

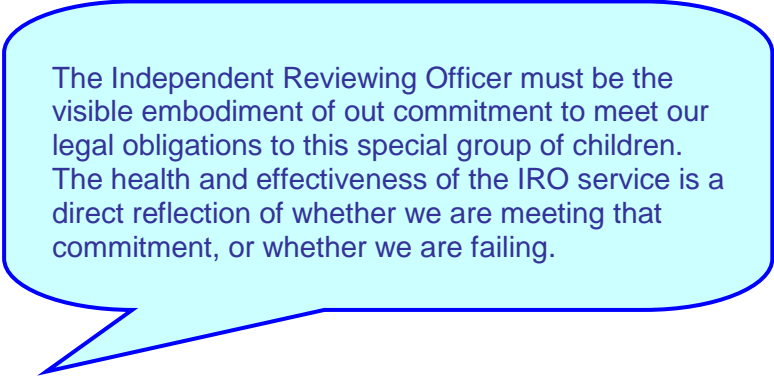
Kirklees IRO Annual Report 2016 to March 2017

The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Children in Care

Purpose of service and legal context

The Independent Review Officers (IRO) role is set within the framework of the IRO Handbook and the Care Planning Regulations. The responsibility of the IRO is management of the Review process which requires regular monitoring between Reviews with young people, parents and professionals. The IRO has a key role on the scrutiny of Care Planning for Children Looked After (CLA) and for challenging drift and delay. Within Kirklees, the IRO function also encompasses children subject to Child protection plans (CPP) as they hold a mixed case load within both areas.

National Children's Bureau research entitled 'The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers 2014' provided substantial information and findings on the efficacy of Independent Reviewing services and their central role in the child's journey. This report will therefore summarise the learning achieved, identify improvements both achieved and to be developed, but also celebrate good practice. Mr Justice Peter Jackson offered the following comment for IRO's to consider



The Independent Reviewing Officer must be the visible embodiment of our commitment to meet our legal obligations to this special group of children. The health and effectiveness of the IRO service is a direct reflection of whether we are meeting that commitment, or whether we are failing.

This annual report is a requirement under the Care Planning, Placement and Care Review (England) Regulations 2010. It confirmed 'the IRO manager is responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny to the Corporate Parenting board'. This report relates to the period from the 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017 and will reflect not only our achievements, but also the challenges and changes needed to improve the service for 2017/18.

This report is set out under the following headings based upon the requirements of the statutory IRO handbook (2010):

- *The context of work for IROs in Kirklees*
- *The development of the Independent Reviewing service during this period (including capacity and caseloads)*
- *Key information and performance in relation to Child protection conferences (CPC)*
- *Key information and performance in relation Looked After Children (LAC)*
- *The extent of participation in both LAC Reviews and child protection conferences*
- *The dispute resolution process (DRP)*
- *Challenges faced by the service*
- *Recommendation for future development*

Context

Whilst the Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations 2010/15 sets out how Local Authorities and their partners should fulfil their responsibilities to care planning, placement and review for LAC, it remains underpinned by the Working Together 2010/13 and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Handbook. *These underline the critical role of the IRO to promote and enable young people to have a voice, promote their independency, but equally support them to achieve the best outcomes.* If the IRO is to ensure the child's care plan fully reflects and promotes their individuality and global needs to achieve the best outcomes, effective planning and review would be underpinned by thorough assessment and making the right decisions at the right time. It is the child's meeting, but the outcomes should be clear, focused, reflect strengths and achievements of the child and remain active and live. As the voice of the child, the IRO will consider decision making that promotes a stable and a consistent level of care that is both sensitive and appropriate to the individual. It must promote them to flourish, achieve and reach their full potential and where possible, this should be in conjunction with the parent's views. Where planning or delay takes place, the Local Authority will adopt a formal DRP process for the IRO to raise concerns which must be respected and prioritised by practitioners and managers alike. Learning from the Ofsted inspection 2016, the Safeguarding and service standards unit (CPRU) continues to explore our strengths, but also identify what needs to improve. The IRO's span across all service areas and continue to promote discussion and strengthen communication with the child at the central of our involvement.

What are we doing about it?

- *IRO's will prioritise statutory reviews take place within the required timeframes.*
- *Monitoring and audit processes will ensure that cases are effectively progressed to achieve better outcomes for our young people.*
- *Discussion and review has started to take place with all internal teams on the achievements, concerns, DRPs and where developments are needed to improve the services and outcomes for LAC and CPC.*
- *We have an DRP (dispute resolution) process in place which would promote discussion, reflection and evidence based practice*

How does the IRO make a difference in Kirklees?

- *IRO's promote the child's voice and participation within meetings to ensure that they are at the centre of and included within all decision making. This requires that the child is seen before the meeting to ascertain their views or opinions, and develop a consistent relationship with them.*
- *IRO's will ensure the young person not only understands how an advocate could support this process, but also signposting and promoting the use of this.*
- *Whilst chairing the young person's review, the IRO will monitor the progress on a continuous basis. IRO's will ensure it takes place on time and that information or decisions are shared effectively for professionals to act upon.*
- *IRO's will ensure that plans and decisions are based on informed assessments which are up-to-date, effective and live. This would prevent 'drift or delay' in respect of permanency and holding professionals to account.*
- *Where appropriate, IRO's will use the Dispute resolution process (DRP) to highlight where delay has taken place, but also where further intervention is required to meet the needs of the young people.*

Professional Profile of the Independent Reviewing service

The Independent Reviewing service (CPRU), falls within Children and young people directorate and are based at Silver Court, Huddersfield. IROs are part of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance service. Direct line management is divided between the two Service managers in respect of Child protection and Looked After children. They will in turn report directly the Head of service (HOS) for safeguarding and quality assurance. The Head of the service reports to the Director for Improvement. In common with many other Local Authorities, the service retains the responsibility for independently chairing Looked after children reviews (LAC) and Child Protection Conferences (CPC). All of the IRO's are experienced social workers and are registered with the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC). Their knowledge, expertise and awareness continue to strengthen the effectiveness and planning.

The service composition is 1.5 (FTE) Service Manager, 17 (FTE) IROs, and 1 PTE LADO officer. From the 17 FTE IRO posts, 4 work part time (18 ½ hours), 10 are full time and there are 6 interim IROs. 1 FTE IRO has resigned from the service in March 2017 and 1 PTE IRO will leave before July 2017. 1 interim service manager joined the service at the start of May 2017, the other PTE returned from secondment at the start of June 2017. The HOS post is currently held by an interim manager. There has been change in the leadership of the service following previous managers leaving the organisation or being seconded to other posts (1 FTE service manager is seconded to the liquid logic implementation until December 2017). Additional posts held under CPRU, and overseen by the HOS are 2 FTE outcome and audit officers and the line management regarding the administration service (business support officers) falls under another directorate. The focus of driving up standards and outcomes for our children remains a priority as does the evidence of strong practice. As part of a wider recruitment campaign, Kirklees will seek to recruit permanent IROs by August 2017. Kirklees will plan to recruit and attract high quality candidates. Like other Local Authorities however, there remains a shortfall of available skilled and experienced IRO's.

Whilst the interim IRO's and managers bring experience and support development throughout the organisation, they equally support the capacity of the service to manage the increased demand of LAC and CP cases. The majority of young people continue to have the same IRO throughout their time in care. However, when 1 (FTE) IRO reported long term sickness absence and 2 interim IRO's left the service in 2017, this meant a small number of our young people experienced changes. There has been an increase in demand for both LAC and CPC which has impacted on the demand and capacity for the service. Whereas the annual report 2015-16, indicate caseloads of between 70 to 100 children, this has reduced to around 70 children per FTE IRO. One of the objectives for the service is to increase and embed stronger communication, development and supportive culture within the organisation. A second would be to support practice development, embed the use of/ training of strengthening family's model at CPC.

In terms of diversity, we have 1 IRO from an Asian background, 1 IRO from South Africa and a cross range of age and gender within the service. IROs have in the past attended and participate within other service meetings and share learning. They offer consultation and advice and provide cover when the LADO is not available. The service managers attend different forums and are expanding the provision of consultation, advice and support on cases where there may be complex issues, or where professionals are seeking advice on the concerns.

Service / IRO manager

The management function over the last year has remained generally the same with attendance and active participation at various forums such as permanency and legal planning panels. Additional expertise and chairing of complex meetings has been incorporated for chairing secure panels, auditing and development of professional practice. Essentially, the key function remains of providing direct operational line management support, Quality assurance functions and decision making to IRO's alongside frequent critical supervision. This enables and supports CPRU to contribute to and share learning/ developments within Kirklees. The IRO manager has a key role in managing and resolving DRPs alongside dealing with service user complaints in a timely manner. These are shared within the organisation to consider the key messages from our young people and key partner agencies for learning. In addition, the role has also offered the provision of consultation to practitioners and other professionals on complex cases.

What are we doing about it?

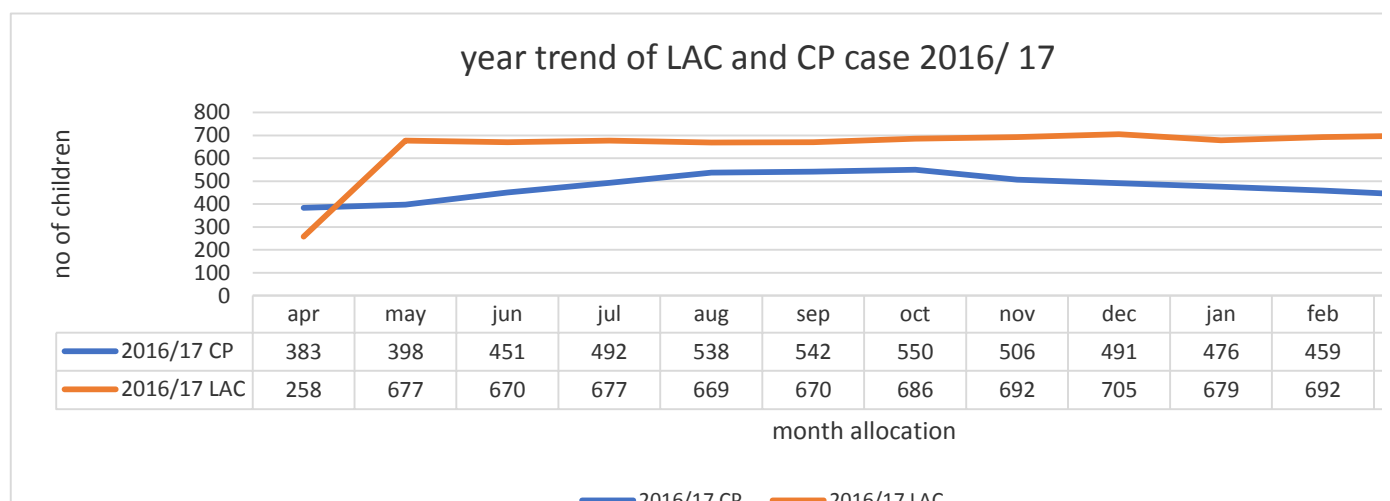
- The new leadership team is driving through the required changes to promote better outcomes for children
- Our objective remains with developing a permanent workforce, but also one that shares learning and strengthening communication.
- The recruitment of a permanent workforce will provide a high level of consistency and stability for our young people, but also reduced the current overspend within the service.
- IRO's continue to develop and perform additional roles that support improvement within the organisation, which strengthens practice, workforce development and relationships. For example, supporting multi/ single agency training
- IRO's continue to actively participate within other forums such as case file audits.
- LADO continues to explore and strengthen relationships, understanding of their role and develop communication with key professionals
- We continue to share learning, supporting organisational development and provide advice or consultation to others
- The LADO service is improving on the outcomes and connections with professionals to established a high level of service

Quantitative information about the Independent Reviewing service

The Independent Reviewing service has embarked on a journey to improve the services for young people, but also clearly demonstrate strong evidence based practice. Whilst we await the arrival of the new IT system (liquid logic), we are using the performance data and reporting information to drive up standards and performance. Review of improving our CPC minutes and recommendations are underway to embed and ensure that they are SMART and promote the child at the centre of our work. One objective remains within CPRU is to increase our use of electronic recording systems and evidence our involvement within the young person's journey. A second key objective would be to ensure our LAC plans, minutes and other key records are both SMART and focused, the footprint of the IRO is evident and clear. In addition, DRP are effective and relevant. Effective scrutiny and review by IRO's would evidence what difference our intervention made or how effective the plan or decisions were. Subsequently, we would challenge at an earlier stage to ensure permanency planning is considered where appropriate or highlight issues where delay has taken place.

Number of children subject to child protection plans or Looked after demands

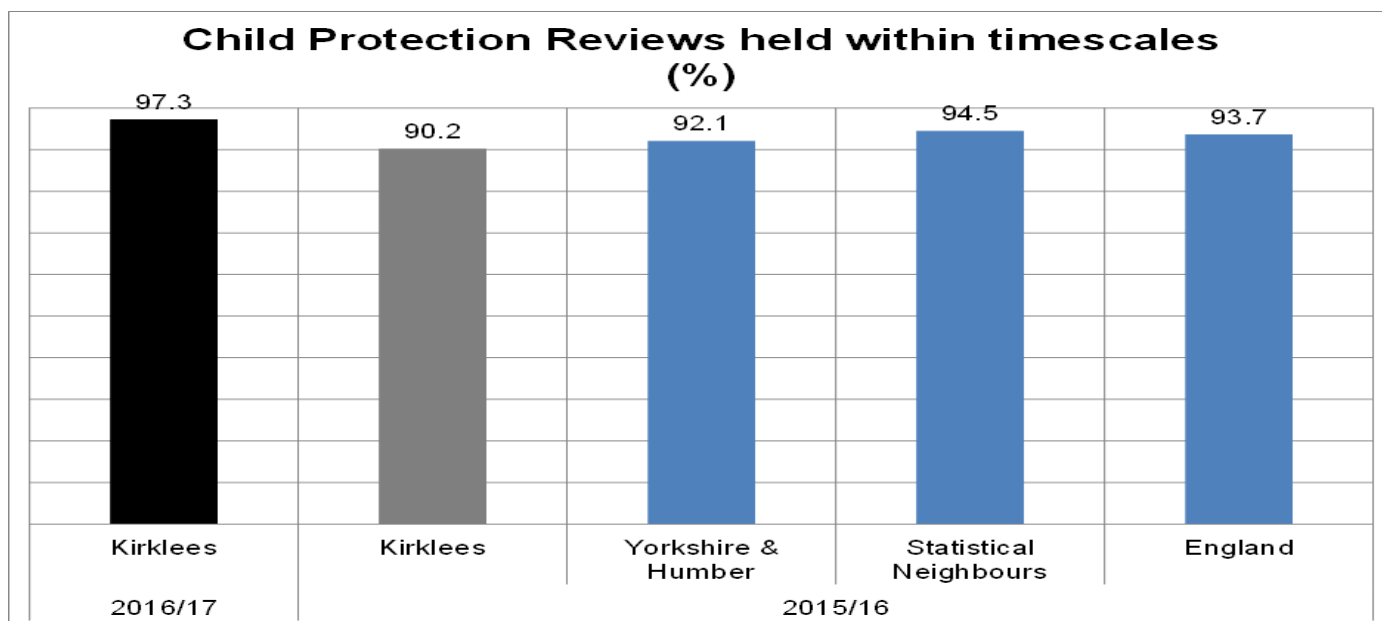
CPRU continues to complete reviews of all relevant children and CPC's. When comparing children subject to both LAC and CPC over the year (see below), this reflected demands have remained high across the organisation following the increase from April 2016. This has placed additional demands on the service to fulfil its obligations and the critically review the needs of the children.



In planning for 2017/18, CPRU will consider the capacity challenges, but also the need for SMART and effective practice. If there is an average of 699 children subject to LAC reviews, this would indicate at least 2-3 review meetings per year for each young person (dependent on court proceedings, significant events and placement moves (there were 975 over the last year of which 60% only moved once). In terms of child protection, if the average number of children is 438 subject to a CPP, this would mean at least 2-3 meetings per year dependent on change of status such as step up/ down from LAC to CPC or whether the IRO makes the decision to hold reviews at shorter periods if there is a significant risk or say court proceedings. In summery and without considering the mid-way reviews, meetings with social workers/ professionals and young people: there could be around 3411 LAC reviews or conferences that the IRO would need to chair and prepare for. This would not consider the high number of young people considered as LAC, but currently placed more than 20 miles outside of Kirklees (95).

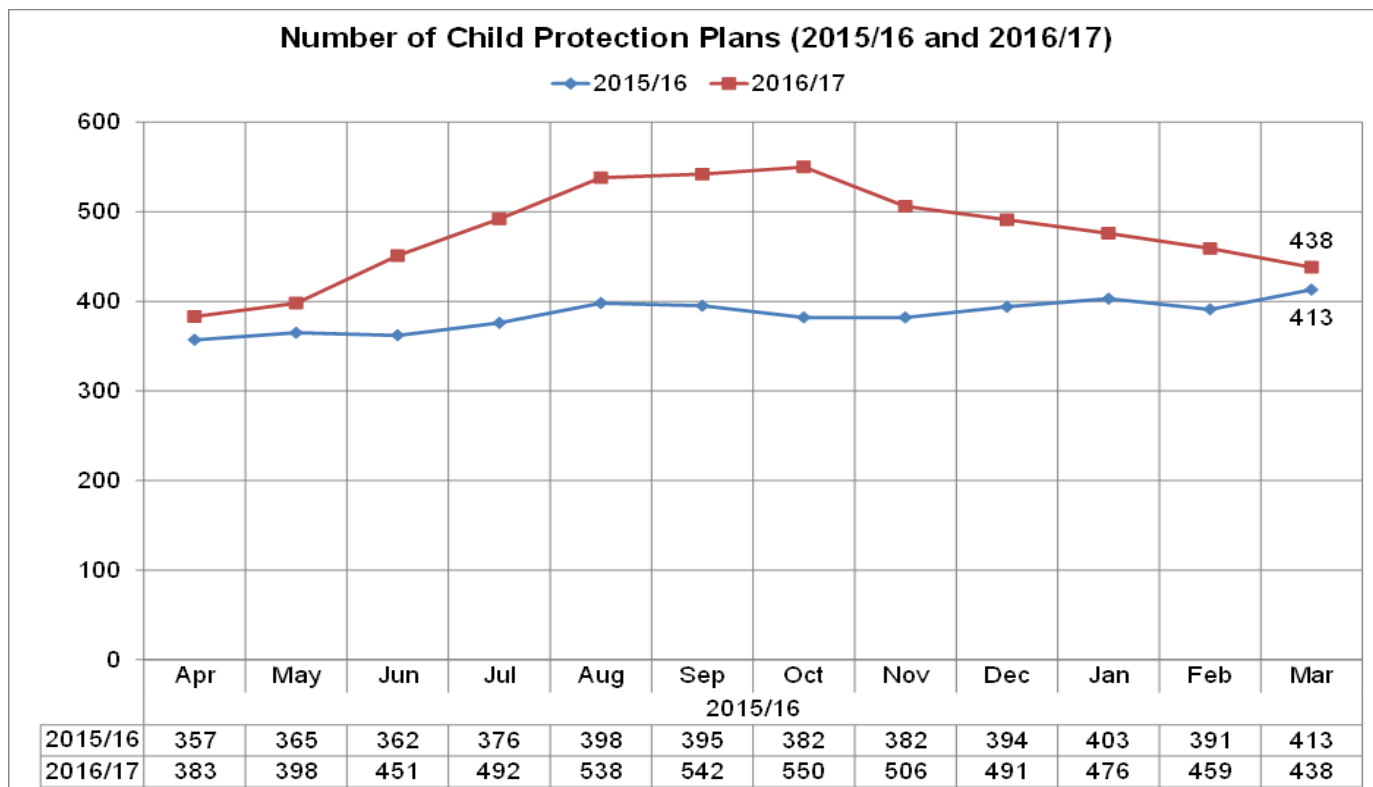
Performance and data analysis: child protection plans and conferences (CP)

Timeliness of child protection conferences: There are challenges regarding strategy to ICPC timescales being met. Part of this relates delay with invitation lists being returned, social workers providing reports on time and ensuring the parents have seen them. Other factors are late notification to CPRU or where data/ episodes are not fully recorded. For example, the number of recorded ICPCs chaired by IROs between April 2016 and March 2017 was 818, 426 of which were within 15 days of the start of the S47 enquiry. However, the number of S47 enquiries that were recorded as requiring an ICPC was 1,169. There are major recording issues in this area of work. There were 441 CPP review conferences in 2016/17 of which 429 (97.3%) were within timescales. This is being explored with assessment and intervention managers, whilst at the same time: the IRO manager is now securitising all new requests. Key messages are shared when IRO's attend team meetings to improve performance, but also the quality aspects and information sharing. If comparing data to our statistical neighbours, whilst the report reflects we achieved 97.3% below: this remains as an area to improve.

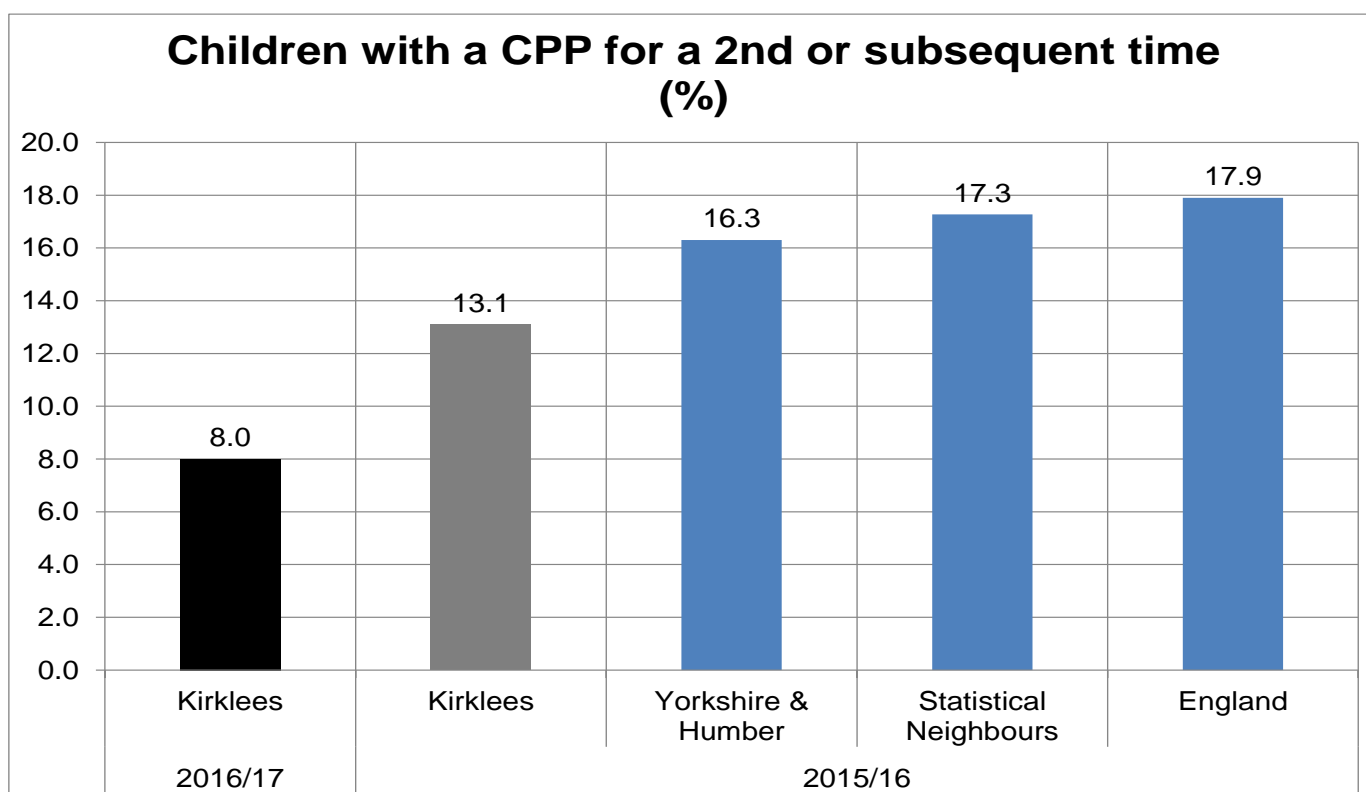


In 2017/18, one objective is to produce live data and analysis that demonstrates evidence of performance across the service and organisation, and to use this to improve decision making, outcomes and achievements. This will incorporate key partner agencies and their active participation when considering risk analysis. One challenge to achieve this surrounds the timeliness from the strategy meeting/ decision to when the initial CPC takes place. The chart below reflects some of the peaks in the year, but the need to have a consistent performance. Other objectives for CPRU are to reduce the high number of children subject to CPC's and to actively sign post families to the appropriate services. If reflecting on the Ofsted report 2016, we need to make the right decision at the right time. As a service, we routinely consider and track information where delay has taken place and this is shared with the relevant team: if appropriate, escalated to senior managers. If considering trends and demands, there was a sharp increase in the number of children subject to CPCs from July to October 16. Whilst this appeared to decrease slightly: we still have an increase of a 100 children subject to CPC over the course of 1 year.

Therefore, CPRU will work in partnership with partner and key professionals to reduce the number of young people subject to CPC's.



Within 2016/17, the numbers of children subject to a second child protection review plan increased. Whilst monitoring and audit processes have been introduced, further investigation is required to explore this area. Some of the factors which led to children being made subject to a 2nd child protection plan could be the professionals closed their involvement prematurely or the appropriate support was not in place for the families to maintain the change. However, in comparing to the national or statistical neighbours, Kirklees is making progress in this area.



Categories of CPP's:

If considering the number of young people and what categories they are made subject to child protection plan (CPP) for, the key areas are for neglect and emotional abuse. There was limited information to compare new CPC plans from 2017, but this will be investigated in 2017/18.

CPP by category and age (as at 31/03/2017)

	0	1-4	5-9	10-15	16+	Total	%
Emotional abuse	15	69	64	57	5	210	47.9%
Neglect	21	34	61	52	9	177	40.4%
Physical Abuse	3	3	1	1		8	1.8%
Sexual abuse	1	7	16	17	2	43	9.8%
Total	40	113	142	127	16	438	

If considering age and ethnicity the data below reflects the main population of our children subject to CPP remains as white/ British, but 24% of the children are from Asian background. If considering gender as factor to consider, the key group is male, but from a very small percentage. There is no current data to reflect the social or economic backgrounds for our children and whether this would reflect a higher number of children from low income or single families are made subject to CPC. However, the chart below indicates which area within Kirklees our children reside and the category. It is acknowledged and further work is taking place to reduce the data errors in 2017/18.

CPP by area and category (as at 31/03/2017)

	Emotional abuse	Neglect	Physical Abuse	Sexual abuse	Grand Total	Total
Batley and Spennethorpe	67	36	4	13	120	27.4%
Dewsbury and Mirfield	63	38		12	113	25.8%
Huddersfield	65	70	4	8	147	33.6%
Kirklees Rural	7	24		8	39	8.9%
Not known / outside Kirklees	8	9		2	19	4.3%
Total	210	177	8	43	438	

CPP by ethnicity and age (as at 31/03/2017)

	0	1-4	5-9	10-15	16+	Total	%	Kirklees 0-17
White	18	66	88	82	11	265	60.5%	67.4%
Mixed	7	20	19	13	3	62	14.2%	5.3%
Asian	8	20	29	28	2	87	19.9%	24.8%
Black	1	4	2	4		11	2.5%	1.7%
Unknown / Other	6	3	4			13	3.0%	0.8%
Total	40	113	142	127	16	438		

CPP by gender and age (as at 31/03/2017)

	0	1-4	5-9	10-15	16+	Total	%
Female	19	56	78	57	8	218	49.8%
Male	20	57	64	70	8	219	50.0%
Unborn	1					1	0.2%
Total	40	113	142	127	16	438	

Length of Child protection plans

56.8% of our CPP's end within 6 months. Whilst we have a small number of children subject to CCP from 18 months (6%), further work and investigation is required to explore whether these children plans were effective and whether the families could maintain this with support. Where children are subject to plans over 9 months or the second review, further evaluation and investigation will be undertaken to consider the decision making and whether the case should have reverted to some other form of action such as legal. Whilst it's the responsibility of the IRO to ensure we ask the question of what needs to happen for the plan to end, as a multi-agency group around the child we also need challenge issues of delay and drift such as changes of social workers, plans not being implemented, what was our response to escalate these.

CPP by length of time on a plan

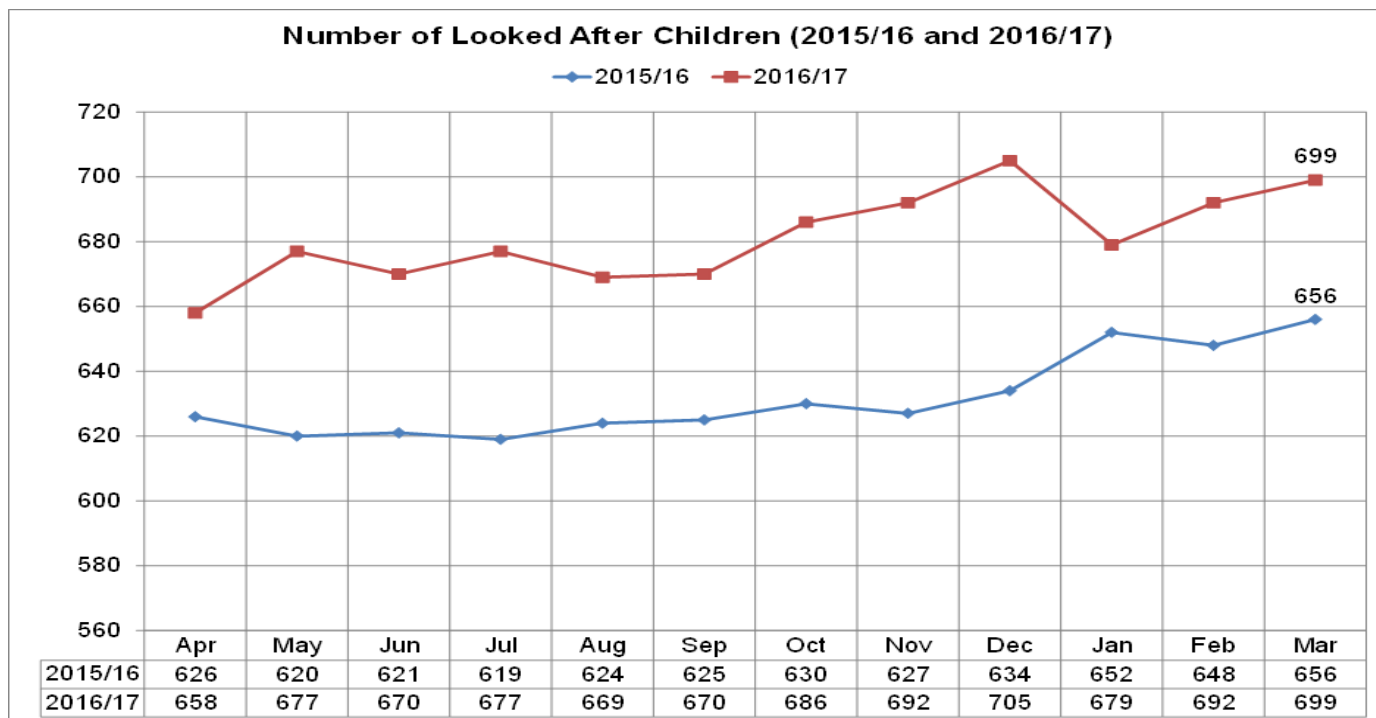
	Emotional abuse	Neglect	Physical Abuse	Sexual abuse	Grand Total	Total
0-6 months	112	116	5	16	249	56.8%
6-12 months	72	35	3	12	122	27.9%
12-18 months	11	25		5	41	9.4%
18-24 months	6	1		10	17	3.9%
2 years +	9				9	2.1%
Total	210	177	8	43	438	

What are we doing about it?

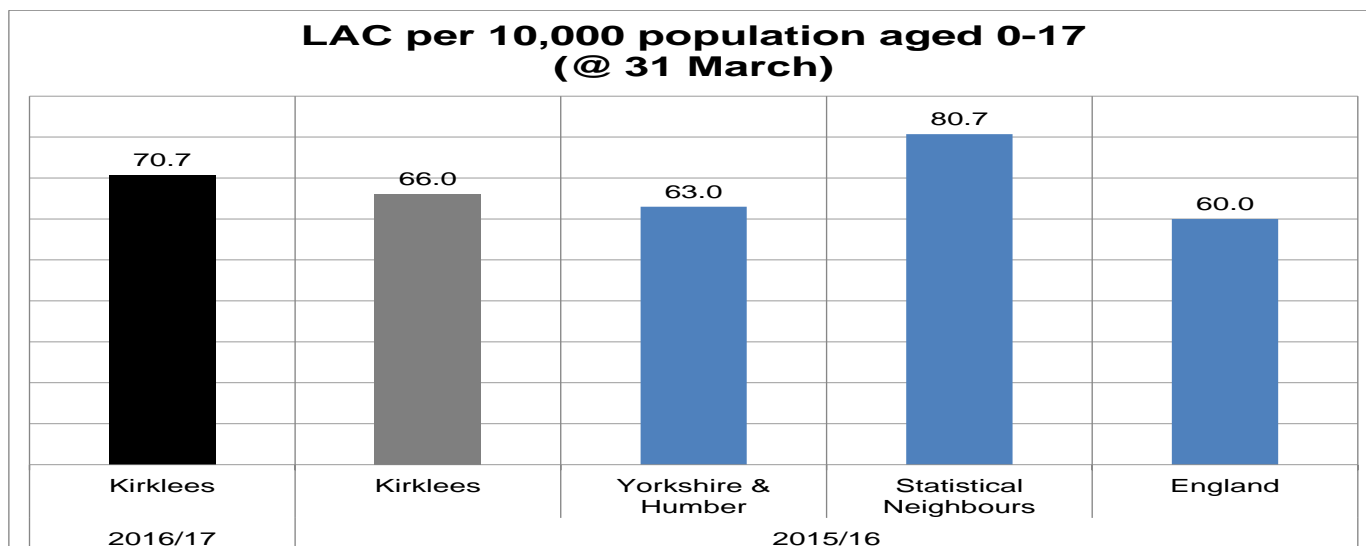
- CPRU will champion and evidence the need for SMART and effective practice
- Our objective is to use live data and analysis that demonstrates evidence of performance across the service and organisation, and to use this to improve decision making, outcomes and achievements.
- CPRU will work in partnership with professionals to reduce the high number of children subject to CPC's and to actively sign post families to the appropriate services.
- IROs will work hard to make the right decision at the right time and actively participate within case file audits to share good practice.
- CPRU will work towards reducing the number of children subject to CPP with partner agencies, but also to reflect and challenge to reduce children being made subject to a CPP for a 2nd or 3rd occasion.
- We will continue to share learning, supporting organisational development and provide advice or consultation to others

Performance and data analysis: Looked After review (LAC)

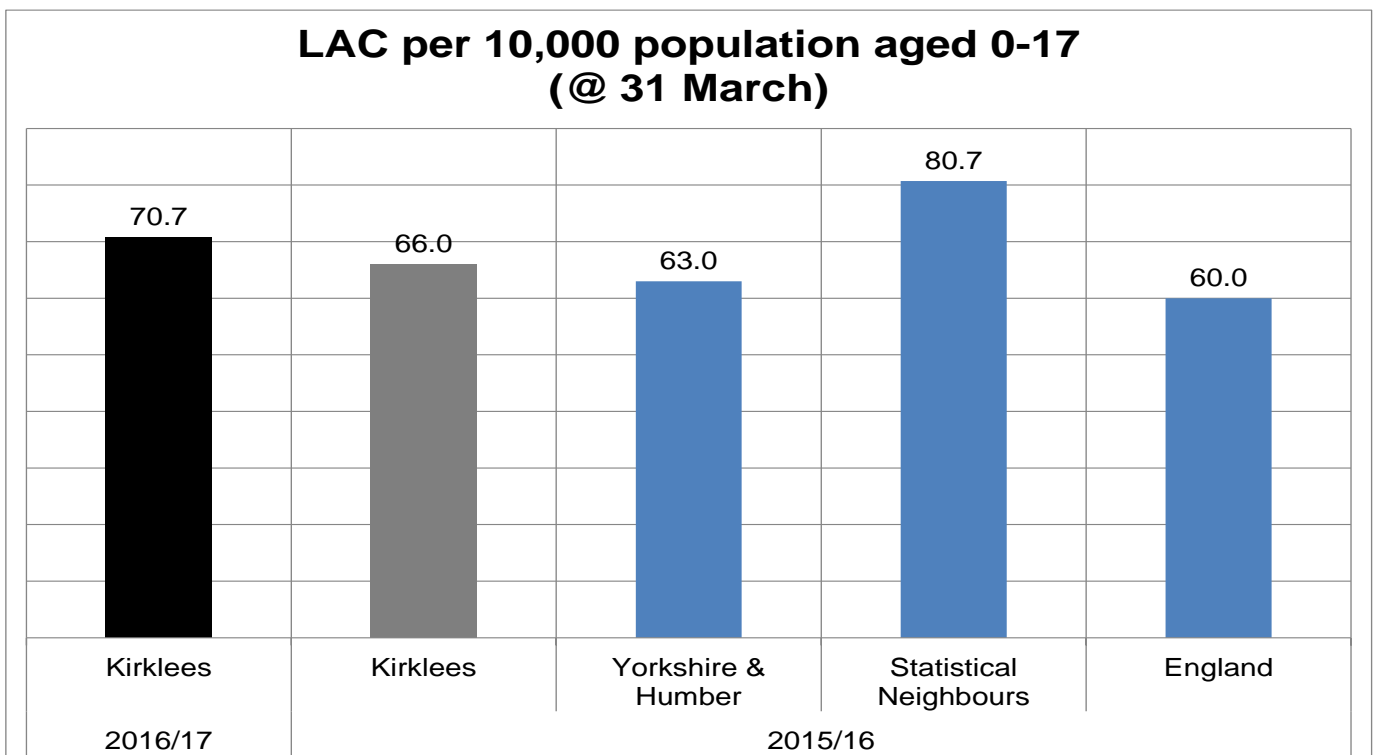
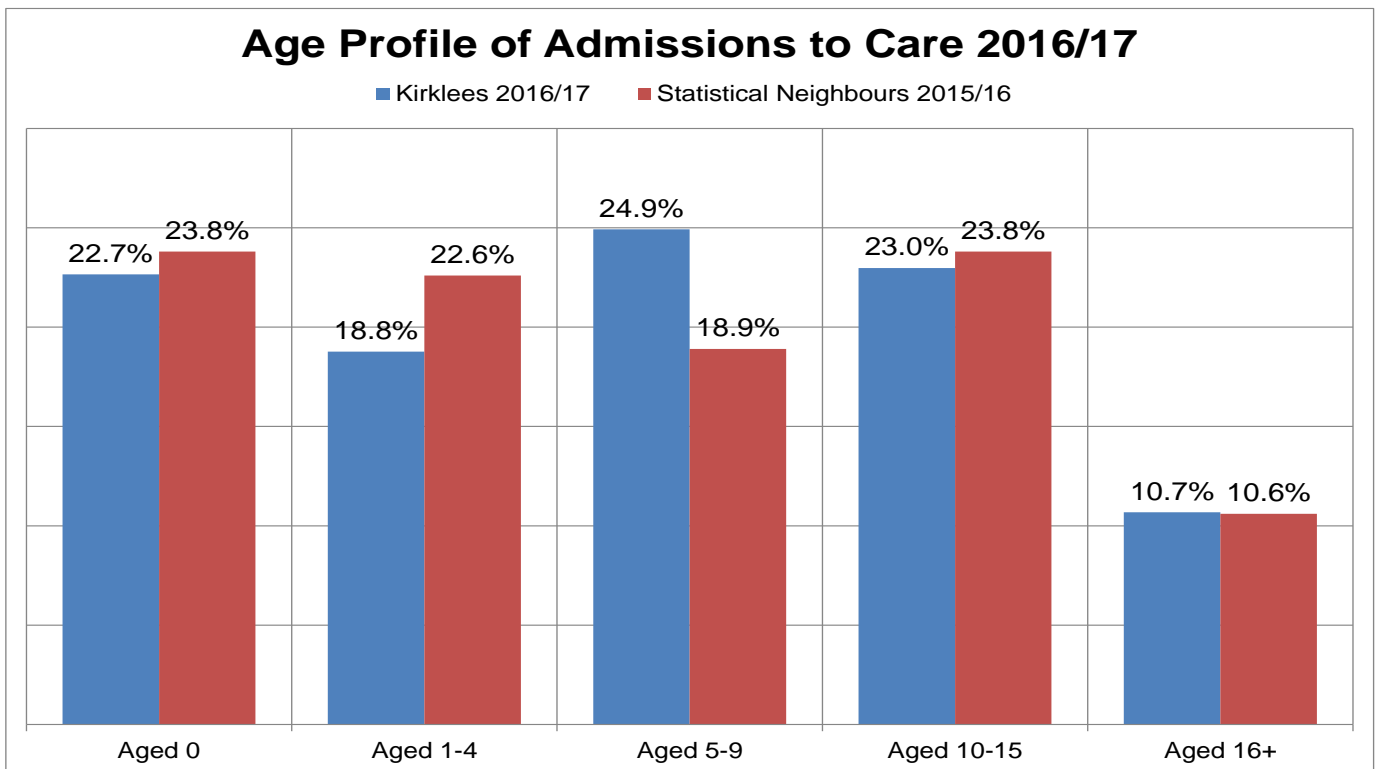
The number of LAC children for the year end was 699: an increase of 43 from the previous year. This may not take into account cases that have been closed, but which require a final LAC review in terms of step down to CIN: for example, children over the age of 18 years. The demand on LAC children has generally increased over the last year although there have been periods where this increased more so in from October to December 16. It is not clear from the data what this was in relation or whether improved signposting and intervention caused the number to decrease. Whilst there is no clear data of how many children from CPP stepped up to being LAC: nationally it is reported by Cafcass of the increased number of court proceedings issued by Local Authorities.



IRO's would consider as part of the LAC review process not just the location, but how this would support contact with family members/ peers and if it meets the child's needs. When considering geographical location of LAC placements for example, the data reports 54% of children are placed outside of Kirklees. Whilst a review of placements is underway to consider whether the young person could move back to the Kirklees area, the impact for IROs and social workers to engage with young people more frequently is difficult given the travel and locations. Also, having more young people placed locally could promote contact and relationships between them and family members, but also enable greater access to services locally and reduce current expenditure.

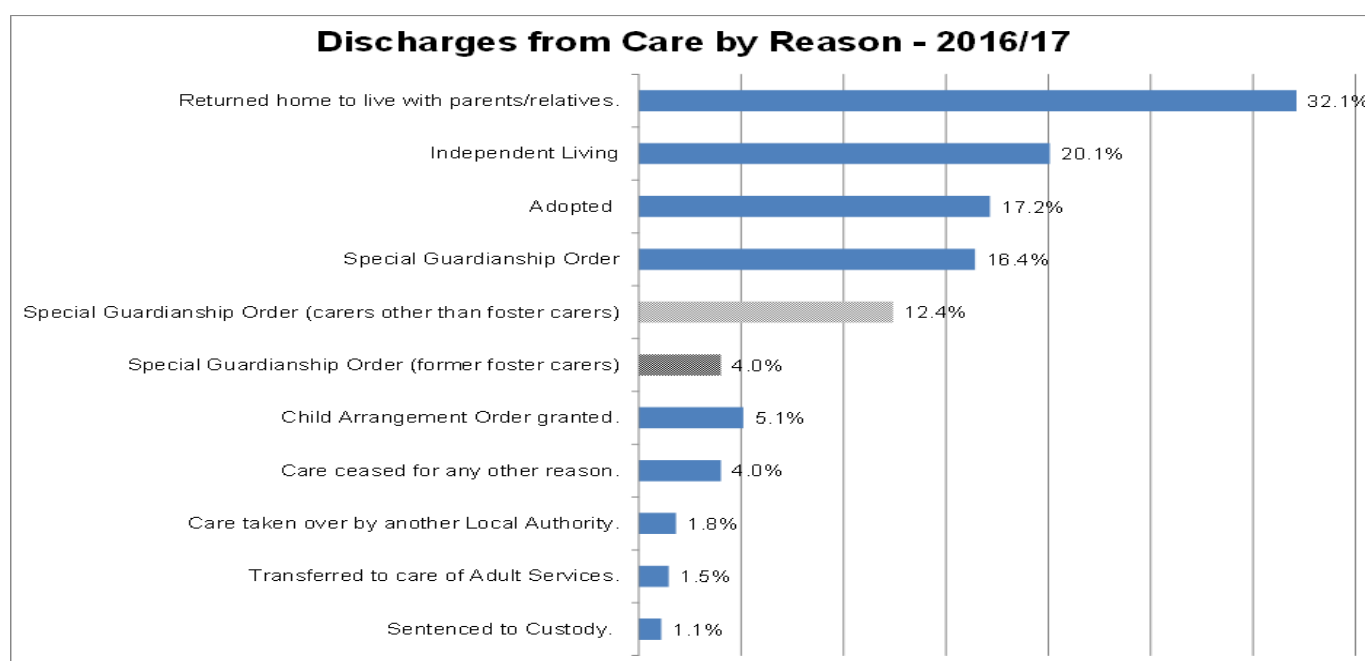


Whilst the placement type is one factor when considering issues of permanency, but there is currently no heat map available to confirm the current geographical location of our LAC population. If considering the gender of our LAC population or age, this has remained generally the same over the last year (as below). There is no clear data to confirm how many unaccompanied asylum seeking (UASC) Kirklees has.



When considering the legal status of our LAC population, there is no current report to reflect the trend and application of care and interim care orders. The number of young people subject to section 20 remains high. A national review and critique by the judiciary system on the illegal use by Local Authorities on section 20 has taken place. Kirklees like many other authorities is exploring which of our children should be returned home or whether there are extended family members, different types of orders such as special guardianship that could be applied. Kirklees like some other Local Authorities has a high number of children placed at home under Care orders (54 children). Whilst this has reduced and further work is taking place in respect of revocation, there remains significant work to undertake in this area. As part of the professionals group around the child, IROs are responsible and will confirm at the second review what the permanence plan is for a child, but also challenge and support final care plans. This is an area of further investigation and review both for the CPRU, but also within the organisation for 2017/18.

There has been increased scrutiny and review within the organisation on young people entering care and whether this is the right decision. This had led to the placement/ permanency panel being held on the same day as legal gateway. The process of legal gateway and permanency panel has been reviewed; a new system will be operation this year. The decisions and recommendations will be shared with the IRO for their views, but equally challenged if it is not the right plan for the child. If the IRO disagrees, there is a process for which this can be challenged within the organisation and court arena. When considering permanency, the chart below reflects the outcomes over the last year. As the information suggests, the highest number are children that return to their parents or relatives care.



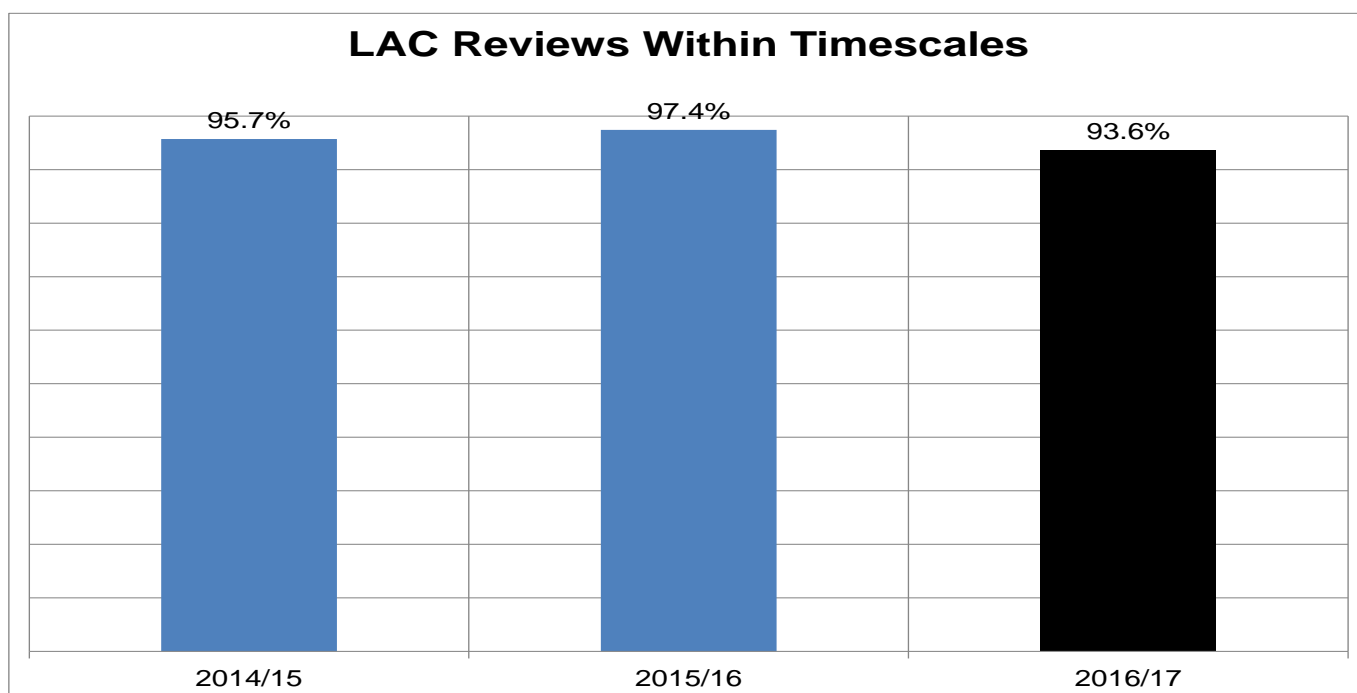
Participation and timeliness

These are key factors to ensure that IROs have reviewed and progressed plans for the young people. As part of their role, it is critical they engage the young person within their meeting and confirm what they want to happen, record the child's voice. From a participation viewpoint, the numbers of children engaging more in their meetings or with the support of an advocate has increased as below.

Participation Method	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Under four years old - Child not of an age of understanding	393	369	470
Child attends, speaks for themselves	802	780	828
Child attends, advocate speaks	4	21	19
Child attends, symbols	4	3	2
Child attendance without contribution	7	20	23

Child does not attend but briefs advocate to speak	390	320	345
Child does not attend, but communicates their views	238	275	256
Child does not attend and gives no views	40	63	94
Initial home visit	-	-	4
Null	7	0	4
Total	1,885	1,851	2,045

From a timeliness point of review, this figure has decreased over the last year and requires further investigation as to why. All LAC reviews should be on time, every time. There may be occasions where the IRO could hold the meeting in two parts (IRO handbook) to ensure participation of parents or other key professionals, but the focus must be with the young person. Where meetings are delayed such as no reports, assessments or where there is delay in the plans being progressed, the IRO will either informally or formally escalate the matter to address the concerns. One objective for 2017/18 is to investigate this area further and ensure the number of reviews increased, but also supports the young person to express their views. One of the key challenges is IROs being notified of when significant changes take place for the child in a timely way.



Quality Assurance

IRO's continue to form part of and participate within the quality assurance of practice. Key issues and learning are fed back to practitioners on the strengths in service, but also areas that need to be developed. This has informed practice and provided key information regarding quarterly performance against national and local performance indicators. It has also strengthened communication and achieving common objectives across all parts of the organisation to focus on our young people aspirations and needs. CPRU continues to highlight on any significant events or safeguarding issues when they occur in both LAC and CPC. There is also feedback sought from CPC's to captured and inform what we as an organisation could do better. Within 2017/18, further investigation will take place to reflect evidence of effective and safe planning/ intervention, but equally promote evidence of our achievements.

Dispute resolution process

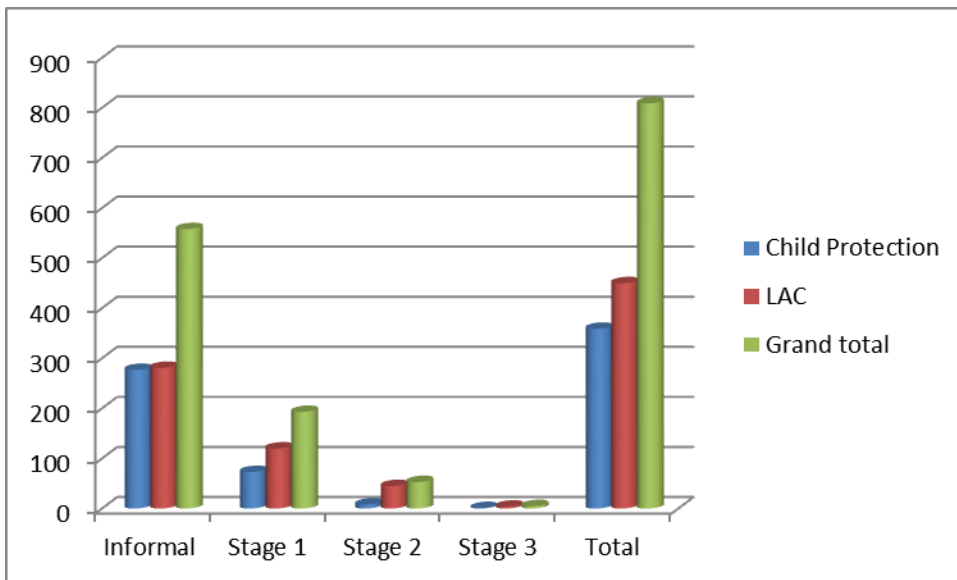
Whilst the IRO has the power to refer to CAFCASS, they must take into account and give serious consideration to the child's wishes and feelings balanced against the human rights of the child. All Local Authorities are required to have a formal dispute resolution process (DRP) to ensure concerns or delay in cases will be resolved effectively and within a required timescale. Whilst the DRP process supports the IRO to raise formal concerns or disagreements relating to drift or delay, it ensures the child voice is heard. The DRP should set out clearly what the issue and what action needs to be taken by whom and by when.

Kirklees has an embedded process in care first. This can be accessed by both social workers and managers alike: with a monthly report. There have been no referrals made to Cafcass. Part of the Ofsted findings was to demonstrate and confirm where the IRO made a difference or challenged others. Equally, the report commented on the high number of DRPs made (in excess of 400) and the limited response from operational managers. During 2016/17, there were delays in respect of planning and permanency for children, but equally in respect of child protection conferences and sharing of information with parents. Whilst the chart below indicates an increase in the number of formal DRPs made, this was linked to the increased recording and challenge by IROs. However, when reviewing the quality or key issues raised by IROs, some aspects were not always as clear and timely. Whilst the IRO concern may be valid, the manager did not always understand what was being asked of them or the timescale required. It was recorded that previously, the IROs had been informed to raise every issue as a DRP. This created a situation where significant issues may be missed given the volume of DRPs made. Some of the key aspects recorded from child protection were in relation to statutory visits not completed, limited assessment information that was up to date and professionals not progressing CPPs in a timely manner. From a LAC perspective, some of the key themes were IRO not informed of significant events, pathway plans, visits to young people and limited updated assessments.

Action has been taken to promote more face to face discussions between IROs and operational teams. We are moving away from sharing information electronically, to one where actions are confirmed and acted upon. Increased information sharing is starting to take place, alongside attendance and sharing information within different team meetings and forums. The key action is to make the right DRP at the right time, joint ownership together for the child's plan and work strong with young people and their families to achieve change which can be maintained. The service managers now review and QA all DRPs to consider their effectiveness, but also their appropriateness. The service manager has reviewed all the outstanding DRPs made, a high number have been closed. DRPs made from June 2017 will be clear, focused and relevant. This will lead to the right cases having a DRP being made, but also tracked by the IRO and evidenced.

As part of this action, the DRP system will be relaunched in 2017/18 to ensure that all managers understand what is required in terms of response, but equally how IROs will ensure they are SMART. Work has started within the CPRU to underline a statement of impact for the child within the concerns, but then clearly set out what needs to change. A number of previous DRPs had not been tracked or responded to. With the changes within different services of professionals, this created a delay on some occasions. Work has started to confirm outcomes and what matters have been resolved. DRPs are routinely shared with the IRO manager as they are sent, discussed with other managers to seek resolution. Whilst there has been no dispute resolution meetings recorded as yet, this will be an option going forward if required. The outcome will be no delay or drift for our children, enabling them to achieve success.

Stage	Child Protection	LAC	Grand total
Informal	277	281	558
Stage 1	73	120	193
Stage 2	8	45	53
Stage 3	1	4	5
Total	359	450	809



What are we doing about it?

- Ongoing active review/ discussion with active feedback from IROs to social workers, Team managers (or visa versa) to address practice, specific issues or concerns in cases.
- Increased tracking and review of DRPs by IROs to ensure they are resolved or escalated where required to the next stage.
- Implementation of Dispute resolution meetings between appropriate professionals within cases to discuss and identify positive outcomes for children
- Increase and effective recording by IRO's within children files to evidence and demonstrate where they made a difference, but also the voice of the child and the IRO footprint
- Before March 2018, to relaunch the DRP process, consider its effectiveness and the information/ qualitative data it provides.
- Before March 2018, to consider and implement how the system can be improved or enhanced to maximise the outcomes for our young people and organisation
- The Independent Reviewing service in consultation with other social care managers will consider and evaluate the common themes and trends emerging to tackle the issue of delay and reduce the need for resolution

Capacity and allocation

The IRO Handbook and Ofsted review of Local Authorities suggested that caseloads for IRO's should be between 50 and 70 if they are to ensure both qualitative, robust scrutiny and frequent contact with the young person. However, the actual number of children within a caseload is just one factor as we also need to consider children placed outside of Kirklees, large families and children with complex needs or disabilities. Additional duties for the IRO role also include discussion with the child's guardian, social worker and other key professionals to ensure the Local Authority is exercising its 'corporate parent' responsibilities. If statutory guidance requires local authorities to ensure IRO caseloads are manageable and they are able to spend individual time on a regular basis young people to ascertain their wishes/ feelings, it equally requires them to review progress in decision making and championing the voice of the child in terms of preventing delay.

From a capacity overview and from 2016/17, Kirklees has observed an increase in the number of requests from children becoming subject to CPP and LAC. The additional challenge of IRO's leaving, sickness absence and recruiting IRO's who are both experienced and good enough for our children in Kirklees has led to higher caseloads within the service. In practice, the balance of allocation for LAC and child protection work varies across individual IRO's and the general allocation for 1 FTE IRO is approximately 64 cases which are either primary CP or LAC. Like most other Local Authorities, child protection cases are based on family's where LAC is based on individual children. Therefore, the actual number of allocated case may not fully consider the complex issues or planning involved.

For example, if the guidance states that 1 FTE IRO's caseload should not exceed 70 cases, based on families) our IROs are within this requirement. However, over half of our LAC population are placed outside of Kirklees. This will place additional time and resources on both the IRO and the organisation to ensure these young people's needs are fully considered and acted upon. Equally, one IRO could have 38 families as CCP, but this equates to 82 children.

The current challenges faced by CPRU and other services will be on reducing the number of children subject to a CPP, but also the length of time these remain in place. In terms of LAC, the challenge will be to support young people being relocated back into Kirklees which will enable them to have access to local services and support, promote higher levels of contact with friends, family and professionals and reduce expenditure. There is national wide and very competitive market to recruit strong IRO's and Kirklees is actively seeking to establish itself as a strong and competitive employer. Whilst one challenge will be ensuring IROs have the required skills and expertise to take on the role, the other is retaining the IROs we have in a competitive market.

What are we doing about it?

- Allocation will consider issues such as complexity, geographical location and skill/ expertise of the IRO.
- A pro-rotta formula will be applied to IROs based on their contractual hours. For example, IROs that work 22 hours per week will be allocated between 35 to 40 children.
- We will actively seek and recruit a permanent workforce that will reduce the dependency on interim staff, but also promote the consistency for our young people

Impact of any issue on service delivery – what helps and what is hindering?

There is limited information available on how many LAC children aged 16-18 was presented and assessed by Housing and Children's Social Care under the "Southwark Judgement within Kirklees. In relation to children in need of respite and/or short breaks, where services under section 20(4) Children Act 1989 apply, there has been limited information available to confirm how many children would receive this service. In relation to disabled children receiving short break/respite care under section 17(6) Children Act 1989 or where a child in need plan is required, this necessitate that reviews should be carried out at least every 6 months.

In general, there are periods where demand for the CPRU increases such July or August (summer school break) or key holiday periods such as Christmas. This co-insides with planned leave and can place additional pressure to meet demands or availability to hold meetings. CPRU regularly considers the frequency of meetings to ensure the best use of resources and monitors cases where children may be subject to both LAC and CPC processes. There is general information to reflect peak trends, but it will be an area to explore in 2017/18.

Whilst there is ongoing scrutiny for young people who are subject to child protection plans for longer than 15 months and the reasoning behind this, the numbers of LAC at any one time are not static as children will join and leave throughout the year. For example, when they return home, are adopted or they reach the age of 18. Increased communication with other professionals and families has continued to develop alongside ensuring plans for permanency are established and promoted within the court arena if the plan is for the child not to return home. Our aim for 2017/18 is to consider and implement strategies that will enable us to plan future trends to effectively manage this.

If considering LAC specifically, the Guidance requires the local authority to carry out reviews as follows:

- The initial LAC review of a child's case is within 20 working days of the date on which the child becomes looked after
- The first review no more than three months after this point. It would be at this stage IRO's ask the question regarding permanency and parallel planning.
- The second and subsequent reviews no more than six months after the previous one
- Whenever the IRO directs; and
- When unplanned changes to the child's placement is required

The local authority is required to measure timeliness of reviews as a key performance indicator and this would include elements such as:

- children who are still in care at the end of the reporting period and have been in care for four weeks or more
- have not been placed for adoption
- they have not been made subject to a special guardianship order, residence order, or supervision order
- Their review was due to be held within the period.

Disruptions of long term placement and pre adoption placements are attended by IRO's. Where themes and learning have been observed, this has been taken forward both in feedback within the service, but also at relevant meetings such as permanency planning or legal gateway. Further development and review is taking place across the organisation to consider and implement more effective services for children, but also in terms of planning, decision making and resource allocation. CPRU objective for 2017/18 is to inform and be part of these discussions.

Qualitative information about the Independent Reviewing service

It is recognised that IRO's need to develop areas such as chairing CPC using the strengthening family's model and ensure the voice of the child is heard throughout meetings and reviews. Good practice around timeliness of reviews, permanency planning and regular dialogue between young people, IRO's, social workers and their carers between reviews is essential to ensure robust oversight and that drift in cases is eradicated. This will be an action for 2017/18 to consider and implement how we can draw in partner agencies to enhance and develop this further. There will be further scrutiny on how IROs record midway reviews to evidence plans are progressing in 2017/18.

Further review and investigation will take place on the use of the DRP system and whether this could act as a two way process between all professionals and IRO's. Whilst in one respect, it enables IRO's to feedback directly to managers where there are concerns; equally others could use the same system to voice their views of the IRO to ensure good plans. The Service manager for CPRU monitors DRPs and audits within supervision to reflect on what difference they made, how effective was the IRO and what outcome was achieved. Whilst this information provides objective quality assurance information designed to add value and improve the organisations services, it also provides an opportunity for IRO's to evidence their role in challenging practice, drift and delay to ensure that the Local Authority fulfils its role as Corporate Parent.

Personal Educational Plans (PEPs)

The 2010 Guidance requires the Local Authority to ensure that every looked after child has an effective and high quality personal education plan (PEP), which forms the education component of the child's overall care plan. IRO's have a responsibility to ensure that every young person deemed as LAC will have a current PEP in place (within 6 months of a child or young person becoming LAC). IRO's routinely review this within LAC reviews to promote the same outcomes we would want for our children. Whilst PEPs are completed on a termly basis, IRO's will consider whether the matter needs to be escalated where PEPs are not available.

Health Assessments

Kirklees continues to provide good health care for LAC and monitor arrangements for the child's health care in accordance with the health plan. Our ambition is to achieve 100% to support a high level of continuity and planning in the future which will promote an effective early warning system to ensure that all relevant young people are referred promptly; receive a service and this forms part of the review discussion. The use and embedding of health passports will be considered and investigated further in 2017/18.

The management of children's LAC reviews

Children are allocated to IRO's at the point of initial referral to the team. We will endeavour to keep the same IRO allocated throughout the life of the case or in respect of siblings to support consistency in decision making. During the last year we achieved a high level of consistency within IRO allocation. This is important to us as young people said they value having a consistent IRO and not repeating their stories. As part of the review process, all IRO's should visit the children prior to the review-taking place to ascertain their views. One of the ambitions for 2017/18 is to consider and investigate whether additional reporting tabs could be introduced to clearly reflect when children are seen by the IRO, how this contributed towards their meeting. At this time, the IROs have only one case note tab they can use to reflect direct IRO case recording. There is limited evidence of the IRO footprint and this will be an area of further investigation/scrutiny for 2017/18.

Although there is no current reporting data to accurately reflect where reviews took place, IRO's will ensure the review takes place where the child is most likely to feel relaxed and comfortable, with the first consideration given to the child's placement. The primary venue would therefore be within young people's placements unless there is specific and appropriate reason for a different venue. In review of the electronic outlook calendars from IRO's, this reflected a number of LAC reviews have taken place at external venues such as foster placements, residential placements and out of area. There are a high number of our LAC children placed outside of Kirklees and this has created some challenges in terms of travel, frequent contact with the young person. IRO's will explore LAC reviews taking place as a sequence of meetings to engage young people more within their reviews. Ongoing discussions will take place with partner agencies regarding other venues; appropriate times etc to increase the offer for our young people to choose from. This will also improve the timing of reviews to ensure education or activities are not affected. Although some meetings may be held within the CPRU, this is linked to safe working or may be at the young person request. Kirklees is reviewing cases where the child is placed outside of the area and our intention in 2017/18 is to consider which young people could be moved back to the area.

The level of Participation by children in their LAC Reviews

The participation of children and young people at their reviews is an essential part of the process. Participation continues to be measured in a variety of ways such as attendance at reviews, face-to-face meetings with their IRO, conveying their views through the use of an advocate etc. Young people nationally have said they prefer mobile apps, email and text as ways in which they can communicate with their IRO. As such, all IRO's are issued with mobile phones to facilitate communication in a secure way, but also ensure that the young people, parents and professionals are able to contact them directly.

In 2016/17, there were 396 LAC reviews held.

- 175 confirmed young person attends and speaks for themselves.
- 5 where the advocate spoke on behalf of the young person
- 59 where the young person did not attend: but had briefed their advocate.
- 4 young people attended, but did not offer any contribution
- 11 did not attend or offered a view and 51 which was recorded as young person did not attend, distance and communication.
- 65 young people were recorded as less than 4 years of age
- 4 were recorded as initial home visit or telephone support.

The current data information available does not indicate which young people was supported if they have additional needs or disabilities specifically.

IROs have engaged and lead on child engagement events. These will explore the views of young people, but also consider and engages professionals on how we can promote the young person in the LAC process. These are quarterly events led by the IROs. CPRU has identified that participation is a key area for service development. The next events are planned for August 2017. One outcome we want to achieve is to review the themes emerging regarding care planning processes from the child's perspective.

Part of the barriers to achieving a 100% may be linked to recording data on why the young person did not want to attend. For example, the minutes of a meeting will not always give a clear account of how the young person participated.

Further investigation will be undertaken in 2017/18 to accurately reflect and ensure that the quality assurance form completed after each review is correct, accurate and completed in a timely manner alongside the qualitative aspect of reflecting this within the minutes. Whilst young people have the right to refuse to participate, it remains our responsibility to maximise their participation and ensure their views and feelings are heard. We will continue to explore ways in which we can improve the LAC review experience for young people and therefore support them to engage more meaningfully with the process.

What are we doing about it?

- An information leaflet will be developed which is sent to young people to ensure they understand the responsibilities of their IRO and how they can communicate with them. The leaflet will set out in what the meeting is for and be age appropriate
- Young people are able to contact their IRO to express their views throughout the period of being LAC or CP.
- IRO's with the young person and social workers will consider robustly the venue for the next review rather than assuming current venue is suitable/appropriate
- IROs are leading on engagement events with young people to promote their voice and views. Analysis and reflection on the achievements will be undertaken in 2017/18.
- IROs receive weekly update reports and information. This will be utilised more fully to explore as a professional group, what actions we can take to improve the outcomes for our young people.
- Data information and reports are routinely shared with all IROs. Further scrutiny and investigation will take place in 2017/18 on what we have achieved, but also what are the gaps in services
- QA of Minutes from meetings and feedback from young people will be undertaken in 2017/18.
- Observations of practice and constructive feedback will be offered to improve the outcomes for children.

Support for IRO's

The Service managers have continued to attend the regional Network Meetings. These meetings provide a wider perspective of the IRO role, up to date information on current thinking and Government policy, guidance and initiatives. The network aims to raise standards for both CP and LAC across the country and to promote consistency of practice and service provision across all agencies. Within 2017/18, communication will be embedded by the Service manager and IRO's to share and pool good practice. There is also an area wide event for all IROs to attend in September 2017 and they attend quarterly learning events with other regional based IRO teams. Both events offer the opportunity to share learning, but keep ahead of changes in legislation and practice.

All IRO's receive regular and frequent formal/ informal supervision. Informal sessions are provided to discuss more immediate or urgent case issues. Team meetings take place monthly and the plan for 2017/18 will be to use part of the sessions to develop peer supervision, training and case discussion. There have been service development days held in February and June 2017 (Cafcass attended). We have planned these events to take place at quarterly periods going forward. Our ambition is to invite guest speakers or judiciary. In addition, we are exploring a joint Cafcass/ IRO training event to be held within the next year. Over the last year, IRO's attended other team meetings to share developments, feedback and learning within Kirklees. The Service manager has also attended other management meetings and meets with different managers on a weekly basis to consider the key themes, challenges and how we can achieve our ambitions for our children.

What are we doing about it?

- Driving forward change with the development and embedding of cross agency training, networking with other IRO teams and sharing good practice within Kirklees
- Developing our understanding of research linked to practice, what this means for young person.
- As a service, promoting a unified and consistent approach to develop communication, high practice standards and the child's voice
- Promoting the profile of the IRO and CPRU within the wider organisation
- Embedding a good and consistent approach both within our reports and records, but also demonstrating what good looks like

Challenges

One of the key challenges for the year ahead, remains with CPRU being fully staffed by skilled experienced permanent practitioners. IRO's must ensure and further evidence their involvement (footprint), challenge of practice and the child's voice at the centre of their work. The capacity arising from increased numbers of both LAC and CPC requests has raised a number of challenges. Our aim is to embed and develop stronger evidence based practice which will have greater positive impact for young people resulting in better outcomes. There will be further work and service development between all agencies to offer and provide a joined up service in relation to health, education and adult services. With the amendments of the Children Act 2010/15, this requires IROs and other professionals to consider the impact of this for young people.

There is ongoing review within the wider service to consider the internal organisational structural and make relevant changes. This includes areas such as improvement within quality assurance audits and utilising the information we gain from this. CPRU remains mindful of the impact of such changes can have, but will continue to be robust in their overview of cases between reviews and ensure that cases do not experience drift. Equally, we form part of the changes that need to be made to ensure the service we provide meets the young person's needs. Other areas of development for our LAC children remain with Pathway planning and analysis based assessments. Whilst the Guidance states these must be informed by good quality assessment that involves the young person at the centre, their family and professional agencies, they must also ensure that it is aspirational and will assist the young person with the transition and contingency plans in respect of health and education. As part of the developments in Kirklees, feedback from practice and reviews will highlight the need for decisions to be SMART, but also distributed within an appropriate timescale. Over the last year, there has been some delay in minutes being formally sent, but we have a clear plan to address this.

Quality Assurance of the Independent Reviewing service

The Independent Reviewing service continues to review and quality assures its practice via a number of key approaches such as:

- Case discussion and consultation between IRO's and the Service manager
- Regular critical and reflective supervision alongside caseload management of individual IRO's
- Through the continued use of the IRO as the critical friend
- The Service manager completing practice observations and audits which are incorporated into supervision to strengthen the IRO role or challenge what needs to improve

Within 2017/18 and as part of supervision, the Service manager will dip sample case notes and minutes/decisions. Equally, they will review previous actions to consider what difference the IRO made in the case. Evaluating the DRP records and allocations reports is a key factor when reviewing individual and service performance along with complaints, comments and compliments. This will be formally recorded within recorded supervision documents and used to inform annual Performance Development Reviews or Service development plans.

We will develop and embed a service development plan for both the IRO's and LADO service to reflect the findings of the last Ofsted review and the changes taking place within the organisation. In relation to team performance and development, actions to improve the quality assurance, findings from audits and case practice will be used and monitored through supervision and team development meetings. Ongoing audits will provide more clear evidence to improve outcomes that are focused, child centered and where the voice of the child is at the centre. For example, scrutiny and review of section 20 cases, children subject to CP plans for longer than 18 months is planned for 2017/18. As data reports evolve, this will lead to more accurate live reports being produced and monitor these improvements year on year.

Achievements and impact of Independent Reviewing service

Areas for consideration include:

- Children and young people's views – how can we capture their voice, evidence our involvement and what difference we made for the young people
- Children and young people chairing their own reviews but also the timeliness and qualitative aspects of these. For example, SMART outcomes
- Contributions and participation of partner agencies
- Quality of Care and permanency planning and tracking and monitoring of Care Plans
- Clear management oversight and evidence of decision making
- IROs are consistent, evidence their involvement and demonstrate where we made a difference

Overview and Summary

In 2016/17, CPRU considered a number of actions as below. The actions were:

<p>Children and young Peoples engagement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child friendly care plans for all relevant children 2. Increase in participation in child protection and Looked after reviews both via advocacy and Looked After children chairing their own reviews where appropriate. 3. Monitor and improve time spent with children by IRO's 4. Pilot the Child Centred Review model 5. Hold an engagement event with Looked After Children and young people 	<p>Care plans are not always consistent. The majority may reflect the young person's view, the areas of risk and what was required. Our plans need to reflect clearly the areas of CSE, MISSING and radicalisation. There is a small gang culture in Kirklees and we need to consider how this would be reflected in planning.</p> <p>The use of advocate to support young people has continued. However, we need to consider and evidence what difference this made for our children in 2017/18.</p> <p>Although there is no precise data to confirm where young people chaired their own meetings or how frequent they met with the IROs, this is an area of ongoing development. The engagement events continued and led by IROs in the service, but further evaluation is required to outline what difference this made, how we can focus the events to the children who do not always engaged with professionals.</p>
<p>Staffing /Workforce</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the number of permanent IRO's and CP Chairs 2. Provide Specialist training for IRO's and CP Chairs 3. Improve the management of sickness and build resilience within the team 4. Further support and provide management oversight of the development of the LADO role 	<p>There is a recruitment campaign planned for both .5 service manager position and the IROs. Training at regional events, adoption and permanency has included IROs participation. The performance management within the CPRU has continued the resilience and support for IROs. In respect of LADO, initial work was undertaken in 2016/17 and this is an area of ongoing development/ review. Further work is planned to develop and enhanced this role further in 2017/18.</p>

<p>Quality Assure our own practice</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Observe each IRO and CP Chair in LAC Review or CP Conference 2. Undertake an Audit of Repeat CP Plans 3. Continue to improve the strategy meeting to ICPC within 15 days performance 4. Focused piece of work including case audit and analysis for those children who have been subject to Child protection plans for over 2 years 	<p>Limited observation of practice has taken place, further scrutiny and feedback will be undertaken in 2017/18. Significant work has been undertaken and supported by the 2 auditors in post alongside the IROs to consider children subject to CCP for periods above 15 months. Further work and audit activity will be undertaken in the year ahead. Audits are shared on a routine basis and consideration has been given to what the learning from these was. For 2017/18, this will be more embedded and evaluation undertaken to assess what difference we made.</p>
<p>Quality Assure Practice in children's social care</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further develop interface meeting with children's social care around themes identified by the service 2. Implement Challenge meetings for cases of CP Plans 15 months plus 3. Put in place quarterly reporting of leaning to Senior Leadership Team 4. Increase monitoring and tracking activities between reviews 	<p>IROs have attended some team meetings, shared feedback. It has not always been evidenced what difference this made, the impact and how the other teams fed back on CPRU. Reporting takes place between all services and with senior managers. There has been tracking in cases, although this is not always evident in the children's files. In 2017/18, IROs will evidence and track more robustly where drift or delay took place. This will be supported by clear and accurate DRPs where required. Performance will be reviewed in supervision with the service manager</p>
<p>Whole Service Improvement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be system leaders for the Risk Sensible model 2. Develop regular feedback sessions with the KSCB manager to track and manage emerging themes and improve communication and working practices, to attend team meetings and develop interface for themes to explore and focus upon. 3. Deliver training to all managers about the roles and responsibilities of IRO's and care planning regulations 	<p>The risk sensible model was applied, but this has not achieved the success we hoped for. Themes and issues have been identified, but not always routinely highlighted and addressed. Training and awareness on the IRO role has not always taken place, partly due to the demands within the CPRU but also in relation to availability.</p>

Recommendations for future development

The service objectives for 2017/18 are:

- To continue with the improvement in effective oversight and challenge by the IROs, in the best interests of young people.
- To be able to evidence and support this from feedback by children, young people and their families.
- To further improve timeliness, quality and effectiveness of reviews from both LAC and CPC's.
- To deliver our services in a culturally competent and personalised manner recognising the diversity of our local population.
- To ensure a high standard of evidence based practice in relation to recording, SMART outcomes and midway review of cases.
- To drive up practice and assessment of risk by sharing and developing other parts of the organisation. For example, more frequent attendance at other team meetings to share and receive feedback.
- IROs being consistently involved in audits, tracking progress of cases and sharing their knowledge and expertise.
- IROs will embed the recording and evidence of the involvement with young people to demonstrate what difference they made, but also how this improved outcomes.
- We will continue with improving relationships and developing links with Cafcass, other IRO's teams on good practice
- We will continue with the development and employment of a permanent based workforce which supports the planning and support for young people, thus reducing the need for interim staff and subsequently reducing costs to the organisation.
- We will relaunch the DRP process (to be known as resolution process) in 2017/18. In cases where escalation is required, these will be clear, accurate and tracked. These will be reviewed and considered in supervision with IROs

- Team development days and events will consider how as a team will achieve our ambitions, the progress of these and use data intelligence to understand and reflect on our performance.
- We will consider and review

During the next year, the Independent Reviewing Service will continue to focus upon the development of its quality assurance and practice development functions. This will include Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) outcomes in order to more appropriately measure the impact for children and young people. The Independent Reviewing Service will continue to work with young people and parents to seek feedback from them about the service we provided. This feedback will enable us to improve the services we provide both within CPRU, but also to improve their life chances. The Service managers will continue to regularly quality assure minutes and plans, observe IRO's and ensure the standards are maintained and best practice is shared.

CPRU will develop a service plan and information regarding leaflets on LAC and CPC's. Peer and review evaluations will be explored with a (good) comparator to support further development of the CPRU. Peer audits will triangulate with outcomes, performance data and feedback and establish a stronger presence in planning and communication within the wider service. In 2017/18, there will be further team development days which will focused on developing the team identify and achievements.