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SUNDERLAND

# Together for Children Children's Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2018-2019



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**Report  
presented to:**

TfC Senior Leadership Team  
TfC Quality & Improvement  
Committee  
Corporate Parenting Board

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All data provided in this report for 2018/19 is provisional pending the submission to and publication of data by the Department for Education

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## **1. Purpose of the Annual Report**

- 1.1. This report covers the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019. It provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Children Independent Review Service and the impact that the work has had upon children and young people. The report includes areas of service improvement, emerging themes, examples of good practice and identifies priorities for the next 12 months.

## **2. Role of the Independent Reviewing Service**

- 2.1. The Independent Reviewing Service has a range of functions that can be summarised as follows:
- Chairing initial and review child protection conferences to ensure information is appropriately shared and risks and actions are identified collectively to ensure children are kept safe.
  - Reviewing and scrutinising care plans to ensure they are legally compliant and in the best interests of the child or young person.
  - Chairing of Children and Young People's Looked after Reviews to review or amend care plans.
  - To ensure that the voice of the child is heard and given appropriate weight within care planning.
  - Promoting corporate parenting to enable positive outcomes for children in the looked after system.
  - Chairing of Placement Order and adoptive placements, ensuring they are appropriate to the child's needs.
  - To provide a quality assurance and scrutiny function, and where appropriate challenge to Children's Social Care in relation to practice.
  - Undertaking fosters carer reviews to provide independent scrutiny of the service provided by foster carers to looked after children.
  - Carrying out regulation 44 visits to TfC- Sunderland's registered Children's Homes to provide independent scrutiny of the residential service provided to looked after children.
  - Chairing and management of allegations against adults working with children: Designated Officer role (DO previously known as LADO).
  - Providing business support to the above areas of the service.
- 2.2. This report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the service in relation to child protection, children looked after and foster carer reviews. Separate reports are produced covering the work of Regulation 44 Visits and Designated Officer. In the forthcoming year, a separate report will also be produced for foster carer reviews.
- 2.3. All the above functions are undertaken in accordance with key child care legislation, regulations and national and local procedures. In addition, the service continues to

provide support via training and development sessions to a wide range of partners. The service is also represented in key work groups such as:

- SSCB
- MALAP
- Foster Carers consortium
- Regional IRO managers group
- Regional Designated Officer (LADO) group
- Northumbria Police & Children's Independent Reviewing Service Management forum
- NHS digital implementation group
- Liquidlogic implementation/project group
- NHS/TFC Safeguarding Forum
- Harrogate trust & Children's Independent Reviewing Service Management Forum
- Change Council
- External Placement Panel
- Permanency Monitoring Group
- Corporate Parenting Board
- Scrutiny Committee
- CAFCASS & Children's Independent Reviewing Service Management Forum
- Legal Services & Children's Independent Reviewing Service Management Forum

2.4. Attendance at the above groups provides the opportunity for improved working arrangements, which in turn leads to better outcomes for the children and families that we work with. It provides an opportunity to influence practice and procedural developments, which ultimately supports Together for Children to deliver positive outcomes for the children of Sunderland.

2.5. To ensure the service fulfils its responsibilities, the following activity is undertaken:

- Attendance at both Change Council groups to ensure direct links with the children and young people. We listen to their views and adopt their recommendations.
- Collation and analysis of data on how the voice of the child is gathered both in Child Protection Reviews and in Looked After Reviews.
- Scrutinise data on the timeliness of agency reports and share this monthly with TfC Directorate and partner agencies
- Undertake mid-way reviews with Social Workers in respect of all children, young people and foster carers, to track progress of recommendations and plans.
- Hold regular service management meetings to consider the monthly data captured in a scorecard and to monitor the progression of our improvement plan.
- Share data regarding the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) with Social Care, allowing themes/trends to be identified and addressed.

- Undertake pre-looked after visits for looked after children to gather views directly and to ensure their views are reflected in their reviews, care plan and recommendations.
- Utilise tools such as Mind of My Own, Viewpoint and Child Protection Conference Packs to gather the views of children and young people and to strengthen their involvement within meetings.
- All Social Care teams have an allocated IRO's who aims to attend at least four team meetings per year to promote the work of the service, increase understanding of our role and to provide overall support to social care teams.
- Respond to actions arising from case file audits or other quality assurance activity.
- Build upon relationships with Social Workers, Team Managers, Operational Managers and Directors through open discussion around practice and service developments and ensuring every team has a dedicated CC/IRO link person.

### **3. Profile of the Independent Reviewing Service in Together for Children**

- 3.1. The Independent Reviewing Service in Sunderland sits within the Corporate and Commercial Directorate in Together for Children and is managed independently of children's social work line management. The Director of Corporate and Commercial Services is supported by a Service Manager and two Independent Reviewing Team Managers. The management team is providing stability along with vision and leadership for the service on its continuous improvement journey.
- 3.2. The management team are supported by a permanent staffing structure inclusive of:
  - 13.5 FTE IRO/Conference Chairs
  - 1 FTE Designated Officer
  - 2 FTE Foster Care Review and Reg 44 Officers
  - 1 FTE Business Manager
  - 7.3 FTE grade 2 Business Administration
  - 3.8 FTE grade 1 Business Administration
- 3.3. Due to peaks in demand, the service sought two temporary IRO/Conference Chair positions from July 2018 to assist with caseloads. Taking account of potential demand fluctuations together with the benefits of having permanent and consistent IROs for children and young people, a review of resources was considered necessary. The review is underway which is currently proposing an increase to the number of permanent positions for business support and IRO/Conference Chairs. This will assist to retain caseloads at a manageable level and will reduce the need to recruit temporary resource when demand fluctuates.
- 3.4. The service has a good balance of experienced workers and those new to their roles. All front-line positions excluding business support require HCPC social work registration. The profile of the team is diverse offering a wide range of knowledge and practice experience, including:
  - Frontline Child Protection Social Work
  - Out of Hours services

- Team Management within Social Care and Fostering
- Ofsted inspection; including inspection of secure accommodation provisions
- Adoption and Fostering including for independent services
- Next Steps (Leaving Care)
- Children with Disabilities
- Therapeutic Work
- Residential Work
- Cafcass Work
- Direct Work with Children Looked After

## **4. Caseloads**

- 4.1. At the time of the last annual report caseloads averaged 83 children per FTE compared with an average of 72 at the end of this year. The drop-in caseload figures are reflective of the additional temporary resources recruited in July 2018.
- 4.2. The current IRO handbook advises that IRO's should have a caseload of between 50 and 70. The service continues to consider the best way to achieve this to reduce any impact on performance and the experiences of children we work with. It is anticipated that further guidance in relation to caseloads will be provided upon publication of expected new IRO handbook by central government in 2020.

## **5. Supervision**

- 5.1. All workers within the service receive regular supervision and have access to informal supervision as and when needed. There is a real commitment by the management of the service to ensure that the level of supervision and support is of the highest standards. The service aims to provide monthly supervisions to workers which will be monitored and reported at the monthly management meetings.

## **6. Independent Reviewing Service Learning and Development**

- 6.1. The service is supported by Together for Children's Human Resource service to identify training needs and to undertake training analysis. Training requirements are also identified through the supervision and appraisal process and informed by external peer reviews, observations and inspections.
- 6.2. The following training has been provided to the service within this reporting year:
  - Neglect toolkit
  - SSCB Safeguarding conference
  - Northern Paediatric Forensic Network conference
  - Domestic Violence and Abuse (Level1 &2)
  - Compromised parenting



- SSCB Vulnerable babies (Level 3)
- Modern Day Slavery
- Tackling Sexual Exploitation conference
- Threshold workshops
- YDAP Drug and Alcohol Awareness
- Liquidlogic
- North East Regional Learning Together Forum; Safeguarding and Disabled Children
- North East Social Work England briefing
- Knowledge & Skills Statements briefings
- GDPR
- Regional Children in Care Conference
- Team development days

## 7. Children and Young People

- 7.1. As a company, Together for Children is committed to 'putting the child first' in everything that we do. The Independent Reviewing Service aspires to be a service that is wholly child centred and strives to ensure that children have the best life opportunities.
- 7.2. The service has a role in ensuring Sunderland children's services are fulfilling that commitment to our looked after children. The service continues to drive development and improvement by:
  - Ensuring children and young peoples voice is consistently heard and influences practice, plans and arrangements for them.
  - Creating the conditions in which strong positive relationships can be developed between the Independent Reviewing Officer and the looked after child.
  - Exploring more creative ways in which the child or young person can participate in care planning and reviews.
  - Ensuring SMART care plans and pathway plans are developed that are clear, accessible and understood by our children.
  - Having plans that are robustly reviewed to ensure they are delivering the outcomes in a timely manner, adapted and changed when needed.
  - Ensuring children's rights, wishes and feelings are respected and identified in plans.
  - Seeking assurance that our children and young people are receiving the best of care and that their right to regular health and dental checks, personal education plans and a passport.
  - Robustly challenge any areas of poor practice exhausting all stages of the dispute resolution process and powers to have the child's needs met promptly.
- 7.3. The Independent Reviewing Service is committed to listening to the views of children and young people, enabling them to influence and shape practice and service development.



During the last year the service has actively engaged with children and young people, listened to their views responded to ideas, concerns and requests. For example, children and young people at Change Council made some suggestions about how the service could communicate the role of the IRO more effectively to children and young people and suggested different ways of doing this such as making better use of the website and sending 'IRO profiles' to children looked after so they know something about their IRO and what they look like.

## 8. Child Protection 2018/2019

- 8.1. As at 31st March 2019, 486 children were subject to a child protection plan in Sunderland compared with 499 in March 2018; this represents a 2.6% decrease.
- 8.2. A total of 1062 conferences have been held in this reporting year; 395 were Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) and 667 were Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC). Overall this is a reduction in child protection meetings of 34.8%.
- 8.3. The revised multi-agency threshold document has been actively used in conferences to promote consistency for outcomes for children.

In 2018/19, a total of 724 child protection plans have been ended:

- 254 ended under six months
- 463 ended between six months and two years
- 7 ended after two years

### Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC's)

- 8.4. An ICPC should be held within 15 days from the date of a strategy, where a child protection investigation has been carried out. The table below shows the current performance together with the latest comparator data.

% of Initial Child Protection Conferences held in timescale	17/18	18/19	Statistical Neighbours	North East	England
	87%	79%	80%	83%	77%

- 8.5. Within the last year, 79% of all ICPC's were held within timescale. This represents an 8% decrease in performance when compared to last year. Performance is broadly in line with comparator data as Sunderland is performing just above the national average but below the North East average. The reasons for ICPC's held out of timescale are detailed in the table below:

<b>ICPC - Reasons for out of Timescale</b>	<b>17/18</b>	<b>18/19</b>	<b>Variance</b>
Late Notifications	27	43	+16
Admin Errors	21	6	-15
Missing reports	3	7	+4
Non-Attendance by Significant Person	13	14	+1
Non-Attendance by Other Professional	4	12	+8
Inclement Weather	2	-	-2
<b>Total Number of Children</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>+46</b>

- 8.6. In 2018/19 there were 43 late notifications received which resulted in conferences being held out of timescale.
- 8.7. 26 of the 43 late notifications were stood down as insufficient notice (5 days) was given for external agencies to prepare and submit reports for the meetings. This specifically impacted Northumbria Police who require sufficient time to undertake police checks for inclusion in their reports.
- 8.8. There was an increase in the non-attendance of professionals which equated to 12 meetings being out of timescale. Non-attending professionals came from a cross section of organisations including, education, health, probation services and TFC social care. In addition, three of these meetings were stood down due to non-attendance of an interpreter/advocate. On occasions where key information is not available it is appropriate and, in the child's best interests to stand down. A further 14 meetings were impacted by non-attendance by a significant person, this being the child's parent's / carers.
- 8.9. There was an increase in missing reports from social care which equated to seven. There was a significant reduction in admin errors which is the result of improved recording methods in Liquidlogic which has reduced the occurrence of human error. There were no meetings affected by inclement weather.
- 8.10. Overall initial conferences for 161 children were held out of timescale. The importance of conference timeliness for children who are at risk of significant harm, is that decisions are made quicker and that child centred protection plans are developed with a clear aim of what work is required for the child, to reduce risk. It should be noted however that on occasion it is good practice to stand down a conference if it is in the best interest of the child and family. For example, it is important that all those attending, including parents are fully informed about the conference and that all appropriate attendees are present to allow the correct decision to be reached for the child.
- 8.11. To assist with increasing the timeliness of initial conferences, the service actively monitors conference meeting activity and provides weekly updates to Service Managers within Social Care. The service has also continued to provisionally plan ICPC's at the start of the section 47 investigation giving Social Care and other organisations the full 15 days to plan for the ICPC.

### Timeliness of Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC's)

- 8.12. A child protection plan should be reviewed at a RCPC within three months of the initial child protection conference and then at intervals of no more than six months. The table below shows the current performance together with the latest comparator data.

	17/18	18/19	Statistical Neighbours	North East	England
% of Review Child Protection Conferences held in timescale	98%	94%	92%	92%	91%

- 8.13. Within the last year, 94% of all RCPC's were held within timescale. This represents a 4% decrease in performance when compared to last year. Sunderland is however performing above the national average and statistical neighbour and north east averages. The reasons for RCPC's held out of timescale are detailed in the table below:

RCPC - Reasons for out of Timescale	17/18	18/19	Variance
Late Notification	0	0	0
Calculation Error	0	6	+6
Missing report	0	7	+7
Non-Attendance by Significant Person	2	3	+1
Non-Attendance by Other Professional	5	9	+4
Other (incorrect migrated data)	1	14	+13
<b>Total Number of Children</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>+18</b>

- 8.14. The overall timeliness has been impacted by two key issues; the first being a data migration error in relation to statutory dates when TfC moved from the case management CCM to Liquidlogic. During this transition incorrect migrated data accounted for 14 meetings. The 14 meetings were migrated as out of timescale but did in fact take place in time; this would move the performance figure to 96%. It is not possible to amend Liquidlogic to alter these recordings.
- 8.15. The second issue relates to cases transitioning between social workers whereby the dates of RCPC's have not being shared. It is envisaged that both issues will reduce moving forward as Liquidlogic is now embedded in social care practice and the social care workforce is becoming more stable thus reducing the need for children's cases to transfer.
- 8.16. Overall review conferences for 70 children are recorded as being held out of timescale. For those children, where conferences were out of timescale, plans were agreed to ensure their safety. The service is taking a proactive approach to limiting the number of reviews that fall out of timescale by ensuring data is provided weekly to Children's Social Care Management, and that individual direct contact is made with team managers, where required.

## Progression of Child Protection Plans

- 8.17. Where a child is subject to a child protection plan for longer than 12 months, consideration is given to the reasons. Conference Chairs consider what alternative intervention is required to reduce the risk of significant harm to that child. The longer a child is subject to a plan can be an indicator that the plan may not be achieving the required outcome for the child.
- 8.18. Conference Chairs are required to track the progression of the plans and to use their position to resolve issues where there are concerns regarding drift and delay. Compared with last year, there has been a decrease in the number of plans open longer than 12 months from 57 children to 52 children.
- 8.19. The following table shows a breakdown of the categories for children subject to a child protection plan.

Child Protection Categories	31/03/18		31/03/19		Number Variance
	No of Children	% of Children	No of Children	% of Children	
Emotional Abuse	<b>166</b>	33.26%	<b>160</b>	34.26%	<b>-6</b>
Neglect	<b>279</b>	55.91%	<b>255</b>	54.60%	<b>-24</b>
Physical Abuse	<b>22</b>	4.40%	<b>36</b>	7.71%	<b>+14</b>
Sexual Abuse	<b>32</b>	6.41%	<b>16</b>	3.43%	<b>-16</b>

- 8.20. The category of neglect has 255 child protection plans; this reflects a slight decrease when compared to the previous year which is consistent with the work that has been undertaken by the service to ensure the most appropriate category is selected for plans and that neglect is not being used inappropriately. Within these cases there is often evidence of the toxic trio being present which relates to; substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse.
- 8.21. The number of children subject to a plan under the category of emotional abuse has decreased by six. At the time of the last annual report it was noted that the shortfall in provision for adults in tackling domestic abuse (DA) within Sunderland had impacted upon the progression and length of child protection plans. Whilst the situation remains in terms of provision, TfC workforce are benefiting from training in this area which is supporting workers in making timely decisions for children. However, Sunderland continues to have a high number of children whose childhood has been impacted by parental domestic abuse which is included in category of emotional abuse.
- 8.22. The category of physical abuse has seen an increase in the number of children from 22 in 2018 to 36 in 2019. This again reflects the more appropriate use of categorisation. The remaining categories have decreased in the last year. Work continues to ensure that categories are used appropriately and reflect the area of risk of significant harm for the child.

## Mid-Way reviews

- 8.23. A mid-way review describes a contact between a Conference Chair and the allocated Social Worker for a case. Mid-way reviews are planned after each review but may also take place on an ad-hoc basis; they focus on the progress of the child protection plan.

- 8.24. 620 child protection midway reviews took place within the reporting year. Mid-way reviews are an important tool for both the Conference Chair and Social Workers to monitor and review progress the children.

### **Child's Voice within Child Protection**

- 8.25. Where children are in attendance, the Conference Chair will invite them into a pre-meeting half an hour prior to the start of the meeting to support their engagement. Where a child is not attending a conference, the Conference Chair will encourage the professionals working with the child to collect their views using the child protection conference pack or the Mind of My Own application which is a digital participation tool.

### **Parents Views**

- 8.26. The service has continued to use the parental questionnaire; asking parents for their views on the Conference Chair's role. An example questionnaire is included in Appendix One. During this reporting year, 368 questionnaires were completed which is double the response compared with the previous year.
- 8.27. 131 questionnaires were completed by parents who attended an initial child protection conference and the remaining 237 from those attending a child protection review conference.
- 8.28. Analysis of the completed questionnaires concludes parents agree that meetings are chaired appropriately and feel supported during the meeting. 80% of parents confirmed a positive experience in conference, with comments such as:  
*"No concerns I think everyone was lovely and understanding"*  
*"I am thankful and very happy how the conference was conducted and specially the conclusion/decision of ending the child protection plan' being provided by parents"*
- 8.29. There were four cases where parents reported, in all areas of the questionnaire, that they were unhappy. The four cases were discussed with the relevant Conference Chair.
- 8.30. It's anticipated that the move in 2019-20 to a Signs of Safety framework will assist and support more meaningful engagement of parents and their support network in child protection conferences.

## **9. Children Looked After**

### **Numbers of Children Looked After (CLA)**

- 9.1. As of the 31/03/19 Sunderland had 602 children looked after. This is a decrease of 16 children being cared for compared to the same time last year. The table below provides a summary of CLA activity.

Indicator	17/18	18/19	Variance
% of CLA Reviews held in timescales	94%	94%	-
% of CLA Reviews where YP participated within the review	94%	96%	+2%
% of CLA with an up to date care plan	N/Available	94%	-
% of CLA with an up to date PEP	92%	94%	+2%
% of CLA accommodated under section 20	25%	18%	-7%
% CLA with an up to date Pathway Plan (within 6 months)	N/Available	94%	-
Mind Of My Own statements	275	401	+126
Viewpoint –relating to CLA review	143	141	-2

### Timeliness of Child Looked After Reviews (CLA)

- 9.2. An initial CLA review is required with 20 working days of a child becoming looked after, a second review within three months and subsequent reviews six monthly. Reviews can be held early where there is evidence of a significant event in the child's life or where consideration is required for changes to the care plan.
- 9.3. A total of 1706 looked after reviews have been completed this year which is an increase of 154 reviews compared with the previous year. The rise in number of reviews aligns with the number of children who have become looked after and the need for early review because of a significant event or change to their care plan.
- 9.4. Despite this increase, the percentage of reviews held in timescale has remained stable this year with 94% of reviews held within timescale, which ensures that care plans have been reviewed by the IRO.
- 9.5. The reasons for a child's review being held out of timescale can be seen in the table below.

Review OOT Reasons	17/18	17/18	Variance
Late Notification	14	15	+1
Administration Error	31	18	-13
Missing report	0	0	-
Non-Attendance by Significant Person	19	28	+9
Non-Attendance by Professionals	1	10	+9
Series of Meeting	3	0	-3
Data Discrepancy	20	22	+2
Other	2	0	-2
<b>Total Number of Children</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>+3</b>

- 9.6. The 22 issues relating to data discrepancies are linked to migration issues between the previous case management system (CCM) and the new system (Liquidlogic) in the early part of the year. The decrease in administration errors is largely tied in with increasing familiarity of staff with Liquidlogic which is reassuring. However, the rise in non-attendance is concerning; as IROs we need to support our colleagues in understanding what preventative steps can be taken to reduce the number of looked after reviews going out of timescale. As with child protection review conferences the risk of a review going out of timescale increases significantly when there is a change in worker. To assist, the service is working with Social Care to offer newly appointed social workers the opportunity to meet with the IRO to discuss their cases, any forthcoming reviews and the process around those reviews.

### **Participation within LAR**

- 9.7. 96% of children participated in their review, this indicates a 2% increase for the previous reporting year where the figure stood at 94%. The service continues to utilise several tools to secure children's engagement in their review e.g. Pre-Looked After Review Visits (PLV) and engagement tools such as Viewpoint and Mind of My Own.
- 9.8. In respect of Mind of My Own statements there has been a 69% increase on the number of statements received compared with the previous year. This figure relates to reports covering many aspects of a child's life. The increase is positive and provides assurance that TfC is receiving and hearing child's views.
- 9.9. A key component of the IRO role is to support children to ensure that their voice is heard. In order to promote this ethos one of our officers attends the Participation Forum each quarter and the IRO managers attend both Change Council groups on a quarterly basis in order to develop and maintain links and achieve the best way to hear the child's voice on an individual basis and as a group voice. The service also actively supports the CLA Christmas party and attends the Regional Child in Care Conference.
- 9.10. In response to a request made by Change Council, we have developed individual IRO profiles which are sent out to every child over the age of 4 years, who becomes looked after so that they know a little about the person who is to visit them prior to their first looked after review. This will continue in the forthcoming year.

### **Pre-Looked After Review Visits (PLV)**

- 9.11. A PLV is a visit, by an IRO, to a child prior to their Looked After Review. This gives the IRO and child the opportunity to directly discuss the care plan and the structure of the child's forthcoming review without other factors influencing the child. This allows the IRO to ensure the upcoming review is firmly focussed on the child, considering their wishes and feelings.
- 9.12. In this reporting period 1048 PLVs have taken place in comparison to 941 last year which is an 11% increase. During these visits the child is given the opportunity to discuss the venue, attendees and 'agenda' for the meeting. Ideally children would be encouraged to chair their own meeting (if appropriate) which provides them with an opportunity to identify issues important to them. It should be noted however that not all children wish to have a PLV. This can be due to several factors such as the child's emotional wellbeing, the stage of the care planning process, the age of the child and on occasion the child seeing this as repetitive to their looked after review. If a child does wish to have a PLV the reason is noted within the looked after review documentation.



### **Mid-Way reviews**

- 9.13. A mid-way review is a contact between an IRO and the allocated social worker for a case. Mid-way reviews are planned after each review and may also take place on an ad-hoc basis; they focus on the progress of the Care Plan. In the reporting year 18/19 there have been 1107 CLA mid-way reviews. A midway review provides the IRO and the child's allocated social worker with the opportunity to reflect upon how the child's care plan is progressing and provides the IRO with an opportunity to share their experiences and practice knowledge should a social worker be faced with an area of a child's care plan that is not moving forward.

### **Education**

- 9.14. The work undertaken by TfC Virtual School Team has led to an increase in the number of children with Personal Educational Plans (PEP) to 94. The PEP is the education plan that outlines individual targets and the support that will be put in place to help a child achieve those targets. The aim of the PEP is to support the child to overcome the disadvantages that research tells us they face as a result of being a looked after child. The rise in the number of PEP's has a direct impact and leads to positive progress of a child's individual educational needs which are considered with a CLA review.

### **Children Looked After Section 20**

- 9.15. S20 is a voluntary agreement whereby a child's parent or legal guardian has consented to them becoming looked after. There is a decrease of 7% of children accommodated via S20 in this reporting period. This equates to 109 children compared with 148 children in the previous year. The decrease is due to greater consideration by Social Care as to the appropriate use of S20 together with timely and appropriate challenge by the IRO in respect of any inappropriate use of S20.
- 9.16. IRO's are mindful of the need to monitor a child's legal status within midway reviews and within CLA reviews and to challenge when necessary.

### **Secure Accommodation Panel Reviews (SAR)**

- 9.17. With regards to children who have been placed in secure accommodation under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989, (Welfare Secure) a SAR panel must be arranged within 20 working days of the Order being made and subsequently three monthly. TfC continues to have a reciprocal regional arrangement in place with South Tyneside and Gateshead Local Authorities to accommodate the SAR panels as there is a requirement for three IROs to be in attendance, one of which must be independent.
- 9.18. In the reporting year TfC has had five children placed in a secure accommodation. This is an increase of one child compared with the previous year.

## **10. Dispute Resolution Procedure (DRP)**

- 10.1. As of April 2018, we combined processes for raising practice issues with Social Care into one process; the DRP Process.
- 10.2. The DRP process has five stages in total; the process ordinarily begins with an informal DRP which involves the IRO/Conference Chair (within 24 hours of identifying an issue) contacting the Social Worker or Team Manager by telephone to raise the concern and confirm a 10-day timescale to address. Should the issue remain unresolved or if the

IRO/Conference Chair feels it necessary, they can escalate the matter up through the levels of Case Management. Once the DRP has been initiated the issue(s) should be addressed within an overall 20 working day timescale.

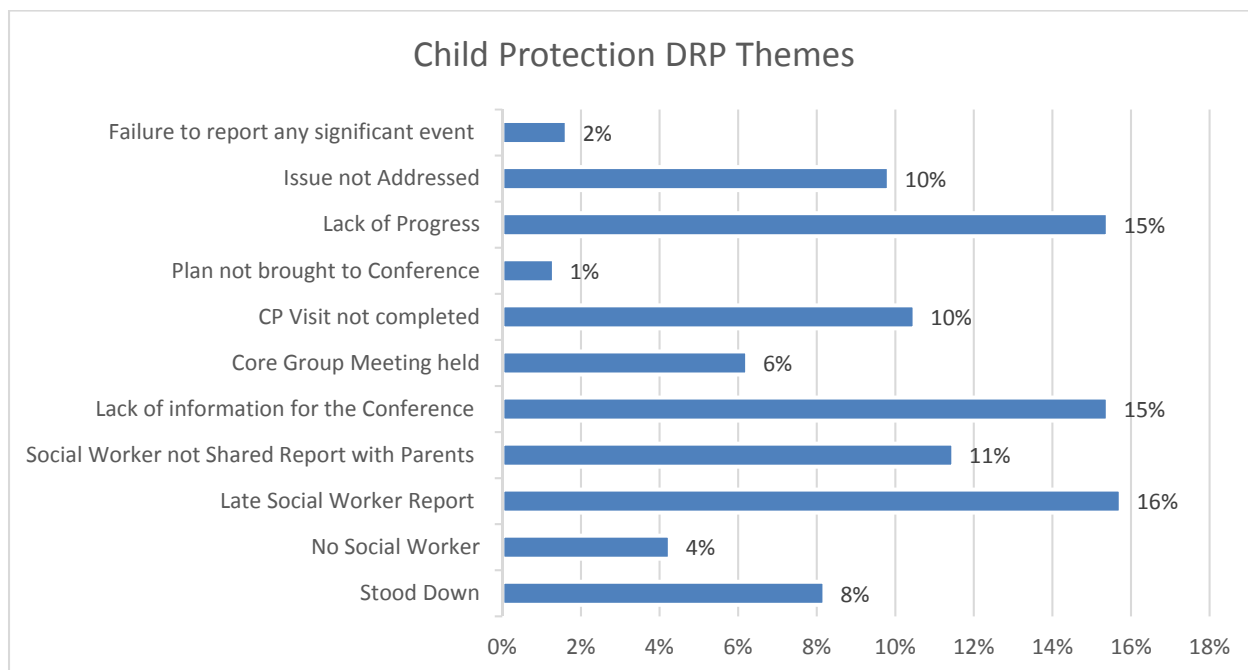
- 10.3. In 2018-19 there were a total of 287 DRP's raised which is a slight decrease of 4 when compared to the previous year.
- 10.4. Following Sunderland's full inspection of Children's Services in May-June 2018, Ofsted reported that "IROs monitor children and young people's progress against plans through midway reviews and the process for resolving professionals' disputes about children's cases is now established". However, Ofsted also reported "IROs are not effectively challenging the quality of children's plans or whether actions are completed following reviews". Ofsted recommended that additional challenge from IROs and conference chairs was required, in order to improve the quality of practice and planning for all children.
- 10.5. The Independent Reviewing Service, in keeping with the national picture strives to strengthen its challenges with regards to the quality of children plans. The tables below provide details of the challenges made by Conference Charis and IRO's on behalf of children over the last year.
- 10.6. The table below shows the number of DPR's raised in relation to child protection.

Child Protection – DRPs	17/18	18/19	Variance
No of DRP's Raised	193	140	-53

- 10.7. The table below highlights the different stages in which DRP's have been resolved for children subject of child protection plans in this reporting year.

Child Protection – DRP Closure	Stage 1 Informal	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Total Closed
Stage at which the DRP was closed	133	2	2	0	0	137

- 10.8. The child protection DRP themes and issues can be seen within the chart below



10.9. The highest themes remain in line with those from the previous reporting year; lack of progress (15%) and late or no social worker report (16%) There has been an increase in the number of meetings stood down (2% to 8%) due to a lack of information being available at conference.

10.10. The impact of DRP is individual to each child and depends upon the concerns raised. Below are examples of DRPs raised for children subject to a child protection plan.

#### Example One:

**Issue:** A DRP was raised due to the lack of preparation for an ICPC in terms of the need for an AIM two initial assessment; given that the child was alleged to have sexually assaulted two younger children. The ICPC was reconvened.

**Outcome:** The initiation of the DRP lead to acknowledgement of this oversight and an agreed timescale for the completion of the work. This outcome supported the development of the best plan for this child.

#### Example Two:

**Issue:** A DRP was raised due to lack of progress in the child protection plan since the ICPC. The child remained at risk and the professionals working with her did not have up to date or accurate information. PLO had ended on the presentation of a 'positive parenting assessment' however the parenting assessment had not started.

**Outcome:** The initiation of the DRP lead Social Care to revisit the required work, PLO panel was able to reconsider information and the child was accommodated. The impact of DRP for the child was that she was accommodated in a place of safety.

10.11. The table below shows the number of DRPs raised in relation to children looked after

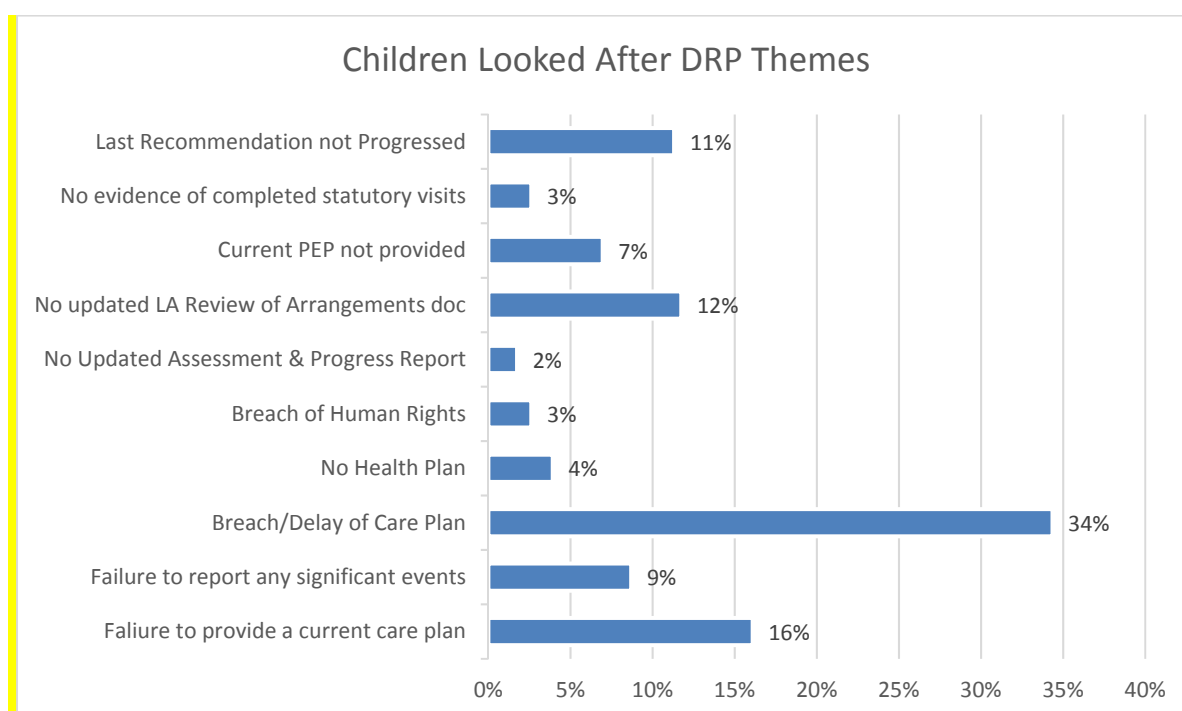
Children Looked After - DRP	17/18	18/19	Variance
No of DRP's raised	98	140	+42

10.12. The table below highlights the different stage in which DRP's have been resolved for looked after children in this reporting year.

Children Looked After – DRP Closure	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total Closed
Stage at which the DRP was closed	126	3	11	7	147

10.13. In this reporting year, 18 DRP's have progressed to stages three or four. There were no DRPs that progressed to stages three or four in the previous year. Part of the explanation for the increase is family groupings. For example, in July 2018, DRPs were raised for a family group of three children that were resolved at stage three. However, in February 2019 further DRPs were raised for the same family group of three children that were also resolved at stage three. Of the seven DRP's progressed to stage four, four involved one family.

10.14. The children looked after DRP themes and issues can be seen within the chart below:



10.15. 34% of DRPs raised were in relation to delay/breach of care plan compared with 17% in 2017/18. The impact of this for a child can be delay in the progression of a plans (e.g. for adoption if dates are not secured for the Agency Decision Maker to consider and agree the plan). There has been a decrease in DRP's raised due to a lack of statutory visits (8% in 17/18) and updates of LA review arrangements documentation (19% in 17/18),

which is a positive development and would support the fact that more Social Workers are now more familiar with Liquidlogic and the required process.

10.16. Below are examples of DRPs raised for children who are looked after:

**Example One:**

**Issue:** A DRP was raised due to drift and delay in progressing recommendations identified at the previous Secure Accommodation Review which impacted upon the length of time the Young Person remained Secure Accommodation

**Outcome:** The initiation of the DRP led to further discussion between Social Care and the IRO, timescales were agreed for the completion of required work and placement issues were managed. The impact of the DRP for the child was that they were able to move on from Secure Accommodation.

**Example Two:**

**Issue:** A DRP was raised due to the need to hold a process review as there was work that needed to be carried out and very limited documentation including no care plan, health plan or PEP. There was outstanding assessment work for the proposed foster carer, limited direct work with the young person and previous LAR recommendations were not achieved.

**Outcome:** The initiation of the DRP led to assessment work being completed. The social worker was reminded of best practice regarding the need to share the outcome of parenting assessment, the completion of key documentation and the need for direct work. As a result, the child was included in the development of a plan that met his presenting needs.

- 10.17. Overall there has been a decrease with regards to the number of DRPs initiated within Child Protection; this is due to Conference Chairs managing the presenting difficulties of staffing capacity within Social Care through negotiation and relationship work.
- 10.18. There has however been an increase in the number issued for children looked after which is possibly due to the rise in children looked after numbers over the year, and the fluctuation in Social Care staffing arrangements, which can lead to looked after reviews being overlooked, delay in Social Workers progressing appropriate paperwork/care plans or failure to achieve agreed care planning. There has also been an increase in the numbers of DRPs escalating to stages three and four for looked after children.
- 10.19. To assist the service to achieve greater consistency in the application of disputes, a DRP forum has been initiated to support workers by providing an opportunity to discuss areas where there is potential for a DRP and to gain the views of team members. Representatives from Social Care can also attend the forum. This will be an area for development in the forthcoming year.
- 10.20. The initiation of a DRP, on a child behalf, is central to the IRO role to achieve best outcome for children. When a DRP is evidenced (as sighted in the examples above) it leads to a change for the individual child. The service, together with Social Care will always aim to resolve any matters at an informal stage, eliminating the need for an escalation however will proceed to escalate should this be required. The DRP process

will be reviewed in the next reporting year with a view to strengthening the informal stage and streamlining the escalation process.

### Positive Practice

- 10.21. Whilst the service has a key role to play for children in addressing areas of poor practice it also has a role in supporting and evidencing areas of good practice. Within this reporting year, we have made nine notifications to Social Workers and their Team Manager advising them of identified good practice, which has led to timely and positive outcomes for children.

#### Example One:

*"I wanted to let you know that I was very impressed with the Social Work report that X brought to Conference yesterday. The child's voice was present throughout and L had clearly undertaken some very good child centred practice with L. L felt comfortable enough to attend the Conference and was able to express his views. Coupled with this was the fact that X had been able to be completely honest about the risks and to have shared these with L and his mother in an open and transparent way. Child Centred Practice and Partnership working was evident throughout her work"*

#### Example Two:

*"I was very impressed with the fabulous report written by L, who has always produced a high standard of work for the Conferences I have worked with her on. She shows great insight as a professional, yet able to write from an empathic and non-judgemental viewpoint. I like that she is able to identify the Toxic Trio being present and ensure this is conveyed in her report. The child's voice also came across clearly, indicative of her one-to-one work with this child"*

## 11. Foster Carer Reviews

- 11.1. The overall purpose of a Foster Carer Review is to determine whether the carer(s) remain suitable to continue to carry out the responsibilities of fostering children and young people. Reviews of foster carers play a key role in evaluating foster care practice in TfC and offer the opportunity for improving the quality of foster care provided to children. Annual reviews are completed from the date when a foster carer is approved by TfC Fostering Services.
- 11.2. Within TfC there is a total of 236 Foster Carers. This number includes 71 Connected Foster Carers (A Connected Carer is a person who is a family member or friend of the child and is approved by TfC-Fostering to look after a named child).
- 11.3. In this reporting year there have been a total of 205 Foster Carer Reviews completed (the number of reviews differentiates from the number of foster carers due to the timing of when they are recruited within the reporting year).
- 11.4. 97% (199) reviews were completed within timescale which is an improvement of 9% from 2017-18. Six reviews occurred outside of timescale due to staff sickness, the availability of the foster carers and one due to an ongoing investigation.

- 11.5. The reviews consider the quality of care provided, how foster carer's development can be enhanced and how the fostering service can support foster carers to undertake their complex work. The foster carer reviews provide a practical representation of the foster carer and the fostering service and have been used by the Fostering Service as a vehicle for improving practice, supervision and support.

## **12. Independent Reviewing Service Positive Feedback**

- 12.1. Service feedback is captured in several ways such as feedback sheets provided to participants of meeting, training feedback sheets, meetings with young people, Mind of My Own application (an online feedback tool for children and young people), the TfC compliments process, and via email from professionals.
- 12.2. The service has received 25 positive practice comments in the last year in relation to a range of areas including advocating the in the best interest of a child, listening to families and taking account of their views and wishes, being flexible to attend meetings at short notice, having great insight and case knowledge, supporting workers to develop plans of action and having our "fingers on the pulse".
- 12.3. Below are some recent examples of positive feedback received:

### **Example of positive feedback to our Foster Carer Officer:**

*"I want to draw your attention to FCR/Reg 44 Officer and her astute observations made during a review of the foster carer for [child]. The Officer saw me after this and advised me of her concerns – that [child] would be unlikely to live independently due to her care needs and that her aunt should apply for DLA and Carer's Allowance in respect of her. I took this information to our meeting, LAC Process Review Part 2 held on[date] and have included this and further recommendations to support [child] into her future as an adult requiring services.*

*This was a great example of good communication and working together".*

### **Examples of positive feedback to our Conference Chairs:**

*"I just wanted to also thank you for your support with [child] – you were tremendous in the last RCPC and your support is much appreciated*

*"Following the conference today {mother} informed me "that IRO is really nice, she made me feel at ease and not as scared as I thought I would be".*

*"I found that [conference chair] listened to [mother], listened to the professionals fully and allowed for [mother] to address any of the reports and comments made by professionals present".*

### **An example of positive feedback to the service from a partner agency:**

*"Would just like to say a huge thank you for allowing me to observe in the meeting today. I found it really really useful and would just like to say that the way you handled the situation was commendable – especially in a difficult situation. Please keep me in mind if you have any other interesting opportunities that may be useful. Thank you again. I really enjoyed my morning".*



### 13. Partnership Working



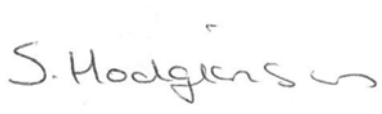
- 13.1. The Children's Independent Reviewing Service is keen to extend its working relationships with partner agencies and has been active in the reporting year to achieve such links.
- 13.2. The service held its second open day in 2018, providing a range of drop-in sessions covering a vast range of topic areas. This has helped to inform, and support professionals to understand the many functions undertaken within the service.
- 13.3. The service has continued to be involved in key groups and developments such as:
- Delivery of bespoke multi-agency training in relation to safeguarding children and the child protection conference process to TfC staff and partner agencies
  - Active involvement in lesson learned events with multi-agency professionals to identify improvement in Child Protection practice
  - Attended and delivered regional training in the area of safeguarding
  - IRO team attachment with Social Work teams to share and support learning
  - Attendance at the regional IRO manager group
  - Planning and delivery of an IRO Regional Conference, planned for 2019.
  - Attendance at the Cooperate Parenting Board and Security Panel

### 14. Achievements in 2018/19

- 14.1. In the 2018/19 Annual Report the service identified several priorities for the service. A full breakdown of this can be seen in Appendix 2.

### 15. Conclusion

- 15.1. Within the reporting year the service, along with colleagues in TfC–Social Care have experienced changes within areas of demand; we have seen a reduction in Child Protection work whilst experiencing an increase in demand for the number of children requiring a Looked After Review. Although the numbers of children looked after slightly decreased towards the end of this reporting year, we have undertaken 150 more Looked After Reviews, which in turn has increased the number of pre-looked after reviews and mid-way monitoring. This is due to more children moving in and out of care.
- 15.2. The forthcoming year presents exciting opportunities as TfC s moving to a strength-based model of practice, Signs of Safety. The service is working closely with Social Care, Early Help and partners to implement the new model. We plan to hold partner sessions and role play events to assist colleagues and partners to understand how the new model will be applied in child protection conferences and to adapt to the new ways of working.
- 15.3. Over the next year we will continue to work closely with Social Care and partner agencies to provide appropriate support to professionals and to ensure children and young people within Sunderland remain at the core of all we do.

Signatures:			
	Kim Roberts, Team Manager	Gavin Taylor, Team Manager	Stacy Hodgkinson, Service Manager
Date:	19/6/19	19/6/19	19/06/19

## Appendix 1 – Parent/Carer Questionnaire

### Child Protection Conference Feedback Form for Parents and Carers

Family Name \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Print)

Date and Time of Conference \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Type of Conference:

Initial ☐

Review ☐

Transfer In ☐

**Parents/carers we would be grateful if you could spend some time completing this form.**

1) The Chair explained to me before the meeting what was going to happen

Strongly Agree

☐

Agree

☐

Disagree

☐

Strongly disagree

☐

2) The Chair supported me so I was able to share my views within the conference

Strongly Agree

☐

Agree

☐

Disagree

☐

Strongly disagree

☐

3) The concerns for my children were clearly explained with the conference

Strongly Agree

☐

Agree

☐

Disagree

☐

Strongly disagree

☐

4) I am clear about what needs to change/happen for the conference to be able to consider ending the Child protection plan

Strongly Agree

☐

Agree

☐

Disagree

☐

Strongly disagree

☐

Not Applicable

☐

### **For review Conference only**

5) The Child Protection Plan helped my family achieve positive change

Strongly Agree

☐

Agree

☐

Disagree

☐

Strongly disagree

☐

Is there anything else that you would like to tell us which might help us improve the experience for parents attending a Child Protection conference?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this feedback form.**

## Appendix 2 – Children's Service Independent Reviewing Service - Priority Plan 18-19

Priority 1: Recruitment / Retention					
Outcome: To maintain a stable permanent work force					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
To ensure that the Staff team are afforded regular reflective supervision	Data re supervision to be captured and reported on monthly	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2019		Supervision is planned and achieved monthly with all staff, data is maintained and shared on a monthly basis with the senior leadership team.
To actively recruit to any vacant post and manage absence, retirement or resignation	Short listing and interviewing to be initiated ASAP following any job vacancy.	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2019		We have achieved timely recruitment to all arising vacancies and new posts
All new staff to be involved in TfC-Sunderland induction programme	Staff to be aware of TFC-Sunderland's organisational aims/ policies and procedures.	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2019		All new staff have been invited to attend TfC cooperate induction programme
To nominate staff in recognition of their contribution to the work of the team	Increased nomination	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2019		Staff are nominated when the opportunity arises

<b>Priority 2: Improve the CPCC/IRO Footprint on Liquidlogic &amp; DRP Challenge on the child's behalf</b> <b>Outcome: Further increase the "footprint" of the CPCC/IRO on the child's case file in the progress of plans and in evidencing challenge</b>					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
That every child subject to a CP plan or a Care Plan has a mid-way review and that all CC/ IRO contact is recorded on LL thus evidencing the IRO footprint.	Improved performance data, as reflected within Liquidlogic	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Reviewed monthly on IRO scorecard		Figures have improved in this reporting year showing that we are making progress in respect of the action
Pre-Looked After visits to be planned and completed prior to the planned review in order to effectively capture the voice of the child.	Improved performance data, as reflected within Liquidlogic and through IRO audit work	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Reviewed monthly on IRO scorecard & within CC/IRO audit		Figures continue to be considered and are now discussed within supervision as staff are provided child level data monthly about any missing visit. One issue is the fact that we are currently not able to record/capture refused PLV.

<b>Priority 3: The voice of the child</b> <b>Outcome: To evidence that the child's voice and participation in LAR's and CP conferences informs the decisions made on their behalf</b>					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
Increase use of Mind of My Own/Viewpoint and Children's Conference Packs within looked after reviews and child protection conferences	A noted increase in recorded statements and evidence within CLA and CP minutes of consideration to the completed summaries	IRO/CC's	Reviewed monthly on IRO scorecard &		As the report indicates there has been an increase in the number of Mind of My Own reports received into TfC. Conference

**Priority 3: The voice of the child****Outcome: To evidence that the child's voice and participation in LAR's and CP conferences informs the decisions made on their behalf**

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
			CC/IRO audit		packs continues to be utilised by Social Care staff.
Work effectively with Change Council members to promote links with the IRO/CC's. Utilise the advice offered by Change Council to inform our service development	Quarterly attendance to be achieved, with additional attendance as required.	Team management IRO/CC Change Council Young People's Officer	March 2019		Quarterly visits are progressed and have been achieved with both groups since their split in Jan 2019. We consulted and developed IRO profiles which will be used in the coming year to introduce children new to their allocated IRO
To support children to consider chairing their own LAR's	An increase in the number of children chairing their LAR's	IRO/CC	March 19		This work continues, on an individual one to one basis. We do not have statistical data to support any improvement but reported incidents are occurring.

<b>Priority 4: Integrate Business Support Into the IRO Team</b> <b>Outcome: To ensure that business support staff are able to manage the completion of tasks in line with statutory requirements</b>					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
Staff including Business Support to achieve statutory timescales in terms of the distribution of LAR/CP minutes and reduce the current backlog	All minutes to be distributed within statutory timescales with detail of outstanding work being recorded on the monthly scorecard	IRO/CC Business support staff Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 19		The distribution of CP minutes has improved in this reporting year but remains an area of improvement. The distribution of LAR which following a differing track to CP minutes is not easily recorded within LL therefore we intend to introduce a new process for the forthcoming year which will ensure we are able to monitor LAR minute distribution.
Business support staff to be included in planned service development days	Attendance to be achieved	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Twice a year		Achieved, with Business support also now benefitting from bespoke development sessions.

<b>Priority 5: Strengthen working relationship with social care staff</b> <b>Outcome: To ensure that the service has an effective working relationship with children's social worker</b>					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
Maintain and develop team links with Social Worker team	That open discussion between the service and the Social Worker teams is maintained in order to ensure that respectful and positive relationship reinforcing Working Together principles; this will be evidenced in	IRO/CC's	Monthly		A yearly programme of team links is established within our service. Information is brought back to management, in order that any trends/themes can be shared with the whole team.

<b>Priority 5: Strengthen working relationship with social care staff</b> <b>Outcome: To ensure that the service has an effective working relationship with children's social worker</b>					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
	team links and reflected in team meeting minutes				
Maintenance of IRO/CC and Team Manager quarterly meeting	Improved working relationships	Service Manger Children's Social Care	Summer 18		This action has not been fully achieved in part due to the staffing changes within TfC
HOS and IRO managers to continue to meet with Service Managers to progress discussion around case themes and issues	Improved working relationships	Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	Summer 18		In the forthcoming year TfC as an organisation should make a concerted effort to priorities this work Plans are in place to support the commencement of solution focused meetings.
Arrange annual Open Day	Increase attendance	IRO/CC's Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	Summer 2019		Planned for May 2019
To share areas of expertise with others	An increase in staff running training sessions	IRO/CC's	March 2019		Through the Open Day our staff provide a forum to share their expertise with Social Care staff and partner agencies.



**Priority 6: Further develop IRO/CPCC Training matrix and improve training opportunities for staff**

**Outcome: To ensure that the service has a training programme reflective of staff needs**

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
All SW staff to be registered on the City Sunderland learning Hub	An increase in IRO training, evidenced through the service training log.  All IRO/CC to attend a minimum of two training events in a reporting year	IRO/CC	March 19		With the introduction of personal accounts for TfC staff all staff are now registered with Community Care Inform and manage their learning logs within this forum.
Every IRO/CC to undertake appropriate training to support their personal learning	Every IRO/CC will complete a minimum of one day's professional training	IRO/CC's	March 2019		Staff continue to be included within TfC training opportunities, at the same time management have secured bespoke IRO training for 2 staff members at Edge Hill University and Reg 44 training for staff and Residential staff.

**Priority 7: Strengthen quality assurance and safeguarding oversight**

**Outcome: Ensure that emerging themes are fed into the QA framework and training programme**

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
To utilise the information provided by the service scorecard; identity themes and performance issues	That themes emerging from an evidence base, (performance data / scorecard) lead service improvement for the service and Social Care	Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Quarterly		The Scorecard has been developed this year to capture increasing amount of data, with changes being affected in several areas for example the decision to increase staffing within the service service both within Business services and in IRO capacity. The increase in the distribution of CP minutes. Improvement in the timeliness of ICPC Improvement in the number of LAR's being held within timescale
Management to complete monthly auditing on identified cases	Monthly audit are completed and the information is used to inform practise development.	Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Monthly		Monthly Auditing actively was achieved until Oct 18, when a decision was reached by TfC re changes to the audit programme IRO/CC actions from Social Care audits are consider monthly

<b>Priority 7: To strengthen the service profile within Sunderland</b> <b>Outcome: Children's Independent Reviewing Service to become a respected and utilised resource to better support outcomes for children/young people within the City.</b>					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
IRO/CC's to be encouraged to lead in key areas of work within Together for Children and with partner agencies.	Increased membership of appropriate steering groups	IRO's Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	February 2019		Staff have been involved in MALAP; the development of Liquidlogic programmes and the introduction of Signs of Safety. Team managers have taken a lead role in the NE6 Regional IRO Managers group and will continue to do so in the NE12 group which was formulated in January 2019. Along with progressing lead roles in the formation of joint forums with Health, Police and Cafcass. The Designated Officer has taken a lead role in representing the North Region at National Level
IRO managers to participate in regional IRO manager group	IRO managers to achieve regular attendance and take active roles to support improvement in service	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	March 2019		Team managers took a lead role in the NE6 Regional IRO Managers group and now host the bi monthly NE12 group which was formulated in January 2019. A plan of work has been agreed which will support bespoke IRO learning and the 2 <sup>nd</sup> IRO regional conference.

<b>Priority 7: To strengthen the service profile within Sunderland</b> <b>Outcome: Children's Independent Reviewing Service to become a respected and utilised resource to better support outcomes for children/young people within the City.</b>					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
Develop an annual programme of meetings with partner agencies: Police Cafcass	Improvement in level of understanding of one another's role, improved communication, improved systems which positively impact upon joint working	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Summer 2018		<p>Management now meet with the Police, Cafcass and Health on a quarterly basis. These meetings have supported an improvement in our overall service and led to a better understanding of the one's roles</p> <p>Our joint working with the Police led to the Police commissioning bespoke conference training which was rolled out to Police and partner agencies on two occasions at the end of the reporting year.</p> <p>This training was positively received.</p>

## Appendix 3 – Children’s Independent Reviewing Service - Priority Plan 2019-20

Priority	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Lead	Timescale
<b>PRIORITY 1</b> To achieve consistency across the service with regards to the CC/IRO, scrutiny, challenge and tracking of individual children’s plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IRO’s apply consistent scrutiny of children’s plans.</li> <li>• Consistent application of DRP process</li> <li>• TFC Social Care to adhere DRP process.</li> </ul>	Every child subject to a CP plan or a Care Plan has a mid-way review. CC/ IRO contact is recorded on LL thus evidencing the IRO footprint.	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Reviewed monthly on IRO scorecard
		Pre-Looked After visits to be planned and completed prior to the planned CLA review to effectively capture the voice of the child.	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Reviewed monthly on IRO scorecard & within CC/IRO audit
		CC / IRO prior to every initial and subsequent review meeting to ensure that they consider the assessment that informs the overall plan.	IRO / CC	At CLA Review or CP Conference & Midway.
		To ensure that review meetings are held timely		
		To undertake a review of the DRP process with the DoSC	Stacy Hodgkinson	June 2019
		Introduce DRP forums on monthly basis	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2019
		Invite a representative from social care	Stacy Hodgkinson	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2019

Priority	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Lead	Timescale
<b>Priority 2:</b> The voice of the child is heard and considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child's voice and participation in LAR and CP conferences informs the decisions made on their behalf.</li> </ul>	Practice to move to signs of safety model which will assist and strengthen the voice of the child in CP and CLA meetings.	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Catherine Witt	March 2020
		Continue to promote the use of recognised aids in conjunction with social workers to facilitate / support.	CYP Participation IRO / CC Social Workers	March 2020
		To work effectively with Change Council members to promote links with the IRO/CC's.	Management IRO/CC Change Council Young People's Officer	March 2020
		Put processes in place to capture views of children and young people in DO, FCR & Reg 44 work and that appropriate feedback is provided to the children and young people.	Management	October 2019
		To actively promote the use of viewpoint, Mind of My Own and conference packs to be completed by children and young people		March 2020

Recommendation	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Lead	Timescale
<b>Priority 3:</b> Strengthen working relationships with social care staff.	To ensure that the service has an effective working relationship with children's social worker	IRO/CCs to attend quarterly team meetings	IRO/CC's	Monthly
		To make Director of Service aware of any areas for discussion for her weekly meeting with DOSC	Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	Weekly
		Consider regular meetings with TfC Chief Exec and/or DOS to provide updates in relation to issues, themes or trends	Stacy Hodgkinson Sue Carty	Quarterly

Recommendation	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Lead	Timescale
		Increase participation of social care colleagues attending open day.	IRO/CC's Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	May 2019
		To develop a model of communication for any issues or concerns about children, practice or policy	All	June 2019
		To obtain regional ideas and learning with regards to strengthening relationships via the regional IRO meeting.	IRO/CC's	Quarterly

Priority	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Lead	Timescale
<b>Priority 4:</b> Maximise business support across service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business support staff are able to manage the completion of admin tasks in line with statutory requirements leading to improved outcomes regarding timeliness.</li> <li>CC / IRO's comply with practice standards</li> </ul>	To realign tasks within the business support function to maximise current resource	Heather Sutherland	March 2020
		Business support staff to be included in planned service development days	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Twice a Year
		Business support to provide monthly performance reports to all teams within the service	Heather Sutherland	March 2020
		Actively monitor the timeliness of statutory timescales	Heather Sutherland	March 2020

Recommendation	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Lead	Timescale
<b>Priority 5:</b> Strengthen quality assurance processes within the service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengths and weaknesses in the service are identified and acted upon.</li> </ul>	Review scorecard to identify themes and performance issues	Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Quarterly
		Develop and implement a quality assurance plan for the service	Stacy Hodgkinson	June 2019



Recommendation	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Lead	Timescale
		IRO Managers to observe each individual IRO/CC practice annually	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	Annual
		Implement SOS model	All	August 2019
		IRO/CC to undertake peer observation on a quarterly cycle to support peer learning	IRO/CC's	Quarterly

Recommendation	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Lead	Timescale
<b>Priority 6:</b> Further develop IRO/CPCC Training matrix and improve training opportunities for staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure that the training programme reflective of staff needs</li> </ul>	Two Staff to attend allocated places on the advanced IRO practice course at Edgehill University	IRO/CC	July 2019
		Undertake an annual review of training needs across the service	Kim Roberts Gavin Taylor	March 2020
		Reg 44 training to be delivered to 15 members	IRO / Managers	June 2019
		Signs of safety training to be delivered to all IRO's	IRO / CC	June 2019
		All CC/IRO to utilise Community Care Informed and to be responsible for keeping an up to date PDP	IRO / CC	March 2020
		IRO Managers to continue to pursue a regional training offer for IRO/CC with the NE12 group	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts IRO/CC	October 2019
		CC/IRO to ensure that they are compliant and ready to re-register with Social Work England	IRO / CC	October 2020
		To input into the regional IRO conference and IRO/CC to attend	Kim Roberts Gavin Taylor IRO/CC	October 2019

Priority	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Lead	Timescale
<b>Priority 7</b> To recruit and maintain a stable workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To maintain a stable permanent work force within the service</li> </ul>	To ensure that the staff team are afforded regular reflective supervision	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2020
		To actively recruit to any vacant post and manage absence, retirement or resignation	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2020
		All new staff to be involved in TFC-Sunderland induction programme	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2020
		To ensure there is management oversight of IRO / CC caseloads	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	March 2020