

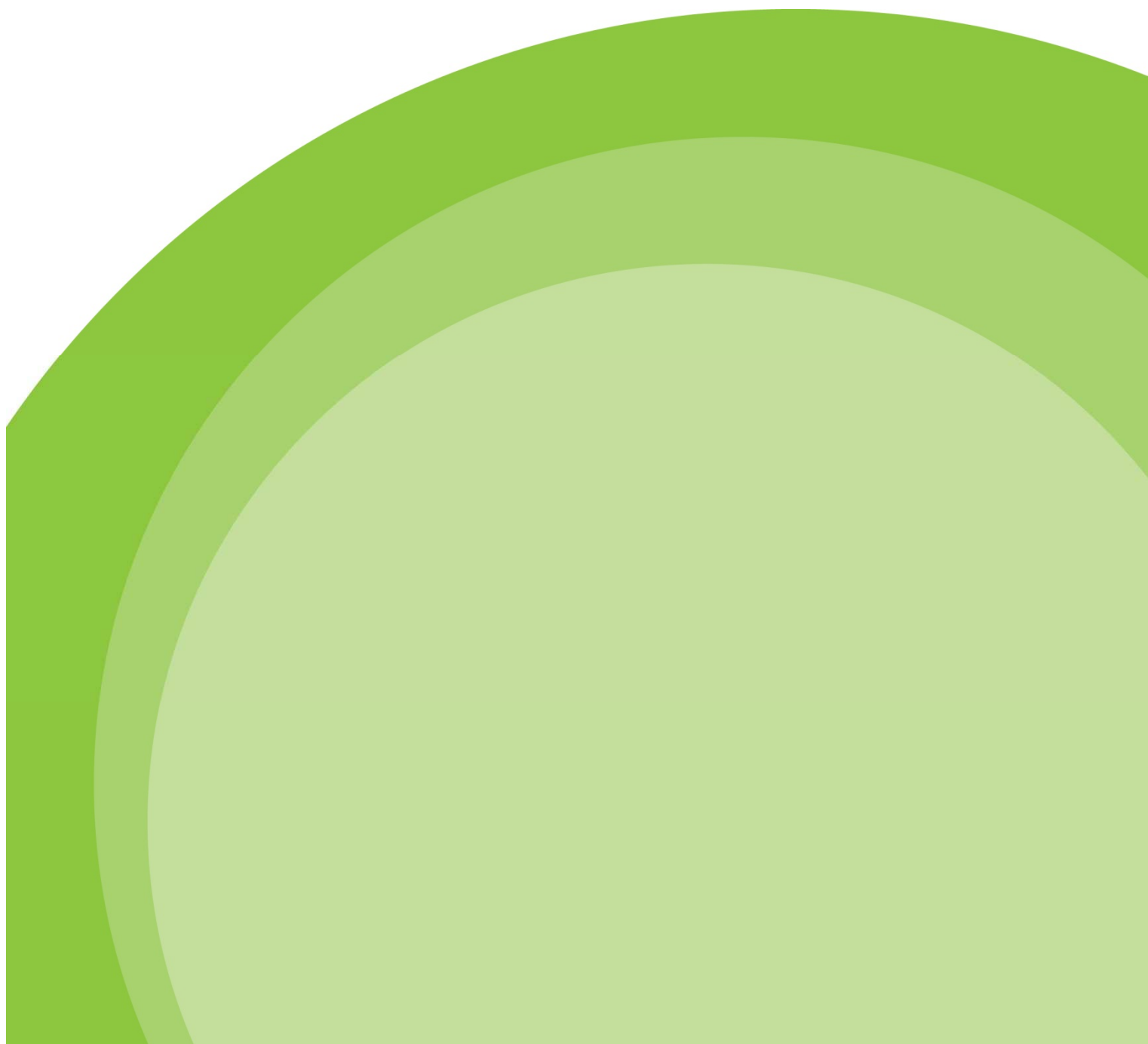
Central Bedfordshire Council
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Quality Assurance
Children Services Operations



Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report April 2013 – March 2014

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



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1.0 Purpose of service and legal context

1.1 The Independent Review Officers' (IRO) Service is set within the framework of the IRO Handbook, linked to the Care Planning Regulations and Guidance, which were introduced in April 2011. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of care planning for children in care and for challenging drift and delay. The responsibility of the IRO has changed from the management of the review process to a wider overview of the case including regular monitoring and follow-up between reviews.

1.2 The recently published National Children's Bureau research entitled 'The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) in England' (March 2014) provides an evidence base about the way the role actually operates in order to inform future policy and practice.

The foreword written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson makes the following comment:

'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 IRO Report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO service in Central Bedfordshire as required by statutory guidance.

2.0 Professional Profile of the IRO Service

2.1 In Central Bedfordshire the Independent Reviewing Officers' (IRO) function is undertaken by Review Managers in the Conference and Review (CRS) within the Quality Assurance Service. Review Managers undertake two main areas of work: chairing of Child Protection Conferences and Looked after Children's Reviews. In addition a small number of short break reviews when provided under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 are chaired by an IRO. One worker undertakes the Local Authority Designated Officer role, in combination primarily with chairing CP conferences, but does review six looked after children for whom she has remained the IRO to provide continuity.

2.2 In April 2013 the service had an establishment of 6.8 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) posts. This equated to 8 Review Managers of whom three were full time, 5 part-time. Three workers were agency staff covering sickness and maternity and at that point a vacant growth post. The staffing position over the year has been challenging with changes in permanent staff being covered by further use of agency workers. However having successfully recruited three new permanent staff members in Autumn 2013, two of whom are in post, one starting in May 2014, the situation is much improved. The rise in the number of children on child protection plans and looked after children led the establishment to be increased to 7.8 posts. With the new worker joining the service will comprise nine Review Managers, six permanent and three long-serving agency workers.

2.3 In terms of diversity the team has a good gender balance reflecting the looked after children population. Workers come from a range of backgrounds but do not fully reflect the ethnic mix of the population. Ideally the workforce would reflect the diversity of the Looked After Children population it is serving, but within a small group a wide representation has not been achievable. Within the social work teams there is a wider range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds represented.

2.4 All Review Managers have as required a considerable number of years' experience. Within the group there is a wide range of experience, with IROs previous roles including front line social work with Children with Disabilities, Looked after Children and Child

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Protection, supervisory and managerial experience, residential experience and previous work as Children's Guardians. Several of the team live locally, others in neighbouring authorities. There is a good knowledge of the local area within the team.

2.5 All of the Review Managers undertake additional roles and duties, either as representatives of the IRO service or as part of their wider role. These include:

- Monthly Quality Assurance Liaison meetings with social work teams as part of the QA strategy
- Attendance at Multi Agency Public Protection meetings as the Children's Services representative
- Supervision of the Parent Partnership Service which sits within CRS as an off-line management role
- Regular liaison with National Youth Advocacy Service including review of the service level agreement for provision of Advocacy and Independent visiting
- Contribution to LSCB training
- Participation in rolling monthly audit programme
- Attendance at Frameworki practitioner group
- Attendance at quarterly liaison meetings with Cafcass

3.0 Arrangement for Reviews

3.1 The social worker and IRO share responsibility for the review.

3.2 The IRO Handbook sets the expectation that children and young people are included in an age appropriate way in deciding on the arrangement for the review – their review.

3.3 Deciding who needs to attend, where the review should be held, arranging invitations and consultations, providing reports, recording the discussion and ensuring timely distribution of the review record, involve co-ordination between social worker, IRO and administrative staff. Business processes are set within the work-flow and formatting of the Frameworki, the children's case management and recording system.

3.4 This combination of factors provides considerable challenge to providing a child-friendly child centred process. The changes to the recording system for Looked After Children reviews in October 2013 initially resulted in reduced effectiveness. Staff found the Frameworki process complicated and the interdependence of the work flow caused some frustrations and delay.

3.5 The IRO and Looked After Children services have worked together to streamline the process and ensure IROs and Social Workers each take responsibility for their part of the process.

3.6 The IRO service is responsible for sending out consultation leaflets in advance of the review. The social workers are responsible for the invitation of the appropriate professionals. It is expected that this will be agreed in discussion between the social worker and IRO and that the child's views be sought.

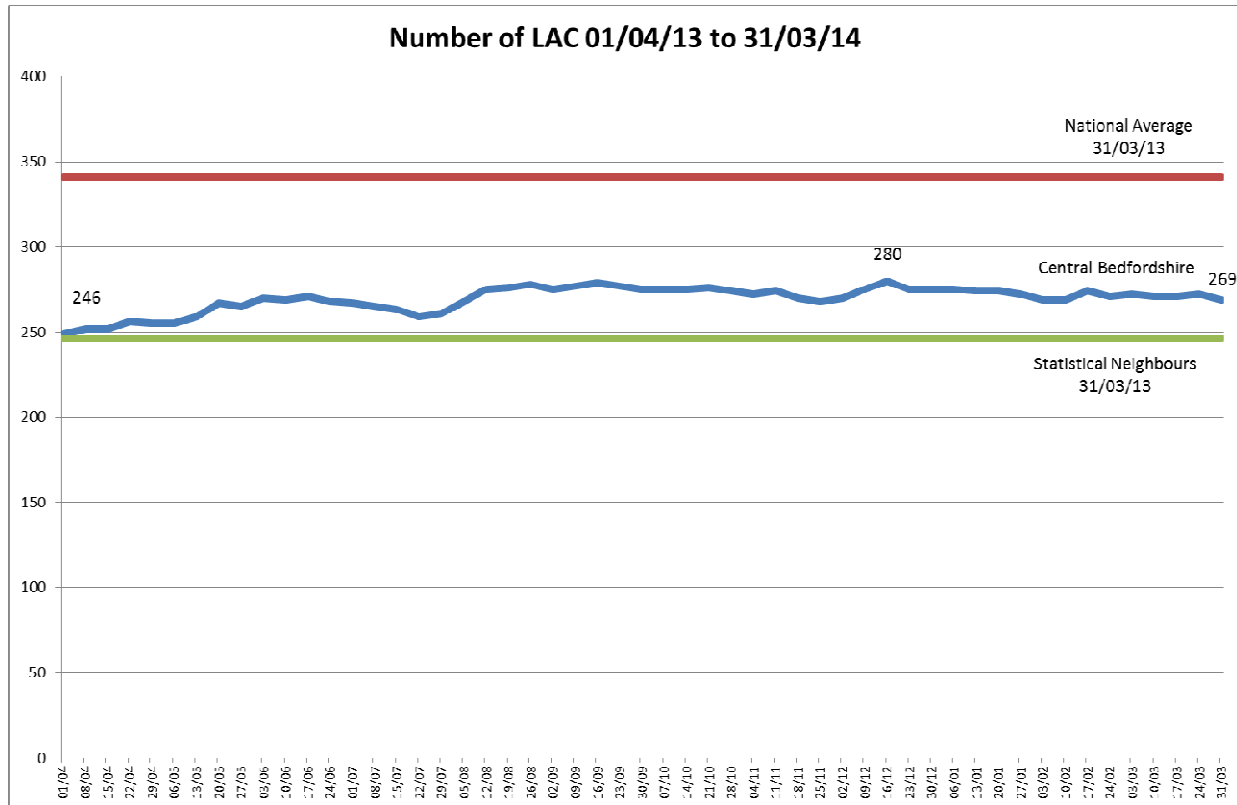
3.7 It is recognised that the documentation is not working as well as we would wish and two pieces of work are underway to review and improve written reports. A working group of IROs and Looked After Children team managers, together with the Children's Case Management team are seeking to optimise the way Frameworki supports practice in this area. The IRO service is consulting with the Children in Care Council on making the reports more child friendly.

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4.0 Quantitative Information about the IRO Service DRAFT DATA- yet to be validated

A total of 343 children have been through the review system in the 12 months ending 31.3.2014.

A total of 777 reviews were held in the year



4.1 The Looked After Children population over the year is shown above. The year end figure is currently reported as 268 up from 246 in March 2013. The comparison to national rates and statistical neighbours is also shown.

4.2 The IRO Handbook recommends that case loads for IROs need to be between 50 and 70. Nationally, the average caseload for a IROs ranges between 50 and 95 identified in a recent (December 2013) national benchmarking survey. The size of caseload alone does not indicate the workload for each IRO; the number of other responsibilities, the number of out of county placements, large family groups and complex case needs will also impact on the work load. The on-going monitoring of the case and the timeliness of case recording and administrative tasks can be compromised in times of workload pressures. There can also be variation in reporting where IRO and Child Protection responsibilities are shared. Using a per child measure caseloads in Central Bedfordshire Council have been as high as 80, when CP numbers were at their peak in summer/early autumn 2013. Since that time Child Protection numbers have reduced and staffing improved and IRO's are now averaging case loads of 63 which is within guidance and allows sufficient capacity for the overview role to be appropriately undertaken. It is this area of work and the timeliness of case recording and administrative tasks which are somewhat compromised in times of workload pressures.

4.3 Composition of the Looked After Children Population (*Provisional 21/05/14*)

Total **268**

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Ethnicity

	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	other
CBC Local School Population	89%	5%	2%	2%	1%
National Funded School Population 31/01/12	78%	4%	9%	5%	2%
CBC Children Looked After 31/03/14	85%	12%	0%	2%	1%
National Children Looked After 31/03/13	78%	9%	4%	7%	2%

Age

Age at 31 March 2014					
	BOYS	GIRLS	Total CBC	% CBC	National 31/03/13
Under 1	3	8	11	4%	6%
1-4	27	29	56	21%	18%
5-9	42	26	68	25%	19%
10-15	49	42	91	34%	36%
16-17	25	17	42	16%	20%
18 & over and placed in a community home	0	0	0		
TOTAL	146	122	268	100%	100%
CBC %	54%	46%			
31/03/13 National %	55%	45%			

Legal Status

Legal Status at 31 March 2014			
	CBC	% CBC	National 31/03/13
Care Orders Interim	35	13%	17%
Care Orders Full	114	43%	42%
Voluntary agreements under s.20 (single period of accommodation)	78	29%	27%
Placement Order	40	15%	14%
Sentenced to <i>CYPA 1969</i> supervision order with residence requirement	1	1%	-
On remand, committed for trial, or detained	0	0	-
Emergency orders or police protection	0	0	-
TOTAL	268	100%	100%

Placement

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Placement at 31 March 2014			
	CBC	% CBC	National 31/03/13
Foster placement with relative or friend	48	18%	75%
Placement with other foster carer	158	59%	
Secure Unit	0	11%	9%
Homes and hostels	27		
Hostels and other supportive residential placements	3		
Residential schools	2	1%	1%
Other residential settings	1	1%	1%
Placed for adoption (including placed with former foster carer)	14	5%	4%
Placed with own parents	1	1%	5%
In lodgings, residential employment or living independently	14	5%	5%
Absent from agreed placement	0	0%	-
Other placement	0	0%	-
TOTAL	268	100%	100%

5.0 Qualitative Information about the IRO Service

5.1 The Timeliness of Reviews

Our target for timeliness was 100%, which was not achieved.

As at 31 March 2014 98.9% (263/266) were held on time

This figure relates to the rolling year with definition from 903 returns "of those children who had been looked after for at least 20 working days, the percentage whose Reviews had all been on time over the past year". This indicator excludes children placed for adoption.

5.2 The timing of reviews is specified in regulation. The first review has to be held within 20 working days of the child/young person becoming looked after, the second within 3 months of the first. Subsequent reviews at intervals of no more than 6 months. Reviews will in addition be held if there is a significant change of circumstances or of the Care Plan.

5.3 There were 3 children and young people who were reported having a late review at the end of the year.

- One was a late report of a placement with a connected person, the child only reported as being looked after on day 20.
- One was an error when a review date was changed due to social worker's illness. An admin error led to a wrong due date being given to the IRO who did not spot the error and booked out of timescales.
- The third was also a date change error. The IRO and social worker had agreed to change but the planned date was cancelled without a confirmed date being re-booked. Neither the IRO, Social Worker nor the Administrator picked up the error until the due date had passed.

There is not currently a performance report which can identify this type of review date error. Reporting is retrospective. Development of a report that can identify planned date

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errors has been requested. In the absence of a reporting mechanism IRO's and administrators double check dates.

6.0 Children's Participation

- 6.1 The IRO Handbook states that it is expected that the child if s/he is of sufficient age and understanding will be present for the whole of the Review, but this will depend on the circumstances of each individual case. The IRO may decide, in consultation with the social worker that attendance of the child is not in the child's best interests. If the child does not attend, other arrangements should be made for their involvement. It is one of the specific responsibilities of the IRO to promote the voice of the child and to ensure their wishes and feelings are represented. It may be appropriate for a younger child to be observed or for the IRO to interact with that child through play or reading in a placement setting. If the child's first language is not English, as for example with the unaccompanied asylum seeking children an interpreter will be provided. A child with disabilities may perhaps be observed in school or placement and their needs and feelings be discussed with their carers if a direct conversation is not possible.
- 6.2 The Review Record will include information on how the child participates and how their wishes and feelings were included. Participation is monitored by recording a participation code. Children aged under 4 are excluded. For all other children it is expected that they should attend, or that their views should be represented.
- 6.3 An audit was undertaken in March 2014 in respect of twenty eight children and young people who had become newly looked after during October to December 2013 in order to assess compliance with the expectations that IRO's are seeing children, seeking their views and monitoring progress of the case.
- 6.4 In the majority of the cases the IRO did meet with the child separately 71% (20/28). This is improved on the previous audit of 62% and now includes an expectation to see all children, not just those aged 4 and over. In all cases for children aged four or over their views were ascertained and recorded as part of the review process. Younger children were in all but one case observed in placement, and a record of the observation was included in the review record. The child who was not seen was a new-born baby.

Attendance at the Review meeting varied according to the age of the child

Audit Findings				
Age Group	Under 4	4-10 years	11+ years	Total
Attended/ Present	2	1	6	9
Did not attend	9	9	1	19

IRO recording of case notes was evident in 19/28 cases (67%) A case note type of CRS case note was added to the electronic case record in January 2014 to facilitate easy identification of the IRO case overview. Audit findings have been fed back .It has been identified that for some workers this change of practice introduced last year has not become fully embedded. This will be monitored and further audited.

- 6.5 Participation is considered an important performance indicator. The outcome for participation is not yet available. The provisional figure is 98% Data quality checking is still in progress at the time of writing.
- 6.6 Data available has identified 5 children who did not participate in their reviews. An explanation of these five young people who did not participate is given below:

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- There are two young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers who had been age assessed as 17 years. Both went missing very shortly after becoming looked after and have remained missing. One young person reached assessed age of 18 in February 2014 the other will do so in July 2014. CBC are revising the policy in respect to this group of young people such that in future if all appropriate checks have been made and there are no safeguarding concerns consideration can be made as to whether the young person should be considered to have de-accommodated themselves.
- A young man aged 17 declined to attend his final review in June 2013 also refusing to meet with the IRO or complete a consultation document. He is recorded as refusing to participate and wishing to dis-engage from services. He was 18 in October 2013.
- A 15 year old boy did not attend his November review which was held at school as he was unfortunately not in school that day. The IRO made 4 attempts to see him at his residential unit. On each occasion he chose to make other arrangements. He did participate in his subsequent review meeting individually with his IRO. It is possible the change of gender to a male IRO may have encouraged his engagement.
- A girl of 9 did not attend her first review in August 2013 which was held in the office. The plan was rehabilitation which was reported to be her wish and occurred in September 2013.

Appendix 1. Gives some examples of the illustrates way young people's views are captured.

7.0 Parental Participation

- 7.1 The IRO Handbook advises that the IRO should seek the views of birth parents and any other adults with parental responsibility and other significant persons in the child's life, for example extended family members. Parent's active participation is achieved through attendance, completion of a consultation booklet, representation via an advocate or in writing or consultation by phone or in person with the IRO separately from the review meeting. The record of the review notes those attending and those consulted as part of the review process. The IRO records qualitative information and feedback on the quality of practice in respect of appropriate involvement of parents and extended family. Quantitative data is now recorded on the database; this was not available last year. As this is a new reporting facility there has not been in year validation. Going forward we will have monthly reporting which will give a more detailed breakdown and allow for monthly data validation, which will improve the quality and detail of the information.

Parental attendance at the review	Parental consultation	Parents deceased or whereabouts unknown.
48%	78%	6%

The parental consultation figure includes the 48% who actually attended the review.

8.0 Service User Feedback

- 8.1 IROs will respond promptly and informally to questions and queries arising from young people their parents and carers, often through a telephone conversation. On most occasions discussion and explanation resolve the matter.

When complaints do arise, they are often part of a wider complaint about Children's Services actions in which case (CRS) have contribute to the response. Conference and

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Review have also responded to feedback from individual families and young people Issues that have arisen are:

- Concern about the wording of a review record. This resulted in either an amendment or facilitation of the differing opinions being reflected and noted.
 - Management of parental participation in the review process. This issue has arisen previously and investigation has identified two areas for improvement in respect of communication.
- a) Firstly the wording of the consultation leaflet has been revised.
- b) Secondly the IRO Manager is part of a working group with Customer Relations drawing up guidance for staff on managing service users who present persistent challenges, following investigation of the complaint and an outcome being achieved.

9.0 The Conduct of the Organisation in Relation to the Review

- 9.1 Conference and Review (CRS) sit within the Quality Assurance Service of Children's Social Care and the quality assurance role is central to the IRO's responsibilities. The IRO is responsible for monitoring the performance of the Local Authority, including effective challenge of poor practice, and has a crucial role in ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as a corporate parent for all the children it looks after.
- 9.2 The IRO completes two monitoring forms after each LAC Review. One of these sits within the Frameworki review episode and records information about the arrangements, who has been consulted, participation by parents and children, completion of required documentation, Health Assessment Personal Education Plan, and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. In addition a word form gives qualitative feedback in respect of care planning, children's participation, and appropriate involvement with family and partnership working with other agencies.
- 9.3 The line manager receives both feedback forms. Feedback on practice will include good practice as well as any areas of concern. The line manager will share with the social worker in supervision and if any identified actions are needed ensure these are completed.
- 9.4 Conference and Review hold monthly Quality Assurance meetings with each of the fieldwork teams. A fostering manager also attends which helps to pick up any concerns within placement. A summary report is provided by CRS which is also circulated to the relevant heads of service. This process ensures that feedback on practice is shared with the individual worker and manager and an overview is given to heads of service.

10.0 Conduct of the Organisation in Relation to the Case

Procedures for Resolution of Concerns

- 10.1 The Central Bedfordshire Conference and Review Service focuses on immediate problem solving with social workers and team managers whenever possible and will always begin to address issues in a constructive co-operative manner. Central Bedfordshire already has in place a Quality Assurance process described above through which most concerns will continue to be raised and resolved.
- 10.2 However the IRO Handbook strengthens the role of the IRO and requires the authority to have a formal Disputes Resolution Policy.

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- 10.3 In the guidance, the IRO has a duty to monitor the Local Authority's performance overall, not just in respect of the review of the child/young person's case. So, the IRO should identify poor practice, and must negotiate with the Local Authority's managers up to the highest level. The IRO is required to consider a referral to the Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, where the child/young person's human rights have not been observed. It is not necessary for all efforts to resolve the dispute through this process to have been unsuccessful, before the IRO does this; rather, it is anticipated that referral to CAFCASS will usually occur when a dispute raised through this process has not been resolved in a timely way.
- 10.4 If an IRO considers that a matter involves a breach of a child's human rights the matter should immediately be raised as a formal dispute.
- 10.5 Most other concerns will be raised with the Team Manager through the existing Quality Assurance process. A 'RAG system' is now in place and ensuring that more urgent or serious matters are highlighted. Going forward information will be collated to allow reporting of RAG data by month and by team.
- 10.6 A failure to respond or a failure to resolve a concern through the QA process will lead to a formal dispute being raised, in accordance with the dispute resolution procedure.
- 10.7 Most concerns continue to be raised and resolved through our quality assurance process. Areas of concern that have been identified have included the following issues:
- Late / poor quality case recording
 - Timescales / responses on Frameworki
 - Concerns re contact
 - Concerns re pathway plans/ care plans
 - Failure to consult with IROs
 - Concerns about the services offered to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
 - Concerns about timely progression of life-story work

The use of the formal dispute resolution process and the interface between the informal and formal process has been inconsistent and will be reviewed.

The follow-up and feedback mechanism within the QA process has been revised and is working well, but there is a need to clarify further the nature and timing of referral into the formal process.

- 11.0 Any resource Issues that are putting at risk the delivery of a quality service for Looked after Children**
- 11.1 Capacity within the IRO service had become stretched by the increasing numbers of Children on Child Protection Plans in the summer of 2013, but with both increased resource in CRS and a reduction in CP numbers, CRS are now appropriately resourced to deliver an effective IRO service.
- 11.2 Staff turnover and the use of agency staff, particularly if short-term both within CRS and in the Looked After Children's Teams has been identified as an issue that can adversely impact on the quality of service to children and young people. Young people require continuity in their relationships with their social workers and IRO's and staff changes whilst sometimes unavoidable are detrimental. This is recognised and is being addressed.

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12.0 Children in particular circumstances

Children Missing from Care and Children at Risk of Harm

- 12.1 Of those children who go missing 25% are at risk of harm and sexual exploitation. There are particular concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation and concerns such as drug and alcohol misuse and violent crime. Looked After Children missing from their placements are particularly vulnerable. Independent Reviewing Officers are advised by social workers whenever a young person they are reviewing is missing from placement. Social work managers ensure day to day oversight and tracking of young people who are missing and hold timely multi agency strategy meeting to co-ordinate attempts to locate young people and plan for their return. When concerns escalate, the stability of a placement is threatened or the placement can no longer keep a young person safe, IROs are advised mid review of the issues and can request an early review.
- 12.2 Where there are concerns regarding children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation IROs can encourage practitioners to refer individual children to the Child Sexual Exploitation Panel. These are multi-agency information sharing meeting meetings, which support agencies to implement plans to respond to child sexual exploitation and prevent the risk of harm to children by proactively seeking to disrupt the behaviour of those seeking to exploit others and advise on preventative and safety measures for those most at risk. All young people looked after by Central Bedfordshire Council from the age of 11+ have been risk assessed by using a sexual exploitation assessment matrix by their social worker. This assessment is reviewed every 6 months by the team and is available for the IRO to review as apart of the LAC review process.

Children placed outside the Council Area

- 12.3 19.1%* of Central Bedfordshire's looked after population are placed in another local authority and more than 20 miles from their home address. Local authorities in which the children are placed if not Central Bedfordshire are advised that a Central Bedfordshire child has moved into their area. Central Bedfordshire and the IROs retain responsibility for the child and their care plan. All children placed out of council area are visited at least once every six months by their IRO and encouraged to contact their IRO between reviews should they wish to talk to someone independent of their case and/or they have concerns. Referral to the Independent Visitor Service is encouraged for children where appropriate.

* (48/251 total looked after children at year end with a distance from home identified)

13.0 Annual Work Programme of the IRO Service i.e. Priority Areas for Improvement

- 13.1 The Quality Assurance Service Plan for 2013/14 incorporated actions arising from the work strands in the 2012 Ofsted Improvement Plan. In addition it addressed improvements identified by the externally commissioned Peer Review of 2013 and the revised Quality Assurance Framework.
- 13.2 The IRO service held a facilitated workshop to identify strengths and areas for development within the service and in the way the service works with the front line teams contributing to improving the quality and consistency of the council's services for looked after children and improving their outcomes.
- 13.3 The need to improve the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance Feedback loop has been identified. The monitoring form was revised to reflect Ofsted grading's and we undertook an exercise with managers to engage them and test thresholds. Concerns about consistent attendance at Quality Assurance liaison meetings were raised with Heads of

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Service and have improved. From CRS instead of having a rota for attendance we have introduced linked Review Managers to service areas to improve consistency and follow through. Preparation for the meetings has been improved by advance circulation of a summary document. In response to this teams are attending with updated information ensuring that issues are not just noted but resolved.

- 13.4 Research In Practice facilitated an away day for the IRO service, jointly with Bedford Borough IROs to consider the development of the IRO role and service in the light of legislative and policy changes and informed by research. The review of research, which included the findings of the Ofsted thematic audit, was followed by workshop time for Central Bedfordshire IROs to develop their own action plan. Work strands were identified in respect of the voice of the child, care planning, care proceedings, skills and Continuous Professional Development and challenge and independence.
- 13.5 The IRO Service are working with the Children in care Council seeking children's views on the way the IRO service consults and involves young people in their reviews, ensures they are informed about the IRO role and are aware of how they can contact their IRO and how their IRO will keep in contact with them .
- 13.6 We have introduced a CRS case note to ensure IRO contacts with the child and their family are recorded and that IRO case monitoring and where necessary challenge is also recorded.
- 13.7 The IRO service has worked with the LAC service and Cafcass and with Legal Services to implement the changes arising from the new Public Law Outline process. There is now good liaison with Cafcass and Central Bedfordshire Council is implementing the Cafcass /IRO protocol.
- 13.8 The need for training and development opportunities has been recognised. Together with neighbouring authorities and Cafcass a workshop was commissioned from BAAF on sibling assessments which were offered to IROs, Children's Guardians and Social Workers.
- 13.9 The Quality Assurance Service Plan for 2014/15 will incorporate further actions arising from the National Children's Bureau Report. The report found that the role in ensuring high quality care planning has yet to be fully realised. The fundamental ingredient is the importance of listening to children and ensuring independent challenge. The IRO must be on the side of the child. The report identifies six key factors that support an effective service.
 - Professional status and respect, demonstrated both by resourcing the service properly and by openly giving IROs 'permission' to challenge
 - IROs with the right skills. Particularly the ability to communicate with children and young people and to know how and when to challenge
 - Access to expert advice, including independent legal advice and opportunities for reflective practice
 - Dispute resolution protocols that work. From informal conversations to the escalation of cases to senior management
 - Child-centred IROs who demonstrate their commitment to each child and work out the best way to seek their views
 - Having a focus on outcomes, and holding agencies to account for their contribution towards these, rather than 'box-ticking
- 13.10 The report makes recommendations at National, Local Authority and service level. In Central Bedfordshire we are in a good position in respect of the areas identified and already have some improvement measures in place.

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- Commissioning role specific training and support
- Maintaining contact with children and young people and recording in the case record
- Holding workshops with the Children in Care Council to gain feedback from children and young people.
- Undertake direct observations of IRO practice through peer and management observations.

The recommendations for the IRO Service will be incorporated into the Service Plan and IRO Personal Development Reviews. The IRO Manager together with the Head of Service and Assistant Director will review and recommendations made at local authority area and identify areas for development.

Report prepared by
Isabel Wilks
Team Manager
Conference and Review Service

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Appendix 1

Case examples illustrating how the child's views are sought and evidenced

- Child A**, a boy of 15 in a local residential placement. **A** had declined to attend his last review and declined four attempts by his IRO to meet with him. As his IRO was then leaving it was decided to allocate a Male IRO in the hope that **A** would respond more positively to a male worker. Mark has been his IRO for six months, since he joined CBC in December. Mark visited **A** in placement to introduce himself and follow-up on the review **A** had declined to attend. **A** engaged well on this visit and there was a discussion about possible 16 plus options. A second planned visit was re-arranged at **A**'s request. This took place before the next LAC review. At this visit his views about his placement, contact, school and his pathway plan were discussed. **A** agreed to chair his own LAC review. At the review **A** followed a written agenda, and guided the meeting, giving the professionals present the opportunity to speak. **A** as chair was able to put across his own views and join in discussions too. Feedback is being sought from **A** as to how he found this experience and whether he has any suggestions that would improve the process.
- Child B**, a girl of 16 in semi-independent accommodation. **B** had become looked after aged 14 due to concerns about her mother's ability to keep her safe, she was out of school experimenting with drugs and alcohol and was sexually active. Laura has been her IRO throughout the three years since she became looked after, which has been helpful in providing continuity as she has had seven key-workers. Laura has maintained contact with **B** and with her family. **B** has e-mailed Laura to ask for help with problems with her placement. Laura has advocated on her behalf. **B** attends and participates fully in her review meetings.
- Child C** A girl aged 16 placed in an out of area residential setting. **C** has significant learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. She has previously been in secure accommodation and has an offending history. She is a vulnerable young person but can present a risk to others.

Jenny has been her IRO since she became looked after in January 2012. Jenny meets with **C** before her reviews and **C** likes to participate. However she also finds it hard to manage being in a meeting with a large number of professionals and does not like there to be discussion about her areas of difficulty. After becoming quite agitated at a previous review it was agreed to manage her next review as a process with professionals meeting first at the Youth Offending Team offices and this being followed by a smaller meeting at her placement with **C**, unit staff, IRO, Social Worker and brief input from one other key professional. This worked well and **C** managed this very well. She was focussed and polite through out, was clear in giving her views and kept her cool even when the CAMHS worker said things she did not like.
- Child D** A girl aged 3 who was placed with her Grandmother following concerns about domestic violence and substance misuse and her mother's mental health difficulties. Rosie had been the conference chair and then became **D**'s IRO when she became looked after. **D** did not participate in her reviews due to her young age. She was observed in placement. Rosie observed her interactions with her maternal grandmother and commented that the attachment was very evident and **D** presented as happy and settled. She observed Grandmother to be responsive to **D** and committed to meeting her needs and supporting her return home if achievable.