

Please note refreshments are available in the room from 5.30pm

Agenda

1. Introductions and Apologies

To note who is attending and any apologies for absence.

2. Notes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2012

(Pages 1 - 4)

To agree for accuracy the notes of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising from the Notes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2012 (5 mins)

To receive an update from the matters arising from the notes of the meeting.

4. What our Elected Members have been doing (15 mins)

County Councillor Winder

To note feedback from work undertaken by the Chair of the Board and our Elected Members including Members' visits. To receive an update on the quilt tour.

What have our Young People been doing?

5. LINX (Lancashire's Children in Care Council) (15 mins)

Young People and Barnardos

To receive feedback on the work our young people have been doing and feedback from their discussions re the "big discussion" and "celebration event".

What Do We Need to Know?

6. Missing Children (50 mins)

Tony Morrissey/Mike Snelson/Lynne Asbridge/Hazel Stewart

Group discussion to get the young people's views/feelings.

7. Update on the Safeguarding and CLA Ofsted Inspection (15 mins) (Pages 5 - 8)

Tony Morrissey

To receive an update 12 months on from the inspection.

- 8. IRO Annual Report (10 mins)** (Pages 9 - 72)
Tony Morrissey

To receive the presentation on the IRO Annual Report and an update.

- 9. Date and Time of Next Meeting**
County Councillor Tony Winder

Thursday, 18 April 2013 at 6.00pm in Cabinet Room 'C', County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ.

Information Item

- 10. Grant Funding Applications** (Pages 73 - 82)
To note the attached document.

- 11. Performance Data - Key Messages** (Pages 83 - 84)
To note the key messages.

Agenda Item 2

Lancashire County Council

Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 6th December, 2012 at 6.00 pm in
Cabinet Room 'D' - County Hall, Preston**

Present: Members

County Councillor Tony Winder	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Margaret Brindle	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Andrea Kay	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Carolyn Evans	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Jennifer Mein	- Lancashire County Council
Jane Simpson	- representing Foster Carers
Louise Taylor	- Director for Specialist Services, Directorate for Children and Young People, Lancashire County Council
Kathryn Mark	- LINX representative
	- LINX representative

Co-opted members

Katherine Ashworth	- representing Young People's Service, Lancashire County Council
Marc Bentley	- Ambassador for Young People
Sue Parr	- representing The Virtual School, Lancashire County Council
Paul Hegarty	- Children's Social Care

Other Attendees

Mark Elliott	- Clerk to the Board - Governance and Project Support Team, Lancashire County Council
Sam Gorton	- Governance Team, Lancashire County Council
Louise Mackender de Cari	- Strategic Integrated Service Development Team, Lancashire County Council
Debbie Nolan-Plunkett	- Barnardos
Anne-Marie Ranson	- Adoption Service Manager
Debbie Ross	- Primary Care Trust
Brendan Lee	- ACERS Residential Manager
Jeff Marsh	- Barnardos

Val Baxter	- Primary Care Trust (Shadowing Debbie Ross)
Kate Baggaley	- Barnardos
Cathy Trengove	- Barnardos

63. Introduction and Apologies

Introductions around the room were made and apologies were noted from County Councillors Case, Leadbetter and Taylor and Paul Armitage, Nicola Bamford, and Lin Fisher.

The Board was informed that Debbie Ross has replaced Cath Randall as the representative from the health economy. The Chair gave thanks on behalf of the Board for the contribution Cath had made to the Board, especially under his stewardship.

The Chair said that David Galt had stood down as a member of the Board. Following a discussion it was agreed to seek two nominations one as a replacement adoptive parent and one person who had themselves been adopted. These nominations would need to be agreed with the Leader of the County Council.

In acknowledging the role the Children's Society play as advocates of young people it was agreed to give the Children's Society co-opted non-voting status on the Board.

64. Notes of the Meetings held on 6 September 2012

The notes of the meetings held on 6 September 2012, subject to the addition of the names of those In Attendance, were agreed as an accurate record.

65. Matters Arising from the Notes of the Meeting held on 6 September 2012

It was noted that the Board would now be using the What's Changed Tool at each meeting to ensure that any actions are clearly allocated to the right person and a timetable agreed for the completion of the tasks.

66. What our Elected Members Have Been Doing

CC Winder updated the Board on the various meetings, visits and actions he had been involved in as the Chair of the Board.

A particularly sad event was the funeral of a young person who had attended the Board in the past. The Chair and Deputy Chair attended on behalf of the Board.

Also it was agreed to ask the CiCC to consider the touring of the Urban Patch (Quilt) with regard as to whether they would like the quilt to tour and if so what form the tour should take.

67. LINX (Lancashire's Children in Care Council)

The Chair introduced a discussion around what support corporate parents should be giving to the young people for who LCC are the corporate parent.

The Board felt it most appropriate to take this forward by having discussions with young people early in the New Year.

All partners should be involved in those discussions and the discussions should link with the priorities of the Board.

The Board received a number of comments from the Ambassador for Young People and Barnardos on work that had been started with the previous CiCC provider that they would not wish to lose sight of. These included the actions from the Wolverhampton event earlier this year eg bus passes for 16-18 year olds.

The first meeting of LINX was scheduled to take place on 18 December where Barnardos will consult with young people about what they want to do in the future, the establishment of a primary group and the possible holding of a residential.

The Chair asked that LINX consider the celebration event for next year and link in with County Councillor Andrea Kay who has been working with Blackpool Pleasure Beach around a possible event there.

68. Adoption and Fostering: Tackling Delay: DfE Consultation

Anne-Marie Ranson took the Board through a report circulated with the agenda outlining the changes the Government are looking to make in the way the fostering and adoption service work.

Reference was also made to the scorecard regarding performance which the Minister had written to 39 local authorities, Lancashire being one regarding. Anne-Marie assured the Board that work was being undertaken to improve Lancashire's position. Caution was expressed that speed in dealing with applications is not always the best way to be categorised.

The Chair thanked Anne-Marie for the presentation and the recently held training day which he personally found very useful.

69. Update on Priorities from 2011/2012 and Priorities for 2013

Sue Parr led the Board through a presentation on the Education, Employment and Training priority which a working group had been dealing with. Whilst there

was a number of encouraging statistics, further work was required on some areas, for example, around fallout rates of CLA attending university.

Due to limited time left in the meeting it was only possible to have a quick discussion around the other priorities.

A number of successes were identified and areas for improvement in 2013 included the number of CLA attaining accreditation through the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) and ensuring CLA are aware of new developments such as Youth Zones and Outdoor Activity Centres through the development of an eDirectory.

Further priorities for next year should include regular access to dental health, opticians, doctors, etc, improve placement stability and choice, looking to include health in placement decision-making.

The Board agreed to sign up to the Leaving Care Charter recently issued by the Government.

70. 2013 Meeting Schedule

The Board noted the dates of its meetings for 2013.

71. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Board noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 7 February 2013 at 6.00pm at County Hall, Preston.

72. Grant Funding Applications

The current position regarding applications was noted.

Update on the Safeguarding and Looked after Children Inspection

Purpose of the report and Summary

This report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an update of progress against the inspection action plan.

As the Corporate Parenting Board will be aware we had our safeguarding and looked after children inspection last year. Overall the outcome was positive with the inspectors judging us as good with outstanding features. There were a number of areas where the inspectors felt we could improve which were highlighted in their report. As a result of this we developed an action plan to address the areas for improvement highlighted and other areas within the report where we felt we could also further improve. A multi-agency group was established to monitor the progress of this action plan.

Key Information and Questions for Board Members

- The action plan contains actions in addition to those identified as areas for improvement within the inspection report
- All immediate safeguarding areas for improvement have been addressed
- All three month safeguarding areas for improvement have been addressed with the exception of one part which relates to training for health staff
- Five out of the nine Safeguarding areas for improvement to be completed within six months have been completed. The four remaining actions relate to major pieces of work e.g. obtaining a new IT system which were likely to take longer than the six months. All are in the process of being completed.
- In respect to looked after children areas for improvement there were no immediate actions.
- All five actions to be completed within three months have been completed, except one part which relates to training advance nurse practitioners so they can undertake initial health assessments as this will take longer than this.
- Six out of the nine looked after children areas for improvement to be completed within six months have been completed. The areas outstanding relate to increasing the numbers of Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) and ensuring care leavers who remain in education are supported financially.
- The Corporate parenting Board and young people may want to consider how well they feel they are supported financially when continuing in education.
- As outlined the action plan contains additional actions and the majority of these actions with a completion date before January 2013 have been completed.
- In order to check that the actions that have been completed are making a difference we also undertake internal inspections, ask agencies to carry out audits. How do the Corporate Parenting Boards and young people see that they can assist in this?

Background

Between 23 January and 3 February 2012 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission undertook an inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services in Lancashire. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The Ofsted report was published on 9 March 2012, with the Care Quality Commission report published in May 2012.

The report identified a numbers of areas of improvement which were:

Safeguarding

Immediately:

- urgently and comprehensively review the governance and safeguarding arrangements for children and young people within University Hospital Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust and Royal Lancaster Infirmary to ensure children are effectively safeguarded
- urgently and comprehensively review the safeguarding arrangements across out of hours, walk-in and accident and emergency health services across Lancashire to ensure children are effectively safeguarded.

Within three months:

- improve the arrangements for recording strategy discussions so that there is a single record of discussions and actions required by the agencies involved
- ensure that the views of the child are represented in child protection case conferences
- ensure all health trusts have robust systems for capturing data to report on compliance with the required safeguarding training standard, and that full compliance is achieved
- ensure that there is sufficient capacity in designated and named health professional roles across the county, and that roles and responsibilities are specified in job descriptions or service level agreements
- ensure assessment and plans include the wishes and feelings of children, including the behaviours of pre-school age children and reports for conferences, child protection plans and core groups are outcome focused
- ensure the LADO arrangements are disseminated across the diverse communities of Lancashire so all sectors are aware of their responsibilities to make notifications.

Within six months:

- review the existing domestic violence service provision to determine future needs and requirements including a commitment to fund early intervention programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence before they enter the criminal justice system and counselling support for children who experience domestic violence before they reach the threshold for access to child protection services
- ensure there is sufficient management capacity to support the out of hours service to consolidate the improvements made in child protection and safeguarding responses

- ensure systems for completing pre-CAF assessments and CAF assessments are consistent and of good quality to provide a sound basis for early intervention work with families and where appropriate to assist social workers when cases escalate into the child protection system
- accelerate plans to improve the electronic integrated recording system to improve the efficiency of case recording, supervision and recording the rationale for management decisions

Services for Looked After Children

Within three months:

- improve the timeliness of initial health assessments
- improve the rate of children who receive a routine dental health examination
- improve the arrangements and quality of looked after children's health records and ensure there is an audit trail to demonstrate all health issues are acted on promptly.

Within six months:

- ensure looked after children independent reviewing officers' caseloads are manageable
- ensure the capacity of family group conference service provision is sufficient to meet demand
- ensure that all PEPs effectively support looked after children to achieve the best educational outcomes
- ensure that reports of looked after children's reviews are completed and distributed within a timely fashion
- ensure appropriate training in independent living skills is consistently available for young people in preparation for them leaving care
- ensure all care leavers aged 18 who remain in education are adequately supported financially
- ensure the clinical psychologist service has sufficient capacity to meet the needs of looked after children.

A multi agency safeguarding continuous improvement group which is chaired by Health developed an Action Plan to address the above areas for improvement. The inspection action plan contains not only priorities and actions in response to areas for improvement, but also where reference is made within the narrative of the Ofsted/CQC reports that we could further improve on our present practice.

Decisions required

What do you want the Board to do (note or approve) what outcome would you wish to achieve by presenting your report to the Board, how can decisions made by the Board help to meet the needs of Children and Young People.

- (i) The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note the report and the progress made against the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission and the additional actions taken by partners to further improve the effectiveness of our services to safeguarding and looked after children.

- (ii) The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to consider how it can also play a role in ensuring the actions taken are making a difference to looked after children lives

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1February 2013

IRO Annual Reports

Purpose of the report and Summary

This is the second IRO Annual Report to the Corporate Parenting Board covering the period from the 1st April 2011 to the 31st March 2012.

The reports provide an overview of practice in relation to children looked after and safeguarding, highlighting the progress made during 2011/12 in strengthening the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) role within Lancashire. Whilst acknowledging the challenges faced by the service and recognising the areas for development, the reports also seek to celebrate achievements and successes in improving outcomes for children and young people.

Key Information and Questions for Board Members

Attached are the IRO Annual Reports in respect of Children Looked After and Safeguarding. Information from the reports will be summarised in a presentation to the Corporate Parenting Board.



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Background

The IRO Annual Report

The 'IRO Handbook' (statutory guidance for IRO's and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children) requires that the manager of the IRO Service produce an annual report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Board. This report should identify good practice and highlight issues for further development. The report has to include information about:

- The IRO service
- The extent of participation of children & their parents
- The timeliness of reviews
- The procedures for resolving concerns
- Any resource issues affecting service quality
- Outcomes of any quality assurance audits

There is a Young Person's Guide to the IRO Handbook: www.rights4me.org

Although there is no requirement to produce a Safeguarding Annual Report, this was recognised as a model of good practice in Ofsted's inspection of Lancashire's safeguarding and looked after children services in January 2012.

The IRO Role

The Children's Commissioner for England has highlighted the importance of the IRO role¹:

Children consulted wanted a significant person to hear and help them represent their views. The IRO represents the child/young person's interests and ensures their voice is heard

The IRO is often the most stable professional in the child/young person's Life, offering consistency and an independent view

The IRO has enabled improved participation for children and young people and access to advice and advocacy

The IRO ensures the plan for the child/young person is appropriate and is taken forward in a timely manner

The IRO role has been strengthened through statutory guidance (IRO Handbook) which reinforces the IRO's responsibility to ensure concerns about the child's plan or their care are addressed and resolved

Increasingly the courts are interested in the views of the IRO

Decisions required

- (i) The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note the report and achievements during 2011/12.
- (ii) The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to give their views regarding the content of the IRO Annual Report for 2013/14.

Sally Allen,
Directorate Safeguarding Manager
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Date: 1/02/2013

¹ Children's Commissioner for England: 'Submission to the Family Justice Review', October 2010

Children Looked After Independent Reviewing Officers

Annual Report 2011/2012



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1. Foreword

'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.'

(OFSTED Inspection of safeguarding & looked after children services in Lancashire, 9 March 2012).

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. This annual report highlights the progress made during 2011/12 in strengthening the IRO role within Lancashire. Whilst acknowledging the challenges faced by the service and recognising the areas for development, it also seeks to celebrate achievements and successes in improving outcomes for children looked after.

Although IRO caseloads are high, good performance has been maintained by the team in relation to reviews completed within timescale and the participation of children looked after in their review. More importantly the quality of children and young people's participation has improved. Quality assurance systems have been strengthened, with a greater emphasis on the quality of practice as opposed to compliance with statutory requirements. There is also evidence of the effectiveness of IRO challenge in improving outcomes for children and young people.

A review of the IRO Service has been completed looking at how services can be streamlined to improve the child's journey and minimise changes of IRO. Lancashire is committed to continuous improvement and alongside three other local authorities regionally is part of a Best Practice Network looking at how IRO services can be improved. This will provide a strong foundation to further develop the IRO Service in Lancashire.

2. Purpose of the Annual Report

This is the second children looked after IRO annual report reviewing the work and findings of the Children Looked After Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO's) during the period from the 1st April 2011 to the 31st March 2012. The report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the IRO Handbook, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (now Department for Education) in March 2010. This report is however, the first of those reports required under the auspices of the handbook as it came into force in April 2011. The initial report for 2010/2011 was shared with the Directorate Leadership Team (DLT), Corporate Parenting Board and Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This report has been approved by DLT and will be shared with these forums and also the Children's Trust. It will also be made available to the public.

The report identifies good practice in relation to the work being undertaken with Lancashire's looked after children and also considers areas for further development, as well as highlighting areas where improvements have been made over the last twelve months. The report provides commentary in relation to statistical performance but also includes more qualitative information regarding the findings of audits. For example, of the quality of reviews and the outcomes achieved by children and young people.

3. Legislation & Background

The duties imposed on the IRO's have been strengthened considerably over the years.

The role of the IRO has historically been governed primarily by 'The Children Act', 1989, 'The Adoption & Children Act', 2002, 'The Review of Children's Cases Regulations', 1991 and 'The Review of Children's Cases (Amendment) (England) Regulations', 2004. It was 'The Adoption & Children Act', 2002 that made the appointment of an IRO a legal requirement under Section 118.

Following this the 'Review of Children's Cases (Amendment) (England) Regulations', 2004, was published as an amendment to the 'Review of Children's Cases Regulations', 1991, along with statutory guidance in September 2004.

The duties imposed on the IRO are clearly laid out in the IRO Handbook, along with the 'Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations', 2010. There are some significant changes to the regulations, but probably the most significant of the changes is that:

'The Handbook extends the IRO's responsibilities (Children and Young Person's Act, 2008) from monitoring the performance by the Local Authority of their functions in relation to a child's review, to monitoring the performance by the Local Authority of their functions in relation to a child's case'. This is a major change and involves IRO's evidencing how they are overseeing the whole of the child's care plan, not simply checking progress at each review. Measures have been established to enable the Senior IRO's in the team to monitor how the IRO's are fulfilling this responsibility, engaging in contact with children and young people and checks between reviews.

The IRO Handbook and placement regulations introduced a number of other significant changes which have effectively meant that the local authority must consult the IRO at every juncture. The following are examples of these changes:

- Timescales within which reviews are held have changed in certain circumstances;
- A new power to adjourn reviews if the IRO is not satisfied that the local authority has complied adequately with the requirements relating to the review. For example, consultation with the child or the absence of review documentation;
- The responsible authority must not make any significant change to a child's care plan without the proposed change first being considered at a review of the child's

case, unless this is not reasonably practical. (Care Planning Regulations, Section 32(2) Part 6). The significance of this change has taken some time to embed in practice but it is now widely accepted within Lancashire that no changes should be made without the IRO being consulted and the change being ratified at a review;

- Provision of independent legal advice to the IRO's. The handbook specifies that this should be independent of the Local Authority's legal department. Consequently there is now in place an arrangement for legal advice to be provided to IRO's via a private solicitor's firm should it be required;
- Subject to their age, the child is now consulted about the venue, agenda and who can attend. It is important to recognise that the review is the child's meeting. The IRO Handbook (page 19, paragraph 3.37) makes it clear that when a young person begins to plan for independence they should chair part of their review meeting;
- Review decisions and recommendations. The Handbook has clarified how recommendations flowing from a review should be managed. Recommendations from a review should be sent to a team manager within 5 working days. If unable to agree to a specific recommendation the manager should advise the IRO and all review attendees. If no response is received then the recommendations are considered to have been agreed. All review recommendations are specific regarding the person responsible for the action and the timescale for completion. IRO's robustly follow up recommendations to ensure they are implemented in a timely manner. Where there is delay IRO's will utilise the problem resolution process to escalate issues.

This is not an exhaustive list of the changes, but does illustrate the scale of change introduced to improve the scrutiny of the care plan and understanding of the child's journey in care.

4. The role of the Children Looked After IRO in Lancashire

This role is now statutory and is described in the IRO Handbook as:

'A specialist role which stands alone in the local authority. It is a role that may involve challenging senior managers and may require the IRO to seek legal remedies if the local authority fails in its duties'.

The IRO Handbook details the role of the IRO. Lancashire has adopted the guidance from the IRO Handbook which states:

- The IRO has a statutory duty to monitor the performance of the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's case;
- Participate in any review of the child's case;
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority, so to promote the voice of the child;

- The IRO should offer a safeguard against 'drift' in care planning for looked after children and the delivery of services to them;
- Immediately alert senior managers where concerns exist and also recognise and advise senior manager's of good practice;
- Make sure the child understands how an advocate could help and explain their entitlement to one;
- To provide robust scrutiny and challenge to Children's Social Care (CSC) should it be necessary.

The IRO Handbook and associated regulations make it clear that the role of the IRO is now wide reaching and all encompassing. No longer is the role restricted to a twice yearly 'check' of the child's care plan, but is a more involved and consultative process. IRO's are now more accessible to looked after children. All children are now advised who their IRO is when they first come into care and are given their IRO's phone number and e-mail address. Children are encouraged to contact their IRO should they feel they need to discuss any issues. To date this has worked well.

Following the implementation of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 Lancashire Children's Services made the decision to separate the IRO Team creating the specialist roles of Children Looked After (CLA) IRO and Safeguarding IRO to ensure a robust approach to both the review of care plans for children who are looked after and child protection plans for children in need of protection. Respective IROs in each service were therefore able to develop knowledge and skills within these specialisms.

However, changes introduced by the IRO Handbook and feedback from children and families within the Munro Review of Child Protection have highlighted the importance of continuity of professional relationships and a single care planning process. Over the last 12 months there have also been changes in service needs, (reflecting a decrease in the number of children subject to a child protection plan and an increase in the number of children looked after). This has impacted on IRO capacity, particularly within the CLA IRO team as identified by Ofsted in their recent inspection of Lancashire's safeguarding and looked after children services. Following a review of the IRO Service a decision has therefore been made to combine the roles once more in order to ensure continuity of IRO for the child throughout their journey of involvement with Children's Services and more equitable caseloads.

5. The Regulatory Functions of a Review

These are detailed within the 'Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations', 2010 and within the IRO Handbook (Section 3.38) and the review must consider:

- The effect of any change in the child's circumstances since the last review;
- Whether decisions taken at the last review have been successfully implemented, and if not why not;

- The appropriateness of the child's legal status. (For example, if a child is accommodated under Section 20, 'The Children Act', 1989, whether this provides legal security to enable proper plans to be made that will provide them with secure attachments that will meet their needs through to adulthood). This may require that the IRO makes a recommendation to initiate care proceedings;
- Whether the child's plan includes a plan for permanence within a viable timescale that is meaningful for the child;
- The arrangements for contact in respect of siblings, parents, and other family members or significant others. Whether these arrangements take into account the child's current wishes and feelings and any changes required to these arrangements;
- Whether the placement is meeting the child's needs. This should include consideration of the attachment between the child and those caring for them and how the local authority ensures the placement provides the quality of care that the child needs;
- The child's educational needs, progress and development and whether any actions are needed to ensure they achieve their full potential. This should include consideration of the Personal Education Plan;
- The leisure activities in which the child is engaging and whether these are meeting the child's needs and current expressed interests;
- The report of the most recent assessment of the child's health and any changes necessary in order that the child's health needs are met;
- The identity needs of the child and how these are being met;
- Whether the arrangement to provide advice, assistance and support to the child continues to be appropriate and is understood by the child;
- Whether any arrangements need to be made for the time when the child will no longer be looked after, so that the child will be properly prepared and ready to make this transition;
- Whether the child's social worker has taken steps to establish the child's wishes and feelings, that the care plan has taken these into consideration and that the care plan demonstrates this;
- Whether the child is being visited by the social worker in accordance with statutory requirements and when the child requests a visit;
- That timely decisions are made to advance the child's care plan;
- Any remedial action required to address drift or delay in implementation of the care plan to ensure the child's needs are met within appropriate timescales.

6. The Mission Statement

The mission statement of the IRO Team is:

'To promote quality of care and care planning to achieve positive outcomes and to improve the experience of childhood for children and young people in care in Lancashire.'

Principles:

Lancashire children should expect the same good standard of care and support wherever they live. Children & their families should be listened to and informed of their rights. Children and young people's plans should be based on an understanding of the child/young person & their family.

ALL PROFESSIONALS SHOULD HAVE THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON AT THE CENTRE OF THEIR THINKING.

7. The Development of the IRO Service

Over the year 2011 to 2012 there has been significant changes and progress made:

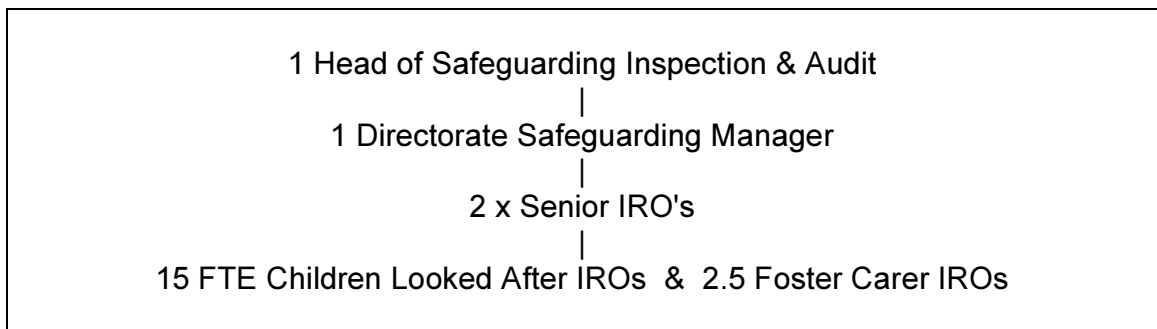
- Team meetings have been developed to be more inclusive and are very well attended. As the team has no effective base the role can be an isolated one so team meetings are essential. A programme of guest speakers is in place and team members present a case for discussion promoting the regular use of reflective practice;
- Team development days are now a regular feature of the team calendar and take place twice yearly. The most recent team day, for example, focused on the team action plan, identifying priorities for the coming twelve months;
- Person centred approaches are now used within reviews on a regular basis. Minimum standards have been developed to ensure that all reviews have some element of a person centred approach. (See Appendix 2: a person centred review agenda);
- The team now has access to independent legal advice;
- Letters are sent to all children and young people when they come into care confirming the details of their IRO;
- IRO's write personalised letters to children and young people following their review briefly summarising the discussion and the recommendations. (Capacity issues do not allow this to happen after every review. This is therefore a target for the coming year);
- Compliance monitoring. A system has been established to evidence IRO activity and oversight of care plans between reviews. This allows Senior IRO's to monitor IRO contact with service users and social workers in between review meetings. Evidence of outcomes for the service users is drawn from this information;
- District/IRO Cluster Meetings are now an established part of the calendar. These are meetings between team managers and IRO's providing a forum for discussion;
- Quality assurance systems have been strengthened through revisions to the IRO quality assurance form with a requirement that it is completed following every Children Looked After Review. This has a greater emphasis on the quality of

practice as opposed to compliance monitoring. This information is used in feedback to District Teams via quarterly District/IRO Cluster Meetings to drive improvements in practice;

- A system of notifying the legal department of the named IRO for a child subject to a new legal order has been established;
- The profile of the IRO's is being raised across the county. Both senior IRO's visit social work teams on a regular basis delivering training on the regulations. It is intended these visits will continue to promote a greater understanding of the IRO role and responsibilities.

8. The Children Looked After IRO Team

8.1 Team Structure



The team is managed by two Senior IRO's (CLA). The team is part of the Directorate's Safeguarding Unit which also includes the Safeguarding IRO's, Schools Safeguarding, the Local Authority Designated Officer and the Child Employment & Entertainment Team.

The Safeguarding Unit is based 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 IRO's.

Following the implementation of the 'Adoption and Children Act', 2002 Lancashire Children's Services made the decision to separate the IRO Team creating the specialist roles of Children Looked After (CLA) IRO and Safeguarding IRO to ensure a robust approach to both the review of care plans for children who are looked after and child protection plans for children in need of protection. Respective IROs in each service have therefore been able to focus and develop their knowledge and skills base.

Following the Munro review of child protection, changes in service needs, (reflecting a decrease in the number of children subject to a child protection plan and an increase in the number of children looked after and the recent outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of

Safeguarding and Children Looked After, a decision has been made to combine the roles once more in order to ensure continuity of IRO for the child throughout their journey of involvement with Children's Services and more equitable caseloads. This will reduce caseloads to approximately 90 per IRO.

The team consists of 4 male and 13 female IRO's. They are all white British, with English as their first language. Given that Lancashire has a large number of black and minority ethnic families, it is recognised that the team is not truly representative of the needs of the community which it serves. However, 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 IRO's have undertaken equality and diversity training to ensure equality of approach with all sectors of society.

8.2 Post Qualifying Experience

All of the IRO's are very experienced professionals and have more than the required 5 years experience in statutory child care as indicated in the table below:

Name	Year of qualification	Year began as IRO	Year began as Senior IRO
Senior IRO 1	2000	2005	2009
Senior IRO 2	1982	1999	2010
IRO 1	1985	1999	
IRO 2	1986	1999	
IRO 3	1989	1999	
IRO 4 (PT)	1995	2005	
IRO 5	2003	2009	
IRO 6	1988	2009	
IRO 7	1993	2009	
IRO 8	2003	2009	
IRO 9	2005	2010	
IRO 10	2004	2010	

IRO 11	2007	2012
IRO 12 (PT)	1988	2011
IRO 13	1979	2011
Fostering IRO's:		
Fostering IRO 1	2000	2007
Fostering IRO 2	1980	2009

The team is well represented at both the Adoption Panel and Fostering Panels and there is Senior IRO representation at the Corporate Parenting Board.

8.3 Staff Recruitment

The development of the IRO service has continued, coping with the challenge of one of the two Senior IRO's taking maternity leave. A member of the team acted up as a senior IRO for a short period, but due to caseload demands and the difficulties backfilling the post, returned to their IRO role. A manager from within the Safeguarding Inspection and Audit Service then assisted with the management of the IRO team. During 2011/12 three IRO's also had long term sickness absence. This presented challenges in terms of consistency of IRO for children and young people. However, it is to the credit of the team that in spite of these challenges, good performance was maintained reflecting a high level of commitment to Lancashire's children looked after.

In recognition of the capacity issues within the IRO Service, in January 2012 the Directorate's Leadership Team (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 looked after children 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. This will be achieved by ensuring families receive appropriate support at an earlier stage which builds their resilience and prevents the need for children to become looked after by the local authority. This work is evident within the 'Working Together with Families' approach which has already been successful in supporting some children within Lancashire's residential homes to return to the care of their families.

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 due to the differential salary grade and the fact that the posts were temporary.

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. (The latter are reviewed by the two Fostering IRO's within the team). The additional posts and the amalgamation of the two IRO teams will reduce IRO caseloads.

Following interviews in March 2012, 1 FTE permanent post was filled from within the residential service. The team has continued efforts to recruit to the remaining posts including an existing part-time vacancy which was created as a result of a permanent member of the team reducing their hours from full to part-time. However, in spite of four internal adverts this post has remained unfilled. Due to difficulties recruiting to vacancies approval was given to advertise externally. This resulted in the appointment of 1 FTE IRO who was an external candidate.

At the time of writing this report the IRO Service (CLA and Safeguarding) has 2.5 FTE permanent and 2.5 FTE temporary vacancies. Recruitment continues to present major challenges. 2 FTE agency IRO's are currently supporting the Safeguarding IRO Team and secondment opportunities from other services within the Directorate are also being explored. Following the outcome of job evaluation in Lancashire, IRO's are now paid at the higher end of the social work salary scale. There is concern that this may impact on the ability to recruit experienced candidates to vacancies within the team.

8.4 Caseloads

The number of looked after children in Lancashire during 2011 -12 has ranged from 1,337 at its highest to 1,286 at its lowest. The Senior IRO's monitor and maintain a monthly record of IRO caseloads. Caseloads have been consistently high within the team during 2011-12, ranging from 98 to 133 for a FTE IRO. This is commensurate with the regional and national position, where many local authorities have been unable to achieve caseloads consistent with that recommended in the IRO Handbook (50 – 70). Variation in caseloads is due to a number of factors including sibling groups and maintaining consistency of IRO where a child has previously been in care. There is also some district variation. A review of the IRO Service has been completed and concluded that the IRO Teams should be amalgamated. As part of this review caseload mapping has been undertaken to inform decisions regarding the location of the additional IRO posts.

A number of actions are being undertaken to increase IRO capacity in order to reduce caseloads. IRO capacity is a significant challenge for the service and is considered further under section 13 of this report.

9. Performance Information

9.1 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. Publication of Lancashire's 'Care Pledge' in July 2011 (made available to every young person in care over the age of 4) has encouraged children to 'have their say'. Although the table below shows a slight dip in performance in 2011/12, 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 2011/12 there were just 40 children who either chose not to contribute or were unable to contribute to their review. (950 out of 990 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%

9.2 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 steadily improved over the last four years, although there was a slight reduction in performance in 2011/12.

Percentage of reviews held within timescale:

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

Although there has been a slight drop in performance this has to be set in the context of a rise in the care population and the increasing workload this places on the IRO Team. This is illustrated further in section 8.3 below.

The table below indicates the number of looked after children during 2011-12 and shows a rise over the course of the year.

APR 11	MAY 11	JUN 11	JUL 11	AUG 11	SEP 11	OCT 11	NOV 11	DEC 11	JAN 12	FEB 12	MAR 12
1286	1298	1307	1317	1314	1325	1327	1312	1330	1320	1337	1332

This increasing trajectory is also evident when comparing performance with previous years:

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1300	1285	1264	1293	1296	1352

The N166 measure relates to reviews for each individual child and is a direct percentage of the number of children in care who have had a 'failed' review, that is one or more of their reviews being late. This return therefore doesn't measure performance in relation to the total number of reviews held.

Put simply this means that in 2011/12, 47 children (3.2%) had a late review out of a cohort of 1,242 children.

However, during 2011/12, a total of 3,731 reviews were held. 47 of these reviews were held beyond the statutory timescale. This equates to a success rate of just under 99% of all reviews held in time, which is in fact almost the same as last year.

It is a priority for the IRO team that reviews are held within timescale and every effort is made to achieve this. In the small number of cases where this has not been possible, this can be attributed to the following factors: IRO sickness, IRO error in setting review dates. (This has been where the previous review was held as a series of meetings and there is a requirement to calculate the due date from the date the review process started), difficulties in coordinating a review date between the IRO and the Social Worker and human error by the Senior IRO's when coordinating the diaries of new IRO's joining the team. There was also one example of confusion regarding the arrangements for the review whereby the IRO attended but the social worker didn't arrive.

9.3 Number of Review Meetings Held

The number of reviews held each month is now monitored by the Senior IRO's and is shown in the table below.

IRO	Meetings	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	Total
IRO 1	Reviews	20	29	22	<u>46</u>	21	<u>41</u>	0	4	16	21	15	12	247
	Others											4	3	7
IRO 2	Reviews	26	<u>36</u>	33	27	26	17	30	30	14	<u>38</u>	27	<u>47</u>	351
	Others													0
IRO 3	Reviews	<u>36</u>	33	21	29	27	29	26	<u>46</u>	25	<u>38</u>	31	<u>38</u>	379
	Others											3	3	6
IRO 4	Reviews			13	33	30	31	43	22	20	20	32	<u>41</u>	285
	Others											1	1	2

IRO 5	Reviews	30	<u>33</u>	20	33	<u>34</u>	24	<u>48</u>	8	9	<u>43</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>36</u>	356
	Others													0
IRO 6	Reviews						5	18	11	5	19	8	20	86
	Others											4	2	6
IRO 7	Reviews	24	29	27	<u>35</u>	16	<u>36</u>	24	25	20	20	19	30	305
	Others											2	2	4
IRO 8	Reviews	21	27	21	<u>37</u>	<u>45</u>	27	0	2	6	<u>38</u>	26	<u>42</u>	292
	Others													0
IRO 9	Reviews	27	<u>37</u>	24	22	12	<u>40</u>	33	20	19	26	19	<u>36</u>	315
	Others													0
IRO 10	Reviews	31	26	30	13	21	28	<u>41</u>	35	18	<u>40</u>	29	27	339
	Others											5	3	8
IRO 11	Reviews	32	34	27	<u>43</u>	12	<u>44</u>	29	31	18	<u>41</u>	38	<u>40</u>	389
	Others											15	14	29
IRO 12	Reviews	18	<u>39</u>	<u>37</u>	23	30	34	<u>37</u>	32	22	<u>45</u>	41	<u>45</u>	403
	Others											2	2	4
Senior IRO 1	Reviews	18	<u>37</u>	10	7	1	6	22	12	10	5	5	3	136
	Others													0
Senior IRO 2	Reviews	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Others													0
IRO 13	Reviews								0	21	14			35
	Others													0

Sub Total (Reviews):	283	363	285	348	275	362	351	278	223	408	264	339	3921
Sub Total (Others):	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	30	66
Grand Total:	283	363	285	348	275	362	351	278	223	408	300	369	3987

Peaks in review activity can be seen in May, September, January and March. Various hypotheses can be put forward as to the reason for this, but historically these months have always been the busiest in terms of reviews; the higher figures usually relating to busy periods of children coming into care over the previous 20 working days.

During 2011/12 there has been a significant increase in the total number of reviews held. (2011/12: 3,731 compared to 2,862 in 2010/11). The actual number of review meetings reported by IRO's was 3,921, which indicates a number of reviews were held as a series of meetings (190). The increase in review numbers reflects a rise in the number of looked after children, resulting in a greater number of initial reviews and consequently second reviews held at four months. Reviews have also been held early where circumstances required this.

The table above (in the category of 'others') also identifies the IRO's attendance at additional meetings, for example, planning meetings or any other meeting held in respect of the child. This reflects the wider responsibility of the IRO within the IRO

Handbook in terms of reviewing and monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis rather than performing a twice yearly 'check'. This information has only been collated since February 2012 but will be reported in full in next year's annual report.

10. Quality Assurance

Whilst performance indicators are an essential source of information and help to benchmark performance, as highlighted by the Munro review, it cannot be treated as a straightforward measure of good or bad practice. Consideration must also be given to the quality and effectiveness of the help given to children and families. IRO's are independent of service delivery and have an important quality assurance role within Lancashire. Central to this is the direct engagement of children and young people to ascertain their wishes and feelings.

10.1 IRO Challenge

Following feedback from a Safeguarding Peer Challenge in July 2011, work has been undertaken with the IRO's in respect of their challenge role. An audit by the Directorate Safeguarding Manager and Senior IRO in November 2011 evidenced that IRO's are challenging practice where appropriate and achieving positive outcomes for children looked after. This is illustrated in the following case examples:

Case Example 1:

Challenge by IRO to parent and local authority of need for child to be S20 accommodated. IRO didn't feel this was appropriate. Outcome: child returned home with intensive support package.

Case Example 2:

IRO met child in school to discuss placement disruption. IRO addressed child's fears and reassurance given that he wasn't to blame for this. Outcome: IRO held professionals meeting to discuss concerns re breakdown of agency foster placement and met with the child. IRO informed child of timescale for move to alternative placement. Evidence of child centred practice and that the child's wishes and feelings were taken into consideration.

Case Example 3:

IRO raised concern re delay in care proceedings. Outcome: Social Worker completed statement for court ensuring appropriate action taken.

10.2 Themes arising from Quality Assurance Checklists

The IRO's are required to complete a Quality Assurance Checklist following each looked after review. (See Appendix 1). The checklist has been amended to include more qualitative information. The checklist is forwarded to the social worker and their manager, identifying good practice and any deficits which need to be addressed. The Senior IRO's regularly audit the checklists to identify any trends and share the findings

in District/IRO Cluster Meetings. (The quarterly meeting between the IRO's and Team Managers).

In 2010/11, 1,401 Quality Assurance Checklists were completed. This is below the number of reviews held in the year due to their completion only becoming mandatory in December 2010. In 2011/2012, 2,805 Quality Assurance checklists were completed which represents a significant increase, although is still not representative of the total number of reviews held. The requirement to complete a checklist continues to be reinforced by the Senior IRO's as it is now considered an integral part of the review process. There is a target to increase this to 80%. The following practice themes have been identified:

- The completion of a social work report for the child's review continues to improve across most districts in the authority. There is also evidence that reports are in the main provided to the IRO within time. Reviews are adjourned where reports haven't been shared before a review meeting. This data is now being collated centrally and reported to senior managers quarterly;
- Whilst an improvement has been noted in the distribution of review reports, this is still patchy across the county;
- The involvement overall of the IRO has improved. Notification of changes to care plans, invitations to other meetings and generally being consulted and kept up to date in terms of recommendations has improved greatly. This may be linked to the higher profile of IRO's now within the organisation and greater understanding of their role;
- Over the last twelve months there has been greater consistency in the quality of care plans presented to reviews and quality of recording on the case record;
- The completion of Personal Education Plans has continued to be problematic and is subject to ongoing discussion with Alternative and Complimentary Education and Residential Services (ACERS);
- The timeliness of Initial Health Assessments is of concern and there are still a significant number of reviews where the Health Action Plan is unavailable;
- The completion and recording of statutory visits remains good;
- The Quality Assurance Checklists indicate that person centred approaches are being used in an increasing number of reviews and that checks are being made to ensure the child and young person has received a copy of the 'Care Pledge';

There is a clear escalation process in place and IRO's continue to escalate issues to the District Manager if a response is not received from the Social Worker or Team Manager. However, there are still some examples of recommendations and issues from the Quality Assurance Checklists not being addressed in a timely manner. This is an area for improvement.

10.3 Problem Resolution (Starred Recommendations)

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.

Starred recommendations per district: 2010/11 2011/2012

LANCASTER DISTRICT	4	2
FYLDE DISTRICT	0	1
WYRE DISTRICT	0	0
PRESTON DISTRICT	4	2
SOUTH RIBBLE DISTRICT	0	0
CHORLEY DISTRICT	2	7
WEST LANCASHIRE DISTRICT	1	2
HYNDBURN DISTRICT	1	4
RIBBLE VALLEY DISTRICT	0	0
BURNLEY DISTRICT	4	4
PENDLE DISTRICT	2	1
ROSSENDALE DISTRICT	2	2
TOTAL	20	25

There were 25 starred recommendations in 2011/2012. Of these one involving two children from the Accrington area was resolved at stage 4 of the Problem Resolution Protocol. Two from the Chorley area were resolved at stage 3. All others were resolved at stage 2.

Starred recommendations were made for a variety of reasons. For example, challenge in respect of an incorrect school, PEP and pathway plans not being completed and challenge regarding a proposed change of placement which wasn't considered to be in the child's best interests.

As the IRO Team has become more robust in monitoring the implementation of children looked after review recommendations (including the use of midpoint review checks), it is

anticipated that a greater number of starred recommendations will be made, reinforcing the importance and status of review recommendations. The quality of recording by the IRO has also improved and all review recommendations have a named person with responsibility for the action and a specific timescale by which it must be completed.

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 person in hospital in isolation. This was deemed unnecessary. The IRO made a starred recommendation with a tight resolution timescale and involved the Child's Guardian and the hospital authorities to achieve a quick change in living circumstances for this young person. This was successful with the IRO being instrumental in effecting positive change.

Case Example 2:

IRO held a meeting with Education Psychology Service in respect of a starred recommendation. The school identified on the SEN Statement wasn't acceptable due to travelling distance. Outcome: Starred recommendation achieved resolution. Child was given place at a local school of their choice. Evidence that child's voice was heard and taken into consideration. Children's Rights appropriately involved. Good outcome to meet the needs of the child.

Case Example 3:

The child's legal status was inappropriate following a change to their care plan. Change was not being effected following an earlier CLA review recommendation. The IRO made a starred recommendation requiring a return to court within a set timeframe. This is now being progressed in a timely manner.

11. Evidence of Good Practice

11.1 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 is also enhancing the quality and depth of the child's contribution. Minimum standards and a standard agenda (See Appendix 2) have been developed, ensuring that all reviews include some elements of this approach. A leaflet has also been produced for children explaining person centred reviews. IRO's are promoting this approach in discussions with children and carers and the IRO's in conjunction with SCAYT Plus (Supporting Carers of Children and Young People Looked After Together) are delivering training to social workers, residential staff and foster carer's to promote awareness of person centred approaches. This has been well received with attendees feeling able to implement these skills in their daily contact with children and young people. The real endorsement has been from children and

young people themselves who have reported feeling more involved in their review. This is illustrated in the following case examples:

Case Example 1:

Child A commented that he had really enjoyed his first person centred review. He said it had been better than other reviews because he got to have his say in the meeting, everybody else got to have their say too and everybody listened. He also said that it wasn't boring. This young person contributed to the development of the person centred review leaflet that is now in place.

Case Example 2:

Child B had previously been reluctant to attend reviews so this was discussed with him and some changes made. This included checking out with him who he wanted to attend. The review started with everyone saying something they liked or admired about Child B, setting a positive tone. The agenda was fairly flexible allowing for Child B's difficulties concentrating and the review was time limited. He was also supported by his social worker and residential staff to participate fully in his review. Child B particularly liked the action plan developed at the end of the meeting and the fact that everyone was clear about what they were going to do for him.

Case Example 3:

Child C is autistic and without speech. He took the chair in his person centred review supported by his father. Child C had chosen the music for the review and had also chosen the refreshments, but most impressively he presented a full DVD of him and his life, what he liked and what he didn't like. This was an excellent review and a significant achievement for Child C, giving him control over his life.

11.2 District/IRO Cluster Meetings

Quarterly meetings are held between the IRO's (Children Looked After and Safeguarding) and District and Team Managers in three cluster group footprints across the county. The meetings provide a forum to share themes arising from the quality assurance forms and parent/carer questionnaires, information on performance and problem resolution, learning from serious case reviews, training and information in respect of any new developments. Going forward the aim is to produce an IRO quarterly quality assurance report to formalise the reporting process and to assist in the preparation of the annual report. The cluster meetings have been particularly effective in improving communication between the IRO's and Team Managers and promoting a greater understanding of respective roles. An example of an issue which has been effectively addressed through this forum is delegated authority, ensuring clarity of responsibility and the provision of this information to the IRO. There is evidence that this has improved practice and IRO's are checking this as part of the review.

11.3 Alternative and Complementary Education and Residential Service (ACERS)

Opportunities and outcomes for children looked after have significantly improved during 2011- 2012 including improved educational performance in Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. Close links exist between the IRO's and the virtual school (within ACERS). The service provides pastoral care and extra tuition to looked after children and the staff regularly attend children looked after reviews. The IRO's are responsible for nominating young people for education achievement awards which are funded through ACERS. 64% of all school aged looked after children received Personal Educational Support Allowances. This ensured that children were able to reach their full potential and had the opportunity to access 1 to 1 tuition (53% of children) and support in literacy and numeracy. It also meant children were able to participate in a range of activities and were assisted in accessing their chosen vocation and career plan. This has improved self esteem and self confidence and has considerably increased the aspirations of children to succeed. 11 young people were accepted at university and one young person is now attending Oxford.

11.4 Children Looked After Missing from Care

Children who go missing are extremely vulnerable and reducing the number of missing children is a priority for the LSCB. Ofsted during their safeguarding and looked after children inspection acknowledged that Lancashire has good arrangements in place to identify and monitor children missing from home, care and education. The development of a Lancashire Strategy for Children who go Missing will ensure a consistent approach across all agencies. The strategy draws together all existing protocols and procedures relating to children who go missing and will raise awareness and support effective collaborative working between agencies.

The Senior IRO is responsible for chairing second stage intervention meetings under the Missing from Care Protocol and is also the link person within the County Council for the police missing co-ordinators. In 2011/2012, 42 stage two intervention meetings were chaired by the Senior IRO's. (A number of other stage two meetings were chaired by Team Managers during this period). Bi Monthly meetings are established between the Senior IRO and the Police Compliance Officer. This provides a forum to share information and to discuss any issues that have arisen. This has improved communication between the police and Directorate and has enhanced safeguarding arrangements in relation to missing children who have been placed in Lancashire by other local authorities.

11.5 Adoption

Closer links have been forged between the IRO's and the Adoption Service. IRO's now receive a monthly update of all children awaiting adoption and any concerns regarding delay are appropriately escalated to the Adoption Service Manager. On a quarterly basis the Senior IRO and Adoption Service Manager attend each other's team meetings. This closer liaison has worked well leading to early resolution of a number of problems which might otherwise have necessitated a starred recommendation.

12. Priorities for 2012/13

12.1 Implementation of new IRO Structure

IRO capacity was identified as a concern by Ofsted in their recent inspection of Lancashire's safeguarding and looked after children services (Report 9th March 2012). Whilst this issue had already been recognised and DLT had approved four additional IRO posts, a decision was made to undertake a review of the IRO Service to further consider how capacity issues could be addressed. The review concluded that the two IRO Teams should be combined to ensure continuity of IRO for children and more equitable caseloads across the service.

The implementation of the new IRO structure has commenced and will be fully operational from the 1st January 2013. This is supported by a training and development plan, including opportunities for IRO shadowing to build confidence and expertise of the team in all areas of the work. Recruitment to the remaining IRO vacancies is crucial as part of this process in order to reduce IRO caseloads and increase capacity.

12.2 Reduce Delay in Proceedings

The average length of care proceedings in Lancashire (including Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen) is 68 weeks. Delay in proceedings is widely publicised nationally, the average care case in the county court taking over 60 weeks. The Family Justice Review published in November 2011 made a number of recommendations to reduce this delay, setting a maximum limit on proceedings of 26 weeks. The Public Law Outline has been re-prioritised in a concerted effort to meet these timescales.

In Lancashire the IRO Service has been involved in discussions with the Adoption Service, Children's Social Care and Legal services in developing a whole system approach to care planning in order to reduce delay. Procedures are being updated including an adoption care planning flowchart and the Public Law Outline is to be relaunched across the Directorate. This incorporates the review timescales and the requirement to consult with the allocated IRO in planning for children. A new Family Finding Protocol introduced by the Adoption Service will also speed up the process of linking, matching and the placement of children. A RAG system ensures children are prioritised who have been waiting the longest. The Adoption service is on target this year to recruit and approve 60 – 65 adopters. Performance is monitored through the Adoption Scorecard.

There are now closer links between the IRO service and CAFCASS in relation to children subject to care proceedings.

12.3 Improve Service User Involvement

Improving service user involvement is important as part of the continuous improvement of the IRO Service. Promoting the participation of children/young people and

parents/carers within the CLA review remains a priority. Whilst performance in relation to the proportion of children and young people participating in their review is high, the quality of the child/young person's contribution is equally important. IRO's are consulting children and young people in respect of the arrangements for their review, giving children and young people choice and offering a flexible service that is tailored to meet individual need. The views of children and young people will also be sought in relation to the IRO Service.

12.4 Further develop the Quality Assurance Role of the IRO's

A recent court judgment from Lord Justice Jackson (A and S (children) and Lancashire County Council) highlighted learning for the IRO Service in relation to the responsibilities of the IRO; in particular regarding the children's legal status and the impact on their human rights. Lessons learnt have already been acted on and measures put in place to prevent such circumstances arising again. A Directorate action plan is in place to address the issues raised. Lancashire does not have any other children subject to a Freeing Order. Quarterly audits are undertaken by the Senior IRO to ensure that children looked after have the correct legal status and that where the care plan is no longer adoption that an application is made to revoke the Placement Order. Recommendations from CLA reviews clearly identify the responsible person and timescale for completion. Improvements have been made to the way the IRO records their section of the review report which ensures all recommendations from the previous review are checked and progress recorded. The aim is to create a narrative from one review to the next. The problem resolution process is instigated where recommendations have not been progressed. Systems are in place to centrally monitor the use of starred recommendations.

To strengthen quality assurance within the IRO Service an audit framework is being developed for use in IRO supervision. A target of 80% has also been set for 2012/13 to increase the completion of the quality assurance form by the IRO.

12.5 Improve Outcomes in relation to the Health of Children Looked After

Ofsted in the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services identified the need to improve the timeliness of initial health assessments and the rate of children receiving a routine dental check. IRO's are monitoring both requirements through the children looked after review. District Manager's and IRO's now receive monthly exception reports. The need for a consistent approach in IRO's being immediately sent the Health Action Plan once completed is also being addressed.

12.6 Short Breaks

The new Care Planning, Placement & Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, implemented on the 1st April 2011 introduced changes to the requirements in relation to children receiving short breaks (respite care). Lancashire currently allocates an IRO to those young people receiving more than 75 nights care per year, or care in two different

settings per year, whilst the procedures require an IRO to be allocated if any level of respite care is received. Lancashire does not currently have the capacity within the IRO service to comply with this regulation. Reviews are currently completed by the Inclusion, Disability Support Service.

12.7 Pathway Planning/Transition Planning

A Staying Put Policy is being developed to ensure a consistent approach in relation to young people wanting to remain in their placement beyond the age of 18. A Transitions Protocol is now in place and is currently being rolled out to districts. The IRO Team has been briefed in relation to the requirements and links are now established with Transition Teams across the county. These links will be further developed in the coming year to ensure the protocol is embedded in planning for young people. As IRO's work with all looked after children across the county they are ideally placed to quickly identify those young people who would meet the criteria for a transitions plan.

13. Key Challenges for the Future

13.1 IRO Capacity

IRO capacity remains a significant challenge as caseloads are consistently higher than that recommended in the IRO Handbook. As detailed earlier in this report IRO capacity is being addressed in a number of ways as follows:

- The Directorate's Leadership Team agreed the creation of four additional IRO posts (two permanent and two temporary for twelve months). Whilst recruitment has been successful to the two permanent posts, recruitment to the temporary vacancies and other permanent vacancies in the IRO service is ongoing. Approval of the Chief Executive has been given to advertise the vacancies externally;
- Recruitment to the 5 FTE vacant posts across the IRO Service. The posts have been advertised externally for a second time;
- Secondment opportunities from other services within the Directorate are being sought;
- In conjunction with the Business Improvement Team we are exploring new and smarter ways of working, seeking to capitalise on any new IT/business processes which will improve the efficiency of the IRO's in completing and recording CLA reviews;
- The Internal Audit Service was commissioned to undertake a review of the IRO service to evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems currently operating within the service and the risks facing the team, including caseloads and resources, compliance with statutory requirements and the efficiency of IRO working practices. The findings will be considered by the senior management team and will be used to further improve the service;
- A management review of the IRO service has also been undertaken. This identified the need to amalgamate the two IRO teams to ensure continuity of IRO for the child but also to ensure more equitable caseloads. The process of

bringing the teams together is underway. A training/development plan is in place including team development days and work shadowing opportunities to build staff confidence and expertise. There is already some crossover of work between the two teams but the new structure will be fully implemented by January 2013;

- Latterly, consideration is being given to how other services within the Specialist Services arm of the Directorate can support the IRO Service.

It is vital that we are able to recruit and retain an experienced IRO service if caseloads are to be reduced and the IRO's supported in fulfilling their critical quality assurance function. This will ensure that IRO's 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.

13.2 Quality Assurance

The IRO's are in a unique position, independent from service delivery and with oversight of practice across the nine Children's Social Care districts. 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 IRO's 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 District Managers. However, to support IRO's in fulfilling this responsibility caseloads need to reduce.

14. Conclusion

The positive impact of the IRO Team on outcomes for children and young people is evident in several areas. Good performance has been maintained by the team and the service has continued to develop and improve practice. For example, the quality of children's participation has improved through the use of person centred approaches in reviews. The IRO's have been instrumental in the roll out of training to support this initiative. There is also evidence of IRO challenge, achieving positive outcomes in relation to the health, education and permanence of children looked after. Development work undertaken in relation to the foster carer review has given it the same status as the CLA Review.

The commitment and professionalism of the Children Looked After IRO Team is acknowledged. To conclude, this has been a very productive year and has provided the foundation for further progress towards achieving the goal of positive outcomes and improved life chances for all children and young people in Lancashire's care.

Jude Brown
Mark Hudson
Senior IRO's (CLA)

Sally Allen,
 Directorate Safeguarding Manager
 October 2012

Appendix 1

Children Looked After Review Quality Assurance Form

Child:						
SU Number:						
Legal Status:						
Type of Review:	1 st (1 month)	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 nd (4 months)	<input type="checkbox"/>	On-going	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Worker:						
Team & Location:						
1. Were the recommendations of the last meeting completed?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Review:						
1a. If any recommendations are outstanding, for how many reviews have they been Outstanding?			Date:			
Comments:						
2. Has the IRO made a Starred Recommendation	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
2a. Is there a Starred Recommendation ongoing?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:						



If this review was carried out using the person centred model please cross

3. Is the Child/Young Person's legal status appropriate?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
3a. Has it been recorded correctly?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				
4. Is the Child/Young Person's care plan appropriate?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
4a. Has it been recorded correctly?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				
5. Has the CLA Review report been completed within timescale?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
5a. Has it been shared with all relevant parties?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				
6. Were the CLA Review Recommendations sent to the Team Manager within 5 working days?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				
7. Was the full record of the CLA Review completed within 15 working days of the review?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				
8. Has the Child/Young Person been consulted and prepared appropriately for their review?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				

9. Has the Child/Young Person received a copy of "The Pledge"? (Year 7 and above)	YES		NO		N/A	
Comments:						
10. Have the Child/Young Person's wishes and feeling been taken into account?	YES		NO			
Comments:						
11. Is an Advocate or Independent Visitor required?	YES		NO			
Comments:						
12. Are there any current complaints?	YES		NO			
12a. If so who is dealing with them?						
Comments:						
13. Has the PIR, Care Plan and Complaints procedure been shared with all relevant parties?	YES		NO			
Comments:						
14. Have statutory visits for this Child/Young Person been completed within timescale & recorded?	YES		NO			
Comments:						
15. Does the Child/Young Person have an up to date Health Assessment?	YES		NO			
Comments: (i.e. have you seen the plan?)						

16. Is there a Home Placement Agreement and has it been shared with the IRO?	YES		NO		N/A
Comments:					
17. Have final care plans and relevant court reports been shared with the IRO?	YES		NO		N/A
Comments:					
18. Does the Child/Young Person have an up to date Pathway Plan?	YES		NO		N/A
Comments:					
19. Does the Child/Young Person have an up to date Adoption Plan?	YES		NO		N/A
Comments:					
20. Does the Child/Young Person have an up to date Personal Education Plan?	YES		NO		N/A
Comments:					

The following sections are optional and should be used to highlight any specific issues for individual Children/Young People.

Legal

For example - How long have proceedings been ongoing? How many Social Workers has this young person had? Is there an appointed Guardian? Has there been a delay? Is there a permanence plan?

Review Process

For example - How many meeting were held to complete this review? Did the review have to be adjourned and if so why?

Placement

For example - How many placements has this Child/Young Person had in this period of care? Is the current placement meeting the child's needs? Is the placement in house or agency, foster care or residential care? Are there any placement resource issues? Is the homeless protocol being used and if so what type of accommodation?

Life History Work

Does the child have appropriate life history materials? Does the child have relevant identity documents?

Services

Does this Child/Young Person require any extra services and are they being provided? Are there any resource issues?

Appendix 2

Person Centred Review Agenda

Putting the child or young person at the centre of their Looked After review meeting

1. What do we like and admire about the young person?
2. What's working well?
3. What's not working so well?
4. What's important to the young person now?
5. What support does the young person need to keep safe and healthy
6. What is important to the young person in the future?
7. Anything else the young person wants to raise
8. Anything else?
9. Action Plan.

Safeguarding Independent Reviewing Officers Team Annual Report 2011/2012



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1. Foreword

As highlighted by Professor Eileen Munro, ('The Munro Review of Child Protection' February 2011), the underlying principle of an effective child protection system is the welfare and protection of the child. IRO's in Lancashire have independent oversight of the child's case and play a crucial role in the quality assurance of practice. This annual report provides an overview of safeguarding activity and highlights the progress made during 2011/12 in strengthening the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) role within Lancashire. Whilst acknowledging the challenges faced by the service and recognising the areas for development, it also seeks to celebrate achievements and successes in improving outcomes for children in need of protection.

Whilst IRO caseloads are high, good performance has been maintained against national performance indicators, which is a reflection as identified by Ofsted, of child protection cases being well managed. (Inspection of Lancashire's safeguarding and looked after children services, 9th March 2012). The inspection also acknowledged that child protection conferences are chaired effectively and found evidence of good multi-agency work, ensuring child protection plans are progressed.

This annual report provides evidence of effective IRO challenge, ensuring risk is appropriately managed and positive outcomes achieved for children and young people. Feedback from parents and carers provides an insight into the child and family's journey and will be used to further improve practice. The importance of the child and families participation in child protection processes is recognised and revised child protection conference documentation has been piloted in one District. Feedback from children and families was very positive, with information being deemed to be more accessible and easier to understand. Consideration is now being given to the roll out of the pilot documentation across the county. Information leaflets explaining the child protection system have also been revised and launched promoting participation.

A review of the IRO Service has been completed looking at how services can be streamlined to improve the child's journey and minimise changes of IRO. Lancashire is committed to continuous improvement and alongside three other local authorities regionally is part of a Best Practice Network looking at how IRO services can be improved. This will provide a strong foundation to further develop the IRO Service in Lancashire.

2. Purpose of the Annual Report

In March 2010 the Department for Children, Schools & Families (Now Department for Education), published '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'.

The guidance places a responsibility on the manager of the Independent Reviewing Officers 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 produce an annual report in relation to safeguarding, ensuring that children and young people

are safe and effectively protected from physical and emotional harm and neglect is a priority within Lancashire's Children & Young People's Plan.

This is the second safeguarding annual report reviewing the work and findings of the Safeguarding IRO's during the period from the 1st April 2011 to the 31st March 2012. It provides statistical information regarding performance and more qualitative information from the IRO's in relation to themes and trends. It highlights areas of good practice and identifies key challenges and priorities for further development during 2012/13. The report has been approved by the Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) and will be shared with the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), the Children's Trust and the Corporate Parenting Board. It will also be made available to the public.

3. The Legal Framework

Lancashire has had an Independent Reviewing Officer service in place 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 looked after missing from care, children looked after who display sexually harmful behaviour towards other children and cases of serious self harm of children who are looked after. Prior to their role being established these meetings were chaired by the team managers responsible for the child's case.

The role of the Safeguarding IRO is governed primarily by 'The Children Act' (1989), 'The Children Act' (2004) and Government Guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2010). They also work in accordance with 'Lancashire's Safeguarding Children Procedures' (Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board).

4. The role of the Safeguarding IRO in Lancashire

Following the implementation of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 Lancashire Children's Services made the decision to separate the IRO Team creating the specialist roles of Children Looked After (CLA) IRO and Safeguarding IRO to ensure a robust approach to both the review of care plans for children who are looked after and child protection plans for children in need of protection. Respective IROs in each service have therefore been able to focus and develop their knowledge and skills base.

However, changes introduced by the IRO Handbook and feedback from children and families within the Munro Review of Child Protection have highlighted the importance of continuity of professional relationships and a single care planning process. Over the last 12 months there have also been changes in service needs, (reflecting a decrease in the number of children subject to a child protection plan and an increase in the number of children looked after). This has impacted on IRO capacity, particularly within the CLA IRO team as identified by Ofsted in their recent inspection of Lancashire's safeguarding and looked after children services. Following a review of the IRO Service a decision has therefore been made to combine the roles once

more in order to ensure continuity of IRO for the child throughout their journey of involvement with Children's Services and more equitable caseloads.

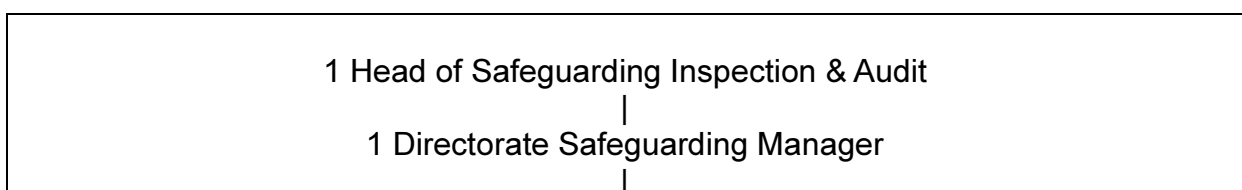
4.1 Overview of the Safeguarding IRO functions:

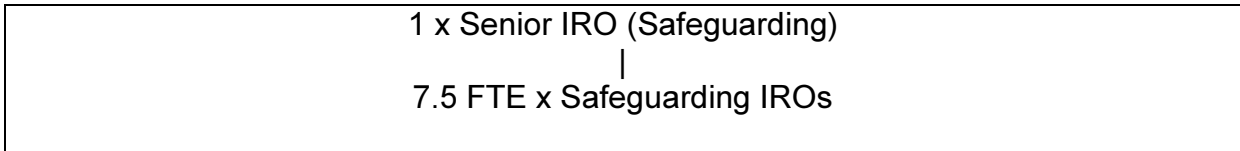
The key role of the Safeguarding IRO is:

- To undertake the local authorities responsibilities in respect of the chairing, management and administration of child protection conferences, in accordance with *'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2010)*.
- To undertake the local authority's responsibilities in the chairing of strategy meetings in relation to looked after children, fabricated/induced illness, child sexual exploitation and allegations against people working with children. These are undertaken in accordance with the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Procedures (LSCB) and the Lancashire Children's Social Care Procedures.
- To maintain high standards at child protection conferences and strategy meetings, ensuring that the meeting is focused on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child.
- To maintain and promote a high level of participation/involvement of children/young people and parents/carers in child protection conferences and to ensure that the voice of the child is heard and given due consideration.
- To provide robust scrutiny and challenge to Children's Social Care in relation to its function and performance ensuring improved outcomes for children and young people.
- To quality assure decision making in respect of S47 enquiries where it is deemed that a child has suffered significant harm and a decision has been made not to convene an initial child protection conference.
- To provide advice on safeguarding issues to practitioners within Children's Social Care and other agencies as necessary. In particular regarding the implementation of safeguarding procedures and to contribute to developments arising from changes in legislation and government guidance.

5. The Safeguarding IRO Team

5.1 Team Structure





The team is managed by a Senior IRO (Safeguarding). The team is part of the Directorate's Safeguarding Unit which also includes the Children Looked After IRO's, Schools Safeguarding, the Local Authority Designated Officer and Child Employment & Entertainment Team.

The Safeguarding Unit is based 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 IRO's.

The team consists of 2 male and 5.5 female workers. They are all white British, with English as their first language. Given that Lancashire has a large number of black and minority ethnic families, it is recognised that the team is not truly representative of the needs of the community which it serves. However, 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. In a recent recruitment campaign a post had been offered to a BME candidate, however they subsequently turned down the offer to take up an alternative post in Lancashire Children's Social Care.

5.2 Post Qualifying Experience

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

The table below details the level of post qualifying experience and length of service as IRO's in Lancashire:

Name	Year of qualification	Year began as IRO	Year began as Senior IRO
Senior IRO	1983	N/A	2011
IRO 1	1995	2004	
IRO 2	1988	2000	
IRO 3	1995	2001	
IRO 4	1999	2010	
IRO 5	1996	2011	
IRO 6	1982	2011	
IRO 7	2000	2011	
IRO 8 (Part-time)	2004	2011	

5.3 Staff Recruitment and Retention Issues

During this twelve month review period the team has been through a period of significant change with 3.5 FTE new IRO's and a Senior IRO being recruited to the team, (the latter in May 2011). Vacancies had arisen for a variety of reasons including growth (part-time vacancy), for personal reasons, and dissatisfaction with the outcome of job evaluation and the Equal Pay Review. Although the IRO's submitted an appeal in respect of their grading this had an unsuccessful outcome.

As an interim measure pending staff taking up these positions 1.5 FTE agency IROs were appointed to increase capacity within the team. Another manager in the Safeguarding Unit also assisted by chairing child protection conferences at this time. By July 2011 the team was fully staffed. Three appointments were internal from within Lancashire County Council and the Senior IRO and one IRO were recruited externally.

The team remained fully staffed until 31st December 2011, when a long standing member of staff retired. Recruitment to this post has been unsuccessful. Offers were made to two candidates who didn't take up the position as they were successful in applications for other posts at a higher salary grade; one with a neighboring authority and one for a Senior Practitioner post within Lancashire Children's Social Care. Both cited the unsuccessful outcome of the IRO EPR appeal as the reason for this.

Following the outcome of job evaluation in Lancashire, IRO's are now paid at the higher end of the social work salary scale. There is concern that this may impact on the ability to recruit experienced candidates to vacancies within the team.

Staff vacancies have impacted on the team's capacity and had led to staff accruing a significant amount of time off in lieu in order to ensure that the service fulfills its statutory requirements in relation to child protection conferences. This position was only tenable in the short term and following approval of a business case by the Director of Specialist Services, 1.5 FTE agency IROs were employed to increase capacity and maintain performance within the team.

In recognition of the capacity issues within the IRO Service, in January 2012 the Directorate Leadership Team (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 looked after children and IRO caseloads having risen to between 120 and 130. (The IRO Handbook recommends 50 – 70). 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. This will be achieved by ensuring families receive appropriate support at an earlier stage which builds their resilience and prevents the need for children to become looked after by the local authority. This work is evident within the 'Working Together with Families' approach which has already been successful in supporting some children within Lancashire's residential homes to return to the care of their families.

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 due to the differential salary grade and the fact that the posts were temporary.

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. (The latter are reviewed by the two Fostering IRO's within the team). The additional posts and the amalgamation of the two IRO teams will reduce IRO caseloads.

At the time of writing this report the IRO Service has 2.5 FTE permanent and 2.5 FTE temporary vacancies. Recruitment continues to present major challenges. 2 FTE agency IRO's are currently supporting the Safeguarding IRO Team and secondment opportunities from other services within the Directorate are also being explored.

5.4 Caseloads

The number of children subject to a child protection plan in Lancashire during the year 2011 – 12 ranged from 679 at its highest (August 2011) to 547 at its lowest (March 2012).

Caseloads within the team have varied between 85 and 119 children and young people. This is considerably higher than the recommended caseload size of 50 - 70 in the IRO Handbook (although this guidance is in relation to IRO's for Children Looked After). This is commensurate with the regional and national position, where many local authorities have been unable to achieve caseloads consistent with the handbook. Whilst the child protection conference considers all children within the household which reduces the number of meetings in comparison to the CLA IRO's, these meetings can be large and complex in nature.

A staff vacancy since January 2012 has impacted on IRO caseloads as the team has chaired additional meetings, often necessitating additional travel time across the county. This has reduced the time available for administrative tasks including the sign off of conference and strategy meeting minutes, meaning that performance against timescales for the distribution of these documents has dropped in latter months. This fall in performance has also been a result of work pressures in a number of District based business support teams who distribute minutes. The use of new IT technology is being explored to support the efficient use of IRO time.

There is an expectation that IRO's complete a quality assurance form following each child protection conference. Due to capacity issues within the team this has not been possible. IRO's have therefore prioritised cases requiring escalation where concerns have been identified regarding the progression of the child protection plan. IRO capacity issues are being addressed as outlined above.

6. Performance Information & Safeguarding Activity

During 2011/12 854 initial child protection conferences were held; 2,067 review child protection conferences and 1,078 strategy meetings.

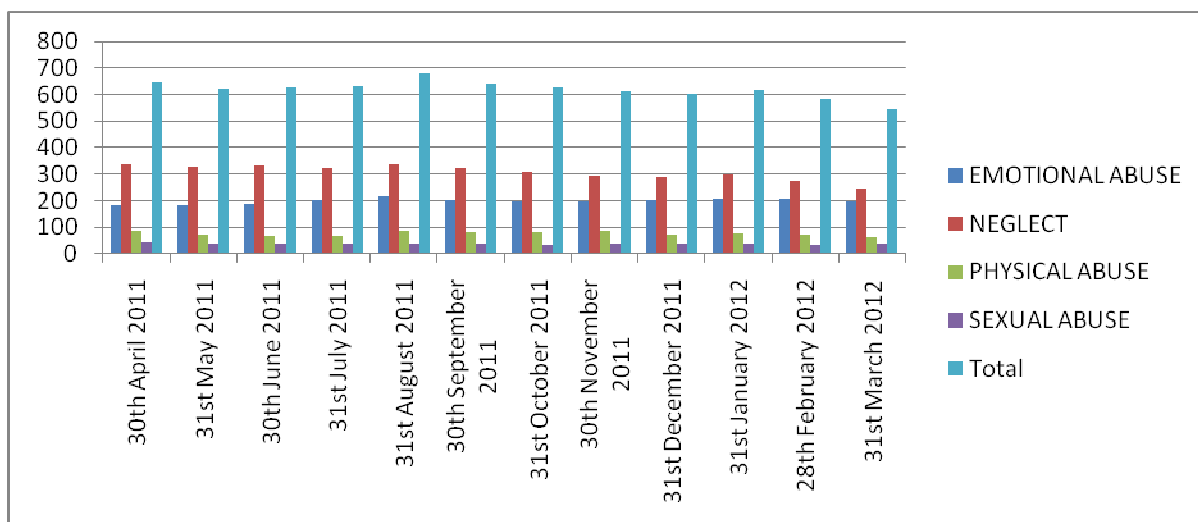
6.1 Child Protection Plans

At the end of March 2012, there were 547 children subject to a child protection plan, a decrease of 126 from the 31st March 2011. This figure equates to 22.36 children per 10,000 of the under 18 population and is below the national average equivalent rate of 35.50 (in 2009/10). Comments made by Ofsted during an inspection of Lancashire's safeguarding and looked after children services in January 2012 may account for this. The report (published on the 9th March 2012) concluded that the Council's child protection service is very well managed. Good performance management and quality assurance systems were said to be in place at both strategic and operational levels. The inspection also highlighted that good multi-agency work ensures child protection plans are progressed effectively. Early intervention and preventative services were also deemed to be good. Services were said to be targeted effectively, for example through children's centres, reaching high numbers of the most deprived children and families in the diverse communities of Lancashire.

6.2 Child Protection Plans by Category of Abuse

The table below gives a breakdown of child protection plans during 2011/12 by category of abuse. This highlights the continuing high prevalence of neglect cases which accounted for more than 45% of all child protection plans. Neglect was also the primary concern in 54% of child protection plans lasting 2 years or more. (See details later in this report). This mirrors national trends.

Number of CP plans at the report end date	30th April 2011	31st May 2011	30th June 2011	31st July 2011	31st August 2011	30th September 2011	31st October 2011	30th November 2011	31st December 2011	31st January 2012	28th February 2012	31st March 2012
EMOTIONAL ABUSE	185	184	187	203	216	200	198	196	200	205	207	199
NEGLECT	338	326	333	325	338	324	310	294	289	297	274	245
PHYSICAL ABUSE	84	73	69	68	86	83	83	85	74	76	70	63
SEXUAL ABUSE	41	40	39	37	39	36	34	36	38	37	32	40
Total	648	623	628	633	679	643	625	611	601	615	583	547



6.3 Performance against National Indicators

Good performance has been maintained against national child protection performance indicators, which is a reflection, as identified by Ofsted, of child protection cases being well managed.

6.3.1 NI 67: Percentage of Review Child Protection Conferences held within timescale

98.90% 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 in line with the national average (2010/11: 97.1%). The 1.1% of cases where reviews were held beyond the requisite timescale involved ten children. In three conferences (involving four children) this was due to human error. In case 1 (one child) the review was held four days beyond the due date, in case 2 (a sibling group of two) the review was held fifteen days beyond the due date and in case 3 (one child) the review was nine days beyond the due date. In the remaining six cases, the conference had to be rearranged. This decision was made for a variety of reasons including: the absence of a social worker's report; the absence of the family's social worker and the IRO's car breaking down rendering them unable to get to the conference venue; the need for additional information to inform the conference decision in relation to the continuation of the child protection plan and confusion in relation to the conference venue meaning the conference wasn't quorate. In all of these cases the conference was reconvened within 28 days and oversight of the child protection plan was maintained through regular child protection visits and monthly core group meetings.

To address the drop in performance a recovery plan was implemented including a requirement that review child protection conferences are held at a maximum of five month intervals (previously six) from the second review onwards. This then allows a month for the occasions when a conference has to be adjourned for legitimate reasons. For example, to facilitate the families participation, to ensure the conference is quorate or where significant reports/information has not been available. Monthly reports of conference adjournments are now used to monitor the frequency and reason why conferences are adjourned.

6.3.2 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

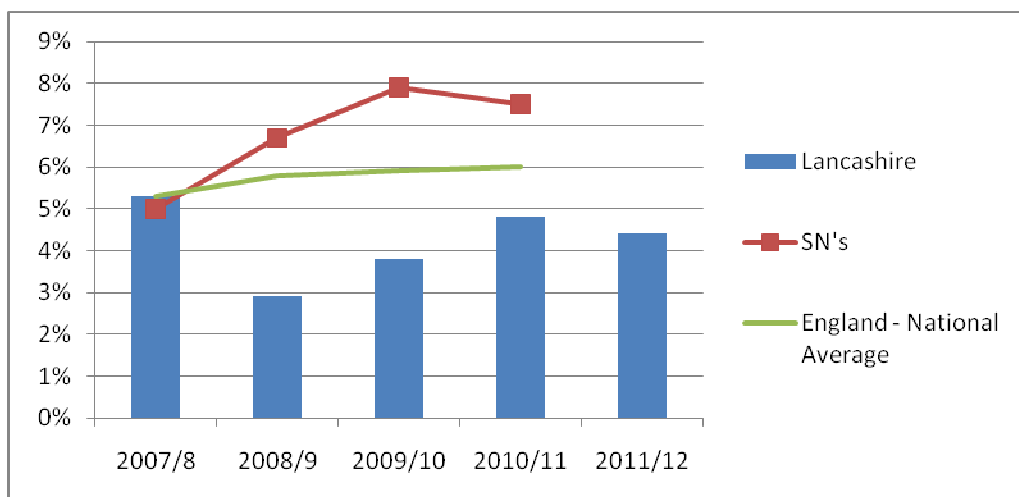
As detailed in the table below the proportion of children with a child protection plan for more than two years has decreased slightly from 4.8% (2010/11) to 4.4% (2011/12) and performance remains well within the top national banding (0<10) for this indicator.

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 1.35% in the Lancaster district to 6.82% in South Ribble. It is difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from this variation apart from saying in the latter that this only represented one case due to the low overall number of children subject to child protection plans in that district. More meaningful may be the figures in the Burnley and Pendle districts where the percentage ceasing to be subject to child protection plans over two years duration were 6.54% and 6.56% respectively. These two districts have seen a rise in long term neglect cases moving into legal proceedings and therefore resulting in the child protection plan being ceased.

It is also important to note that this slight decrease on an already very low figure is perhaps a reflection of the fact that child protection cases are well managed and IROs together with District Managers and Team Managers regularly review all children who have been subject to a child protection plan over twelve months.

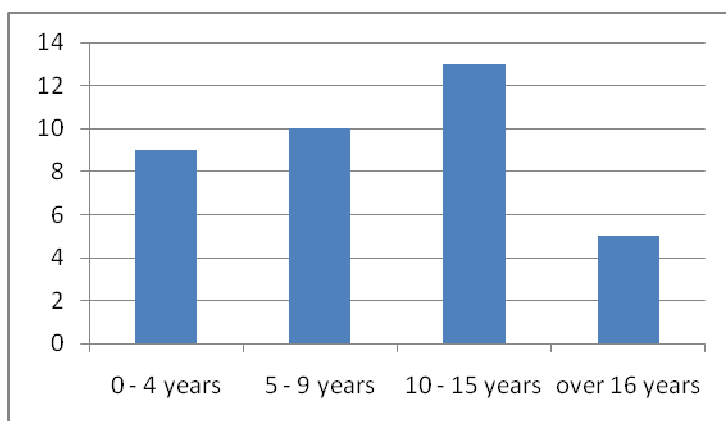
Where progress is not being made to significantly improve the life chances of the child, cases are progressed into proceedings. Where significant improvement has been made the appropriate decision is made to cease the child protection plan. In these circumstances cases are appropriately deescalated to child in need to ensure continuation of support for the family.

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



The age breakdown of this cohort is detailed below:

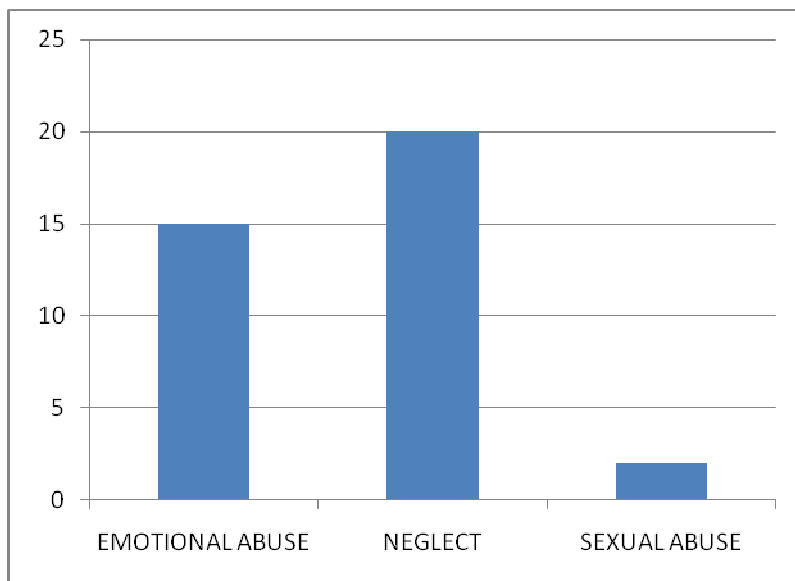
0 - 4 years	9
5 - 9 years	10
10 - 15 years	13
over 16 years	5
Grand Total	37



There is a relatively even spread across the age bandings 0-4, 5-9 and 10-15, with only 5 young people over the age of 16. The average age of the children in this cohort is 8 years old.

The category of abuse for this cohort is detailed below:

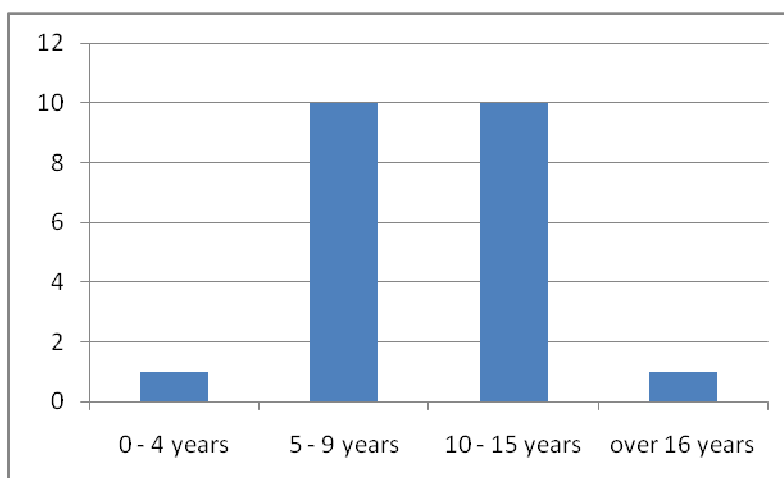
EMOTIONAL ABUSE	15
NEGLECT	20
SEXUAL ABUSE	2
Grand Total	37



Over 50% of this cohort was on a child protection plan under the abuse category of neglect. All but one of this cohort was of a white British ethnic origin and one child was categorised as 'other dual heritage' ethnicity.

It is also important to consider the number and proportion of current child protection plans over 2 years in duration. (As opposed to NI 64 which only considers child protection plans which have ceased). This identified 22 children in this cohort. (Out of a total of 547 children who were subject to a child protection plan as at the 31/03/2012). This equates to 4% of all child protection plans. It is interesting to note that the majority of children in this cohort were between the ages of 5 – 15 years.

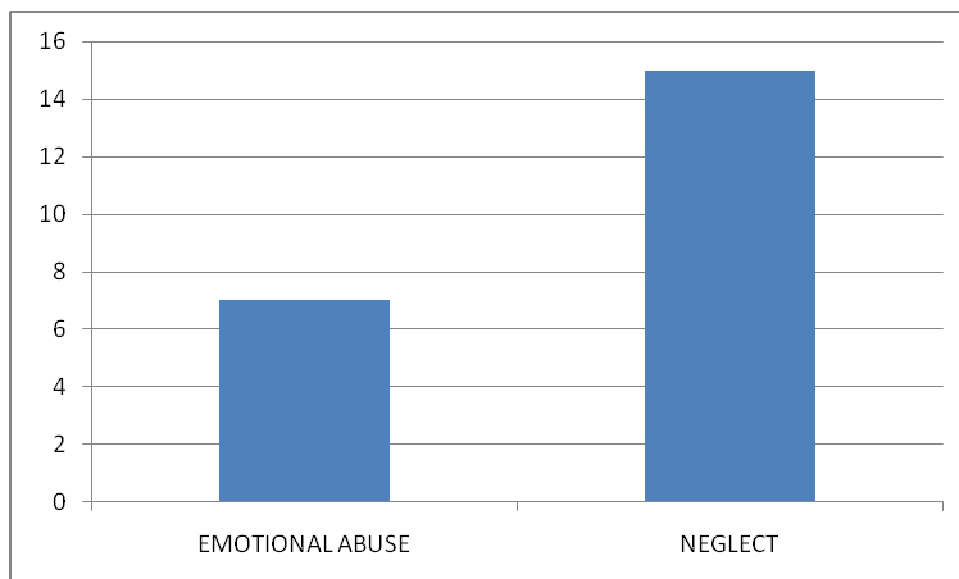
0 - 4 years	1
5 - 9 years	10
10 - 15 years	10
over 16 years	1
Grand Total	22



The ethnicity of the 22 in the cohort is predominantly white British with 13 of the children falling into this category, with 5 children classified as 'white and Asian'.

The category of abuse was as follows:

	Total
EMOTIONAL ABUSE	7
NEGLECT	15
Grand Total	22



This indicator provides a broader and perhaps more meaningful picture of the duration of child protection plans across Lancashire.

6.3.3 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. The target for 2011/12 was 13% and nationally good performance is deemed to be between 10 – 15%. During 2011/12 there was a significant decrease in the number of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time. This shows a decrease from 13.7% in 2010/11 to 10.8 % in 2011/12. It is of note that this is nearly 2% below our statistical neighbour authorities at 12.5% and the England average of 13.1%.

IROs have been mindful of not ceasing a plan too early due to the 'rule of optimism'. The IRO's have been increasingly rigorous during the course of this year in recommending that a case should be progressed into proceedings where there is long term neglect with no sustained improvement despite significant interventions with the family. In these cases there has often been a short period of improvement resulting in a request for the child protection plan to be ceased, only to see a further deterioration and the child being referred back into the child protection system. ('Revolving door syndrome').

The IRO team has also identified concern around the lack of outcome focused child protection plans that lack realistic targets and timescales. (See priority area for 2012/13).

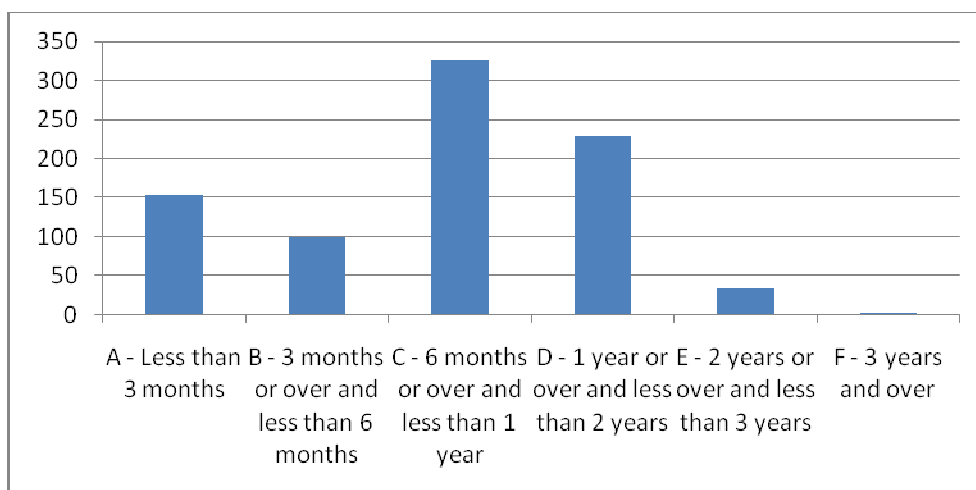
Although this indicator is useful in showing the level of repeat child protection plans, it would be more meaningful to consider other factors such as:

- The length of time from the previous plan being ceased to the most recent plan commencing;
- The length of time the child previously spent on a child protection plan;
- The reason for the previous plan(s) and the reason for the current plan
- Whether the second or subsequent plan is due to the child moving across local authority boundaries as this may artificially increase the number of repeat plans.

The table below details Lancashire's performance in respect of these 3 National Indicators:

Indicator	2010/11	2011/12	2011/12 Target	England Average 2010/11
NI 64 Child protection plans lasting 2 years or more	4.80%	4.40%	4.4%	6.00%
NI 65 Percentage of children becoming the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time	13.70%	10.80%	12.00%	13.1%
NI 67 Percentage of child protection cases reviewed within required timescales	100%	98.90%	100%	97.10%

Duration of CPPs ceasing in the 12 months to 31 st March 2012	Total	Percentage of Total
A - Less than 3 months	153	18%
B - 3 months or over and less than 6 months	99	12%
C - 6 months or over and less than 1 year	326	39%
D - 1 year or over and less than 2 years	229	27%
E - 2 years or over and less than 3 years	34	4%
F - 3 years and over	3	0%
Grand Total	844	



68.5% (578) of all child protection plans that ceased in Lancashire in the 12 month period to 31st March 2012 were less than 1 year in duration, with just over a quarter (27.1% - 229 child protection plans) over 1 year but less than 2 years. The duration of child protection plans that ceased in the same period across the districts was fairly evenly spread, with the exception of Ribble Valley where 55.6% of child protection plans ceased were less than 1 year duration. However, this only involved 5 children out of a cohort of 12 child protection plans ceased during this time period.

6.3.4 Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan who were are also a Child Looked After

On 31st March 2012, there were 39 children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan whilst also being looked after by the authority. Of these children, 24 were subject to Interim Care Orders and 17 were accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. The table below gives a breakdown of placement type:

Placements of CYP who are subject to a CP plan and are also looked after by the authority	Total
Foster placement with relative or friend (in LA)	1
Placed with own parents or other persons with parental authority (in LA)	7
Placement with other foster carer (in LA)	28
Placement with other foster carer (outside LA)	3
Grand Total	39

A number of actions have been taken in response to these findings:

- More robust quality assurance mechanisms have been established:
 - District Managers and IROs now receive monthly lists of all child protection plans over 12 months in duration, child protection plans for a second or subsequent period and details of all Children Looked After who are also subject to a child protection plan, to review the cases;
 - The IRO's are reviewing the children who have been made subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time within the last 12 months.

- The Directorate has undertaken a detailed review of neglect cases using a safeguarding quality assurance framework to evaluate practice and to inform the development of a multi-agency strategy for neglect. Neglect has been identified as a significant safeguarding issue and is a factor in 45% of children and young people subject to child protection plans.

7. Quality Assurance

Whilst performance indicators are an essential source of information and help to benchmark performance, as highlighted by the Munro review, it cannot be treated as a straightforward measure of good or bad practice. Consideration must also be given to the quality and effectiveness of the help given to children and families.

The IRO's are independent of service delivery and have an important quality assurance role within Lancashire.

7.1 Evidence of IRO Challenge

The IRO role is well embedded in Lancashire. The following case examples illustrate the effectiveness of the IRO in challenging practice and the positive outcomes this has achieved for children:

Case Example 1:

The IRO challenged gaps in the pre-birth assessment and the decision for the baby to remain at home on an Interim Care Order subject to a home placement agreement. This was escalated to District Manager level and agreement reached that the case would be contested in court with a view to seeking removal of the baby at birth.

Case Example 2:

The IRO challenged a proposal to cease the child protection plan involving three children with complex health needs when there was evidence of poor engagement by parents, considerable concerns in respect of the children's health, development and safety and the assessment was incomplete. The IRO was instrumental in providing advice, formulating the child protection plan and tracking the progress between conferences to ensure that each agency was completing their part of the plan to prevent drift. The IRO was able to ensure the conferences remained child focused and that the implications of the safeguarding concerns for each child were fully considered.

Case Example 3:

The IRO challenged practice where there was a delay in a case being brought to conference. This followed concern regarding the frequency of domestic abuse incidents over a 12 month period. There were also continuing concerns regarding drug and alcohol misuse and evidence of the impact to the children. The IRO closely monitored the implementation of the child protection plan and the management of risk to the children who now live with their extended family.

7.2 Themes Arising from IRO Quality Assurance

As chairperson of the child protection conference, the IRO has responsibility for ensuring the child protection plan is progressed. As part of the IRO's quality assurance role, a quality assurance form should be completed after every child protection conference.

The purpose of the quality assurance form is to ensure compliance against statutory requirements as well as being a problem resolution mechanism for escalating and resolving any practice concerns. The form ensures that where outstanding tasks are identified, they are promptly relayed to the social worker and team manager in order for issues to be addressed without delay. If not resolved at this level the concern is escalated further using the line management structure and ultimately to director level if necessary. The form is also used to identify and reinforce good practice which is equally important for staff development.

In 2011, two IROs worked with the manager to develop a new quality assurance form that had a more qualitative focus in capturing information that would inform improvements in practice as opposed to reporting on compliance and quantitative data.

Consultation took place with District Managers and Team Managers and the new form was introduced in January 2012. Between the 1 January 2012 and the 31 March 2012 174 quality assurance forms were completed by the IROs. This a completion rate of 22.3% of the total number of child protection conferences held during this period. This was due to the team covering a full time vacancy and so holding higher caseloads and spending more time travelling to meeting venues. During this period there was agreement that IRO's would prioritise those cases where there were concerns about practice or the quality/ timeliness of child protection plans that required escalation to Team Managers for action.

The following practice themes have been identified:

- S47 core assessments are completed in all cases leading to an initial child protection conference;
- However, where there has been a change in the child's circumstances and the core assessment needs updating this isn't completed in a significant number of cases which can lead to a loss of focus and drift, particularly in cases where neglect is the predominant feature;
- In the majority of cases initial child protection conferences are held within 15 working days;
- The quality of reports completed by social worker's for child protection conferences has improved, although in many cases the analysis of the information is inadequate and focuses on factual information rather than an analysis of the impact on the child. Training on assessment skills is being delivered to address this;
- The quality of child protection plans in many cases is still poor. They are not outcome focused in the majority of cases. (This was an issue highlighted by Ofsted in their inspection of safeguarding and children looked after in January 2012). See priority Action for 2012-13;
- There is still evidence that in a significant number of cases the social worker hasn't shared their report with the parent/carer 48 hours in advance of the

review conference. (Out of 174 quality assurance forms completed the parents had seen the report in only 50 cases. Therefore 71% hadn't seen them in a timely manner);

- In the majority of cases monthly core group meetings have been held;
- In the majority of districts child protection visits were completed within timescale;
- The participation of children and young people in child protection conferences is not evident in a significant number of cases, even in the ten plus age range. (Out of 174 quality assurance forms, only five children aged over ten years had participated in the conference). It is recognised that this is an issue which requires further action and is a priority action for the IRO Team during 2012-13. It is important however, to recognise that there are different ways that a child/young person can contribute to the process. It may not in many cases be appropriate for them to attend and hear information that is sensitive or confidential to their parents and may be distressing to the young person. Various mediums will be considered including for example, letters/ texts, IT systems to allow them to record their thoughts and the use of pictures for younger children;
- In respect of participation the most critical issue is that children and young people are engaged in the child protection process by their social worker and that they understand why they are subject of an initial child protection conference or a child protection plan. The Safeguarding IRO's need to ensure through their quality assurance responsibilities that this is happening and that children/young people are 'given a voice' to communicate their views or concerns and what they need from agencies to make them feel safe and ensure their quality of life and life chances are enhanced;
- The participation of parents/carer's is evident in the majority of conferences. Out of 174 quality assurance forms completed parents had attended in 160 conferences (92%);
- However the quality of parents contributions during child protection conferences and meaningful engagement in the process is still of concern. In many conferences parents are still often passive bystanders rather than being actively engaged in the process. This will be addressed as a priority during 2012-13;
- There is evidence that in the majority of cases a copy of the child protection plan has been given to the person with parental responsibility for the child. (There were only a few cases where the answer to this question was no).

The quality assurance forms identify many examples of good practice across the county, for example in the quality of work undertaken as part of the child protection plan, the child centred focus of the work, sensitivity shown to the parents and positive engagement with families.

7.3 Feedback from Parents and Carers

Parents/carers are asked to complete a questionnaire following every child protection conference to give feedback about their experience of the process. 161 responses were received in the year April 2011 to the end of March 2012. This represents an 5.5% return on the 2,921 conferences held during 2011/12. The table below gives a breakdown of numbers received for both initial and review child

protection conferences for each month. This reveals no particular pattern in respect of the numbers of questionnaires completed for either initial or reviews and by month.

Months 2011 - 2012	Numbers of Parent/Carer Questionnaires Initial CPC	Numbers of Parent/Carer Questionnaires Review CPC
April	9	6
May	9	5
June	5	12
July	5	14
August	8	3
September	3	8
October	4	17
November	4	9
December	3	7
January	7	2
February	6	4
March	2	8
Total	66	95

7.4 Themes from Parent/Carer Feedback Questionnaires

- Most parents/carers said they had the opportunity to meet with the IRO prior to the start of the meeting;
- The majority stated they had received the social worker's report 48 hours before the conference. However, it should be noted that at conferences themselves, the majority of parents report a very different picture with many stating that their social worker has not shared their report with them. This may indicate that the 5.5% returns received are completed by parents/carers who are largely happy with the child protection conference and therefore is not representative of all parents involved in the conference process;
- The vast majority indicate that parents/carers felt prepared for the conference by the IRO and believe the meetings were chaired in a clear and respectful manner;
- Most of the parents/carers felt they were given the opportunity to express their views in respect of the concerns raised at the conference;
- The majority felt able to share and discuss their views in the meeting;
- There are some comments which indicate that parents find the nature of the conference process to be stressful;
- Most parents/carers indicated they felt clear about what needed to change to make their child safe;

- Most parents/carers said that the appeals process had been explained to them, although a couple said they were not clear what this meant;
- The majority said they had been given the opportunity to speak to the chairperson at the end of the conference.

7.5 Parent Participation/Involvement in Child Protection Conferences

Within team meetings the IRO's have discussed their own observations of the child protection conference process and believe that in the majority of meetings parents play a passive role where most 'air time' is given to professionals sharing information. Consideration has been given to how conferences could be more interactive with parents/carers being able to significantly contribute and engage in the process as opposed to being observers.

With this in mind consideration is being given to the use of the strengthening families model which has been used in a number of authorities including West Berkshire and Oxfordshire. This model is more interactive utilising a white board where the chair notes the concerns raised by professionals and also encourages the families to report the concerns/issues as they see them.

It was planned late last year that a number of the team would visit the authorities using this model in the spring of 2012. Due to capacity issues detailed earlier in this report that was not possible. We plan to undertake these visits in the autumn if we have been able to achieve full staffing by this time. If we believe this model is achieving greater participation and engagement of parents in the process and thereby achieving better outcomes for children, the approach will be piloted in Lancashire.

A suite of information leaflets have been developed explaining the child protection process and purpose of the child protection conference. This includes information promoting the participation of parents/carers.

7.6 Participation of Children and Young People in the Child Protection Conference Process

At present it is only in the minority of child protection conferences that older children or young people attend and make a verbal contribution.

It is recognised that not all children would want to attend the child protection conference and in some circumstances this may not be beneficial or appropriate. To promote understanding of the importance of participation information leaflets have been developed for children and young people which explains the child protection conference and the varied forms which participation can take.

The IRO Team is mindful of research findings that have paid particular heed to the outcome of the Munro review of child protection where the importance of listening to 'the voice of the child' and being mindful of 'the child's journey' is highlighted.

Audits by the IRO Team have identified the absence of 'the child's voice' on many occasions both during the Section 47 enquiry process leading to an initial child

protection conference and between conferences whether it be in recording of Core Group minutes or in home visits.

Clearly there are many ways of ensuring children and young people can participate in the child protection conference process and this does not have to mean attendance at the meeting. The Safeguarding IRO Team will be leading district based training in relation to participation with Social Workers and Team Managers this autumn. (See priorities for 2012/13).

7.7 Audit

7.7.1 Child Protection Plans

In October 2011 the Senior IRO completed an audit of cases where the child had been made subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time within twelve months of the previous plan being ceased. The following findings were reported:

- There was insufficient time for changes/improvements to be consolidated;
- The 'rule of optimism' had prevailed at the conference leading to the child protection plan being ceased prematurely;

The Senior IRO also completed an audit of cases where children had been subject of child protection plans for more than two years. The main findings of this audit included:

- Some child protection plans lacked clarity in terms of targets or timescales. This meant that in some cases there was no evidence at review conferences of targets being met or progress being made;
- Also certain assessments/interventions agreed had not been undertaken therefore progress could not be measured;
- Sometimes certain professionals had not provided necessary information. For example, risk assessments not provided by Probation in relation to the risk presented by a male partner in relation to offending behaviour. This included the risk of physical violence and history of sexual offending;

To strengthen the quality assurance role of the IRO Team a programme of audit activity has been agreed with the Directorate Safeguarding Manager to be undertaken by the Senior IRO in 2012/13.

7.7.2 Conference Decision Sheets

The Mobile Minute Taking Service has improved performance in relation to the distribution of the conference decision sheet within 24 hours. Within the last 12 months conference documentation has been distributed to professionals using secure email which has improved efficiency and timeliness. Going forward, the service hopes to produce management information reports to more accurately report on performance. Two factors have impacted on performance timescales including delays by the IRO in returning the decision sheet for distribution and the minute taker being off work due to annual leave or sickness.

7.7.3 Audit Tool

In May 2011 the Directorate launched revised recording standards and a new file audit tool. The file audit framework was also updated and became operational in July 2011. A central audit team supports and strengthens the Directorate's audit process and an audit calendar identifies the agreed audit priorities for the year.

7.7.4 Internal Audit

In February 2012 the Internal Audit Service commenced an audit of the IRO Service. The objective of the audit was to evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the controls in place over the key risks affecting the Children Looked After and Safeguarding Independent Reviewing Officers in relation to IRO caseloads and resources, compliance with statutory requirements and the efficiency of IRO working practices. Findings from the report will be considered by the senior management team and will be used to further improve the service.

7.7.5 Multi-agency Mock Inspections

In conjunction with the LSCB, the Directorate has agreed that as part of its continuous improvement programme and in preparation for future inspections that it will undertake a series of unannounced mock inspections. The inspections which will commence in autumn 2012 will follow the Ofsted framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children. Their purpose being to evaluate the quality of services being provided to children, young people and their families; to assist preparation for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children; to identify good practice and areas of vulnerability; to learn lessons from the process which can assist staff in preparation for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children and to look for evidence of how services to children, young people and their families have a positive impact and result in good outcomes for children and young people. The mock inspections will include observations of frontline practice including child protection conferences and strategy meetings.

8. Evidence of Good Practice

In addition to the good practice examples identified within the quality assurance forms and parent/carers questionnaires, a number of service developments have taken place which it is hoped will strengthen our approach to safeguarding and improve outcomes for children and young people.

8.1 District/IRO Cluster Meetings

Quarterly meetings are held between the IRO's (Children Looked After and Safeguarding) and District and Team Managers in three cluster group footprints across the county. Each of the three Cluster meetings is chaired by one of the three Senior IROs in order to provide continuity. The meetings provide a forum to share themes arising from the quality assurance forms and parent/carers questionnaires, information on performance and problem resolution, learning from serious case reviews, training and information in respect of any new developments. Going forward the aim is to produce an IRO quarterly quality assurance report to formalise the reporting process and to assist in the preparation of the annual report. The cluster meetings have been particularly effective in improving communication between the

IRO's and Team Managers and promoting a greater understanding of respective roles.

8.2 Review of Child Protection Business Processes

The Directorate in partnership with the LSCB has undertaken a review of its child protection business processes. The revised child protection documents were piloted in the Pendle district during the period from July to the end of December 2011. (This included the conference invite, the initial and review child protection conference agendas, a standardised agency report template, the child protection conference decision sheet, revised core group agenda and core group notes template and core group report to the review child protection conference).

Feedback from the pilot has been very positive. A continuous theme from parents/carers was that the reports are easier to read and follow as they are more succinct and are less confusing. Parents have found it easier to understand the views of agencies and reported that their views were also clearly recorded. They compared the core group report to the previous Social Worker's report and not knowing where to start due to the volume of pages. As the content of the report is discussed in the core group there were no surprises. Similarly a fourteen year old young person provided feedback that she found the multi-agency core group report 'easier to understand in one report' and that she didn't 'want a report from everyone'. That she does "not have to listen to everyone" and that the documents helped to avoid the repetition of information.

Agency feedback was also positive, reducing the duplication of information, providing a stronger focus on the child and ensuring information was effectively shared between agencies. The IRO also made a number of positive observations:

- That the duration of the review conference had been reduced and the documents provided greater clarity regarding the information requirements for a review conference.
- The multi-agency report is more unified and the information provides a better picture of what is happening.
- It was also felt the documentation supports a clear analysis of risk.
- The process supported multi-agency attendance at core groups.

Consideration is now being given to the integration of the pilot documentation within Lancashire's electronic social care record with a view to then rolling out the pilot across the county. As Lancashire is in the process of procuring a new IT solution for the integrated children's system, consideration is also being given to the configuration of the documents within this system. The development of a document portal will also ensure the more efficient and timely sharing of reports and information for the child protection conference. This will also create significant cost savings.

8.3 Mobile Minute Taking Service

A dedicated minute taking service has been developed to improve the quality of recording of child protection conferences and strategy meetings. During the last year this service has been introduced in all districts except Lancaster. To promote the participation of children and families a number of new conference venues have been identified by the Safeguarding IRO Service and the Mobile Minute Taking Service

working together. These venues have included Children's Centres, Child and Parenting Support Service (CaPSS) buildings and schools. As current office accommodation is often unsuitable for conferences this is an essential service. The service will be fully operational following the conclusion of the disaggregation of the administrative support service in 2013.

8.4 Child Protection Information Leaflets

The information leaflets for children/young people and parents/carers explaining the child protection system have been revised and launched. Separate leaflets have been developed for parents/carers and children/young people, the latter targeted at different age groups. The leaflets provide a useful tool for practitioners to use when explaining the child protection system to children and families and will promote their engagement in the conference process.

9. Priorities for 2012/13

9.1 Implementation of new IRO Structure

IRO capacity was identified as a concern by Ofsted in their recent inspection of Lancashire's safeguarding and looked after children services (Report 9th March 2012). Whilst this issue had already been recognised and DLT had approved additional IRO posts, a decision was made to undertake a review of the IRO Service to further consider how capacity issues could be addressed. The review concluded that the two IRO Teams should be combined to ensure continuity of IRO for children and more equitable caseloads across the service.

The implementation of the new IRO structure has commenced and will be fully operational from the 1st January 2013. This is supported by a training and development plan, including opportunities for IRO shadowing to build confidence and expertise of the team in all areas of the work. Recruitment to the remaining IRO vacancies is crucial as part of this process in order to reduce IRO caseloads and increase capacity.

9.2 Neglect

Neglect has been identified as a significant safeguarding issue within Lancashire. As detailed in this report it accounts for 45% of child protection plans and is a factor in over 50% of plans lasting two or more years. The devastating impact of long term neglect on children's health and development has also been highlighted by IRO's in the cases they've escalated using the quality assurance form. In order to address this, the Head of Children's Social Care introduced more robust quality assurance mechanisms requiring District Managers and IRO's to review all neglect cases to ensure that appropriate and timely action was being taken to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. The court judgement Re E was also reissued to district teams highlighting the importance of chronologies.

The Directorate's Audit Team has undertaken a detailed audit of neglect using a safeguarding quality assurance framework. This approach triangulated information from case file audits (68 case files), interviews with children and parents/carers,

focus groups with staff, a staff questionnaire and a literature review. The audit provides significant insights into how services can be improved and will inform the development of a neglect strategy. The findings will be shared with the IRO Service to look at learning in relation to their role.

9.3 Participation in Child Protection Conferences

The quality assurance forms have identified children and young people's participation in child protection conferences as a continuing area of concern. In only a very limited number of cases was an advocate used on behalf of the child to convey their wishes and feelings. A culture needs to be embedded in practice which values the participation of children and young people in child protection conferences and recognises their right to participate in decisions affecting their life. (Taking into consideration their age and understanding).

Research tells us that children and young people are a key source of information about their lives and the impact any problems are having on them. This has been echoed in the Munro review in which children themselves identified the importance of being able to participate in decisions affecting their life. To promote understanding of the importance of participation the IRO Team is going to deliver a series of participation workshops to practitioners and manager's within the district teams during 2012/13.

9.4 Sharing Reports in Advance of Child Protection Conferences

The failure to share conference reports in advance of the conference remains a significant issue as identified by both the IRO's and in the feedback from parents and carers. This impacts on their ability to participate in the conference and is likely to be a contributing factor in the stress levels reported in attending these meetings. Reports to conference (from all professionals) should be shared with the parent/carer 24 hours in advance of an initial child protection conference and at least 48 hours in advance of a review child protection conference.

9.5 Conference Venues

Work has been undertaken during 2011-12 to identify a number of new venues across the county. For example in Preston and Burnley a number of Children's Centres and CaPSS centres have been identified as being more family friendly than district offices. In some districts there has been pressure on venues; for example in Accrington with the closure of the Globe most conferences are being held at the Union Street office. A search is currently underway to identify other appropriate venues, for example using children's centres in the area. In Chorley the CaPPS centre is the only current venue so the Safeguarding IRO service is working with the Team Managers and Mobile Minute Taking Service to identify additional venues.

The suitability of conference facilities is recognised as an important consideration in achieving greater participation within meetings. In particular, having the facility to allow children and parents/carers the opportunity to withdraw from the meeting if required.

9.6 Administration of Child Protection Conferences

The administration of child protection conferences is currently undertaken in each district team involving a significant number of administrative staff as well as social worker's and IRO's in the process. This is an overly complex process and creates inefficiency. A workshop was held in June 2011 to consider how this process could be improved and options to centralise the administration of conferences was considered. It has been agreed to centralise this support by creating a small administrative team which will be responsible for booking initial child protection conferences and strategy meetings. This will free up a significant amount of both IROs and Social Workers time in negotiating times and venues for meetings and will also cut out a significant amount of business support time in the Safeguarding Unit cross referencing IROs calendars with the Mobile Minute Taking Service. Unfortunately, the disaggregation of the county administrative support service has created some delay in progressing this initiative.

9.7 Regional IRO Transformation work

The North West Directors of Children's Services have established a Best Practice Network to support collaborative working and to drive improvements in practice regionally. The Best Practice Network including Lancashire, Salford, Tameside and Wigan has been assigned a Transformation Project looking at the IRO service. The remit of the project, 'IRO Service - Back to First Principles', is to work with representatives from the four authorities and others to put forward ideas for improving the IRO service and to identify/share best practice. A range of issues are being considered including IRO caseloads, training/development opportunities, supervision and management arrangements, quality assurance models and regional standards. This work is being led by a group of aspirant leaders who will produce short, medium and long term proposals and possible aspirations to consider developing an IRO service regionally.

10. Key Challenges for 2012-13

10.1 IRO Capacity

The IRO Handbook suggests a caseload of between 50 to 70 children would represent good practice in the delivery of a quality service. (Although this is referenced specifically in relation to the number of looked after children an IRO should have on their caseload). Caseloads for all IRO's in Lancashire are considerably higher than this, Within the Safeguarding IRO Team the average caseload includes between 85 and 119 children subject to a child protection plan. (Although separate conferences are not held in respect of individual children and the number of families this equates to is significantly less). In addition to this each IRO holds a number of cases where they are chairing strategy meetings.

Although the number of children subject to a child protection plan fell during 2011-12, at the time of writing this report the numbers of initial child protection conferences is rising again with a corresponding increase being seen in the number of children subject to a child protection plan. As detailed earlier in this report IRO capacity is being addressed in a number of ways as follows:

- The Directorate's Leadership Team agreed the creation of four additional IRO posts (two permanent and two temporary for twelve months). Whilst recruitment has been successful to the two permanent posts, recruitment to the temporary vacancies and other permanent vacancies in the IRO service is ongoing. Approval of the Chief Executive has been given to advertise the vacancies externally;
- Recruitment to the 5 FTE vacant posts. The posts have been advertised externally for a second time;
- Secondment opportunities from other services within the Directorate are being sought;
- In conjunction with the Business Improvement Team we are exploring new and smarter ways of working, seeking to capitalise on any new IT/business processes which will improve the efficiency of the IRO's in completing and recording CLA reviews;
- The Internal Audit Service was commissioned to undertake a review of the IRO service to evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems currently operating within the service and the risks facing the team, including caseloads and resources, compliance with statutory requirements and the efficiency of IRO working practices. The findings will be considered by the senior management team and will be used to further improve the service;
- A management review of the IRO service has also been undertaken. This identified the need to amalgamate the two IRO teams to ensure continuity of IRO for the child but also to ensure more equitable caseloads. The process of bringing the teams together is underway. A training/development plan is in place including team development days and work shadowing opportunities to build staff confidence and expertise. There is already some crossover of work between the two teams but the new structure will be fully implemented by January 2013;
- Latterly, consideration is being given to how other services within the Specialist Services arm of the Directorate can support the IRO Service.

It is vital that we are able to recruit and retain an experienced IRO service if caseloads are to be reduced and the IRO's supported in fulfilling their critical quality assurance function. This will ensure that IRO's 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.

10.2 Quality Assurance

The IRO's are in a unique position, independent from service delivery and with oversight of practice across the nine Children's Social Care districts. However, in the past there has been an over emphasis on their role in relation to compliance and performance timescales. Whilst recognising the importance of a timely response to the needs of children and families, the IRO quality assurance role needs to be more focussed on the quality of the work undertaken by CSC and partner agencies as part of the child protection plan and the effectiveness of the help being given to children and families. This change in emphasis was highlighted by Professor Eileen Munro in the national review of child protection published in May 2011.

There is evidence that IRO's in Lancashire are more robustly challenging practice and escalating concerns to Team and District Managers. To support the Safeguarding IRO's in this role and to ensure consistency of practice across the IRO service, the Problem Resolution Protocol is being extended within the child protection arena. This will formalise the escalation process where there is a failure to implement the child protection plan within appropriate timescales. This will be piloted from the 1st December 2012 with a view to being fully operational from the 1st February 2013.

The Safeguarding IROs quality assurance role needs to ensure that social workers assessments are robust, that they analyse and identify the needs within the family and that the child protection plans that result from these assessments are realistic and outcome focused. This was an area for development identified by Ofsted in their inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services. It is also important that parents are fully engaged in the process and the voice of children and young people is heard if we are to significantly improve their lives as a result of our interventions. The revised conference documentation used within the Pendle pilot has improved the quality of child protection plans, ensuring they are more outcome focussed. To further develop practice training is being commissioned in relation to outcome focussed child protection plans.

11. Conclusion

The experience, commitment and professionalism of the Safeguarding IRO Team is acknowledged. The recent Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services made specific reference to the work of the IRO's and to the quality of child protection work in Lancashire. In summary it highlighted that child protection conferences are chaired effectively by officers who are suitably qualified and experienced social workers. Child protection chairs were deemed to be very well managed with regular supervision, provided with good opportunities for reflective learning and their practice is observed routinely to ensure the quality of decision making. Effective multi-agency involvement in planning and assessment was observed at each stage of the child protection process. Child protection cases were deemed to be well managed and good multi-agency work ensures child protection plans are progressed effectively. However, there is no room for complacency and it is recognised that we must strive to further improve the quality of provision and services for safeguarding children and young people in Lancashire.

Linda Harmer-Jones,
Senior IRO, Safeguarding
October 2012

Sally Allen
Directorate Safeguarding Manager

Grant Funding Applications

Number	Approved/ Not Approved	Name and Address of Group	Application Details	Amount Requested	Contact Person	Date Application Received	Date Considered by Young People	Date considered by Directors	Date considered by Chair	Comments	Link to Report
1	Approved	CLICS, County Hall, Preston	Refreshments at two county Celebration Events 2010 for Children Looked After and Care Leavers	£3,152.32	Suzy Cummings, Participation Officer, B4 County Hall, Preston	01-Apr-2010		19-Apr-2010	19-Apr-2010		Applications\Ap plication 1\app 1.pdf
2	Approved	Crestmoor Children's Residential Unit, Easden Clough, Morse Street, Burnley, BB10 4PB	Summer fun day which will include stalls that give information to our young people on health matters, education, healthy eating, drugs etc to allow young people to access this information but also have a good time, have a DJ to play music	£500.00	Gwen Monk, Manager, Crestmoor CRU	06-May-2010		Louise Taylor 19/05/2010	CC Winder 19/05/2010		Applications\Ap plication 2\app 2.pdf
3	Deferred	Social Pedagogy Task Force, Crestmoore Children's Residential Unit, Easden Clough, Morse Street, Burnley, BB10 4PB	Seeing The Hidden – a photography project, that culminates in publishing a book	£2,075.00	Alexander Borchert, Social Pedagogue/ Consultant	13/05/10		Reply Received Louise Taylor 16/07/2010		Author informed deferred 11/08/2010	Applications\Ap plication 3
4	Not approved	Haverholt Children's Home, 24A Haverholt Close, Colne, BB8 9SN	To enable CLA to have Spanish fiesta type meal, visiting the Roman Amphitheatre near where we are staying, a day out at a Water Park and a day out at a Theme Park and finally rides on a Banana Boat or something similar whilst on holiday in Spain	£2,000.00	Alan Hornby, Registered Manager, Haverholt CCH	07-Jul-2010		Grant Not Supported by Louise Taylor 16/07/2010		Not supported - Author informed 20/07/2010	Applications\Ap plication 4\10 07 07 Application form holiday.docx
5	Approved	Children and Young People's Directorate, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ	Printing "Entitlements Leaflets" for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers	£322.00	Peter Francis, Performance Manager, Roon B10, County Hall	06-Aug-2010		Louise Taylor 10/08/10	CC Winder 11/08/2010	14/09/2010 - Notification of approved application to Peter Francis	Applications\Ap plication 5\Entitlements Leaflets - Grant Application.pdf
6	Not approved	Haverholt Children's Home, 24A Haverholt Close, Colne, BB8 9SN	To fund a conservatory at the back of the house	£30,000.00	Miss Sarah Hill, Assistant Manager, Haverholt CCH	17-Aug-2010		Reply from Louise Taylor 31/08/2010			Applications\Ap plication 6\Haverholt.pdf
7	Approved	Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team	To supplement the existing service's recruitment budget in order to meet 2010/11 new foster carer targets.	£13,000.00	Gill Green, Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team Manager	06-Oct-2010		Comments from Louise Taylor 12/10/2010	CC Winder/CC Wilson 20/10/2010	21/10/2010 Notification of approval sent to Stasia Osiowy, Barbara Bath and Gill Green	Applications\Ap plication 7\Grant Application.doc

Grant Funding Applications

Number	Approved/ Not Approved	Name and Address of Group	Application Details	Amount Requested	Contact Person	Date Application Received	Date Considered by Young People	Date considered by Directors	Date considered by Chair	Comments	Link to Report
8	In Progress	CLASS, 2nd Floor, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland, PR25 1DH	E Learning' Training for Emotional Health and Wellbeing modules for all of Lancashire's Children's workforce (estimated at 54,000). The modules will be accessed through Lancashire's website. The full course consists of nine modules of which three have so far been funded through the schools budget and NHS NW. These will be launched in the new year.	£30,000.00	Mark Warren, CAMHS Co-ordinator	16-Dec-2010	30/12/11 Follow Up Sent to Mark Warren	Sent to Louise Taylor 07/01/2011	Sent to CC Winder 07/01/2011		Applications\Ap plication 8\Grant Funding Application.doc x
9	Approved	Crestmoor Children's Residential Unit, 1 Unity Way, off Haslingden Old Road, Rawtenstall, BB4 8RR	Crestmoor would like to start an initiative with Burnley Youth Theatre that will see the young people of Crestmoor express themselves through different media. At the end of the project the young people will have produced a DVD that shows "A life in the day of Crestmoor".	£6,475.00	Alexander Borchert, Social Pedagogue	12-Jan-2011		02/03/2011 Approved by Louise Taylor	04/03/2011 CC Val Wilson Approval	10/03/2011 Notification of approval sent to Alexander Borchert	Applications\Ap plication 9\application 9.pdf
10	Approved	Hannah Peake, CYP Directorate, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ	Work to support and enable the participation of looked after children and young people	£2,530.00	Hannah Peake	25-Mar-2011		Approval Received from Louise Taylor 25/03/2011	06/04/2011 CC Wilson	06/05/2011 Approval Email Sent to Hannah Peake	Applications\Ap plication 10\application 10.pdf
11	Approved	Hannah Peake, CYP Directorate, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ	To design and print several children and young people friendly documents.	£2,485.00	Hannah Peake	05-Apr-2011		06/04/2011 Approval Louise Taylor	06/04/2011 CC Wilson	07/04/2011 Approval Email sent to Hannah	Applications\Ap plication 11\application 11.pdf
12	Approved	Paul Hegarty, Service Manager CLA, Area Education Office, White Cross Education Centre, Quarry Road, Lancaster, LA1 4XQ	To host an event which enables managers from; residential, foster, adoption, field work and CWD to explore participation and develop an action plan to support the Participation Strategy for Children Looked After.	£237.50	Paul Hegarty	06-May-2011		18/05/2011 Approval Louise Taylor	18/05/2011 CC Winder Approval	19/05/2011 Approval Email sent to Paul Hegarty	Applications\Ap plication 12\Application Form.doc
13	Approved	Laura Goodfellow, Lancashire Children's Rights Service, 30 Ribblesdale Place, Preston, PR1 3NA	Children Looked After and Care Leaver Celebration of Achievement Event	£7,000.00	Laura Goodfellow	18-Jan-2012	Confirmation of YP Approval 13/02/2012	23/02/2012 Approval Louise Taylor	23/02/2012 Approval CC Winder	24/02/2012 Approval Email sent to Laura Goodfellow and CC Kay	Applications\Ap plication 13\Grant application Celebration Event.doc

Grant Funding Applications

Number	Approved/ Not Approved	Name and Address of Group	Application Details	Amount Requested	Contact Person	Date Application Received	Date Considered by Young People	Date considered by Directors	Date considered by Chair	Comments	Link to Report
14	Approved	Paul Hegarty, Service Manager CLA, Area Education Office, White Cross Education Centre, Quarry Road, Lancaster, LA1 4XQ	To print LAC/CPB Literature - the Pledge	£57.75	Paul Hegarty	27-Oct-2011		24/11/2011 Sent to Louise Taylor	22/11/2011 CC Winder Approval	25/11/11 Approval Email sent to Paul Hegarty	Applications\Ap plication 14\Application Form.doc
15	In Progress	Laura Goodfellow, Lancashire Children's Rights Service, 30 Ribblesdale Place, Preston, PR1 3NA	To develop work in communicating with children and young people looked after. This will include involving children and young people in producing informational resources to communicate with children and young people in care across Lancashire. This is expected to take the form of leaflet development and posters, however, the direction of the resources produced will be taken from the children and young people and we are open to ideas that are more innovative and creative.	£1,000.00	Laura Goodfellow	28-Nov-2011	Young People Approval 19/12/2011	Sent to Louise Taylor 30/12/2011	Sent to CC Winder 20/12/2011		Applications\Ap plication 15\Grant application 15.doc
16	Approved	Crestmoor Children's Residential Unit, 1 Unity Way, off Haslingden Old Road, Rawtenstall, BB4 8RR	15 young people who attend Weds night at JJB from both residential leaving care and foster care, they have been doing regular football coaching and will complete a 1 day accredited junior sports leader award, any young people who are appropriate will undergo F.A 25 hour junior coaching award. Continue with the ongoing success that has been created.	£10000 - £2000 granted	Gwen Monk, Manager, Crestmoor CRU	28-Mar-2012	17/10/2012 Comments from YP	19/10/2012 Louise Taylor Approved	08/11/2012 CC Winder Approved	121108 Approval Sent Gwen Monk	Applications\Ap plication 16\Application Form.doc
17	Approved	Anthony Moorcroft, 29 South Avenue, Morecambe, LA4 5RJ	The project aims to involve Lancashire's children looked after in creating a giant patch work quilt that represents their views thoughts feelings on individual placements, be this Residential, Foster, Short Break or leaving Care. Allowing children young people a voice, regardless of their background, age, ability or circumstances.	£8,000.00	Anthony Moorcroft, Unit Manager	11-Jun-2012	15/06/2012 YP Comments - Approval	26/06/2012 Louise Taylor Approved	21/06/2012 CC Winder Approved	26/06/2012 Approval email sent to Anthony Moorcroft	Applications\Ap plication 17\Application 17.pdf

Grant Funding Applications

Number	Approved/ Not Approved	Name and Address of Group	Application Details	Amount Requested	Contact Person	Date Application Received	Date Considered by Young People	Date considered by Directors	Date considered by Chair	Comments	Link to Report
18	Approved	Hena Begum, Autumn House Children's Home, Co-operative Street, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 6FH	To purchase sport and recreational equipment for young people to participate on the date with staff members and invitees. There will be a small sports day to keep young people focussed, active and be able to enjoy and achieve.	£500.00	Hena Begum, Assistant Manager	18-Jul-2012	09/08/2012 reminder sent	05/09/2012 Louise Taylor Approved	05/09/2012 CC Winder Approved	12/09/2012 Approval email sent to Hena Begum	Applications\Ap plication 18\application 18.pdf
19	In Progress	Laura Goodfellow, Lancashire Children's Rights Service, 30 Ribblesdale Place, Preston, PR1 3NA	Children's Rights Summit	£1,425.00	Laura Goodfellow	14-Dec-2012	03/01/2013 sent to CiCC				Applications\Ap plication 19\Application Form.doc

Grant Funding Applications - Approved

Grant Application Number	Name and Address of Group	Application Details	Contact Person	Amount Requested	Amount Received	Description of how Funding was Utilised
1	CLICS, County Hall, Preston	Refreshments at two county Celebration Events 2010 for Children Looked After and Care Leavers	Suzy Cummings, Participation Officer, B4 County Hall, Preston	£3,152.32	£3,152.32	<p>Events held on 18 March 2010 and 29 April 2010.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominees – 233 young people were nominated for an award <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominees – 177 were invited to the events • Nominees - 64 attended the events to receive their awards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers – 61 • Lancashire County Council Staff and Councillors – 34 • In total 160 staff, carers, county councillors, managers, Children and Young People Looked After and Care Leavers attended the event. • Unfortunately 56 Young people were nominated but not invited to the event due to lack of space in the venue
2	Crestmoor Children's Residential Unit, Easden Clough, Morse Street, Burnley, BB10 4PB	Summer fun day which will include stalls that give information to our young people on health matters, education, healthy eating, drugs etc to allow young people to access this information but also have a good time, have a DJ to play music	Gwen Monk, Manager, Crestmoor CRU	£500.00	£500.00	<p>The money was used to help put on a fun day. This was a huge success attended by all the areas residential units, social workers, all the CWD units we had information stalls from education, health and children's rights. We held the Olympics with teams from the CLA team, YOT and Crestmoor with Crestmoor winning the cup!! We also released over 1000 balloons which we charged £1 a balloon and this money will be donated to Donna's dream house for Children with terminal illnesses. We had a petting zoo, a gunge chair competition which people paid to have someone gunged this was won by Anthony Moorcroft and Gary Pickles, a steel band, BBQ, chocolate fountain and tombola. It was great to see everyone having a good time together. For me it was partnership and participation at its finest.</p>
5	Children and Young People's Directorate, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ	Printing "Entitlements Leaflets" for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Peter Francis, Performance Manager, Room B10, County Hall	£322.00	£322.00	In the process of having the leaflets printed.

7	Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team	To supplement the existing service's recruitment budget in order to meet 2010/11 new foster carer targets.	£13,000.00	£13,000.00	£13,000.00	<p>The Communications Service was tasked with supporting the fostering recruitment team in achieving 1,000 enquiries between April 2010 and March 2011. Research was undertaken and communications objectives were set with targets of increasing traffic to the website and enquiries to the telephone helpline. The additional £13,000 grant funding was essential and was used to purchase appropriate advertising space and marketing materials to achieve this.</p> <p>A broad range of tactics were used during the campaign based on the demographic research of behaviour and preferences of our key audience. Activity included media relations, broadcast and print advertising, outdoor advertising, grassroots distribution of marketing materials, digital marketing and internal communications.</p> <p>Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campaign exceeded its key target with a final total of 1,113 fostering enquiries achieved within the 2011/12 financial year. • A 23% increase in unique visitors to the website which led to an average of 74.5 online enquiries each month. • Telephone enquiries increased from an average of 35 up to 68 calls per month by the last campaign quarter. • More people now identify one of the campaign's key channels than previously which indicates that communications are more memorable and/or focused to more appropriate channels.
9	Crestmoor Children's Residential Unit, 1 Unity Way, off Haslingden Old Road, Rawtenstall, BB4 8RR	Crestmoor would like to start an initiative with Burnley Youth Theatre that will see the young people of Crestmoor express themselves through different media. At the end of the project the young people will have produced a DVD that shows "A life in the day of Crestmoor".	Alexander Borchert, Social Pedagogue	£6,475.00	£6,475.00	<p><u>On the 19th and 26th of May 2011 the first two sessions for young people from East Lancashire have happened. These were colourful, interesting sessions which the young people thoroughly enjoyed. There were some games to get to know each other, a tour through the theatre and some exercises around what the young people want to do in the future sessions. First photographs were taken of and by the young people; material was collected for a play and /or poem. The young people expressed what they want to do (i.e. filming) and this is now prepared for the next sessions to come.</u></p> <p><u>Newspaper report from the event.</u></p>

10	Hannah Peake, CYP Directorate, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ	Work to support and enable the participation of looked after children and young people	Hannah Peake, Strategic Lead - Children and Young People's Participation	£2,530.00	£2,530.00	Key Activities: 1. Facilitating attendance at CPB. 2. Supporting young people to attend Lancashire Youth Council. 3. Youth Proofing Lancashire CLA documents. 4. Continuing consulting with children and young people regarding the CiCC. 5. CiCC meetings.
11	Hannah Peake, CYP Directorate, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ	To design and print several children and young people friendly documents.	Hannah Peake, Strategic Lead - Children and Young People's Participation	£2,485.00	£2,485.00	The project is still in progress but the policy and strategy document have been 'Youth proofed' and will be sent to the Communications team to be designed and printed. The A-Z document and children's version are still being drafted as they need to reflect recent changes to in legislation/ government guidance.
12	Paul Hegarty, Service Manager CLA, Area Education Office, White Cross Education Centre, Quarry Road, Lancaster, LA1 4XQ	To host an event which enables managers from; residential, foster, adoption, field work and CWD to explore participation and develop an action plan to support the Participation Strategy for Children Looked After.	Paul Hegarty, Service Manager CLA	£237.50	£237.50	The event was very successful with over 30 managers attending from residential homes (both mainstream and children with additional needs), fostering, adoption, Independent reviewing services, social workers (IAS/CWD/CLA/LC) and a team manager. The event was also supported by the attendance of County Councillor Tony Winder and Louise Taylor (Director). The event looked at the opportunities and challenges of introducing a children in care council and an action plan was developed that Hannah (Peake) is currently producing. A representative from the Children Society also attended following their recent successful bid to drive this agenda forward and outlined next steps. Detailed discussion did take place regarding Hannah's strategic role and the concern the group expressed at the lack of a distinct focus on the children looked after agenda. Hannah spoke to this and it was agreed that I would discuss this further with Louise Taylor. In conclusion I think the event was a success. It established some clear actions and principles to ensure this essential activity is successfully implemented and the views of children and young people influence the service they receive, professional practice and wider service delivery. In conclusion I think the event was a success. It established some clear actions and principles to ensure this essential activity is successfully implemented and the views of children and young people influence the service they receive, professional practice and wider service delivery.
13	Laura Goodfellow, Lancashire Children's Rights Service, 30 Ribblesdale Place, Preston, PR1 3NA	Children Looked After and Care Leaver Celebration of Achievement Event	Laura Goodfellow	£7,000.00	£7,000.00	

14	Paul Hegarty, Service Manager CLA, Area Education Office, White Cross Education Centre, Quarry Road, Lancaster, LA1 4XQ	To print LAC/CPB Literature - the Pledge	Paul Hegarty, Service Manager CLA	£57.75	£57.75	
16	Crestmoor Children's Residential Unit, 1 Unity Way, off Haslingden Old Road, Rawtenstall, BB4 8RR	15 young people who attend Weds night at JJB from both residential leaving care and foster care, they have been doing regular football coaching and will complete a 1 day accredited junior sports leader award, any young people who are appropriate will undergo F.A 25 hour junior coaching award. Continue with the ongoing success that	Gwen Monk, Manager, Crestmoor CRU	£10,000.00	£2,000.00	
17	Anthony Moorcroft, 29 South Avenue, Morecambe, LA4 5RJ	The project aims to involve Lancashire's children looked after in creating a giant patch work quilt that represents their views thoughts feelings on individual placements, be this Residential, Foster, Short Break or leaving Care. Allowing children young people a voice, regardless of their background, age, ability or circumstances.	Anthony Moorcroft, Overnight Residential Manager, South Avenue	£8,000.00	£8,000.00	
18	Hena Begum, Autumn House Children's Home, Co-operative Street, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 6FH	To purchase sport and recreational equipment for young people to participate on the date with staff members and invitees. There will be a small sports day to keep young people focussed, active and be able to enjoy and achieve.	Hena Begum, Assistant Manager, Autumn House	£500.00	£300.00	
TOTAL					£46,059.57	

Grant Funding Applications - Not Approved

Grant Application Number	Name and Address of Group	Application Details	Contact Person	Amount Requested	Reason for Not Approved
3	Social Pedagogy Task Force, Crestmoore Children's Residential Unit, Easden Clough, Morse Street, Burnley, BB10 4PB	Seeing The Hidden – a photography project, that culminates in publishing a book	Alexander Borchert, Social Pedagogue/ Consultant	£2,075.00	Deferred because still insufficient understanding of how this links to the children in care council and the wider directorate's commitment to the engagement of children and young people.
4	Haverholt Children's Home, 24A Haverholt Close, Colne, BB8 9SN	To enable CLA to have Spanish fiesta type meal, visiting the Roman Amphitheatre near where we are staying, a day out at a Water Park and a day out at a Theme Park and finally rides on a Banana Boat or something similar whilst on holiday in Spain	Alan Hornby, Registered Manager, Haverholt CCH	£2,000.00	The grant is not approved as it is not an appropriate use of Corporate Parenting Board funding or ties in with priorities in CCYP Plan and in current economic climate would mean that CLA arguably are receiving over and above what others received and it subsidises staff. There is also potential for it to set a precedence of this nature.

6	Haverholt Children's Home, 24A Haverholt Close, Colne, BB8 9SN	To fund a conservatory at the back of the house	Miss Sarah Hill, Assistant Manager, Haverholt CCH	£30,000.00	It would be inappropriate to subsidise activity of this kind because there would be insufficient funds .to cover similar requests from other homes. The link between the request and the Children and Young People's Plan is tenuous. It wouldn't be appropriate to subsidise activities which involve staff and support activities which arguably other families in such an economic downturn could not afford.
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Key Messages for Children Looked After

Extract from "Annual review of Safeguarding and Looked After Children data 2012"

- The rate of children looked after was below national and statistical neighbour average rates but has been increasing sharply in recent months.
- The increases in section 47s and other indicators of safeguarding activity suggest that the children looked after rate may continue to rise for the foreseeable future.
- More than two thirds of children starting to be looked after do so as a result of abuse and neglect and this is higher than the national average.
- The proportions of children on Care Orders and Placement Orders are above the national average whilst the proportion accommodated under section 20 is half the national rate.
- In order to gain a better understanding of the issue, we need to put in place robust arrangements to record incidents of children missing from care.
- Almost three quarters of children looked after are in foster placements but this is slightly below the national rate whilst one in ten is placed with parents and this is double the national rate.
- The proportion of children looked after placed outside local authority boundaries is almost half the national rate.
- The net gain in children looked after as a result of other authorities placing their children within Lancashire rose to 390 and we remain the third biggest net importer of children nationally.
- Around half of children looked after are placed in the County Council's own provision and this is below national and regional average rates.
- Long term and short term placement stability is good.
- The proportions of children looked after with up to date immunisations and dental checks remain slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of children looked after identified as having substance misuse problems is higher than the national average and the proportion refusing treatment appears quite high.
- School attendance and fixed term exclusion rates for children looked after are better than average.
- Levels of educational attainment are generally in line with national average rates.
- The proportion of care leavers in employment or training has dropped by more than half over the last year.
- The proportion of care leavers in education, employment and training and the proportion in suitable accommodation are now some way below national average rates.
- The proportion of children looked after cautioned or convicted remains above the national average.
- Adoption, Residence Order and Special Guardianship Order rates are all above the national average.
- The time taken in processing adoptions needs to improve in order to meet Government thresholds.
- The proportion of children looked after returning home to live with parents or relatives has fallen and is below average.

