

## Lancashire County Council

### Scrutiny Committee

Friday, 8th November, 2013 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston

### Agenda

#### Part 1 (Open to Press and Public)

No.	Item
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1.	<b>Apologies</b>
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2.	<b>Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Interests</b>
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Members are asked to consider any Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests they may have to disclose to the meeting in relation to matters under consideration on the Agenda.

3.	<b>Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 October 2013</b>	(Pages 1 - 8)
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4.	<b>Working Together With Families (WTWF)</b>	(Pages 9 - 26)
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5.	<b>Independent Reviewing Officers</b>	(Pages 27 - 70)
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6.	<b>Work Plan and Task Group Update</b>	(Pages 71 - 76)
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7.	<b>Urgent Business</b>
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An item of urgent business may only be considered under this heading where, by reason of special circumstances to be recorded in the Minutes, the Chair of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency. Wherever possible, the Chief Executive should be given advance warning of any Member's intention to raise a matter under this heading.

8.	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>
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The next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will be held on Friday 6 December 2013 at 10:30am at the County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher  
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall

Preston

# Agenda Item 3

## Lancashire County Council

### Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 11th October, 2013 at 10.30 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

#### **Present:**

County Councillor Bill Winlow (Chair)

#### **County Councillors**

A Barnes	M Parkinson
C Dereli	N Penney
M Green	J Shedwick
R Newman- Thompson	D Watts
Mrs L Oades	D Westley
D O'Toole	G Wilkins

County Councillors C Dereli, M Green and N Penney replaced County Councillors C Pritchard, C Wakeford and T Burns respectively for this meeting.

#### **1. Apologies**

None were received.

#### **2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

None were disclosed.

#### **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 September 2013**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. Review of Winter Service**

The Chair welcomed Steve Browne, Interim Executive Director for the Environment; and Sue Procter, Assistant Director Highways Operations to the meeting.

The Review of Winter Service Report built upon the reviews undertaken for the winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11 and aimed to implement further improvements and new initiatives to deliver the Winter Service for 2013/14 and beyond. The Winter Service would continue to exploit the benefits of more comprehensive engagement with partners, better communication with stakeholders and a more

innovative approach to tackling the problems that arose during severe and prolonged winter conditions.

Public Perception of the winter services provided by Lancashire County Council had continued to show an increase in satisfaction levels. The service had also received compliments and messages of thanks from local residents and County Councillors.

The County Council's Winter Service Plan was reviewed and updated as necessary prior to each winter season. This review took account of lessons learnt within the service and also ensured on-going compliance with national codes of practice. The 2013/14 Winter Service Plan would be published by 31 October 2013. Public satisfaction levels would continue to be monitored through the 'Living in Lancashire' survey commissioned for February 2014.

The County Council had allocated £3.642m for the provision of Winter Service in 2012/13, and actually spent £5.348m. Of that sum £1.387m (26%) accounted for fixed costs, including:

- Provision, maintenance and servicing of the gritting fleet;
- Provision, maintenance and servicing of facilities, infrastructure and systems;
- Standby payments during the winter season.

The remaining £3.961m (74%), represented the variable costs of the service and covered expenditure on salt and other materials as well as gritting operations. These costs vary from year to year depending on the severity of the winter.

For the 2012/13 winter season, the County Council stockpiled 32,500 of salt, exceeding the recommended pre-season resilience standard by a considerable margin. However, the County Council recognised that its ability to maintain a continuous minimum stockpile would depend on the national salt supply chain situation and the capacity of Lancashire's supplier to deliver 'in-season' re-stocking. Experience during the previous winters suggested there was a risk salt deliveries would not always be available. Salt stocks were monitored through the season and were kept deliberately high through the high season (December – March). During the 2012/13 winter the County Council used just over 33,000 tonnes of salt on the carriageways.

Steps to ensure salt usage was adequate and proportionate would continue, complemented by refresher training for those involved in delivering the Winter Service, including salt use decision makers and gritter drivers.

During the snow events of the 2012/13 winter, the County council's resources were fully deployed and were supplemented by mutual aid from the district council's and resources from the snow clearance contract which gave the County

Council access to 39 operators ranging from local farmers to construction contractors to provide and operate snow clearance equipment at a local level.

There was an established partnership between the County Council and the Lancashire Constabulary to ensure that emergency situations were reported through to winter service teams. The Police notified Environment Directorate officers of any roads they identified in need of treatment and the Environment Directorate officers undertook their own inspections to identify how best to assist the most vulnerable with regard to deep snow or persistent ice.

Review actions for dealing with snow were as follows:

- Pre-winter season training programmes would incorporate lessons learnt from last winter, particularly with regard to snow ploughing and snow blowing given the increased emphasis on removing snow in national guidance
- The snow clearance contract had expired. A new contract specification had been tendered to allow for the provision of an enhanced service removing some of the restrictions on the times and locations of operations for contractors.

The national Winter Resilience Review found there was a wide gap between public expectation and local authority resources on the issue of footway treatment, with few local authorities prioritising the treatment of, or clearance of snow from footways. The Review concluded that whilst public expectation was reasonable, it would never be possible to resource local authorities to perform the task other than in selected pedestrianised areas and accesses to hospitals, bus and railway stations and schools.

The County Council had currently over 1,800 grit bins and over 700 salt heaps and for winter 2012/13 over 3000 tonnes of salt/salt mix was used in restocking them. The County Council continued with the policy of using a 50/50 sand/salt mixture for restocking the bins and heaps and continued to apply the approved decision making criteria to all requests for additional grit bin provision. The role of grit bins and how they were utilised was part of ongoing discussions with District and Parish Councils. These discussions were focussed on ensuring the grit provided through grit bins was for use on the highway only. All County Council grit bins would have a 'Highway Use Only' label attached to discourage misuse of the material and each bin would be identified by a unique reference number.

For the winter of 2012/13, the County Council had engaged with District Councils, Parish and Town Councils, through the Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC), and also farmers and contractors to improve resilience in dealing with prolonged severe winter weather.

The Winter Service Plan included a method statement for agreements with District Councils and Parish and Town Councils covering the treatment of

footways or areas maintainable at the public expense and arrangements for the supply and storage of the salt/grit material.

The current method of service delivery required drivers to learn at least one route from their depot. Using satellite technology the County Council had invested in devices for each gritter that would allow more flexibility with the drivers to treat different routes in severe weather conditions. The satellite navigation devices would be available for use in the 2013/14 season.

Route based forecasting was introduced in the winter of 2011/12. The forecast provider was able to produce a route specific forecast for all of the Lancashire routes which enabled the decision makers to plan actions for each route. The use of route based forecasting had enabled the County Council to make savings on the nights where the temperatures were marginal by not having to treat all routes in a particular domain.

There was an expectation from the public about what the County council could deliver in relation to winter service. There was a need to clearly communicate to a wide audience, County Council policies and procedures and the circumstances in which they were implemented. There was also a need to ensure effective communications internally and externally on a day to day basis throughout periods of inclement winter weather so that all stakeholders could access information appropriate to their needs. A communications strategy to support the delivery of the winter service had been developed. The three objectives of this strategy were:-

- Clearly communicate and manage expectations of the level of service the County Council provided.
- Raise awareness of the public's own role in dealing with severe winter weather.
- Improve perceptions among relevant stakeholders that the County Council is well prepared for winter and that it provided an effective winter service during periods of cold weather.

Meetings had taken place with Representatives of District Council Chief Executives, Emergency Services and the Primary Care Trusts, and, Bus and and Rail industry representatives.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in relation to the report, a summary of which is provided below:

- Members were informed that there was not a stock of grit bins kept. If the County council knew alot of grit bins were requested then a bulk order would be placed pre-season.

- On the subject of weather forecasts Members enquired how far in advance forecasts were received from the Met Office and did we get winter forecasts each year. They were informed that the Highways Services Team had a strong relationship with the Met Office and were provided with a weekly forecast. The Team also got a daily forecast in the morning for each day which was key in the decision making for each day.
- The Committee were told that the County Council had stocked up with 32,500 tonnes of salt for 2013/14. This was because the Highways Services Team had found difficulty in restocking salt in previous years due to an increase in national demand for salt which led to limited providers. The 32,500 tonnes of salt meant a minimum restock when salt supplies ran low. If more salt needed to be stocked, more salt barns would be required.
- The cost of the treated salt pre-season was around £41 a tonne. In season it was £45 a tonne. The County Council bought at the cheaper rate which was a significant difference when buying 32,500 tonnes.
- The breakdown on what LCC paid on salt and on staff was about half/half with general overheads on top of that.
- On the topic of manpower, there was a rota of drivers who were on call 24/7. The timing of the grit runs was usually early evening. The drivers would go home after this unless there was a major weather change. If there was uncertainty about when the frost was going to settle or if there was going to be a wet band of weather followed by freezing conditions, the grit runs had to be timed between the two events. On these occasions there would be crews in the depots waiting. The drivers were drawn exclusively from the Highways Operations Teams.
- There were exceptions to the gritting of residential streets such as emergency situations e.g. ambulances. There were a lot of individual cases like this where the Highways Services Team could not offer a gritting service first hand. In these situations self help would have to be looked at, because the Team were trying to keep 'A' Roads open.
- Members asked if salt was not effective below a certain temperature. They were informed that untreated salt was effective up to -5 degrees centigrade. Below -9 degrees centigrade it has no effect. Treated salt is effective at slightly lower temperatures and stays on the ground for longer.

- The Committee enquired if the Highways Services Team were working with Non- Parish areas. They were told that this was not a category the Team had looked at but welcomed any suggestions on how it could work with these areas more effectively. If these areas were predominantly urban areas, the Team would work with the Districts to look at these areas.
- Regarding grit bins and if they met the specified criteria, the Committee were informed that a review had been carried out three years ago. If the grit bin was broken or not fit for purpose anymore then a review would be carried out to establish if it was in an appropriate location.
- Councillors requested that the Priority Footway Networks in each of the 12 District Council areas be e-mailed to them so they would have advanced knowledge for when their constituents contacted them.
- Members expressed concern that areas with high pedestrian movements such as to local centres and public transport interchanges, including railway stations were not always provided with grit bins.
- There was a Grit Bin Assessment Form which was part of the Winter Service Plan available on the intranet for Members. It was a document developed by the Public Realm side of the Service
- The Committee were informed that the contract for snow clearing was advertised openly to all individuals and companies who could provide a snow clearing service. No-one was excluded from the tendering process.
- Sue Procter, Assistant Director Highways Operations, informed Members that briefings had been provided for Parish Councils. In 2012 there had been joint seminars for Parishes with about two or three turning up to each seminar. The team had also accessed the Parishes through the Lancashire association of Local Councils (LALC). LALC confirmed they communicated details of the winter service with all authorities. LALC carried out functions for the County Council with all Parishes. It was pointed out however that a number of Town and Parish Councils were not members of LALC and therefore were not getting information passed on to them from LALC. Sue assured the Committee that she would check with the Public Realm managers to make sure information was conveyed to all Town and Parish Councils.
- With regards to staffing, Members were told a rota system was in operation for the drivers. The drivers worked one week in four as



there were enough drivers on the rota to enable this. There was always a crew on standby 24/7/.

- The salt provided a de-icing function on the roads and did not scour the roads.
- Members asked what assurance there was that snow ploughing the middle of roads would not happen again. The Committee were told that this was caused by snow ploughs which used V-shaped blades. Snow ploughs did not use V-shaped blades anymore instead they used blades which pushed the snow to one side and the snow ploughs would now do a double run on the roads. This was a service improvement that the Highways Services Team had made.

The Highways Operations Team were praised for all the work they had done. Steve Browne, Interim Executive Director for the Environment, wished to thank Phil Barrett, Director of Lancashire Highways Services, who was unable to attend the meeting, for all the work he had done.

**Resolved:** That the Committee,

1. Commend the Environment Directorate and the Highways Operations Team on how well they have done and to keep up their good work.
2. Ask the Highways Operations Team make sure that all Town and Parish Councils will be contacted as well as making sure all non-parish areas receive information.
3. Request a list of priority footpaths for all County Councillors.
4. Request the subject of Highways Maintenance continues to be brought up at future Scrutiny Committee meetings possibly 6 December.

## **5. Work Plan and Task Group Update**

A report was presented to Members summarising the work to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee in the coming months, including an update of task group work.

The Chair stated he had a meeting with Mike Kirby, Director of Transport and Environment, about Transport Plan for Lancashire, in particular to do with railways. Mike Kirby's team would like to do a bitesize briefing to County Councillors first, then look at the Transport Plan for Lancashire at a later date with the Scrutiny Committee.

**Resolved:** That the Committee:

1. Agree to the Transport Plan for Lancashire at a future meeting.
2. Note the report.

**6. Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Friday 8 November 2013 at 10:00am at County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher  
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall  
Preston

# Agenda Item 4

## Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Electoral Division affected: All
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## Working Together With Families (WTWF)

(Appendix 'A' refers)

### Contact for further information:

Paul Hussey,  
01772530145  
Children and Young People Directorate  
[Paul.hussey@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.hussey@lancashire.gov.uk)

### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present an up-date regarding implementation of the Working Together With Families approach across Lancashire. The report identifies progress to date challenges encountered and associated risks and mitigating actions.

### Recommendation

Members are recommended to:

Note the content of the report and offer comments and feedback.

### Background and Advice

The Working Together With Families (WTWF) strategic work programme is now in its second year having commenced in September 2011 and is aimed at increasing the resourcefulness and resilience of families across Lancashire. Focussed on whole-system culture change, the emphasis is on working with families as opposed to doing to, helping them to take greater control over changing their circumstances and improving outcomes for their children and young people.

The work forms part of the wider 'Lancashire Improving Futures programme' which, under the joint leadership of the Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust (LCYPT) and Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB), is working on a number of developments including the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); the creation of multi-agency delivery hubs; further development of integrated working across all districts including bringing together the Early Support and WTWF work streams and a workforce development programme to support the change process.

From March 2012, Lancashire's targets under the national Troubled Families Unit (TFU) work led by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have been included in this programme.

### **Progress to Date**

- Payment by Results claim submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in July for 734 claims (relating to successful work with over 500 families) enabling us to draw down £427,000. This was the largest claim nationally and reflects the good progress made in embedding the WTWF approach across Lancashire.
- Roll out of 2 day Lead Professional (LP) training across all districts by mid November with a total of 305 attendees from Lancashire County Council (LCC) and partner organisations
- Production of a series of short films to describe the experience of LP's and the experience of families of the WTWF approach. These will be accompanied by short case studies to be used for awareness raising and training as well as providing a body of evidence for monitoring purposes.
- WTWF Community Asset Development post appointed and work plan approved at the WTWF Governance Group on 9<sup>th</sup> September
- Agreement with Children Social Care (CSC) re process to identify Child Protection/Children in Need (CP/CIN) cases which also fit 2 or more of the WTWF national criteria to ensure support in place via LP and reduce demand on statutory service
- Commenced work on integration of WTWF and Early Support processes and procedures
- Successful delivery of Lancashire Improving Futures (LIF) Awareness workshops across all Districts with positive feedback from participants.
- Community Asset post appointed and work plan developed
- Planned conference with Housing providers 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013
- Planned workshop for middle managers 28<sup>th</sup> November 2013

### **Challenges**

- Increase in scale and pace in implementing the WTWF approach and in particular achieving the targets set by the Troubled Families Unit (TFU) remains a challenge
- Identifying and working with sufficient number of families meeting two or more of the TFU national criteria in order to claim for the maximum available PBR funds within the lifetime of the programme.
- Engaging all partners fully in the WTWF approach especially in relation to identifying Lead Professionals within their existing workforce. There are very particular issues for certain sectors e.g. schools and we are actively working with partners to identify sector specific solutions.
- Facilitating and supporting service re-design to fully embed a family focus to service delivery and ensuring appropriate levels of training, support and

supervision are available for all Lead Professionals. We have found that middle managers in particular need support with these elements

- Potential financial implication of not meeting revised DCLG targets for number of families worked with and changes to anticipated claim rates. Potential predicted shortfall, due to changing DCLG guidance
- Demonstrating impact and efficiencies within partner organisations across the county and linking interventions via WTWF to a reduction in demand on statutory services
- Ensuring all commissioned services are clearly targeted at the correct cohort of families and clear messages are provided to front line workers re referral, contact points etc

### **Maximising Resources and Value for Money**

The expectation at the start of the Troubled Families (TF) Programme in Lancashire was that we would be able to draw down £5,260,000 in attachment fee and £3,508,000 in payment by results, which totals £8,760,000. However, due to changes to the TF Agreement there are potential risks to achieving the anticipated PBR monies.

A number of mitigating actions have been identified to assist in maximising PBR monies and ensure these resources are focused on stimulating the system change required. A few of these actions are listed below:

**a)** We have undertaken a thorough analysis of current expenditure and commitments. This has involved an exercise with senior finance colleagues to establish a budget manageable through the county council's financial management system, ORACLE.

**b)** We have agreed with the Troubled Families Unit that we will agree a joint statement with the County Council and the unit to clarify key terms and principles that will act as an amendment to the original agreement including; definition of worked with, attachment and payment by results targets and payment rates, expansion of eligibility factors to the funded TFU work to include key identifiers such as families receiving child protection or child in need intervention, and a financial schedule going forward until March 2015.

**c)** We have investigated our sources of data required to make claims and identified key areas of improvement which will be addressed. These include;

- provision of data sets from key services/ direct from families on a timely basis (families to be incentivised),
- lead professionals training to focus on importance of evidence based reporting via 'tracker'
- revision of Service Plan including roles and responsibilities of analyst function, improved data sharing agreement at District Local Management Groups

(LMG) level and Strategic Level; sharing of expertise between other local authorities e.g. West Yorkshire who have achieved high levels of employment outcome claims; and those who have a dedicated database to identify and track troubled families (namely Manchester City Council and Salford).

**d)** In relation to employment outcomes we have specifically identified from the July claim experience, that there are potentially 189 employment outcomes that were not maximised. The corrective actions described in above in c) above will maximise these employment outcome claims in Jan 2014 and help us achieve better claim figures in the future.

**e)** In addition, we are scrutinising the impact of our commissions funded via the WTWF (TFU funding) and asking: what is the attachment of families to these commissions; what are the outcomes and in which districts; and what the value is for money of these contracts. At the Governance group in early December we will agree which of our original business commitments are no longer required due to projects/commissions not commencing or emerging identified needs of families across Lancashire. The aim will be to develop a key Early Support/Prevention and WTWF offer list.

**f)** We are examining how WTWF Support is enhanced to include Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) Cases.

A number of steps have been drawn up to explore this area including; trawl of CIN and CP cases and cross reference against WTWF families, and moving forward Children Social Care (CSC) to notify WTWF analysts of all new CIN cases, and to notify the WTWF analyst if the case meets 2 or more of the TFU national criteria. Any funding drawn down will be used to commission further prevention intervention services and/or fast-track into current service offers.

## **Evaluation of the Troubled Families Unit Programme**

- Lancashire is one of 20 local authorities which have been selected as a 'case study' for the purposes of the national evaluation.
- On 23<sup>rd</sup> October, we were visited by members of the evaluation team for day 1 of this robust process. The aim of the case studies is to explore in depth how Troubled Families (TF) services are operating, to understand how systems and services have been redesigned and reformed to work with families and to provide ongoing learning about how to optimise the value role and efficacy of the TF programme. Case studies will be based on interviews and group discussions with staff, workshops with local partners, at both strategic and operational levels and interviews with a selection of families (in some areas).
- The outcomes of the evaluation will be shared with the WTWF Governance Group and to County Councillors via the WTWF regular up-date briefings.

## **Communications and Member Engagement**

We are developing an internal communications plan and briefing schedule for county councillors. By way of an example of the type of information available, appended to this report is a presentation recently provided to a Councillors Essentials event.

### **Consultations**

N/A

### **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

The risks associated with the WTWF are outlined in the report however the Governance Group has developed a risk register designed to mitigate identified risks. The risk register is regularly monitored as part of the overarching performance management arrangements that are in place to support the implementation of the WTWF approach.

### **Financial**

As outlined in the report

### **Equality and Diversity**

Whilst the WTWF approach may be challenging for some families it is designed to improve outcomes for these families many of whom will come from deprived backgrounds. The WTWF approach also embraces and celebrates diversity and builds on the strengths of communities in Lancashire.

### **Crime and Disorder**

The WTWF approach makes a significant contribution to reducing Crime and Anti Social Behaviour in Lancashire.

### **Personnel**

The WTWF approach includes a significant investment in the workforce to effect the required system change.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985  
List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A





Lancashire  
Improving Futures  
Programme



# Working Together With Families

19<sup>th</sup> September 2013

Janette Buckland

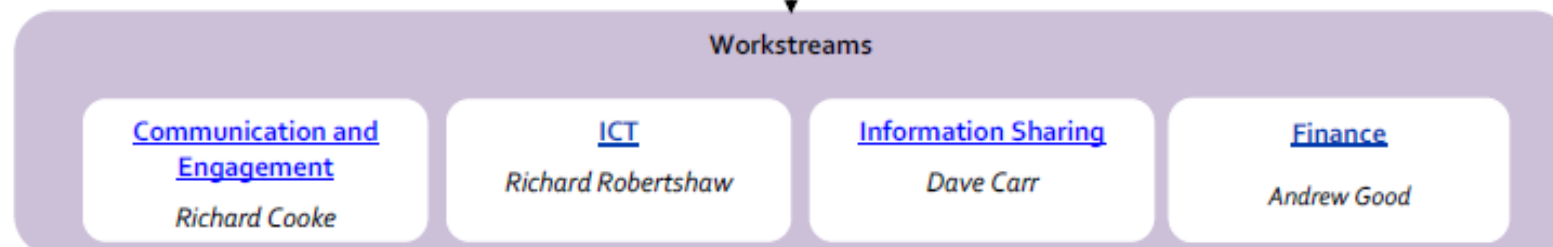
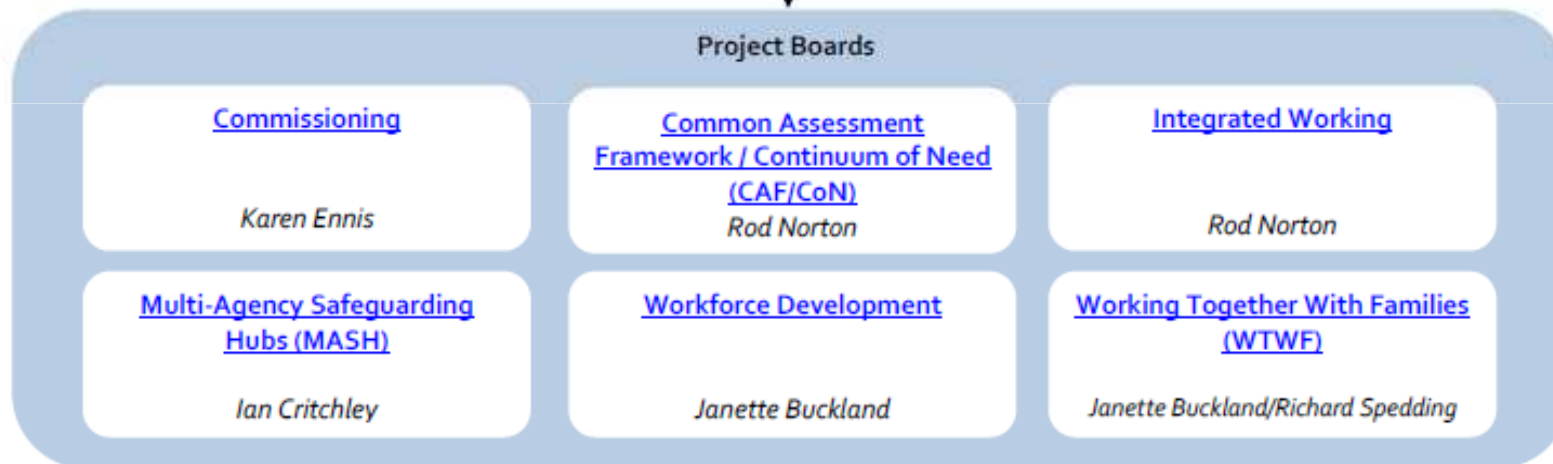
Paul Hussey



# Lancashire Improving Futures Programme



Programme Manager - Richard Spedding





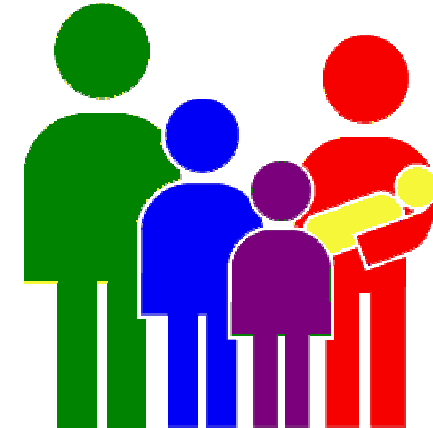
- **Whole System Change Programme**
- To have all partners working together more **efficiently and effectively**,
- thereby **reducing and managing risk and demand for services** from children, young people and families in Lancashire
- to the **benefit of key stakeholders and the wider community**
- while at the same time improving **key outcomes**
- to reduce **dependency**
- and Increase **resilience**
- while being more cost effective – **value for money**

# Drivers

- Children's Trust transformational principles –
  - shared locations
  - shared information
  - shared ownership
  - shared pathways
  - shared commissioning and delivery
- Principles of **Prevention** and **Early Intervention**
- Government Reports e.g. Allen, Munro
- Meeting efficiency targets through reducing demand on specialist services



# Working Together With Families (WTWF)



- Working **with** not doing to or for
- Target group - most complex families
- Troubled families work - 2<sup>nd</sup> largest LA,  
3 criteria: worklessness, crime/ASB, school non-attendance
- Funding from central government
- 2,630 families
- 12 Local Management Group's
- Lead Professional Approach: **1 family, 1 worker, 1 plan**
- Positive results so far

# What Does This Mean for Lancashire?



- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest LA
- 3 co-ordinators & 3 clusters
- 2,630 families (2,999)
- 876 in year 1
- 1300 in year 2
- 454 in year 3
- Upfront attachment fee and results-based payment.

- Lancaster = 162 (342)
- Wyre = 109 (226)
- Fylde = 57 (178)
- **Cluster A = 328 (746) over 3 years**
  
- Preston = 294 (483)
- West Lancs = 189 (151)
- Chorley = 162 (227)
- South Ribble = 109 (230)
- **Cluster B = 754 (1,091) over 3 years**
  
- Burnley = 425 (371)
- Pendle = 373 (278)
- Rossendale = 294 (195)
- Hyndburn = 399 (269)
- Ribble Valley = 57 (49)
- **Cluster C = 1548 (1,162) over 3 years**

# WTWF Current Situation



## Personnel

- WTWF Programme Co-ordinator
- WTWF Area Leads
- WTWF analysts
- 4 DWP advisors

## Performance

- 1<sup>st</sup> DCLG claim in January 2013 for 128 PBR outcomes (50 predicted)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> DCLG claim in July 2013 for 607 PBR outcomes (80 predicted)
- 841 Families supported by end of July 2013, and counting, part of the process.
- DCLG negotiation

## Progress

- Edge of Care
- Short Stay Schools
- Family Group Conferencing
- Lead professional budget arrangements
- Lead Professional workshops and Lead Professional induction training

# Workforce Development

- Lead Professional (LP) role
- Training and development needs
- Menu approach – 2 day LP Training with additional training opportunities
- Support and supervision
- CAF/CON Training
- Evaluation
- Links closely with Workforce Reform Board and Workforce Implementation Group





# Lead Professional Role

- To act as a **single point of contact** for the family and other professionals
- To **co-ordinate** the **delivery** of the actions agreed (not to do it all)
- To **reduce overlap** and inconsistency in the services received

This has NOT changed

- Identify needs of **all family** members and refer appropriately
- Identify areas of **risk** – act or refer on as appropriate
- Assist the family in their **self assessment** – e.g Family STAR
- Give opportunistic **healthy lifestyle** messages
- Request **commission** of a specific intervention/service (LP budget)

# County Councillor Role?



- Communication
- Community Leadership
- Challenge
- Advocacy
- Linking to other activity in LCC and Partners
- Utilise skills and expertise – intervention, advice, information
- Your view?



# Questions?



Paul Hussey

WTWF Co-ordinator

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Mobile 07876844212

## Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Electoral Division affected: All
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## Independent Reviewing Officers

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

Louise Taylor, 01772 531646, Children and Young People's Directorate,  
Louise.Taylor@lancashire.gov.uk

### Executive Summary

Further to the request of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013, this report provides a response from the Directorate for Children & Young People in relation to the actions taken to improve the recruitment and retention of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs).

### Recommendation

The report is presented for information.

## Background and Advice

In January 2013 the Scrutiny Committee received a progress report in relation to the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection Action Plan. The Ofsted inspection report made several references to the valuable role played by IROs in Lancashire, highlighting that child protection conferences and children looked after reviews are effectively chaired and that the IROs are well managed. The report also gave recognition to the contribution made by IROs overall to shape and improve services at both a strategic and individual child level. However, at that time the Scrutiny Committee was advised of the challenges faced by the local authority in relation to the recruitment and retention of IROs, which impacted on IRO caseloads and capacity. This report sets out the actions taken within the Directorate to address these issues and explains the current position.

## The IRO Role

The IRO has a critical and unique role, having independent oversight of the child's case, with responsibility for ensuring that the child's interests are protected throughout the care planning process. The appointment of an IRO for children looked after was made a legal requirement under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The role and responsibilities of the IRO are set out in statutory guidance. ('The 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', 2010). IRO's have two distinct functions:

- Chairing the child's review; and
- Monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis.

As part of the monitoring function, the IRO also has a duty to monitor the performance of the local authority's function as a corporate parent and to identify any areas of poor practice. Equally important, the IRO should recognise and report on good practice. The IRO manager is required under the statutory guidance to produce an annual report including this information. The IRO Annual Report for 2012/13 is attached to this report as **Appendix A**. The report has been presented to the Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) and the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). It will also be shared with the Corporate Parenting Board.

### **The Team Structure**

IROs are located within the Safeguarding, Inspection & Audit Service which sits within the Specialist Services arm of the Directorate. It is independent of the line management structure of the district social work teams, therefore retaining the independence of the IROs. There are 27 full-time equivalent (FTE) IRO posts in the team. This includes 25 IRO's with responsibility for chairing children looked after reviews, child protection conferences and a range of specialist strategy meetings. There are currently two Fostering IRO's who chair foster carer reviews, although with the introduction of a panel system for undertaking foster carer reviews, this will be reduced to one in January 2014. Details of the team structure can be found in Section 3.1 of the annual report.

### **The Challenges**

#### **Recruitment & Retention**

Historically Lancashire has faced significant challenges in the recruitment of IROs and this issue was highlighted in the IRO Annual Reports for 2011/12 and 2012/13. In recognition of the capacity issues within the IRO Service, in January 2012 DLT approved the creation of two additional temporary IRO posts for a period of twelve months. This was in the context of the increasing number of children looked after and IRO caseloads having risen. The posts were temporary, with the aim, in line with Lancashire's Children & Young People's Plan, of reducing the number of children looked after.

In line with the County Council's HR policies, it was agreed that the posts would be ring fenced to staff in the residential service whose jobs were at risk in the residential restructure in order to retain experienced staff. However, difficulties arose in recruiting to these posts.

In March 2012, DLT approved a further request to establish two permanent IRO posts given the additional demands on the IRO Service arising from short breaks, remands and the rise in the number of foster carer's. Following four separate recruitment attempts between May 2012 and January 2013 these posts were eventually filled.

Pending recruitment to vacancies a number of actions have been taken to support the IRO Team as follows:

- Agency IRO's have been used to cover vacancies.
- Part-time staff in the team have worked additional hours, meaning that the actual vacancy position over the previous summer reduced to 0.6 FTE posts.
- Secondment of staff from the residential service. Two residential managers have been seconded to the service, both of whom have been successful in securing permanent posts in the team.
- Managers within the service have taken on additional supervision responsibilities to cover the long term sickness absence of two IRO managers rather than acting up an IRO to cover the posts.
- IROs prioritise their statutory responsibilities and do not undertake additional tasks.
- We continue to explore new ways of working to ensure IRO's have the right 'tools' for the job and to make the most efficient use of their time. For example, a centralised booking service for child protection conferences is reducing the amount of time spent on administrative tasks and IROs have been put forward as a priority group of staff to pilot any new technological solutions.
- Consideration of how other services within the Specialist Services arm of the Directorate could support the IRO Service. In particular, the use of YOT managers, although this option could not be progressed due to changes in the availability of staff.

In addition to addressing staff recruitment, consideration has also been given to how we can improve the efficiency of the service, to get the most from existing resources. Greater efficiency has been achieved by:

- A review of the IRO Service was undertaken to further consider how the capacity issues could be addressed. The review concluded that the two IRO Teams, (at that time there were two separate IRO Teams for CLA and Safeguarding) should be combined to ensure continuity of IRO for children and more equitable caseloads across the service. The new IRO structure became fully operational on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2013.
- A review was also undertaken of the management structure within the Safeguarding, Inspection & Audit Service and a decision made to reduce the number of Tier 5 manager posts from four to three, in order to increase IRO capacity through the creation of an additional full-time permanent IRO post.

The Directorate's Commissioning Service has also explored a number of options for the future delivery of Lancashire's Independent Reviewing Service. Consideration was given to commissioning the whole or part of the service from an external provider. However, current legislation prevents local authorities from discharging their IRO functions to another body. Furthermore, it was not cost effective to do this. It was concluded that the current model of service delivery should be continued.

Staff retention has shown an improvement in 2013. Although three IROs will have left the team this year, two have retired and one has been successful in obtaining an IRO post nearer to home. (This person was travelling from Cumbria). One of the three managers also left the team in August for the same reason, having secured an

IRO manager post nearer to home, creating a better work-life balance with less travelling.

### **Increase in IRO Caseloads**

IRO capacity remains a significant challenge as caseloads are consistently higher than that recommended in the IRO Handbook. (50 – 70 children looked after). This is not unique to Lancashire as evidenced in a recent review of IRO caseloads across the North West region, which highlighted that only one local authority is compliant with this requirement. Research by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) identified a similar picture, with two thirds of local authorities nationally, having average caseloads above the recommended limit. However, based on the regional data Lancashire's IRO caseloads are amongst the highest at 114. (Bolton: 122 and Liverpool: 118).

Although DLT has previously agreed four additional IRO posts (two permanent and two temporary), there has continued to be an increase in service demand since March 2012, which has meant that the reduction in IRO caseloads anticipated has not been achieved.

	<b>March 2012</b>	<b>July 2013</b>	<b>% change</b>
Initial CP Conferences	848	1,413	+66.6%
Subject to CP Plan	547	873	+59.6%
CLA	1332	1514	+13.6%

(12 months cumulative totals).

At September 2013 the number of children looked after had increased to 1,548, whilst the number of children subject to a child protection plan had increased to 946. There has been an 83% increase in child protection plans from March 2012 to September 2013.

A report regarding the increase in service demand was considered by DLT on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 and approval was given to make the two temporary IRO posts, (which were coming to an end), permanent. This will increase IRO capacity.

### **Quality Assurance & Performance**

Despite the increase in workload, performance has been maintained at a high level. (Section 4 of the IRO Annual Report, Appendix A). The IROs are in a unique position, independent from service delivery and with oversight of practice across Children's Social Care. However, in the past there has been an over emphasis on their role in relation to compliance and performance timescales. Development work within the IRO Service has focused on the IRO responsibilities within the IRO Handbook and the importance of the IRO challenge role. There is evidence that IROs are challenging practice and use the problem resolution process to escalate concerns to Team and Senior Managers. However, rising caseloads are impacting on some aspects of their quality assurance role, particularly in undertaking mid-point reviews checks, to monitor the progression of review recommendations. Lower caseloads would enable this to occur in all cases in line with the statutory guidance.



## **Current Staffing Position**

Following interviews in September 2013, appointments were made to all IRO vacancies in the team. This included three full-time permanent positions and one full-time temporary post, funded through the Adoption Reform Grant. The latter has been agreed as a secondment, subject to the post holder's substantive post being back-filled. It is anticipated that all four staff will be in post by February 2014. Recruitment to the two IRO posts which DLT agreed to make permanent, will also be progressed. This will reduce caseloads and based on the current number of children looked after and children subject to a child protection plan, the average IRO caseload will be 96.

## **Future Development**

Lancashire has participated in a piece of research led by the NCB, exploring the role and effectiveness of the IRO service. The study incorporated a national survey of IROs, IRO Managers and Directors of Children's Services and an analysis of costs and qualitative case studies in four local authorities. Focus groups were also held with IROs, Social Workers and semi-structured interviews were undertaken with children looked after and other stakeholders. .

The study is considering the following areas:

- Ways in which IROs and Social Workers work together.
- How IROs support the care planning process.
- The impact of the IRO service on individual cases and overall services for looked after children.

The first stage of the research relating to the national survey was published in August 2013. Following publication of the final report, Lancashire will consider how the findings can be used to further improve its IRO service.

## **Consultations**

N/A

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

## **Risk management**

IRO's have statutory responsibilities as set out in legislation and statutory guidance. They have an important role in quality assuring practice and holding the local authority to account as a corporate parent. The effectiveness of IROs, particularly in relation to their quality assurance and challenge role is subject to external scrutiny by the courts (in legal proceedings) and by Ofsted under the inspection framework for services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Failure to provide effective services will result in Government intervention and possible action by children, young people and their families under the Human Rights Act.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985  
List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

# Independent Reviewing Officers

## Annual Report Children Looked After & Safeguarding

April 2012 – March 2013



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## **1. Foreword**

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) has a critical and unique role, having independent oversight of the child's case, with responsibility for ensuring that the child's welfare and interests are protected throughout the child protection and care planning process. They have a crucial role to quality assure practice.

Although a challenging year for the IRO service, the report highlights the contribution made by IROs in improving outcomes for children looked after and those in need of protection. A review of the service has been completed and the service restructured, bringing together all IRO functions within one team consistent with the 'Munro Review of Child Protection', (February 2011), ensuring continuity of IRO for children and families. Although IRO caseloads remain high, there is evidence of effective challenge and resolution of issues to prevent drift in care planning, using both formal and informal resolution processes. Good practice is evident in facilitating the participation of children looked after in their reviews, using creative techniques, particularly where children have communication difficulties.

The quality assurance functions within the service have been strengthened through the introduction of new IRO case file auditing arrangements and feedback from parents/carers has been used to make changes to the way child protection conferences are undertaken. However, it is recognised that opportunities need to be made available for children and young people to provide feedback in relation to the IRO service.

IRO caseloads are now more equitable across the service and despite them remaining above the recommended caseload for IROs (70 cases maximum), good performance has been maintained.

Following an inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services in 2012, Ofsted reported that 'Lancashire County Council have high aspirations for young people to achieve well and reach their full potential. Independent Reviewing Officers give high priority to encouraging looked after children, parents and carers to contribute to care planning and reviews.' Feedback gathered from children and families throughout the year evidence that this practice has continued.

## **2. Purpose of the annual report**

'The 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' (2010), places a responsibility on the manager of the IROs for children who are looked after to produce an annual report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Board. Whilst there isn't a requirement to provide information in relation to safeguarding, IROs within Lancashire also fulfill an important safeguarding function, chairing child protection conferences and a range of strategy meetings. This information is therefore included within the report.

This is the third IRO annual report completed by the IRO service in Lancashire. It provides a review of the work and findings of the IROs during the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

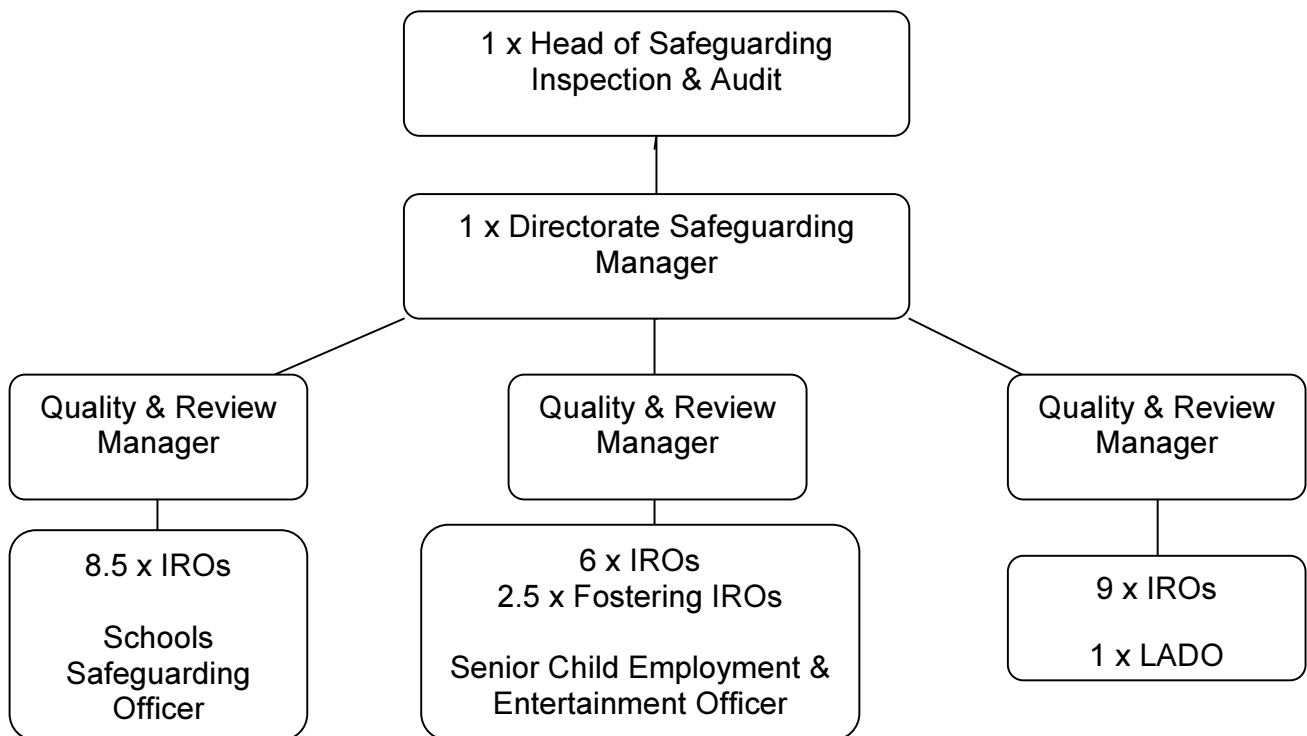
The report provides statistical information regarding performance and more qualitative information from the IROs in relation to themes and trends. It highlights areas of good practice and identifies key challenges and priorities for further development during 2013/14. The report will be presented to the Directorate Senior Leadership Team (DLT), the Corporate Parenting Board and the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

### 3. The IRO service

Lancashire has had an IRO service since 1999, responsible for chairing looked after children reviews, child protection conferences and a range of specialist strategy meetings, including allegations against people working with children, suspected cases of fabricated/induced illness, child sexual exploitation, children missing from home or care, children looked after who display sexually harmful behavior towards other children and cases of serious self harm of children who are looked after.

#### 3.1 Team structure

IROs are located within the Safeguarding, Inspection & Audit Service which sits within the Specialist Services arm of the Directorate. It is independent of the line management structure of the district social work teams, therefore retaining the independence of the IROs.



The staffing complement for the service includes 23.5 FTE IROs and 2.5 Fostering IROs. The team consists of 5 male and 21 female IROs. The majority of the team is white British, with English as their first language. Three members of the team are from a black and minority ethnic background. Equal opportunities policies are upheld as part of the recruitment and selection process and there is always a BME panel member where this is required. All of the IROs have undertaken equality and diversity training to ensure equality of approach with all sectors of society.

### **3.2 Post qualifying experience**

All IROs in Lancashire are required to have a minimum of five years post qualifying experience. They have all worked in statutory child care settings and several have previous management experience.

A detailed table of the level of post qualifying experience and length of service as IRO managers and IROs in Lancashire can be found in appendix 1.

### **3.3 Restructure of the IRO service**

The annual report for 2011/12 proposed the implementation of a new IRO structure, combining the IRO roles for children looked after and safeguarding, promoting continuity of IRO for the child throughout their journey of involvement with children's services and to ensure more equitable caseloads across the IRO service.

In August 2012 a training plan was developed in order to progress the merger of the teams and ensure IROs had the necessary skills to undertake their new functions. This included training delivered from the pool of knowledge already in the service and by colleagues in other parts of the Directorate. For example, in relation to transition and adoption. Training for 'Experienced Child Protection Chairs' was commissioned externally. Feedback from the less experienced IROs particularly, confirmed they had found this beneficial. Shadowing opportunities across the team was mandatory and completed by all in order to learn processes and have 'live' experience of the different meetings IROs chair.

In December 2012 the first phase of the amalgamation commenced with the Safeguarding IROs retaining any children subject to child protection plans who subsequently became looked after. The Children Looked After IROs also became responsible for chairing strategy meetings in respect of children looked after.

By the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2013 the teams had fully merged and were operating as one service. A duty system and a centralised referral point for all initial child protection conference requests was established for allocation purposes.

A review was also undertaken of the management structure within the Safeguarding, Inspection & Audit Service and a decision made to reduce the number of Tier 5 manager posts from four to three, in order to increase IRO capacity through the creation of an additional IRO post.

### **3.4 Staff recruitment and retention issues**

During 2012/13 the IRO service has faced further challenges in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff. Two IRO managers were absent from work due to long term sickness leaving one IRO manager. A manager from within the Safeguarding Inspection and Audit Service therefore assisted with the management of the IRO team and the Directorate Safeguarding Manager also undertook some IRO supervision.

One of the managers subsequently tendered their resignation and did not return to their post.

During 2012/13 four IROs also had long term sickness absence. This presented challenges in terms of maintaining service delivery and consistency of IRO for children and young people. However, it is to the credit of the team that in spite of these challenges, combined with an increase in the number of children looked after and those subject to a child protection plan, good performance has been maintained, reflecting a high level of commitment to the children and families of Lancashire.

In 2012 DLT approved the establishment of four additional IRO posts (two permanent and two temporary) given the additional demands on the service. There have been four separate recruitment attempts in 2012/13 to recruit to IRO vacancies:

- In May 2012, one full-time equivalent (FTE) permanent post was filled from within the residential service.
- In August 2012, 1.5 FTE permanent posts were filled. One of these was an external candidate and one was internal.
- In October 2012, 2.5 FTE permanent posts were filled. Two of these were external candidates and one was internal. Unfortunately, one offer of appointment had to be withdrawn due to unsatisfactory references. A full time secondment was also secured along with a part time secondment to the fostering IRO function of the service.
- In January 2013, three FTE permanent posts were filled. Two of these were internal appointments and one was external.

Agency staff have been used since August 2012 to assist in the management of IRO vacancies pending recruitment to permanent posts. At the time of writing this report the IRO service has the following vacant posts:

- 1 x temporary part-time post as a result of IRO maternity leave (until September 2013).
- 1 x temporary part time IRO.



In the last six months additional hours have been agreed with a number of the part-time IROs to assist the service, meaning that the actual vacancy position is now is 0.9FTE posts. This will reduce to 0.6 FTE posts as another part-time IRO has agreed to work additional hours from late summer 2013.

A further recruitment campaign is being undertaken due to one IRO and one Fostering IRO submitting their notice of intention to retire. Both of these IROs will have left the service by the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013.

One of the IRO managers has also secured alternative employment in a neighbouring authority (in order to work closer to home) and will also leave the Directorate by the end of August 2013.

### 3.5 Caseloads

Prior to the amalgamation of the service caseloads on the Children Looked After Team ranged from 100 to 137. Caseloads on the Safeguarding IRO Team ranged from 79 to 171 throughout the year. The latter was due to an increase in children subject to a child protection plan in one district. Cases were reallocated to ensure greater equitability.

The number of looked after children in Lancashire during 2012/13 has ranged from 1,345 at its lowest to 1,482 at its highest.

The table below indicates the number of looked after children during 2012/13 and shows a rise over the course of the year.

APR 12	MAY 12	JUN 12	JUL 12	AUG 12	SEP 12	OCT 12	NOV 12	DEC 12	JAN 13	FEB 13	MAR 13
1345	1349	1362	1380	1401	1412	1440	1450	1461	1462	1479	1482

At year end the total number of Children looked After has increased by 11.26% compared with the previous year.

The number of children subject to a child protection plan in Lancashire during 2012/13 has ranged from 518 at its lowest to 878 at its highest.

The tables below indicate the number of children subject to a child protection plan in 2012/13 and show a rise over the course of the year.

APR 12	MAY 12	JUN 12	JUL 12	AUG 12	SEP 12	OCT 12	NOV 12	DEC 12	JAN 13	FEB 13	MAR 13
518	540	549	587	644	700	719	781	802	831	862	878

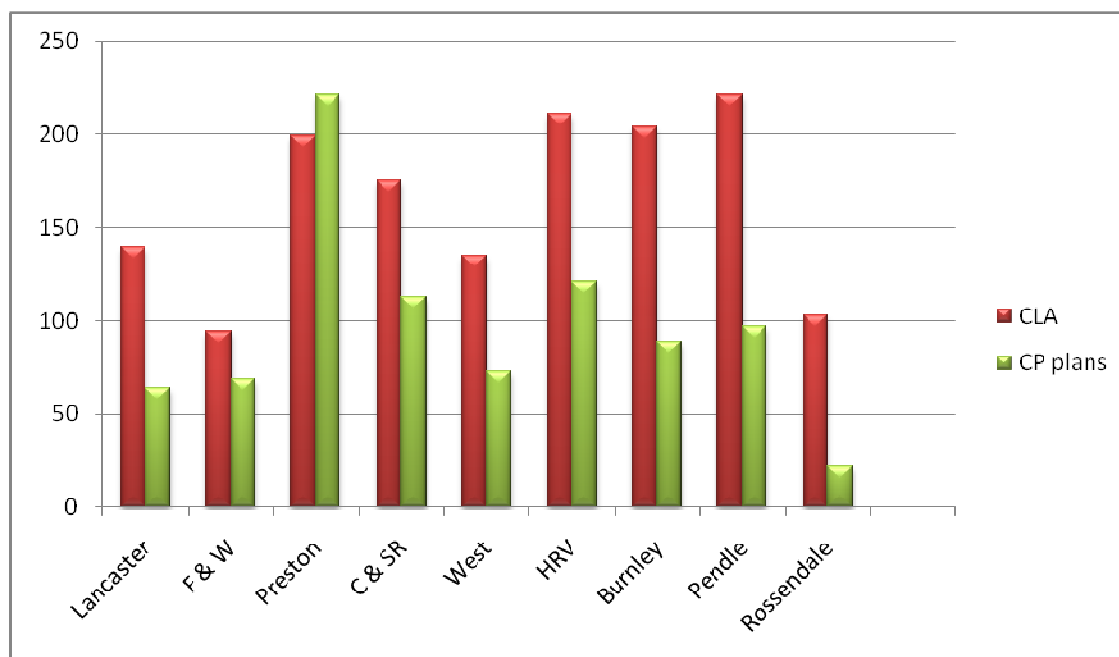
Children subject to a child protection plan per 10,000 population in 2012/13:

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Lancashire	20.30	26.17	26.94	27.26	22.36	36.10
SN's	25.60	32.36	33.53	38.95	34.6	
England - National Average	26.50	31.0	35.50	38.30	37.80	

The year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 shows a 60.5% rise in the number of children subject to a child protection plan compared with the previous year. Given this significant increase a piece of research was commissioned from the Directorate's Performance Team to aid understanding of the data and the implications for practice. The key findings were as follows:

- There were 'spikes' of activity in May, July, October, November 2012 and January 2013.
- Prior to Christmas 2012 the increases were most noticeably seen in Burnley, Lancaster and Preston. From January 2013 these districts appear to have stabilised and further increases in the county rate have largely been attributable to increases in Chorley, South Ribble, Hyndburn and Wyre which have generated an additional 88 cases between them.
- The number of child protection plans shows some correlation with deprivation indices, with the most deprived districts reporting a higher number of child protection plans per 10,000 population and vice versa.
- Preston's rate appears unusually high even when taking deprivation into account.
- A comparison of child protection cases in Preston, Burnley and Lancaster has revealed that the children who became subject to plans in Preston during 2012 tended to be older and were more likely to have had several previous referrals. This would appear to support the hypothesis that the increase in child protection plans was due to a lowering of the threshold for statutory intervention.

The chart below indicates the number of children looked after and children subject to a child protection plan by district for March 2013.



District	No of CLA	No of CP plans	Total
Lancaster	140	66	206
Fylde & Wyre	94	69	163
Preston	199	221	420
Chorley & SR	175	113	288
West	135	124	355
Hyndburn & RV	211	124	335
Burnley	204	89	293
Pendle	221	97	318
Rossendale	103	29	132
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1482</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>2360</b>

There is a combined total of 2,360 children looked after and children subject to a child protection plan. If fully staffed caseloads would be approximately 100. However, with the current 0.90 FTE vacancy, the average IRO caseload is 105. This is still above the IRO handbook recommendation for an IRO to be able to carry out their duties and responsibilities in their entirety, but is an improved position to that reported in last year's annual report. Staff sickness has impacted on IRO capacity where IROs have provided cover for additional meetings in order to maintain a service to children and families. This work is not reflected in caseloads but is evident in workload and diary commitments.

## 4. Performance

### 4.1 Number of meetings

The rise in the number of children looked after and children subject to a child protection plan has resulted in a significant increase in the number of meetings chaired by an IRO, particularly the number of child protection conferences. This has a direct impact on IRO capacity.

<b>Numbers of CLA Reviews</b>		
2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
2,862	3,731	4,080

This increase of reviews equates to 9.35% more meetings than the previous year.

<b>Numbers of Initial Child Protection Conferences</b>		
2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
	854	1387

This increase in initial child protection conferences equates to 61.57% more meetings than the previous year.

<b>Numbers of Review Child Protection Conferences</b>		
2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
	2,067	2,374

This increase in review child protection conferences equates to 14.85% more meetings than the previous year.

<b>Numbers of Strategy Meetings chaired by an IRO</b>		
2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
	202	222

This increase in strategy meetings equates to 9.9% more meetings than the previous year.

### 4.2 Performance relating to children looked after

#### 4.2.1 Legal status of children looked after

The table below provides a breakdown of the legal status of children looked after as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

District	Interim Care Order	Care Order	Sec 20 Accommodated	Remand	EPO/PPO	Placement orders	Total
Lancaster	24	55	25		1	35	140
Fylde & Wyre	19	47	23			5	94
Preston	39	97	21	6		36	199
Chorley & SR	30	93	26		1	25	175
West	22	75	30			8	135
Hyndburn & RV	62	93	31			25	211
Burnley	65	90	21	1		27	204
Pendle	52	101	23		2	43	221
Rossendale	10	58	25			10	103
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>709</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>1482</b>

47.8% of the children looked after population is subject to a Care Order. This group of children are predominantly in long term fostering or residential placements, although some children may be placed at home with a parent under a home placement agreement.

15.1% of children are accommodated by agreement under section 20 of The Children Act 1989. These children are usually between the ages of 10 and 18 and have been accommodated due to family relationship breakdowns or due to an illness or disability of either a parent or child. There are a small number of children who will be accommodated with the consent of their parents whilst Children's Social Care secures a legal order through the courts. There are an even smaller number of children in this group where they have lost both parents and have no other family members able to care for them.

14% of children are subject to a Placement Order and have a plan of adoption. 32.7% are placed with their adoptive families. There are a small number of children subject to a Placement Order where their care plan is no longer adoption. Regular audits evidence that these children are all in the process of having their legal status changed in accordance with their care plan.

Out of the total number of children looked after, 1,154 are looked after due to abuse or neglect. Other categories of need include family dysfunction, family in acute stress and child or parent has an illness or disability.

#### **4.2.2 Placements of children looked after**

Of the 1,482 children that are looked after by Lancashire County Council, 63.7% (942 children) are placed within local authority placements. The remaining 36.3% (540 children) are placed with carers approved by an agency.

The majority of children are placed within either an adoptive or foster family. (1,123 children which equates to 75.8%). Of those children placed in an agency placement, 75% are placed with a foster carer.

A much smaller number of children are placed within residential settings. 3.6% (53 children) live within a Lancashire County Council children's residential unit and 4.6% (68 children) live in a residential home provided by an agency.

16% (238 children/young people) live in other settings, for example, supported living as they prepare to leave care. Also included in this particular group of children are remanded young people, young people in very specialist placements due to specific needs such as mental health related issues and there is 1 young person currently on a Section 25 welfare Secure Order and is placed in a secure unit.

#### 4.2.3 Placement stability

The percentage of children looked after having 3 or more placements during the past 12 months is low at 8.7%. (A low percentage is an indicator of good performance. In 2011/12: statistical neighbours: 10.6% and England average: 11%). The percentage of looked after children who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years is 73.4%, which represents an improvement of 1.7% on performance in the previous year.

#### 4.2.4 Age and gender breakdown of children looked after

The table below provides a breakdown of the gender and ages of children looked after as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

Age group	Female	Male	Unborn	TOTAL
Under 1	60	54	1	115
1 to under 5	139	184		323
5 to under 10	148	165		313
10 to under 16	211	286		497
16 to under 18	109	125		234
<b>County Total</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1482</b>

#### 4.2.5 Participation (PAF 63)

Performance in relation to participation remains high with the majority of looked after children in Lancashire either attending or contributing to their review. Although the table below shows a dip in performance in 2012/13, this has to be set in the context of a higher number of children in this cohort over the age of 4 years than in the previous year. In 2012/13 there were just 56 children who either chose not to contribute or were unable to contribute to their review. (1,006 out of 1,062 children and young people over four years of age actually contributed).

Participation of children looked after in their review:

2008/9	90.3%
2009/10	89.7%
2010/11	97.4%
2011/12	96.2%
2012/13	94.7%

#### 4.2.6 Reviews held within timescale (NI66)

Performance in relation to the number of children and young people having their care plans reviewed within statutory timescales has decreased by 1.2% in 2012/13. Out of the cohort of 1,360 children, 68 reviews were held outside of the timescale. This has to be set in the context of a rise in the care population which equates to an 11.26% increase in comparison to the previous year and this in turn equates to a 9.35% increase in the number of CLA reviews compared to the previous year.

Percentage of reviews held within timescale:

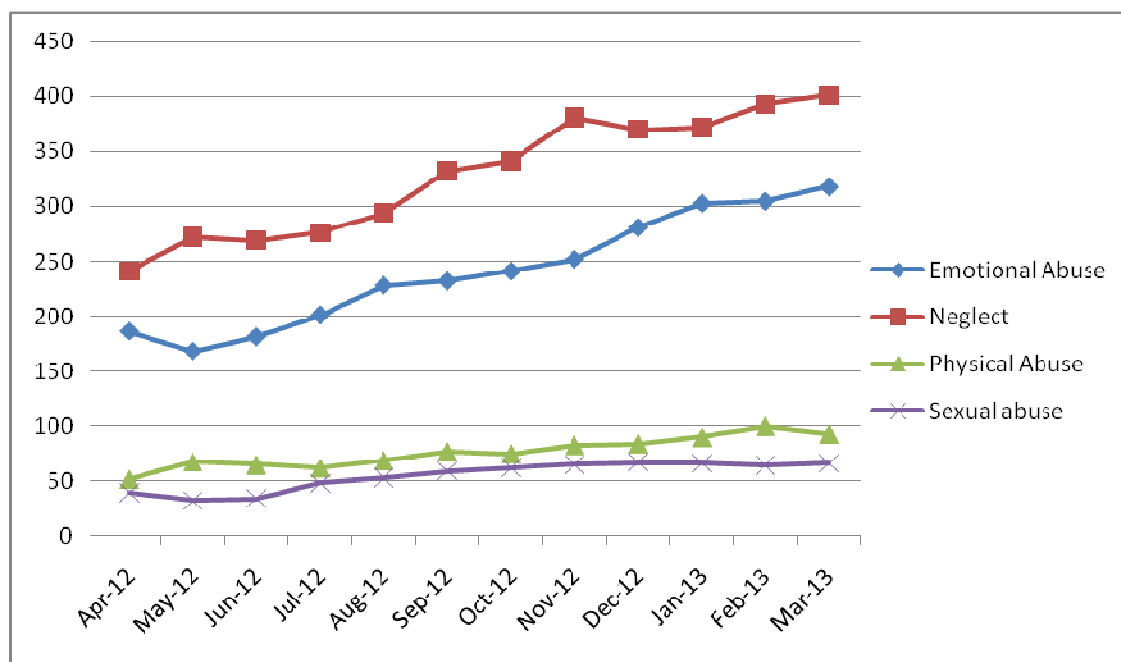
2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
79.6%	86%	95.7%	95.6%	97.8%	96.2%	95%

### 4.3 Performance relating to safeguarding

#### 4.3.1 Child protection plans by category of abuse

The table below gives a breakdown of child protection plans during 2012/13 by category of abuse. This highlights the continuing high prevalence of neglect cases. Neglect accounts for 45.67% of child protection plans in Lancashire with the second largest category being emotional abuse at 36.2%. Neglect remains a priority for the LSCB and Directorate and a considerable amount of research has been undertaken in Lancashire, identifying the characteristics of neglect, defining good outcomes and aiding our understanding of the experiences of children and families. This work informed the development of a neglect strategy (approved by the LSCB in April 2013) which sets out Lancashire's approach in tackling neglect.

Number of CP plans at the report end date	30th April 2012	31st May 2012	30th June 2012	31st July 2012	31st August 2012	30th September 2012	31st October 2012	30th November 2012	31st December 2012	31st January 2013	28th February 2013	31st March 2013
EMOTIONAL ABUSE	186	168	181	201	228	232	241	252	281	303	305	318
NEGLECT	241	272	269	276	294	332	341	381	370	372	393	401
PHYSICAL ABUSE	52	68	65	62	69	77	75	83	84	90	100	93
SEXUAL ABUSE	39	32	34	48	53	59	62	65	67	66	64	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>831</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>878</b>



#### 4.3.2 Child protection plans by age

The table below provides a breakdown of children subject to a child protection plan by age as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.



District	Under 1	1 to 4years	5 to 9 years	10 to 15 years	16 and over	Total
Lancaster	8	29	15	14	0	66
Fylde & Wyre	12	21	20	14	2	69
Preston	34	70	53	59	5	221
Chorley & SR	14	38	32	27	2	113
West	10	17	23	21	2	73
Hyndburn & RV	19	39	29	30	4	121
Burnley	13	35	23	14	2	89
Pendle	10	31	24	28	4	97
Rossendale	6	7	12	4	0	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>878</b>

Whilst there has been a rise in the number of children subject to a child protection plan overall, the table below identifies the increase by age categories. Although the 16 plus category shows the largest increase, this was actually only an increase from 12 to 21 children.

Under 1	1 to 4years	5 to 9 years	10 to 15 years	16 and over
41% increase	68% increase	59% increase	62% increase	75% increase

#### 4.3.3 NI 67: Percentage of review child protection conferences held within timescale

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Lancashire	100%	99.6%	100%	100%	98.90%	96.5%
SN's	99.8%	99.7%	97.1%	96.4	98%	
England - National Average	99.4%	99.1%	96.8%	97.1%	96.7%	

96.5%% of children subject to a child protection plan were reviewed within the required timescale. It is acknowledged that there has been a slight drop in performance which is below the target of 100%. However, performance is still within the top band for this indicator. The 3.5% of cases where reviews were held beyond the requisite timescale involved twenty children. In seven conferences (involving sixteen children) this was due to the adjournment of the conference. Conferences were adjourned for a number of reasons. For example, a parent needed an advocate; a child was in hospital with the parent in attendance and invite letters to one of the conferences involving six children were incorrect. This meant attendees arrived late and there was insufficient time to hold

the meeting which had to be rearranged. The reconvened conference was held within 20 working days. However, this fell outside of the original review timescale. The other conferences held out of time were due to delays by another local authority in arranging a child protection transfer conference following the relocation of the family and in one case the review was late due to human error with the conference being arranged out of time.

This has been addressed by the management team and IROs have been reminded that they must book review conferences with five months rather than six months, thus giving time to reconvene within timescale should there be a need for an adjournment. Adjournments are now being monitored on a monthly basis to monitor the frequency of this. Tighter control measures have also been put in place requiring that IROs and Social Worker's seek the permission of their manager for authorisation to change a review date.

**4.3.4 NI64: Percentage of children ceasing to be the subject of a child protection plan during the 12 month period who had been subject of a child protection plan for 2 years or more**

As detailed in the table below the proportion of children subject to a child protection plan for more than two years has decreased significantly from 4.4% (2011/12) to 2.6% (2012/13) and performance remains well within the top national banding (0<10) for this indicator.

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Lancashire	5.3%	2.9%	3.8%	4.8%	4.4%	2.6%
SN's	5.0%	6.7%	7.9%	7.5%	6.0%	
England - National Average	5.3%	5.8%	5.9%	6.0%	5.6%	

Performance has varied across the nine district teams with the percentage of children ceasing to be subject of a child protection plan after two years ranging from 2.33% in the Lancaster district to 16.67% in Ribble Valley. It is difficult, however to draw any meaningful conclusions from this variation as the latter district has the fewest number of child protection plans and therefore this percentage reflects a very small numerical change.

This decrease on an already very low figure is perhaps a reflection of the fact that child protection cases are well managed (as highlighted by Ofsted in the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children, 2012) and IROs together with District Senior

Managers and Team Managers regularly review all children who have been subject to a child protection plan over twelve months. Where progress is not being made to significantly improve the life chances of the child, cases are progressed into proceedings. Where significant improvement has been made the appropriate decision is made to cease the child protection plan. In these circumstances cases are appropriately deescalated to child in need to ensure continuation of support for the family.

This indicator relates to children who have ceased to be on a child protection plan. It is perhaps more helpful to consider the actual duration of time on a plan and this is detailed below.

#### 4.3.5 Duration of child protection plans

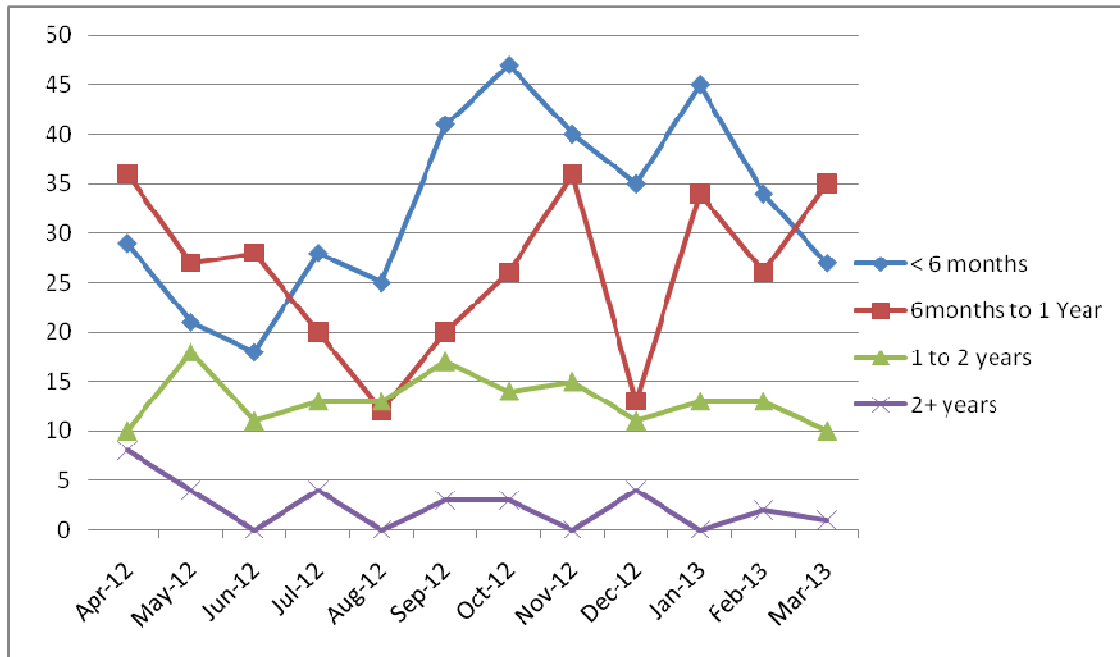
In understanding the increase in children subject to a child protection plan, consideration also needs to be given to the duration of those plans.

The below table details the number of child protection plans ceased per month during 2012/13 and the duration of the plan upon cessation.

	APR 12	MAY 12	JUN 12	JUL 12	AUG 12	SEP 12	OCT 12	NOV 12	DEC 12	JAN 13	FEB 13	MAR 13
< 6 Months	29	21	18	28	25	41	47	40	35	45	34	27
6 months to 1 year	36	27	28	20	12	20	26	36	13	34	26	35
1 to 2 years	10	18	11	13	13	17	14	15	11	13	13	10
2+ years	8	4	0	4	0	3	3	0	4	0	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>73</b>

The following table details the above information as a percentage:

	APR 12	MAY 12	JUN 12	JUL 12	AUG 12	SEP 12	OCT 12	NOV 12	DEC 12	JAN 13	FEB 13	MAR 13
< 6 Months	34.9	30.0	31.6	43.1	50.0	50.6	52.2	44.0	55.6	48.9	45.3	37.0
6 months to 1 year	78.3	68.6	80.7	73.8	74.0	75.3	81.1	83.5	76.2	85.9	80.0	84.9
1 to 2 years	21.7	31.4	19.3	26.2	26.0	24.7	18.9	16.5	23.8	14.1	20.0	15.1
2+ years	9.6	5.7	0.0	6.2	0.0	3.7	3.3	0.0	6.3	0.0	2.7	1.4



During the year 2012-13 a child protection plan was ceased in respect of 890 children. On average 74 child protection plans were ceased per month (range 50-91). In 43.8% of the plans ceased (involving 390 children) the child had been subject of a child protection plan for less than six months. In practice terms this means the plan ended at the first review approximately ten weeks after the conference decision that a child required safeguarding through a formal child protection plan.

Given that a child protection intervention is a costly process, both in terms of the financial and human costs, it is a concern that in a significant number of cases the decision to implement a child protection plan had changed by the first review.

The following scenarios may account for this:

- On the basis of a more in-depth assessment agencies felt that the risk was manageable outside of the formal child protection process. This may suggest that the threshold for children entering the child protection system is too low requiring further analysis;
- The plan ended because the child had become looked after, suggesting that more detailed assessment highlighted a need to safeguard a child outside of the family. This may suggest that the child protection intervention came too late and/or was not able to preserve the child safely within their family;
- The plan ended optimistically before meaningful and lasting change was achieved;

- The plan ended as the child moved out of Lancashire and case responsibility transferred to the receiving authority.

If the third factor was significant this would be evident in a high rate of re-registrations, and particularly re-registrations within one year of the plan being ceased. However, this is not the case, which indicates that decisions to end child protection plans are taken safely.

To consider the influence of the first two factors requires some understanding of what happens to children when the child protection plan ends and why the decision to end the plan was made.

Of the total number of plans ceased in the year (890, regardless of duration) 24.25% (291 children) were looked after at the time the plan ended. This means that one in four children ceasing to be subject of a child protection plan will become looked after. Further audit work will be undertaken in order to gain more insight into the duration of child protection plans and in particular those that have ended in less than six months. This analysis will be shared with District Senior Managers for consideration of further actions.

#### **4.3.6 NI65 Re-Registrations: Percentage of children who become subject of a child protection plan at anytime during the year who had previously been subject of a child protection plan regardless of how long ago**

NI 65 illustrates the percentage of children who became subject to a child protection plan in the last twelve months who had previously been the subject of a child protection plan, regardless of how long ago that was. Good performance has been maintained against this indicator with performance above target being achieved. (Nationally good performance is deemed to be between 10 – 15%. Target for 2012/13: 13%, actual performance: 12.3%).

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Lancashire (internal data)	14%	12.6%	13.3%	13.7%	10.8%	12.3%
DFE definition <sup>1</sup>					17.8%	16.7%
SN's	13.3%	13.0%	15.0%	12.5%	15.6%	
England - National Average	13.6%	13.5%	13.4%	13.3%	13.8%	

<sup>1</sup> Following the submission of this report it was identified that Lancashire internal data on re-registrations does not include children previously subject of plans in another Local Authority area whereas the updated DFE national indicator definition does so. The updated data return has therefore been added.

#### **4.3.7 Children Subject to a child protection plan who are also a child looked after**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, there were 49 children who were subject to a child protection plan whilst also being looked after by the authority. Of these children, 19 were subject to Interim Care Orders, 29 were accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and one young person was remanded.

The merger of the IRO service should minimise this duplication. Children who are subject to a child protection plan who then become looked after have their review child protection conference brought forward within the 20 day timescale for the first child looked after review and the meetings are held consecutively. This reduces the need for children to be subject to a dual process. It will only be in exceptional circumstances that a child needs to be subject to a child protection plan whilst also being looked after. For example, when the plan is for a child to return home very quickly.

### **5. Quality assurance**

#### **5.1 Themes arising from IRO quality assurance**

The IROs are required to complete a quality assurance check following each child looked after review and child protection conference. Although due to capacity issues this hasn't been achieved, with IROs prioritising those cases requiring escalation. In 2012 the IRO checklist was amended to include more qualitative information and is used to identify good practice and any deficits which need to be addressed. The IRO managers regularly audit the checklists to identify any trends and share the findings in the District/IRO Cluster Meetings. (A quarterly meeting between the IROs and operational managers).

In 2012/2013, 2,648 quality assurance checklists were completed in respect of CLA reviews and child protection conferences. This is a decrease in the number completed in 2011/12. However, this needs to be set in the context of a rise in the care population and the number of children subject to a child protection plan and the increasing workload this places on the IRO Team.

The importance of quality assurance continues to be reinforced by the IRO managers as it is considered an integral part of the IRO role. The following practice themes have been identified by the IROs:

##### **5.1.1 Preparation for reviews/conferences**

There is evidence that reports are completed by Social Workers prior to a CLA review or Child Protection Conference taking place in a high number of cases. However, there is also evidence that reports are not shared with children and their families within the required timescales prior to the meeting on most occasions. (Three days prior to a CLA review, one day for an Initial Child Protection Conference and two days for a Review Child Protection Conference). This means that children and families may not be adequately prepared for meetings and meetings may be of a longer duration to ensure everyone has had the opportunity to read the reports. It is the IROs responsibility, as defined by the IRO Handbook, to ensure that children and parents are appropriately prepared for meetings and the IRO can adjourn the meeting to allow more preparation time. There are a number of adjournments that have taken place in 2012/13 for this reason in both CLA reviews and conferences. In these circumstances the IRO reconvenes the meeting within a maximum of 20 working days.

95% of children and young people are recorded as being consulted and prepared prior to their children looked after reviews.

### **5.1.2 Review recommendations**

There is evidence that the recommendations from children looked after reviews are completed by the IRO within the five working day timescale in a high number of cases, approximately 85%. However, it is acknowledged that due to capacity issues the full review report is not completed and distributed within the requisite 15 working days. This is currently achieved in approximately 55% of cases.

The completion of review recommendations is evident in a high number of cases. IROs are undertaking midpoint review checks to track the progress of recommendations between reviews. This ensures the timely completion of review recommendations and means that outcomes for children and young people will improve as the care plan is progressed.

### **5.1.3 Appropriate legal status and care plans for children and young people**

In 99% of the quality assurance checklists completed the child/young person is reported to have an appropriate legal status. The remaining 1% includes children who are accommodated under S20 of the Children Act 1989, but the need to initiate care proceedings has been identified and a small number of children subject to a Placement Order where the plan is no longer adoption. Quarterly audits of these cases ensure timely applications are made to the court seeking revocation of the order.

There are approximately 2% of children who have an inappropriate legal status where this is incorrectly recorded on their electronic case record. Care plans for CLA are recorded as being appropriate in a high number of cases but approximately 6% are not recorded correctly. Recording issues are highlighted by the IRO to ensure the case record is corrected.

The quality assurance checklists highlight that IROs are receiving court reports and legal orders in only 67% of cases subject to court proceedings. IRO managers continue to notify the legal department upon the allocation of an IRO to a child and IROs follow up with the legal department where they have not received documents. A meeting will be arranged with legal services to identify any barriers that are preventing a consistent provision of court reports across the service.

#### **5.1.4 The provision of life story books**

The IROs have reported through their quality assurance role delays in the completion of life story books in respect of children placed for adoption. Where necessary this has been addressed through the formal problem resolution process.

The adoption service has responded to the issues raised by the IROs, with the resolution that funding has been allocated from the recently acquired Adoption Improvement Grant to support two additional social workers for a time limited period to complete outstanding work within the service, including life story work.

In the longer term the development of a Central Care Proceedings Team (also funded by the Adoption Reform Grant) will ensure that material for life story work is collated from an early stage. The development of the Central Care Proceedings Team will also facilitate swifter adoption care planning and placement in the future and achieve additional capacity to complement the Children Awaiting Adoption Team function.

#### **5.1.5 Multi-agency attendance at child protection conferences**

There is evidence of good multi agency attendance at child protection conferences and continuing good multi agency work with children who are made subject to a child protection plan. It is noted that some attendance by agencies at core groups isn't as consistent as it should be and attendance at subsequent review conferences can be less than at initial conferences.

Following a Serious Case Review recommendation an audit was commissioned of the participation of schools in conferences and core groups with the following key findings:

The participation of 15 primary and 21 secondary schools was audited and this included two special schools and one independent school.

The audit highlighted some good examples of schools participation, evidenced in meeting notes, where school's reports are child focused and schools have demonstrated a clear understanding of complex cases along with empathy for the child or young person themselves. There is further evidence that information has been



shared and discussed widely within the meeting in addition to evidence that school representatives have asked appropriate questions, sometimes regarding child protection processes or in considering the impact of the child protection plan.

Nearly all schools were consistently represented by the named core group member. For primary schools this was usually the Head or Deputy Head Teacher and for secondary schools this was the Head/Deputy Head Teacher, the Designated Senior Person, Special Educational Needs Coordinator or a key worker. For example, Pastoral Care or a Family Support Worker.

Following a recommendation from the audit, the Schools Safeguarding Officer is now involved in addressing any non attendance or non participation issues in conferences directly with the schools involved.

## **5.2 Themes arising from parent/carers questionnaires**

Parents and carers are asked to provide feedback of their experience of Lancashire's child protection processes at two key points; after the initial child protection conference and following the review conference. 39 questionnaires were returned for initial conferences and 57 were completed following the review. The following themes have been identified:

### **5.2.1 Initial child protection conferences**

In a high proportion of cases (92% of respondents), the parent/carers advised that they understood why a child protection conference had been held and they had met with the IRO prior to the start of the conference so their role and the conduct of the meeting had been explained to them. Interestingly only 69% indicated they had been given the opportunity to speak to the IRO at the end of the meeting. This is an area for development within the service.

The majority of respondents (90%) felt they had been able to express their views. However, a small number of responses highlighted the complexity of reports and the difficulty remembering everything when several agency reports are discussed. As a result of this some parents/carers felt that they were not able to contribute as fully as they would have wanted to.

Compounding this was that some parents/carers reported it was hard to remember who everybody was at the conference due to the high level of anxiety at the start of the meeting. This has been addressed and name plates are now used in conferences. Whilst the majority of respondents (85%) knew who would be attending, some hadn't felt prepared by the social worker and were also unsure about the relevance of some professionals attending.

38% of respondents reported that they don't receive conference reports 24 hours before the meeting. This was the main criticism in feedback from the questionnaires. Several comments state that reports had only been received upon their arrival ten, fifteen or sixty minutes prior to the meeting. Other comments relate to specific reports that were missing from the conference pack; the most common missing report was the police report. However, this is most likely due to the confidential nature of this information.

Sensitivity of information was another issue identified by parents/carers. Whilst it was understood that information would be shared with other agencies, some respondents hadn't recognised the level of information that would be discussed within the conference and questioned whether all attendees should be privy to that information.

74% of respondents reported that the conference appeals process had been explained to them, although in some cases this had only been discussed briefly. Written information is always available at the conference explaining the appeals process. IROs will be reminded to make reference to this during the introduction to the meeting.

The anxiety and distress experienced by some parents/carers attending initial child protection conferences is acknowledged, although some comments highlighted the focus was rightly on the child and although at times difficult, they understood the need for this. In terms of suggestions to improve services, the need for empathy and to be treated with dignity and respect was identified. Other comments included the need for more time to read reports, the need for the right professionals to be in attendance, listening to the views of parents as well as children, the need for better communication and having a list of professionals in attendance.

### **5.2.2 Review child protection conferences**

Feedback from the questionnaires highlights that in a high proportion of cases (95%) monthly core groups are taking place and parents are invited to attend in almost all cases. The majority of responses (95%) indicate that parents/carers are able to express their views and feel listened to. One response commented that they felt scared of giving their opinion as they didn't feel listened to. This reinforces the need for awareness of perceived power imbalances between parents/carers and professionals.

In a significant number of cases (35%) respondents again identified that reports are not shared in the requisite timescales (48 hours) before the review conference. This was the main criticism in feedback from the questionnaires.

Parents/carers report that they meet with the IRO prior to conference in a high number of cases and all the comments were positive about the chairperson, many referring to their kind nature, empathy and understanding of the parents' situation. They also reported feeling supported by the IRO. Responses confirmed that parents/carers feel

able to share their views in the review and feel listened to. This suggests that they feel more able to share their views in the review child protection conference, probably because they are more familiar with the process and feel less anxious.

Feedback highlights the critical role of the IRO in terms of whether the process has been a good or bad experience for parents/carers. From the comments received it is evident that a good chairperson makes participants feel listened to, supported and important in what is for most a stressful situation.

Likewise, the comments highlight the importance of good professional relationships and how professionals can empower families in child protection to make positive changes in their child's lives. The emphasis being on the people in the process rather than process itself.

Within the questionnaire parents/carers are asked to share any comments about the process and their experience. Feedback centres on the feelings of the parent/carers at the end of a complex process, and are largely expected: '*Stressful*', '*It's hard*', '*rollercoaster of emotions*'. However, positive statements were also made about their journey and the outcomes for their family: '*finally got me and my children's life back to normal*', '*changed my life to a better one*', '*very beneficial*', '*an eye opener*'.

### 5.3 Problem resolution

One of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process. The Problem Resolution Protocol provides a formal process for the IRO to raise concerns when informal attempts to resolve the issue have failed.

Currently this process is used in respect of the IRO duties in relation to children looked after. However, the process has been developed to replicate this process in the child protection arena.

#### Starred recommendations by district: 2010/11      2011/12      2012/13

<b>LANCASTER DISTRICT</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FYLDE &amp; WYRE DISTRICT</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PRESTON DISTRICT</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>CHORLEY &amp; SOUTH RIBBLE DISTRICT</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>WEST LANCASHIRE DISTRICT</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>HYNDBURN &amp; RIBBLE VALLEY DISTRICT</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>BURNLEY DISTRICT</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>PENDLE DISTRICT</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>ROSSENDALE DISTRICT</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SPECIALIST SERVICES (located outside of districts)</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>

There were 23 starred recommendations in 2012/2013. Of these, one was referred to Cafcass, which is the highest stage in the resolution process. At the time of writing this report, one remains a live issue and is at stage 5. Two were resolved at stage 4 of the Problem Resolution Protocol and the remaining 19 were resolved at stage 2.

There is evidence that most starred recommendations are being resolved in a timely manner, within the 20 working days defined by the IRO Handbook. Some that haven't been resolved within that timescale are due to timescales being renegotiated in the best interests of the child.

Starred recommendations were made for a variety of reasons. For example, challenge in respect of long term placements not being identified in a timely manner; review documents, care plans, personal education plans (PEPs) and pathway plans not being completed; challenges regarding proposed changes of placement which weren't considered to be in the child's best interests and contact plans which the IRO felt were not safeguarding the child.

There has been a reduction in starred recommendations made this year. In 2011/12 the percentage of starred recommendations made in relation to the number of reviews held was 0.7%. In 2012/13 this had reduced to 0.5%. IROs are completing midpoint review checks and escalating issues informally at an earlier stage. IROs are also monitoring review recommendations more closely, therefore reducing the opportunity for delay.

The dispute resolution process is firmly embedded in practice and has achieved positive outcomes for children looked after as illustrated in the following examples:

**Case Example 1:**

A young child placed with foster carers who had made it known to the social worker that they would not be able to offer a permanent placement. The IRO made a starred recommendation that searches for a permanent placement needed to be intensified following delay in this being progressed. Tight timescales were set to identify an in-house placement before agency placements were to be considered. The outcome of this was that a long term placement was identified within one month of this recommendation.

**Case Example 2:**

Two children placed in a long term foster placement. Referrals had been made to Child & Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) on two occasions in order to progress an assessment. Consultation had taken place with SCAYT+ (Supporting Carers of Children and Young People Together) and this assessment was felt to be vital for care planning and placement stability. Both referrals were rejected by CAMHS. This starred recommendation was for CAMHS to carry out an assessment. This was progressed by the district team in conjunction with SCAYT+ within the 20 day timescale for resolution and the ultimate outcome was that CAMHS accepted the referral for assessment within two weeks of the third referral.

**Case Example 3:**

During a review for three young children the IRO became concerned about the level of supervision that was in place for contact sessions between the children and their parents. The IRO identified risks that the children were exposed to during these sessions and made a starred recommendation that contact be urgently reviewed. This was carried out by the team manager within the one week timescale and supervision of the sessions was increased.

**5.4 IRO challenge**

There is also evidence of the effectiveness of IROs in challenging practice without the need for recourse to formal problem resolution processes:

**Case Example 1:**

The IRO raised concerns about a young child placed at home with parents on an Interim Care Order. The local authority care plan put before the court was to remove the child but the judge would not allow this and ordered that the child remained in the care of the parents. The IRO and CSC continued to be concerned about this arrangement and the IRO clearly recorded these views in the review document which was made available to the court. The IRO challenged evidence of the parent's engagement with the plan at reviews and recommended that the home placement agreement be reviewed by the responsible manager and for this to be presented to the court. The outcome was that the child was removed and placed in foster care. As this was a young child the care plan is now adoption. Information was received by CSC that the parents were expecting another baby and plans were put in place for a pre birth child protection conference. This identified no changes to the family circumstances and therefore care

proceedings were initiated at birth and plans made for an immediate removal. The long term plan is for both siblings to be placed together in an adoptive placement.

### **Case Example 2:**

In this case three siblings are placed at home on Care Orders under a home placement agreement and the mother is expecting her fourth child. There is a history of domestic abuse. The decision of the social work team responsible for the older children had been to discharge the Care Orders. However, a recent incident of domestic abuse had been reported by the police and this plan had therefore been put in abeyance to allow a further period of assessment. The IRO challenged the decision by CSC not to hold a pre birth child protection conference. (It had been proposed to manage the case under a child in need plan). The IRO felt this plan was not sufficiently robust to manage the risk given the particular vulnerability of a new born baby. The IRO raised this with the manager of the team and it was agreed that an initial child protection conference would be held.

### **Case Example 3:**

The IRO challenged the timing of a planned move of a child looked after to live with their sibling, as it was felt this was being rushed following a previous breakdown of a placement where they had lived together. The IRO requested that the original bridging plan was implemented so that all involved ensured that this was the right plan for the children and that it was given every chance of success. The IRO requested a planning meeting and also discussed their views with the Guardian. The IRO also visited both children to ascertain their direct wishes in relation to the bridging. The outcome was that the original timescales for the move were reinstated with the agreement of both children.

## **6. Evidence of good practice**

### **6.1 Participation**

The proportion of children and young people participating in their review remains high and participation continues to be encouraged in creative ways. The use of person centred approaches within the review process continues to be promoted throughout the team. Training in relation to person centred approaches continued to be delivered during the year. There is evidence of good practice in district teams in promoting creative mechanisms for participation as illustrated in the following examples:

#### **Case Example 1:**

The Social Worker has on several occasions completed direct work with children to help them participate in their children looked after reviews. This has particularly helped younger children and children who are shy or have a degree of learning needs.

Before the review the Social Worker writes down with the child their views of positives and negatives. Positives and negatives were represented by symbols. One child drew a football pitch. Positives were shown through goals scored, negatives through own goals scored. The child asked the IRO to be the referee of the football match and had to show a parent a red card because they had missed a contact. Another child used a pirate ship and represented positives and negatives through treasure chests and skull and cross bone flags.

This method would not suit all children but is an imaginative way to help some children who find it difficult to communicate, to participate in their review in a meaningful way.

### **Case Example 2:**

A young person and his family had praised the review process for supporting them through a difficult time in relation to transition planning. This young person had always had a person centred review following a difficult initial review held in a traditional way. The review *'kept everyone on track and was an opportunity to share positives collectively when sometimes it was difficult to see progress on a daily basis.'*

### **Case Example 3:**

Two young people complete a story board for every review that is either on the wall or in the middle of the room on a table so that all professionals can read their views and see what is important to them throughout the meeting. They design these themselves and choose what they want to share. This is a good way for professionals to be reminded that children and young people should be at the centre of planning and reviews.

## **6.2 Concurrent planning**

The IRO service has been kept up to date on the progress of the concurrent planning project and in particular when carers are about to be approved under this scheme. This has enabled IROs to identify any children on their caseload, particularly unborn babies, who would meet the criteria for a concurrent placement. The placements that have been made have all been identified by the IRO service in the initial stages and the IRO has been involved in progression of the plan. This achieves a positive outcome for very young children, reducing delay and the number of placement moves.

## **6.3 Pilot of revised child protection process**

The 2011/12 annual report referenced a pilot of revised child protection documents and processes in the Pendle District. Observations of child protection conferences and feedback from families continues to evidence the positive impact this has made to practice. This is particularly evident through the use of the final core group report which has eliminated the need for parents/carers to read several different agency reports. The importance of this has been raised in the feedback from the parent/carer

questionnaires. This also ensures a greater proportion of conference time is focused on discussions in relation to the child protection plan.

It remains the intention to implement the revised documentation across the county and it has therefore been incorporated in the service specification for the replacement IT solution for the Children's Social Care Record which will be launched in January 2014. It had been hoped that changes could be made to the current IT system but the cost of doing this is prohibitive. In the interim period it has been agreed to use documents from the pilot which are not part of the current electronic record.

The IRO in this district also delivered two training sessions to support improvements in practice, including outcome focused child protection plans and thresholds. This was offered to social workers, managers, parenting support workers and representatives from health.

#### **6.4 Education awards for children looked after**

IROs have nominated children and young people for education awards for some years now but in 2012/13 changes were introduced to improve the process and particularly the timeliness of the child/young person receiving their award. IROs are now assigned a number of vouchers each month and can give these out at the child's review. The criteria for awards has also been reviewed and is now more clearly defined, requiring that the child/young person has met a target as identified in their PEP. Positive feedback has been received from children and young people who like the fact that they are instantly rewarded for their hard work.

### **7. Service development**

#### **7.1 Administration of child protection conferences**

An internal audit review of the service highlighted that there was no audit trail to the allocation process for initial child protection conferences as the IRO was contacted directly by the district team to arrange a conference.

An IRO duty system was introduced in January 2013 and a centralised referral process implemented. This provides a clear audit trail of the allocation process.

The development of a centralised booking service for initial child protection conferences was identified as a priority in the annual report for 2011/12. This has been progressed and an appointment made to the post within the Mobile Minute Taking Service. The service will deliver efficiencies, freeing up a significant amount of time spent by IROs, Social Workers and Business Support staff in negotiating conference arrangements. It will also ensure conferences are arranged in a timelier manner, maximising the notice period and allowing more preparation time for families and professionals.



## **7.2 Quality assurance**

Following a recent review of the case file audit tools used within Children's Social Care, the quality assurance checklist has been replaced by an IRO audit tool. This tool provides more qualitative information and is focused on the impact of interventions and the outcomes for the child, requiring the IRO to assess the quality of the work undertaken with the child/family. As the form is completed electronically, the data can be more easily collated to capture trends and themes. The audit tools will be a part of the new electronic recording system which will assist IROs in their completion as they are only using one system. The findings will be shared at quarterly cluster meetings between the districts and IRO service.

Managers at all levels within the Safeguarding, Inspection & Audit Service are required to undertake case file audits and an audit calendar has been agreed for the IRO managers who will complete 12 audits per month. Themed audits will be completed across a range of practice areas, including pre-birth conferences, pathway planning, child protection plans over two years and children with a care plan of adoption. Work shadowing is also used to facilitate direct observations of practice and learning. This has included IROs shadowing their peers and senior manager's observing conferences and CLA reviews. Work shadowing will be extended to include the IROs managers in undertaking practice observations.

## **7.3 Continuous improvement**

The service continues to strive to make improvements which will achieve positive outcomes for children and young people. Staff development is key to this. Legal training for IROs has been commissioned to ensure IROs fully understand their role and responsibilities and when to challenge. This will be helpful for all IROs but will be of particular value to new IROs in the team. This training will also involve solicitors from legal services and representatives from Children's Social Care.

A new way of recording CLA review reports has been implemented to ensure that all review recommendations from the previous review have been implemented and consideration given to the impact on the child. This should also assist IROs in determining the need for a starred recommendation.

Quarterly audits are undertaken to ensure timely action is taken to seek the revocation of Placement Orders where the care plan is no longer adoption. The current position is much improved with all cases now being progressed and applications made to the court for a more appropriate order.

## **7.4 Outcome focused child protection plans**

The Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services identified that whilst child protection cases are well managed, reports for conferences, child protection plans and core groups were insufficiently outcome focused. During 2012/13 training was

commissioned in order to address this. As detailed above, changes are also being made to child protection documentation including a revised conference decision sheet and child protection plan which explicitly record outcomes for the child.

## **8. Challenges**

### **8.1 IRO capacity**

IRO capacity remains a significant challenge as caseloads are consistently higher than that recommended in the IRO Handbook. It is noted that caseloads are now equitable across the service but the number of children looked after and children subject to a child protection plan increased significantly during 2012/13. The number of meetings chaired by the IRO Service has exceeded 8,000 and this has had a significant impact on capacity.

IRO capacity has been addressed in the following ways:

- Recruitment to the additional posts agreed by the Directorate Leadership Team in early 2012 has been successful with the exception of one part-time temporary post. This did however, necessitate four separate recruitment attempts.
- Recruitment is underway to the vacancies arising from staff retiring in summer 2013;
- Recruitment is underway for the IRO manager's post created due to the resignation of the current post holder;
- Secondment opportunities from other services within the Directorate have been utilised;
- Agency staff have been used within the service to ensure statutory responsibilities have been met.

It is vital that we are able to recruit and retain an experienced IRO Service if caseloads are to be reduced and the IROs supported in fulfilling their critical quality assurance function. This will ensure that IROs have time to prepare properly for meetings, therefore improving the quality of the meeting and achieving the best outcome for the child. It will also ensure that practice is robustly challenged where appropriate and good practice shared.

### **8.2 Quality assurance**

The IROs are in a unique position, independent from service delivery and with oversight of practice across Children's Social Care. However, in the past there has been an over emphasis on their role in relation to compliance and performance timescales.

Development work within the IRO service has focused on the IRO responsibilities within the IRO Handbook and the importance of the IRO challenge role. IROs need to ensure

that Social Workers assessments are robust, that they analyse and identify the needs of the child and that care plans and child protection plans that result from these assessments are realistic and outcome focused.

There is evidence that IROs in Lancashire are monitoring the implementation of the child's care plan in between reviews and are more robustly challenging practice, escalating concerns to Team and Senior Managers. However, to support IROs in fulfilling this responsibility caseloads need to reduce.

## **9. Priorities for 2013/14**

### **9.1 Embed new structure**

Now the service is fully operational in its new structure and systems have been implemented to support the new ways of working, the priority for this year is to develop the service and the IROs working within it. The team training and development plan is being reviewed to ensure the IROs continue to feel supported and develop in their new roles.

### **9.2 Develop a quarterly quality assurance report**

A quarterly quality assurance report will be developed to capture themes from case file audits completed within the IRO Service, performance information, issues arising through the problem resolution process and learning from Serious Case Reviews. It is hoped that the report will provide a useful reporting and feedback mechanism to district teams.

### **9.3 NCB research**

Lancashire is currently participating in a piece of research led by the National Children's Bureau (NCB), exploring the role and effectiveness of the IRO service. The research has received the support of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) Research Group.

The study incorporates a national survey of IROs, IRO Managers and DCS's (now completed), an analysis of costs, and qualitative case studies in four local authorities. The NCB also met with a focus group of IROs and Social Workers, completed semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and looked after children and have undertaken an analysis of recent care plans, reviews and case notes.

The study will consider the following areas:

- Ways in which IROs and Social Workers work together;
- How IROs support the care planning process;
- The impact of the IRO service on individual cases and overall services for looked after children.

Lancashire will consider how the findings can be used to further improve its IRO service.

#### **9.4 Reduce delay in care proceedings**

The Family Justice Council has reviewed the timescales in relation to the duration of care proceedings in the family courts. The revised timescale has been reduced from 40 to 26 weeks. The emphasis for the local authority is firmly placed on pre proceedings work, ensuring that the timescale can be met once before the court. The IRO service has been involved in the development of the Directorate's pre proceedings protocol, ensuring the review process and its function in monitoring the care plan and preventing delay is implemented at the earliest opportunity.

A central care proceedings team has been established in the county in an effort to further reduce delay in care proceedings; in particular for those children with a plan of adoption. An IRO manager is represented on the steering group to ensure a collaborative approach to this initiative with CSC.

As part of their quality assurance role, IROs will continue to escalate concerns about delay to Childrens Social Care managers and their own line manager and if necessary commence the formal problem resolution process by making a starred recommendation.

#### **9.5 Improve service user feedback**

A priority this year is to increase the feedback from children and families in respect of their experience of services and their views regarding the IRO role. The proportion of completed parent/carer questionnaires is not representative of the number of conferences taking place and efforts will be made to improve this during 2013/14.

A method of consulting children and young people will be developed as part of the review process. This will provide children and young people with an opportunity to share their views about their meetings or the child protection conference, the process and their IRO in order to inform improvements in practice.

#### **9.6 Access to independent legal advice**

The IRO Handbook requires that IROs have access to independent legal advice. This is currently spot purchased from a private law firm which can be costly. Legal services are exploring the feasibility of establishing reciprocal arrangements with another local authority.

### **10. Conclusion**

The IRO service is an experienced team and whilst retaining its independence and challenge, has developed strong collaborative working relationships, particularly with colleagues in CSC. The team has risen to the challenges of the last twelve months, evidencing a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people. The new service structure provides a strong foundation upon which to deliver improvements in practice, promoting continuity of IRO and improved efficiency.

The quality assurance function of the IRO service has been strengthened through the new case file auditing arrangements. Whilst feedback from parents/carers has already been used to improve practice within the child protection arena, the views of children and young people will be sought to inform developments within the IRO service and improve service delivery.

Jude Brown	Senior IRO
Mark Hudson	Senior IRO
Paul McIntyre	Schools Safeguarding Coordinator

June 2013

**Appendix 1****Post qualifying experience table****IRO Managers**

Name	Year of Qualification	Year began as an IRO	Year began as an IRO manager
IRO Manager 1	2000	2005	2009
IRO Manager 2	1982	1999	2010
IRO Manager 3	1999	N/A	2011

**IROs**

Name	Year of qualification	Year began as IRO
IRO 1	1985	1999
IRO 2	1986	1999
IRO 3	1989	1999
IRO 4	2003	2009
IRO 5	1988	2009
IRO 6	1993	2009
IRO 7	2003	2009
IRO 8	2005	2010
IRO 9	2004	2010
IRO 10	2007	2012
IRO 11	1988	2011
IRO 12	2000	2012

IRO 13	2001	2013
IRO 14	2006	2013
IRO 15	2005	2013
IRO 16	2006	2013
IRO 17	1995	2004
IRO 18	1995	2001
IRO 19	1996	2011
IRO 20	1982	2011
IRO 21	2000	2011
IRO 22	2004	2011
IRO 23	1988	2012
IRO 24	2007	2012
<b><u>Fostering IROs:</u></b>		
FIRO 1	2000	2007
FIRO 2	1998	2013
FIRO 3	1980	2009





# Agenda Item 6

## Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on 8 November 2013

Electoral Division affected: None
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## Work Plan and Task Group Update

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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claire.evans@lancashire.gov.uk

### Executive Summary

The plan at Appendix 'A' summarises the work to be undertaken by the Committee in the coming months, including an update of task group work. The statement will be updated and presented to each meeting of the Committee for information.

### Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the report.

### Background and Advice

A statement of the current status of work being undertaken by the Committee is presented to each meeting for information.

### Consultations

N/A

### Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### Risk management

There are not significant risk management implications.

**Financial, Legal, Equality and Diversity, Human Rights, Crime and Disorder, Personnel, Property Asset Management, Procurement, Traffic Management, CIA (policies and strategies only):**

N/A

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**  
**List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
N/A	N/A	N/A
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		

**Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2013/14**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Agenda setting</b>	<b>Chair's Briefing</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Witness</b>	<b>Purpose/Key issues</b>
<b>8 Nov</b>			<b>Vulnerable Children and Young People</b>	Louise Taylor; Barnardos NW	Consideration of the role of the county council (including work with Barnardos North West) in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving Futures Initiative</li> <li>• Gvt. agenda for improvements to residential care home provision</li> </ul>
			<b>Independent Reviewing Officers</b>	Louise Taylor or delegate	Consideration of recent developments, in particular related to recruitment and retention
			<b><i>Superfast Broadband?</i></b>	<i>Andrew Halliwell and BT</i>	<i>SPECIAL MEETING Presentation and briefing: progress in delivering Superfast Lancashire at Leyland HQ</i> <i>Date tbc</i>
<b>6 Dec</b>			<b>Supporting Adults with Learning Disabilities</b>	Stephen Gross	Progress in re-modelling support for Adults with Learning Disabilities. Requested by Cllr Bill Winlow
<b>17 Jan</b>			<b>CAMHS</b>	Louise Taylor or delegate;	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued member concern of variability in the quality and equity of CAMHS provision in Lancashire (and nationally)</li> </ul>

				NHS: Lancashire Care Trust	
			<b>Highways Maintenance</b>	Phil Barrett	Focus on pot holes and repairs
<b>7 Feb</b>			<b>Road Safety Part 1</b>	Mike Kirby	
			<b>Community Safety and Crime Reduction Partnerships</b>	Mel Ormesher	To consider the performance and effective of partnership arrangements for tackling crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting community safety. Witnesses to include Responsible Authorities: Lancs Constabulary; Probation Service; Fire and Rescue; NHS. (Statutory Requirement)
<b>7 Mar</b>			<b>Safeguarding Lancashire's Children</b>	Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational arrangements, governance and information sharing; financing the work of LSCB</li> <li>• Neglect: Strategies and services to support children who suffer neglect</li> </ul>
			<b>Road Safety Part 2</b>	Mike Kirby	

**Future Topics: not yet scheduled**

- Parking Fee Schemes – financial risk
- Safeguarding Children: Domestic Abuse and Substance Misuse by adults – secondary impact on children's health, safety and well-being
- Lancashire Skills Agenda

## **Task Groups**

The following task and finish groups are ongoing or have recently been established:

- Economic Development, Business Support (Chair Cllr Michael Green)
- Educational Attainment of Pupils on Free School Meals and use of the Pupil Premium (Chair Cllr Cynthia Dereli)
- Halal Meat and the County Council (Chair Cllr Bill Winlow)
- Elderly and Adult Nursing Care: Care Complaints – Joint Review with district councils (inc Pendle)
- Fylde Coast Post Consultation Review – provision of healthcare (one meeting task group)
- NHS Health Checks – Joint Review with South Ribble BC
- Planning Matters: Interface between upper and lower tiers authorities in making the right decisions on planning applications (esp.flood management and educational provision) To begin later in 2013 (Chair Cllr Liz Oades)

