective direct work with children and young people.

- 5.3 Four of the five IRO's are White British females, the other a White British male. The Unit takes issue of gender, culture and diversity fully into account in its provision of services.
- 5.4 All five of the IRO's are independent of City of York Children's Social Care and are not involved in preparation of children's care plans or the management of cases or have any control over resources allocated to a case.
- 5.5 All IRO's have access to independent legal advice upon request.
- 5.6 All IRO's are encouraged to participate in the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional IRO Practitioners Group for peer-support and sector-led improvement opportunities.
- 5.7 All IRO's access training opportunities. In May 2015 for example, all five attended a one-day Regional IRO Practitioners Conference, hosted by Sheffield City Council. The conference programme included:
- From the PLO Forwards: a legal briefing for IROs
 - Making care plans work well for children: messages from University of East Anglia research into care planning and the role of the IRO
 - Child Centred Approach to Child Care Reviews (Sheffield Children's Involvement Team)
- 5.8 During the reporting period, management of the IRO's has continued on an interim basis and has been subject to some change. On 01 May 2015, management transferred from the Principal Advisor to the Principal Social Worker and in November 2015 to the Senior Manager – Peer Support and Challenge. All three managers within the reporting period have been qualified Social Workers registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council and subject to regular Disclosure and Barring Service enhanced checks. All three are experienced Children's Social Care safeguarding managers. Interim management arrangements have ensured that there has been oversight, professional advice and management support to each IRO, including monthly Supervision and Team Meetings and work to ensure the IRO's access training appropriate to need.
- 5.9 Although all of the Interim Managers have been part of the Children's Social Care Management Group, their substantive roles have not involved operational

management, the preparation of children's care plans, the management of individual cases or resource allocation. Accordingly, there has been no conflict of interest. Should there be any potential conflict, provision has been made for the Principal Advisor to 'step-out' of their Children's Social Care line-management arrangement.

- 5.10 All of the Interim Managers have represented York and been active members of the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional IRO Managers Group. The Group meet on a quarterly basis to share information, report on common and emerging themes and priorities and provide peer support and sector-led improvement opportunities. The Group provides two Members to the National IRO Managers Group which has representation from the Department for Education.
- 5.11 During the reporting period, the administrative support for the IRO's has continued to be provided through a pooled resource arrangement with a wide range of responsibilities.
- 5.12 During the reporting period a review of the Unit's overall structure, level of resourcing, management arrangements and reporting arrangements within the wider Authority was undertaken by the Senior Manager – Peer Support and Challenge. Quantitative and qualitative Information gathered during the course of the review are referred to, as appropriate, below.

6. IRO Caseloads and Unit Performance

Caseloads

- 6.1 In common with half of its regional peers, City of York Council IRO's have a dual function. As well as the independent review of children and young people in care, the IRO's provide independent Chairing of Child Protection Conferences, a separate statutory function under *Working Together 2015* for which they are accountable to the Director of Children's Services. The most significant benefit of integrating CYPIC Reviews with the Chairing of Child Protection Conferences is the opportunity to provide a greater level of consistency and oversight for children and young people. The benefit of continued and sustained relationships, and the potential for relationships to improve outcomes for children, irrespective of a child's status, is considered to be a key and important strength. The argument in favour of separating the functions is the ability to prioritise children and young people in care cases all of the time. It is acknowledged that the integrated model in use in York places a very substantial additional task upon Unit.

Table 1: Total Unit Caseload and IRO Average Caseload at Year End

					2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
	Quarter 1 Apr-Jun	Quarter 2 Jul-Sep	Quarter 3 Oct-Dec	Quarter 4 Jan-Mar				
CYPIC	199	203	188	191	191	197	222	243
CP	124	133	144	146	146	124	125	128
Total	323	336	332	337	337	321	371	345
Average					75	68	74	98

- 6.2 Table 1 shows case load by quarter for the reporting period and historical comparisons. The data confirms a marginal increase in the 2015/16 return in the total caseload over the 2014/15 figures. It is noted that the marginal decrease in Children and Young People in Care has been offset by an increase in the Child Protection population. As a consequence the Year End Average Caseload evidences a small but significant increase.
- 6.3 To contextualise the caseloads, partial regional data has been made available through the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional IRO Managers Group in November 2014. It is noted however that comparison with regional peers should be regarded as illustrative only, due to the very different structures, roles and responsibilities across the region's Local Authorities and the partial return of data.

Table 2: Yorkshire and Humberside IRO Services allocated caseloads (November 2014)

Local Authority	Average Caseload
Bradford	85
Hull City Council	89
Kirklees	65
Leeds City Council	63
North Yorkshire County Council	68
Rotherham	78
Wakefield Metropolitan District	76
Regional Average	76

- 6.4 Table 2 evidences that there is significant caseload variation within the Region. However, for the purposes of this Report it is noted that York, at an average caseload of 75, continues to return below the indicative regional average of 76.
- 6.5 Managers within the Regional IRO Management Group would note however that indicative caseloads do not represent the challenges in responding to unpredictable

demand and retaining enough flexibility to respond to peaks in demand and associated workload, whilst maintaining a focus on quality and oversight.

Number of Reviews

Table 3: Total Unit Activity – Reviews and Child Protection Conferences undertaken

Total Unit Activity				
		Historical		
	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	1012/13
CYPIC	548	619	660	861
CP	273	235	240	312
Total	821	854	900	1173

6.6 Within the reporting period the Unit have chaired a total of 548 CYPIC Reviews (compared with 619 in 2014/15 and 660 in 2013/14) and a total of 273 Child Protection Conferences (compared with 235 in 2014/15 and 240 in 2013/14). As a consequence, the overall reduction in the numbers of children and young people in the care of the City of York Council has been almost totally offset by an increase in the number of children and young people subject to Child Protection Plans within York, resulting in a very marginal reduction in workload.

Timeliness of Reviews

6.7 Table 4 reports the percentage of looked after children who had **all** their reviews on time within the reporting period. The 2014/15 Annual Report adopted a target of 90%. This ambitious target was met in Q1, however the overall performance within the reporting period (Q1-Q3) of 81% fell short of the target and reflects a decrease in Unit performance from the preceding year. In part this may be attributed to a reduction in the establishment of the Unit of 0.5 FTE and marginally higher caseloads as a consequence. It may also reflect changes in the Business Support staff group and decreasing familiarity with the Review process.

Table 4: Percentage of CYPIC Reviews held within timescales

Reviews within timescales by Quarter 2015/16					Historical Performance			
	Quarter 1 Apr-Jun	Quarter 2 Jul-Sep	Quarter 3 Oct-Dec	Quarter 4 Jan-Mar	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Reviews	90%	85%	81%	No Data	81%	88%	86%	75%

Participation in Reviews

Table 5: Method and Percentage CYPIC Participating in their Review taken from the Quality Assessment Framework (Question

		Historical		
		2016/16	2014/15	2013/14
Code	Method	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage
PN0	Child under 4 at time of Review	18%	13%	15%
PN1	Attends or speaks for him/herself	38%	41%	40%
PN2	Attends, views rep. by Advocate	1%	0.5%	2%
PN3	Attends, views conveyed non-verbally	0.3%	2.5%	0%
PN4	Attends but does not convey views	0.7%	1%	0.5%
PN5	Does not attend but briefs an advocate	15%	11.5%	7%
PN6	Does not attend but conveys in wri. etc	23%	24.5%	32.5%
PN7	Does not attend nor views conveyed	4%	6%	3%
Total		100%	100%	100%

6.8 Within the reporting period 78% of children and young people in care contributed to the review of their care, with only 4% not contributing by choice and 18% by virtue of age. The return is consistent with the 2014/15 return, with a marginal increase in the use of advocacy. Only 40% of children and young people in care attended their Review. This level of participation through attendance continues to be an area of concern to the Unit.

6.9 Of those children and young people who attended, it has been a Unit priority to facilitate, where appropriate, a child or young person to Chair or Co-Chaired their own Review. Whilst there will only ever be a small minority of children or young people who wish to Chair or Co-Chair their review, the Unit will continue to encourage all children and young people to consider Chairing or Co-Chairing their review and ensure that they are supported to do so. The return within the reporting period showed a welcome and substantial increase over the previous year. This complies with the aspiration within the Handbook that:

It is hoped that for many older children and young people, especially as they begin to plan for independence, the IRO will hand over at least part of the chairing role to them so that they can take an increased ownership of the meeting (at para.3.37)

Table 6: Number of Children and Young People Chairing or Co-Chairing their own Review:

Number of Reviews Chaired and Co-Chaired by Young people			
	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14

Reviews	41	24	11
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Consultation Prior to Reviews

6.10 There is a statutory expectation that children and young people are visited by the Independent Reviewing Officer and consulted with *prior* to their review. The *Handbook* does however acknowledge that there are circumstances where the IRO will exercise their discretion and determine whether this is necessary, for example; where there is a strong relationship between the young person and the IRO, where there are no significant changes to the care plans or where the child is very young. In previous periods this statutory requirement has proved extremely challenging due to higher than desirable caseloads held by the Unit. The return for the calendar year of 2013 for example recorded that in only 11% of reviews was the child or young person seen prior to their review and in 22% of reviews there was no record at all.

Table 7: Percentage of children and young people seen and spoken to by the IRO prior to the Review (Data from QAF Question 3)

Percentage of Children seen and spoken to prior to Review		
	2015/16	2014/15
Seen	35%	45%
Not Seen	30%	25%
Not appropriate	26%	22%
Not necessary	9%	7%

6.11 The Unit has been committed to improving its performance. In the Annual Report for 2014/15 a target of 50% was set building upon the 45% achieved within the preceding 12 months. The 2015/16 return indicates an unacceptable decrease in performance by the Unit. Whilst the staff group did reduce by 0.5FTE from 31 July 2015, nearly a third of children and young people whom it was appropriate and necessary to see were recorded by the QAF as not having been seen. This is a priority performance deficit for the Unit.

7. Profile of Children and Young People in Care in York

Number of Children and Young People in Care

Table 8: Number of Children and Young People in Care (excluding Short Breaks)

Number of CYPIC		
	Historical Performance	Comparators

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	Regional	National
Number CYPIC	199	203	188	191	191	197	222	243	491	457
No. per 10k	55	56	52	53	53	54	61	68	65	60

- 7.1 Within the reporting period, the number of children and young people in the care of the City of York Council has steadily decreased. At the end of Q4 (31 March 2016), the figure was 191. The numbers of looked after children in York are lower than both the national and regional averages. The decrease is consistent with Children's Social Care's determination to provide robust edge of care services to ensure that only those children and young people who absolutely need looking after become children in care. The figures also reflect the shorter duration of public law care proceedings and the focus on ensuring that permanency by way of adoption, or within kinship placements out of care secured in a timely way. It is anticipated that over the next reporting period, the numbers of Children will stabilise around the current level and not significantly decrease any further.

Gender of Children and Young People in Care

Table 9: Number of Children in Care by Gender

	Number of CYPIC					Historical Performance		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Number	199	203	188	191	191	193	222	243
Male	120	111	109	98	98	101	121	132
Female	103	106	100	93	93	92	100	111

- 7.2 Within the reporting period, the numbers of male and female children and young people in the care of the City of York are broadly representative of the demography of York, with no notable over-representation.

Ethnicity of Children and Young People in Care

Table 10: Percentage of Children in Care by Ethnicity at Year End

Ethnicity		2015/16		2014/15	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
ABAN	Bangladeshi (Asian or Asian British)	0	0%	1	0.5%
AOTH	Any other Asian or Asian British Bckgnd	1	0.5%	1	0.5%
BCRB	Black or Black British - Caribbean	0	0%	1	0.5%
MOTH	Any other mixed background	1	0.5%	1	0.5%
MAWS	White and Asian	4	2%	4	2%
MWBC	White and Black Caribbean	1	0.5%	1	0.5%
OOTH	Any other ethnic group	0	0%	1	0.5%
WBRI	White British	183	96%	187	95%
WIRI	White Irish	1	0.5%	0	0%
WOTH	Any other White background	0	0%	0	0%
		191	100%	197	100%

- 7.3 Within the reporting period, the ethnicity of the children and young people looked after by the City of York is broadly representative of the demography of York with no notable over-representation.

Age of Children and Young People in Care

Table 11: Number of Children by Age at Period End

Children by Age						Historical Performance		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Under 1 yr	10	9	9	13	13	8	6	5
1-4 years	23	21	17	19	19	23	30	38
5-9 years	39	39	36	37	37	36	45	46
10-15 years	86	90	79	78	78	90	92	102
Over 16 yrs	41	44	47	44	44	36	49	52

- 7.4 Within the reporting period, there have been a number of changes in the age profile of children and young people in care. There continues to be an increase in the number of babies in care which it is believed reflects improvements in assessment practice, earlier intervention and improved decision making. The next two age groups have shown a steady decline in numbers. This may reflect changed timescales for care proceedings down to a maximum of 26 weeks brought in with the revised PLO (CYC being a top performing Authority with average timescales of less than 20 weeks) and improved timescales and outcomes for permanence planning out of care for younger children. The number of young people in the 10-15 years age group has also decreased substantially. This reduction may reflect a greater Edge of Care focus by the Child in Need Service within the reporting period.

Time in Care of Children and Young People

Table 12: Number of Children by Period of Care at Period End

Number of CYPIC by Care length						Historical Performance		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Less than 6mths	28	34	24	25	25	25	27	20
6-12mths	25	21	13	18	18	22	11	17
1-2 years	18	25	32	31	31	19	24	57
2-4 years	39	33	30	33	33	41	61	65
More than 4 yrs	89	90	89	84	84	86	99	84

- 7.5 Within the reporting period, there has continued to be a decrease in the length of time in care for significant numbers of children and young people cared for by the City

of York. However, the increase in the 1-2 year cohort may reflect the challenges in securing permanency by way of Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement Order or Discharge of Care Orders following care proceedings.

Legal Status of Children and Young People in Care

Table 13: Legal Status of Children and Young People in Care as Percentage of whole

	2015/16	Historical			Comparitors	
		2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	Regional	National
Interim Care Orders	10%	11%	6%	12%	23%	20%
Full Care orders	55%	54%	57%	49%	44%	40%
Freed for Adoption	4%	6%	12%	16%	14%	11%
Accomm. S.20	31%	29%	25%	22%	18%	29%
YOT legal Statuses	0%	0%	0%	0.4%	0%	0%
Detain CP in LA Acc.	0%	0%	0.5%	1.0%	0%	0%

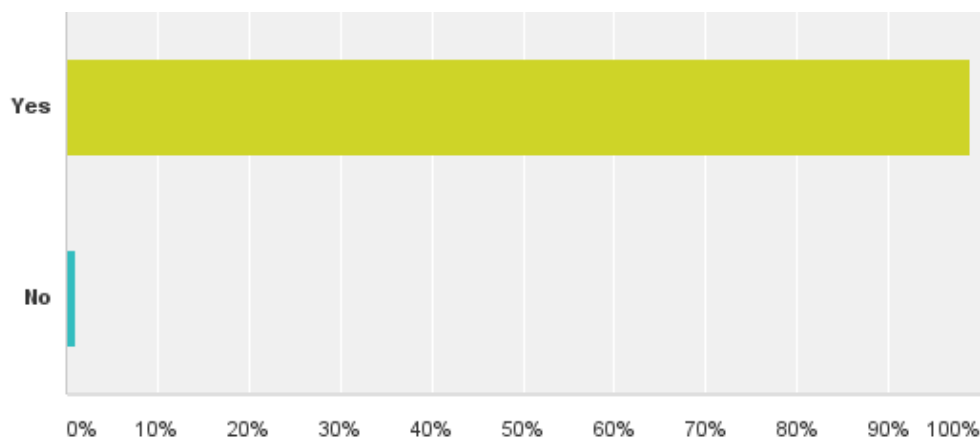
- 7.6 Within the reporting period, there has been a continued reduction in the numbers of children subject to Placement Orders (Freed for Adoption). This trend reflects the national picture. As there is no matched increase in use of full care order it is likely that this reduction is due to use of other permanence options such as Special Guardianship Order.
- 7.7 It is also noticeable that within the reporting period, there has been a further marginal increase in the use of s.20 Children Act 1989. The use of Section 20 has been subject to judicial and national scrutiny (N (Children) (Adoption: Jurisdiction) [2015] EWCA Civ 1112; ADCS *Practice Guidance for the Use of Section 20*). The ADCS Practice Guidance noted:

We share judicial concern about those s20 cases which have drifted without decent care plans for children, where individual children looked after have suffered demonstrable harm or detriment as a direct result. This type of practice can never be excused or condoned. All local authorities should take steps to ensure they do not have a single s20 arrangement of this sort. This assurance can only be achieved by ensuring that every s20 case open to a local authority has been actively reviewed and that s20 status remains the appropriate current legal option and framework for the child.

The Unit takes this challenge very seriously and works proactively to ensure the right permanence plan, including legal status, is in place for every child and young person in care. This is reflected in the Quality Assurance Framework used by the Unit. Table 14 demonstrate that, in the IRO's opinion, in 99% of cases the current or proposed legal status of the child is appropriate and meeting the child's needs. In the small minority

of cases where the IRO disagrees with the Legal Status, 1% of cases, the IRO will dispute the matter under the Local Dispute Resolution Process.

Table 14: QAF Data from Question 20: Is the current or proposed legal status for the child appropriate?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	98.96%	478
No	1.04%	5
Total		483

Placement Stability of Children and Young People in Care

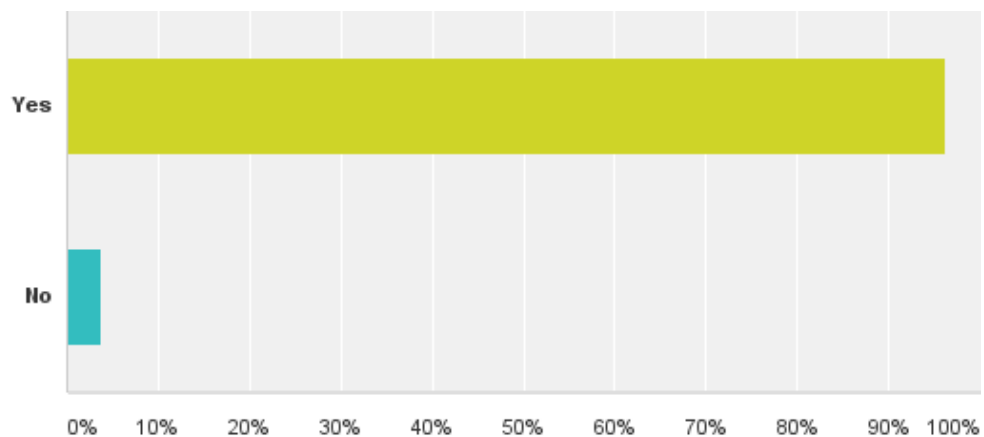
Table 15: Percentage of CYPIC having 3 or more placement moves

	2015/16	Historical Performance		
		2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
3+ Moves	8.9%	11.9%	9.5%	14%

7.8 Accordingly, placement stability has increased since 2014/15. The Unit is aware of the contribution that it can make to the stability of care for children and young people and will subject care plans proposing changes in placement to detailed scrutiny under its Quality Assurance Framework to ensure that any placement change is in the best interests of a child or young person and any disruption, particularly to education, is minimised. The Unit takes this challenge very seriously and works proactively to ensure the right placement for every child and young person in care. This is reflected in the Quality Assurance Framework used by the Unit. The table demonstrates that, in the IRO's opinion, in 96%

of cases the current or proposed placement for the child is appropriate and meeting the child's needs. In the small minority of cases where the IRO disagrees with the placement decision, 4% of cases, the IRO will dispute the matter under the Local Dispute Resolution Process.

Table 16: QAF Data from Question 21: Is the current or proposed placement meeting the needs of the child?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	96.29%	467
No	3.71%	18
Total		485

Placement Location of Children and Young People in Care

Table 17: Number of Placements by Location of new CYPIC

	2015/16	Historical		
		2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
New Placements in LA	47	35	46	38
New Placements outside LA	22	29	16	16
New Placements +20miles	4	11	10	14

- 7.9 Within the reporting period, there has been a significant decrease in the number of children who have been cared for in placements placed outside of the authority. This may reflect in part, the reduced numbers of children and young people in care and successful recruitment of Foster Carers within the City under the Making York Home project. The Unit is aware of the contribution that it can make in ensuring placements are appropriate and that every effort is made by Children's Social Care to place as close to the child's home and community as possible so far as is consistent with their need to be safeguarded.

Health and Education of Children and Young People in Care

Table 18: Health Assessments and Dental Checks, Under 5's Developmental Checks, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Scores and Personal Education Plans

	2015/16	Historical		
		2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Health and Dental Checks	74.5%	66%	92.9%	82%
Under 5s Dev Checks	100%	92.9%	82.1%	87%
Average SDQ Score	13.0	13.1	15.9	14.8
Up-to-date PEP in place	Not Available	70.1%	83.7%	53%

7.10 Health and education are two key dimensions within the developmental needs of children and young people in the care of the City of York. The Unit is aware of the contribution that it can make by monitoring multi-agency activities such as the Initial and Review Health Assessments and PEP meetings to ensure that children and young people in care are getting the help and support they need. Table 18 demonstrates that there has been progress in the reporting period but that more can be achieved.

8. IRO impact on the outcomes for children and young people

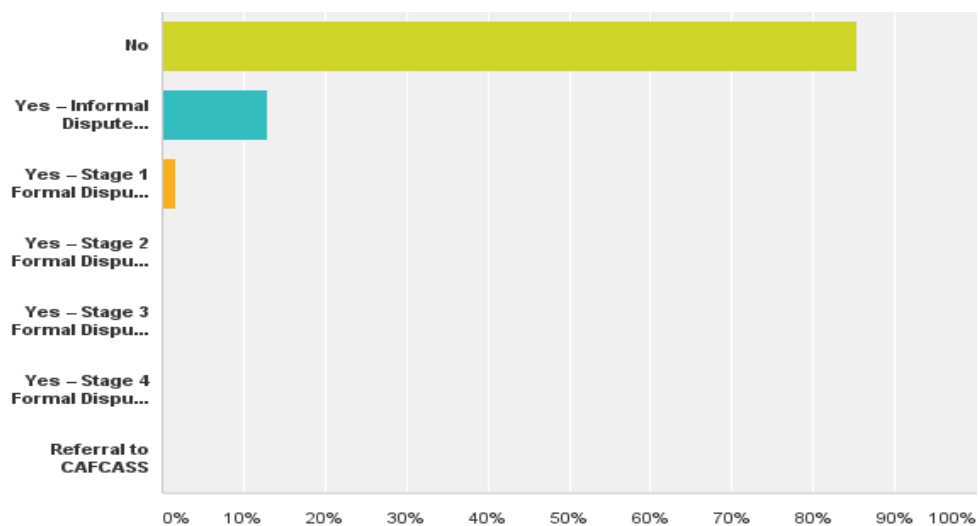
Dispute Resolution and Escalation

- 8.1 One of the key functions of an IRO is to oversee the needs and rights of every young person in the care of the Local Authority. This responsibility is outlined in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and *IRO Handbook 2010*. Every child in care has an Independent Reviewing Officer appointed to ensure that their Care Plan fully reflects their needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the Local Authority's legal responsibilities towards them as a child or young person in care. An IRO will ensure that the wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the Local Authority throughout the whole time the child is in care and will monitor the performance of the Local Authority in relation to the child's case. On occasions this means that it will come to the attention of the IRO that there is a problem in relation to the care of a child or young person, for example in relation to planning for the care of the child, or the implementation of the plan or decisions relating to it, resource issues or poor practice by the Social Worker. When this happens the IRO is required to seek a resolution.
- 8.2 It is acknowledged that the resolution of disputes can be time consuming and can create tensions between the IRO and the Local Authority. Nevertheless, the child's allocated IRO is personally responsible for activating and seeking a resolution, even if it may not be in accordance with the child's wishes and feelings if, in the IRO's view, it is in accordance with the best interest and welfare of the child, as well as his or her human rights. In compliance

with the *IRO Handbook 2010* there is in place a formal Dispute Resolution Process whilst acknowledging and giving primacy to informal resolution where possible.

- 8.3 York IROs manage most disagreement and challenge very effectively and on an informal basis. More often than not, discussion with social workers and their managers is effective in achieving the progress required. That said, achieving a culture of effective challenge is difficult and success is ultimately rooted in confident and respectful professional relationships. At its best, challenge is perceived as helpful and supports professional learning and development which social workers and managers take forward in other cases and elements of their practice. A Dispute Resolution Process is only effective if IROs, social workers and managers all perceive it to be effective and this remains an area which requires further and continued focus following the review of the Unit.

Table 18: Number of Disputes (taken from QAF Data Question 30: Following the Review, in the judgment of the IRO will any issue identified in the care or care planning for the child be taken into informal or formal resolution processes?)



Answer Choices	Responses	
No	85.42%	416
Yes – Informal Dispute Resolution	12.94%	63
Yes – Stage 1 Formal Dispute Resolution	1.64%	8
Yes – Stage 2 Formal Dispute Resolution	0.00%	0
Yes – Stage 3 Formal Dispute Resolution	0.00%	0
Yes – Stage 4 Formal Dispute Resolution	0.00%	0
Referral to CAFCASS	0.00%	0
Total		487

8.4 Accordingly, the IRO Unit initiated 63 disputes with Children’s Social Care on an informal basis and 8 at Stage 1. In terms of reasons for the Dispute – these are captured within the QAF to aid the Unit’s challenge to the Authority as Corporate Parent.

Table 19: QAF Data for Question 31: Issues taken into Dispute

Answer Choices	Responses
Not applicable	84.18% 399
Resources - inappropriate placement	0.21% 1
Resources – contact arrangements unsuitable/inadequate	1.05% 5
Resources – inadequate health provision	0.21% 1
Resources – inadequate education provision	0.42% 2
Resources – inadequate emotional wellbeing provision	0.00% 0
Care Planning – inadequate risk management of CSE	0.21% 1
Care Planning – inadequate risk management of missing/absence	0.00% 0
Care Planning – Family Finding (Adoption)	0.00% 0
Care Planning – Achieving Legal Status change	0.63% 3
Care Planning – Planning for Permanence	1.69% 8
Care Planning – Securing a permanent placement	0.84% 4
Practice - LACR Decisions not implemented/complied with	1.27% 6
Practice - Insufficient evidence of child's voice	0.63% 3
Practice – No/delay in allocating Social Worker	0.00% 0
Practice - Statutory Visits not within timescales	3.80% 18
Practice - No/poor quality assessment of need	1.48% 7
Practice – No/poor quality Placement Plan	3.16% 15
Practice – No/poor quality Care Plan	6.12% 29
Practice – No/poor quality Pathway Plan	2.32% 11
Practice – No/poor quality Health Assessment	1.48% 7
Practice – No/poor quality PEP	2.53% 12
Practice – No/poor quality Life Story Work	0.42% 2
Practice – Inadequate preparation for LACR	0.63% 3
Other (please specify)	6.33% 30
Total Respondents: 474	

8.5 Accordingly, from the QAF Survey Data, the Unit is able to assert that the three key issues brought into Dispute were:

1. Practice – No/Poor quality Care Plan
2. Practice – Statutory Visits not in timescales
3. Practice – No/Poor quality Placement Plans

In this way, the Unit was able to feed back to Children’s Social Care to improve practice by practitioners for children and young people in care.

Quality Assurance of Corporate Parenting

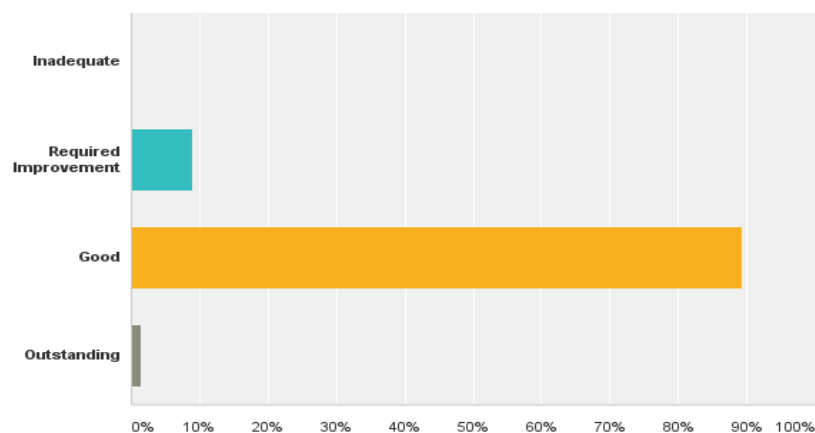
8.6 As well as Chairing Looked After Reviews and monitoring individual cases on an ongoing basis, the *Handbook* notes that:

the IRO also has a duty to monitor the performance of the local authority’s function as a corporate parent and to identify any areas of poor practice. This should include identifying patterns of concern emerging not just around individual children but also more generally in relation to the collective experience of it’s looked after children of the services they receive (at para. 2.13)

Accordingly, the Unit has systematised the collation of data obtained at each Review by way of the Quality Assurance Framework which is recorded on Survey Monkey, enabling aggregation into the ‘collective experience’ of children and young people Looked After by City of York Council as Corporate Parent.

8.7 The QAF Survey explicitly asks the IRO at the end of the Review to comment upon the quality of the Corporate Parenting that the child or young person in care has received. This QAF dataset is perhaps the best indicator of the quality of Corporate Parenting being provided.

Table 20: QAF Data for Question 29: In the judgment of the IRO, what is the overall quality of corporate parenting of this child?

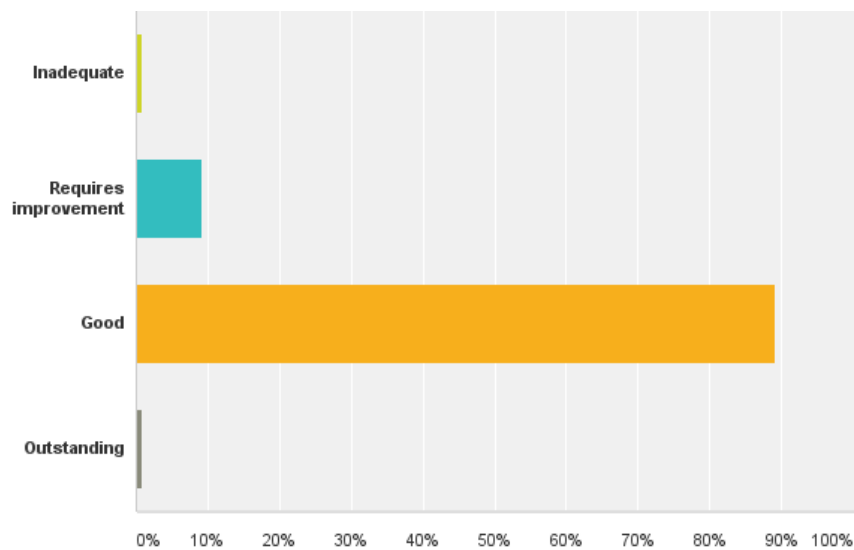


Answer Choices	Responses	
Inadequate	0.20%	1
Required Improvement	9.00%	44
Good	89.37%	437
Outstanding	1.43%	7
Total		489

8.8 Accordingly, the Corporate Parenting was judged to be inadequate in only a single case, whereas in 89% of cases, the Corporate Parenting was judged as either good or outstanding.

8.9 Following the introduction of the QAF, historical comparisons can begin to be made. In 2013 65% of Care Plans were recorded as being judged as being of 'good quality'. In the first QAF return, 85% were deemed 'good' (with 2% of outstanding quality) and in 2015/16 89% of Care Plans were judged 'Good' (with 0.8% outstanding).

Table 21: QAF Data for Question 23: In the judgment of the IRO, what is the overall quality of the Care Plan?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Inadequate	0.81%	4
Requires improvement	9.15%	45
Good	89.23%	439
Outstanding	0.81%	4
Total		492

- 8.10 In summary, the Quality Assurance processes introduced by the Unit within the reporting period are a significant improvement and enable the Unit to identify areas of concern and development and areas of strength which can then be alerted to Senior Managers within Children's Social Care.

Referrals for Advocacy

- 8.11 The IRO Unit continues to have an established and close working relationship with the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service. The Service offers advocacy to children and young people in care and, if necessary, will support them through the City of York Corporate Complaints procedure.
- 8.12 The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service advise that the main themes of referrals to it by the Unit and others in relation to the concerns and views of children and young people in care in 2015/16 were as follows:

Theme	2015/16	2014/15
Contact issues	3%	13%
Unhappiness about their Social Worker	17%	11%
Placement issues	11%	13%
Disagreement with Care Plan	5%	11%
accessing support / services	8%	5%
Support to express wishes and feelings	50%	45%
Other	6%	2%

- 8.13 The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service regularly attends Unit Team Meetings to update IRO's on emerging themes of concern raised by children and young people. Every IRO understands that it is their responsibility to make sure that a child or young person understands that advocacy is a right and an option for them and will explain how the advocate could help, providing age appropriate information to each looked after child about the City of York Advocacy Service.
- 8.14 The Unit greatly values the contribution of the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service to outcomes for children and young people. Two examples of the Unit and advocacy working closely to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people are described below:

A referral was made for an advocate by the IRO for 2 siblings subject to Care Orders, living with parents, outside of York. The referral recognised the complexity of the placement and focused on ascertaining the children's wishes and feelings and insights into life at home. Frequent visits were undertaken outside of the home environment, during which time both children were able to talk about

how they felt about living at home. Both children were supported to attend their review meetings. They requested to leave the home and come into Foster Care and although the decision for them was still difficult, they were supported through this process. The case was closed to advocacy in February 2016, they both now attend IM2 and have independent visitors and are very happy in their placement.

A referral was made for a young man age 14 due to him saying that he was unhappy living out of area in a residential unit. S was supported to express his views about wanting to live with a family friend and his reasons for this. With the support of an advocate S was able to share his views and wishes and a planned move was agreed. S is settled and remains in the placement he requested.

9. Update on the Seven Service Priorities 2015-16

9.1 In the Annual Report 2014/15, seven Service Priorities were identified for the Unit Work Plan 2015/16 period. These seven priorities were:

- 1. Deliver the 'enhanced' IRO role for children and young people;**
- 2. Change business processes to better support the IRO Role;**
- 3. Increase the participation of children and young people in their Reviews;**
- 4. Ensure appropriate independent challenge to the City of York as Corporate Parent to improve outcomes for children and young people;**
- 5. See more children and young people.**
- 6. Conclude the Review of the Unit**
- 7. Prepare the Unit for transition onto the Mosaic case Management System**

This Section provides a detailed overview of progress made by the Service on the seven identified priorities during the whole of the reporting period from 01 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

One: Deliver the 'enhanced' IRO role for children and young people

9.2 Monthly supervision sessions with IROs have consistently reviewed IRO caseloads and the balance of work with regard to children subject to Child Protection Plans and Children in Care. At most points during the reporting period, most IROs have been within the target of holding no more than 80 cases.

- 9.3 During this reporting period, the IROs have commenced completion of monthly Peer Audits of colleagues' case files. The IROs have consistently prioritised this work and describe the value in terms of learning from colleagues and the peer feedback they receive. The IRO peer audits are collated and included in a routine service 'Score Card' which is used by managers to identify practice strengths and themes across Children's Social Care. This contributes to improvement in the Corporate Parenting of the Council.
- 9.4 Additionally, as well as their case work, York IROs have become increasingly involved in wider service and partnership work, bringing their quality assurance experience to a range of activities. During this reporting period, York IROs have prioritised the following:
- One IRO represented the Unit in a Project (Making York Home) aimed at strengthening local placement options for children with complex needs. The project was intensive in terms of time and included representation from a number of key agencies.
 - Two IROs acted as 'Mosaic Champions' and assisted colleagues in the transition to a new work flow based Case Management System.
 - York IROs and the interim IRO Manager have consistently prioritised attendance at regular regional IRO meetings and training. The meetings have been invaluable in terms of peer support and learning, including focused work around evidenced based approaches to child centred reviews.
 - IROs have prioritised team meetings to develop communication and relationships with key colleagues, including; Named Nurse for Children in Care, Children's Rights and Advocacy Team, Health colleagues regarding the introduction of the Health Passports.
 - IROs have attended a foster carer consultation session and Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) Group and plans are in place to progress this work further.
 - IROs and IRO Manager attend and contribute to a number of LSCB sub groups, including one which focuses on multi agency case audits and a case review group.

Two: Change business processes to better support the IRO role

- 9.5 During the reporting period, IROs have prioritised work around improving consistency around systems and processes. This work has included a number of joint sessions with business support colleagues and detailed discussion and planning around roles and practice, including the implementation of Mosaic. The Unit has worked hard to

support changes to colleagues and responsibilities within business support. This work remains ongoing.

Three: Increase participation of children and young people in their reviews

9.6 During the reporting period, the Unit has nearly doubled the number of children and young people who have Chaired or Co-Chaired part of their review, evidencing a move toward more child-centred reviews facilitated, in part, by a challenging and stimulating presentation by the Sheffield Children's Involvement Team to the Unit in May 2015. However, overall participation through attendance did not increase within the period and this must remain a service priority in the next twelve months. Nevertheless, the Unit can report on some excellent examples of child-centred practice:

- One IRO uses a set of 6 coloured A5 prompt cards, labelled : 'Family', 'Friends', 'Home', 'School' 'Health' and 'Wild Card'. The IRO sometimes uses the cards with children and young people to help them identify their own priorities for discussion at a Review Meeting. If the child or young person decides to chair their meeting, they have the option of using the cards to structure the discussion. Some young people have chosen to circulate the cards during the meeting, appointing different people to lead different parts of the discussion.
- One IRO always writes an individual letter to children and young people following Review Meetings. The letter includes a photograph of the IRO and 'speech bubbles' to ensure that the child or young person knows that the IRO has written the letter.
- IROs have used video link, when young people have said that they don't want to attend a Review Meeting but still want to be involved in the process.
- One IRO routinely asks young people if they would like her to bake cakes for their Review Meeting! In some cases, this has prompted young people to also bake and bring cakes and biscuits.

Four: Ensure appropriate independent challenge to the city of York as a corporate parent to improve outcomes for children and young people

- 9.7 The Unit has been active in challenging the Council. The IROs initiated 63 disputes with Children's Social Care on an informal basis and 8 at Stage 1. Whilst the issues raised were many, key themes emerged, focusing on practice. These were communicated to Senior Managers within Children's Social Care and in every case, resolution was achieved.
- 9.8 The introduction of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) Survey using the functionality of Survey Monkey has significantly increased the ability of the Unit to aggregate data and thereby identify areas of strength and areas of development with which to challenge the Council as Corporate Parent. In this way the Unit has been better able to contribute to the ambitions of the Council to achieve the best possible outcomes for its children and young people.

Five: See more children and young people

- 9.9 Seeing more children and young people in care has been a Unit priority since 2013 when just 11% of children in care were seen prior to their Review. All IROs have been committed to improving their performance. In the Annual Report for 2014/15 an ambitious target of 50% was set for the year, building upon the 45% achieved within the preceding 12 months. Regrettably, the 2015/16 return of 35% indicates a decrease in performance by the Unit. Whilst the staff group did reduce by 0.5FTE from 31 July 2015, nearly a third of children and young people whom it was appropriate and necessary to see were recorded by the QAF as not having been seen. This is a priority performance deficit for the Unit.

Six: Conclude the Review of the Unit

- 9.10 The IRO Unit has been subject to review for several months and interim staffing and management arrangements have been in place. It is acknowledged within this Report that the interim arrangements presented, at times, high levels of uncertainty for Unit staff. The review by the Senior Manager – Peer Challenge and Support is now complete and her recommendations will be implemented during September 2016.
- 9.11 The review of the Unit started from a position of understanding existing strengths, challenges and dependencies. The process considered different perspectives and in particular focused on the wider system in which the Unit is expected to operate. This approach resulted, importantly, in the review's conclusions being coherent and consistent with the overall direction and vision of Children's Services and partnerships. The review process included the following research and engagement;
- Engagement sessions with the IRO Unit and business support colleagues

- Engagement session other related Service Managers
- Questionnaire to agencies attending case conferences
- Manager observations of 4 case conferences
- Feedback and insights from Regional IRO Manager Meetings and work around child centred reviews

9.12 The review established the following baseline strengths;

- *A well performing team with good oversight of children and their plans. IROs are experienced and tailor their approach to individual circumstances.*
- *Fluctuating levels of demand can create challenges around the allocation of work (IROs and business support). The unit recognise that, in part, this situation can be helped by further streamlining systems and processes.*
- *The vast majority of Child Protection Conferences are well attended with good agency participation. The Conference process has developed well in recent years and a current priority is achieving an earlier focus, in the meeting, on risk analysis and the multi agency development of the outline plan.*
- *The insights and analysis which IROs develop could be routinely collated and better communicated to the workforce and wider partnership, promoting learning through practice and child and family feedback.*

9.13 The Review also included feedback from Foster Carers about the Unit and highlighted a number of themes and priorities;

- *Foster Carers have different levels of understanding about the IRO role and statutory responsibilities.*
- *Foster carers value contact (visit or telephone discussion) from IROs prior to review meetings.*
- *Foster Carers support an approach to child and young person centred reviews. Some carers noted that they had observed recent improvements and others felt that meetings were still too focused on professionals and parents.*
- *Foster carers would like to see more young people consulted in advance of Review Meetings. Some carers identified the importance of practical things such as venue and invites to meetings. Foster carers were pleased to hear that IROs wanted to promote 'normality' and this theme can help structure subsequent discussions.*

- *Foster carers noted an improvement in the distribution of review records. The consensus, however, was that distribution still takes too long.*
- *All agreed that it would be important for IROs to routinely contribute to foster carer basic training so that new carers are well informed about the role. Equally, it would be helpful for IROs to produce a leaflet for foster carer explaining the role and sharing contact details.*

9.14 The Review also included feedback from the Service Manager for Fostering who noted:

“York IROs are child focused and conscientious colleagues who are always keen to be flexible in their role, ensuring that their skills and unique oversight of a child’s story are maximised. At times, this has included IROs visiting children to inform them about important decisions and on such occasions (although limited), IROs have recognised that their relationship with the child means that they are best placed to have the discussion and/or share the information”

9.15 Finally, the Review included feedback from a Service Manager responsible for one of Social Work teams who noted:

“York IROs present as having a holistic understanding of our individual young people and their individual strengths and needs, particularly those who are in care. This frequently comes across to me through my discussion with IROs and also via their written documentation”

9.16 The review of the Unit concluded there was a strong baseline from which to further improve the IRO service in York. It was noted that:

“the strengths of the unit are important strengths; an existing emphasis on the voice of the child, a skilled and experienced staff team which prioritises learning and already identifies the potential that the role can offer at a practice and strategic level”

9.17 As a result of the review, with its areas for development and positive feedback of areas of strength, the review proposed significant changes focused upon increasing the resilience and capacity of the Unit, establishing additional management capacity and improved coordination and alignment with other performance and quality

assurance related functions. The most significant changes for the purpose of this report include:

- The Unit will be structurally located within a new Quality Assurance Group alongside other quality assurance and performance management activities. The Unit will therefore be accountable to a newly established Group Manager providing strategic overview of related activities and linking in with the Head of Children’s Social Work Practice and other operational Group Managers;
- The Unit will include a new Service Manager post which will, for the first time, provide the unit with a full time dedicated manager providing oversight, challenge and support. This role will be critical in driving forward the Units’ performance and practice development work;
- The IRO unit will benefit from additional staffing, moving from three permanent full time equivalent posts to six full time permanent posts. This additional resource will provide greater resilience to what was previously a relatively small team with vulnerabilities to sickness absence, leave and spikes in demand. The additional staffing will however absorb the transfer of Child in Need cases and introduce independent review of them, promoting greater consistency for children along the whole safeguarding continuum;
- The Unit will for the first time accommodate and deliver the statutory review of Foster Carers and also undertake quality assurance of commissioned residential placements include an additional IRO post which will focus on

Seven: Prepare the Unit for transition onto the Mosaic case Management System

9.18 The Unit fully engaged and participated in the preparation and transition onto the Mosaic Case Management System. Two IRO ‘Champions’ supported the development of workflow, templates and processes to enable the Reviews for children and young people in care to be undertaken on the new system. The work was of high quality and the launch – on 21 March 2016 – was achieved successfully as a consequence of months of preparation.

10. Service Work Plan for 2016/17

10.1 The Service Work Plan for 2015/16 identifies a number of Actions for the next reporting period, categorised under three Strategic Aims:

- Achieving Structural Change

- Strengthening Professional Relationships
- Prioritising Quality Practice

The Work Plan is tabulated as follows:

Strategic Aims	Actions
Achieving Structural Change	1. Establish and embed the new management structure with Group Manager and Service Manager appointments
	2. Progress to successful conclusion the transition of IROs and assimilation of current CIN Planning and Reviewing Officers to the new Unit; including induction and whole-team development work
	3. Review key processes to establish how systematic and independent reviews of children and young people's plans across the safeguarding continuum will be delivered, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Frequency of Reviews; b. The resolution of disputes process c. The Quality Assurance Framework
Strengthening Professional Relationships	1. Establish an improved balance between home, independent working and team working for IROs
	2. Establish a link worker IRO role for teams and services and use this role to strengthen professional relationships
	3. Develop a forward plan identifying IRO unit participation and engagement with key services and stakeholders, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster Carers • Show Me That I Matter • Regional Groups • Virtual Head Teacher for Children in Care • Health
	4. Implement a process for providing routine feedback to services and agencies, regarding the quality of service and agency practice, more specifically; feedback around how practice impacts on outcomes for children

	5. Introduce routine peer observation of practice by Service colleagues
Prioritising Quality Practice	1. Extend the practice of mid-point reviews to all cases involving children in care
	2. Prioritise developing systems and processes to improve the timely distribution of records following review meetings
	3. Develop a way of analysing cases that move up and down the continuum from Child in Need to Child Protection or Children in Care to establish practice learning around the application of thresholds
	4. Develop the Child Protection Conference model, researching evidenced based approaches consistent with relational practice. Consult on and implement and recommendations from this work.
	5. Review the IRO role and oversight for young people reaching 18 years, ensuring that Transition to Adulthood is well planned and supported for all cases, particularly for children with disabilities or complex needs
	6. Take forward the priorities identified through the Making York Home Project, identifying and promoting placements which offer opportunities for delegated authority to foster carers and other child-centred planning
	7. Review quality assurance arrangements, introducing peer observation and reviewing current arrangements for collating and using family feedback

11. Summary

11.1 At the time of writing, the Unit is on the cusp of significant change. Looking backwards, it made significant progress over the reporting period in delivering high quality, systematic and independent reviews of the care and care planning for children and young people in the care of the City of York Council. Looking forward, changes to the Unit offer the opportunity to meaningfully improve the experiences and outcomes

for looked after children within the City. The Unit can look forward with confidence to the next twelve months.

12. Recommendations to the Corporate Parenting Board

12.1 It is recommended that the City of York Council Corporate Parenting Panel consider the following:

1. Note the areas of positive performance referred to within the Annual Report, particularly evidence that the Unit has directly contributed to improving outcomes for children and young people in care;
2. Note and support the Unit's commitment to better deliver its statutory responsibilities to children and young people in care and their parents or carers, in particular increased consultation, participation and challenge;
3. Use the annual reporting requirement of the Unit to inform the ongoing work of the Corporate Parenting Panel in raising outcomes for the children and young people in the care of the City of York Council.

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09 September 2016



1. Introduction and Purpose of the Annual Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to meet the statutory requirement for the IRO Manager to produce a report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Board, established by the *IRO Handbook* (2010).
- 1.2 The specific purposes, content and format of this report will follow those set out in the IRO Annual Report for 2013. The details of the underpinning statutory guidance and recommendations from the OFSTED Thematic Report *Independent Reviewing Officers: Taking up the challenge?* (2013) inform the structure and content of this report and are set out in the Annual IRO Report 2013. They will not be repeated here.
- 1.3 Finally, it is noted that following presentation to the City of York Council Corporate Parenting Board and the City of York Safeguarding Childrens' Board, this report, and a Children and Young People's version, will be placed on the City of York Council website as publically accessible documents.

2. Reporting Period

- 2.1 The previous full Annual IRO Report covered the period 1st January to 31st December 2013. That report was followed by an addendum report covering the period 1st January 2014 to 31st March 2014. This brought the annual reporting cycle for the IRO report into line with the national reporting cycle for looked after children.
- 2.2 This report therefore covers the standard reporting period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015.

3. The Legal, Statutory and National Context of the IRO Role

- 3.1 The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for a child or young person looked after by the Local Authority is a legal requirement under s.118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- 3.2 In March 2010 the *IRO Handbook* was issued, providing Local Authorities with statutory guidance on how the IRO's should discharge their duties. Significantly, the *Handbook* stated:

The IRO has a new role conferred upon them to monitor the child's case as opposed to monitoring the review, effectively monitoring the implementation of the Care Plan between reviews (at para. 3.74)

The *Handbook* goes on to state that the primary role of an IRO is:

To ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child (at para. 2.10)

In discharging this role, the *Handbook* notes (at para. 2.14) that the IRO has a number of specific responsibilities, including:

- *promoting the voice of the child;*
- *ensuring that plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs;*
- *making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his/her entitlement to one;*
- *offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning for looked after children and the delivery of services to them; and*
- *and monitoring the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands*

3.3 Furthermore, the *Handbook* commented upon how Local Authorities should facilitate IRO's to fulfil their statutory responsibilities by observing:

The local authority should provide sufficient administrative support to facilitate the delivery of an efficient and effective review process (at para. 7.3)

The manager should ensure that the size of the caseloads enables each IRO to comply with primary legislation, the Regulations and relevant guidance in order to achieve the outcomes for every looked after child that a conscientious and caring parent would seek for their own children (at para. 7.9)

It is estimated that a caseload of 50 to 70 looked after children for a full time equivalent IRO, would represent good practice in the delivery of a quality service, including the full range of functions set out in this handbook (at para. 7.15)

3.4 The 2013 Annual IRO Report highlighted the 2012 case of *A and S v Lancs CC* [2012] EWHC 1689 (Fam) which raised fundamental questions about the IRO role and purpose. Whilst the court found a local authority's failings were primary failings in front line social work, of relevance the Judgment noted that a contributory factor was the inadequacy of the IRO system, which did not pick up on and remedy the primary problem. Significantly, the IRO was found to have independently breached the boys' rights under Articles 8.

3.5 In a more recent case in 2015 *Re X (Discharge of care order (1)) Re 2014 EWFC B217* the Court found that there was a failure by a Local Authority to implement a plan for the permanent placement for a child with autism. This appears to have been, at least in part, due to resource constraints. There was also a failure to provide therapeutic support once CAMHS

had assessed that the child did not meet their threshold criteria. The IRO in this case was explicitly criticised for "... failing to robustly manage the Local Authority's implementation of the Care Plan". The judgement made clear that it was the expectation of the Court that an IRO should appropriately escalate concerns and set remedial timescales even when a Local Authority's ability to implement its care plan was affected by matters outside its direct control. The judgment noted the *IRO Handbook* (2010) which clearly states:

There will be times when the IRO may be advised that obstacles in the way of resolving the issue are outside or beyond the control of the local authority, for example in relation to staffing, interagency or resources issues. However, if these are impacting on the ability of the department to meet the needs of a child as identified in the child's care plan, the IRO should continue to escalate the issue. (at para. 6.5)

3.6 Finally, in the Annual Report 2013, it was noted that Ofsted had published a thematic report in relation to an evaluation of the effectiveness of IRO's entitled *Independent Reviewing Officers: Taking up the challenge?* (2013). The recommendations of that Report (at pps. 6-7) are worth restating:

Local authorities should:

- *Take urgent action to implement in full the revised IRO guidance and ensure that:*
 - *IROs have the required skills, training, knowledge and time to undertake all elements of their role effectively, including ensuring that children's wishes and feelings properly influence the plans for their future*
 - *management oversight of IROs is sufficiently robust, which must include formal and rigorous challenge where there is delay in making permanent plans for their future; senior managers must assure themselves of the quality of the IRO service and manage its performance effectively; line managers must take prompt action to rectify poor IRO performance*
 - *an annual report is produced by the IRO service in line with statutory guidance, setting out the quality of corporate parenting and care for looked after children; it should be publicly accessible and include information on IRO caseloads*
- *seek regular feedback from children, young people, families, carers and professionals about the difference the IRO has made to the lives of the children with whom they work. This evidence should be collated by the local authority and used to drive improvement*
- *prioritise and implement strategies that enable the most vulnerable looked after children, such as children with additional communication needs and children living away from their home local authority, to participate as fully as possible in the planning and reviews of their care.*

4. The City of York Council IRO Service

- 4.1 During the reporting period, the IRO Unit has been subject to some changes in personnel. The Unit continues to comprise of three full-time, permanent Independent Reviewing Officers, all of whom are experienced and authoritative Social Work practitioners with management experience. Additionally, from 01 June 2014, the Unit benefitted from a 1.5 FTE temporary uplift in capacity with a full-time Agency IRO being appointed and a part-time IRO appointed through the secondment of a Senior Practitioner from another service area. The Unit has also, during the reporting period, relied upon limited additional sessional hours (0.2 FTE) from a part-time Independent Reviewing Officer.
- 4.2 All six IRO's working for the Unit are qualified Social Workers registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council and subjected to regular Disclosure and Barring Service enhanced checks. All have relevant and appropriate skills, bringing to the role specialist knowledge and experience including Children's Social Care safeguarding management, youth offending management, fostering and adoption work, work in therapeutic and third sector services, residential services management and performance management and quality assurance work. All have substantial experience of effective direct work with children and young people.
- 4.3 Five of the six IRO's are White British females, the other a White British male. The Unit takes issue of gender, culture and diversity fully into account in its provision of services.
- 4.4 All six of the IRO's are independent of City of York Children's Social Care and are not involved in preparation of children's care plans or the management of cases or have any control over resources allocated to a case.
- 4.5 All IRO's have access to independent legal advice upon request.
- 4.6 All IRO's are encouraged to participate in the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional IRO Practitioners Group for peer-support and sector-led improvement opportunities.
- 4.7 All IRO's access training opportunities. In May 2015 (just outside the reporting period) all six attended a one-day Regional IRO Practitioners Conference, hosted by Sheffield City Council. The conference programme included:
- From the PLO Forwards: a legal briefing for IROs
 - Making care plans work well for children: messages from University of East Anglia research into care planning and the role of the IRO
 - Child Centred Approach to Child Care Reviews (Sheffield Children's Involvement Team)
- 4.8 During the reporting period, management of the IRO's has continued on an interim basis to be provided by the Principal Advisor, a substantive post within Children's Social Care. The Principal Advisor is a qualified Social Worker registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council, is subject to regular Disclosure and Barring Service enhanced checks and is an experienced Children's Social Care safeguarding manager. The Principal Advisor provides oversight, professional advice and management support to each IRO, including monthly Supervision and Team Meetings and works to ensure the IRO's access training appropriate to need.

- 4.9 Whilst the Principal Advisor is part of the Children’s Social Care Management Group, this is a performance management and quality assurance role and does not involve operational management, the preparation of children’s care plans, the management of individual cases or resource allocation. Should there be any potential conflict in the Principal Advisor supporting an IRO in dispute with Children’s Social Care, provision is made for the Principal Advisor to ‘step-out’ of their Children’s Social Care line-management arrangement.
- 4.10 The Principal Advisor is an active member of the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional IRO Managers Group. The Group meet on a quarterly basis to share information, report on common and emerging themes and priorities and provide peer support and sector-led improvement opportunities. The Group provides two Members to the National IRO Managers Group which has representation from the Department for Education.
- 4.11 During the reporting period, the administrative support for the IRO’s has been subject to review and in common with other service areas, administrative staff are a pooled resource with a wide range of responsibilities.
- 4.12 During the reporting period, a new online Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for ‘Looked After Children’ was introduced. This was introduced from 01 June 2014 and replaced the previous ‘Monitoring Form’ which had been in use in the Authority for a number of years. The new QAF is completed by the IRO following the completion of a Review. The QAF provides data pertinent to the performance of the IRO Unit as well as wider performance of the Local Authority as Corporate Parent.
- 4.13 During the reporting period a review of the Unit’s overall structure, level of resourcing, management arrangements and reporting arrangements within the wider Authority was undertaken by the Interim Manager. His findings led, in November 2015, to the instigation of a Senior Manager review of the service This review is ongoing and it is anticipated will be completed in march 2016.

5. IRO Caseloads and Unit Performance

Caseloads

- 5.1 In common with half of its regional peers, City of York Council IRO’s have a dual function. As well as the independent review of looked after children, the IRO’s provide independent Chairing of Child Protection Conferences, a separate statutory function under *Working Together* 2015 for which they are accountable to the Director of Children’s Services. This arrangement supports an aligned single planning and review process when a child is looked after and subject to a Child Protection Plan. The arrangement also supports the maintenance of safeguarding competences by the IRO’s. However, Chairing responsibilities are a very substantial additional task for the Unit.

Table 1: Total Unit Caseload and IRO Average Caseload at Year End

	2014/15				2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
	Quarter 1 Apr-Jun	Quarter 2 Jul-Sep	Quarter 3 Oct-Dec	Quarter 4 Jan-Mar			

LAC	223	217	209	197	222	243	256
CP	114	120	118	124	125	128	162
Total	337	337	327	321	371	345	418
Average	-	-	--	68	74	98	-

5.2 Table 1 shows case load by quarter for the reporting period and historical comparisons. The data confirms a reducing total Unit Caseload based upon decreasing numbers of looked after children. This is marginally offset by a slight increase in the Child Protection population. The Year End Average Caseload evidences a significant reduction, commensurate with the increase in the staffing of the Unit from 01 June 2014.

5.3 To contextualise the caseloads in Table 2, partial regional data has been made available through the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional IRO Managers Group. It is noted however that comparison with regional peers should be regarded as illustrative only, due to the very different structures, roles and responsibilities across the region's Local Authorities and the partial return of data.

Table 2: Yorkshire and Humberside IRO Services allocated caseloads (November 2014)

Local Authority	Average Caseload
Bradford	85
Hull City Council	89
Kirklees	65
Leeds City Council	63
North Yorkshire County Council	68
Rotherham	78
Wakefield Metropolitan District	76
York	68
Regional Average	76

5.4 Table 3 evidences that there is significant caseload variation within the Region. However, for the purposes of this Report it is noted that York, at an average Case Load of 68, returned below the indicative regional average of 76.

5.5 The Directorate Management Team is aware that the current caseloads are based upon the temporary uplift of 1.5FTE and that the long-term staffing of the Unit needs to be resolved.

Number of Reviews

Table 3: Total Unit Activity – Reviews and Child Protection Conferences undertaken

Total Unit Activity 2014/15 by Quarter					Historical			
	Quarter 1 Apr-Jun	Quarter 2 Jul-Sep	Quarter 3 Oct-Dec	Quarter 4 Jan-Mar	2014/15	2013/14	2011/12	2010/11
LAC	154	146	174	145	619	660	861	783
CP	61	57	57	60	235	240	312	199
Total	215	203	231	205	854	900	1173	982

- 5.6 Within the reporting period, 2014-15 the Unit have chaired a total of 619 Looked After Reviews (compared with 660 in 2013-14) and a total of 235 Child Protection Conferences (compared with 240 in 2013-14). This relatively small reduction in Unit activity is commensurate with the overall reduction in the numbers of children and young people Looked After by City of York Council and the number of children and young people subject to Child Protection Plans within York.

Timeliness of Reviews

- 5.7 Table 4 reports the percentage of looked after children who had **all** their reviews on time within the reporting period. The 2013 Annual report established for the Unit a 2014/15 target of 90%. This was achieved in the final quarter (Q4), however the overall performance within the reporting period of 88% fell just short of the target. Nevertheless, within the return period the Unit has recorded its highest performance for a number of years.

Table 4: Percentage of LAC Reviews held within timescales

Reviews within timescales by Quarter 2014/15					Historical Performance			
	Quarter 1 Apr-Jun	Quarter 2 Jul-Sep	Quarter 3 Oct-Dec	Quarter 4 Jan-Mar	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Reviews	88%	85%	88%	90%	88%	86%	75%	85%

Participation in Reviews

Table 5: Method and Percentage Looked After Children Participating in their Review. Taken from the Quality Assessment Framework (Data for Q2, Q3 and Q4 only)

Code	Method	2013/14 Percentage	2014/15 Percentage
PN0	Child under 4 at time of Review	15%	13%
PN1	Attends or speaks for him/herself	40%	41%
PN2	Attends, views rep. by Advocate	2%	0.5%
PN3	Attends, views conveyed non-verbally	0%	2.5%
PN4	Attends but does not convey views	0.5%	1%
PN5	Does not attend but briefs an advocate	7%	11.5%
PN6	Does not attend but conveys in wri. etc	32.5%	24.5%
PN7	Does not attend nor views conveyed	3%	6%
Total		100%	100%

- 5.8 Within the reporting period 81% of children and young people in care contributed to the review of their care, with only 6% not contributing. The return is consistent with the 2013/14 return. Of those children and young people over the age of 4, just over half attended their Review and were facilitated to represent their own views and wishes. This level of

participation through attendance continues to be an area of concern to the Unit. As a consequence, in May 2015, the IRO staff group attended a Regional training event in which one of the key topics was the involvement of children in their own reviews. A presentation by the Sheffield Children's Involvement Team of a model using a strengths-based approach, similar to the Strengthening Families Child Protection Conference Model provided some useful tools and ideas for the Unit to take forward as it strives to deliver greater levels of involvement and participation by children and young people in their reviews.

- 5.9 Of those children and young people who attended, there were very few who were facilitated to Chair or Co-Chaired their own Review. Whilst the *Handbook* does not expressly require Chairing or Co-Chairing by young people of their own Review, it does promote Chairing and Co-Chairing noting:

It is hoped that for many older children and young people, especially as they begin to plan for independence, the IRO will hand over at least part of the chairing role to them so that they can take an increased ownership of the meeting (at para.3.37)

Table 5: Number of Looked After Children Chairing or Co-Chairing their own Review:

Number of Reviews Chaired and Co-Chaired by Young people		
	2013/14	2014/15
Reviews	11	24

- 5.10 Whilst there will only ever be a small minority of children or young people who wish to Chair or Co-Chair their review, the Unit will continue to encourage all children and young people to consider Chairing or Co-Chairing their review and ensure that they are supported to do so. The return within the reporting period shows a welcome increase over the previous year.

Consultation Prior to Reviews

- 5.11 There is a statutory expectation that children and young people are visited by the Independent Reviewing Officer and consulted with *prior* to their review. The *Handbook* does however acknowledge that there are circumstances where the IRO will exercise their discretion and determine whether this is necessary, for example where there is a strong relationship between the young person and the IRO, where there are no significant changes to the care plans or where the child is very young. In previous periods this statutory requirement has proved extremely challenging due to higher than desirable caseloads held by the Unit. The return for the calendar year of 2013 for example recorded that in only 11% of reviews was the child or young person seen prior to their review and in 22% of reviews there was no record at all.

Table 6: Percentage of children and young people seen and spoken to by the IRO prior to the Review

Percentage of Children seen and spoken to prior to Review		
	2013	2014/15
Seen	11%	45%
Not Seen	65%	25%
Not appropriate	2%	22%
Not necessary	-	7%
Not recorded	22%	0%

- 5.12 The Unit has been committed to improving its performance. In the Annual Report for 2013 an ambitious target of 50% was set. The return indicates that whilst significant improvement was made – commensurate with reduced caseloads – the Unit fell just short of its target. Accordingly, whilst there has been a marked improvement, the Unit is not complacent and recognises that further significant improvement in this area is needed.
- 5.13 Finally, it is worth acknowledging that the Annual Report 2013 made reference to the Unit actively considering the introduction of 'Viewpoint', a national web-based, child-focused interactive consultation tool which children and young people from the age of 4 to 18 can use to contribute to their Review. Pilot Funding was agreed. However, concurrent to the Unit's consideration of a 'stand alone tool', Children's Social Care embarked on commissioning a replacement of its entire case management system with a new system which included portal applications for direct consultation with service users. Accordingly, Viewpoint was not progressed and launched and the Unit awaits the implementation of the Mosaic Case Management System.

Distribution of Review Records

- 5.14 The *Handbook* unambiguously requires that the record of the Review of a Looked After Child is distributed **within 20 working days of the completion of the Review**. This facilitates and enables all those involved in the care of the child or young person to be informed of the decisions made at Review in writing, with timescales and responsibilities clearly communicated. Accordingly, the Annual Report 2013 set a challenging target of 50% of records distributed in timescales. Regrettably, within the reporting period, this target has proved to be extremely challenging. Nonetheless, it is of note that there has been a significant improvement over the previous reporting period from only 9% within timescales to 26%. Indeed, in Q4 the figure returned was 39% of reviews. However, the performance of the Unit continues to be below that expected and represents an ongoing challenge.

Table 7: Percentage of Records distributed within 20 working days of Review

Percentage of Records Distributed within 20 Working Days					2014/15	2013/14
	Quarter 1 Apr-Jun	Quarter 2 Jul-Sep	Quarter 3 Jan-Mar	Quarter 4 Oct-Dec		
Within 20 Days	16%	32%	16%	39%	26%	9%
More than 20 days	84%	68%	84%	61%	74%	91%

6. Profile of Looked After Children in York

Number of Looked After Children

Table 8: Number of Children Looked After (excluding Short Breaks)

Number of Looked After Children						Historical Performance			Comparators	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	Regional	National
Number LAC	223	217	209	197	197	222	243	256	491	452
No. per 10k	61	60	58	54	54	61	68	73	65	60

- 6.1 Within the reporting period, the number of children and young people looked after by the City of York Council has steadily decreased. At the end of Q4 (31 March 2015), the figure was 197. The numbers of looked after children in York are now lower than the national and regional averages. The decrease is consistent with Children's Social Care's determination to provide robust edge of care services to ensure that only those children and young people who absolutely need looking after are looked after. The figures also reflect the shorter duration of public law care proceedings and the focus on ensuring that permanency by way of adoption, or within kinship placements out of care is secured in a timely way. It is anticipated that over the next reporting period, the numbers of Looked After Children will stabilise around the current level.

Gender of Looked After Children

Table 9: Number of Children Looked After by Gender

Number of Looked After Children						Historical Performance		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Number LAC	223	217	209	197	197	222	243	256
Male	120	111	109	101	101	121	132	147
Female	103	106	100	92	92	100	111	109

- 6.2 Within the reporting period, the numbers of male and female children and young people looked after by the City of York are broadly representative of the demography of York, with no notable over-representation.

Ethnicity of Looked After Children

Table 10: Percentage of Looked After Children by Ethnicity (as at Year End (31.03.2015))

		2014/15	
Ethnicity		Number	Percentage
ABAN	Bangladeshi (Asian or Asian British)	1	0.5%
AOTH	Any other Asian or Asian British Bckgrnd	1	0.5%
BCRB	Black or Black British - Caribbean	1	0.5%

MOTH	Any other mixed background	1	0.5%
MAWS	White and Asian	4	2%
MWBC	White and Black Caribbean	1	0.5%
OOTH	Any other ethnic group	1	0.5%
WBRI	White British	187	95%
WIRI	White Irish	0	0%
WOTH	Any other White background	0	0%
		197	100%

- 6.3 Within the reporting period, the ethnicity of the children and young people looked after by the City of York is broadly representative of the demography of York with no notable over-representation.

Age of Looked After Children

Table 11: Number of Children by Age at Period End

Looked After Children by Age	Historical Performance							
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Under 1 yr	4	10	10	8	8	6	5	9
1-4 years	29	25	23	23	23	30	38	51
5-9 years	41	39	40	36	36	45	46	54
10-15 years	94	92	93	90	90	92	102	101
Over 16 yrs	55	51	43	36	36	49	52	41

- 6.4 Within the reporting period, there have been a number of changes in the age profile of looked after children. There was an increase in the number of babies in care during Q2 and Q3 of the period. It may be thought that this increase reflects improvements in assessment practice, earlier intervention and improved decision making for the most vulnerable group of children in the city. The next two age groups have shown a steady decline in numbers. This may reflect changed timescales for care proceedings down to a maximum of 26 weeks brought in with the revised PLO (CYC being a top performing Authority with average timescales of less than 20 weeks) and improved timescales and outcomes for permanence planning out of care for younger children. The number of looked after young people in the 10-15 years age group has remained stable. This is an age group where permanence options out of care are less likely. The reduction in those over 16 has been due to a number of factors including, young people returning home, care orders being discharged and a significant group of young people reaching 18 (at adulthood, their Looked After status lapses).

Time in Care of Looked After Children

Table 12: Number of Children by Period of Care at Period End

Number of LAC by Care length	Historical Performance							
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Less than 6mths	24	26	34	25	25	27	20	40
6-12mths	16	20	15	22	22	11	17	38
1-2 years	15	18	22	19	19	24	57	42

2-4 years	65	60	51	41	41	61	65	70
More than 4 yrs	103	93	87	86	86	99	84	66

- 6.5 Within the reporting period, there has continued to be a decrease in the length of time in care for significant numbers of children and young people looked after by the City of York. This is likely to be a result greater focus on securing permanency by way of adoption, the reduction in the length of time for public law care proceedings and securing permanency by way of Special Guardianship under the Public Law Outline. There has been an increase in those in care for between 6-12 months.

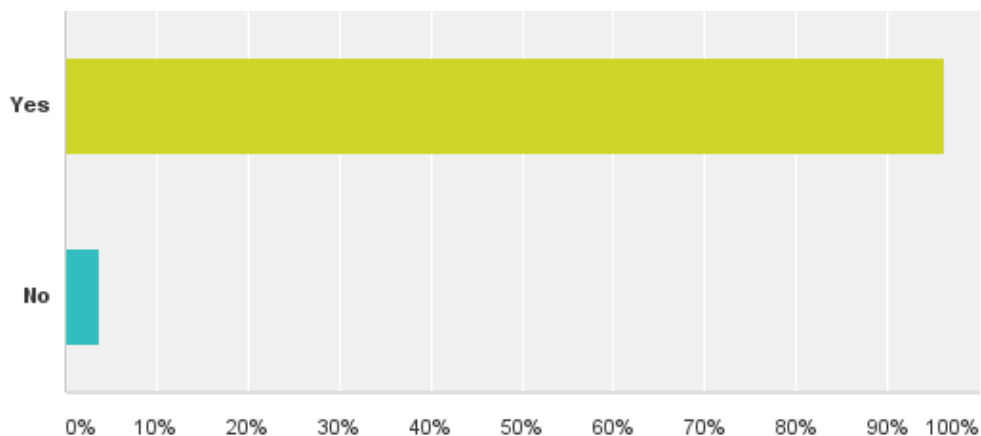
Legal Status of Looked After Children

Table 13: Legal Status of Looked After Children as Percentage of whole

Percentage of LAC by Legal Status						Historical		Comparators	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	Region	National
Interim Care Orders	3%	5%	8%	11%	11%	6%	12%	23%	20%
Full Care orders	58%	56%	54%	54%	54%	57%	49%	44%	40%
Freed for Adoption	10%	11%	9%	6%	6%	12%	16%	14%	11%
Accomm. S.20	29%	28%	28%	29%	29%	25%	22%	18%	29%
YOT legal Statuses	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.4%	0%	0%
Detain CP in LA Acc.	0%	0.5%	1%	0%	0%	0.5%	1.0%	0%	0%

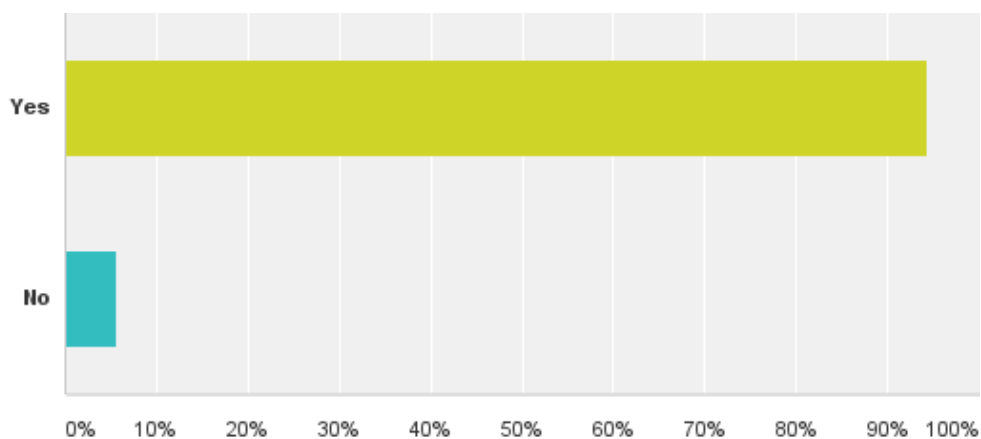
- 6.6 Within the reporting period, the number of children subject to full care orders has stabilised, having increased in the previous year. The increase in Full Care Orders is likely to have been as a result in the national drive by Family Courts to decrease the length of public law care proceedings, resulting in more Care Orders being granted when work to assess other permanent outcomes remains ongoing. The fact that this figure has stabilised rather than continued to increase may indicate that the work to achieve permanent outcomes out of care has progressed after care proceedings have concluded. Where this is the case, IRO's fulfil an important role in ensuring that the care planning progresses without delay and that the outcome secured is the most appropriate for the child.
- 6.7 There has been a reduction in the numbers of children subject to Placement Orders (Freed for Adoption) in the second half of the reporting period. This trend is likely to continue and reflects the national picture. As there is no matched increase in use of full care order it is likely that this reduction is due to use of other permanence options such as Special Guardianship Order. It is too soon to know if this is a long term trend.
- 6.8 The IRO is responsible for ensuring the right permanence plan is in place for the child. This is reflected in the Quality Assurance Framework used by the Unit. Tables 14 and Table 15 below demonstrate that, in the IRO's opinion, in 97% of cases the current or proposed legal status of the child is appropriate and in 95% of cases the current or proposed placement for the child is meeting the child's needs. In the small minority of cases where the IRO disagrees with the Legal Status or Placement of a child, 4% and 6% respectively, the IRO will dispute the matter under the Local Dispute Resolution Process.

Table 14: Is the current or proposed legal status for the child appropriate?



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	96.18% 378
No	3.82% 15
Total	393

Table 15: Is the current or proposed placement meeting the needs of the child?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	94.39%	370
No	5.61%	22
Total		392

Placement Stability of Looked After Children

Table 16: Percentage of LAC having 3 or more placement moves

Percentage of LAC with 3 or more Placement moves						Historical Performance		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
3+ Moves	2.2%	4.1%	9.1%	11.9%	11.9%	9.5%	14%	16%

- 6.9 It is noted that Table 16 is a cumulative return (Q4 represented the Year End aggregate). Accordingly, placement stability has decreased slightly since 2013/14, however is lower than the preceding years. The Unit is aware of the contribution that it can make to the stability of care for children and young people and will subject care plans proposing changes in placement to detailed scrutiny under its Quality Assurance Framework to ensure that any placement change is in the best interests of a child or young person and any disruption, particularly to education, is minimised.

Placement Location of Looked After Children

Table 17: Number of Placements by Location of new Looked After Children

Placement Location of new LAC by Quarter						Historical	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
New Placements in LA	10	12	7	6	35	46	38
New Placements outside LA	6	7	14	2	29	16	16
New Placements +20miles	4	2	4	1	11	10	14

- 6.10 Within the reporting period, a much higher proportion of children who have started to be looked after have been placed outside of the authority than has previously been the case. This may reflect in part, the great success in York of the "Staying Put" initiative, whereby young people can remain with their carers beyond their 18th birthday, putting additional pressure on the need to recruit new carers within the City. The Unit is aware of the contribution that it can make in ensuring placements are appropriate and that every effort is made by Children's Social Care to place as close to the child's home and community as possible so far as is consistent with their need to be safeguarded. Within the context of reducing availability of placements in York, the stable number of placements made more than 20 miles away from York is in part a measure of the effectiveness of the unit in this regard.

Health and Education of Looked After Children

Table 18: Health Assessments and Dental Checks, Under 5's Developmental Checks, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Scores and Personal Education Plans

Health and Education Activity by LAC by Quarter						Historical	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Health and Dental Checks	60.7%	63.7%	56.8%	66%	66%	92.9%	82%
Under 5s Dev Checks	90.9%	85.7%	15.8%	92.9%	92.9%	82.1%	87%
Average SDQ Score	15.9	16.2	13	13.1	13.1	15.9	14.8
Up-to-date PEP in place	84.1%	80.3%	73.9%	70.1%	70.1%	83.7%	53%

- 6.11 Health and education are two key dimensions within the developmental needs of children and young people looked after by the City of York. The Unit is aware of the contribution that it can make by monitoring multi-agency activities such as the Initial and Review Health Assessments and PEP meetings to ensure that Looked After Children are getting the help and support they need. Table 18 demonstrates that there continue to be significant challenges in this area.

7. IRO impact on the outcomes for children and young people

Dispute Resolution and Escalation

- 7.1 One of the key functions of an IRO is to oversee the needs and rights of every young person in the care of the Local Authority. This responsibility is outlined in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and *IRO Handbook 2010*. Every child looked after has an Independent Reviewing Officer appointed to ensure that their Care Plan fully reflects their needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the Local Authority's legal responsibilities towards them as a looked after child. An IRO will ensure that the wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the Local Authority throughout the whole time the child is in care and will monitor the performance of the Local Authority in relation to the child's case. On occasions this means that it will come to the attention of the IRO that there is a problem in relation to the care of a looked after child, for example in relation to planning for the care of the child, or the implementation of the plan or decisions relating to it, resource issues or poor practice by the Social Worker. When this happens the IRO is required to seek a resolution.
- 7.2 It is acknowledged that the resolution of disputes can be time consuming and can create tensions between the IRO and the Local Authority. Nevertheless, the child's allocated IRO is personally responsible for activating and seeking a resolution, even if may not be in accordance with the child's wishes and feelings if, in the IRO's view, it is in accordance with the best interest and welfare of the child, as well as his or her human rights. In compliance with the *IRO Handbook 2010* there is in place a formal Dispute Resolution Process whilst acknowledging and giving primacy to informal resolution where possible.

7.3 Six examples of the Unit making a real difference to the lives and outcomes of looked after Children and young people in 2014/15

Case Example 1:

J is a young woman, aged 17 years, with significant and complex mental health needs. Her mental health needs included a history of self harm and an emerging pattern of foster placements breaking down. J had also experienced a number of hospital admissions relating to her mental health. The IRO worked very closely with J and her social worker to identify the type of placement J needed. J was fully involved in planning and this included a number of meetings and visits to potential placements. J describes being happy in her placement and risk taking behaviour has significantly reduced.

Case Example 2:

IRO achieved the reinstatement of direct contact between mother and her daughter following a divergence of professional opinion as to whether this was appropriate. IRO facilitated a number of mediatory meetings that established regular indirect contact as a building block to reinstatement of direct contact with the support of all parties

Case Example 3:

K is a young man, aged 14 years, who struggled to settle and form attachments within a foster placement. The IRO facilitated discussion and planning which explored residential options for K. K previously described a residential placement as a 'sign of failure'. The move to a residential placement proved to be very successful for K and he now recognises that he copes better with the balance between what the placement and staff team can offer and his relationship with his family. The IRO for K spent time with him discussing placement options to ensure that his voice was central to the planning and review process.

Case Example 4:

The IRO identified that there was no allocated Social Worker and this impacted G because there was a lack of progress in implementing Decisions from the Review, particularly around CAMHS input. The IRO raised this with the Service Manager and a Worker was allocated and clear actions were agreed, including the need to secure timely CAMHS involvement.

Case Example 5:

When a new Social Worker and new Service Manager increased the level of contact for S with their father and began to consider promoting staying contact, the IRO intervened. The IRO provided continuity of knowledge of the original assessments and Care Plan and through collaborative discussions clarified more appropriate and proportionate contact arrangements.

Case Example 6:

Following representations by Police that a young person who was placed in their area 'needed to move', Children's Social Care planned a move without a full consideration of the significant progress made by the young person in her placement in engaging with education in her Year 11 studies. The IRO, through informal resolution processes, stayed the move and triggered a more comprehensive needs-led consideration of the necessity of a move. The young person was also signposted by the IRO to advocacy enabling the young person's voice in care planning for her to be clearly heard and considered.

Quality Assurance of Corporate Parenting

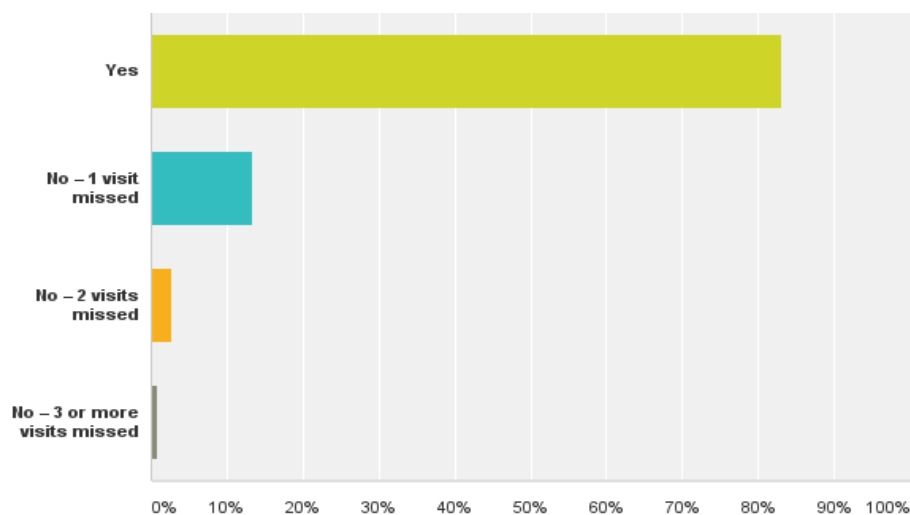
- 7.4 As well as Chairing Looked After Reviews and monitoring individual cases on an ongoing basis, the *Handbook* notes that:

the IRO also has a duty to monitor the performance of the local authority's function as a corporate parent and to identify any areas of poor practice. This should include identifying patterns of concern emerging not just around individual children but also more generally in relation to the collective experience of it's looked after children of the services they receive (at para. 2.13)

Accordingly, the Unit has systematised the collation of data obtained at each Review by way of the Quality Assurance Framework which is recorded on Survey Monkey, enabling aggregation into the 'collective experience' of children and young people Looked After by City of York Council as Corporate Parent.

- 7.5 For example, the Council has statutory responsibilities to visit children and young people within specific timescales, depending upon the type and duration of placement. The Quality Assurance Framework prompts the IRO to record an answer to the following question: Has the Social Worker visited the child in placement within statutory timescales? The results can then be aggregated as follows.

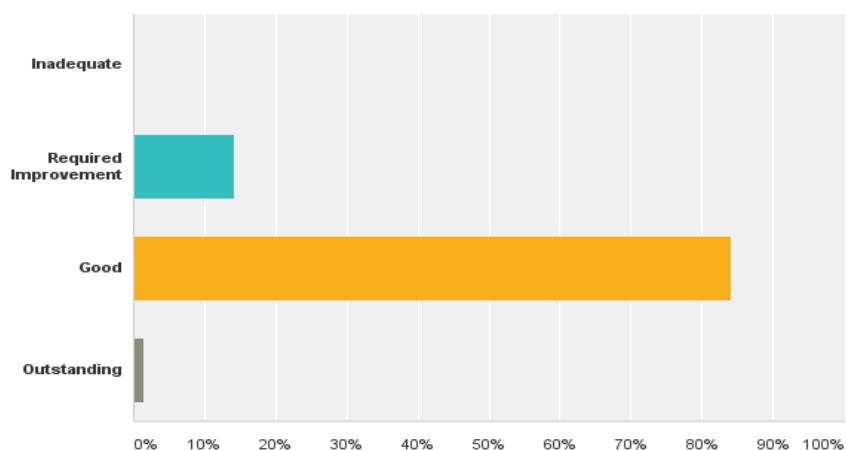
Table 19: QAF Data for Question 25: Has the Social Worker visited the child in placement within statutory timescales?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	83.12%	330
No – 1 visit missed	13.35%	53
No – 2 visits missed	2.77%	11
No – 3 or more visits missed	0.76%	3
Total		397

- 7.6 Accordingly, , the QAF Survey is a useful tool to enable aggregate performance data to be produced which is then used by the Unit to challenge Children’s Social Care about any deficits in the quality of corporate parenting and care planning.
- 7.7 Additionally, the QAF Survey also explicitly asks the IRO at the end of the Review to comment upon the quality of the Corporate Parenting that the child or young person in care has received. This QAF dataset is perhaps the best indicator of the quality of Corporate Parenting being provided.

Table 20: QAF Data for Question 29: In the judgment of the IRO, what is the overall quality of corporate parenting of this child?

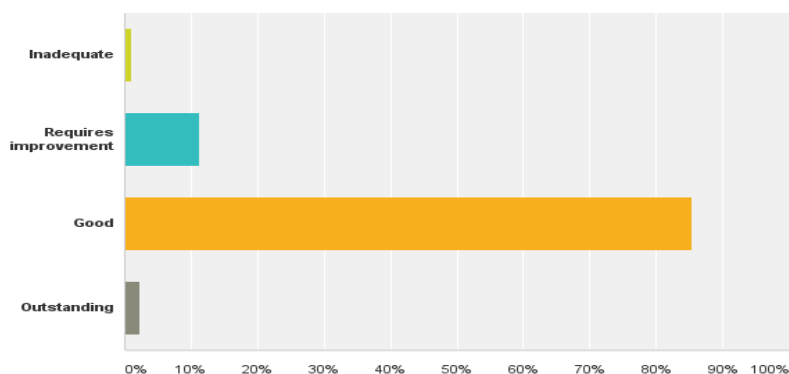


Answer Choices	Responses	
Inadequate	0.25%	1
Required Improvement	14.11%	56
Good	84.13%	334
Outstanding	1.51%	6
Total		397

- 7.8 Accordingly, the Corporate Parenting was judged to be inadequate in only a single case, whereas in 86% of cases, the Corporate Parenting was judged as either good or outstanding.
- 7.9 Given the introduction of the QAF, historical comparisons are difficult – the preceding ‘Monitoring Form’ had a more limited question set. However, it is noted that in 2013, 65% of

Care Plans were recorded as being judged as being of 'good quality'. The aggregate QAF data suggests that some significant improvement in the quality of Care Planning has taken place.

Table 21: QAF Data for Question 23: In the judgment of the IRO, what is the overall quality of the Care Plan?



Answer Choices	Responses
Inadequate	1.01% 4
Requires improvement	11.36% 45
Good	85.35% 338
Outstanding	2.27% 9
Total	396

7.10 In summary, the Quality Assurance processes introduced by the Unit within the reporting period are a significant improvement and enable the Unit to identify patterns of concern which can then be alerted to Senior Managers within Children's Social Care.

Referrals for Advocacy

7.11 The IRO Unit has an established and close working relationship with the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service. The Service offers advocacy to children and young people looked after and, if necessary, will support them through the City of York Corporate Complaints procedure.

7.12 The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service advise that the main themes of referrals to it by the Unit and others in relation to the concerns and views of City of York Looked After Children in 2014/15 were as follows:

- 13% related to contact issues
- 11% related to unhappiness about their Social Worker
- 13% related to placement issues
- 11% related to disagreement about their overall Care Plan
- 9% related to accessing support / services
- 45% related to support to express wishes and feeling in decision making process
- 2% related to advocacy for other issues

- 7.13 The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service regularly attends Unit Team Meetings to update IRO's on emerging themes of concern raised by children and young people. Every IRO understands that it is their responsibility to make sure that a child or young person understands that advocacy is a right and an option for them and will explain how the advocate could help, providing age appropriate information to each looked after child about the City of York Advocacy Service.
- 7.14 The Unit greatly values the contribution of the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service to outcomes for children and young people. An example of achieving improved outcomes for children and young people is described below:

B is aged 8 years and lived with foster carers. A referral was made for advocacy by the IRO following a Looked After Child Review and as a result of some concerns regarding how well B had settled into her foster placement. An initial visit was made by the Advocate at the foster placement and subsequent visits at school, at B's request. Over a few weeks, B began to talk about her wishes and feelings, and stated that she wanted to move to a different placement and see her mother and sister. Advocacy helped B explore her wishes and feelings. B also spoke about her foster placement and agreed for the feedback to be shared with her social worker. Through advocacy, B was able to communicate clearly what she wanted from a placement and a planned move to an alternative placement progressed. The child's advocate, social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer worked closely to ensure that planning and preparation were prioritised for B and all are confident that the new placement is better suited to meet B's long term needs. Contact with B's mother commenced again.

8. Update on the Five Service Priorities established for 2014-15

- 8.1 In the Annual Report 2013, five Service Priorities were identified for the 2014/15 period. These five priorities related to identified deficits in service delivery by the Unit at the time. The five priorities were:

- 1. Deliver the 'enhanced' IRO role for children and young people;**
- 2. Change business processes to better support the IRO Role;**
- 3. Increase the participation of children and young people in their Reviews;**
- 4. Ensure appropriate independent challenge to the City of York as Corporate Parent to improve outcomes for children and young people;**
- 5. See more children and young people.**

In November 2014 an Addendum to the Annual Report 2013 provided a 'mid-way update' on progress made in the six months since the Service Improvement Plan had commenced. This Section provides an overview of progress made by the Service on the five identified priorities during the whole of the reporting period from 01 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

One: Deliver the 'enhanced' IRO role for children and young people

- 8.2 From 01 June 2014, the Unit increased its capacity from 4.0 FTE (3 full-time Independent Reviewing Officers and 1 FTE provision through sessional staff) to 4.8 FTE (an additional part-time (0.5 FTE) seconded Advanced Social Work Practitioner IRO, a full-time temporary Agency IRO and some limited sessional hours from an additional IRO). The increase in establishment had a significant positive impact upon caseloads during the remainder of the reporting period.

Table 22: Average Allocated Caseloads on 31 March 2014 and 31 March 2015

	31/03/14	31/03/15
Average Caseload	93	68

The reduction in caseloads was identified as foundational to the Unit contributing to improved outcomes for children and young people. The Service Improvement Plan asserted that evidence of the positive impact of reduced caseloads would be found in improvements in a range of performance indicators used by the Unit. Evidence of improvement is shown by:

- **More LAC reviews held in timescale**
- **More children Chaired their own or part of their Review**
- **More children consulted prior to a Review**
- **More children and young people attended their Review**
- **More reports distributed in time**
- **More local disputes instigated and resolved**
- **More referrals of children and young people for Advocacy**

- 8.3 However, perhaps the biggest contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people was the introduction by the Unit within the reporting period of a Quality Assurance Framework for children and young people looked after. This Framework gave effect to the 'enhanced role' of the IRO by requiring them to systematically review the care and care planning of a child or young person by reference to 20 'quality indicators' derived from the statutory guidance within the IRO Handbook . The indicators are as follows:

Planning for the Review

1. The child was consulted by the Social Worker about who s/he wished to attend the meeting, about the time and date and venue of the meeting and about the agenda

Consultation Prior to the Review

2. The child was seen and spoken to by the IRO in private prior to the Review
3. The child was made aware of their right to an Advocate by the IRO
4. All relevant parties were consulted prior to the Review

Information considered at the Review

5. A report from the Social Worker was available for consideration 3 days before the Review
6. An up-to-date PEP was available for consideration at the Review
7. An up-to-date Health Assessment was available for consideration at the Review

Timing of the Review

8. The Review was held within timescales

Participation in the Review

9. The child participated in the Review and may be Chaired or Co-Chaired part of their Review
10. The views of all relevant people were considered at the Review

The Care Plan

11. The child has a current and up-to-date Care Plan
12. From the second Review, there is a plan for permanence for the child
13. The current or proposed legal status for the child is appropriate
14. The current or proposed placement meets the needs of the child
15. The Care Plan demonstrates that the child's views and wishes have been taken into account

Monitoring the Case on an Ongoing basis

16. The Social Worker informed the IRO of all significant changes or events in the child's life since the last Review
17. The Social Worker visited the child in placement within statutory timescales
18. All the Decisions that were agreed at the last Review (if still relevant) were implemented within the timescales set for them
19. There is no drift and/or delay in the care planning for the child
20. There is no drift and/or delay in achieving permanency for the child

- 8.4 This 'QA Framework' enables the Unit to provide consistent challenge by the Unit where there is an identified deficit in the care and care planning for a child or young person. Additionally, as the IRO completes a 'QA Survey' on every case using Survey Monkey, as well as case-specific challenge, a service-wide picture of the quality of corporate parenting and care planning can be established.

Two: Change business processes to better support the IRO Role

- 8.5 Within the reporting period, business processes in use by the Unit have been reviewed and where necessary improved. New documentation such as the Social Work Report to Review, IRO Record of Review and the Decisions Record of Review have been introduced.
- 8.6 Within the reporting period, the Unit has also actively contributed to the Case Management System Replacement Project by attending workshops to map processes and ensure that the new system – Mosaic – will support effective practice by the Unit.
- 8.7 Within the reporting period there has been no resolution of the somewhat cumbersome administrative arrangements for the Unit. The future of the arrangements will be incorporated within a review of the Unit by a Senior Manager building on a review undertaken by the Interim Unit manager.

Three: Increase the participation of children and young people in their Reviews

- 8.8 The third service priority was in relation to increasing the participation of children and young people in their Reviews. An ambitious target of increasing the attendance at Review

by 10% from a 2013/14 figure of 42.5% was established. This target has not been met. The data for participation in 2014/15 is as follows:

		2013/14	2014/15
Code	Method	Percentage	Percentage
PN1	Attends or speaks for him/herself	40%	41%
PN2	Attends, views rep. by Advocate	2%	0.5%
PN3	Attends, views conveyed non-verbally	0%	2.5%
PN4	Attends but does not convey views	0.5%	1%
		42.5%	45%

- 8.9 There is clearly more work to be done. Work to make reviews more child-centred, adopting and developing elements of the 'Sheffield Child Centred Approach to Child Care Reviews' will need to progress.

Four: Ensure appropriate independent challenge to the City of York as Corporate Parent to improve outcomes for children and young people

- 8.10 This fourth service priority has benefitted from the introduction of the Quality Assurance Framework for Children Looked After. Using Survey Monkey it is now possible to report on whether, in the independent judgment of the IRO, care and care planning are appropriate to the needs of children and young people looked after. The Quality Assurance Framework is linked to a structured decision making tool about when an IRO should and should not use the Local Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) to seek a resolution of a concern. This has led to a greater consistency and use of the DRP and more timely resolution to concerns about the care and care planning for children and young people.
- 8.11 An amendment to the Survey Monkey question set now aggregates when the Dispute Resolution is used and in relation to what areas of concern. This data is not available within the reporting period. However, by way of indication of the future dataset, the following concerns will be reported upon:
- Resources – inappropriate placement
 - Resources – contact arrangements unsuitable/inadequate
 - Resources – inadequate health provision
 - Resources – inadequate education provision
 - Resources – inadequate emotional wellbeing provision
 - Care Planning – inadequate risk management of CSE
 - Care Planning – inadequate risk management of missing/absence
 - Care Planning – Family Finding (Adoption)
 - Care Planning – Achieving Legal Status change
 - Care Planning – Planning for Permanence

- Care Planning – Securing a permanent placement
- Practice - LACR Decisions not implemented/complied with
- Practice - Insufficient evidence of child's voice
- Practice – No/delay in allocating Social Worker
- Practice - Statutory Visits not within timescales
- Practice - No/poor quality assessment of need
- Practice – No/poor quality Placement Plan
- Practice – No/poor quality Care Plan
- Practice – No/poor quality Pathway Plan
- Practice – No/poor quality Health Assessment
- Practice – No/poor quality PEP
- Practice – No/poor quality Life Story Work
- Practice – Inadequate preparation for LACR

Five: See more children and young people

- 8.13 The Annual Report of 2013 asserted the primacy of the Service Priority to see more children prior to their Review. The Unit set itself an ambitious target of seeing 50% of children and young people where it was deemed necessary and appropriate to see and consult with them prior to a Review. The Unit fell just short of this target but returns a significant improvement.

Percentage of Children seen and spoken to prior to Review		
	2013	2014/15
Seen	11%	45%
Not Seen	65%	25%
Not appropriate	2%	22%
Not necessary	-	7%
Not recorded	22%	0%

- 8.14 The Unit remains aware that a significant number of Looked After Children are still not seen when they should be. Meaningful face-to-face consultation can make a direct contribution to attendance and participation at the Review itself and of course direct work is foundational to safeguarding practice. More can clearly be done and more needs to be done.

9. Unit Work Plan for 2015/16

- 9.1 The Unit Work Plan for 2015/16 adopts the five priorities for 2014/15. These are as follows:

- (1) **Deliver the 'enhanced' IRO role for children and young people**
- (2) **Change business processes to better support the IRO Role**
- (3) **Increase the participation of children and young people in their Reviews**
- (4) **Ensure appropriate independent challenge to the City of York as Corporate Parent to improve outcomes for children and young people**
- (5) **See more children and young people**

The adoption of the five previous priorities is not in anyway an acknowledgement that the Unit failed to deliver within 2014/15, merely that it remains committed to delivering further on the ambitious Work Plan first established in 2013.

9.2 Additionally, the Unit Work Plan for 2015/16 includes the following additional priorities:

(6) Conclude the Review of the Unit

In November 2015, the Senior Manager – Peer Challenge and Support commenced a review of the IRO Unit's overall structure, level of resourcing, management arrangements and reporting arrangements within the wider Authority building on the work undertaken by the Interim Manager. This review is ongoing and it is anticipated will be completed in March 2016.

(7) Prepare the Unit for transition onto the Mosaic case Management System

In March 2016, the Unit along with a number of statutory safeguarding services for children will transition from the current case management system onto Mosaic. The Unit must be prepared to deliver services in new and innovative ways whilst ensuring there is no disruption to the timely review of care and care planning for children and young people in care.

10. Summary

10.1 The Unit has made significant progress over the reporting period in delivering high quality, systematic and independent reviews of the care and care planning for children and young people Looked After by City of York Council. Increased capacity has contributed to more children and young people being seen, more timely reports and better scrutiny of the quality of care and care planning. The Unit continues to work with some of the most vulnerable children and young people in York and does so within a very regulated and prescribed statutory framework. The Unit has readopted the five Service Priorities for the year ahead as these remain ambitious priorities which, if delivered, will enable the Unit to significantly contribute to improving the experiences and outcomes for looked after children within the City.

11. Recommendations to the Corporate Parenting Board

11.1 It is recommended that the City of York Council Corporate Parenting Panel consider the following:

1. Note the areas of positive performance referred to within the Annual Report, particularly evidence that the Unit has directly contributed to improving outcomes for children and young people through the early resolution of issues with Children's Social Care;

2. Note and support the Unit's commitment to better deliver its statutory responsibilities to children and young people and their parents or carers, in particular increased consultation, participation and challenge;
3. Use the annual reporting requirement of the Unit to inform the ongoing work of the Corporate Parenting Panel in raising outcomes for the children and young people Looked After by the City of York Council.

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31 January 2016



Corporate Parenting Board**26 September 2016**

Report of the Group Manager for Quality Assurance

Inspection Briefing Report**Summary**

1. City of York Council has not yet been subject to the Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. All local authority Children's Services, including York, will be inspected under this framework by December 2017. Ofsted publish guidance to Local Authorities about the process of inspection and how their findings are determined. A brief Report is appended at Annex A for information of Panel.

Background

2. The Report summarises information contained in the Inspection handbook: inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers (Ofsted 06 October 2015, No. 130216)

Consultation

3. No consultation was undertaken for the preparation of the Report appended (Annex A).

Options

4. No options are presented to Members for their consideration.

Council Plan

5. No reference is made or is necessary in relation to the Report appended (Annex A).

Implications

- 6. Implications for the Council are detailed as appropriate within the Report.

Risk Management

- 7. Risks for the Council are detailed as appropriate within the Report.

Recommendations

- 8. It is recommended that the City of York Council Corporate Parenting Board note the framework for Inspection by which City of York Council will be inspected by December 2017.

Reason: To ensure that Members are kept updated on the framework for inspection.

Contact Details

Author:

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Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Jon Stonehouse
Director of Children’s Services

Report Approved



Date 19/09/2016

Wards Affected: List wards or tick box to indicate all

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Inspection Briefing – Annex A

Ofsted Inspection Framework

Briefing to Corporate Parenting Board

1. Scope of Inspection

The children and young people within the scope of the Inspection are:

- those children and young people at risk of harm (but who have not yet reached the 'significant harm' threshold) and for whom a preventative service would provide the help that they and their family need to reduce the likelihood of that risk of harm escalating and reduce the need for statutory intervention
- those children and young people referred to the local authority, including those for whom urgent action has to be taken to protect them; those subject to further assessment; and those subject to child protection enquiries
- those who become the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan setting out the help that will be provided for them and their families to keep them safe and to promote their welfare
- those children and young people who have been assessed as no longer needing a child protection plan, but who may have continuing needs for help and support
- those children and young people who are receiving (or whose families are receiving) social work services where there are significant levels of concern about children's safety and welfare, but these have not reached the significant harm threshold or the threshold to become looked after
- those children and young people who are missing from education or being offered alternative provision
- **those children and young people looked after either by being accommodated under section 20 or those 'in care' during or as a result of proceedings under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and those accommodated through the police powers of protection and emergency protection orders**
- those children aged 16 or 17 who are preparing to leave care and qualify as 'eligible'; those aged 16 or 17 who have left care and qualify as 'relevant'; those young people aged 18 and above and qualify as 'former relevant'; and those young people aged 18 to 25 who qualify as 'former relevant children pursuing further education or training' including those children living in homes of multiple occupation
- those children and young people who have left care to return home, or are living with families under a special guardianship order, residence order or adoption order.

2. Inspection Methodology

Methodology differs from previous Inspections and will include:

- evaluating and exploring a sample of at least 25 children's cases (to inform Key Lines of Enquiry) in order to judge the quality of front-line practice and

management and the difference this makes to the lives of children, young people, their families and carers – this will include discussions with social work staff, including their managers and other professionals working with the child or young person.

- Of the 25 children's cases, twelve will be children looked after and include:
 - a. **at least two children placed out of authority**
 - b. **at least one child who has a plan for adoption**
 - c. **at least one child who lives with a foster family provided by the local authority**
 - d. **one child who has recently returned home in the last three to six months**
 - e. **one child for whom the plan is to return home**
 - f. **two children living in children's homes who are known to have run away.**
- testing the decision-making at all stages of a child's journey: early help; referral and assessment; children in need; child protection planning; continuing support; the decision to remove a child from home; permanence planning; placement decisions, including work to support return home; leaving care
- meeting with children, young people, parents and carers
- shadowing staff in their day-to-day work, for example observing practice in the duty team, the work of social workers with children and families and the work of independent reviewing officers
- observing practice in multi-agency meetings such as child protection strategy meetings, child protection conferences, **looked after children reviews** and resource panels.
- Inspectors will usually talk, by telephone where necessary, with a range of stake holders including... the corporate parenting group or senior officers in partner agencies responsible for corporate parenting

3. Inspection Judgments

The overall effectiveness of services and arrangements for children looked after, care leavers and children who need help and protection is a cumulative judgement derived from:

- the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- **the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence including graded judgements on:**
 - **adoption performance**
 - **the experiences and progress of care leavers**
- leadership, management and governance.

Inspectors will make their judgements on a four-point scale:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- inadequate

4. Timeline of Inspection

Week One:

- Mon: Telephone Notification from Ofsted
- Tuesday: Request for Annex A
- Wednesday-Thursday: Inspectors evaluate the effectiveness of the Front Door arrangements
- Annex A data to be provided (Wednesday)
- Performance data to be provided (Friday)

Week Two:

- Monday – Friday: Case file auditing of 20 cases (Inspectors not on site)

Week Three:

- Tuesday – Thursday: Inspectors track and sample at least 25 cases and meet with staff and service users

Week Four:

- Tuesday: Inspectors track and sample 50 cases and meet with staff and service users
- Wednesday - Feedback to the Director of Children's Services

5. Ten Probable Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOES)

- (1) What makes York's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Local Safeguarding Children Board anything other than requiring improvement?
- (2) What has happened in York since the last SLAC Inspection?
- (3) Are services in York self-aware – are there inconsistencies of understanding between professionals and/or between partner agencies about the Services being delivered and outcomes being achieved?
- (4) Are caseloads simply too high to provide a safe and effective service?
- (5) Is Quality Assurance systemic – is it part of the day-to-day business involving everyone at every level?
- (6) Do York know what 'good' looks like?
- (7) What is happening at the 'threshold points'? ie. such as a decision to escalate from CAF to Contact, Contact to Referral, Referral to Strategy Discussion, Decision to convene Conference, Decision to List, Decision to accommodate, Decision to enter into care proceedings.
- (8) What is the culture in York? Is there effective organisational support? Is there a clear and coherent narrative about the support being provided?

- (9) Does the LSCB hold partners to account? Are there clear and understood governance arrangements (do partners know who reports to who and who should know what?)
- (10) Are lessons learnt in York (from national and local SCRs)?

6. What 'Good' looks like according to Ofsted. Some Questions?

Key judgement: The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence

- Are decisions to look after children and young people timely and made only when it is in their best interests?
- Is the Public Law Outline used effectively, including Letters Before Proceedings, family group conferences and parallel planning?
- Where the plan for a child or young person is to return home, is there evidence of purposeful work to help the family to change so it is safe for the child to return?
- Are applications and assessments for care or other orders accepted by the courts?
- Are Viability Assessments of members of the family carried out promptly to a good standard?
- Are children and young people seen by their social worker alone and do they understand what is happening to them? Are they helped to understand their rights and to complain and access an advocate and/or independent visitor?
- Are risks associated with children and young people offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, going missing or being sexually exploited known and are plans in place to reduce the risks?
- Are children and young people helped to maintain or improve their health?
- Are children and young people receiving the same support from their carers around their education as they would from a good parent?
- Do children and young people who do not attend school have access to 25 hours per week of good-quality registered alternative provision?
- Is urgent action taken when children and young people are missing from school or their attendance noticeably reduces?
- Do carers have delegated authority to make decisions about children's access to recreation and leisure activities?
- Do children and young people live in safe, stable and appropriate homes or families with their brothers and sisters when this is in their best interests?
- Do children and young people move only in accordance with care plans, when they are at risk of harm or are being harmed? They do not live in homes that fail to meet their needs and they do not move frequently.
- Do Care Plans comprehensively address the needs and experiences of children and young people?
- Are they regularly and independently reviewed, involving as appropriate the child or young person's parents, kinship carers (connected persons), foster carers, residential staff and other adults who know them?

- Do children and young people have appropriate, carefully assessed and supported contact with family and friends and other people who are important to them?
- Do children and young people who live away from their 'home' authority have immediate access to education and health services that meet their needs as soon as they begin to live outside of their 'home' area?
- Are family-finding strategies informed by the assessed needs of children and young people and is there decisive action to find families and avoid drift and delay?
- Does the recruitment, assessment, training, support, supervision, review and retention of foster carers including kinship carers (connected persons) and, as appropriate, special guardians, ensure that families approved are safe and sufficient in number to care for children and young people with a wide range of needs.
- Are children and young people effectively prepared for, and carefully matched with, a permanent placement?
- Are children helped to understand their lives and their identities through life history work that is effective and provided when they need it?
- Are Plans effectively and regularly reviewed by independent reviewing officers (IROs). Do IROs bring rigour and challenge to the care planning and monitor the performance of the local authority as a corporate parent, escalating issues as appropriate?
- Do case records reflect the work that is undertaken with children and clearly relate to the plans for their futures?
- Are children and young people represented by a Children in Care Council or similar body which is regularly consulted on how to improve the support they receive?
- Do children and young people receive care that is sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation?

Adoption performance

- Is adoption considered for all children who are unable to return home or to their birth families and who need a permanent alternative home?
- Does the local authority demonstrate a sense of urgency and care in all adoption work including the appropriate use of concurrent and parallel planning?
- Does the recruitment, preparation, prompt assessment, training and support of adopters enable them to meet the needs of children and young people and to keep them safe?
- Are sufficient families available to accommodate sibling groups, older children and children with complex needs?
- Does the Panel and Agency Decision-Maker ensure that children are effectively matched with the most appropriate families and does the Panel promote good practice through its work and regular reports to the local authority?
- Are children who are adopted, their adoptive families, their birth relatives and adopted adults informed of their entitlement to receive an assessment of their adoption support needs? When support is needed, is it provided quickly and effectively?

The experiences and progress of care leavers

- Are Care Leavers safe and do they feel safe?
- Are any risks associated with offending, drug or alcohol misuse, going missing or with sexual exploitation known by adults who have a responsibility for them and effective plans are in place to reduce the risk of or actual harm to them?
- Is Pathway planning effective and do plans (including transition planning for looked after children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) address all young people's needs and are they updated as circumstances change?
- Are the health needs of Care Leavers are clearly assessed, prioritised and met?
- Do Care Leavers have access to and understand their full health history and are provided with all key documents they need to begin their lives as young adults, for example national insurance numbers, birth certificates and passports?
- Do Care Leavers develop the skills and confidence they need to maximise their chances of successful maturity to adulthood, including parenthood? This includes learning to budget, to live independently and to manage safe relationships and behaviour.
- Do Care Leavers succeed in their transition to greater independence and adulthood at a time that is right for them? Are young people aged 16 and 17 are encouraged to remain looked after until their 18th birthday where (and this will usually be the case) this is in their best interest and can they remain in placements beyond their 18th birthday or, where more appropriate, live in permanent and affordable accommodation that meets their needs?
- Do Care Leavers have access to appropriate education and employment opportunities, including work experience and apprenticeships?
- Are Care Leavers positive about themselves?
- Is accommodation for Care Leavers appropriate for each young person to safely develop their independence skills?
- Are Care leavers are provided with information about their legal entitlements such as access to their records, assistance to find employment, training, financial support and how to complain where necessary supported by an advocate?

Key judgement: Leadership, management and governance

- Do leaders, including elected members and managers, have a comprehensive and current knowledge of what is happening at the 'front line' and how well children and young people are helped, cared for and protected?
- Does the local authority have detailed and relevant knowledge of its local communities, including looked after children and care leavers?
- Do commissioned and in-house services respond to and meet the needs of local children, young people and families in need of help, care and protection?
- Does the local authority work effectively with other strategic bodies such as the LSCB, the Health and Well-being Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups to promote and secure a sufficient range of good-quality provision to meet local need?
- Is the local authority an active, strong and committed corporate parent that knows the children and young people it looks after well? Is it an

effective and successful champion of their progress (particularly in education and learning) ensuring that each child has every opportunity to succeed?

- Does the DCS work closely with the LSCB chair? Does the Chief Executive, drawing on other LSCB partners and, where appropriate, the Lead Member, hold the chair to account for the effective working of the LSCB.
- Does the local authority, through performance management and monitoring, have an accurate and systematically updated understanding of its effectiveness? Does it have a track record of dealing rigorously and effectively with areas for development?
- Is management oversight of practice, including practice scrutiny by senior managers, established, systematic and used to improve the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children and young people?
- Does the local authority know itself well? Is it a learning organisation?
- Does the local authority have an effective relationship with CAFCASS, the health community, the family courts and the local Family Justice Board?
- Is the social care workforce sufficient, stable, suitably qualified and competent to deliver high-quality services to children and their families?
- Are managers and practitioners experienced, effectively trained and supervised and does the quality of their practice improve the lives of vulnerable children, young people and families?
- Is there effective organisational support for the professional development of social workers and do leaders provide the right environment for good social work to take place?

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Corporate Parenting Board – Workplan 2016-17

Meeting Date	Strategic Themes	Reports Supporting Strategic Theme	Other Reports
27 June 2016	Education	Virtual School Development Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of 2016-17 Virtual School Improvement Plan • Rees Centre for Education – key issues for Elected members • Results of Poetry Competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on SMTIM Panel (including Bright Futures Scheme) • Corporate Parenting Board Programme of Work and Priorities
26 Sept 2016	Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health; Wellbeing; Relationships & Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMTIM Panel Annual Report 2015-16 • Annual Advocacy Report 2015-16 • Care Leavers Bill – Keep on Caring • Making York Home – Update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual School Update - GCSE and A Level results for children in care • Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report • Inspection Briefing
21 Nov 2016	Good Safe placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making York Home – key priorities • Increasing placement capacity • New Placement Service arrangements • Relevant performance data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Report of the Children in Care Strategic Partnership Board to YorOK Board & HWWB • Member Visits to Children’s Homes
13 Feb 2017	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Education data – children in care • Education: Secondary school data – children in care. 	

Meeting Date	Strategic Themes	Reports Supporting Strategic Theme	Other Reports
10 April 2017	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health passport • Health profile / issues for children in care • Local arrangements • Relevant performance data 	
June 2017	Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health; Wellbeing; Relationships & Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant performance data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Learning & Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Sept 2017	Respect & Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual SMTIM Report • Annual Advocacy Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report • Member Visits to Children's Homes
Nov 2017	Moving to Adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying Put • Housing • Education, Training & Employment • Apprenticeships • Where young people live • Relevant performance data 	