

Annual Report of Independent Reviewing Officers

2013 – 2014

London Borough of Lewisham



Report Author: Sarah Sturge Independent Reviewing Officer Team Manager

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Report is a statutory requirement produced according to section 7.11 of the IRO Handbook¹ accompanying the 2010 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations. It should be made available to the members of the Corporate Parenting Board and published as a public document. The Report provides a profile of our Looked After Children and a summary of the work undertaken by the IROs and themes for further service improvement.
- 1.2. The IROs work with Lewisham's looked after children and young people. Each child has a named IRO. The IROs conduct reviews of the child's Care Plan, which is prepared by the social worker, ensuring that it is appropriate to the child's needs and that it is being progressed without delay. The IRO must ensure the child's views are considered in reviewing their Care Plan. The IROs also chair Missing from Care Reviews, and Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation strategy meetings for Looked After Children, and attend some Legal Planning Meetings and Care Planning Panel. The IROs play a significant role in quality assurance, as they regularly audit Children's Social Care records and participate in Service Manager Quality Audits. The IROs have a role in the ongoing monitoring of progress of the Child's Care Plan and will escalate any concerns about delay.

2. Independence

- 2.1. The IROs are placed within the Quality Assurance Service in the Children's Social Care Division of the Children and Young People's Directorate. Although IROs are employed by the Local Authority, they have a separate line of management up to the Director for Children's Social Care. The IRO team sits alongside the Complaints, Representation and Access to Records Teams, and the Child Protection Chairs Team in the Quality Assurance Service.

¹ IRO handbook: statutory guidance for independent reviewing officers and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children, Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2010 S7.11

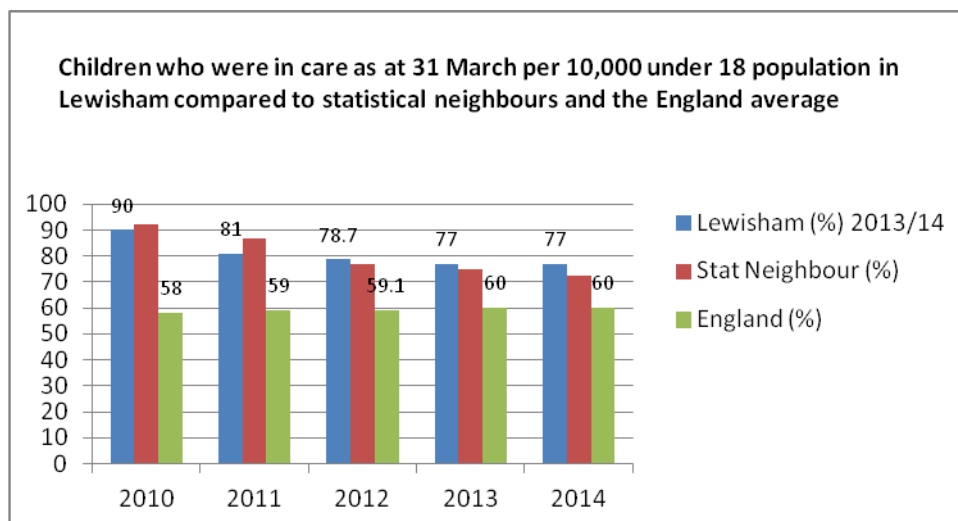
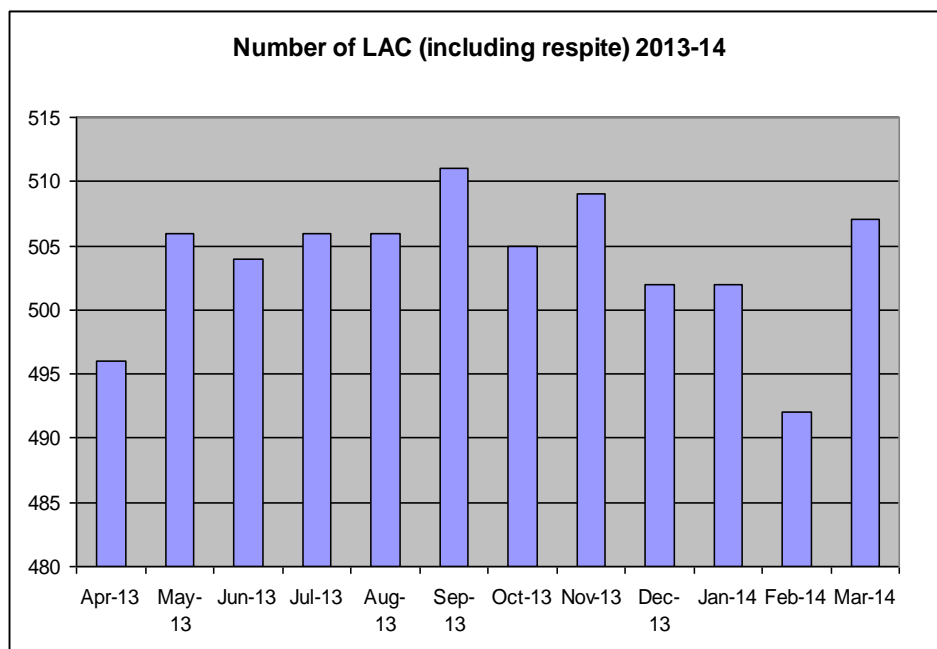
3. The IRO Team

- 3.1. In March 2013 to April 2014, Lewisham Children's Social Care had an extra IRO post for 1 year resulting in eight full time IROs and a Team Manager. We have had a history of good retention of our IROs, which means that many of our Looked After Children have an opportunity to develop a relationship with IROs who know their history. This is important as Looked After Children have said that they find it difficult to keep having to explain their history to new people.
- 3.2. The allocated IRO remains with the child until they leave care unless the IRO leaves their post. If the child returns home and then becomes looked after again, we allocate the same IRO when ever possible. We also try to make sure we have the same IRO for a sibling group and extended family members such as cousins, unless there is a good reason not to do so. We have achieved this in every case where the IRO is still employed by Lewisham.
- 3.3. The IROs demographics reflect the diversity of our Looked After Children.
- 3.4. IRO Guidance stipulates that each IRO should have a caseload of between 50 to 70 children. Some of our IROs had more than 70 cases in 2012/13. Agreement was given to appoint an additional IRO for period April 13 to March 14, which enabled us to maintain IRO caseloads as advised by statutory recommendation. In line with best practice, we are able to allocate an IRO within 5 working days of every child becoming looked after.

4. Profile of Lewisham's Looked After Children

Numbers of Looked After Children

Our looked after population was 500 in March 2014.



4.1. Children come in and out of care all the time and for a variety of reasons.

recorded under specific categories as follows:

- 32% - Abuse or Neglect. This compares with 55% nationally and 48.3% with statistical neighbours.

- 30% - Family dysfunction. This compares with 19% nationally and 13.9% with statistical neighbours
- 12% - Family in acute distress. This compares with 10% nationally and 7.6 with statistical neighbours
- 9% - Socially unacceptable behaviour. This compare with 4 % nationally and with 7.6%
- 13% - Absent parents. This compares with 6% nationally and 14.7% with statistical neighbours
- 4% - became looked after for other reasons.

Some children are supported to return to their families, whilst others cease to be in care because of alternative permanent arrangements such as Adoption or Special Guardianship.

4.2 Lewisham has a total population of 286,180, including an under eighteen population of 68,689. This equates to 22% of the total population. During the year the number of looked after children fluctuated between 496 and 511. In March 2014 there were a total of 500 looked after children in Lewisham, equating to 0.17% of the total population and 0.76% of the child population. The number of children looked per 10,000 population is 77, remaining the same as 2012 -2013 but generally following a downward trend since 2010 compared to 72 for statistical neighbours and 60 nationally.

Ethnicity and Nationality of Looked After Children

4.3 In Lewisham, based on the last available data, 40% of our residents are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, rising to 77% within our school population. This is because the black and ethnic minority population in Lewisham is younger than the white population. Over 170 different languages are spoken in Lewisham schools. IROs need to ensure that looked after children and young people as well as their parents have been able to receive good social work assessment and care taking account of difference in language and culture.

- 4.4 In March 2014, of the 500 children looked after the three largest ethnic groups represented were White British at 26.97%, Black Caribbean at 19.29% and Black African at 13.78%.

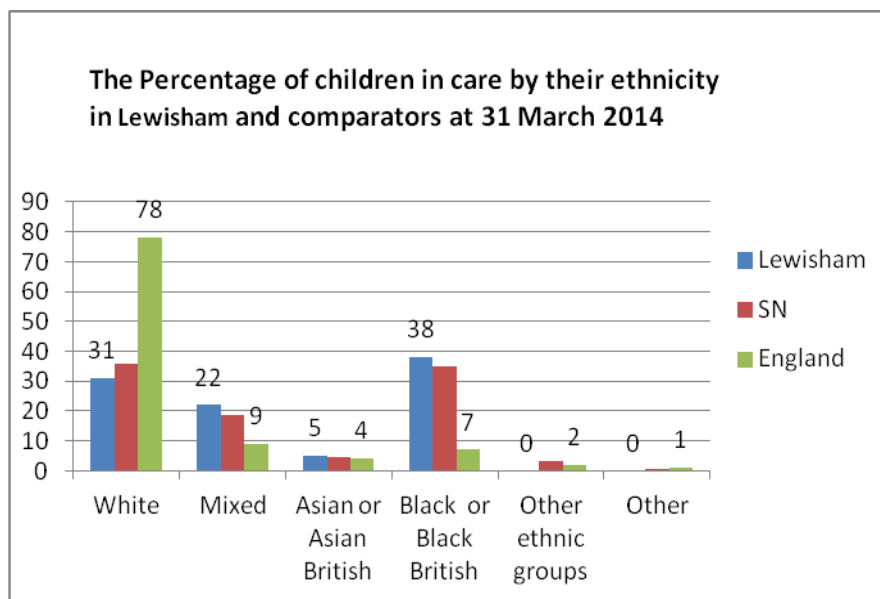
The tables below sets out the ethnicity of looked after children in Lewisham on 31.03.2014 with national and statistical neighbour comparators

Ethnicity of looked after children as at 31st March 2014	
Ethnicity	Percentage
ASIAN & WHITE	0.20%
ASIAN OTHER	2.95%
BANGLADESHI	0.39%
BLACK AFRICAN	13.78%
BLACK AFRICAN & WHITE	3.94%
BLACK CARIBBEAN	19.29%
BLACK CARIBBEAN & WHITE	8.66%
BLACK OTHER	3.74%
Gypsy / Roma	0.20%
INDIAN	0.20%
MIXED RACE OTHER	9.65%
NOT KNOWN OR NOT STATED	0.59%
OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	3.35%
PAKISTANI	0.20%
Traveller of Irish Heritage	0.20%
VIETNAMESE	1.77%
WHITE BRITISH	26.97%
WHITE IRISH	0.39%
WHITE OTHER	3.54%
Grand Total	100.00%

Overall ethnic breakdown of children in Lewisham aged under 18 and comparators

	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Other Ethnic Groups	Total BME
Lewisham (number)	22,779	10,319	5,592	23,010	1,807	63,507
Lewisham (%)	35.9	16.2	8.8	36.2	2.8	64.1
Stat Neighbour (%)	80.9	4.4	11.6	2.4	0.8	19.1
England (%)	78.5	5.2	10.0	5.0	1.3	21.5

Ethnicity of looked after children as at 31 March 2014



This comparator data shows that the percentage of children from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds in Lewisham's under 18 populations is significantly higher, at 64.1%, than both statistical neighbours 21.5% and England 19.1%.

The comparator data for children looked after is broken down differently but shows that:

- 31 % came from all white backgrounds There are 35.9% of white children in Lewisham's under 18 population, compared to 78% nationally and 80.9% for statistical neighbours. Overall this shows that children from white backgrounds in Lewisham are slightly over represented in care, compared to the ethnic make up of the local community, under represented in statistical neighbours and almost identical nationally.
- 38% came from all black backgrounds compared to 36.2 % of black children in Lewisham, 7% nationally and 36% in statistical neighbours. Overall this shows that there is a slightly higher number of children from black backgrounds in care compared to the ethnic make up of the local community. Our statistical

neighbours appear to have a disproportionate number of black children in care compared to the numbers of black children in the local community. The national comparator shows that there are 2% more children in care from black backgrounds than children in the population.

- 16.2% of Lewisham's under 18 population comes from mixed backgrounds compared to 5.2% nationally and 4.4% of statistical neighbours. 22% of children looked after come from mixed backgrounds which is an over representation of children in care... This is also true for statistical and national comparators.
- There are 5% of children in care from Asian communities compared to 8.8% in the local community. This is also true of statistical and national comparators where there are lower numbers of children in care compared to a higher local population.
- Overarchingly, Lewisham's looked after children are fairly representative of its diverse population, the make up of which differs from statistical neighbours and the national picture. The service needs to continue to be proactive in its identification of need through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and planning at strategic and operational levels to ensure the needs of local children continue to be a high priority.

The independent reviewing service needs to continue to:

- be alert to and have a sound working knowledge about the very diverse needs within the community,
- ensure that care plans for children looked after are based on an up to date and culturally sensitive assessment of need
- be robust in ensuring that services are being delivered to meet identified need

Nationality

- 4.5 The table below demonstrates range and percentages of nationalities of looked after children at March 2014. Our Looked After Children span 29 nationalities, compared to 27 in 2013 – 2013. The vast majority are British 73.4%, the next largest groups are Nigerian (5.49%), Jamaican (2.80%), Sri Lankan (2.24%), Albanian (2.35%) and German (1.77%).

- 4.6 The significance for IROs is that they must ensure children's nationality and immigration status is clear and the Care Plan and services are culturally sensitive, based on an informed assessment of need. For example, asylum seeking children must be aware of their rights and care planning needs to be considered in parallel as it will depend on outcomes of immigration applications and appeals and influence outcomes for the young person.

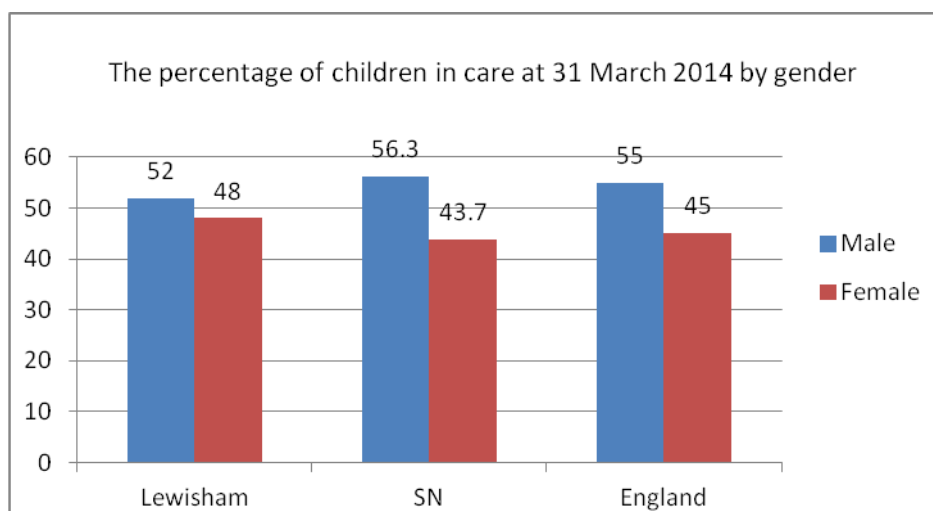
Nationality	%
AFGHAN	0.23%
ALBANIAN	2.35%
ANGOLAN	0.23%
BANGLADESHI	0.52%
BELGIAN	0.21%
BENIN	0.28%
BRITISH	73.34%
COLUMBIAN	0.18%
CONGO	0.37%
CZECH	0.65%
DANISH	0.55%
ERITREAN	0.23%
ETHIOPIAN	0.23%
FRENCH	1.74%
GERMAN	1.77%
GHANAIA	0.57%
IRAQI	0.22%
IRISH	0.19%
JAMAICAN	2.80%
LIBERIAN	0.22%
NIGERIAN	5.49%
Not Recorded	0.30%
PAKISTANI	0.20%
PORTUGUESE	0.59%
RUSSIAN	0.29%
SIERRA LEONE	0.16%
SOMALIAN	0.36%
SPANISH	0.36%
SRI LANKAN	2.24%
UNKNOWN / Other	1.35%
VIETNAMESE	1.78%
Grand Total	100.00%

5. Gender of Looked After Children

5.1. 52.2% of our looked after children are male compared to 47.8% female. This represents a slightly higher percentage of males compared to the total child population in which there are 51% male and 49% female. Comparisons show that statistical neighbours and England have between 3 and 4.3% higher percentage of males to females in care than Lewisham.

5.2 There is a higher representation of males in the cohort of children remanded to youth detention and accommodation (RYDA) Of the 55 children in this cohort 52 (94.5%) were male.

The percentage of children in care at 31 March 2014 by gender with comparators



6. Ages of Looked After Children

6.1 Lewisham's looked after children cohort cover the full range of ages. The highest percentages being reflected in the 15, 16 and 17 years age range.

6.2 The spread of age pattern is the same as last year with around 5% at under 1 and 1 year old declining to age 5 and 6 and then building to a high in the later teenage years.

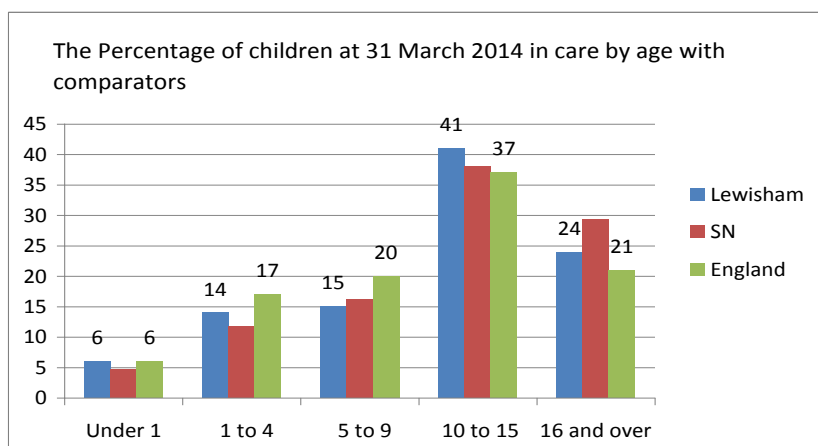
6.3 The age spread can be accounted for by newborns and babies in Care Proceedings some of whom leave care by returning to parental or family care

or being adopted. Then the number increasing in teenage years by additional young people becoming looked after due to breakdown of family relationships, unaccompanied asylum seekers, homeless young people choosing to be looked after rather than provided with accommodation, pressures on families and increased risk of criminal involvement and sexual exploitation; and young people remanded through criminal court becoming automatically looked after under the LAPSOA regulations.

- 6.4 At 31st March 2014, the age spread of children looked after by Lewisham is set out in the chart below:

Age breakdown as at 31st March 2014		
Age	Percentage	
0		5.51%
1		5.51%
2		3.94%
3		2.95%
4		2.76%
5		1.77%
6		2.76%
7		3.94%
8		3.35%
9		3.54%
10		4.92%
11		3.74%
12		5.12%
13		8.46%
14		7.87%
15		9.84%
16		10.43%
17		13.58%
Total		100.00%

The percentage of children by age that were in care on 31 March 2014



	Under 1	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	16 and over
Lewisham	6	14	15	41	24
SN	4.6	11.7	16.2	38.1	29.4
England	6	17	20	37	21

6.5 When compared to England the management information demonstrates that Lewisham has higher than the national percentage of looked after children in the 10- 15 and over 16. It is lower for the 1 – and 5 -9 age categories and in line with national figures for the under 1 year age category

6.6 When compared to statistical neighbours Lewisham has a higher percentage of looked after children in the under 1 year, 1 – 4 and 10 – 15 age groups whilst being a 1.2% and 5.2% lower in the 5 – 9 and 16 and over categories respectively.

7. Disability or Children with Complex Needs

7.1 At 31st March 2014, 43 (8.6%) looked after children were recorded as having a disability. This is a slight increase on 7.25% in 2012-13.

7.2 The largest recorded category of disability for a second year were those with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome. This is a continuing trend from last year. Although comprehensive training has already taken place in Children with Complex Needs Service, there is a continuous training need for further social work staff and IROs alike with multi agency focus to ensure SMART planning and appropriate challenge.

8. Location of Placements

The table shows a breakdown of type of placement for children placed more than 20 miles from Lewisham.

secure unit	2	3%
homes and hostels	23	30%
Placed with parents	1	1%
Independent Living	2	3%
foster placement with relative or friend	3	4%
Placement with other foster carer	36	47%
Medical or Nursing Care	1	1%
Residential School	8	11%

- 8.1 On 31st March 2014,) 212 (42%) of children looked after were placed inside the borough boundary and 288 (58%) children were placed outside of the borough.
- 8.2 Of the 212 children placed within the borough 100% were placed within a 20 mile radius of their home address.
- 8.3 Of the 288 children placed outside of the borough 212 (73.6%) were placed within a twenty mile radius of their home address, while 76 (26.4%) were placed outside of a twenty mile radius. This equates to 15.2% of looked after children in March 2014, an annual average of 14% compared to 13.2% for our statistical neighbours, the national average being 12%.
- 8.4 In London, this does not always equate with being placed a great distance from the family home or school. In some cases children just outside the local authority boundary are nearer to their home and school compared to being placed on the other side of the borough.
- 8.5 There are different reasons for children and young people being placed at a distance from home. The majority of children placed more than 20 miles from

Lewisham are those in Independent foster agency care .Although some were placed out of borough for safeguarding reasons, some were due to a shortage of appropriate in borough carers being available.

- 8.6 The IRO Team Manager completed a dip audit of cases and was reassured that most children placed further away than 20 miles are still within good travel distance e.g. in Kent, and that the assessed needs of the child could be met. The need to recruit more local foster placements is recognised and the fostering service had been tasked with this. As a result there already has been an increase in local foster placement available.
- 8.7 The second largest group of children placed more than 20 miles from the home address were those in Residential Placements (homes) and hostels. Fifty seven children, 11.4% of children looked after were looked after in residential placements. Ten children (17.5%) were placed in the borough while 47 (82.5%) were placed outside of the borough boundary. These young people are placed according to their needs and will be in need of specialist care, which a foster placement cannot provide. However, residential placements can often be far from London. The IRO service recognises the vulnerability of children in these circumstances, which may impact on their sense of identity, feeling of belonging and connection to home and family. IROs work closely with partners to ensure their needs are being met.
- 8.8 In particular the service are aware of the vulnerability of looked after children to being at risk of or experiencing child sexual exploitation. The service have been trained in the requirements of Working Together to Safeguard Children, the London child protection procedures and Lewisham's joint protocol for children missing from home, school and care. IROs track the cases of all looked after children at risk of or who have been sexually exploited, to ensure that their care plan reflects an integrated approach to safeguarding and promoting their welfare and delivers a coordinated response to meeting all their identified needs, including the need to be safeguarded from sexual exploitation by the provision of safe and effective care.

- 8.9 Children missing from care are more vulnerable to being exploited. The named IRO will therefore chair missing from care meetings in line with procedure and track the progress of cases to ensure that:
- The child is safeguarded in a placement that is matched to their identified need or is providing an assessment of need.
 - The child is being visited regularly, their wishes and feelings established and the placement is being closely monitored to ensure it can deliver the care plan for the child.
 - The quality of care provided is consistently of a good standard.
 - There is timely and effective planning towards placement stability and better outcomes across the child's range of need.
- 8.10 Concern was raised by the Children and Families minister Edward Timpson in January 2014, and in the an Ofsted From A Distance report that drew attention to children being placed in residential care at a distance from home without effective care planning, management oversight and monitoring by Independent Reviewing Officers. Lewisham has responded to these concerns. In addition to social work visits and Looked After Reviews, Lewisham's Senior Management Team had already started a visiting programme during the summer of 2013 to these placements and the children residing in them to obtain assurance that placements are appropriate to the needs of the child placed, providing quality care and achieving outcomes. Twenty five residential homes were visited on an unannounced basis, by senior managers between August and October 2013. The care provided was graded as good in 22 visits and satisfactory in 3. Some visits found areas needing improvement such as the standard of decoration and the isolation of the unit making independence preparation difficult. These issues were raised with the placement service as well as with IROs and social work teams in order to ensure progress was monitored.
- 8.11 In light of the concerns raised it is important that IROs robustly exercise their responsibility to review placements thoroughly and hold the local authority and partner agencies to account for discharging their functions towards them.

During the year ahead IROs will offer robust scrutiny of care planning to monitor

- how well children are matched to their placement
- how well placements are able to deliver the requirements of the care plan, and how the milestones towards achieving them are being progressed...
- How frequently the child is being visited
- How well the children's homes regulations are being implemented

8.12 In order to further improve the monitoring of care planning arrangements, each child's IRO is invited to Lewisham's Care Planning Panel where decisions about placements are made so that they can have a voice in the decision and challenge if necessary. In addition in 2014 -15 the IRO Team Manager will be a panel member. This will contribute to child focussed decisions on an individual and collective basis, aiding communication between the social work services and the IRO service on behalf of the children, as well as ensuring value for money.

8.13 An audit was carried out by the IRO TM of the five most distant placements in the year. This shows the varied reasons for our long distance placements.

- Age 17, F - placed at 999 miles: Placed in a family placement outside the UK since 1997.
- Age 16, F, placed at 265 miles: The Care Plan at 2012 was for this child who was vulnerable to significant harm and exploitation to be stabilised within a residential setting away from London. Over the course of this placement the child begun to reflect on her previous experiences of significant abuse and this generated a high level of emotional turmoil, anxiety and self harm. This child is now .making better progress and has been supported with input from CAMHS for anger management, SORTED program for alcohol use, and a therapist for counselling. The placement has supported education. The child has developed a positive attitude to preparing for GCSEs and moving on to college.

- Age 16, F, placed at 217 miles: This child was placed at a distance from home for a twelve week [period due to being missing from care and vulnerable to sexual exploitation, poor education outcomes and being involved in criminal behaviour. This young person has made significant changes since being placed, has returned to Lewisham and is engaging with services, which help to address ongoing concerns.
- Age 15, M, placed at 191 miles
This young person, subject to a care order, with complex health, learning, emotional and behavioural needs was placed for assessment in a residential placement. The placement has identified the need of a specialist resource to meet the young persons wide range of need. This placement was being progressed whilst the existing placement was working well to meet the young persons need in the interim... Outcomes are not yet established.
- Age 15, M, placed at 175 miles. Placed since 2009 in a stable foster placement.

8.14 This audit indicates that Lewisham places children and young people at a distance only after careful consideration of whether this best meets their needs.

8.15 Lewisham's Children's Social Care Procurement service manager has worked to ensure services are in place for Lewisham's looked after children placed at a distance.

9. Looked After Children's Services

9.1 Lewisham's Commissioning Team

Lewisham's Commissioning Team has liaised with services in other local authorities to make sure children placed out of borough receive the services they need. In some cases of children placed out of borough, timely health assessments have been a particular challenge. Steps were taken with our

partners in health services to make sure all Looked After Children have a health assessment within 28 days of becoming Looked After.

- 9.2 Lewisham has a specialist worker for Looked After children who is part of the Substance Misuse Service based in the Crime Intervention and Leaving Care Services. The role includes locating substance abuse services for children placed out of borough.
- 9.3 Lewisham's Joint Commissioning Team, on behalf of the Local Authority and the Clinical Commissioning Group, directly commissions South London and Maudsley (SLaM) NHS Foundation Trust for the provision of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) in the borough.
- 9.4 SLaM provides a range of tier 3 CAMHS provision through a number of community teams including: SYMBOL (for Looked after Children); Lewisham Young People's Service (for young people with emerging psychosis); Neuro-Development (for learning difficulties); ARTS (for young people with a forensic history); and East/West Generic teams for all other referrals.
- 9.5 The SYMBOL team consists of a diverse skill mix including social workers, family therapists, clinical psychologists and consultant psychiatrists. The team accepts on average, 20 new referrals per quarter. Their caseload consists of Lewisham LAC and non-Lewisham LAC placed in borough, or within a 20 miles radius, assuming young people and carers are willing and able to travel.
- 9.6 Commissioners are responsible for commissioning community CAMHS for Lewisham LAC placed out of borough and often liaise with providers in other parts of the country to ensure that Lewisham young people receive the mental health assessment and treatment required, in a timely manner.
- 9.7 The overall average wait from referral to assessment across the whole CAMHS service, is falling below the national expectation of 12 weeks. Although data varies from quarter to quarter, there are some waiting time concerns, specifically within particular teams. SYMBOL (for looked after children) reported on average waiting times, over the year 2013- 2014 of 16

weeks. The average waiting time for quarter 4 was 30 weeks. During 2013 - 2014 68% of 13-19 year old looked after children started treatment within 12 weeks. Reasons for this include a delay in CAMHS funding confirmation from boroughs where non-Lewisham looked after children are placed in borough. Commissioners are working directly with SLaM to respond to such issues. IROs will continue to monitor these cases to ensure that better health outcomes for children requiring CAMHS services are promoted.

- 9.8 Commissioners regularly liaise with services in other local authorities to make sure children placed out of borough receive the services they need. In some cases of children placed out of borough, timely health assessments have been a particular challenge. The necessary steps are taken with our partners in health services to make sure all looked after children have a health assessment within 28 days of becoming Looked After. IROs also ensure follow up with partner agencies to ensure health plans are tailored to meet individual need and focus on better individual and collective outcomes for looked after children.
- 9.9 In terms of preventative CAMHS provision, Place2Be, a school based counselling service are operating in nine Lewisham schools and are due to expand into a further four secondary schools. Looked after children attending these schools are picked up by the service, as and when appropriate.
- 9.10 More recently Lewisham has secured a £500,000 grant through the Big Lottery: Fulfilling Lives Head Start Programme to develop resilience in 10 – 14 years olds, with the aim to prevent the onset of mental health issues. Lewisham looked after children will be targeted as recipients of this provision to be delivered in year 2014 -15.

10. LAC Health Team

- 10.1 The Annual Health Report is an evaluation prepared by the Looked After Children's Health Team, of the delivery of health services for LAC & YP placed within and outside of the borough. It outlines both the achievements and the challenges faced by the LAC health team over the past year, and includes the

progress towards relevant performance indicators and targets. One challenge identified is to embed the use of substance use screening tool in the annual health assessment and this is a target for the coming year. Another challenge was improving performance on the percentage of looked after children and young people having an initial health assessment within the required timescale of 28 days. This showed marked improvement over the year 2012-13 achieving 100% in March 13. LAC health team has commenced an audit in collaboration with social care to ascertain whether the child's health care plan is being acted on by all professionals and is indeed making a change to the health outcomes for the child. It has already identified some issues with processes that will need to be worked on. The audit to be completed by the end of June 2014.

10.2 LAC Education Team.

The IRO Service work closely with the LAC education team and other education partners to promote better education attainment and outcomes for looked after children. This includes timely and effective PEPs and working to ensure that all looked after children are in education, employment or training. Areas for improvement have been identified which are set out in the action plan for 2014 – 2015. The appointment of a Virtual Head Teacher will also support this improvement

11. Type of Placement

The percentage of children in care at 31 March 14 by placement type with comparators

	Foster placements	Placed for adoption	Placement with parents	Other placement in the community	Secure units, children's homes and hostels	Other residential settings	Residential schools	Missing - Absent for more than 24 hours from agreed placement	Other placement
Lewisham	77	5	2	5	9	x	2	x	0
SN	76.6	2.9	0.8	4.4	10.9	1.8	0.5	0.0	0.0
London	75	3	1	5	11	2	1	-	X
Inner London	74	4	1	5	11	2	1	x	X
England	75	5	5	3	9	2	1	-	-

11.1 The vast majority of our looked after children and young people are in foster care or supported living for those preparing for independence. This is wholly appropriate. In comparative terms the data demonstrates that Lewisham's performance is better than all those we are compared with, including nationally, with statistical neighbours and London.

11.2 11.4% of children were placed in residential care The IRO service in conjunction with children's social care and partner agencies have been focusing on children placed in residential care to monitor care plans and ensure that residential care is the best placement choice, whether there are alternatives and if they do need residential care that they are being well looked after and actively planned for over time to avoid drift.

12. Legal Status of Looked After Children

The data below shows the legal status of children looked after as at March 31st 2014, alongside the comparator data sets

	Interim care orders	Full care orders	Freed for Adoption	Placement order granted	Accommodated under S20	Detained on child protection grounds in LA accommodation	Youth justice legal Statuses
England	12	46	-	13	28	-	-
London	12	39	x	9	39	x	1
Inner London	12	44	0	9	33	x	2
SN	11.3	42.3	0	8.4	36.2	0	2.2
Lewisham	16	40	0	8	35	0	2

12.1 The comparator data about the legal status of children looked after demonstrates that Lewisham have a similar number of children subject to Care Orders than London and lower number if compared to England, Inner London and Statistical neighbours by between 2 and 4 percentage points. Lewisham compares similarly to all comparators for children where a placement order has been made but all are lower than the percentage for all England. However Lewisham has a significantly higher percentage, (between 4 and 5%) than all comparators for children in care proceedings for whom there is an Interim Care Order.

12.2 The percentage of children accommodated with parental agreement is 7 percentage points higher than the national figure and 2 percentage points higher than inner London, but lower than for statistical neighbours and London as a whole.

13. Participation of the child/young person in reviews.

13.1 During 2012 - 2013, 99.7% of children and young people participated in their Looked After Review. This compares to 94% of Looked After Children for statistical neighbours in 2009, and national average of 97% in 2010. There has been no comparative data with our statistical neighbours since 2009 or nationally since 2010.

14. Consultation with the Looked After Child

- 14.1 Lewisham encourages all Looked After Children to complete a web based consultation called Viewpoint. The IRO also sees the child on their own before a review. Around a fifth of Looked After Children used Viewpoint. We would like to increase the use of Viewpoint as it proves very valuable in understanding how things are for our looked after children and young people. A working group has been meeting with this aim and a more user friendly questionnaire being developed, for example using fewer questions and the option of a mobile phone app. The Viewpoint questionnaire is sent to the IRO before the Review so that they can discuss any particular pertinent points the child has raised with them and others.

15. Safeguarding:

- 15.1 The following responses were recorded in Viewpoint from 1st April 2013 – 31st March 2014
- 93% of 4-6 year olds said they feel safe where they live. Only 1 child answering no.
 - 97% of 7-9 year olds said they feel safe where they live now. Only 1 child answering no.
 - 94% of 10-15 year olds (94 children) said they feel safe where they live now. Only 1 replied no and 15 said just about.
 - 89% of 16+ said they definitely feel safe where they live now, with 4 saying they just about feel safe and none saying they don't feel safe.
- 15.2 Children interpret questions in different ways and a positive answer does not always equate with an adult understanding of safety. For example in one case the child said they felt unsafe because a sibling in the same placement was taking her things. In each case where the child gave a negative answer, this was acted upon without delay by the social worker and subsequently explored by the IRO to ensure children were safe and felt safe.

16. Practice improvement led by children and young people:

16.1 Looked After Children and Young People told us via Viewpoint in 2013 -2014 that we need to do better in the following areas:

- We need to ensure all children who have been in care for more than a year have a Life Storybook. This continues to be an area for improvement as 64% of 4-6 year olds said they had no life story book with pictures and stories about them and their family.
- 44% of 7-9 year olds in year 13-14 said they do have life story information but 34% said they did not and 22% would like more.
- 51% of 10 to 15 year olds said they have a life story book or information about people they know, but 29% said they have none and 20% would like more.
- 31% of 16 + said they have life story information, but 51% said they have none and 17% would like more.
- We need to ensure more 4-6 year olds have friends visit where they are. Again this continues to be an area for improvement as 50% of 4-6 year olds said they friends did not visit them where they live now.

A key action for the year ahead is for the IRO to ensure that this is being addressed in reviews, and that the tasks are being assigned with clear measurable timescales that are being followed up by managers.

17. Independent Reviewing Officers response to children's views about their Reviews:

17.1 Based on feedback from the Child in Care Council, the IRO team had introduced measures to help young people know and be able to contact their IRO and to try to make sure the Review was child friendly. The team had for example designed introductory letters, which include a photo of the IRO along with their contact details – email and phone number. IROs developed strategies with individual children to ensure the children could leave the meeting if they wanted to. The IRO service will take action to improve things further in the year ahead by consulting on how young people would like their

reviews to be conducted and how possible it will be for them to lead all or part of their review.

18. What Looked After Children told IROs

- 18.1 In February 2014 we surveyed looked after children for their views on IROs and Review meetings. There were 20 responses with the following conclusions:
- 18.2 Two thirds of children who responded knew who their IRO was and just over half knew how to contact them. Some commented that they did know who their IRO was but could not remember their actual name. This is an area needing improvement and the Introductory Letter should continue to be used to provide information. We want to improve this further by ensuring there are other ways that the child or young person can contact the IRO and that the IRO contacts the young person in between reviews.
- 18.3 Whilst only 60% looked forward to their Reviews, 85% reported that they find them useful.
- 18.4 The review process seems to be well understood, children seem to feel they are involved and things go in a way they are happy with.
- 18.5 There was less satisfaction about how decisions at reviews are subsequently carried out. The Independent Reviewing Service will address this through on going consultation with children and young people and robust monitoring of the progression of decisions.
- 18.6 Overall children and young people rated their satisfaction with both, their review and their IRO as 7.5 out 10. This is a 75% satisfaction rate. We have not quite achieved the target we have set of 95% being happy with the review, and the IRO. Work remains to be done to improve children's experience of the service. This is reflected in the service's action plan for 2014- 2015.

18.7 Only 20 children responded to this survey. This represents only about 4% of the Looked After population. All the respondents were also over the age 12. It is therefore not particularly representative, and we will need to do more in future to engage more young people.

18.8 Survey Action Plan:

The IRO team is continually looking for ways to improve the Review experience and meaningfulness for the child or young person and in response to this survey have included in their personal and team targets for the next year.

- Make reviews fun by understanding what children want
- Have a child's "starred" decision. This decision will be the decision that is most important for the child/young person. By highlighting that this is the decision most important to the child it is expected that whoever is responsible for that particular action will be especially motivated to carry it out promptly and the IRO will monitor this.
- It is important for the child/young person to understand their care plan and the IRO monitors that this is the case and reports this on their post review monitoring form. If the child/young person is not clear it will be explained to them.
- Achieve 95% young person satisfaction with the review process and the IRO.

19. **Review Preparation**

19.1 A Leaflet is sent to all carers, parents and young people outlining the role of the IRO and the review process.

19.2 Social workers must visit the child/young person before their review to obtain the child's views and discuss how the child would like the review to be conducted. The IRO is then required to have a pre review discussion with the social worker to plan the review. Although these discussions are said to take place, written records were not made. There are now additional questions in the ICS review record, asking whether the IRO has:

- had a discussion with the social worker prior to the review meeting
- met with the child, ascertained their wishes and feelings and discussed their participation plan.

20. Children with additional communication needs

20.1 It was identified by the IRO service in 2012-13 that IROs need to do better to ascertain the wishes and feelings of Looked After Children who have complex needs. It was agreed that prior to a review, the IRO should with reference to the child's communication profile or passport make efforts to communicate directly with the child. It was planned for the IRO Team Manager to audit a selection of cases to understand if practice is improving in relation to IRO and social worker's direct communication with children with complex needs, using their communication passports. Unfortunately this audit did not take place. However, there has been improvement and the Speech and Language Therapy service is now working jointly with the social work teams to support direct communication with children with complex needs. Training has also been provided and further work is underway to improve our communication strategies. The IRO Team Manager audit is now scheduled for 2014-15, as well as further training for the IROs.

21. Complaints and Advocacy for children

21.1 At every review the IRO asks the child or young person if they know what an advocate is and how they would go about getting one. The IRO asks the child or young person to explain how they would go about making a complaint.

21.2 Viewpoint consultations with children and young people in 2013-14 showed that 81% of 16+ say they know how to make a complaint, 87% of 10 – 15 year olds say they know how to make a complaint. Younger children are more variable which probably reflects their age of understanding. During 2014 -2015 the Independent Reviewing Service will ensure that the complaints process is explained to looked after children in the younger age range in an age appropriate style, so that they can make their views known.

22. Complaints relating to Looked After Children and Young People.

22.1 Forty three complaints were made to a looked after child or young person in the year. Two of these were withdrawn and one was outside the complaints jurisdiction as the child or young person was subject to care proceedings. Two complaints were upheld and 16 were partly upheld.

The two complaints fully upheld were

- regarding lack of SGO payments
- a poor service towards a child with complex needs . These issues were also raised by the IRO.

Out of the complaints partly upheld:

- 5 were concerning contact. Contact is of prime importance to children.
- 6 included staff conduct or service delivery.

22.2 IROs note any concerns raised by children and young people at their reviews on the post review monitoring form, which go to the team managers. This action can help to deal with concerns at an early stage before the complaints procedure is needed. Whilst every complaint raised is a matter of concern, the fact that only 18 complaints relating to looked after children had aspects that were upheld, demonstrates the generally good standard of practice is delivered to looked after children and young people.

22.3 Whilst parents or relatives made the majority of complaints connected to a Looked After Child or young person, eight children and young people submitted complaints directly or through an advocate or legal representative in 2013- 2014. One complaint was withdrawn. The remaining seven complaints were about:

- A change of placement against agreed Care Plan – complaint not upheld,
- Being excluded from a child protection conference before being looked after – partly upheld,
- Complaint about placement and social worker – partially upheld,
- Rent arrears accrued – partially upheld,

- Social work conduct and support – not upheld,
- Contact issues and non payment of expenses – Partially upheld,
- A lack of housing support – Partially upheld

All of the complaints were resolved, appropriate action was taken and lessons learnt have been fed back to IROs, social workers and managers.

23. IRO Performance. Timeliness of Statutory Reviews

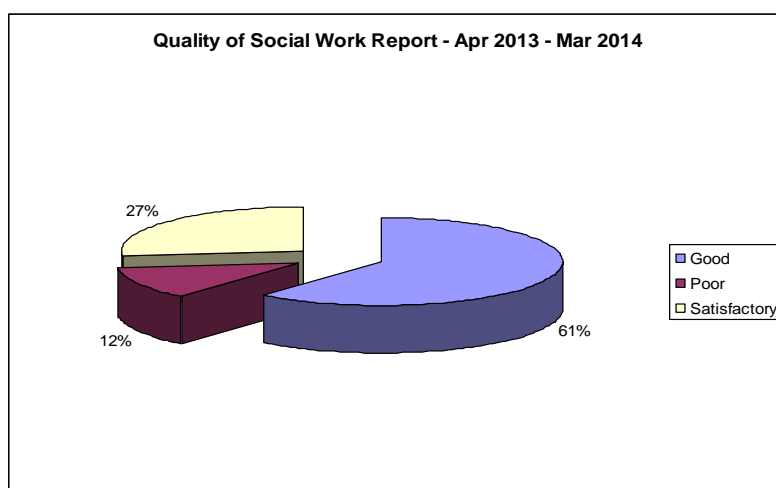
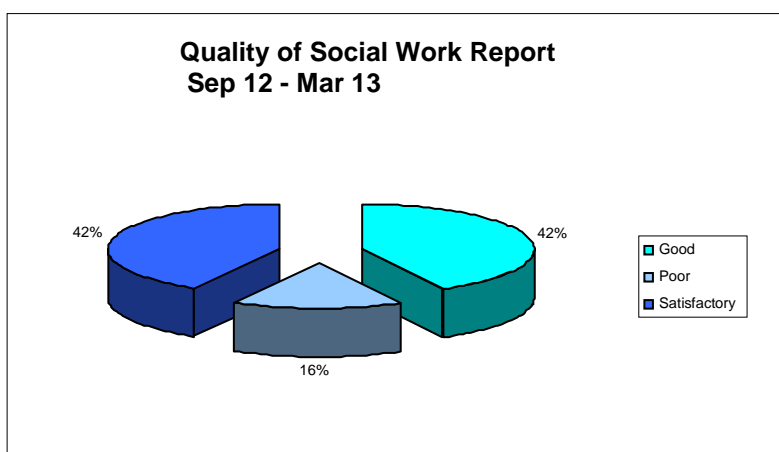
23.1 During 2013 – 2014, 99.6% of reviews were held within the statutory timeframe exceeding the boroughs local target of 99%, the statistical neighbours performance 85.8% and the national average of 90.5% . Three individual reviews were late during the year. Two were Initial Reviews, one due to a late notification from the social worker, one due to misunderstanding about the change of date between short break S17 and looked after S20 review and one date calculation error was made by an IRO following an adjourned review, making a review six days late. The service have addressed the reasons for the late reviews and will continue to ensure that reviews take place on time.

24. Quality of social work and multi agency practice

24.1 In order to hold the local authority to account for discharging its functions towards looked after children the Independent Reviewing Service completes a monitoring form after every review held. The monitoring form covers key important areas such as the quality and timeliness of care planning, participation and involvement, the quality of health and education planning that will inform better outcomes for a child. Each month the Team manager of the IRO Service will produce a report to Senior Management Audit Team highlighting key areas of good practice and any areas for attention. This forms part of the Quality Assurance Framework to provide assurance about how well the local authority and partner agencies are performing to achieve these outcomes. The tables below provide evidence of the key monitoring that takes place

25. Quality of Social Work Reports

25.1 The IRO rates the quality of the social work report for the review and records what improvements are needed in a monitoring form. This form is sent to the Social Worker, Team Manager and Service Manager.

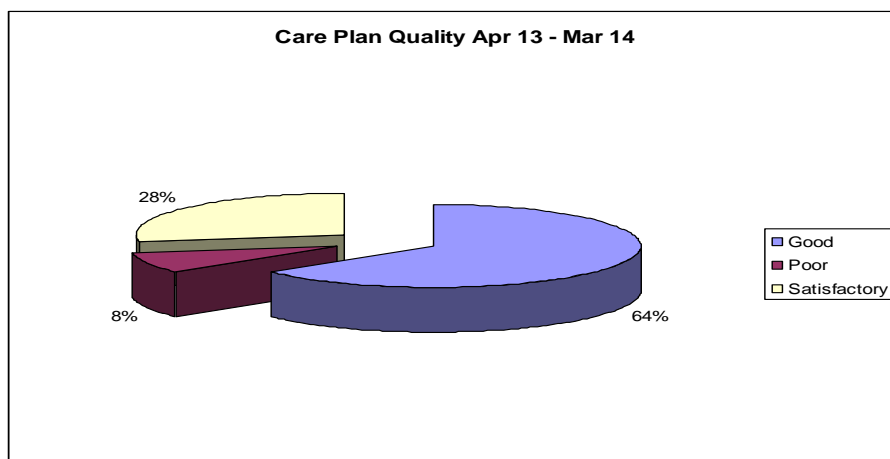
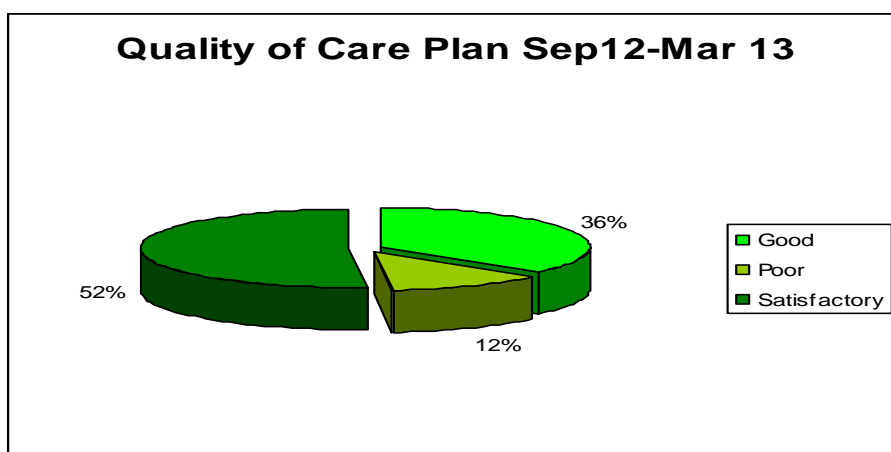


25.2 The target of having 100% good quality social work reports has not been achieved in the last two years. There were still 12% of reports categorised as being of poor quality. However, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of good reports and a decrease in the number of satisfactory and poor reports.

25.3 The IRO rates the quality of care and pathway plans.

25.4 Lewisham was inspected by Ofsted in 2012 when services for looked after children were graded as good with some outstanding features. One area for

improvement identified by Ofsted was the quality of the Care Plan and Pathway Plans. While they found very positive outcomes for children it was considered that these could be even better if the quality of care and pathway planning was improved. In response to this, the department carried out mandatory training for all social workers and put systems in place for team managers to check the quality of Care Plans. Every time an IRO completes a review, they rate the quality of the Care Plan in the review monitoring form, which also goes to team managers, and service managers so that action can be taken to ensure every child and young person has a plan appropriate to their needs.



- 25.5 We aimed to reduce poor Care Plans by the end of 2013 - 2014 by ongoing mandatory training for all social workers and team managers on care plans. Practice Improvement officers support social workers struggling with care and pathway plans. Team Managers are taking responsibility to quality assure

social work reports and care plans and authorise them. IROs quality assure the quality of reports and plans and will bring a poor care or pathway plan to the attention of Team and Service Managers in the post review monitoring form and monthly reports. IROs rate the quality of plans and detail improvements needed, meeting with social worker or team manager to explain and support practice improvement.

25.6 The IRO Team Manager completed a dip audit of 5 Care/Pathway Plans rated by IROs as good to check standards. The findings of the audit showed that:

- 3 Plans were agreed Good but did not include the agreements of young person, parent or carer.
- 1 Care Plan was generally good but that there should have been more specific actions in connection with achieving placement stability such as planned support meetings. In addition a Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire should have been completed and was absent from the Care Plan.
- 1 Care Plan was good and included agreements.

These points have been fed back to the IROs to ensure standards of Care Plans/Pathway Plans are applied. Further audits will take place as part of usual practice.

The charts above show that there has been an improvement in the quality of Care Plans though there is room for further improvement addressed in the action plan.

26. An Outcomes focused service

26.1 The Independent Reviewing Service commenced RAG rating cases in September 2012.

- A case is RAG rated Green if the child is achieving good outcomes and there is a good care plan in place.
- A case is RAG rated Amber if there is a good care plan and an active network of support in place but good outcomes are yet to be realised.

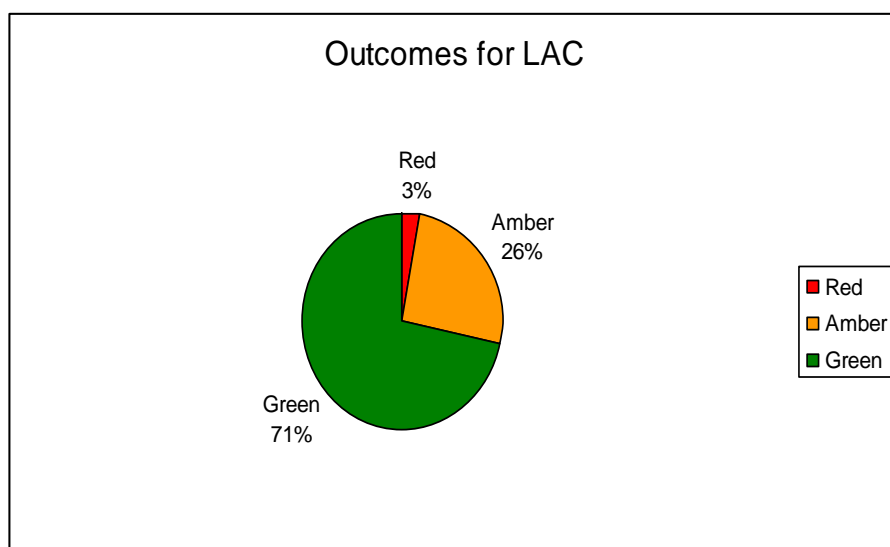
Examples include, young people who may be substance misusers, who are offered substance abuse services, but yet to be drug free.

- A case is rated Red where the child is achieving poor outcomes and the care plan is poor, or not being achieved due to a poorly functioning support network.

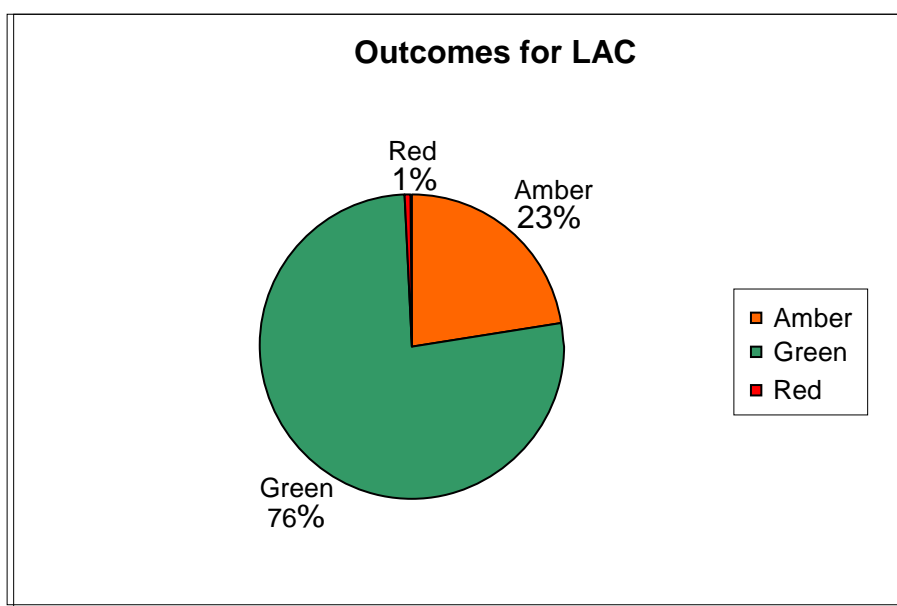
Service managers are alerted if a case is rated as red who will take immediate action to address shortfalls in service provision.

The tables below show the RAG rating for cases from September 2012 until March 2014

September 2012 – March 2013 was:



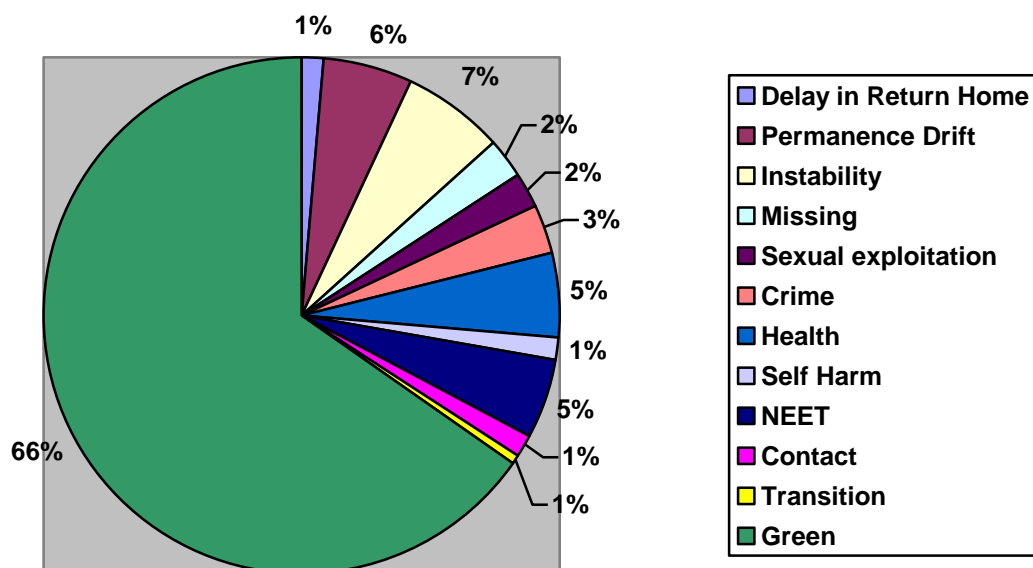
April 13 to March 14 is:

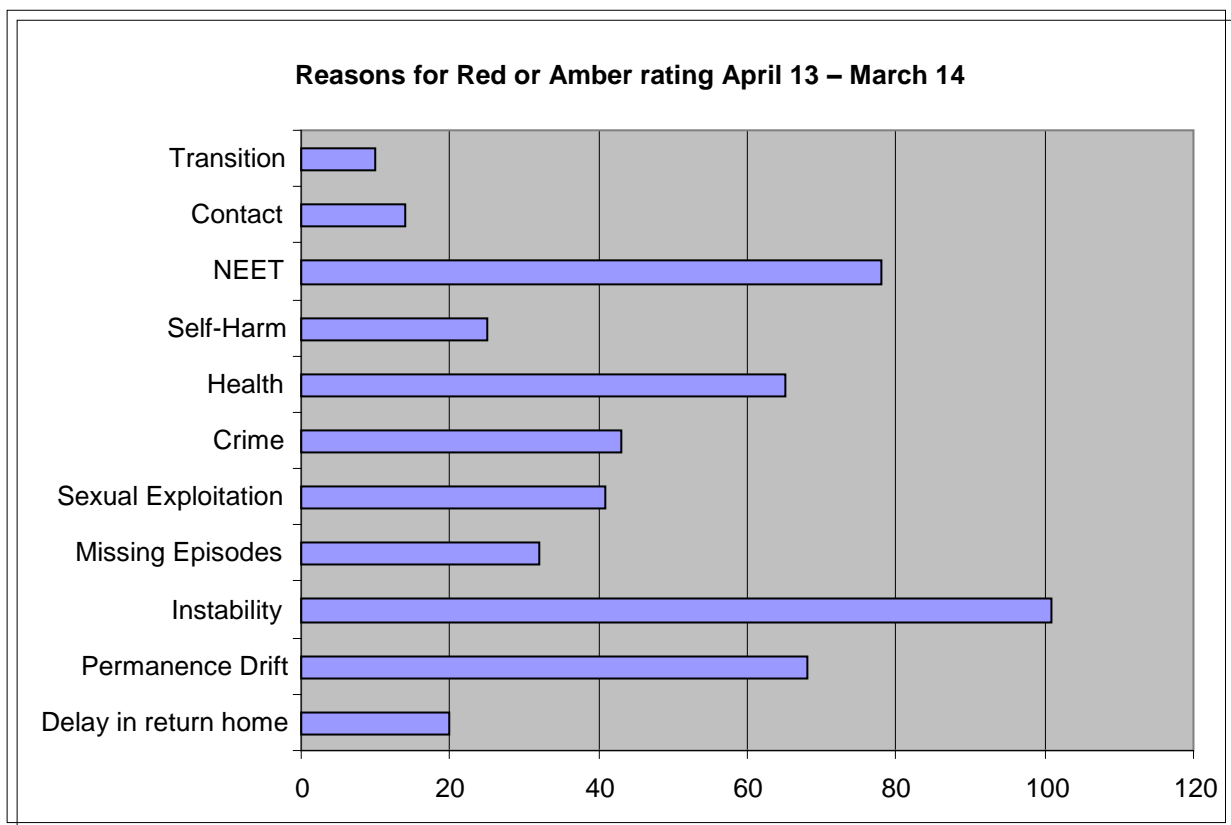


26.2 This management information shows that 76% of looked after children are achieving good outcomes. 23% of Looked After children social workers have made sure that good care plans are in place to support the children to work through challenging issues and achieve the desired outcomes. We know that this can take time. In 1% of cases, the Care Plan and outcomes for the child have been poor and prompt action was taken to address this at Senior Management level. These Red rated cases have decreased as would be expected with this strategy in place.

Cases With An Amber Rating in Perspective

RAG Rating of all Reviews - Sept 12 - March 13





26.3 The main categories of concern have been the same for two consecutive years – Instability of placement, NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training, Drift in Permanence and Health issues including substance misuse. These issues are considered at a strategic level to ensure they are being addressed on a collective basis as well as individual basis to address improving outcomes for all looked after children.

26.4 IROs continue to track all amber rated cases until the issues are progressed, where necessary using the formal escalation process.

27. Placement Stability:

- Lewisham has commissioned a multi agency audit and report to gain understanding of this issue. The learning will inform strategic planning on how to improve Placement Stability.
- At present placement support meetings are held to plan how to achieve stability for a child. The IRO monitors that this is happening if a placement is considered fragile. In year 14-15 training and focus on the Secure Base model is planned to promote stability.

28. NEET:

- A permanent Virtual Head for all Lewisham's Looked after children and young people is due to start in September 2014. This will help reduce the number of children not in Education, Employment or training. The virtual head will be a useful post for the IRO to escalate concerns to. At present the Looked After Children's Education Team provide a helpful service in supporting Looked After Children's education and providing advice to social workers and IROs.
- In September 2013 Lewisham introduced the strategy on "no young person slips through the net when they drop out of post-16 education". To minimise children and young people not being in education, training or employment, (NEET), Lewisham has a NEET strategy manager. Looked after children and young people are identified on a database. This assists with tracking and identifying interventions. Schools feed into this. The Leaving Care Team have used designated NEET projects and a named key worker. The Education of Looked After Children team work closely with all partner agencies to implement the September Guarantee (all 16 yr olds to have a recognised destination by end of Sept yr 12). We are in a Raising Participation (RPA) era and by 2015 the education leaving age will be 18. The RPA agenda has extended the role of the Virtual school presently up to year 12. Lewisham will be looking towards a post 16 Educational coordinator. As young people move through year 12/13 an attendance tracking agency 'Welfare Call' will monitor and flag poor attendance at 3 days, 5 days, 10days, 15, 20, 25 etc. With careers advice being statutory from year 8 including impartial advice and guidance, this again will help children and young peoples decision making. Ensuring the uptake of Student Bursary is another useful mechanism to support children and young people achieve improved educational outcomes.. Another strategy embedded are the drop in sessions at Leaving Care Team twice weekly (fast-track), specifically around education literacy/numeracy skills, GCSE re sits etc. Lewisham also offers the Youth Contract to 18 year olds. The Youth Contract comprises three separate programmes:

- support for 16 to 17 year olds who are not in education, training or employment with training to help move those persons into education, training or employment with training;
- support for unemployed 18 to 24 year olds, including Work Experience places, wage incentives and additional support from Jobcentre Plus advisers; and
- subsidies for small businesses, which take on apprentices, aged 16 to 24 years old.

The IRO service is responsible for ensuring that partner agencies work together to ensure that good outcomes are promoted for looked after children, that there are clear milestones set out in a Personal Education Plan that promote improved educational outcomes and better life chances. Where looked after children are not in education, employment or training the IRO should ensure that there are clear interventions set out that are tracked and that agencies are held to account for implementing the progress individually and collectively.

.28.1 Achieving Permanence:

- Permanency Planning Meetings are held on all children and young people up to age 16 to ensure a permanence plan is in place by the second review.
- The IRO team has a stringent approach to challenge and has a responsibility to escalate concerns. It has been identified through the monthly analysis of the IRO monitoring forms that there could be a concern and an audit by the IRO Team Manager is planned for 2014-15.

28.2 The IRO team manager tracked the amber cases rated in reviews during 2013 - 2014 to see how many had progressed from an amber to green rating. Where a rating changes from amber case to green the care plan is making a positive difference to our cohort of children with challenging issues. Where it is not working, the long term analysis will highlight topics for further discussions with service providers in the partnership about the efficacy of their interventions.

	RAG Rating at this Review		
RAG Rating at previous Review	Amber	Green	Red
Amber	55%	44%	1%
Green	13%	87%	1%
Red	43%	38%	19%

28.3 This analysis found that for 44% of children and young people previously rated amber, the Care Plan is making a positive impact on their outcomes despite significant concerns having been identified.

28.4 Out of the cases previously rated red, 38% have become green and 43% amber, which shows progress in the right direction. The cases, which have remained red, are flagged up for particular attention to team and service managers. A tracking system to achieve this is being developed for 2014-15. At present this can be seen on the individual child's monitoring form .

29. Escalation of concerns and monitoring

29.1 In the vast majority of reviews there were either no concerns or the concerns were resolved through on going IRO monitoring. In 27 cases the IROs have had to raise a formal QA Protocol Escalation. All these were resolved internally with no escalations to CAFCASS needed.

29.2 All cases are monitored between the first and second review by an IRO to make sure there is a clear plan in place, including any contingency plans for permanency. The Team Manager of the IRO service chairs a permanency planning meeting, which reviews all cases approaching the second review to ensure that the permanency plan is ready to be presented to the second review. The IROs also target cases for monitoring where there is concern about important actions not being progressed in a timely way. In 2013 - 2014 IROs have monitored social work practice in 35.25% of cases. The IRO pursues the matter until the action is completed. Some examples of good outcomes following cases being tracked by the IRO have been:

- Following a medication review the IRO identified delay in effecting a recommended change in medication.. This was progressed with positive results. The child is more engaged in therapeutic work and education and is now more able to develop friendships and engage in leisure activities. All of which had previously been a struggle for the young person.
- A child's passion for creative writing was identified by the IRO at the review. The child had been identified as being isolated. The IRO was able to engage the LAC Education Team to explore and agree a locally based resource to build on the child's passion, skill and promote social contacts..

30. Additional Audits carried out by the IRO Team

- 30.1 An audit in August 2013 to check that IROs had evidenced in ICS records the mid review monitoring identified at the child's review was disappointing. The IROs do actively monitor and follow up important decisions and concerns but need to improve their recording of this action so that it can be tracked and evidenced.
- 30.2 In October 2013 a Personal Education Plan (PEP) audit was carried out by the IRO team contributing to action to improve the quality of the PEP record. IROs will need to continue to ensure that IROs are monitoring the progression of the targets in the PEP and escalating concerns where necessary.
- 30.3 In July 2013 an audit of cases highlighted as having a safeguarding issue were audited by the IRO team manager. This ensured that in every case the concern had been heard and discussed and for any cases, which needed further action, this was planned.

31. Quality Assuring the IROs

- 31.1 The service manager for Quality Assurance observed IROs chairing review meetings in 2013-14. These provided evidence of positive chairing and IRO skills. 2 observation of a LAC review took place by the IRO Team Manager in July 13 and a further 2 February 14. The IROs observed were found to be very adept at involving the young person and ensuring good planning.

31.2 For 2014-15 , further observations will be undertaken by the IRO Team Manager. it has also been planned that the senior management team will observe on a rota basis LAC reviews as part of the service managers quality assurance programme.

32. Complaints and Compliments about IROs

32.1 No complaints were received regarding the IRO service.

32.2 The Children and Young People Directorate received 2 compliments about the work of the IRO. One was from a child's Guardian complimenting the IRO for their support to the child and communication with the Guardian during court care proceedings. The other was from a foster carer commenting on the IRO being very in tune with the child and having good chairing and decision making skills.

33. Achievements in 2013 – 2014

33.1 The following are some of the achievements of the IRO Service during 2013 - 2014

33.2 Change of Review Recording to capture IRO pre review discussion with social worker.

33.3 IROs include specific improvement details in their monitoring forms to support social work teams in improving the quality of Care and Pathway plans.

33.4 Participation in National Research by University of East Anglia on the role of the IRO.

33.5 Good working relationships with CAFCASS.

33.6 Positive oversight and monitoring arrangements in place.

33.7 Team targets included:

- a. Monitoring 3 months after a return home
- b. Make reviews more fun to encourage better child participation – e.g. tiddly winks played at review, review on beach.
- c. Role and voice in Care Proceedings established with communication with Guardians embedded and IRO view on Local Authority Care Plan.
- d. Good performance on reviews being held on time and in the child/young person's involvement in their reviews.
- e. IROs have played an important safeguarding role in chairing missing from care and risk of child sexual exploitation meetings.
- f. IROs have contributed to the departmental quality assurance plan by auditing and being part of the service manager audit panels.
- g. IROs attended siblings together or apart training and preparation for adoption training which assisted Good Care Planning decisions for children.

34. Challenges for 2014 - 2015

- a. Maintaining standards and continuous improvement without the additional IRO capacity available in 2013 -14. This will be ongoing and include regular monthly supervision of IROs, reading and tracking IRO monitoring forms from LAC review and analyse on a monthly basis, direct observations of IROs, case audits and the use of the standard performance monitoring tools.
- b. Placement Stability: A Placement Stability audit is underway in 2014-15 and will be completed by mid November 2014. This will inform the placement stability strategy which is drafted by the Service Manager for Looked After Children. The draft strategy will be available by the end of January 2015. A LSCB MESI subgroup (Monitoring, Evaluation and Service Improvement) multi agency audit on placement stability is planned and presented to the LSCB In March 2015. The placement stability strategy will be reviewed in light of the findings of the MESI audit. This will include how effectively IRO monitoring is contributing to placement stability for looked after children

- c. Ensuring children's placements are providing good quality of care: The placement matching process is reviewed as part of the placement stability strategy and a secure base model will be fully adopted (see above). Through the LAC review process the quality of care is discussed. Support, training or challenge will be offered for any issues identified. This is an ongoing process and the IRO Team Manager will provide assurance to the service through audit, observation, analysis of the monitoring forms. This is ongoing and reported monthly to the senior management team..
- d. Tracking concerning cases to check for improvements: The IRO Team Manager is developing a simple tracking tool for the IRO monitoring forms to ensure care planning progress can be strategically understood and outcomes tracked effectively. This to be in place by end of 2014.
- e. Further improving the quality of Care and Pathway plans: Social work staff has already been trained on quality of care and pathway plans. For 2014-15 further training and workshops are planned to be delivered by the IROs to social work staff to improve the quality of care and pathway plans for children. The secure base model will be implemented as part of the placement stability strategy and audits and LAC reviews will support the quality assurance, as well as the monthly analysis of the IRO monitoring forms by the IRO Team Manager.

35. Recommendations from year 2012-13

35.1 Improve quality of children's participation and Viewpoint use.

- There is still work to do in relation to improving communication strategies within the complex needs service. There is a Service Level Agreement with the Speech and Language Therapy Service, however this needs reviewing as it is not sufficient in ensuring that social work requirements are fully met. A more effective Service Level Agreement is being developed.
- There is ongoing training and support being provided by speech and language and the sensory teaching teams to social workers, but also built in communication training for the whole of the service into this years training plan.

- Complex Needs Team have a specialist social worker who communicates with British Sign Language, which is a real positive for the service as there are not many disability services across the country that has this post.

35.2 Life story information to be available to 100% of children and young people from 3rd Review.

- The IROs are tasked with making this a specific review decision where needed and of tracking progress

35.3 More information about young people's rights and entitlements

- IROs do ensure young people at their reviews know how to complain and how to access an advocate.
- The Looked After Children's Service are developing a leaflet for children and young people outlining rights and entitlements for example including expenses.

35.4 Improve transition of young people with complex needs to independence.

- Lewisham has developed a specific work stream within the SEND reform working groups. This work stream is the 'preparing for adulthood' stream. The working group is made up of representatives from children's social care, children's commissioners, adult social care, adult commissioners, health and education. The role of the group is to develop transition pathways right across children's and adult services and this does include 'looked after children'. We have also established a quarterly monitoring meeting where we share information of all 14+ children who are likely to need support from adult services post 18, this again includes LAC. This work is overseen by the SEND Reform Board.
- Viewpoint take up has remained disappointingly low and further review of Viewpoint and take up is planned for 2014-15 as already set out in the Child participation section of this report –see section start page 15.

35.5 Quality assure IRO team.

- Observations and audits have taken place. IRO work is monitored during supervision. Further audits and observations are planned for year 2014-15.
- This report details how these targets have been addressed but further improvement can be made and action is planned.

36. Recommendations 2013-14

36.1 Placements:

The IROs are to actively audit to ensure that all children placed at a distance have an active SMART care plan that the placement can achieve and that the permanence plan is not drifting. This is to be achieved by the IRO Team Manager analysing the IRO monitoring forms and providing a monthly analysis, as well as through the monthly supervision process, direct observations of 3 IROs and an achieving permanence audit by the IRO Team Manager in 2014-15.

Placement stability to be enhanced by social work implementation of secure base work with children and carers. This forms part of the placement stability strategy which is developed by the Looked after Children Service Manager, based on audit findings and will be available at the end of January 2015.

36.2 Social Work Practice:

All children to have life story information by third review. IROs to make this a review decision. This to be fully implemented by 2014-15 and documented by the IROs in their review recordings. A sample audit to take place by the IRO Team Manager by March 2015 to identify if this has now taken place and evidenced in practice.

Quality of Care and Pathway plans to be continually improved by IROs challenging poor reports and detailing improvements. For 2014-15 further

training and workshops are planned to be delivered by the IROs alongside Advanced Practitioners to social work staff to improve the quality of care and pathway plans for children. The secure base model will be implemented as part of the placement stability strategy and audits and LAC reviews will support the quality assurance, as well as the monthly analysis of the IRO monitoring forms by the IRO Team Manager.

Social workers, IROs and all partner agencies to work together to quickly address those children who are identified as NEET or have a significant health issue or whose plan for permanency is drifting. This to be scrutinised through the LAC review process and tracked by the IRO Team Manager through the monthly analysis of monitoring forms.

Children whose case is rated Amber or Red at Review to be tracked to ensure Care Plans are effective in improving outcomes. The IRO Team Manager is developing a simple tracking tool for the IRO monitoring forms to ensure care planning progress can be strategically understood and outcomes tracked effectively. This to be in place by end of 2014.

Criteria for certain disabilities have been misinterpreted in the past or were not consistently recorded and recording needs to be improved in this area to ensure accurate reporting and analysis as well as planning. This will be raised in the IRO team meetings and through the supervision process to ensure IROs scrutinise the child's records at LAC review stage. This has already started and will continue throughout 2014-15. The IRO team Manager will complete random spot audits to be assured of an improvement. This to be reported by end of March 2015 by the IRO Team Manager.

37. Children and young people's participation in Care Planning and Review:

- 37.1 Children with additional communication needs to be facilitated to have their feelings/views presented for their review and to have the Care Plan shared and explained. Further training to take place for IROs and case audit to be completed by the IRO Team Manager by March 2015.

- 37.2 Viewpoint use to be promoted by social workers and IROs who will actively encourage use through the Review process. IROs already promote Viewpoint through the review process and this to continue. Viewpoint reports to be analysed to gain a better understanding of uptake by Dec 2014 and process to be reviewed in light of updated report and findings to be implemented by end of March 2015. Uptake to increase from by 15%.
- 37.3 IROs are to continue to make Reviews child/young person friendly. This will include making a child starred decision at the Review to enhance the child's ownership of the process and ensure decisions most important to them are acted on. This will be evidence in increase satisfaction of reviews with target 95%.

Independent Reviewing Service
Action Plan 2014-2015

Recommendation	Action \ Targets	Responsible Person	Timescale to Deliver	Progress
Maintain standards of continuous improvement in the IRO service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team and Individual targets for IROs are to be set via an Annual Performance Evaluation, monitored in supervision. • Track 100% of IRO monitoring forms and produce a performance report to SMT. • Audit 5% of the work of IROs by direct observations of performance in reviews and auditing the quality of written reports. (2 per month) 	IRO Team Manager	Monthly	
		IRO Team Manager	Monthly	
		IRO Team Manager	Monthly	
Ensure that IRO's are holding partner agencies to account for delivering Lewisham partnerships pledge to Looked After Children.	.Track, by routine analysis of monitoring forms, audit & supervision that health & education outcomes are being monitored by IROs and escalated within the appropriate agencies.	IRO Team Manager	February 2015	
	Contribute to the health and CSC audit of health outcomes and implement	IRO Team Manager	June 2015	

Social Work Practice Life story work is to be available to 100% of children and young people looked after by time of the 3 rd review.	after children about how they would like to be engaged in their reviews more meaningfully	IRO Team Manager with CIC Council and Participation Services	March 2015	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act on the findings of the consultation and achieve 95% satisfaction if young people with reviews, their IRO and the implementation of review decisions. 	IRO Team	March 2015	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure young people are participating where desired via an advocate. 	IROs & Team Manager	Monthly	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IROs to ensure this is a review decision in 100% of cases by the third review. 	IROs & Team Manager	Monthly	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor progression through mid point reviews and on going monitoring of cases. 	Team Manager\IRO		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit review decisions to ensure this is continuously improving. Report to SMAT 	IRO Team Manager	Monthly	

Strengthen IRO tracking of cases involving children with complex needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track through audit and supervision that IROs: Ascertain the wishes and feelings of children with complex needs in 100% of cases reviewed. effectively monitor cases to ensure outcomes of care plans are being achieved without drift or delay. Check that the record of CWCN are consistently and accurately recorded,. 	IRO Team Manager	Monthly	
Placements	<p>Closely monitor that children placed at a distance from home robustly monitored by IRO,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by analysis of monthly monitoring forms. Audit of cases. Visit distant placements to provide assurance about their quality and capability to deliver the child's care plan 	IRO Team Manager	Monthly	
	Contribute to the Placement	SMT	As set out in the SMT rota	

Strengthen the quality of care planning and outcomes for children. The Senior Management Team are to hold a strategic overview of the quality of care planning.	Stability audit, reporting on the effectiveness of the IROs in improving placement stability as a result of their decision making and on going monitoring.	IRO Team Manager	February 2015	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a tracking tool and monitor the progress of improvements identified by IROs. 	IRO Team Manager	December 2014	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track 100% of cases rated as red or amber by the IRO and report to SMT. 	IRO Team Manager	Monthly	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track a sample of cases rated as green to provide assurance about the quality of ratings applied 	IRO Team Manager	Monthly	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to SMAT to provide a strategic overview of the quality and improvements in care planning arrangements 	IRO Team Manager	March 2015	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRO Service to attend mandatory training on care planning and secure base 	IRO Team Manager	As set out in the CSC Training Schedule	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver workshops to CSC to improve the quality of care planning • Attend the care planning panel to contribute to the continuous improvement of care planning 	<p>IRO Service</p> <p>IRO/ Team Manager</p>	<p>As set out in the CSC Training Schedule</p> <p>Weekly</p>	
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