



**Integrated Safeguarding Unit
Independent Reviewing Service**

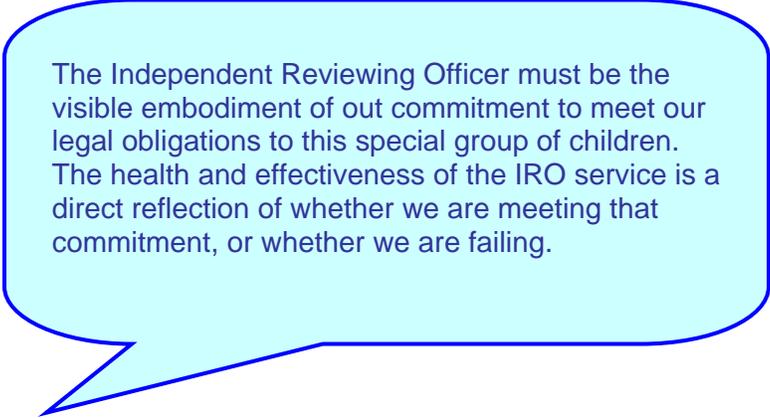
Annual Report

April 2013 – March 2014

1. Purpose of service and legal context

The Independent Review Officers' (IRO) service is set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011. 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. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of Care Planning for Children Looked After (CLA) and for challenging drift and delay.

The recently published National Children's Bureau research entitled 'The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) in England' (March 2014) provides a wealth of information and findings in regards to the efficacy of IRO services and outlines a number of important recommendations in relation to caseload sizes and management oversight of individual Officers'. The foreword was written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson; in it he 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.

What are we doing about it?

This Annual IRO report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Services in Wigan local authority as required by statutory guidance. It is written to summarize the issues that have arisen for the lead member with responsibility for Children's Services and Corporate parenting

Professional Profile of the IRO Service in Wigan

IRO Service Review

A Service Review of the Children's IRO Service has been undertaken between December 2013 and February 2014. The future staffing structure, due to be implemented in June 2014 is detailed at [Appendix 1](#). Interviews for these positions have been undertaken.

The future staffing structure is based upon the development of 2 services; a Child Protection Review Service and a Looked After Children IRO Service with 19.5 (WTE) full-time equivalent posts including senior roles in both the IRO LAC and Child Protection Chair respective Business Support Services. This structure will provide performance management overview of the service and ensure the effective and timely implementation of the IRO Service Plan. This future structure will ensure the service can evidence outstanding performance to external Inspection Frameworks and ensure that all children are effectively safeguarded and that all Looked After Children's outcomes are improved, by securing an appropriate permanent placement at the earliest opportunity. Further, the IRO (G10) job description in both services has been reviewed to ensure all IROs take a Service Champion Lead role in multi agency system partnership developments, e.g. children with a disability, domestic abuse, adult substance misuse, neglect, child sexual exploitation, trafficking etc.

During the Service Review consultation was undertaken with:

- IRO staff
- Senior Management Social Care
- Stakeholders across WSCB represented agencies
- Children's Commissioning Service

Horizon scanning of IRO Services judged to be 'outstanding' by OFSTED Inspection Frameworks was also carried out to ascertain which models of service delivery have proved most effective in reducing the numbers of children requiring to become 'Looked After' and which have reduced the period of time a child / young person is 'Looked After'. There was Statistical analysis of LAC and CP Cohorts over last 2.5 years undertaken.

The redesign of administration service and operational practices, including increased use of technologies within meetings via minute taking tools, will ensure the significant backlogs in meeting minutes distribution will be achieved and agencies will be clear on their element of the Child Protection Plan. It will increase the efficiency in dissemination of minutes as required in relation to the OFSTED Inspection Framework. A Pilot of audio recording meetings without administration attendance has also informed this Service Redesign. It is not proposed that minute taking will be removed for all Child Protection cases, minute taking administration presence will be in place for all Initial Child Protection Conferences. However at Child Protection Review Meetings decisions as to administration minute taking presence, as opposed to audio recording and subsequent typing, will be based on a case by case basis, dependent upon the complexity of the meeting and multi agency nature of the Child Protection Plan.

HUMAN RESOURCE ISSUES RE: IRO SERVICE

Caseload Size

Caseloads were over 100 per IRO at Feb 2012. Consequently 2 additional IROs were recruited to increase staffing resource. This meant that IRO caseloads became within the nationally recommended size. At March 2014 there are 8.5 IROs undertaking both LAC and CP work. With approximately 523 Looked after children and ...230?...children subject to a plan we will need to carefully monitor that the caseloads do not however increase again as we work to embrace all aspects of the IRO role and function going forwards

FUNCTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY THE IRO SERVICE

Functions previously undertaken by the IRO Service were reviewed this year and stripped back to the essential statutory functions. So MAPPA and MARAC attendance moved to duty at Children's Social Care, Regulation 33 Inspections of Children's Homes moved to Commissioning Service via initial Analyst overview & co-ordination, Pathway Plan Reviews moved to Children in Care Service, Sexual Exploitation & Missing from Home meetings had already moved to the SEAM process. This review of functions was focused on ensuring IROs could prioritise their statutory function to the Child Protection And Looked After Children Reviewing Systems.

The IRO Service is maintaining responsibility for managing the 'risk list' of people who are a risk to children. The service manager attended meetings with GMP, Health, Social Care, Probation and WSCB staff to review the information sharing and storing and the WSCB Business Manager, is in the process of finalizing the protocol for WSCB agreement. It is proposed that the future G6 roles within the IRO Service can manage the risk list on behalf of children and adult social care

on the Liquid Logic and AIS systems as a central point for agencies to access this information.

Lessons Learned from the national OFSTED Thematic IRO Inspection

Although Wigan IRO service was not included in this Inspection the findings of a National Thematic Report were reviewed by the, then, Service Manager and Wigans operational performance was analysed against the themes highlighted. Senior Management Team were provided with an evidence based rag rating and associated Action Plan. [OFSTED Thematic IRO Action Plan \(appendix 2\)](#)

This Action Plan has regularly been updated in order to provide an evidence base of the IRO Services current position against expected standards of IRO Services by OFSTED to an external Inspection regime. The recently appointed Team Manager has sustained this analytic reflection on the work of the Service and from this work has agreed 4 priorities for the team. These are:-

- Timeliness of our work
- The Voice of the child
- Dealing with Issues on behalf of children
- Having greater management oversight of our service operation

TEAM PLANNING

All findings from case file scrutiny undertaken has informed the ongoing development of the team through meetings and development day discussions. It also supported the team to be involved in the Neglect Thematic OFSTED Inspection and the Adoption Diagnostic DFE Consultant Review. Other LA OFSTED Inspection reports have been monitored to identify lessons for the IRO Service and used to inform the decision to redesign the service.

The OFSTED Inspection Framework initially published in Oct 2013 has also been discussed with IRO's in team meetings and the Service Plan for 2014-15 will have clear aims to develop practice in accordance with the standards expected in the OFSTED Inspection Framework.

QUALITY AUDIT OF THE IRO SERVICE OPERATIONAL PRACTICE

Audits Undertaken

Several case file audit tools were developed by Service Manager Safeguarding and the Senior Safeguarding Analyst. The following case file audits were undertaken during this reporting period:

- Quality of SMART Keeping Safe Plans.
- Quality of, and timeliness of distribution of, LAC Recommendations.
- 4 month permanence decision and plans .
- Use of Graded Care and addressing neglect risks within Keeping Safe Plans .
- CP to LAC cohort and quality of Keeping Safe Plans to prevent LAC entry
- Practice Alerts – IRO use of the new procedure and themes identified regarding Social Care practice.
- Child's voice case file audit.
- Quality of, and distributions timeliness of, Child Protection Minutes

Informal Resolution Procedure – Wigan IRO Practice Alert & Notification System

A Practice Alert & Notification System was developed in August 2012. This system aimed to evidence consistent IRO challenge of practice drift in both the

CP and LAC review systems, balanced with highlighting positive and effective practice. This procedure was reviewed 12 months after implementation by IRO Service and Children's Social Care representatives. A further developed flowchart and procedure was developed and subsequently approved by the Children's Performance [Group \(see Appendix 3\)](#) . The initial verbal discussion prior to submitting a formal Practice Alert document is currently assisting the building of relationships with Social Care with the aim of achieving a healthy, evidence based, balanced challenge which is appreciated by Social Care Managers as an 'internal evidence based window on the effectiveness of the social care'. A number of practice alerts highlight good practice to managers too. A performance dashboard has been developed by the Senior Safeguarding Analysts which monitors on a 1/4ly basis the themes arising from Practice Alerts

'Partnership System' Practice Alert Procedure - The Practice Alert system developed initially to challenge concerns regarding Social Care practice was presented to WSCB Executive Group and approved to be used across the partnership system. This procedure is in its 9th month of operation and will require a review after 12 months operation and an annual Practice Alert Report being presented to WSCB in early summer 2014. Work remains to be undertaken to ensure this is implemented consistently by IRO's, which is being overseen and quality assured by the IRO Team Manager via supervision and team meetings. Further work is also required as to agencies response to receiving a Practice Alert.

SMART PLANNING - CHILD PROTECTION

A 'Keeping Safe Plan' was developed in March 2012. Work has been undertaken with all IROs via supervision and team meetings / service development days to ensure their CP Keeping Safe Plans are:

- SMART
- Clearly identify the needs of individual children and risks related to their age and individual needs
- presented in a language which is understandable to both professionals and families
- include evidence based multi agency interventions which are appropriate to assessed parenting needs of the child and the parenting ability of both parents / extended family carers appropriate to the assessed risks and strengths
- present a balanced approach to addressing risk factors which also support the development of strength factors and a systems model of support from within wider extended family as a sustainability model, to decrease dependence upon agencies services.
- are clear as to which named individuals across the partnership are responsible for providing an intervention or support and the date this is to be undertaken by, related to the risks and needs of the children, not the date of the next CP Review
- detail a clear contingency plan if the required change is not effected, in a way that families understand the point at which their children could be removed from their care, and in the circumstances of babies and younger children making it a reality that their child could be placed for adoption in situations of high levels of risk or clear history of siblings having been removed due to risks and alternative permanent placement has been sought, particularly in light of siblings recent family court procedures.

- that Review meeting Plans evidence the changes made / lack of change and resultant action being taken within the child's timescale.

Audits undertaken of practice since the implementation of the document and supervision have evidenced that SMART planning improvements have developed across the team. With regard to evidence based multi agency interventions it is recommended that the commissioners and WSCB could further develop a clear visual continuum of commissioned evidence based interventions, against the WSCB thresholds of need for IROs to refer to within CP Conferences.

CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

Parental Substance Misuse interventions

Analysis of the reasons as to why children were on a CP Plan have consistently highlighted parental substance misuse as a factor. Work was undertaken by Service Manager Safeguarding with the Adult Drug Commissioner. Tendering of adult substance misuse services considered family based interventions to reduce substance misuse for the adult, whilst providing improved parenting and care to the children in the family unit and breaking down a dependency risk cycle of neglect and substance misuse. A commitment from the commissioner was secured and the tendering round included a service specification for work with parents.

A Pilot was commenced between the Greater Manchester Substance Misuse Service, the Children's Duty Service and IRO Service. The pilot methodology was that upon a referral to Children's Duty re: neglect and substance misuse issues being highlighted in the initial assessment and S47 investigation a referral would be made to the GMW Substance Misuse Service, via 2 appointed SPOC's to receive the referrals and undertake the work with the parents. The SPOC attending the initial Case Conference to become a part of the system around the

family and then undertake an initial screening assessment and health needs and impact of substances upon their parenting, completing elements of the Graded Care Profile in conjunction with the allocated social worker and health visitor. The child's social worker undertaking work to capture the voice of the child, via direct work and life story work with pictures, stories, dolls houses, memory boxes and poetry etc as of interest to the child, for this to be shared with the parent in joint sessions with the child's social worker and substance misuse worker – taking place in the family home, whilst addressing issues which had become apparent in the Graded Care Profile assessment. The substance misuse intervention methodology was Cognitive Behavioural 'daily mind mapping', based upon the routines of the individual children and their respective needs and risks. The programme was commissioned to be intensive and provide a written evidenced based report to the initial Conference Review to inform the CP Plan or move to pre proceedings / PLO, or be clear about plans for removal of younger children in the case of lack of engagement or changes made to the parenting and risks presented.

on the re-commissioning of adult substance misuse services Addaction became involved in providing non clinical interventions of support to adults. Meetings are in the process of taking place with regard to the business case presented by Addaction regarding an intensive programme they could provide to families. Co-location of the Children's Social Care Duty Service and Addaction workers has been proposed to facilitate greater partnership joint work with parents and cascade of sub misuse service data to social workers to break the myth of the effectiveness of a methodology of urine sampling interventions' as opposed to the evidence base of CBT support empowerment models with clear consequences of non engagement.

TIMELINESS OF DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD PROTECTION MEETING MINUTES

Child Protection Initial and review Case Conference minutes have been quality assured and a revised 'minute template' had been developed to move the team from verbatim minute to an overview of the risks and protective factors and decisions, referring to attached agency reports. This new format of minutes seeks to ensure the team are efficient and business like, reduce unit costs of minutes being produced and improve dissemination timescales.

Performance monitoring has been undertaken to ensure all Keeping Safe Plans are disseminated within 24 hours of the meeting. Minutes being disseminated within 15 days of the meeting. Performance management of admin staff members has been undertaken. A decision was taken due to the issues arising from the implementation of Liquid Logic to draw a line under a date and ensure that minutes of meetings from this date forward were undertaken within the required timescale and that outstanding minutes would be completed as a backlog. That these outstanding minutes would not be sent to agencies automatically, unless they requested copies for their files. This was agreed by the WSCB Executive Group.

SMART LAC Recommendations – LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Work has been undertaken to develop a framework for SMART LAC recommendations which seek to improve the child's outcomes and ensure that the child's voice can be evidenced. In supervision and team meetings / development days the same structure as for Keeping Safe Plans has been discussed re: identifying specific needs, what interventions will be provided, who by and when this will be achieved by and what outcome is being sought. The previous team manager chaired a LAC meeting and her written recommendations of the meeting were exceptional. They were SMART and

presented formally for agencies to adhere to, whilst presented separately in a letter format to the child so they understood their meeting in the current tense, or, when reviewing their records as an adult could determine what happened and why when they were a child. This has been taken as a model of exceptional practice to model future IRO practice.

THE CHILD'S VOICE

Considerable work has been undertaken to evidence the impact of the individual children's voice in LAC Review Meetings. With the increased IRO staffing resources, and a review of the non IRO statutory functions previously undertaken by the IRO Service moving to other areas of the Council's work, IROs have been able to have time to undertake visits to children between their LAC Review meetings. IROs have reflected that this has helped them ensure the meetings are more child needs focused, as they have a greater awareness of the children's wishes and feelings before the Review Meeting.

The IROs are now stating that they need to do the same for children on a CP Plan and are looking forward to the new staffing structure to have specialism's to undertake visits to children on a CP Plan. Visits to children on a Child Protection Plan need to commence as soon as the specific focused structure comes into force. A performance monitoring framework is in the process of being developed by the Senior Safeguarding Analyst, for the Team Manager to monitor visits to children re: LAC and CP and address any evidence of lack of visits being undertaken in individual supervisions.

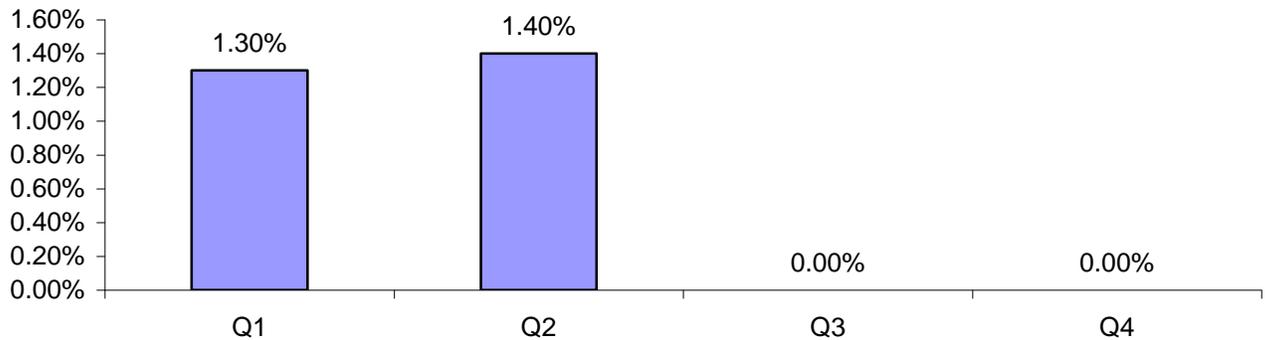
The IRO Manager and 2 IROs have been working with Voice for Choices to develop all the IRO Service literature, leaflets and young people invites to meetings and consultation documentation to provide their views to meetings they do not attend.

Additional to this the IRO Service is working with children's Social Care in the work to capture the child's voice through a one off questionnaire. We have had 4 young people who are 'Looked After' involved in the interview process for the 2 Senior IRO positions in the IRO Service review recruitment procedure.

4. PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE IRO NATIONAL INDICATOR SET

4.1 CHILD PROTECTION

NI 64: Percentage of children ceasing to be the subject of a child protection plan during the year who have been the subject of a child protection plan for two years or longer

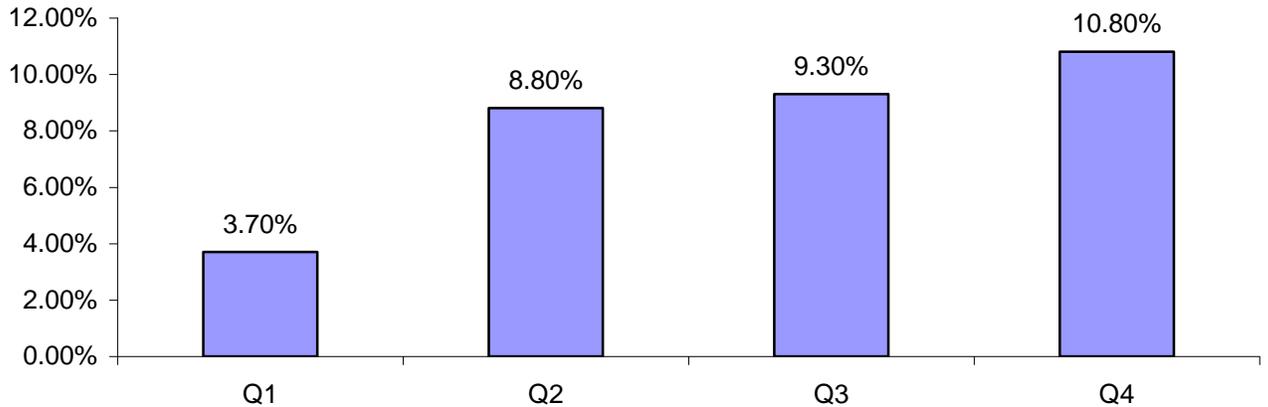


Performance throughout the year has improved. The new CP pathway for those subject to a plan aged 3 years and under has reduced the period of time younger children are subject to a plan by introducing a 3 monthly review cycle.

IRO's are presenting cases to regular supervision for robust management oversight of all CP cases and any presenting issues are addressed promptly.

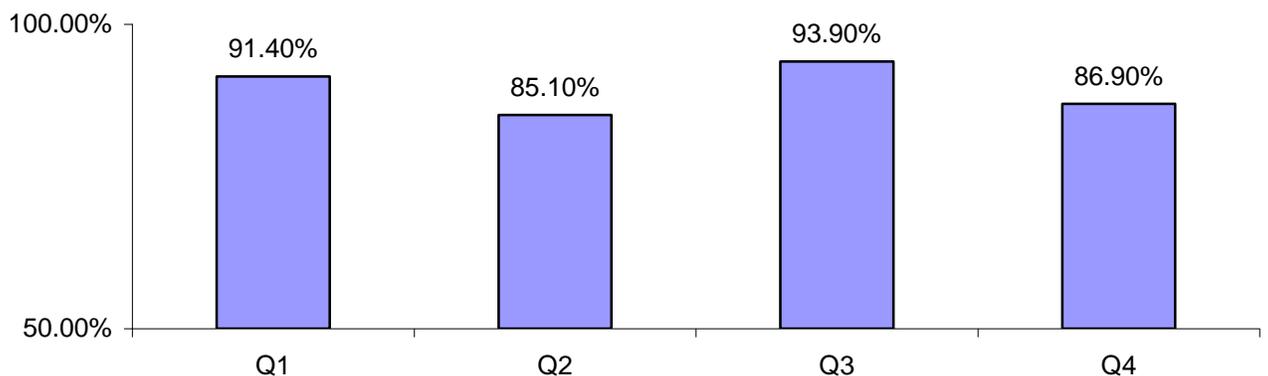
Auditing is planned for the year 2014_15 for those cases subject to a child protection plan for a period of twelve months to ensure the plan is progressed and discuss presenting issues with other agencies to drive service improvement.

NI 65: Children with a second or subsequent child protection plan



On the whole performance for the year 2013_14 is much improved on 2012_13 where overall 18.8% of children who became subject to a plan had previously been subject to a plan. This year, 2013_14, overall 10.8% of children who became subject to a plan had previously been subject to a plan. These cases have been looked at in detail and the presenting themes analysed to inform future service provision.

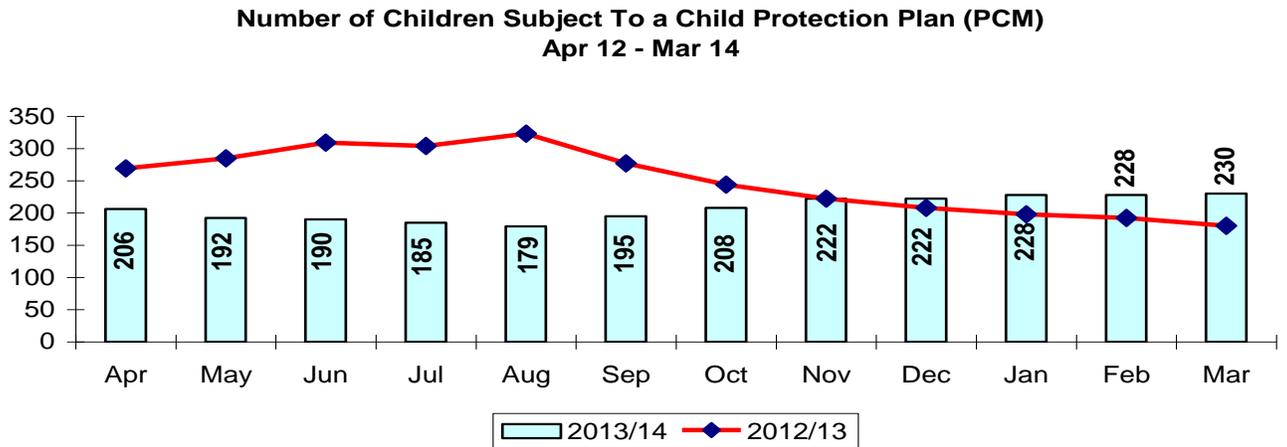
NI 67: The percentage of child protection cases which should have been reviewed during the year that were reviewed



Further analysis of those cases which have fallen outside of statutory timescales have indicated an issue regarding quoracy at Initial Case Conference and review

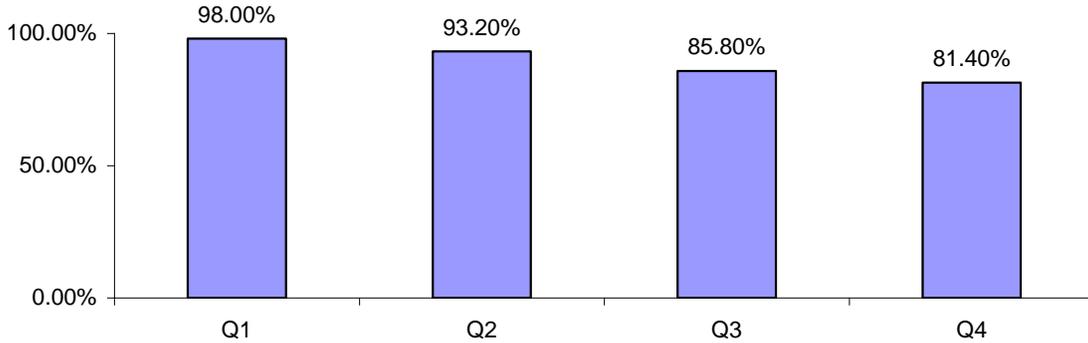
Case Conference. Agencies such as the Police are unable to provide a representative to all meetings and as such, particularly in the case of younger children where there is no education representative required, reviews are often rearranged outside of timescales to achieve a quorate representation.

IRO's have not always given priority to the timeliness of CP meetings and this has been addressed within supervision. IRO's have been reminded of the need for timely meetings and that this is a priority which will form part of their IPA.



4.2 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

NI 66: The percentage of children looked after which should have been reviewed during the year that were reviewed during the year

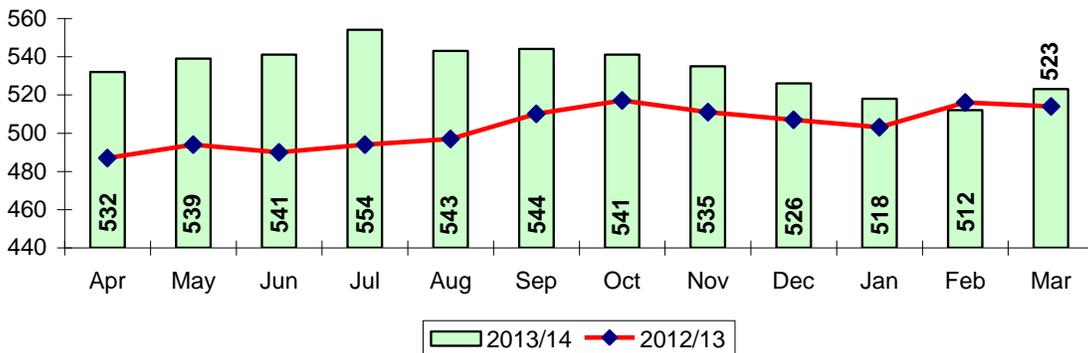


IRO's have not always given priority to the timeliness of LAC meetings and this has been addressed within supervision. IRO's have been reminded of the need for timely meetings and that this is a priority which will form part of their IPA.

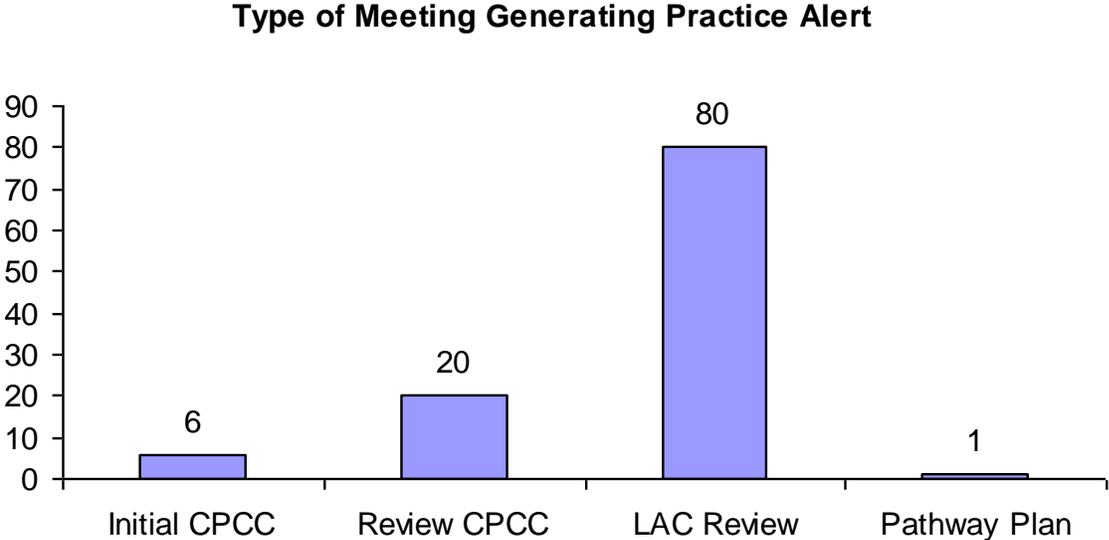
IRO's are being encouraged to undertake a 'series' of meetings where a complete LAC review meeting cannot be held within timescales.

The new team structure will ensure that timeliness is scrutinised on a month by month basis.

**Number of Looked After Children (PCM)
Apr 12 - Mar 14**



5. EVIDENCE OF IRO CHALLENGE AND SCRUNITY - Practice Alert Analysis



Pathway Plans no longer undertaken by IROs since (date) therefore this impacts upon the rate of Practice Alerts in the above chart.

CHILD'S VOICE

Voice of the Child - Your Say Survey

Introduction

A questionnaire was sent to all Looked After Children aged ten and over. The questionnaire was designed to ascertain the views of the young people who are currently looked after by Wigan Council. The questionnaire focused on various aspects of the journey of the looked after child.

At the time of disseminating the survey 509 children/young people were currently looked after by Wigan Council. 208 of these children/young people were aged ten and over and as such were included within the cohort of participants.

To encourage children and young people to respond to the survey a prize of a £50 voucher for one survey (to be selected at random) was offered. All those who returned their survey prior to the deadline were given a £5 Grand Arcade Voucher. 43 children and young people responded to the survey (21%).

Respondee ages ranged from 10-17 with the majority of respondees being 13 years old. 56% of those who responded resided in foster care, 28% were within residential establishments the remaining 16% were placed at home or with friends and family foster carers.

Becoming Looked After

We asked participants what they would like to have been made aware of when coming in to care. All respondees replied to this question. The general theme from the responses received indicated that

- Children/young people were unsure how long they were going to be in care and why they were being taken in to care.
- Some of the respondees indicated that at the point of coming in to care they were unaware that they were being brought in to care.
- A number of respondees indicated that they would like to have been informed that their placement could change on a number of occasions.

Professional Involvement

The survey asked participants if the professionals supporting them could do anything else for them.

- 29% replied that their social worker could help them more, participants replied that their social could support them to find employment, visit them more and arrange for their return home to family.
- 19% of participants replied that their IRO could help them more The ways in which extra support could be provided was outlined as visiting them more, increasing contact arrangements and arrange for their return home to family.
- 4 young people replied that they did not know who or what a LAC nurse was and had never seen the nurse.

- 43% of respondees stated that their school or college could do more for them. Examples were provided as extra support for specific subjects and supporting them in work experience placements and subsequently help to find a job.

The survey asked young people if they had, had the chance to speak to their social worker alone. 88% of respondees replied that they had.

Looked After Child Review Process

The survey asked children/young people if they attended their Looked After Child Review, 93% replied that they did. Some young people described their review as useful. Those respondees who replied that they did not attend their reviews stated that the review was boring and was sometimes held within school times and as such they did not wish to attend.

When asked if they found the review process useful 81% replied that they did comments supporting this included *‘because they let me know what’s going on with everything’* and *‘it gives me a chance to express my feelings in front of everyone’* and *‘so I can keep up to track of contact, placement plans etc’*. Those respondees who replied that they did not find their review useful stated *‘they are boring I’ve got better things to do’* and *‘I feel like everyone knows more about me than I do’*

Participants were asked what they would like to discuss as part of their review. The majority of respondees wished to discuss contact as part of their review. The results table below highlights the most popular responses

Discussion Topic	Number of Responses
Contact	29
School	22
Health	20
Where I live	17
Family	16
Friends	12
Going Home	1

The survey asked participants if there was anyone they would prefer did not attend their Looked After Child Review. The majority of respondees indicated that they would prefer that school staff did not attend their reviews. The results table below highlights the most popular responses.

Would Prefer Did Not Attend My Review	Number of Responses
Teachers/School	11
Siblings	6
Health	4
Social Worker	3
Parents	3
Anyone I do not know	1

The survey asked participants what would help them as part of their review process to feel more comfortable. The majority of respondents indicated that they would prefer a say in who attends their review. The results table below highlights the most popular responses.

What Would Help Me At My Review	Number of Responses
Deciding who attends	15
Meet My IRO prior to the meeting	14
Chose where my review takes place	14
Bring a friend to the review	13
Chair my own review	7

To encourage participation at reviews we asked children and young people how they would like their thoughts, feelings and views presented to the review process if they did not wish to attend the actual meeting. The majority of respondents indicated that they would like to meet with someone who can bring their views to the meeting on their behalf.

The results table below highlights the most popular responses.

If I Do Not Wish To Attend My Review I Would...	Number of Responses
Meet with someone prior to the review to bring my views (Advocacy)	29
Complete a questionnaire prior to review	16
Text the IRO	5
E-Mail the IRO	3

Service Plan for 2014/2015

The IRO service is committed to making its new structure fully operational and working as one overarching team focused on securing the best outcomes for children who are Looked after and those subject to a child Protection plan

Lessons Learned in the previous year

- 'Putting children and Young People at the centre of all we do' – The IRO team has faced a major transition as we have lost very established staff and gained new ones this year. This means a change of worker for many children and young people. We have used the service redesign as an opportunity to reflect on our service priorities and think how we can do things differently. Our number one priority is to consult and involve children and young people more effectively and use the information they give us to continually shape our service and practice.
- 'Being timely in our interventions': the IRO service has historic issues with not being good at getting our records out in a timely way. We know that meeting information is only meaningful if passed on in a timely manner. We are committed to addressing this and have the systems and processes better embedded to allow this to happen. This is an improving picture and we are working closely with social care to make sure we are supported to do this by social workers getting reports to us in time
- 'Reporting on good or bad practice':- we understand our need to quality assure the practice of others and to raise concerns should things not be happening, or in place, for children and young people. We know that how we challenge other individuals or agencies is very important and so we will use greater informal discussion before formalizing our concerns. We will however systematically challenge poor practice and use the escalation routes that exist wherever necessary

- ‘ Driving overall improvement’ we know that as a team we need to be encouraged to grow and develop. Our new team structure allows this to happen as there is much more capacity for managers to know the practice of individual team members by observation or through the audits that are undertaken. There is the opportunity for practitioners to be part of audits and observe one another. We are also aspiring to develop peer support networks. We also recognize our role in driving overall improvement across social care and other agencies involved with Looked after children and in child protection. We are getting better at considering performance information and trends as a team through the development of monthly dashboards for CP and LAC. We are also moving from a position where we focused solely on our core business to considering our role within the wider system, identifying what we can do to enhance it. The new structure will allow the IRO manager the capacity to performance manage better and to work more strategically with other partners. This has already started in for example working with the permanence coordinator to identify drift in planning and challenge of some LAC cases and with commissioning to look at quality assuring external placement provision. Similarly the work plan for the senior safeguarding chair is to develop better relationships with the locality teams to agree approaches to those children and Young people deemed to be at risk .

Action Planning
Looked after children

What do we need to do ?	How will we do it?
Timeliness of Looked after children's 100% of reviews need to take place on time	<p>The Senior IRO and the senior Business support Officer will on a monthly basis look at the reviews scheduled to avoid them going out of timescale.</p> <p>The IRO manager will ensure that the IRO's understand how to carry out reviews as series of meetings</p>
Get all children and Young People participating in their reviews	<p>We will develop a range of ways that children and Young people can access their IRO and get their views across. This will include new consultation material, designed by the children, visits and consideration of new technologies. We will refer children to advocates or independent visitors when needed.</p> <p>We will encourage those who wish to to chair their own reviews and we will write our review reports to children making them more easily understood</p>
Make sure that all children and young people have a care plan that meets their identified needs	<p>We will routinely monitor the plans that are in existence for children between reviews and not only at the review meeting.</p> <p>We will constructively challenge when we see drift and always promote the need for a Permanence Plan</p>
Have a view on the quality of placement provision for the children and young people we review	<p>When visiting children and young people we will consider the placement environment and how children present in their placement . We will work closely with our commissioning, residential and fostering colleagues to share any observations we make</p>
Seek feedback from children, young people and families on the review process and work with them to better develop our service. (Voices for choices)	<p>We will develop post review questionnaires and individual IRO's will seek feedback on how reviews can be better managed</p> <p>We will develop our growing relationship with the Voices for choices group</p>

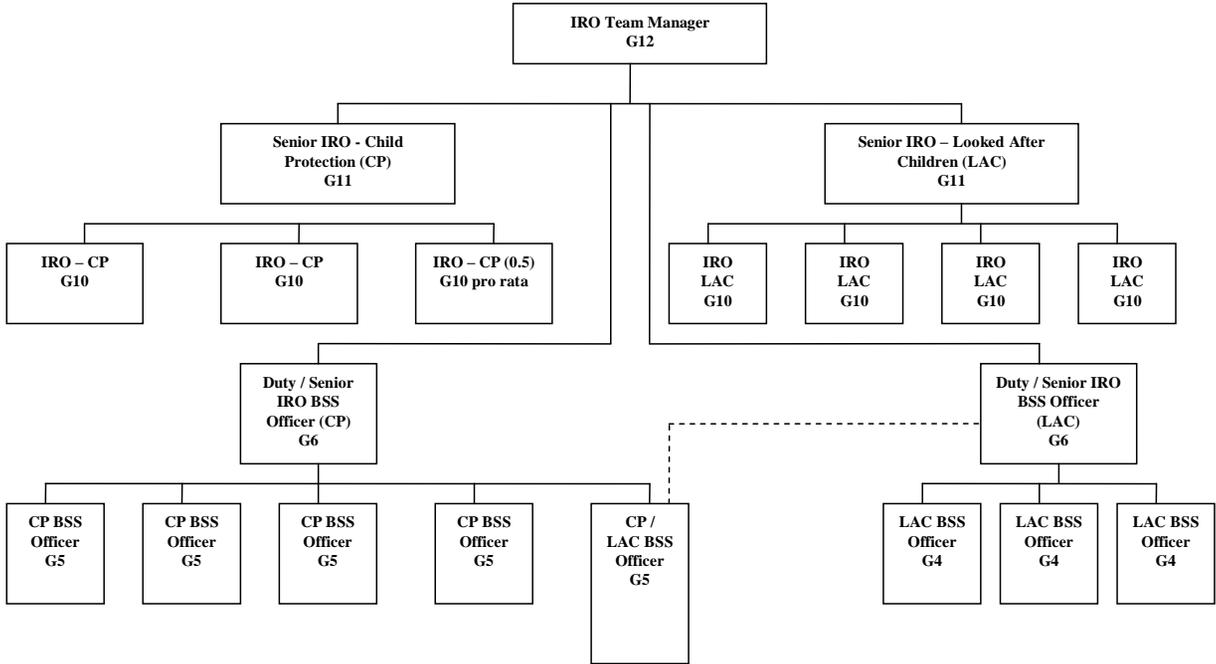
Children and Young People on a Child Protection Plan

What do we need to do?	How will we do it?
<p>Our Child Protection Case</p> <p>Conferences need to start with the needs of, or Voice of, the child</p>	<p>The chair of the conference will consider how best to establish the views of the child prior to the conference. This will include the chair visiting children and young people to seek their views</p> <p>Consultation materials will be designed with children and Young people and the use of My Plan will be promoted</p>
<p>Ensure that safeguarding chairs know the children who have been on a plan more than once or who are approaching a year on a plan.</p>	<p>These cases will routinely be discussed in supervision sessions or the peer group (to be developed)</p> <p>They will be routinely monitored and discussed with social care team managers</p>
<p>Make sure that other LSCB agencies attend conferences and reviews and are involved in core groups</p>	<p>We will monitor this more closely and share the evidence base for poor attendance on a more regular basis with the LSCB safeguarding practices sub group</p>
<p>Ensure that are Keeping Safe Plans are SMART and child and Family centered</p>	<p>We will use the examples of good practice previously located in case file audit to develop practice across the team</p>
<p>Continue our role in training through the LSCB so that other agencies are aware of our expectations of them when attending Child Protection Case Conferences and reviews</p>	<p>Each of the 4 safeguarding chairs and the senior Business support officer will be able to deliver aspects of this training so that</p>

Appendix 1 Future Independent Reviewing Service Staffing Structure



Future IRO Service staffing structure



Key
IRO CP – Independent Reviewing Officer Child Protection
IRO LAC – Independent Reviewing officer Looked After Children
BSS – Business Support Services Officer

Appendix 2 Ofsted Thematic Plan

OFSTED Thematic Report raised issue	Current Wigan IRO Service practice	Wigan IRO Action Plan	Ra Rati
<p>Review records</p>	<p>(+'ve)</p> <p>LAC Monthly QA of review records have lead to improvements in the 'minutes' of LAC reviews. Ensuring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the voice of the child is recorded (where appropriate) ▪ Education, Health, Placement and permanence plan are recorded ▪ Minutes are of an acceptable level of detail providing an adequate picture of the child's life/journey. <p>CP Monthly Audit of CP review records have lead to improvements in the format of CP minutes, ensuring that each professional in attendance and presenting information at conference/review is summarised outlining the main issues and progress surrounding the family. This format has been welcomed by professionals and family members. The new format seeks to improve the timeliness in the production and disseminating minutes</p>	<p>Monthly QA to continue, issues to be raised with IRO Admin Team @ fortnightly team meetings and individual supervisions.</p> <p>IROs to ensure LAC Recommendations are clearly informed by child's voice.</p> <p>Monthly CP Audit review use of CP Minutes template. Admin to ensure voice of the child is clear within CP minutes template and IROs ensure that evidence of voice of child has informed decisions, plans and outcomes.</p> <p>Service Review commencing re: analysing establishing a specific CP team within the IRO Administration team.</p>	

	<p>to family and professionals.</p> <p>Pad technology to be used in meetings continues to be piloted with IT but initial hand writing applications were not sufficient</p> <p>The Independent Reviewing Service is supported by an Administration Team who attend, minute and produce CP minutes.</p>	<p>Pad handwriting technology pilot to be completed and implemented universally for CP & ALC meetings.</p>
<p>Review recommendations</p> <p>In nearly all authorities, review recommendations and the subsequent monitoring of progress by IROs were not consistently rigorous, leading to poor planning for children's futures and unnecessary delay in some children's cases.</p>	<p>(+ve)</p> <p>Monthly QA undertaken regarding the LAC recommendations for children and young people.</p> <p>Previous IT systems did not provide an acceptable family friendly format for CP plans. As such the IRO service developed a word document 'Keeping Safe Plan' format to support the work completed via the IT system and provide a family focused plan easily understandable by family members and non professionals.</p> <p>Monthly QA undertaken surrounding LAC and CP review recommendations to ensure consistency in terms of SMART planning. Ensuring timescales and responsible persons/professionals are</p>	<p>Monthly QA to continue and lessons continue to be communicated via team meetings and individual supervision.</p> <p>The move to Liquid Logic Version 8 will enable the format of the word doc 'keeping safe plan' to be configured in to the LL system. To enable this to happen the current Keeping Safe Plan will need to be amended slightly. A draft format has been developed and consultation is currently being undertaken with the IRO service. A proposed format will be shared with the LL user group on 18th July 2013.</p> <p><i>Would you mention that</i></p>

	<p>included and highlighted throughout plans.</p> <p>The service is in the process of recruiting two additional IRO temp posts to assist with ensuring that statutory functions are undertaken within the timescales. i.e. CLA recommendation @ 5 days, if no response by day 10 to be circulated by day 20.</p>		
	<p>(-'ve) Analysis has raised an issue that Keeping Safe Plan are not used within all Core Group meetings, as LL Core Group doc has been used, therefore CP recommendations not easily evidenced as taken forward via a 'system' approach between Social Care and IRO Service.</p>	<p>The new planning format in LL Version 8 will be used for CP initial and review meetings and by Social Care led Core Groups.</p> <p>Further work needs to be undertaken to ensure consistency in IRO recording on the LL system to reflect the Keeping Safe Plan.</p> <p>Further work uis being undertaken across Social Care and the IRO service as a system to ensure Social Care staff completing C&F Assessments identify needs / risks clearly so this can formulate the outline SMART plans that will be presented to CPCC and should form the basis of any Keeping Safe Plans if this is the out come.</p>	
	<p>Discussions are being undertaken with Social Care re: Review recommendation process and that IRO are sending Recommendations within 5 days of</p>	<p>'System' discussions to continue between IRO Service & Social Care re: reviewing the recommendations arising from LAC Reviews within timescale agreed and then recommendations taken</p>	

	<p>review and Social Care acceptance taken if no e mail response received. Practice Alerts have been initiated by IROs as Social Care have progressed a different plan to that agreed at LAC Review.</p>	<p>accepted ratified and Practice Alerts initiated if action other than the Care Plan presented at LAC Review and subsequent recommendations made are undertaken by Social Care.</p>
<p>Monitoring of progress between reviews Social workers and IROs communicated regularly with each other between reviews, although the purpose and impact of this was not always evident.</p>	<p>(+'ve) Discussions between social workers regarding cases are now recorded within the case note area on Liquid Logic, this has stopped discussions being Stored/hidden within IRO/Social worker email in boxes.</p>	<p>Monthly Audit to ensure communications are clearly recorded in LL case notes and that any e mail / Practice Alerts are recorded clearly and timely by IRO on LL system.</p> <p>Senior managers to record on system their discussions.</p>
	<p>(-'ve) Current IRO caseload demand creates difficulties for all IROs to monitor and timely record all communications on LL to evidence progress between reviews. Additional 2 x temp IROs should lead to reduced IRO caseloads – see caseload section of this report.</p> <p>IROs have joined caseloads of CP and LAC & Pathway Plans (A non statutory responsibility for IRO Service) which sometimes can lead to CP risks needing to be prioritised.</p>	<p>Service Review re: analysing IRO Service performance improvement and improved child's outcomes, if IRO Service is split into CP and LAC teams is due to commence upon appointment of new IRO Manager (Sept 2013)</p> <p>The IRO Service also currently undertakes Pathway Plans (this equates to ? yp people post 18 yrs of age as at 1st June), if this responsibility were to be removed from IRO Service responsibility there would be increased IRO capacity to monitor progress and address evidenced drift for CP and LAC cohorts – which is the IRO Statutory responsibility.</p>
<p>Formal dispute resolution Formal dispute resolution processes were in place, but</p>	<p>The Independent Reviewing Service has implemented a clear Escalation</p>	<p>Monthly analysis of Practice Alerts to be undertaken and communicated to the Children's Performance</p>

<p>were not always well understood or used when required.</p>	<p>Procedure of Informal discussion, Practice Alerts and Notifications which are used to address poor/good practice with social workers and their managers. Practice Alerts are classed as informal resolution and can be used as a precursor to the formal dispute resolution process. Since the implementation of practice alerts only 2 cases have progressed to a formal safeguarding notification which evidences that the Practice Alert procedure has proven effective.</p>	<p>Group.</p> <p>Practice Alerts to start to be used wider than for Social Care across the system and the data analysis to be accordingly developed to reflect the use of the system to wide agencies i.e. health and education. The proposal for such a process, which is to be presented at forthcoming WSCB Executive Group, is attached</p> <p> PA proposal for WSCB.doc</p>
<p>Driving overall improvement</p> <p>The independent challenge that can be provided by IROs was encouraged and welcomed by senior managers as a lever for improvement.</p>	<p>(+’ve)</p> <p>Informal discussion - Practice Alert – Notification procedure has been implemented since OFSTED SLAC. 70 Practice Alerts were made by IROs Mid Oct ’13 – June ’13, resulting in 2 Notifications.</p> <p>Social Care Team Managers are now familiar with this process and timely appropriate responses being provided and resolution meetings are developing insight and trust of this system.</p> <p>The recent OFSTED Thematic Neglect Inspection reflected the positive balance the Wigan IRO Service can evidence a balance, between being a critical friend with some evidence of</p>	

	<p>challenge and being part of the 'system around the child' leading and facilitating the planning and review multi agency system.</p> <p>(-'ve) There are a some remaining issues as to how Practice Alerts and Notifications are raised by some IROs and issues s to how these are received by members of Social Care which required attention.</p> <p>It is hoped that evidence based IRO Practice Alerts can be welcomed within the whole system approach and a timely resolution is achieved to prevent drift for the children.</p>	<p>Further work to be undertaken with the IRO service as 'how' the informal – Practice Alert – Notification Procedure is implemented consistently across the IRO Service – Team Meetings, service away days and individual supervision and appraisal.</p> <p>Further discussion to be undertaken with Social Care as a 'system', as to how Social Care receive and respond to escalations challenge made staff by the IRO – led by Children's Performance Group.</p> <p>Care Planning Regulations training to be provided as a 'system' by the IRO Service and Locality Service Managers to Social Care so the understanding of the IRO function and responsibilities to challenge drift and lack of any agency action across the system, as per the IRO Handbook and the Courts and CAFCASS expectations (as per lessons learned by the Lancashire IRO related Court Ruling), is understood, acknowledged, accepted and valued by the 'system' as a critical friend approach.</p>
<p>Caseloads Excessive workloads for IROs in most authorities visited had an</p>	<p>(-'ve). IRO caseloads in Wigan remain excessively high, almost 40 above the</p>	<p>Impact on caseload size of the recruitment of 2 x temp IROs to be analysed upon their commencing in role with a full caseload.</p>

<p>adverse impact on their ability to carry out their role effectively, particularly in ensuring that children's voices influence planning for their future care.</p>	<p>national recommended average. Caseload are currently at 80 – 115 per IRO. Additional temporary x 2 IRO posts are being recruited to so as to address this. When IRO Caseloads are reduced IRO's will be able to ensure visits to all LAC are undertaken prior to review thus enabling the voice of the child to be heard at all meetings.</p>	<p>New CP system and Legal Gateway impact on CP figures and LAC figures to be monitored by Children's Performance Group,</p>
<p>Management oversight The effectiveness of IRO oversight of individual looked after children's care plans was not consistently good enough. Oversight of IROs' work by their line managers was not sufficiently rigorous in most local authorities visited.</p>	<p>(+ve) The IROs have received regular supervision and appraisal since the appointment of an IRO Manager with a reviewed portfolio of responsibility in Aug 2012.</p> <p>Regular Team Meetings and service planning and development days have been held.</p> <p>Regular management of the IRO Manager has been undertaken by the Service Manager for Safeguarding, who reports any issues directly to Head of Service who in turn reports to Director of Children's Services.</p> <p>Regular quality audit of CP and LAC records are undertaken and the IRO Team Manager has quality assured CP and LAC meetings undertaken by all IROs via direct observation.</p>	<p>None needed.</p>

	<p>The Head of Service has attended some LAC and CP meetings to QA the practice.</p> <p>There is regular quality assurance of case recordings by the Service Manager for Safeguarding and Integrated Safeguarding Unit Analyst – lessons learned feed directly into IRO supervision discussions, monthly team meetings and service planning and development days.</p>	
<p>Involving children and Parents and carers</p> <p>IROs in most areas visited had not forged strong links with the corporate parenting board or the Children in Care Council. They were not sufficiently integrated into senior leadership discussions or strategic reviews of the progress and experiences of looked after children and young people.</p>	<p>(-ve).</p> <p>There is no current IRO Service representation on the Wigan Corporate Parenting Board.</p> <p>Consultation Forms have been developed in the last 12 months which are sent to foster carers, children home carers and the children. A Review is being undertaken as to the % received from children and if the form / process of gaining children view needs to be undertaken via different methodology.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken with Amy Calter by IRO Team Manager re: Children in Care Council but has not yet progressed.</p>	<p>Discuss with Corporate Parenting Board Chair re: future IRO Service representation and involvement.</p> <p>Review of formal consultation procedure with parents, foster carers, children home carers and children to be undertaken annually to ensure % of voice received is increased and seek feedback and lessons learned are implemented.</p> <p>Work by IROs with CiC Council to be further progressed in the next quarter as 2 IROs have had previous involvement with CiC lead who has left position.</p>

	<p>(+’ve) Wigan Family Welfare (WFW) is involved in offering advocacy to children becoming on a Child Protection Plan or becoming LAC. There is a system in place for WFW to be notified when a child was to become CP /CLA so the initial contact could be made.</p>		
	<p>(-’ve) However, the uptake of WFW is not significant, as evidenced by recent WFW Annual Report. IROs have commenced visiting young people between their reviews (LAC) since the OFSTED SLAC. However, this is not able to be 100% undertaken due to current resources and caseload size demand, which is clearly above national recommended caseloads. (See caseload section of this report)</p>		

<p>Timing, attendance and location of reviews</p> <p>Children and young people were not always properly consulted on the venues for reviews and about which adults they would like to attend.</p>	<p>(-'ve).</p> <p>Annual surveys undertaken with LAC and links with the children in care council 'voices for choices' have indicated that children and parents do not wish to hold reviews within the school environment and prefer that teachers did not attend. Where appropriate LAC and their carers prefer reviews to be undertaken at the care address.</p>	<p>Visits to / IRO contact with all children between reviews should involve discussion where and when the children would like the meetings to take place before the meeting arrangements are finalised.</p> <p>This Q has been incorporated into the LL report so will evidence if this has occurred.</p>
	<p>(+'ve)</p> <p>CP Initial & Reviews are now taking place within local communities and not at previous IRO Offices.</p> <p>A paper has been developed for WASB and WSCB re: meetings venue provision by agencies to ensure the availability of locality venues close to families homes is further developed.</p> <p>IROs have commenced visiting / contacting the children between LAC meetings and consulting with them on venue and times of meetings (-'ve_ however, this is not currently undertaken in 100% of cases due to workload current demands.</p>	<p>Venue request paper has been virtually circulated to WSCB members and his due to also be sent to WASB members so an appropriate Locality Venue List to be further developed (as attached)</p> <p> Case Conference venue requirements r</p>
<p>IRO involvement in care</p>	<p>There is a process during being</p>	<p>Protocol agreement to be finalised in discussion with</p>

<p>proceedings</p> <p>Generally, the involvement of IROs in cases during care proceedings was underdeveloped, although there were signs of improving liaison with the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) in several authorities.</p>	<p>finalised – as attached</p>  <p>IRO and Cafcass Protocol Feb 2013.doc</p> <p>IROs report positive contact with CG throughout proceedings recently.</p>	<p>CAFCASS.</p>
<p>Feedback from children, families and professionals</p> <p>seek regular feedback from children, young people, families, carers and professionals about the difference the IRO has made to the lives of the children with whom they work. This evidence should be collated by the local authority and used to drive improvement.</p>	<p>(-'ve).</p> <p>Feedback/evaluation forms are forwarded to all parents, carers, professionals and where appropriate the child or young person following CP and LAC meetings. The feedback from these evaluation forms are collated and analysis is shared via quarterly and annual reports but the response rate is low.</p>	<p>Methodology of feedback being sought to be reviewed by new IRO manager (from Sept 2013)</p>
<p>Performance Monitoring</p> <p>The quality of IRO annual reports, where they existed, was not consistently good enough. Nearly all reports that were produced were not accessible to children, young people, carers and families, or to the wider public.</p>	<p>(-'ve).</p> <p>An Annual Report is produced by the IRO Service, however, this report has not yet been made available to the wider public.</p> <p>Report collation has been hindered throughout the 2012/13 reporting period due to the operational recording during transition to and implementation</p>	<p>An Executive Summary of the Annual Report to be presented in the public domain.</p> <p>Annual report for 2012 – 2013 to be undertaken Sept 2013 once data recording has been finalised and LL system data report functionality has been completed.</p>

	<p>of the Liquid Logic (Protocol) has raised issues in terms of the re: development of information reports and implementation phase of the system has uncovered practice recording issues across Social Care and IRO service which are being addressed.</p>	
<p>Training IROs have the required skills, training, knowledge and time to undertake all elements of their role effectively, including ensuring that children's wishes and feelings properly influence the plans for their future</p>	<p>(+ve) The IRO Service have undertaken team training re: Impact of Trauma on children and planning. All IROs all qualified Social Workers and have the ability to communicate with children to gain their wishes and feelings, as has been evidenced by their commencing to visit / contact children between reviews and the issues which have arisen as evidenced by the Practice Alerts.</p> <p>Some IROs have commenced shadowing Adult Safeguarding Conferences in Wigan to reflect on their long standing practice.</p> <p>Plans are in place for IROs to shadow each other chairing reviews meetings to ensure service consistency in practice.</p>	<p>IROs, Analyst and Service Manager undertaking a Practice Development Day re: quality of C&F assessments. IROs undertaking a C&F on a case they are allocated to, analysts and managers audit of the records and determining what a C&F should detail, discussion day to be held to agree consistent threshold quality expected by IRO Service, to address quality of assessment (as raised by recent OFSTED neglect thematic audit).</p> <p>A Training Plan for the IRO Service to be developed arising out of the IRO Service Plan Update and the IRO individual IPAs (By new IRO Team Manager Sept 2013) which reflect a 'system' development approach in partnership with Children's Social Care.</p>
<p>Complaints</p>	<p>(+ve) All Complaints about Social Care practice which has an IRO involved, and</p>	<p>None required.</p>

	<p>when an IRO has a complaint made about themselves or IRO Service are clearly communicated to IRO Team Manager via the Complaints and Quality Assurance Team.</p> <p>Service Manager oversight of IRO Service also has oversight of Social Care Children's Complaints within portfolio and is informed of all complaints involving IRO Service.</p> <p>Outcomes of Complaints received inform IRO Service Plan Review and IRO supervision and team meetings.</p>	
<p>Access to independent legal advice</p>	<p>(+ve) Wigan Independent Reviewing Service have access to independent legal advice via Adam F Greenhalgh Solicitors.</p>	<p>None required other than ongoing review of when this advise is accessed and the subsequent costs to LA.</p>

Appendix 3 – Practice Alert Flow Chart

