

Worcestershire County Council

Agenda

Corporate Parenting Board

Tuesday, 12 July 2022, 2.00 pm
County Hall, Worcester

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Corporate Parenting Board
Tuesday, 12 July 2022, 2.00 pm, County Hall, Worcester

Membership:

Cllr Andy Roberts (Chairman)	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Rob Adams	Wychavon District Council
Cllr Lynn Denham	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Matt Jenkins	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Matthew Lamb	Worcester City Council
Cllr Steve Mackay	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Nyear Nazir	Redditch Borough Council
Cllr Fran Oborski	Wyre Forest District Council
Cllr Margaret Sherrey	Bromsgrove District Council
Cllr Tom Wells	Malvern Hills District Council

Agenda

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5	District Champions	
6	Future Meeting Dates Dates 2022 Wednesday 5 October 2022, 2pm Tuesday 29 November 2022, 2pm	
	Videos - District Champions At the end of the meeting there will be an opportunity for District Councillors who will be 'Champions' to record a short video.	

Agenda produced and published by Abraham Ezekiel, Assistant Director for Legal and Governance, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP

To obtain further information or a copy of this agenda contact Kate Griffiths on
KGriffiths@worcestershire.gov.uk

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Date of Issue: Monday 4 July 2022

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Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board

County Hall, Worcester

Thursday, 12 May 2022, 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Andy Roberts (Chairman), Cllr Rob Adams, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Nyear Nazir and Cllr Fran Oborski

Also attended:

Tanya Beckett, Justine Bishop, Thomas Bourne, Shannon Childs, Beverley Downing, Adam Johnston, Dr David Lewis, Heather Manning, Kerry Nicholl, Tina Russell, Elaine Salter, Bev Weaver, Paul Webber and Charlotte, Nathan and Tia.

284 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mike Johnston, Margaret Sherrey and Tom Wells.

285 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 February 2022 were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting and would be signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that shadowing opportunities to attend various appointments or support groups with children who were looked after, would be available on an on-going basis, and Corporate Parents were encouraged to contact Adam Johnston to make arrangements.

286 Pledges in Practice

Adam Johnston explained that The Corporate Parenting Board Pledges were important aims which covered primary needs such as supporting and listening to Looked After Children and Care Leavers. However, it was important that the pledges were put into practice and a prompt card was being developed with input from young people.

The Care Leavers Offer was available on the website and included the financial offer available. Although the DfE had given feedback that the Local Offer was comprehensive, Worcestershire Children First had recognised that there were some weaknesses which were being addressed through the

Connect programme, 18+ pathway plans and a project to ensure all young people had access to some forms of identification.

Following Adam's presentation, Board Members had various queries which were clarified:

- A request was made that care leaver benefits be considered in more detail at a future meeting.
- The Connect scheme worked with young people who wished to take up the opportunity; it did not work with the volunteer and community sector but rather Worcestershire Children First Staff who were not paid, but were given time back. The scheme would be piloted and then reviewed.
- Councillors asked for young people to be told that Councillors carry out case work and may be able to offer help in a variety of situations as they had useful contacts.
- The Pledge Prompt was being prepared, and Shannon, the Participation Peer Mentor, explained that Speak Out had discussed what should be included and how the message should be spread. Ideas included using it as screen savers, on QR codes on key fobs, and spreading the word on social media.
- Young people were allocated a PA while they were still considered a looked after child before they became 18. Conversations around what happened when they reached 18, in terms of which services would be available for them, began much earlier.

287 Kickstart Programme

Kerry Nichol, Team Manager introduced the Kickstart programme Peer Mentors. The programme gave individuals valuable opportunities and enabled personal development for individuals while at the same time helping Worcestershire Children First learn from care leavers with different life experience.

Charlotte, a young mum and care leaver and Nathan, a care leaver with experience of the criminal justice system were both peer mentors. They explained that they were able to communicate with other young people who were facing similar problems and able to help the PAs by explaining situations from a young person's perspective.

Nathan spoke very movingly about wanting to help others avoid the mistakes he had made and he hoped that in future a job could be created for a specialist PA to help young people avoid criminality. He recognised that he had been very fortunate to be given a second chance and wished to thank the Care Leavers Team and particularly his PA.

Bev Weaver explained that she was the Business Support Manager in Worcestershire Children First and although she did not work on the front line she chose to mentor four young people because she cared about working with young people in care. She introduced Tia who she was helping in an office placement, and read out some words prepared by Tia about what she had achieved and what she hoped to achieve in future.

The Chairman thanked the contributors from the Kickstart programme and felt that the Board had received a better insight into care from those who have experienced it and want to help others, than they could have from officers. He encouraged Councillors to reflect on what they had heard and consider if they could attend other meetings with young people, which could be arranged through Adam Johnston, which would help them to consider how they could support looked after children and care leavers.

288 Friends and Family Fostering

Tina Russell explained that a new policy was being developed for when friends and family took care of young people who were classed as a children in need. The policy should not be called a fostering policy but would suggest a way of working which allowed family values to be promoted and followed the children in care duty of looking for a connected person to take care of a young person in the first instance if the parents are unable to cope.

The policy would allow friends and family to read the document and see how arrangements would work in practice. It would detail what WCF would be able to offer the family and what kinship carers would be offered.

It was clarified that the Ukrainian and Afghanistan resettlement programme were not part of children in care system and that the County Council rather than WCF were leading on receiving families, while unaccompanied children would be placed straight into the care system.

289 Activity Event

As mentioned in the Kickstart item – Corporate Parenting Board members were encouraged to attend further appointments or events with young people.

290 Quarterly Data, Q4 2021-22

The Board noted the quarterly data information.
A request was made for a future meeting to have a report on the data, focusing on out of county placements.

291 Future Meeting Dates

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 12 July at 2.00pm at County Hall,.

The meeting ended at 3.50pm

Chairman

Worcestershire Children First



Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2021 / 2022

Introduction:

This report captures the performance, feedback, and next steps of the IRO Service in Worcestershire for the year 2021/2022. The report provides an evidence base for what's working well, what we need to improve on, the impact our service is having on children and young people and where our priorities are focused for the year ahead.

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 - b. Audits
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5. Signatures

Executive Summary:

This executive summary highlights what we know about ourselves in the IRO Service

What is Working Well...	Areas for Focus...
<p>The IRO Annual Report has evidenced sustained & continuous improvement in timely CLA Reviews for Children with an average of 96% in time and a high of 98%.</p> <p>Although a continuous priority, we have seen strengths in children attending & participating in their reviews</p> <p>We have heard from 132 children & young people – the majority telling us that they are having opportunities to attend and/or participate in their reviews</p> <p>We have consolidated our Quality Assurance programme in respect of the IRO Service and this has evidenced areas of good practice; this was through audits of children's experiences from mid-way and targeted audits</p> <p style="text-align: center;">We have a stable and experienced IRO Workforce</p>	<p>From our Audit Learning we are focusing on ensuring all our recommendations from CLA Reviews are SMART – with clear timescales and measures</p> <p>We want to ensure that the IRO consistently reviews and has oversight when children go missing</p> <p>Although improving year-on-year, from our feedback we want to ensure all children participate in their meetings in the best way for them</p>

1. Context of the IRO Service

The responsibility of Local Authorities is to provide Looked after Children and Care Leavers the best possible experiences in life and support their hopes, wishes and aspirations as any good parent should, this is our privileged role as corporate parents.

The Children Act 1989 [amended 2004] and the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 specify the duties of the Local Authority to appoint an IRO when a child first becomes looked after. The IRO should ensure that the Local Authority gives due consideration to any views expressed by the child and the IRO has a responsibility to monitor the Local Authority's performance of its functions in relation to the child's case.

The regulations clearly specify circumstances when the Local Authority should consult with the IRO, for example, proposed change of placement, change of education plan, or serious incident. They also specify the actions that the IRO must take if it is felt that the Local Authority is failing to comply with the Regulations or is in breach of its duties to the child. The statutory duties of the IRO are to (section 25b (1), 1989 Act

- Monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's care journey.
- Participate in any review of the child
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration
- Perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations

The primary task of the IRO is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and those actions in the care plan are consistent with the LA legal responsibilities towards the child. There are now two clear and separate aspects of the function of the IRO.

- Chairing the child's review meeting and monitoring the child's care journey on an ongoing basis.
- The monitoring function should include identifying any areas of poor practice or drift and delay in care planning that impacts directly on the child and should be appropriately escalated. Equally the IRO should also recognise and celebrate good practice that has positively impacted on the child's care experience.

2. Workforce & Management

The IRO service is situated with in the Safeguarding Quality Assurance Service alongside the Independent Chairs for Child Protection Conferences and the LADO Service; the service is supported by a Business Support Team; each Team has a dedicated Practice Manager. The Service is under overall direct management of the Head of Service for Quality Assurance, Daniel Gray.

We have a diverse team of IROs in terms of gender, ethnicity, and age and all bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the team. All have been Team Managers and/or Service Managers – this enables us to have a robust service embedded in practice wealth.

The IRO Service is almost at full establishment presently having had a member of staff recently retire and our new starter joins the team on the 1st of July 2022. We have achieved and maintained a fully staffed and permanent workforce; this has been a strength of the Team which brings consistency and stability for children who are looked after.

Supervision & Performance/Wellbeing Reviews:

All IROs have bi-monthly supervision with the Practice Manager as well as other support & development opportunities – in year 2021/2022 we achieved 100% compliance of achieving supervision for all staff.

All IROs complete, a recently revised individual diagnostic tool, that they send to the Practice Manager before supervision. This reflects the work the IRO has completed since last supervision and captures information such as caseload, case closures, participation and attendance of children, formal and informal DRPs, audit activity, learning and reflection on what has gone well any worries they have and what needs to happen; this promotes accountability for each IRO and is used in supervision with all IROs.

Each year we undertake an end of year Wellbeing & Performance Review for each member of staff – this is to reflect on achievements, areas for focus, training and personal wellbeing; in 21/22 we achieved 100% compliance for the IRO Service.

Management:

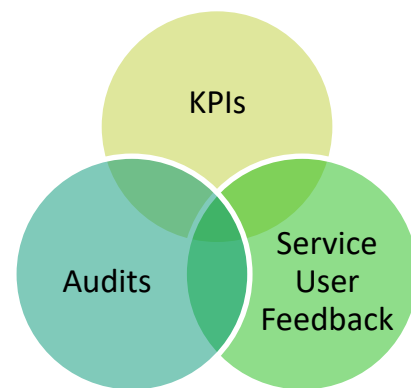
In addition to receiving one to one supervision the service has several mechanisms to ensure that we are sharing information and promoting practice development these are:

- **Monthly Meetings:** Monthly team meetings where information is shared from across the service, ideas are brought to the table, and we invite speakers in and track agreed team actions.
- **SQA Service Meetings:** these meetings are held twice a year for the whole of the SQA service – we celebrate our achievements and look to focus on areas of improvement.
- **End to End Leadership Meeting:** End to End Leadership Meetings are bi-monthly meetings for all Senior Managers, Front Line Managers, Advanced Practitioners, and IROs/CP Chairs from across the service. This is a forum to share and celebrate good practice, disseminate key information/learning, and build relationships with wider staff.
- **Ask and Tell:** The whole service have an opportunity to meet with the Group Manager Daniel Gray and ask any questions they may have, this is a monthly opportunity for staff to join the ask and tell session, which staff have found very helpful and informative.
- **Regional Practice Meetings:** All IROs are invited to the Regional practice meetings with other IROs to share practice.

We know from our staff health check that our staff feel valued, that they feel supported and guided by managers and they feel engaged and central to the vision and purpose of the service. 100% of staff report good visibility, accessibility to responsive management support and all staff reporting they receive feedback from quality assurance activity.

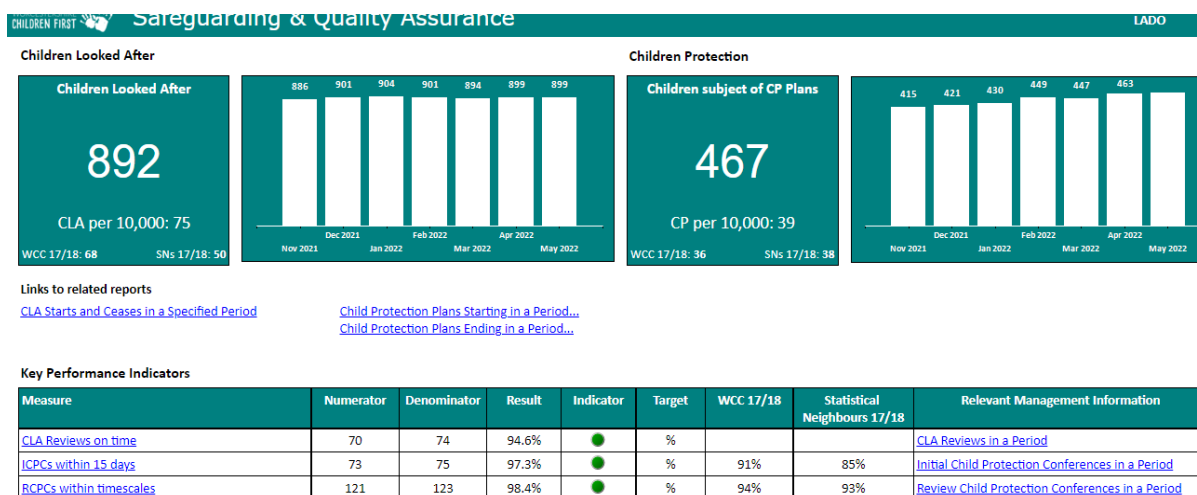
3. IRO Quality Assurance

In SQA we have systems to Quality Assure our work, this is through Key Performance Information, Service User Feedback and Audits.



3.1 KPIs

Key Performance Indicators help us understand how much we are doing and the timeliness of our work, this is the first measure of knowing ourselves well. We measure IRO Performance through the SQA Dashboard which is a live system to help us track & monitor team & individual performance.



CLA Reviews

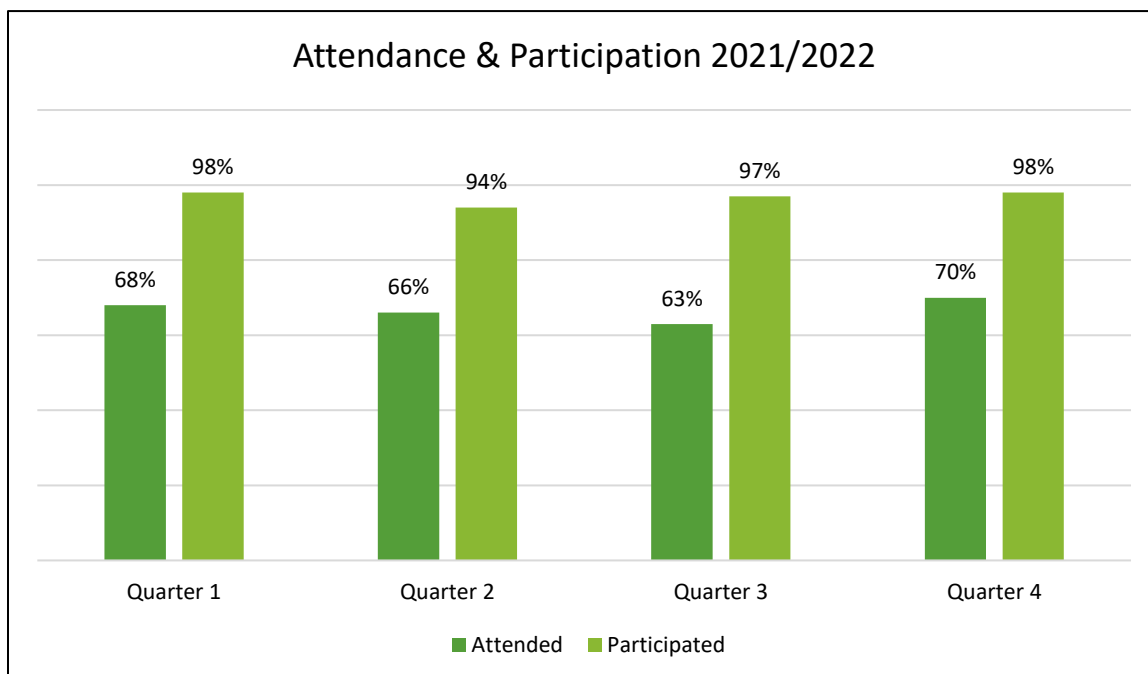
Timely looked after reviews are essential to effective and timely care planning for children and young people who are looked after. A key priority of SQA was to improve the timeliness of review meetings held in Worcestershire for our children. The below graphs demonstrates a consistent improvement of review meeting timeliness, the year 2021/2022 saw a total of 2,122 Reviews held which is an increase of 145 from 20/21 figures – the average of meetings held in time for 21/22 is 96% with a high of 98%. There has been pretty much consistent improved performance across most months apart from a slight dip of 3% in November 21 and a dip of 10% in February this year in reviews being completed in timescales, the audit undertaken regarding the dip in performance in Feb 22 relates to miscalculation of timing of reviews from some IROs and some late notifications or requests to move meetings. There is also a 1% dip in March compared to last year but overall, a very positive picture

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
20/21	96%	95%	96%	95%	96%	96%	97%	97%	96%	87%	98%	98%
20/22	98%	95%	98%	97%	96%	96%	98%	94%	96%	91%	88%	97%

This remains an on-going service priority to promote achieve and sustain timely review meetings for our looked after children. As a team we use an individual IRO Diagnostic Tool which provides better qualitative information and individual accountability, and greater IRO independence this is submitted to the Practice Manager every 8 weeks in line with supervision and is used as a tool for discussion/reflection. This is only one part of performance management of the service.

Children's Participation and Attendance

Promoting children’s participation and attendance within Looked after Reviews is essential to ensure their voice is captured, listened to and that our outcomes are based on their wishes and feelings. This requires creativity in our approach as we work with a wide range of children with differing needs.



In the year 2020/2021 we had an average of 64% of children attending and 93% participating; we can see from the above graph that overall; we have seen improvements in children attending & participating in their meetings – this remains a relentless focus to ensure children’s voices are heard and they are part of these important meetings and decisions about them.

IRO Direct Contact:

These are specific case notes to capture IRO Visits and phone calls to children and young people between Review meetings, to strengthen their footprint, evidence their work and to capture children and young people’s views. In the year 2020/2021 IROs completed 1032 direct contact summary episodes. In the year 2021/2022 IROs completed 1341 that is an increase in the last year of 309 additional contact summaries.

3.2 Audit Activity

Audit activity is the second strand of our Quality Assurance Framework, over 2021/2022 we have worked hard to embed an approach of how we audit our own work in the IRO Service, this comes through part of the mid-way audits, but also Targeted Audit activity on key areas of practice, below is a summary of this learning. Learning is shared with the IRO Service through individual feedback, reports, team presentations and most recently in an SQA Service Event that was held virtually.

3.2.1 Mid-Way Audits:

In 2021/2022 we completed 125 mid-way audits in the IRO Service this is a slight increase of 6 since the previous year and also we had a couple of IROs who were off due to prolonged ill health who did not complete audits every month.

- Across the year we have identified strengths through our IRO Footprint and Engagement, and this has been a consistent theme of the mid-way IRO Audits.
- The volume of audits and feedback completed by the IRO Service remains a strength.

3.2.1 Targeted Audits:

Across the year 228 children's experiences of the IRO Service have been undertaken across 5 Targeted Audits; the key learning and reports are:

Targeted Audit Theme	Number of Children	Snapshot Summary/learning	Document
SMART Planning Children Looked After	10	Ten review records were considered as part of the audit, overall, the responsible person for actions was clear in the plan and actions supported care planning; language was child centred and easily understood. Timescales for actions were not always clear in plans and therefore the ability to track and measure progress will be hindered. The actions need to be always clear and specific and have a clear timescale provided so it can be tracked from review into review and within the workers supervisions.	Appendix A
CLA Reviews Audit	37	<u>Review timescales</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing delay with pre meeting reports not being completed by the SW in time for the child's review meeting, Minutes are completed by the IRO on word but causes delay in workflow being completed • Some CLA Reviews have been postponed due to no PM reports or at the request of others. 	Appendix B

		<p><u>Attendance of children at their meetings.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some children and young people choose not to attend their meeting in addition there has been some confusion over the use of PN codes 	
CLA Review Recommendations Audit	8	<p><u>What is going well:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Records are well written and directly to the children, in all Reviews considered the review record was on the child's record. • Most actions written are specific and relevant for the child and their care plan. • Most cases the manager has reviewed the recommendations of the CLA Review. <p><u>Areas of Focus & Improvement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the recommendations were not SMART and timescales were not clear or ambitious and language such as "ongoing" "ASAP" were used 	Appendix C
IRO Footprint and Minute Audit	162	<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having audited the 132 sets of minutes it is encouraging to see the minutes are in the main comprehensive and the quality is good there is evidence of improved consistency in the style of writing, but all have a SOS approach recognising strengths, worries and what needs to happen. • All the 94 audits re IRO footprint and the further snapshot audit of another 30 evidenced a significant improvement in IRO footprint on Childrens files over the last 12 months, again some inconsistencies in style of writing, but overall evident on Childrens files. <p><u>Areas of continued development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All reviews should be written to the child, proof reading before ending the episode would ensure a more consistent approach. • Headings should be in bold. • IROs should provide narrative re Legal status and care plan not just a "yes" • IROs to be mindful re language used so it is easy to read and clear with minimal jargon in it. • Actions should have clear timescales and person responsible for each task 	Individual learning is recorded within IRO personal supervision

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of next meeting should be in the record (if there is going to be another meeting) • IROs to evidence greater depth re identity section and an introduction to the IRO role • IROs should continue to evidence that a discussion has taken place re emotional health and wellbeing of YP 	
Missing Audit	11	<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of the 11 audited had IRO footprint on the file re action taken once they had received it and where recorded the quality was good and actions were appropriate <p><u>Areas of continued development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All IROs on receipt of a missing notification will evidence in a monitoring IRO case note that they have read the notifications and record action/t taken • Concerns around missing and the risks should be evidenced in plans and recommendations 	Appendix D

3.3 Service User Feedback

Service user feedback is the third strand of our Quality Assurance Framework, this helps us understand how children & families experience our services. In 2021/2022 we heard from 132 children, and 44 foster carers.

Foster Carers

Across October 2021 we undertook a targeted survey with WCFF Foster Carers, the survey was completed electronically via Microsoft Forms to hear the views of Foster Carers. In total 44 Foster Carers gave their views, they told us:

	Question	Feedback
1.	Did you have an opportunity to speak with the IRO before/after the CLA Review or in-between reviews?	77% said yes
2.	Did they help you understand the role of the IRO and how the Review was going to work?	84% said yes
3.	Do you understand the recommendations from the review and what everyone will do next?	93% said yes
4.	Was it recognised what was going well in respect of the child/placement during the review?	93% said yes
5.	CLA Reviews are currently being held in a blended approach, with a mix of face to face and virtual meetings, were you supported to attend and contribute to the meeting?	86% said yes
6.	Did the meeting hear the views of the child/young person and take them into consideration?	80% said yes
7.	Were you given the opportunity to share your views and opinions?	93% said yes
8.	Do the notes of the meeting give an accurate reflection of what was said and agreed in the meeting?	93% said yes

Foster Carers said...

"The knowledge of the child's history to date"

"We have nothing but praise for our IRO"

"Communication is excellent"

"Our IRO is extremely supportive, and he always puts the kids needs at the centre as should everyone"

"She shows interest in the children, had a good understanding of their past and grasped very quickly how they want to be listened to"

"Cherry always goes out of her way to make sure the child is heard, and her wishes taken into consideration"

"I liked how the children needs are met and I like that on home visit the IRO has been very positive"

"Fred Whiston very supportive of S's needs and wishes, with regards to home-schooling in the January 21 lockdown"

Children & Young People

The IRO Service undertook a targeted survey across November 2021 to January 2022, IROs contacted children & young people to hear their views on the IRO Service, in total 132 young people gave us their feedback on their experiences. Their feedback was:

Did you have the opportunity to speak with your IRO before your looked after review? **85% said yes**, of the group of children & young people who said they did not speak with their IRO – 95% said they did not want to speak with their IRO prior to their review and this was their choice.

Did the IRO help you understand their role? **85% of young people said that they did.**

Did the IRO help explain how the review was going to work? **73% of young people** said that the IRO did explain the review meeting.

Do you understand the plan from the review and what everyone will do next? **76% said that they did.**

Did the meeting recognise what was going well for you? **97% of young people said that the review did recognise strengths** and what was going well for them.

CLA Reviews are being undertaken in a blended approach, between face-to-face and virtual meetings. Were you supported to attend and contribute to the meeting? **85% said they were supported to attend and contribute to their meeting.**

If you attended, how did you attend?

- 25% said they attended in person
- 36% said they attended virtually
- 11% said they had a separate meeting with their IRO
- 9% said they didn't attend their review
- 19% said they didn't attend their review, but this was their choice

Were you given the opportunity to share your views and opinions? **98% said that they were supported** and given these opportunities.

Did the review hear your views and consider them? **96% said yes**, the review and those attending did.

There is a range of feedback from children & young people, the majority are telling us that they are having opportunities to attend and/or participate in their reviews and this is how they want to do this as part of their review. There is a small number of children telling us that they didn't have the opportunity to speak with their IRO before the review but wanted to (5%) and some children didn't attend their review but indicated within the survey they would have wanted to (9%), although these are small % it is a key focus to ensure all children have the opportunities to attend and participate in their meeting in the way they want to.





What did children tell us...?

"Pretty good and she was dancing and singing with at the last one – she was here for 3 hours, which was fine"

"She did a good job and supporting us and left us a card with her phone number so we can call her"

"She did the meeting very well and seems to know what she's doing"

"I think Teams Meetings work well for me, I know how to get in touch with my IRO if I need to speak to them or I want things to be different"

"My new IRO seems nice, she called me to introduce herself and review was all good"

"MY IRO always had a little chat with me after every discussion to ensure i understood things"

"I always feel listened to 'every time"

"My IRO brought me and my siblings a letter that told me about her role so that I understood. I have kept my letter. My IRO is funny and kind"

"She listened to me really well and understood what i wanted and helped me get what I want"

"For my IRO to come and see me more often"

"I would like to attend my review, not just the end of it, I can't remember some things about my reviews"

"My new IRO met me and respected that I did not want to attend my meeting, but she listened to my views, and she made sure people knew the reasons why I did not want to stay in my supported living placement"



4. DRPs & Practice Acknowledgements:

A crucial role of the IRO is to quality assure the work of the Local Authority; if a concern arises then the Dispute Resolution Process is initiated, this is a process where the IRO can raise a concern for a child or young person and the Social Work Manager will respond.

We have a clear DRP Framework, and this is available to all staff on Practice Standards – Social Care.

The IRO Service also looks to identify and celebrate good practice; this is achieved through a Practice Acknowledgement. This is a specific Liquid Logic Form where the IRO can formally record and recognise practice of Social Work Teams.

Our DRP Summary for 2021/2022:

- A higher number of Informal DRPs being issued – supporting to resolve matters at an early stage.
- Audit findings of Informal DRPs evidenced appropriate application of DRP, there was learning to ensure Informal DRPs were clearly recorded and tracked, to improve this we have moved Informal DRPs from Case-Note recording into the DRP form to improve this area of work.
- The volume of formal DRPs is 24% less than Informal, this evidences that IROs and Conference Chair's appropriately identify concerns at an early stage and look to progress at the appropriate level. The majority of our Formal DRPs are resolved at Stage 1 (total 80%), again evidencing those concerns are resolved early, a small volume move to Stage 2 and none through the year went to Stage 3 or 4 – evidencing appropriate resolution of concerns. Audits again evidenced the appropriate use of DRP to identify and resolve practice issues. 82% of DRPs are responded to within the required timescales, this remains an area of focus for SQA tracking.
- We have seen a range of Practice Acknowledgements across the service with an equal split across engagement with families, quality of assessments and voice of the child.
- The development of our DRP Dashboard to now support our weekly, monthly & quarterly analysis and tracking of DRPs

5. Signatures



Daniel Gray
Head of Service



Sally Branchflower
Practice Manager IRO Service 12/05/2022

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Targeted Audit Record

NATURE OF AUDIT	Quality of plans audit in the IRO service
NAME OF AUDITOR	Sally Branchflower
TITLE/POSITION	Practice Manager
DATE OF AUDIT	August
NUMBER OF CASES	10
PLANNED AUDIT	Planned
OUTLINE THE PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT	To ensure that the learning from quality of plans audit has been embedded which was shared in April with the IRO service
AUDIT ACTIVITY	10 looked after review reports completed by IROs specific focus on quality of plans and actions from the period June July and August picked randomly so not all IROs work was audited
LEARNING FROM AUDIT (Identify key strengths and areas for development)	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This audit evidenced an overall improvement in SMART planning • Timescales on (5) were succinct and clear • Person responsible for the action was clear in the plan • Actions supported care planning discussion • There was a lot less detail in the actions and the detail was found in the body of the report • Language was child centred and easy to understand in the main • Some actions were written to the child • Some had clear bold headings which was easier to read • New form is much clearer evidencing the childs wishes and feelings and table provides clear guidance to the IRO completing the form. <p>Areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescales were inconsistent in plans some were missing so could not be measured some were in line with next review (is this SMART and does it support priorities in the childs care plan?)

- Actions should be written to the child in each set of minutes for consistency
- Actions to be short and clear as the detail is in the report under specific headings, too much detail can cause confusion for children and families.
- Liked actions in bold suggest this going forward for consistency
- Audit was completed and looked at the old CLA form and the new one so there was a mixture of audits on different forms, next audit needs to be completed where IROs have used new forms with a specific focus on timescales and how they can be measured.
- Learning to be shared at a team meeting and individually.

Quality of/SMART Plans Audit- completed by PM Sally Branchflower, in August 2021

IRO plans audited	Is the plan Specific for the child and specific to the child's care planning	Is the plan measurable ? <i>Can we measure progress for the family?</i>	Is the plan achievable	Is the plan realistic ? <i>Does it use family friendly language and it would be understood by the family?</i>	Is the plan timely ? <i>Does it include time focused/limited actions?</i>
210004321 review date 29/06- IRO CH	Yes - 5 short clear actions which support the care plan discussion at the review	Partly yes - language is simple and clear and all but 2 have clear timescales which were clearly agreed at the child's review. The 2 that don't relate to life story work and when Grandmother will be supervising contact	Yes - the plan is not over complex and very clear re narrative and easy for the Kinship carers to understand	Yes - plan is realistic and as stated very simple	Partly yes -Timescales are clearly given for 3 out of the 5 actions the 2 that have no timescales is with the SW team when they can complete life story work and when Gran feels comfortable to supervise contact
200082159 CE review date 15/06 IRO FW	Yes - only 1 clear recommendation listed as other reccs such as PEP health assessment	Yes - very clear and measurable and who needs to be involved and written to the child about what others will	Yes -1 recommendation which specifically targets education resource	Yes - both children need to be in school with support from the virtual school and GRT	Yes -clear short timescale given of 2 weeks which the Team Manager is in agreement with.

	etc are in the body of the review report	do this outcome linked to identifying a suitable school to include their cultural heritage		team. Language clear and simple	
200112564 CK review 21/07 IRO AB on new CLA form	Yes-6 short recommendations 1 is in relation to the PEP which is a given so could be removed	Partly Yes- they are all measurable with different timescales apart from 1 rec with no timescales, is direct work with the child this says "ASAP" this can not be measured	Yes all recs are achievable and support the care planning discussion	Yes-language is clear and simple and easy to understand	Yes- all apart from 1 which says ASAP
200238608 BH review 10/06 IRO GW	Yes- actions are very specific and relate to Health assessment actions, contact arrangements with Nan and life story work and support care plan discussion	Yes-the 3 actions all have timescales which were discussed in the meeting and agreed and language is clear	Yes- all are achievable in the required timescales specified in the report and actions not complicated but will require focus and pace	Yes- language is simple and actions are realistic no more than 2 lines for each action	Yes- this review was for 3 children all require life story work and the IRO gave 3 months but this was agreed by the TM
200189026 LP review 07/07 IRO JC	Yes partly-actions are specific in the main but some are statements such as continue to support LP with medication and LP wants to live independently and to continue with Asdan	Yes partly-this was a very thorough review with lots of details covered due to the high profile and the actions listed 9 in total but doesn't say for all actions a completion date	Yes- all are achievable some of them are very basic which should be happening anyway such as meds and Asdan continuing TAC meetings every 6 weeks but for the more specific tasks they do have timescales	Yes- language is simple and clear and child's name used which makes actions directly relate to LP	Yes partly- a lot of the actions remain ongoing or expected but the more specific targets do have timescales and list who will do what clearly
200144915 HC review 07/06 IRO LJ	Yes-plan is clear and specific detailed discussion recorded	Yes partly- plan is measurable for those where clear timescales have been given ie SW	Yes-all are achievable and clear good use of language written to the YP	Yes-plan is realistic and supports the discussion at the meeting and	Yes partly-for those actions with timescales a couple of the actions set timescales for the

	and actions support discussion	visits every 12 weeks but less measurable for those actions without timescales such as feedback to parents asap?		highlights what needs to happen by who.	next review in November such as contact with child's Brother which could be sorted before then in my view.
200118874 AD review 15/07 IRO JP	Partly yes - plan is very detailed and there is a lot of text on the box on the new CLA form and covers a lot of the history which isn't needed however if more succinct do support the care plan I think it is style of writing on the new form.	Partly yes -Again to much detail and explanation as to why the action has been listed but there is clear timescales in bold at the bottom of each narrative so actions can be measured. Some are shorter than others which reads better.	Yes - all targets are achievable, but narrative is too long the detail is in the body of the report so some duplication.	Yes - plan is realistic main actions relate to family time and health and leisure but again to much detail	Yes partly - as above for those actions with clear timescales
200204616 CH review 03/08 IRO KS	Yes - very specific in relation to tasks that need to happen to support CH re transition planning NEW CLA pathway plan is very structured and clear	Yes - all targets under each heading are clear and simple written to the YP saying what will happen and by who and when	Yes -clear targets that are achievable broken into smaller steps under what when and who timescales for completion maybe questionable?	Yes - plan is realistic and supports the YP re transition planning and his views are evident throughout.	Yes - most state within 10 days and clarify who will complete the action.
200216844 DC review held 13/12 IRO NE Completed on new CLA form	Yes - specific re tasks that need to happen that came out of the review discussion very clear and easy to understand	Yes - all 5 targets will be reviewed at the next review in November dates clearly recorded and by who and written to the child	Yes - targets are achievable such as updating contact plan completing parenting assessment starting some life story work and exploring play therapy	Yes - plan is realistic and supports the discussion that took place taking into account wishes and feelings of children and family and tasks to support care planning.	Yes - the tasks are expected to be completed by the Permanency review in November it states the date and who will do what

200200337 KM review held 07/07 IRO SS	Yes- specific tasks for each child unique to them 3 children in total.Tasks clear not complicated good language	Yes- clear timescales given for each action and who will complete the action	Yes- targets are achievable each child has 3 -4 targets to support the care planning none are complex. Succinct and clear	Yes- plan is realistic and supports the childrens care plan of what needs to happen more detailed discussion in the body of the record	Yes- Timescales vary depending on the importance and it would appear that timescales have been agreed in the review meeting
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Put yourselves in the shoes of a parent or child and young person, read the plan before distributing and ask yourself is this is clear?

Do I understand what is expected by when? and who will support them to get there?

Is the plan written to the child?

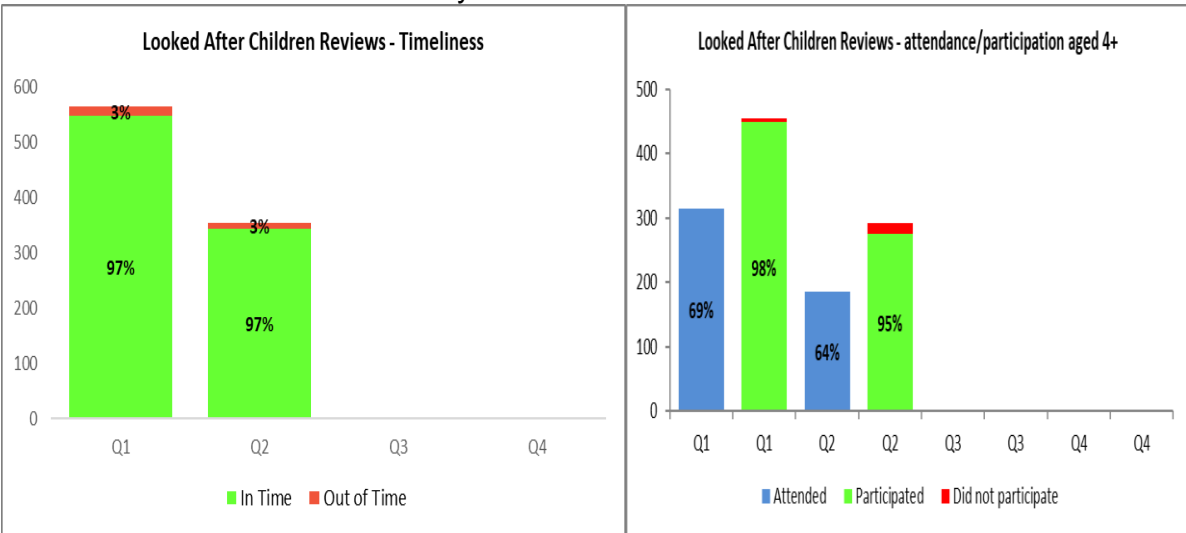
Are the child's views evident?

Is the plan SMART?

How have the timescales been agreed? Are they realistic and achievable and how will they be tracked?

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Targeted Audit - CLA Reviews

NATURE OF AUDIT	CLA Reviews – Timescales & Attendance
NAME OF AUDITOR	Daniel Gray
TITLE/POSITION	Head of Quality Assurance & Principal Social Worker
DATE OF AUDIT	November 2021
NUMBER OF CASES	13 – CLA Reviews out of Time / 24 – child not attended (37 cases in total were considered)
OUTLINE THE PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT	<p>Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 KPI Analysis told us:</p>  <p>We saw a reduction in the number of CLA Reviews held in Quarter 2, although this will be due to review cycles happening in different periods – we did see the % KPI remain consistent of reviews in timescales, however, it is questioned why reviewed were not held timelier given the reduction in meetings. Equally we saw a reduction in the number of children attending/participating in their meetings this quarter.</p>
AUDIT ACTIVITY	A self-reflection audit was completed by IROs on a sample of CLA Reviews where the meeting had been out of timescales or the child did not attend their meeting – this was to consider learning for SQA.

LEARNING FROM AUDIT (Identify key strengths and areas for development)

Review Timescales:

- From review of the data, at times pre-meeting reports (the Social Work Report to CLA Reviews) are delayed, meetings are taking place but not with the reports being completed, this can lead to delays in reviews being recorded in the system.
- CLA Reviews are being postponed due to Social Work Reports not being completed or requests from placements/teams – these are at times resource lead requests rather than child focused decisions.
- At times meetings are held in a series of meetings, in line with IRO Handbook and Section 3.6 ([iro statutory guidance iros and las march 2010 tagged.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) the date of the first meeting is not being consistently recorded, therefore it appears the meeting is out of time when it is not.
- Reviews not always being well-planned and therefore have gone out by a few days of the timescale.

Attendance:

- For some children & young people – these choose not to attend their review meeting, and this is personal choice.
- IROs shared examples of meeting/visiting children between or around reviews to support their participation – so although they have not attended, this has been through personal choice.
- Some Young People have attended or participated, and this has been recorded incorrectly, this is individual learning for IROs to ensure they record this accurately in review documents.

OUTLINE KEY ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Review Timescales:

1. Communication to Through Care Team Managers and IROs on the importance of pre-meeting reports being completed in time and shared with families in advance of the meeting have been sent out.
2. A new performance tracker for the IRO service has been developed for the IRO Practice Manager to have a direct weekly overview of case concerns and oversight of these performance issues.
3. A diagnostic session with IROs has been planned for the 26th November to reflect directly on the learning and further case sampling with the team.
4. We have developed new IRO Practice Standards on Review Timescales and this state:
 - a. Review dates cannot be rearranged unless there are exceptional circumstances and then only if the rearranged meeting can take place within statutory timescales. In this case the new date should be agreed by the social worker with the IRO, and agreement made as to who will inform the other participants.
 - b. In the event of a key participant being ill or unable to attend the review, the meeting will go ahead but the IRO may decide that the review be adjourned or held as a series of meetings when all participants can attend or can provide consultation documentation expressing their views.

- c. If the IRO thinks a meeting may go out of timescales, they must speak with the IRO Practice Manager or in their absence the SQA Head of Service to agree the next steps and whether a meeting can be held out of time.

Attendance:

1. Ensure we continue to promote child/young people attending their reviews whenever possible and in a manner that works best for them.
2. Ensure we accurately record their attendance when they have.
3. This will be another area of focus in the IRO Diagnostic Session on the 26th November 2021.

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Targeted Audit Record – CLA Review Recommendations

NATURE OF AUDIT	CLA Review Recommendations
NAME OF AUDITOR	Daniel Gray
TITLE/POSITION	Head of Quality Assurance & Principal Social Worker
DATE OF AUDIT	21-01-2022 (Quarter 4)
NUMBER OF CASES	8 (200306280, 200188172, 200296502, 200140936, 200263989, 200262450, 200231658 & 200295905)
OUTLINE THE PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT	Targeted audit on Recommendations made by IROs as the outcome of CLA Reviews for children, are these SMART – specifically in respect of the recommendations being timely and measurable; have they been agreed by the Team Manager.
AUDIT ACTIVITY	Audit activity included review of children’s records, specifically the CLA Review Record from a sample of reviews held in October 2021.
LEARNING FROM AUDIT (Identify key strengths and areas for development)	<p>In October 2021 a total of 179 children had a Looked after Review held, of these 98.3% of reviews were held in timescale, there were 3 reviews that were not held in timescale. Of these 61% children were in attendance and 98% children participated in their review.</p> <p><u>What is going well:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Records are well written and directly to the children, in all Reviews considered the review record was on the child’s record. • Most actions written are specific and relevant for the child and their care plan. • Most cases the manager has reviewed the recommendations of the CLA Review. <p><u>Areas of Focus & Improvement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescales for actions are not being used well and this was the overall findings from all review records considered within this audit, the key issues included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The next review date for the completion of an action can be too long – for examples 3 or 6 months is a significant period and could lead to delay, whereas actions completed within 4 weeks of the review could enable further work and care plan progression by the next review

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At times the use of “ongoing” is used – this is not appropriate, we need to see specific measurables, what do we want to see and how will this be measured? The timescales then being the management supervision or a TAC Meeting/Get Safe Meeting etc ○ At time the use of “ASAP” is used – this is not appropriate; we need to see specific timescales such as “this is an immediate action to be completed the same day as the review” or “this is a priority action for completion within 3 working days to include feedback to the IRO” ● The section in recommendations “what do the family/network need to do and who will do it” is not being used consistently, this section will help families, carers and agencies know what they need to do to help the child or young person – this will also help them know how other people are helping and supporting them
OUTLINE KEY ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IRO Practice Manager to reflect the over-arching learning themes to the Team in next IRO Team Meeting (February 2022). 2. Repeat Audit in April 2022 to see the evidence of the learning and the impact from this Audit and Feedback to close the learning loop. 3. SofS Lead to be invited to present to IROs on the use of the “what do the family/network need to do and who will do it” section.

IRO audit on Missing episodes for looked after children in January and February 2022 by Sally Branchflower PM for the IRO service

Method

I looked at 11 young people who had been reported missing in January and February.

Notifications are sent by Daniel Gray GM and all relevant IROs are copied into the email with a request for the IRO to provide oversight review and footprint which is evident on the child's file

Expectations

It is expected that on receipt of the missing notification as the YP IRO they should add an IRO discussion/monitoring case note type to the child's LCS record which should evidence they have received the notification and highlight any action taken such as "reading the missing report" "Reading the missing intervention meeting" discussing with the social worker etc this provides clear oversight and monitoring as the child's IRO but also provides a clear IRO footprint.

Findings

From the 11 children that I audited that went missing in January and February, 9 were male, 2 were female and ranged from aged 11-17

8 of the 11 children are open to "Get Safe"

Frequency of missing episodes ranged from 1-20 that had been recorded in the last 90 days so approximately the last 13 weeks.

IRO footprint/monitoring -findings

4 out of the 11 had clear IRO footprint monitoring and review in relation to the missing notification, quality was good.

1 IRO did not evidence specific case note to missing episode at the time but call the SW 2 days after to talk about the CLA review coming up

1 IRO is in regular contact with the SW where missing episodes are discussed but not recorded on file at the time of the notification.

1 YP has been missing since June 21 all appropriate action being taken IRO footprint clear re monitoring and holding virtual reviews

1 had no IRO case note in relation to the missing episode at the time but discussed in detail re the missing episodes in the CLA review a week later

1 IRO discussed with the SW 2 days later after the missing episode and before GM notification alert but conversation was around other risks and discharge plan not about the missing episode

1 IRO did not record anything on the child's file after the missing notification was received

1 IRO did not evidence on the file at the time action specific to the missing notification but arranged to visit the YP and saw him 2 weeks later where the missing episodes were discussed directly with him

Learning

This Audit is a snapshot audit of 11 children that went missing but the findings clearly evidence inconsistencies in responding to and evidencing the missing notifications sent by Daniel Gray, some have responded in a timely way and clearly evidence oversight monitoring review and appropriate action.

Others evidence contact with the SW but not specifically about the missing episodes and 1 young person was seen by the IRO and spoke to the YP direct

One evidences no oversight monitoring or footprint in relation to the notification they have received.

Children go missing from placement for a variety of reasons which undoubtedly places them at higher risk of being exploited and being unsafe.

Action

- Audit findings to be shared with the team-13/04/22
- Expectations to be made explicitly clear to all IROs-13/04/22
- Individual learning to be discussed with each IRO
- Further audit to be undertaken by PM Sally Branchflower by the end of May 22 to ascertain if practice regarding this area has become more consistent and learning from audit feedback has been embedded.

12/04/2022

Children Looked After Placed Out of County Summary Report

This summary report gives an overview of the process to notify other Local Authorities of children being placed by Worcestershire in their area and a data summary of the number of children placed by Worcestershire out of area.

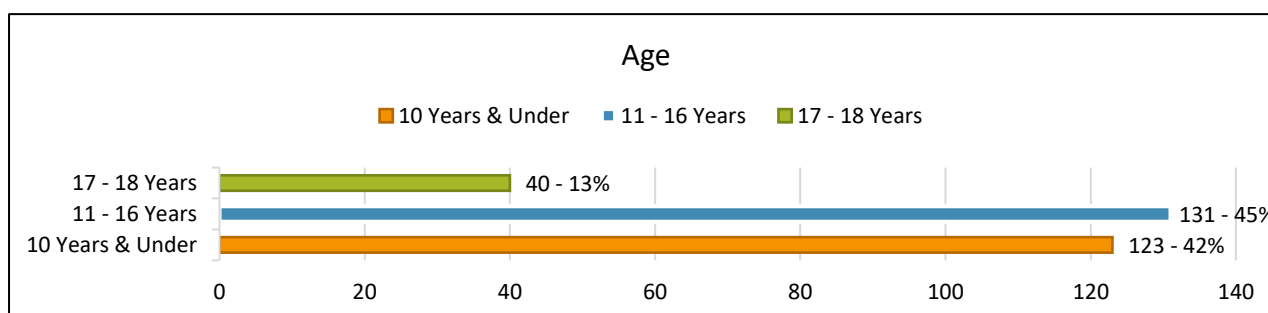
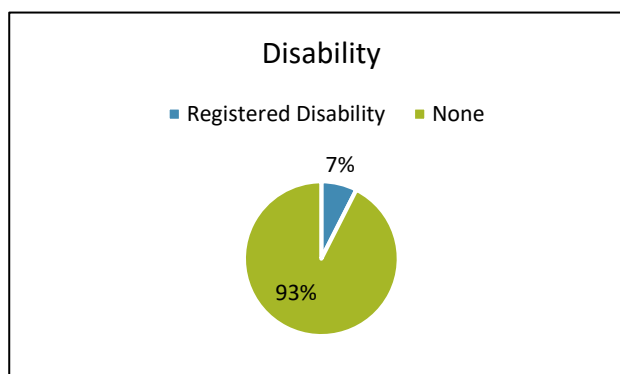
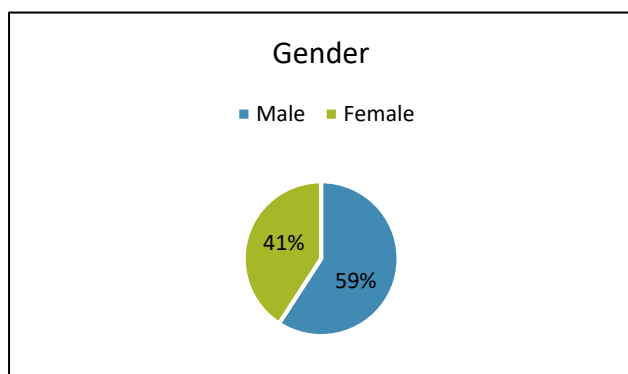
1. Worcestershire Children placed in other Local Authorities

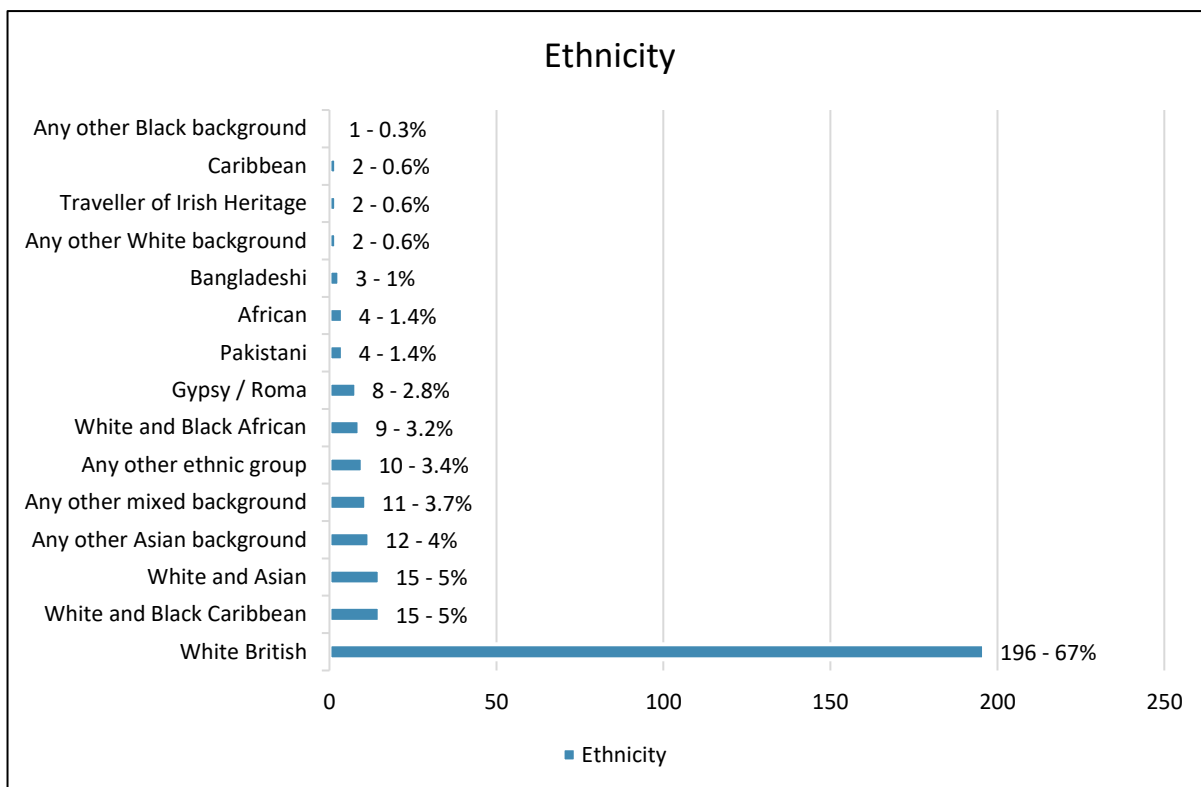
The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review statutory guidance and the associated regulations updated in 2013, outline duties on local authorities to notify other local authorities if they place a child in care within their area.

Children’s Social Care have a centralised function for the notification of our looked after children being placed in other Local Authority areas; to ensure this system is effective and no child is missed, we have an automated internal notification system, so when a child is placed out of area and Liquid Logic is updated with their new address, the Safeguarding Quality Assurance (SQA) Service receive a notification of this change.

This enables us to work with the Social Work Teams to ensure the notification is completed; this also includes notifying the local Health Authority of a looked after child being placed in their area.

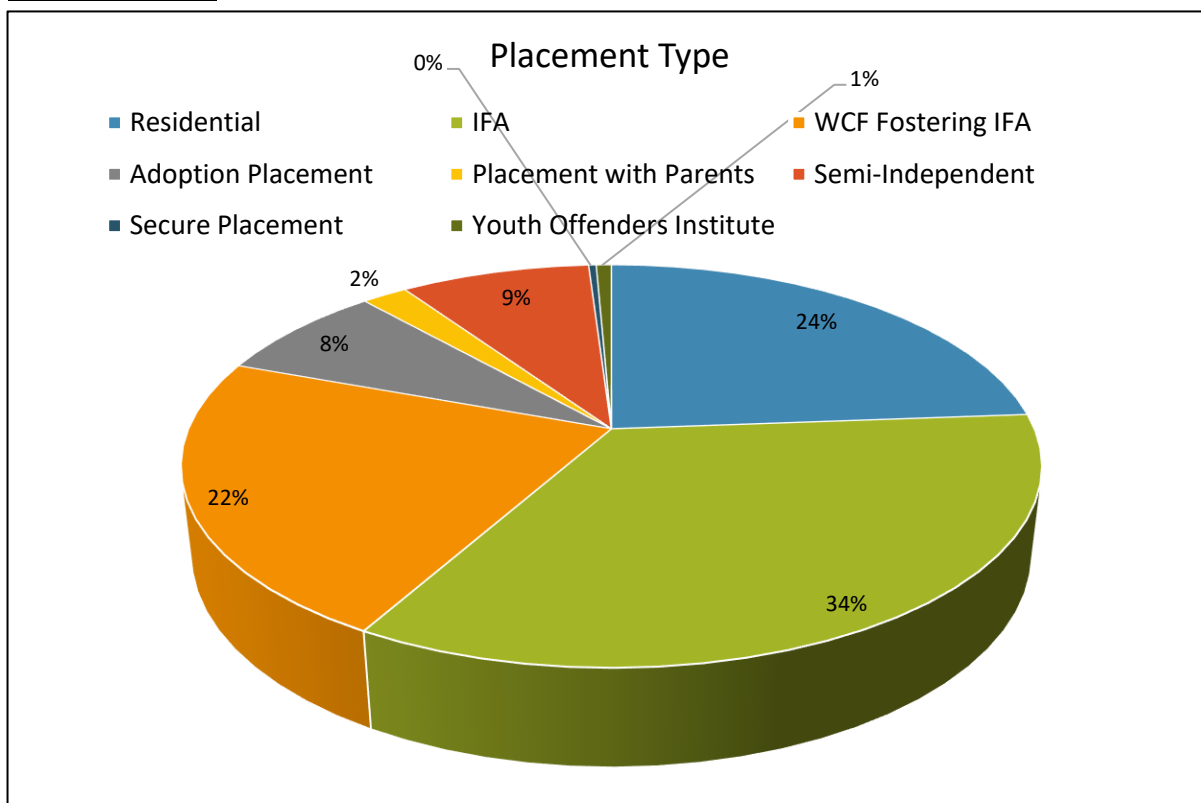
As of the 24th of June 2022, WCF had 294 looked after children placed outside of the Worcestershire area. The following graphs give a data narrative of this cohort of children and young people.





The majority-of children placed outside of the area are male and in the age cohort of 11 – 16, followed by those aged 17 & 18. A very small number of children placed out of area have a disability and this amounts to 7%, this is 22 children. The-majority of children are White British totalling 67%.

Placement Type:



There are a range of Placement Types, children placed with Foster Carers are the highest volume of this cohort and between WCF Fostering and other Fostering Agencies, 46% are placed with carers, this is followed by children placed in a Residential setting at 34%.

Of the 66 children placed out of county with WCF Carers, 44 of these are Kinship Carers, evidencing keeping families within the extended family is a preferred care plan for children.

Of the children placed out of area, 153 (52%), are placed within a Worcestershire neighbouring authority.

In total 32% (294) of Worcestershire looked after children are placed outside of the Local Authority area. However, of the 294, 66 are placed with WCFF carers, 23 are placed with Adopters, 6 have returned to their parents care under Placement with Parent Regulations, and 3 young people are in specialist secure/Youth Offenders Placements that do not operate within the Worcestershire Boundary – this accounts for 98 of children placed out of area. This means 21% of Worcestershire looked after children are placed outside of area following these specific circumstances.

2. Children placed within Worcestershire by other Local Authorities Review

We have a centralised process of other Local Authorities notifying us that a looked after child has been placed in our area and we are able to track this through our Dashboard. As of 24th June 2022, there are 480 children placed in Worcestershire by other Local Authorities; although these children are placed in our area, Children's Social Care have no Statutory Responsibility for this cohort of children.

Our central BSO for tracking OLA Notifications, has done a focused piece of work in liaising with other LAs, in ensuring we are being notified of such placements and that this information is regularly updated – we record the child and their details on Liquid Logic; any key information is also saved to the file.

To support other Local Authorities knowledge of our notification process and services available in the Local Authority area we developed and sent the attached letter to all other Local Authorities. Letter available on line at [Agenda for Corporate Parenting Board on Tuesday, 12th July, 2022, 2.00 pm - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

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Date: 6th October 2021

Dear Director of Children's Services

Services Available to Children in Care Placed in Worcestershire by Other Local Authorities

Our vision is for Worcestershire to be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up

Worcestershire Children First would like to notify you about the resources and facilities available to Children in Care and young people who may be placed in our district by your Local Authority.

Within this letter, we set out the process on how to notify us when a Child in Care or young person is placed in the Worcestershire district or when their placement arrangements change.

We would appreciate timely notification of any placements within our Local Authority. We also include details about our Virtual School for Children in Care and information about accessing universal services.

Please disseminate this information to relevant professionals within your Social Care Service. We hope that this information will help your professional staff to understand and access the diverse universal services that are available for children and young people in our district.

It would be useful to receive similar information and contact details about services and opportunities available to out of area children in care placed in your local area by other Local Authorities.

Notifications

All notifications of Children in Care placed in Worcestershire should be sent to:

CLANotifications@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Changes of address and notifications of Children in Care leaving Worcestershire should also be sent to this address so we can update our records. Please ensure that notifications highlight any particular-risks or vulnerabilities to assist the professional network within Worcestershire in responding effectively to any issues that might arise.

Making a Referral

The Family Front Door, Initial Contact and Referral Team is the central point for all referrals for children and young people aged 0 to 18 years and living in Worcestershire where there is safeguarding, or child protection concerns for them.

If you have an immediate concern about the safety and welfare of a child, please contact the Family Front Door directly on 01905 822666. You will be required to submit the information on a referral form following this as per the WLSCB procedure.

If you have a child protection concern outside of normal office hours, please contact our out of hours emergency duty team (EDT) telephone 01905 768020.

The Family Hub and Early Help

It is important that families know where to go and get help. We know that where to start or what to ask for can sometimes be a challenge. We have developed this page to give you a range of different types of resources that are available to you online, on the phone or face to face that you can access directly.

Please see our Early Help booklet by clicking on the link below of services across Worcestershire providing Early Help Support, Advice & Guidance to children & families.

[The Family Hub | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Worcestershire Children First Education Services

We provide education support services and training to over 1800 early years settings, schools and post-16 providers in Worcestershire and surrounding local authorities. Please click on the link below for further information.

[Worcestershire Children First Education Services](#)

The Virtual School

Our School aims to promote high aspirations for our children placed in care and previously looked after, to ensure all pupils are given the opportunity to succeed and develop their full potential. We believe that every individual can achieve.

We are a statutory service which exists to support and challenge all those involved in the education of children in care. We work primarily with school age children and use the Personal Educational Plan as a vehicle for raising standards and improving educational outcomes. We also support Post 16 learning and Early Years and have a network of staff supporting colleagues and agencies in these areas.

[The Virtual School | Worcestershire County Council](#)

SEND

Our Local Offer provides information about provision families can expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people who have Special Educational Need (SEN) or are disabled, including those who do not have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. You can find out about resources, services, support, activities, and events here.

[SEND Local Offer | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Health Services

All children and young people living in the Worcestershire district have access to universal health services such as a GP, Health Visitor or School Nurse.

Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust also provide a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service which offers a range of services, including Looked After Young People. Within CAMHS there is a Specialist Looked After and Adopted Children (LAAC) Team, which offers therapeutic support to Looked After Young People and their carers.

Please contact 01905 768300 for general enquiries, or professionals can refer to CAMHS.

[I am worried about my Child's mental health | Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust \(hacw.nhs.uk\)](#)

Get Safe – Keeping Children and Young People Safe from Criminal Exploitation

Have you seen a change in their behaviour or routines? Do they have unexplained money, clothing, or gifts? Do you think they maybe being criminally exploited?

If you have an **immediate safeguarding** concern for a child, you must call the police on 999.

If your concern is about activity in the Worcestershire area which you believe **may indicate crimes being committed** e.g., drug dealing or Modern-Day Slavery, please contact the police on 101.

If you wish to discuss a **not immediate safeguarding concern about a child aged 0-18 years**, then please contact our Family Front Door on 01905 822666 during office hours. In emergencies out of hours the number is 01905 768020.

We have collated information on criminal exploitation of children and young people but if you wish to talk to someone, Worcestershire Children First have a dedicated **Get Safe team** who works closely with partner agencies here in Worcestershire. The team is contactable for advice on 01905 845568 or at getsafe@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Worcestershire Youth Justice Service

The team are based at:

Youth Justice Service
Tolladine Road
Worcester
WR4 9NB

Contact number: 01905 732241

[West Mercia Youth Justice Service](#)

I hope that you have found this information useful however if you need further information please visit the Worcestershire Childrens First website.

[Worcestershire Children First \(worschildrenfirst.org.uk\)](http://worschildrenfirst.org.uk)

Yours sincerely,



Daniel Gray
Head of Quality Assurance