



## 1. Introduction and Purpose of the Annual Report

- 1.1.1 The purpose of this report is to meet the statutory requirement for the IRO Manager to produce an annual report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Board to evidence the contribution made by IROs to quality assure and improve services for children and young people in the care of the local authority as set out in the IRO Handbook linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and guidance which were introduced in April 2011.
- 1.2 This report follows the format and content used in preceding Annual Reports.
- 1.3 It is a statutory expectation that this report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board and the Safeguarding Childrens' Board. It will also be shared with York's Children in Care Council (Show Me that I Matter) after which a copy will be uploaded via the City of York Council (CYC) website as a publically accessible document.
- 1.4 The report refers to 'Children and Young People in Care' wherever possible, or uses the acronym 'CYPIC' in preference to more commonly used acronyms (eg. LAC/CLA) . This 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 2016 to 31 March 2017.
- 2.2 During this reporting period there have been some significant changes within Children Social Care in York implemented to improve service delivery and outcomes for children and young people receiving social care services , brought about by the introduction of a new ICT system and implementation of major service restructure (described in more detail in paragraph 5).

- 2.3 The transition to the new ICT system was successfully achieved in March 2016, introducing new workflow based recording and reporting tools, which are set to create significant efficiencies by streamlining administrative processes across Children's Services. Management information tools are being developed and new reporting cycles introduced to help track and evidence this progress and maximise the transparency and analysis of key performance indicators.
- 2.4 In the interim the IRO service has maintained ongoing scrutiny, review and reporting about care planning and service delivery for children and young people in care, whilst also itself undergoing significant structural reform to expand the reach, remit and impact of the service.

### **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 The IRO Handbook was issued in March 2010 providing Local Authorities with statutory guidance on how the IRO's should discharge their duties. The guidance confirms 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*
- 3.4 The Handbook confirms that the IRO also has a duty (para 2.13) ,

*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 its looked after children of the services they receive. Equally important, the IRO should recognise and report on good practice.*

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

4.1 The CYC IRO Service operates within the context of CYC as 'Corporate Parent' for all of the children and young people in its care.

4.2 The CYC has high aspirations for children and young people in their care, promoted by the Children in Care Council's award winning "Aspire for More" project and the 2016 launch of an ambitious and challenging strategy and strategic partnership for Children and Young People in Care.

### The City of York Council's 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 The Independent Reviewing Service is well positioned and committed to help promote, deliver and evaluate these aspirations and to embody through our daily interventions the Corporate Parenting Board's founding priorities:

- Promote 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 professionals and elected members;
- Actively engage with young people through direct consultation and existing forums, such as Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM), in order to stay connected to the experiences of young people and

ensure a sustained focus on the voice of the child, outcomes and progress.

## 5. Restructure of Children’s Social Care in York

5.1 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 an interim Senior Manager – with portfolio for Peer Support and Challenge. This review helped to inform and shape the service and wider service restructure.

5.2 Mid way through the reporting period, in September 2016, major restructure of Children’s Social Care Services were implemented. The primary intention of the structural reforms was to promote better outcomes for children by;

- Extending the reach, remit and impact of independent review across children’s services to promote consistent, timely and quality interventions across the directorate
- Further improving the quality, timeliness and proportionality of assessments across Children’s Services
- Achieving the right sort of permanency, at the right time, for children and young people in care
- Having sufficient local and appropriate placements for children and young people in care
- Continuing to improve the professional support, development opportunities and tools available to staff
- Continuing to build a knowledgeable, skilled and confident workforce using evidence based methods of work

5.2 To help deliver these objectives Children’s Social Care were reorganised within 3 newly formed Service Groups overseen by a newly formed Quality Assurance Group, where the reconstituted Independent Reviewing Service is now located.



## 6. The City of York Council IRO Service

- 6.1 Prior to the Service restructure, during the period April – September 2016 there were 4.2 full time equivalent (FTE) Independent Reviewing Officers with responsibilities to oversee the planning and reviews in respect of children and young people in care, the IROs also chaired the multi agency conferences in respect of children subject to child protection plans. Elsewhere in the council there were 3 FTE workers undertaking reviews for children subject to child in need plans and agency staff were used to undertake the statutory review of foster carers and regulatory inspections of CYC's registered residential unit (The Glen).
- 6.2 In September 2016 the new Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) was established, bringing together the above roles. A new integrated IRO role was created, that combined the three distinct roles of IRO, Conference Chair and CIN reviewer in one integrated position, with a pioneering new remit to extend the consistency and reach of independent scrutiny and review across the full spectrum of children's social care. The 6 FTE new Integrated IROs were co located in the new IRS alongside a newly created IRO (Placements) officer, who has pioneering responsibility to undertake quality assurance review of commissioned residential placements , as well as inspection of CYC's registered provision (The Glen) and statutory foster carers' reviews. To help deliver these objectives CYC invested in additional management capacity, creating for the first time in York, a dedicated IRO manager role without wider portfolio.
- 6.3 The IRS is set to help achieve seamless continuity and consistency in planning for children across the full spectrum of children's services. Any child or young person receiving a service from Children Social Care beyond the Initial Assessment , has this support coordinated through either a Child in Need Plan, a Child Protection Plan and / or a Looked After Care Plan, independently reviewed by a consistent Independent Reviewing Officer. IROs in York are uniquely positioned within Children's Social Care to oversee the delivery of services by all social work and CIN teams. IROs are thus well placed to ensure consistent application of service thresholds and best practice standards across the directorate, to highlight good practice and outcomes and / or to identify and address any potential drift, delay or poor delivery of services. New reporting tools and cycles are being developed to help disseminate such learning and promote active discourse and service development at every level in the directorate.
- 6.4 The IRO (Placements) is focused on ensuring robust and consistent review and application of fostering standards and robust scrutiny and review of residential care services to ensure that the children of York continue to receive optimal care, in value for money placements that promote the very best of outcomes. Co location of the IROs with the IRO (Placement) enables both services to work closely together to maximise optimum care planning and service delivery for individual children.
- 6.5 New employment opportunities presented by the service restructure were such that 5 of the 7.2 former IROs / CIN planning officers moved to new positions. During the period of transition and recruitment the IRS was highly dependent upon temporary

agency cover. Maximum effort was made to retain as much continuity for children and carers as possible during this interim period, however staff turn over was such that none of the foster carers and only 25% of the children subject to care plans / child protection plans and 33% of the children subject to CIN plans were able to retain the same IRO / Conference Chair / CIN reviewer following September's restructure. Some temporary and supernumerary IRO capacity was provided during this transition period via a number of experienced agency workers, to assist with the need for additional recruitment, induction and training activity.

- 6.6 By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 permanent staff had been successfully appointed/started for 3.5 of the 6 FTE IRO posts and 0.5 of the IRO (placements) post. Conditional offers had also been accepted in respect of all but 0.5 FTE IRO post (pending references and notice periods). Agency workers continued to provide cover for the vacant posts pending full recruitment.
- 6.7 At the time of writing there are 9 workers in total covering the 7 FTE IRO posts. The service currently comprises of 1 FTE IRO (Placements) appointed to 2 x 0.5 FTE permanent staff, and 6 FTE IROs appointed to 5 full time permanent staff, 1 x 0.5 FTE permanent worker and 1 x 0.5 hrs covered by a sessional workers pending recruitment to the permanent post. The sessional worker continues to provide some temporary super numerate cover to help maintain manageable caseloads for newly recruited staff whilst they are being inducted into the role.
- 6.8 Throughout the above period of transition all of the IRO's working for the Unit have continued to be qualified and experienced Social Workers registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council and subjected to regular Disclosure and Barring Service enhanced checks.
- 6.9 All members of the IRO team have significant experience and relevant and appropriate skills, bringing to the role specialist knowledge and experience including senior management of residential services, management of fostering services, leaving care services and safeguarding services, and extensive experience in adoption, CIN, fostering and safeguarding services. All IROs have substantial experience of effective direct work with children and young people and three members of the team are experienced IROs
- 6.10 Seven of the IRO's are white British females, two are white British males, this gender imbalance is replicated across social work services. The unit has not been able to recruit a higher proportionate of males / alternative ethnic groups to better represent the demographic profile in York as no such workers have been available, however the unit continues to be acutely aware of the need to address any potential cultural bias, influences or impact of diversity on planning.
- 6.11 All nine 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.

- 6.12 All IRO's have access to independent legal advice upon request, and frequently do make use of the in-house provision available to them.
- 6.13 All of the new starters have engaged in supported induction programs, including opportunity to undertake relevant IT training and shadow more experienced colleagues. As the team is so new and at a critical stage of early service development, additional protected time has been given to promote relevant networking, training, peer-support and sector-led improvement opportunities, including bi-weekly team meetings, quarterly team development days and attendance at the quarterly Yorkshire and Humberside Regional IRO Practitioners Group. Bespoke induction training has also been provided for the team on the graded care profile, Integrated Assessment Framework and from the Safeguarding Group Manager, Pathways Manager, CIN Manager, Adoptions Manager, Children's Rights Manager and CSE coordinator.
- 6.14 IROs are expected to maintain responsibility for their own professional development, and members of the team have proactively taken up additional training opportunities available to them. All team members regularly access relevant reading and in-house training provided by the CYC Workforce Development Unit, Community Care Inform on line training and the National IRO Managers Partnership web links. In November 2016 all of the substantive post holders attended a one-day Regional IRO Practitioners Conference, hosted by Sheffield City Council and two IROs attended introductory training for new and aspiring IROs delivered by the National Association for IROs.
- 6.15 Management of the IRO service was undertaken by the Interim Senior Manager – Peer Support and Challenge in the period April – September 2016 and by the dedicated IRO manager since mid September. Both managers are qualified Social Workers registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council and subject to regular Disclosure and Barring Service enhanced checks. The former manager was an experienced Children's Social Care safeguarding managers and the newly appointed Service Manager has experience as an IRO and former Quality Assurance and IRO manager.
- 6.16 Management arrangements have ensured that there has been oversight, professional advice and management support to each IRO, including monthly Supervision, induction and Personal Development Reviews to ensure the IRO's access training appropriate to need.
- 6.17 Neither manager has been involved in 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.
- 6.18 Both 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.

- 6.19 There is dedicated administrative support provided separately for the child protection conference, child care review, CIN review and fostering review processes, some of which is provided through a pooled resource arrangement whereby administrators have a wide range of responsibilities, supporting the wider directorate. The provision of administrative support and services is currently subject to service review.

## 7. IRO Caseloads and Unit Performance

### Caseloads

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

	Number of children with an allocated IRO (snapshot)				2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar					
CYPIC*	190	190	196	204	<b>204</b>	191	193	222	243
CP	122	143	199	171	<b>171</b>	135	124	125	128
CIN	-	-	207	219	<b>219</b>	-	-	-	-
Total	312÷4.2	333÷4.2	602÷6	594÷6	<b>594÷6</b>	337	321	371	345
Average	74	79	100	99	<b>99</b>	75	68	74	98

\*These figures do not include the children subject to short breaks, whose care plans IROs also review and oversee – currently 11)

- 7.1 IROs caseloads have significantly increased during the reporting period, (from a average of 75 in 2015/16 to 99). This is due to a slight increase in the number of children and young people coming into local authority care, a sharp peak in the number of children being made subject to protection plans (Table 2) and the structural changes that resulted in IROs also taking on reviews of children subject to child in need plans.

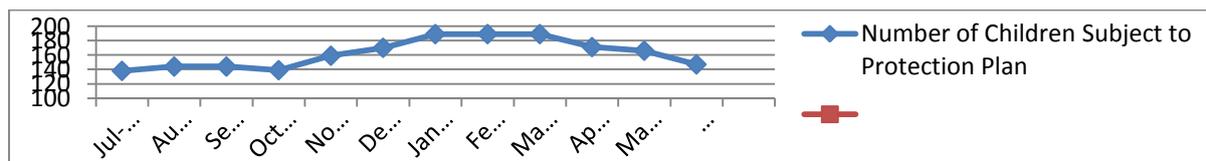


Table 2. Children Subject to Protection Plan 2016/17

- 7.2 The increase in the number of children and young people receiving support from Children's Services from Q3 was preceded by a rise in the number of referrals being

made to Children's Services. The peak arose within a few weeks of the major structural reorganisation which resulted in there being an unusually high number of agency workers and substantive post holders appointed into new social work, manager and Conference Chair roles and it also coincided with Ofsted's intensive 4 week SIF inspection. These factors may have contributed to staff being more enthusiastic, expeditious and / or more risk adverse than usual, which may have contributed to more referrals / significant incidents progressing to conference / accommodation. Current data suggests that this was a short term anomaly. Child protection number have now reduced to former levels and the number of children in care has levelled.

- 7.3 Until September 2016, CYC IRO's had a dual function, in common with half of its regional peers, in that the IROs provided independent Chairing of Child Protection Conferences, in addition to their responsibilities to Children and Young people in care, (a separate statutory function undertaken in accordance with *The Working Together* 2015 statutory guidance). In September 2016 this remit was further extended to include independent review of children subject to Child in Need Plans. This combined job remit is unique to York as far as we are aware.
- 7.4 Caseload size in itself is not an accurate measure of an IRO's workload as there can be vast variation in the level of consultation, review and active intervention than any child or young person may require. This variation is much more diverse now that IRO's caseloads include children subject to child in need plans as well as care plans and protection plans. A clear benefit in this unique amalgamated role is the opportunity to provide more consistent and coordinated oversight for children and young people, as they make their journey across children's services, enabling them to retain the same IRO even if other workers change ( a child may typically experience a quick succession of social workers/ supervising managers as they pass from referral team, to the safeguarding team and onto the permanent placement team). IRO's more diverse caseloads also provide efficiencies and flexibility to provide variable levels of scrutiny, consultation and challenge proportionate to the child or young person's specific circumstances. Ongoing review is required over the coming year to determine whether this integrated approach continues to serve all children and young people well and whether IRO's have the time and availability required to raise key performance indicators identified later in the report.
- 7.5 To contextualise the caseloads, 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. York is the only local authority within the region in which IROs have any role in reviewing CIN plans, which explains why York's caseloads have

risen within the reporting period from being slightly below the Regional Indicative average to the highest.

**Table 3:** Yorkshire and Humberside IRO Services allocated caseloads

<b>Local Authority</b> *In these LAs IROs have singular responsibility for CYPIC The others combine this with CP	<b>Average Caseload Nov 2014</b>	<b>Average caseload Nov 2016</b>
Barnsley*	-	73
Bradford	85	-
Calderdale	-	59
East Riding Yorkshire	-	65
Hull City Council	89	97
Kirklees	65	70
Leeds City Council*	63	62
North Yorkshire County Council	68	-
Rotherham	78	-
Wakefield Metropolitan District*	76	80
York	75	99
<b>Regional Average</b>	76	76

- 7.6 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 4:** Total Unit Activity – Reviews and Child Protection Conferences undertaken

<b>Review meetings chaired by IROs during reporting period</b>									
<b>This Reporting Period</b>						<b>Historical</b>			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	1012/13
CYPIC	138	149	120	147	554	548	619	660	861
CP	82	80	103	103	368	273	235	240	312
CIN	*NA	*NA	104	176	280	*IRO's didn't oversee CIN cases until Sept 2017			
Total	220	229	327	426	1,202	821	854	900	1173
Indicative average	÷4.2= 52each	÷4.2= 66each	÷6= 55each	÷6= 71each	Yr average 244	÷4.2= 195			

- 7.7 It is difficult to make direct comparisons with the number of meetings undertaken by the unit against preceding years as the size and remit of the unit has changed so much during the reporting period. The number of meetings undertaken by the unit is not in itself a clear indication of comparative workloads. There is vast variation in the level of preparation, consultation, complexity, recording and follow up required for different meeting types, and IROs have statutory responsibilities in respect of the wider care planning for children in care that they do not have for children subject to protection plans and CIN plans. The number of meetings undertaken by an IRO does however give some indication of the workload demands.
- 7.8 Table 4 illustrates a significant increase in the indicative average number of meetings undertaken by each IRO (244 meetings 2016/17 compared with 195 in 2015/16), suggesting a significant increase in workloads that has arisen since the restructure.
- 7.8 As a consequence of the restructure the CYPIC reviews and CP conferences that were previously undertaken by 4.2 FTE IROs and the CIN reviews that were previously undertaken by 3 FTE CIN officers moved across to 6 IROs with an amalgamated remit. Whilst the volume of child care reviews has remained broadly similar during this time (554, compared with 548 in 2015/16) there was a significant increase in the volume of child protection conferences (368 compared with 273 in 2015/16).
- 7.9 This increase in the volume of work has arisen whilst the unit was managing the additional demands of the afore mentioned recruitment, induction and training and as a consequence the team has had very limited availability to engage in service development initiatives outside of their immediate statutory obligations and some performance targets were adversely affected.

## Timeliness of Reviews

**Table 5:** Percentage of CYPIC Reviews held within timescales

Reviews within timescales by Quarter 2016/17					Historical Performance				
					2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
	Q1 Apr-Jun	Q2 Jul-Sep	Q3 Oct-Dec	Q4 Jan-Mar	Year average	Year average	Year average	Year Average	Year average
Reviews	75%	81%	75%	67%	67%	85%	90%	86%	75%

- 7.10 Table 4 indicates the percentage of children and young people in care who had **all** of their reviews on time in the reporting period. The table indicates a reduction in the

timeliness of review meetings that significantly dipped in the two quarters following the service restructure. This drop in performance is largely attributable to difficulties associated with large scale reallocation of workers that arose at the time of the restructure, as a high number of social workers, supervising social workers, managers and IROs moved to newly configured teams within the directorate, (including the very positive establishment of a new team specifically for children in permanent placements). This major restructure meant that children and young people in care were particularly likely to have required a change of social worker.

7.11 Throughout this period of transition the IROs worked hard to maintain the integrity of the review process, (as evidenced in paragraph 9, by IRO's use of the resolution process to highlight and address concerns about inadequate preparation for review meetings). A number of reviews were delayed or held as a series of meetings to enable meaningful consultation and to accommodate new worker's commitments. During this period the IROs made increased use of individually tailored review process meetings (initiating the review process within statutory timescales, but delaying the final meeting until qualitative consultation / reports were available). Unfamiliarity with the new workflow system and reporting tools was such that a number of these reviews were inaccurately recorded as being outside of statutory timescales, or a miscalculation was made on the due date for the next meeting. This training / process issue has now been addressed and we are confident that next year's return on the timeliness of meetings will be much improved.

## Participation in Reviews

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

Code		2016/17	Historical		
			2015/16	2014/15	2013/14
PN0	Child under 4 at time of Review	17.4%	18%	13%	15%
PN1	Attends or speaks for him/herself	39.5%	38%	41%	40%
PN2	Attends, views rep. by Advocate	1.3%	1%	0.5%	2%
PN3	Attends, views given non-verbally	0.6%	0.3%	2.5%	0%
PN4	Attends but does not convey views	0.4%	0.7%	1%	0.5%
PN5	Doesn't attend but briefs advocate	10%	15%	11.5%	7%
PN6	Does not attend but conveys views	21.3%	23%	24.5%	32.5%
PN7	Does not attend or convey views	9.5%	4%	6%	3%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

7.12 Within the reporting period the number of children and young people attending their review meetings was generally very similar to preceding years, but amongst the C/YP choosing not to attend their review meetings there has been a significant drop in the number choosing to send their views indirectly. There has also been a marked decline

in the use of advocates for this cohort (10% in 2016/17 compared with 15% in 2015/16) and a rise in the number of C/YP who have chosen to neither attend or convey their views by alternative means (9.5% in 2016/17 compared with 4% in 2015/15).

- 7.13 This reduction in children's participation arose in the period following the restructure when a high number of children and young people in care had been allocated a new social worker and / or IRO, low participation rates are likely to be associated with this lack of familiarity / limited time to develop a meaningful relationship ahead of the meeting. As described in paragraph 7.12, a number of reviews were delayed and / or held as a process or series of meetings during this period to maximise the level of meaningful consultation, engagement and direct participation and increased use was made of the Quality Assurance Monitor to highlight instances of concern.
- 7.14 Findings from the U Matter Survey undertaken by CYC Children's Rights Service in March 2017 found that only 63% of the children and young people in care who responded stated that they knew who their IRO was (21% said they weren't sure) – however this return is not surprising given that 75% of CYPIC were allocated a new IRO following the restructure. Encouragingly 85% stated that they had opportunity to speak to the IRO separately ahead of their review, however only 51% reported that they had been involved in preparing for their review meeting.
- 7.15 In our endeavour to better understand how we can better promote children and young people's participation in the review process a consultation event was held at the end of March 2017 in which there was full representation from the IRS, the Children in Care Council and The Children in Permanent Placements social work team. Following this event a working party has been established to develop a participation tool kit, to help develop a range of tools to promote children's direct and indirect participation in the review, including means to encourage a larger cohort of young people to co-facilitate or where appropriate to chair their own review.

### **Consultation Prior to Reviews**

- 7.16 There is a statutory expectation that children and young people are visited and directly consulted by the Independent Reviewing Officer prior to their review. The *Handbook* does however acknowledge that there are circumstances where the IRO should 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, where the child is very young or where the young person declines the offer of this visit.

7.17 The number of children directly seen by IROs in York is considerably lower than would be expected, and has progressively dropped across the current reporting period. Despite a commitment being made in last year's annual report to make this a priority area for improvement, 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 continues to be a priority performance deficit that needs to be prioritised in the coming year.

**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							
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Seen	39%	36%	32%	32%	34.5%	35%	45%
Not Seen	28%	27%	37%	35%	32%	30%	25%
Not appropriate	22%	30%	23%	28%	26%	26%	22%
Not necessary	11%	7%	8%	5%	7.5%	9%	7%

## 8. 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	2016/17	2015/16 Yr end	2014/15 Yr end	2013/14 Yr end	2012/13 Yr end	Regional average	National average
Number CYPIC	190	190	196	204	204	191	193	222	243		
No. per 10k	51	51	53	55	55	53	53	61	68	63	60

8.1 Within the reporting period, the number of children and young people in the care of the City of York Council has slightly increased. At the end of Q4 (31 March 2017), the

figure was 204, compared with 191 the preceding year, however the numbers of looked after children in York continue to be lower than both the national and regional averages. This performance 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 are secured in a timely way. It is anticipated that over the next reporting period, the numbers of Children will stabilise around the current level.

## 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	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Number	190	190	196	204	204	191	193	222	243
Male	102	103	104	108	108	98	101	121	132
Female	88	87	92	96	96	93	92	100	111

8.2 Within the reporting period, the numbers of male and female children and young people in the care of the City of York have continued to be 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		2016/17		2015/16		2014/15	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
ABAN	Bangladeshi (Asian or Asian British)	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.5%
AOTH	Any other Asian or Asian British Background	1	0.5%	1	0.5%	1	0.5%
BCRB	Black or Black British - Caribbean	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.5%
MOTH	Any other mixed background	1	0.5%	1	0.5%	1	0.5%
MAWS	White and Asian	3	1.5%	4	2%	4	2%
MWBC	White and Black Caribbean	1	0.5%	1	0.5%	1	0.5%
OOTH	Any other ethnic group	4	2%	0	0%	1	0.5%

WBRI	White British	193	94.5%	183	96%	187	95%
WIRI	White Irish	1	0.5%	1	0.5%	0	0%
WOTH	Any other White background	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
		<b>204</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>100%</b>

8.3 Within the reporting period, the ethnicity of the children and young people looked after by the City of York has remained static and it continues to be broadly representative of the demography of York with no notable over-representation. The slight increase in 'other ethnic groups' from 0-2% is accounted for by a small number of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people that CYC have taken responsibility for.

### 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	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Under 1 yr	4	5	9	11	<b>11</b>	13	8	6	5
1-4 years	26	23	20	24	<b>24</b>	19	23	30	38
5-9 years	35	36	35	35	<b>35</b>	37	36	45	46
10-15 years	77	78	86	82	<b>82</b>	78	90	92	102
Over 16 yrs	48	48	46	52	<b>52</b>	44	36	49	52

8.4 The age profile of children and young people in care has broadly followed the same pattern this year as was seen last year, with the only significant variation being in the increased number of young people over the age of 16 remaining in care, this is potentially a positive reflection of improved pathway planning and more young people choosing to remain in care after they turn 16 rather than seeking their own premature discharge from care. There continues to be a relatively high 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 continue to be lower since the revised PLO reduced timescales for care proceedings to a maximum of 26 weeks (CYC being a top performing Authority with average timescales of less than 20 weeks).

### 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	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13

Less than 6mths	-	-	-	-	35	25	25	27	20
6-12mths	9	11	24	28	28	22	22	11	17
1-2 years	8	27	20	26	26	27	19	24	57
2-4 years	25	29	30	29	29	30	41	61	65
More than 4 yrs	135	93	89	86	86	87	86	99	84

- 8.5 Within the reporting period, there has continued to be a positive decrease in the length of time in care for significant numbers of children and young people cared for by the CYC. The increase in the cohort that are in care for less than 1 year may reflect the success in securing permanency via early resolution of PLO, 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 the whole

Legal Status of CYPIC	Historical		2015/16				
	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	Region al	Nation al
Interim Care Orders	10%	10%	11%	6%	12%	23%	20%
Full Care orders	62%	55%	54%	57%	49%	44%	40%
Freed for Adoption	2%	4%	6%	12%	16%	14%	11%
Accomm. S.20	25%	31%	29%	25%	22%	18%	29%
YOT legal Statuses	0.4%	0%	0%	0%	0.4%	0%	0%
Detain CP in LA Acc.	0%	0%	0%	0.5%	1.0%	0%	0%

- 8.6 Within the reporting period, there has been a rise in the use of care orders and a decline in the number of children subject to S20 voluntary care arrangements. This reflects a national trend following judicial and national scrutiny about use of S20. There has been a continued reduction in the numbers of children subject to Placement Orders (Freed for Adoption). This trend reflects the national picture, which appears to be linked to increased use of other permanence options such as Child Arrangement Orders and Special Guardianship Orders.
- 8.7 The IROs work 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, whereby the IRO is asked to report after every child and young person's review whether they feel that the placement and legal status is meeting C/YP's needs. IROs make use of the resolution process to raise any concerns that they may have.

8.8 The Quality assurance monitor confirms that IROs continue to be satisfied that very few children and young people in the care of the council are not subject to an appropriate legal status. IROs have however reported more instances where they have concerns since Q3, which evidences the increased focus on converting some voluntary S20 arrangements for the cohort of children for whom a return to their family's care is not in the C/YP best interests.

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

Appropriateness of legal status	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016/17	2015/16
In the IRO's view is the current / proposed legal status NOT appropriate	2/138 1.4%	2/149 1.3%	5/120 4.1%	6/147 4%	16/554 2.8%	5/485 1.04%

### Placement Stability of Children and Young People in Care

8.9 Children and young people in the care of CYC are currently enjoying significantly improved stability as can be seen in tables 15 & 16 , which demonstrates a significant fall in the number of children and young people experiencing multiple moves (4.9% this year compared with 8.9% last year and 11.9% the year before). At the same time there has been a slight rise in the number of children and young people who have remained in the same placement for at least 2 years (or moved onto their permanent adoptive home).

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

Placement Stability of CYPIC		Historical Performance		Regional average	National average
CYPIC experiencing 3 or more moves	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16	2015/16
	4.9%	8.9%	11.9%	10%	10%

**Table 16** Percentage of CYPIC looked after over 2.5 years who have been in same placement for at least 2 years or moved to adoptive home

Placement Stability of CYPIC		Historical Performance		Regional average	National average
% CYPIC looked in same placement for 2+ yrs (or moved to adoptive home)	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16	2015/16
	67%	64%	58%	68%	68%

- 8.10 The Unit is aware of the contribution that it can make to the stability of care for children and young people. IROs 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 98% 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, 2% of cases, the IRO will use the Resolution Process to raise and address their concerns.

**Table 17:** QAF Data from Question 21: Is the current or proposed placement meeting the needs of the child?

Suitability of placements	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016/17	2015/16
In IRO's view the placement does NOT fully meet assessed needs	3/138 2.1%	5/149 3.3%	3/120 2.5%	2/147 1.3%	13/554 2.3%	18/485 3.7%

## 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

Health and Education of CYPIC	Historical				
	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Health and Dental Checks	60.99%	74.5%	66%	92.9%	82%
Under 5s Dev Checks	97.14%	100%	92.9%	82.1%	87%
Average SDQ Score	16.11	13.0	13.1	15.9	14.8
Up-to-date PEP in place	Not Available	Not Available	70.1%	83.7%	53%

- 8.12 Health and education are two key dimensions within the developmental needs of children and young people in the care of the City of York. Table 18 demonstrates that there has been a reduction in the timeliness of health assessments being completed. This appears to have been caused in part by process /training issues relating to the new ICT system. Collaborative work has been undertaken by CSC and health colleagues to improve the workflow process and reduce the need for repeat parental consents. There is confidence that the timeliness of health assessments will improve.
- 8.13 There has been a rise in the number of C/YP scoring higher in the annual Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (an annual measure made to help track and highlight

needs in relation to emotional wellbeing). The SDQ scores are split into three bandings with 0-13 deemed Normal, 14-16 Borderline and 17-40 Cause for Concern. It is cause for concern that the average score in York is now approaching a score that would indicate need for specialist intervention. This aggregate rise in concerns about the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in care in York has arisen at the same time that changes were made to the way that CAMHS support is commissioned for children and young people in care. IROs are well positioned to identify and highlight any children for whom there are concerns and to make use of the resolution process to address any deficits in the support arrangements.

## Permanency outcomes for children and young people

Table 19; Outcomes for CYPIC ceasing to be looked after

	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Number C/YPIC ceased being looked after	74	84	89
adopted(unopposed application)	7	5	9
adopted (consent dispensed with)	2	0	7
Planned returned to care of parent/relative	14	18	9
Immediate (unplanned) move to parents/relatives	5	0	3
Move to kinship carer / parent who does not have PR	3	11	5
Accommodation on remand ended	4	0	1
Age assessment determined YP is 18 and support no longer required	2	1	0
Care taken over by other LA	2	0	0
Residence Order granted	0	0	6
SGO to carers	6	6	9
SGO to other party	1	6	3
Moved to supported indep living	5	5	14
Moved to unsupported indep living	1	1	2
Transferred to adult services residential care	1	3	3
Sentenced to custody	3	0	1
Died	0	1	0
Other	13	23	13
% care leavers aged 17-21 in suitable accommodation	97.4%	92%	95%

8.14 Table 19 indicates that the majority of care episodes in York continue to end positively with the biggest cohort being children and / young people being supported to make a planned return back to parents or relatives, (14), children being adopted (9) or being made subject to Special Guardianship Order (7). In 2016/17 there was an increase in the number of care episodes ending because the C/YP was sentenced to custody (3) and 1 young person moved onto unsupported independent living, however 97% of care leavers aged between 17 and 21 were deemed to be in suitable accommodation. These positive outcomes are evidenced in the IRO quality assurance framework, where very few issues are made subject to formal dispute.

## 9. IRO impact on the outcomes for children and young people

### Dispute Resolution and Escalation

8.14 IROs complete a Quality Assurance Monitor as part of the review of any child and young person in care, to confirm their view about the quality of provision and to identify any potential areas of emergent concern (a parallel monitor is also completed for children subject to protection plans, and is being introduced for children subject to CIN processes). Through this Quality Assurance Framework the IROs continue to report very positively on the general standard of support, planning and provision of services for children and young people in York, and any concerns that are identified are generally addressed at an informal level, without need to invoke more formal resolution processes – consistent with the expectations of the IRO Handbook (paragraph 6.1):

*One of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process. Where problems are identified in relation to a child's case, for example in relation to care planning, the implementation of the care plan or decisions relating to it, resources or poor practice, the IRO will, in the first instance, seek to resolve the issue informally with the social worker or the social worker's managers. ..If the matter is not resolved in a timescale that is appropriate to the child's needs, the IRO should consider taking formal action.*

*It is the task of each local authority to put in place a formal process for the IRO to raise concerns and to ensure that this process is respected and prioritised by managers. ..The IRO may bypass any stage and progress the dispute to the level s/he considers most appropriate. The formal dispute resolution process within each local authority should have timescales in total of no more than 20 working days.*

**Table 18:** Number of Disputes (taken from QAF Data Question 30:)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016/17	2015/16
Number of children for whom the IRO raised issues informally	13/138 9.4%	19/149 12.7%	26/120 21.6%	25/147 17%	83/554 14.9%	63/474 13.2%

Number of children for whom the IRO raised issues using the formal resolution process	1/138 0.7%	0 0%	1/120 0.8%	1/147 0.6%	3/554 0.5%	8/474 1.68%

8.15 As illustrated in table 19, the vast majority of issues raised by IROs tend to be practice issues, relating to poor quality or out dated Education Plans, Care Plans, Health Assessments and Placement Plans or concerns relating to overdue statutory visits. The concerns relate to a small number of children and young people (14.9% in 2016/17) but IROs frequently identify multiple concerns affecting individual children and young people. Competing workload demands within the social work teams is such that there is sometimes some delay in these processes being completed even after the social work team have acknowledged and agreed to address the shortfall. It is recognised that improved use could be made of the Quality Assurance Framework to help highlight and address such occurrences / any emergent trends. Improved reporting tools and cycles are currently being developed to help promote improved tracking and responsiveness to issues raised at an informal level, to avoid process issues avoidably having to be escalated through the formal resolution process and to help disseminate associated learning.

8.16 Table 19 also shows that in the period since the restructure there has been an increase in concern about inadequate preparations for the review process (as discussed in paragraph 7.11). Where appropriate IROs completed some reviews in a series of meetings to help maintain the integrity of the process and ensure relevant people were involved.

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

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016/17
<b>Number of child care reviews</b>	138	149	120	147	554
<b>Number of issues raised in total</b>	29 issues in respect of 14 c/yp	58 issues in respect of 20 c/yp	46 issues in respect of 26 c/yp	69 issues in respect of 28 c/yp	202 issues in respect of 88 c/yp
<b>Resource issue - placement</b>	1	-	-	-	1
contact provision	2	1	4	1	8
educational provision	1	1	1	1	4
health provision	-	-	-	-	-
emotional wellbeing provision	-	-	2	1	3
<b>Care Planning- management of CSE</b>	-	-	-	-	-
management of missing episodes	-	-	-	-	-
achieving change of legal status	-	-	2	2	4
Planning for permanence	-	2	2	2	6
Securing a permanent placement	1	-	-	3	4
<b>Practice- Decisions from last review not</b>	2	9	1	5	17

acted on					
insufficient evidence of child's voice	-	1	1	1	3
Delay in allocating social worker	2	1	-	-	3
Statutory visits not in timescale	4	5	2	7	18
No / poor quality placement plan	1	3	1	10	15
No /poor quality care plan	2	10	3	10	25
No / poor quality pathway plan	5	2	3	1	11
No / poor quality assessment of need	1	1	3	4	9
No / poor quality health assessment	-	7	5	6	18
No / poor quality PEP	4	11	11	4	30
No/poor quality life story work		2	3	2	7
Inadequate preparation for review	3	1	1	9	14
Other	-	1	1	-	2
<b>Issues addressed at informal resolution stage</b> (discussion with social worker / SM)	28 issues in respect of 13 c/yp	58 issues in respect of 20 c/yp	46 issues in respect of 26 c/yp	69 issues in respect of 28 c/yp	201 issues in respect of 87 c/yp
Issues raised at stage 1 formal resolution (email to service manager)	0	1	1	1	3
Issues raised at stage 2 (meeting with Service Manager)	0	0	0	0	0
Issue raised at stage 3 (meeting with Group Manager)	1	0			1

## Quality Assurance of Corporate Parenting

8.18. 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 enabling aggregation into the 'collective experience' of children and young people Looked After by City of York Council as Corporate Parent.

8.19 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. Table 20 illustrates a drop in performance in the IRO's opinion, evidenced by a drop in

the number of good ratings (from 89% in 2015/6 to 80%) and a rise in the 'Requires Improvement' rating (from 9% in 2015/16 to 18%). This decline is thought to be associated with the disruptions brought about by the restructure, as it occurred whilst there was significant reallocation of work within children's services. It is encouraging to see that in the final quarter there was a positive rise in the number of instances in which the IRO considered the standard of corporate parenting to be 'Outstanding'. It is intended that the improved reporting cycles that are currently being developed will help to disseminate such evidence and understanding about such examples of exemplary practice whilst also helping to highlight and address the concerns.

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

Overall quality of corporate parenting	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016/17	2015/16
Good	101/111 90.9%	87/110 79%	64/86 74.4%	98/130 75.3%	80%	89%
Outstanding	1/111 0.9%	1/110 0.9%	1/86 1.1%	5/130 3.8%	1.8%	1.4%
Requires improvement	9/111 8.1%	22/110 20%	21/86 24.4%	27/130 20.7%	18%	9%
Inadequate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.2%

- 8.21 Following the introduction of the QAF, historical comparisons can begin to be made. There has been a slight reduction in the overall number of care plans judged by IROs to be of a good quality (drop from 89% in 2015/16 to 82%), however this remains significantly better than the reported rating in 2013 when it was just 65%. Encouragingly, in the current reporting period IROs have identified 18 care plans as being of outstanding quality. It is planned that future reporting tools and cycles will enable such examples of exemplary work to be more widely acknowledged and shared, to promote best practice models across the directorate.

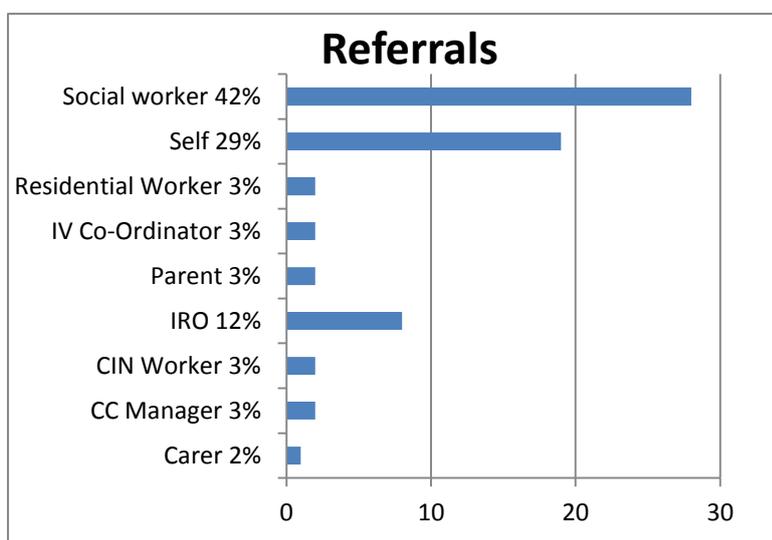
**Table 21:** QAF Data for Question 23: In the IRO's opinion, what is the overall quality of the Care Plan?

Overall quality of care plan	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016/17	2015/16	2013/14
Judged good in the IRO's opinion	98/111 88.2%	93/109 85.3%	60/85 70.5%	106/130 81.5%	357/435 82%	89%	65%
Judged 'Outstanding' by IRO	1/111	16/109	0%	1/130	18/435	0.8%	NA

	0.9%	14.6%		0.7%	4.1%		
<b>Required improvement in the IRO's opinion</b>	12/111 10.8%	0%	24/85 28.2%	22/130 16.9%	58/435 13.3%	9.15%	NA
<b>Inadequate in the IRO's opinion</b>	0%	0%	1/85 1.1%	1/130 0.7%	2/435 0.4%	0.8%	NA

## Referrals for Advocacy

8.2 The IRO Unit maintains 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.



Independent Reviewing Officers were responsible for 12% of the total number of referrals made to the advocacy service, which is similar to the previous years findings – suggesting that new IROs were appropriately informed about the service as part of their induction.

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	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Contact issues	15%	3%	13%
Unhappy with Social Work services	7%	17%	11%
Placement issues	12%	11%	13%
Disagreement with Care Plan	7%	5%	11%
accessing support / services	0%	8%	5%
Support in decision making	42%	50%	45%
Issues re-education provision	3%	-	-
Other	12%	6%	2%

## 10. Progress achieved with implementation of the 2016/17 service work plan

10.1 An ambitious work plan was set for the IRS , against which considerable progress has been made;

IRO work plan 2016/17		
Strategic Aims	Actions	Progress Achieved to date
Achieving Structural Change	1. Establish and embed the new management structure with Group Manager and Service Manager appointments	The planned restructure was successfully achieved and key positions filled.
	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	The IROs are now undertaking the assimilated role for CYPIC, CP and CIN cases. Some supernumerary cover was provided in the transition period to enable protected time for recruitment, 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	Ongoing work is being undertaken to revise the reporting tools, process and procedures to reflect the new working arrangements, which will be streamlined to also incorporate a new Integrated assessment framework to be introduced across children's services.  The Quality Assurance Framework and dispute resolution process are being revised and extended to include the CIN processes and safeguarding arrangements. The new integrated model is to be launched with new reporting arrangements . This will include quarterly dissemination of findings , learning and best practice models to services and partner agencies.
Strengthening Professional Relationships	1. Establish an improved balance between home, independent working and team working for IROs	The IROs are now predominantly office based rather than remote workers, and they are successfully raising their profile and accessibility within the directorate. The team gave a presentation at an all staff engagement day, and have delivered training for Designated Teachers and multi agency training about the conference process on behalf of CYSCB. The team are currently developing promotional literature and training materials for roll out across the directorate /partner agencies to help better promote understanding and awareness of the IRO role and A framework.
	2. Establish a link worker IRO role for teams and services and use this role to strengthen professional relationships	Good use has been made of team meetings and

	3. Develop a forward plan identifying IRO unit participation and engagement with key services and stakeholders,	development sessions to invite a range of guest speakers and the unit has engaged in active participation events with the Children’s Rights and Show me that I matter group. The team continue to actively contribute to a range of other forum including the CYSCB practice scrutiny group, Mosaic User Group, and the Regional IRO and IRO managers’ group. Improved reporting cycles are currently being developed to help promote and disseminate the learning arising from the IRO Quality Assurance Framework. This will be implemented when the integrated Quality Assurance Framework and resolution process is extended to CIN and CP.
	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	
Prioritising Quality Practice	1. Extend the practice of mid-point reviews to all cases involving children in care	IROs are now routinely setting a range of different mid way reviews (proportionate to need) to embed more proactive and robust oversight of care planning for CYPIC and they are actively overseeing the quality of core group records for children subject to protection plans. The IROs contribute actively to the ICT user group to help develop more efficient workflow processes, and timeliness of distributions is now to be actively monitored. Early indications suggest that there has been a marked improvement in timely distributions since the substantive posts were recruited to. This will remain under active review. Improved reporting tools are currently in development to assist with systemic analysis of step up and step down arrangements, in the interim IROs continue to undertake monthly peer audits of one another’s work to help promote a consistent team approach and to identify and address and shortfalls and to disseminate learning about best practice models. The IRO manager also undertook a snap shot audit of conference activity to better understand the peak experienced in Q3 and has introduced a quarterly cycle of conference audits (specifically looking at instances when protection plans are stepped down at first conference, exceed 15 months or are made subject to protection plan within 2 years of a previous plan ceasing).  IROs are committed to the priorities identified through the Making York Home project and they have
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	been instrumental in advocating for increased use of Child Arrangement Orders and Special Guardianship Orders where this is appropriate. IROs have actively promoted increased use of delegated PR agreements and they have contributed to the development of a new care plan and placement plan that is soon to be introduced.
	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	The team have undertaken a good level of peer observation and audit to assist with the induction of new staff, and they are committed to introducing routine arrangements for collating feedback from colleagues, service users and partner agencies. Systems for doing so will be developed and embedded in the coming year.

## 11. Service Priorities and work plan for 2017/18

11.1 The Service Work Plan for 2015/16 identifies a number of Actions for the next reporting period,

IRO work plan 2017/18	
Strategic Aims	Actions
Improving outcomes for children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve timeliness of review meetings and distribution of review records</li> <li>• Increase children's direct involvement in the review process – increase the number of children seen, the number attending their reviews , the number chairing or co facilitating their own meeting and the level of indirect participation by those C/YP who choose not to attend or see their IRO.</li> <li>• Embed use of the midway review process and demonstrate evidence of the impact of any challenge made when progress is not being made against the child's plan.</li> <li>• Evidence robust action taken to raise performance in relation to statutory requirements such as statutory visits , completion of care plans, placement plans, pathway plans, Health Assessments and PEPs .</li> <li>• Develop and launch the QAF and resolution process to include CYPIC, CP and CIN – including quarterly reporting / dissemination of learning</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review impact of IRO caseloads and impact of integrated role</li> </ul>
Strengthening Professional Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and disseminate training about the role and remit of IROs and the contribution the Quality Assurance Framework can make to improved service delivery and embed rolling program of induction training about the IRS for new starters to CSC.</li> <li>• Launch and embed a cycle of reporting to services and agencies about the key findings and learning arising from the Quality Assurance Framework and audit activity about how practice impacts on outcomes for children</li> <li>• Further develop IRO participation and engagement with key services and stakeholder groups, including Foster carers, SMTIM, Regional Groups, Virtual Head Teacher for children in Care and Named Nurse.</li> <li>• Develop and embed feedback from C/YP, parents, carers and other professionals to supplement ongoing audit activity.</li> <li>• Update promotional literature and leaflets.</li> </ul>

## 12. Summary

12.1 The Independent Reviewing Service in York, and the wider Children's Services directorate, have undergone major structural reform during 2016/17 that is set to deliver improved outcomes and services for the children and young people of York . The aspirations of the restructure are ambitious and far reaching, but the scale of the reform and redeployment is such that the full benefits of the restructure have not been immediately actualised. During the period of transition there has been a drop in performance in respect of some of the process performance indicators (timeliness of reviews, completion of health assessments, PEPs and care plans) but the key performance indicators continue to evidence a good overall quality of placements, a good standard of corporate parenting, improved placement stability and positive outcomes for children and young people in care. We are confident that the new service restructure is set to deliver improved performance across the directorate and we are confident that the process performance indicators will be significantly improved in the coming year.

## 13. Recommendations to the Corporate Parenting Board

13.1 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 and identified areas for improvement;
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.

Author

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Olorenshaw', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Sarah Olorenshaw

Independent Reviewing Service Manager