

# **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**5 OCTOBER 2023**

## **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023**

Report from: Dr Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive

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### Summary

The Annual Report sets out how The Independent Reviewing Service met the needs of the children in care in the year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and establishes the work which should be undertaken in the coming year.

#### 1. Recommendations

1.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the IRO Service Annual Report 2022-2023.

#### 2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. The Independent Reviewing Officer (herein referred to as IRO) post is a statutory one supported by legislation. The IRO Handbook (2010) is the statutory guidance relating to care planning and reviewing arrangements for all children Local Authorities care for. The guidance is for children's services, IROs and Local Authorities and it covers the roles and duties of IROs and the strategic and managerial responsibilities of Local Authorities in establishing an effective IRO service. The Handbook should be used with Volume 2 Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review and other associated guidance such as Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. The IRO service should report to the Local Authority any gaps in services for children they care for and be independent from the social work teams.

2.2. In accordance with the council's constitution, paragraph 21.2 (b) of the Overview and Scrutiny rules (chapter 4), this committee is responsible for the review and scrutiny of children's services.

### 3. Background

- 3.1. Medway's IRO service sits within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance service and wider Children and Adults Directorate. The IROs are therefore independent of Children's Services with decision-making accountability. The IROs are accountable to the Director of People.
- 3.2. The core function of the service is to review the Local Authority's care plans, for children in our care (with some key exceptions for former children who have left our care), monitor, and escalate concerns about the execution of these, ensuring their best outcomes. The service provides high support and challenge to the Local Authority in respect of its corporate parenting and safeguarding duties towards children we care for. The core functions of the IRO can be summarised as contained in the IRO Handbook (2022) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-reviewing-officers-handbook>
- 3.3. IROs should report on 'good practice' as a secondary function and support any improvement work in Local Authorities.
- 3.4. IROs are qualified, experienced social workers, many of whom have also been previously employed in a management role; their role is commensurate with a Team Manager role in children's social care. Six of the IROs have been employed within the service for over 12 months.
- 3.5. The service comprises of 7.6 IROs. The Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) is managed in the Service and provides extra IRO capacity for up to 12 additional children. During the year 2 permanent IROs joined the service in May and December 2022. By the end of March 2022, we had 1.6 agency posts against vacancies.
- 3.6. The IRO group has diverse representation regarding ethnicity and gender. Across the Southeast region, IRO recruitment has some retention challenges starting to impact these services, but in Medway this was not the case this year.
- 3.7. IRO caseloads remained stable throughout the year towards the higher end of the recommended caseloads (mid to late 60s). 144/465 or 31% children are placed over 20 miles away from Medway higher than statistical neighbours at 18% and the South East region at 22% having increased from 25% to 28% in the last 2 years.
- 3.8. The IRO Service Manager enjoys some strategic influence as part of the extended senior leadership team and continued to contribute to supporting the Access to Resources Panel (ARP) twice weekly, and to attend the corporate parenting Permanence Panel from January 2023 (having previously chaired it). She continued to contribute to the development of the permanence policy and guidance.

## 4. Advice and analysis

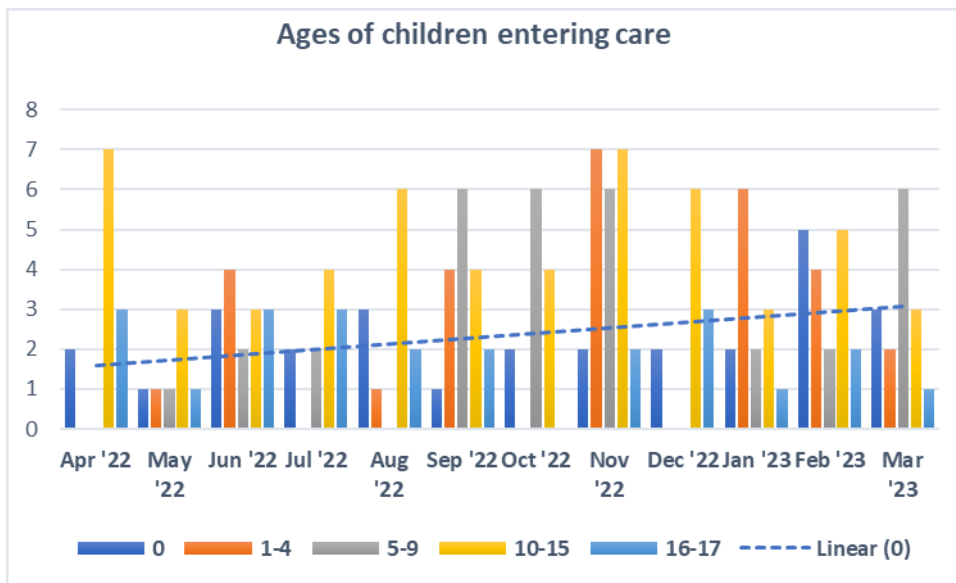
### Face to face & hybrid children's review meetings

- 4.1. IROs worked from a variety of settings and spent time travelling to see children for and in between their statutory review meetings. Most review meetings took place with the IRO and the child's allocated social worker attending the meeting in person. Children were encouraged to decide who they wanted to invite to the review meetings in person or by a 'teams' link. This rendered the meetings a hybrid one, in many instances, something which partners find accommodating and helped parental participation. To support the preparation for review meetings, IROs have started to have pre-discussions with the social work teams and children to make sure updating social work reports and care plans are being written and shared with children before their review meetings.
- 4.2. This year IROs developed further practice standards for statutory reviews and launched them with the social work services. Our IRO Monitoring form of reviews was updated to capture greater quality information.
- 4.3. IROs continued to balance travelling and staying in contact and observing young children in care, with their overall duties. At times this was challenging; the national picture of lack of sufficient care arrangements has led to a greater number of children placed out of Medway (see above) and IROs travelled this year to locations such as Scotland, Blackpool, Norfolk, Lancashire, Cumbria to see children and young people as well as visiting children in Kent and more accessible authorities. As last year, this has impacted on their ability to attend other meetings, but they remain available to provide oversight and their views to the social work teams. IROs provided weekly oversight of the social work and care planning work for children in unregistered and unregulated care arrangements adhering to Medway's updated guidance for some more vulnerable young people being cared for in unregulated placements and visited them within 2 weeks of these arrangements being made.

### Quantitative Data & Demographics

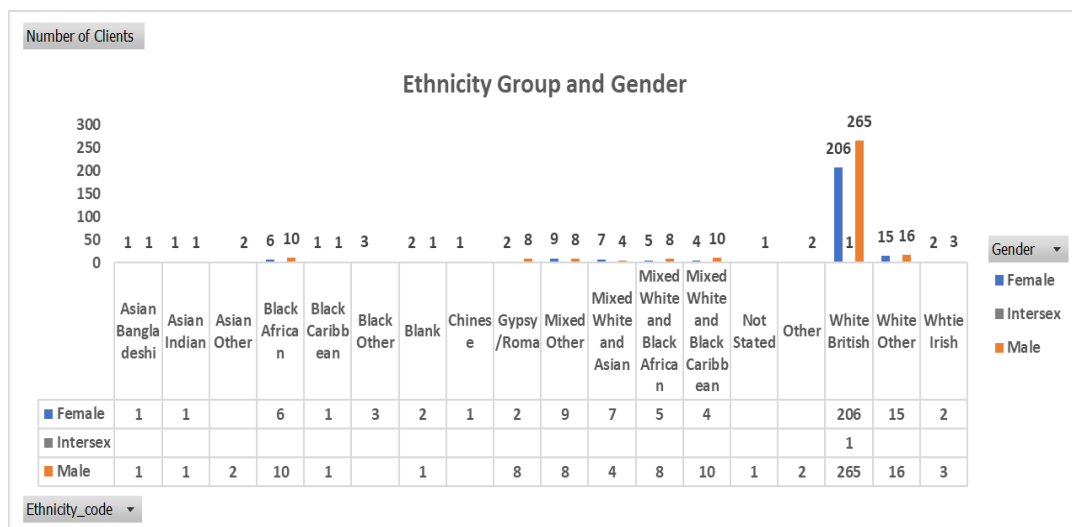
- 4.4. **Age & Gender.** A greater number of boys were cared for throughout the year; in April 2022, this was 243/437 or 55.6% of the cohort with 194/437 or 44.4% of girls. By March 2023, this was 268/466 or 57.5% of boys and 198/466 or 42.5% of girls. As last year there was no reporting for children who classify themselves as non-binary. By the end of the year, March 2023, the largest age group in care were those aged 10–15 years (199) and 16–17-year-olds (94), representing 293/446 or 62.9% of the cohort. Children aged 5 to 9 years sat at 93. For children entering care this year totalling 168, there was a noted rising trend for those under 1 year of age and 1–4-year-olds, with a slight decrease in trend for the older ages as seen in the below table.

Table 1. Ages of children in care year 2022-2023, per month



4.5. **Ethnicity.** The ethnicity of the children and young people we care for is seen in table 2 below; for the purposes of reporting these are grouped. Most children in care are from white British or 'other' ethnicities. All Asian/Chinese/Mixed White and Asian/ accounting for 18/466 or 3.8% and Black African/Black Caribbean/Mixed White and Black African/Mixed White and Black Caribbean/Black other accounting for 48/466 or 10% of our cohort and together representing 13.8% of our children; a 50% increase from last year, suggestive of a changing demographic. Over the next year we should further consider how to consider this with the corporate parenting board, consider community links and help services to consider culturally competent practice in care planning approaches.

Table 2. Ethnicity of CiC, 2022-2023.



- 4.6. **Children and young people entering and exiting care.** More children were in care by the end of this reporting year; overall entries into care increased and children leaving care decreased. Higher entries into care were seen in September 2022, November 2022 & February 2023 (17, 24 and 18 respectively). 168 children entered care and 147 left care this year.
- 4.7. Historically Medway was not an outlier for numbers of children in care in comparison to statistical neighbours or the national trends. This year the rate of children in care per 10.000 rose in November 2022 to 70 per 10,000 and at the year-end to 71.2 per 10.000, indicating more children were in care than the previous year and from March 2023 they began to rise above the national average along with Medway's statistical neighbours who have been above the national average consistently this year, with Medway reaching the same levels as them by the year end.
- 4.8. This year Medway did not take part in the National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. For 2023-2024 this will change. and will lead to an increase in children entering care for the next financial, year and capacity will be built into the IRO service to ensure a service for these children.

Table 3. Entries into & exits out of care, trend in entries.

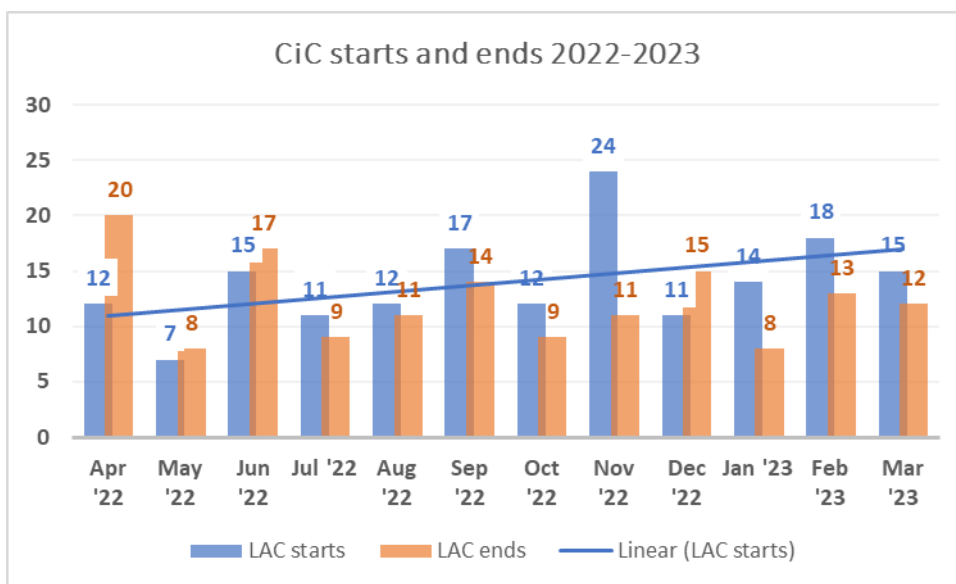


Table 4. Entries into & exits out of care, trend in exits.

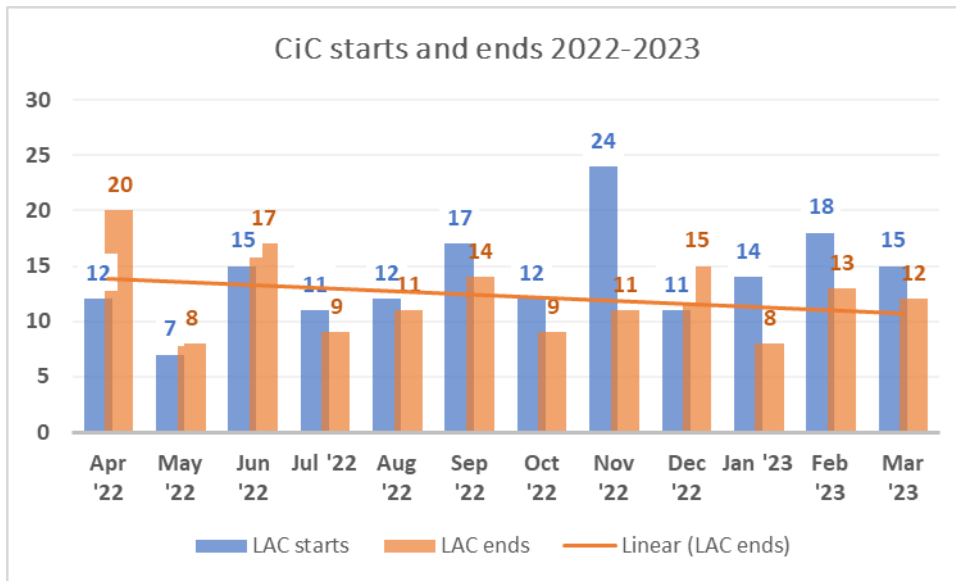
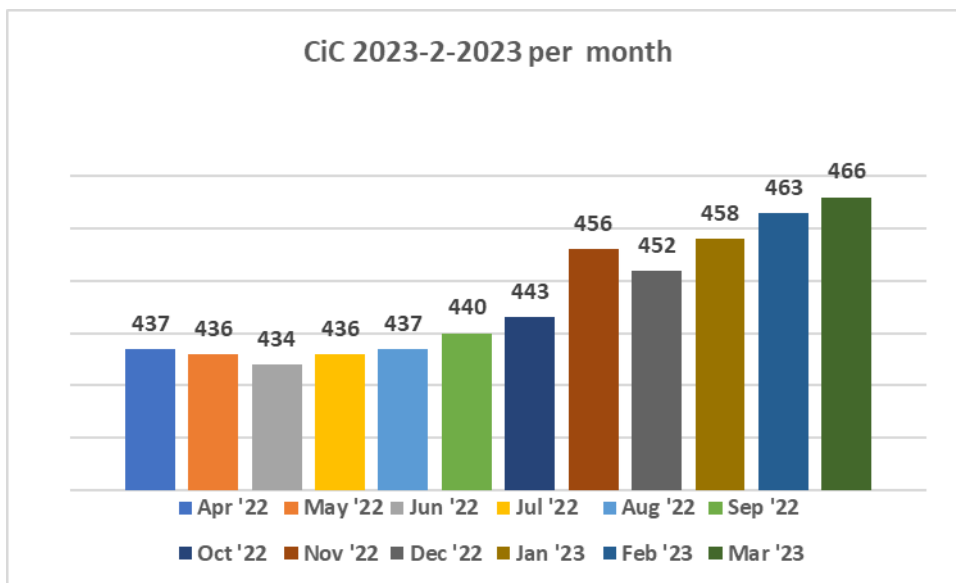


Table 5. Children in care per month 2022-2023



4.9. **Statutory basis of children entering care.** S20 (voluntary accommodations into care) Interim Care Orders (ICOs) both sat at 57 or 35% of the legal status by which children entered care. ICOs fell from 97 or 38% at the end of the previous year. At the start of the year, 287 Care Orders were in place for children and at the end 283; S20s stood at 39 at the start of the year and at the end of the year, peaking in November 2022 at 52 and 28 children entered care under police protection and 11 children entered under Emergency Protection Orders, (at 17% and 11% respectively, representing an increase in the use of police protection and Emergency Protection Orders from 9% and 5% respectively last year). This year 6 young people (boys) entered care as a result of being criminally remanded to Medway’s care, into the secure criminal estate e.g., to Youth Offending Institutions or Secure Training Centres. Five

children entered care at the conclusion of care proceedings as a planned admission, having remained at home until their care proceedings concluded.

Table 6. Legal status for the year 20202-2023 per month

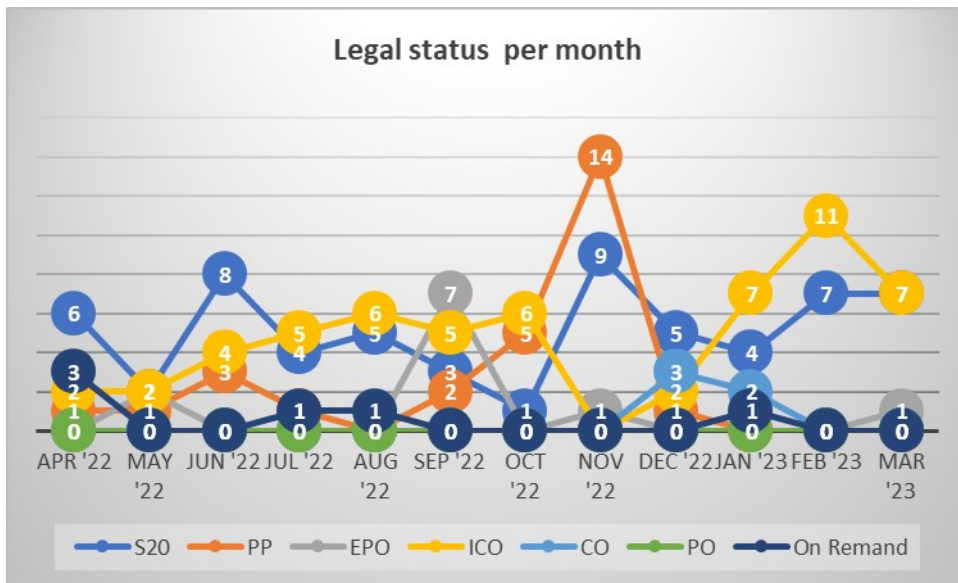


Table 7. Children's legal status 2022-2023 (year-end)

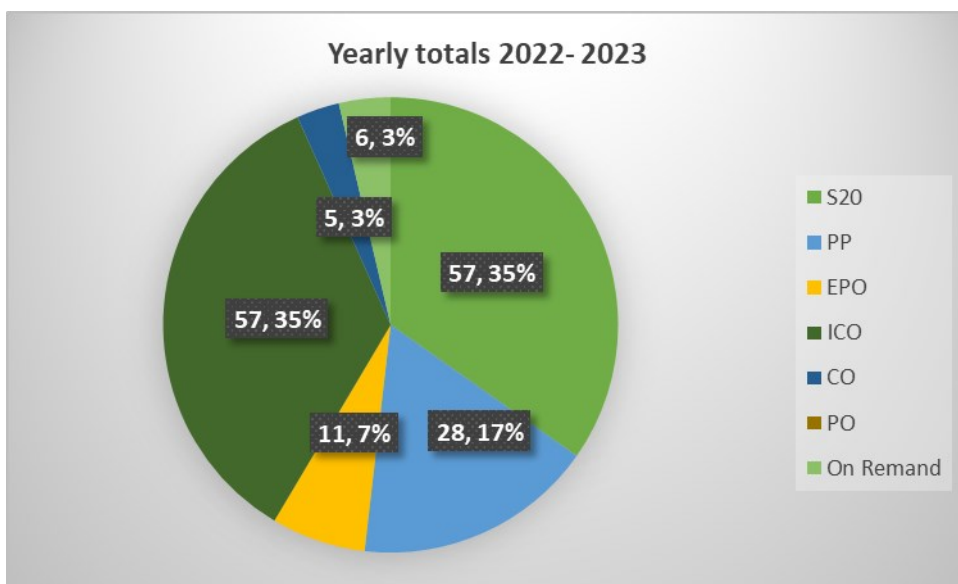
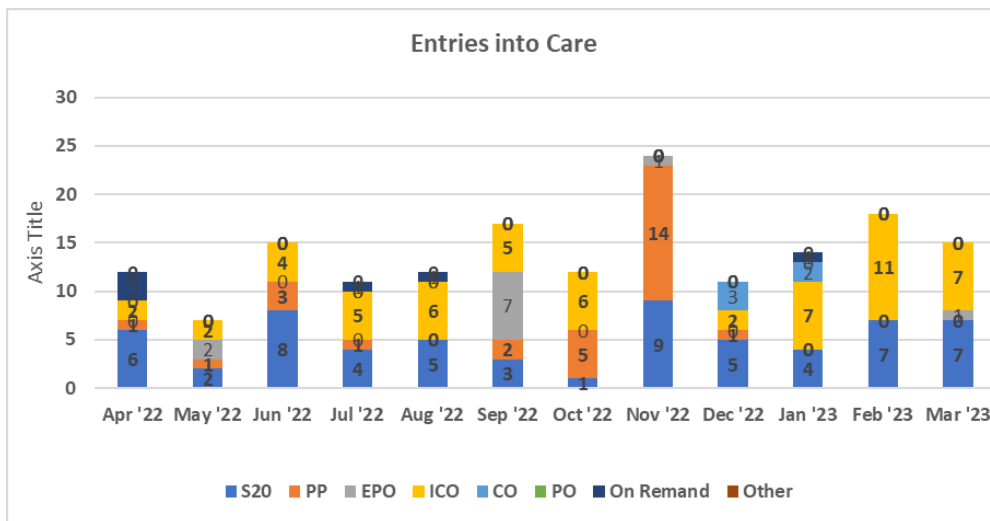
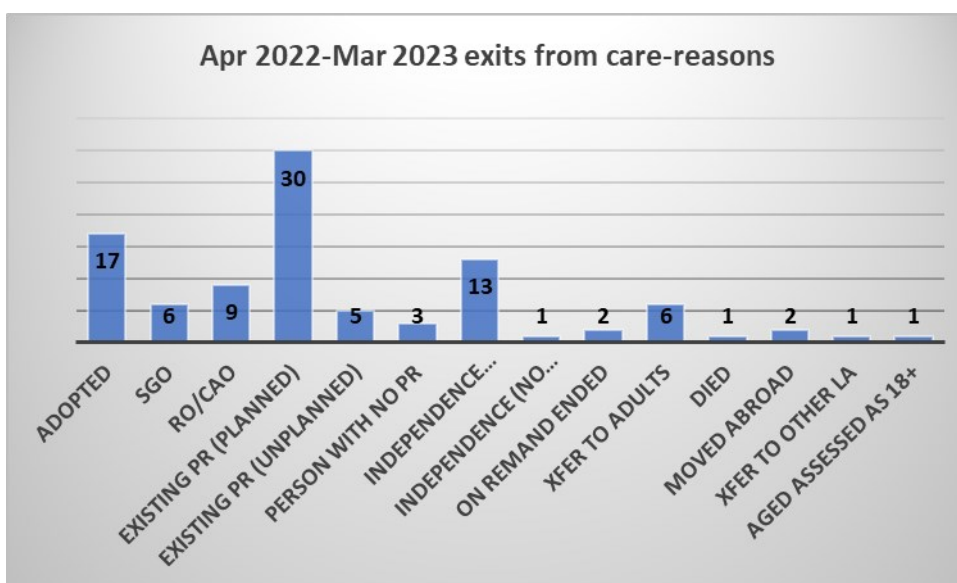


Table 8. Legal status of entries into care per month 2022- 2023



4.10. **Reasons children left care.** 146 children are recorded as leaving care last year; 39/146 or 26.7% of children and young people returned to the care of their parents, in either a planned or an unplanned way. Special Guardian Orders were awarded for 7 children (4.7%), lower than the last 2 years, with 9 children leaving care to be supported under interim Child Arrangement Orders, made to family members, until final decisions about their permanence are made by the family courts. Adoption Orders accounted for 21/146 or 14.3%, where the rate of orders remained similar to last year but lower as a proportion (from 22% last year). Care leavers (turning 18 years) accounted for 49/146 or 33.5%, the largest group in this cohort, with staying put arrangements agreed for several children (where they remain with their former foster carers).

Table 9. Reasons children left care.



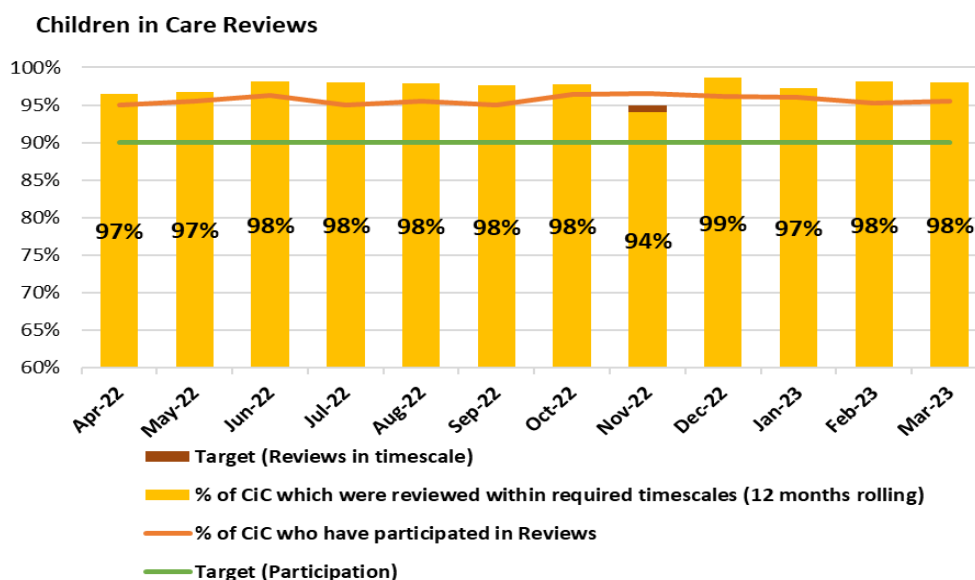


- 4.11. **Children's stability.** At the end of this year the percentage of children in long term foster care, defined as 'the percentage of children with long-term fostering as a plan, where the child is in a long-term fostering placement' was lower than the target of 70%, sitting at 63%, the same as last year. At the end of the year this showed as 56%. The number of children under 16 years who have been with the same carers for 2.5 years or more is lower for Medway's children at 67% down from the previous year at 71% and lower than the stretch target of 75%. It is lower than statistical neighbours at 69%, and national rates at 71%.

### **Timeliness & Recording of Review Meetings**

- 4.12. In the 12-month period before 31/3/2023 IROs chaired a total of 1487 reviews a similar figure to last year. After further manual interrogation, 99.9% of reviews were held in time; 2/1487 or 0.1% of reviews were held out of timescales from known and understood reasons. Monthly performance recording shows that reviews were mainly held above the target of 95%.
- 4.13. Children and young people's participation in their reviews, (including their views being represented in their absence) sat above the target for 90% at around 96%. A strength is the level of participation of children and young people in their review meetings, suggestive of the strong relationships Medway's children enjoy with IROs helping children's views to be well considered. Participation is calculated as those that have attended a meeting / contributed to the process by means of a consultation form, observation by the IRO, advocacy, submitting a Mind of My Own App note, using an interpreter, and discussing issues directly with their IRO or their social worker.
- 4.14. IROs in Medway follow the statutory guidance in relation to the timing of reviews; a first review is held within 4 weeks of a child coming into care, then a second review within the next 12 weeks or 3 months and then at least every six months after this. Significant changes to children's care plans, including them moving in planned or unplanned ways to different types of care provision, sees the IRO decide as to whether a review should be brought forward. When children move to a pre-adoptive care arrangement a review is held within 4 weeks, as Adoption Orders can be applied for after week 10 or their move and these new arrangements need careful IRO oversight and at this stage regular contact to birth parents ends with only any contact proposed when adopted is promoted and agreed.
- 4.15. This year IROs continued to summarise children's review meetings into a letter written to the child with a copy to their parents, in age-appropriate language. They are sent to the children and their parents to keep and be held for younger children when they would be able to understand them. The IRO Handbook recommends that review meeting records should be received within 20 working days of the meeting. This year IROs have worked hard to complete these records within 15 days, sending these electronically, to all other participants as last year, ensuring they contribute to the council's green agenda.

Table 10. Reviews in timescale 2022 to 2023



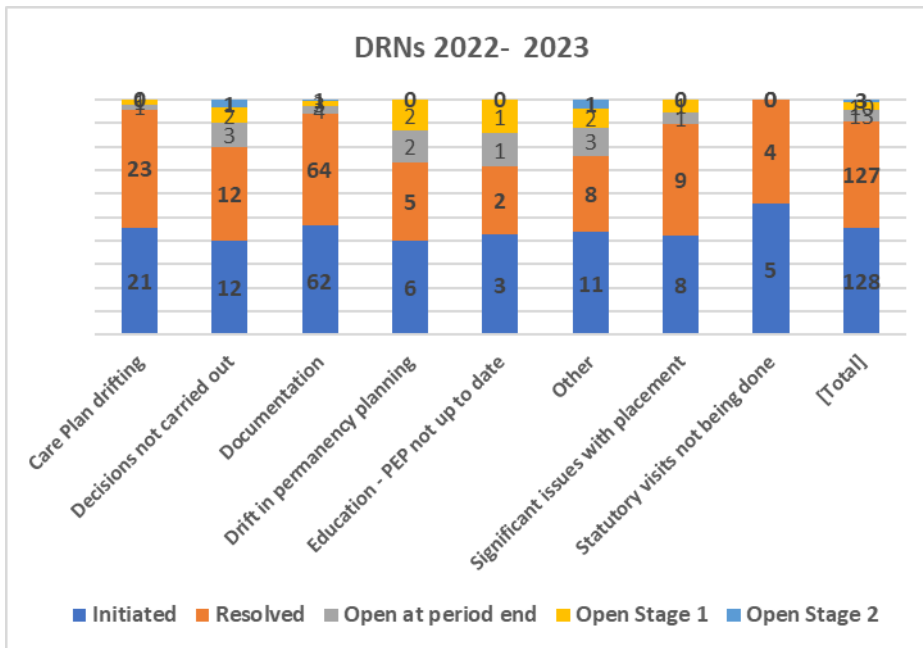
## Quality of Practice: Practice Improvement

- 4.16. IROs have continued to monitor children’s plans during, before and between the statutory review meetings, through Midway Reviewing. Performance reporting on this activity was developed this year and is being updated in line with the updates to the Mosaic forms planned for next year.
- 4.17. From December 2022, IROs developed a system to track their midway reviews, their visits to children, their pre-discussions for reviews with children’s social workers, their Dispute Resolution Notifications, and when they notice any signs of success in social work teams’ practice.
- 4.18. Wherever possible IROs now include children in their midway reviews of their care plans, through visits or by holding purposeful discussions with them; they are starting to write this midway review record as if the child or young person were reading it.
- 4.19. The IRO monitoring form, which IROs complete as part of their reviewing work at each statutory review, has been further developed and updated and is being trialled in the service, with performance reporting being developed from it. This will allow us to start to benchmark indicators such as how many older children chair or part chair their own reviews.
- 4.20. Children chairing and part chairing their reviews is a focus for this years’ service plan along with a refreshing of the service’s commitment to ensure that review meetings are led by children and young people with attention paid to the conversations children want to raise. Children will still be helped to decide where they want their review meeting to take place and who will attend. IROs are, like last year, are committed to checking out with individual

children their preferred chosen terms and language to describe their family time, their homes, carers, family members.

- 4.21. IROs have sampled and peer reviewed their letters to children and worked with an external auditor to improve these letters, learning from each other, and considering what a good letter to a child looks like. This will continue twice yearly next year. As a service we are committed to improving how we write to children and the letters being more consistent across the service.
- 4.22. This year we have seen more evidence of the IRO footprint on children's files. This includes pre-meeting discussions with social work teams and weekly oversight of unregulated care arrangements for some children. The IRO's core business of reviewing care plans, holding statutory review meetings, seeing children, and undertaking midway reviews remain priority core tasks for IROs next year.
- 4.23. With the re-design of the IRO visiting form on Mosaic, all types of contacts IROs have with children and young people will be recorded and reported on in the future; meanwhile IROs continue to record these in the case notes on children's files on Mosaic.
- 4.24. Dispute Notification Resolutions (DRNs). The IRO Handbook specifically tasks IROs to raise dispute resolution notifications (DRNs) where informal actions have failed to resolve concerns about children's care plans. Medway has developed a formal DRN procedure, which allows IROs to raise disputes at any level initially (stages 1 to 4), dependent on the severity of the concern. They do not need the permission of the child in care to challenge the LA. Ultimately, they can raise the dispute with CAFCASS and seek independent legal advice; Medway has a service level agreement for IROs to access legal advice from Portsmouth LA's legal team. Last year no disputes were raised into CAFCASS.
- 4.25. Last year 128 DRNs were raised and 127 were resolved. The majority of these (62/128 or 48%) related to IROs raising concerns about poor documentation on the children's files in preparation for reviews. This is an overall decrease from last year, affected by new starters, changes in the service, and increased travelling. DRNs remains an area for improvement, for the service ensuring IROs review care plans and raise alerts formally, where they see drift and delay. We know that stability for children in care and being matched to carers is a key area, the permanence options for children being progressed in a timely manner, along with how to consider the needs of children in unregistered and unregulated care arrangements against a dire national and local sufficiency shortfall.
- 4.26. Quarterly reporting of DRNs and second review dip sample main findings are included in a Practice Development Service quarterly report. Scrutinised by the children's services management team (CSMT) and shared with children's services.

Table 11. DRNs April 2022 to March 2023



4.27. This year the IROs continued to support children about their rights, entitlements and supports and making referrals to MCYPC and the Young Lives Foundation; next year we will develop and re-launch formal leaflets/card to give children with IROs details on. Their details are also in the letters they send to children and young people. We will update our leaflets and information about the IRO service to share with partner agencies, parents, and children. Children entering care should receive accessible information and previously this was in the form of a pack with relevant leaflets and written information for them, including information about Medway's commissioned participation service Young Lives Foundation (YLF) and the IRO service, which we would support being driven forward next year with the support of the Corporate Parenting Board.

### The Impact of the IRO service

4.28. The IRO Service Manager dip samples most second statutory reviews, quarterly. Second reviews are where permanence options for children are the focus of care planning, as directed in the IRO handbook, so that early options are identified and planned for children avoiding delay and promoting best outcomes. This is important for younger children who may need adoption considered and for children who may be able to be re-united with their families. The overall findings from the year suggest that whilst the majority of plans are understood by social workers, parallel permanence planning could be improved for a small cohort of children and that initial permanence panel recommendations were not always being tracked efficiently by social work managers and IROs; IROs were sometimes too involved in planning with the teams rather than taking an independent overview of the care plan and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. For some second reviews midway reviews were brought forward where gaps in planning were identified, through

conversations with teams and IROs to ensure practice standards and learning were held with remedial actions agreed and tracked.

- 4.29. Dip Sampling identified that for some children their second review letters did not always well explain permanence options in compassionate and clear language, and this remains a focus of improvement for the service next year. Where these were well written children remembered their letters and asked questions e.g., one young person, aged 15 years asked their IRO during a visit, about the timescales for their parents assessments taking place, referred to in their review letter, which they had in their hand, asking when they would be told about the outcome (their needs were being considered in the family courts) and they reflected their IRO was the only person in their network who had told them this information.
- 4.30. IRO views were regularly sought and represented in social work statements when applications to family courts took place. IROs regularly consulted with Guardians representing children in care proceedings.
- 4.31. Information from Cafcass service leads in quarterly Cafcass meetings with service managers from Medway are also attended by the IRO service manager. This year there were known delays in care proceedings in line with the national picture and trends with average care proceedings taking over 40 weeks to conclude (the standard is 26 weeks). This reflects the challenges in courts availability and capacity, and a rising trend in care order applications. This has meant that for some younger children and babies there has been a delay in making final decisions for adoption, they have waited too long to be matched with adopters overall, and some assessments have had to be updated within the care proceedings.
- 4.32. The IRO manager attends the national and south east regions IRO Managers group (NIROMP and SEIROM) to share and local and national successes and challenges and learning in IRO services. This year the 'The Independent Review of Children's Social Care' (DfE May 2022) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-childrens-social-care-final-report>) asked for £2.6bn, to transform the children's social care system and prevent the number of children in care (nationally sitting above 100,000) which followed the killing of toddlers Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, in 2020. The role of the IRO was challenged in this report and was proposed to be replaced. The recommendation was met with a mixed response from the profession and stakeholders and there are no plans currently to replace the IRO role.
- 4.33. IROs continued to support children living in unregulated care arrangements as referred to in last year's reporting; weekly reporting on these children has been established this year and is followed up by IROs in their weekly oversight of these children. As last year the IRO Manager sits on key panels and is regularly invited to service specific panels tracking outcomes for children; there has been further embedding of permanence tracking and oversight by Heads of Services and Service Managers in the services in the last year, in line with the updated permanence policy which was drafted by the IRO Service Manager and 2 colleagues, agreed by the senior management team in November 2022.

- 4.34. IROs continue to use group supervisions, offer mapping to teams, and model the Signs of Safety practice model in their interactions with teams and services, as reported last year.
- 4.35. Linking role to service areas and new staff remain in place. IROs remain linked to specific service areas and assist managers and social workers with all things related to care planning for children in care. In the coming year link IROs in the service areas will work with the practice development leads to support continued practice improvement.
- 4.36. This year the IRO service assisted and lead on a response to the Independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel to ensure that Quality and Safety Reviews were completed for all children with complex needs and disabilities currently living or spending significant periods of time, at residential specialist schools to ensure they are in safe, quality placements. This request was part of a National Review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings following concerns and allegations that children with disabilities and complex health needs suffered harm in three independent residential facilities in Doncaster. 2 IROs and the IRO service manager visited and planned with partners in education and health visits to 6 specific children in 4 settings with their findings used in a final report to the National Panel.
- 4.37. **Individual examples of IROs making a difference for children in care** include the following:
- One IRO supported a 16 year old's view refusing to be moved from her care arrangement in order to remain where she was and to cease a plan for a Deprivation of Liberty Order, in favour of strengthening partner agencies interventions to support her. She settled in a more local care arrangement and was involved in all decisions when she eventually moved.
  - One young person aged 12 years was supported by his IRO to be baptised, despite some reservations from his family. He was pleased to have been empowered to take this decision.
  - One young person aged 10 years entered care at the end of care proceedings, and experienced 4 different care arrangements in a short time culminating in a residential care arrangement out of the Medway area. Her IRO completed a 'words and pictures' explanation why she was no longer living at home and ensured that Christmas presents were delivered to her from her mother after visiting her. The same IRO, working with this child's older brother attended sexual harm reduction sessions with him, to support him access these.
  - One IRO after 6 years had built a relationship with a young person's mother enough for her to share information about his father, after her resistance about sharing this information over the years and during the past care proceedings.
  - One young person aged 16 years was helped to return home to her mother's care by the IRO, in line with her wishes. This involved supporting the social work team to revisit a parenting assessment of her mother, providing support services to intervene in their complex relationship and effectively plan transitional work to support her rehabilitation home.

- One IRO noticed that the professional network struggled to engage a young person, involved with gangs, and being exploited, and was able to work with him effectively so that he participated in his review meeting; this involved some direct work with him regarding his behaviours and options for his future.
- During a first review meeting an IRO encouraged the social work team to revisit their plan for a residential assessment for parents of a baby and to re-focus on strengthening family support in the community for the parents' additional needs with a family member caring for the baby whilst this was taking place.
- An IRO effectively challenged a proposed adoption placement regarding their concerns about the care afforded to a child and his relationship with his proposed adopters, supporting the views of his social worker. He was moved and placed with foster carers who subsequently expressed a wish to adopt him and are currently being assessed for this.
- Two children in a foster care arrangement, had had significant delay in progressing rehabilitation to their father post a care order being awarded. Their IRO ensured that a transition plan was put into place, the girls enjoyed overnight stays with their father and a timescale was set for their return to his care. Whilst this plan was not ultimately achieved, after both girls assessed they preferred to remain with their carer, they were supported to consider life with their father and were realistic about this not working for them, with him supporting their decision to remain with their carers.
- A young boy of 10 was having brain surgery. He was not having face-to-face family time with his mother (as per his care plan which promoted letterbox contact). Given the seriousness of his health, and his mother's request to see him during this time (given her fears about the operation) his IRO intervened, so that his mother was able to see him in hospital, without interacting with him. His IRO helped the social work team to consider her request compassionately. His mother attended his next review meeting and was more involved than in previous ones leading to planning about how to update her regarding his healing and progress.
- A 16-year-old entered care 6 weeks after being placed on a child protection plan, His IRO challenged the positioning of the social work team, in not undertaking a parenting assessment of his mother (his sole carer) to consider more the impact of her parenting, highlighted his potential unassessed neurodiverse needs, and that of a young carer, to help better understand his responses to his parent (who had her own known vulnerabilities). He was supported to remain in care on a voluntary basis longer term.

### **Participation and feedback.**

- 4.38. The IRO service has established links to Medway's commissioned service 'The Young Lives Foundation' (YLF) who provide advocacy services for children. IROs continued to make referrals for children and young people to advocacy services to help them solve problems and participate fully in all their meetings, to help them make complaints if necessary and to understand their entitlements.
- 4.39. During July and August 2022 IROs supported the Corporate Parenting Board consultation with children in care to explore how well they were listened to (at

their review meetings); findings supported high satisfaction with reviews and IROs, with 51 children's views captured mainly by IROs after review meetings. Main messages included that children, even whilst in care, place high trust and confide in their family members and children valued reviews being conducted in person. This reminded us of the connectedness children in care often have to their birth families and the likelihood they need these strengthened safely as they mature, wherever possible and that personal face to face conversations and seeing children is optimal.

4.40. The development of formal regular feedback, from partners and the services remains an area to develop further this and next year in the IRO service; tools will be co-designed and produced with children in care, in order to strengthen and learn as a service from feedback.

4.41. All recruitment of IROs has included a care leaver being on the recruitment panel, chaired by the IRO service manager. Their observations and lived care experiences are valued and critical in our recruitment activity.

4.42. Recommendations for the next year

- Increase feedback activity with service users and stakeholders to inform IRO service delivery.
- Continued focus on IRO core activities of review meetings, monitoring of children's care plans, contact with children.
- Consolidate the quality of IRO letters to children through peer review, dip sampling.
- Continue to sample and quality assure children's 2<sup>nd</sup> review meetings and IRO oversight of their permanence plans.
- Strengthen the support offer to services with the Practice Development Service leads and IRO links e.g., workshops, training sessions.

## 5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Timeliness and Recording of Review Meetings	There is statutory guidance in relation to the timing of reviews; a first review is held within 4 weeks of a child coming into care, then a second review within the next 12 weeks or 3 months and then at least every six months after this.	Staffing levels have been maintained to ensure that children's Review Meetings meet with statutory requirements and support our strong performance in this area.	D IV



Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Children's participation in their Review Meetings	Participation is recorded as those children that have attended a meeting / contributed to the process by means of a consultation form, observation by the IRO, advocacy, submitting a Mind of My Own App note, using an interpreter, and discussing issues directly with their IRO or social worker.	Staffing levels have been maintained to ensure that children's participation in their Review Meetings are provided through a variety of means and support our strong performance in this area, ensuring that children are listened to.	D IV

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

## 6. Financial implications

6.1. There are no direct implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

## 7. Legal implications

7.1. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

### Lead officer contact

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## Appendices

None

## Background papers

1. Independent Reviewing Officers' Handbook; Statutory guidance relating to care planning and reviewing arrangements for looked-after children 2010; DfE
2. MacAlister J, (2022) 'The Independent Review of Children's Social Care Final Report London:(DfE)
3. Volume 2 - Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review'.
4. The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010