

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date and Time :-	Tuesday 12 September 2023 at 4.00 p.m.
Venue:-	Rotherham Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.
Membership:-	Councillors Browne, Burnett, Z. Collingham, Cusworth (Chair), and Pitchley (Vice-Chair)
Contact	Dawn Mitchell, Governance Advisor Dawn.mitchell@rotherham.gov.uk

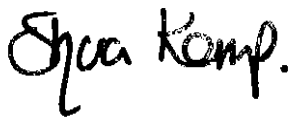
The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

Rotherham Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair or Governance Advisor of their intentions prior to the meeting.

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
To receive the apologies of any panel member who is unable to attend the meeting.
- 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 3 - 9)**
To consider the minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 20 June 2023 and approve them as a true and correct record of the proceedings.
- 3. Declarations of Interest**
To receive declarations of interest from Members in respect of items listed on the agenda.
- 4. Exclusion of the Press and Public**
To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.
- 5. Fostering Recruitment and Retention**
To receive a verbal update on fostering recruitment and retention.
- 6. The Review of Fostering Panel**
To receive a verbal update on the review of the fostering panel.
- 7. Performance on a Page (Pages 11 - 23)**
To receive an update on performance monitoring for quarter 1 2023/2024.
- 8. The Statement of Intent for Corporate Parenting (Pages 25 - 26)**
To receive an update on the Statement of Intent for Corporate Parenting, in the absence of the strategy.

- 9. The Independent Reviewing Officer Report (Pages 27 - 53)**
To receive an update on the Independent Reviewing Officer Report.
- 10. The Local Authority Designated Officer Report (Pages 55 - 68)**
To receive an update on the Local Authority Designated Officer Report.
- 11. Urgent Business**
To determine any item which the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.
- 12. Date and time of the next meeting**
The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be held on 13 November commencing at 2:00 p.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.



Sharon Kemp,
Chief Executive.

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday 20 June 2023

Present:- Councillor Cusworth (in the Chair); Councillors Pitchley, Browne and Z. Collingham.

82. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

83. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Minute 90 (Looked After Children Council Update) was exempt from the press and public. The Chair moved the following resolution:- That under Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 (information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual/financial information).

Resolved: - That members of the press and public be excluded for this item.

84. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Arising from Minute No. 71 (Looked After Children's Council Update Report), clarification was sought on how young people's identities and personal details could be protected should they wish to attend a meeting. The Strategic Director for Children's and Young Peoples Services advised the following:

- Reports containing the identities of Looked After Children and Young People would not be published publicly.
- The reports were published internally. This was currently under review.
Discussions on the status of the Corporate Parenting Panel were on-going, with two different models under consideration.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 March 2023, were agreed as a correct record.

85. HOUSE PROJECT UPDATE

The Assistant Director for Children's Services gave an update on The House Project and outlined the following:

- The House Project would close on June 30, 2023, this was a result of required savings throughout the next financial year.
- The House Project had assisted over thirty children within a five-year period to transition into independence.
- Any young people who would have received the support through the House Project and would be supported by the Leaving Care Team on other available programmes.
- The final year's cohort would still be offered support through their personal advisor's and would not be disadvantaged as a result of the project ending.
- There were only two children who required support that were remaining in the project and the service is working with Housing Services to find suitable accommodation.
- Any young people who were in a property would be able to take over the tenancy.
- Housing Services had agreed to provide the same level of properties each year to ensure that the service would be able support the same number of children. It was noted that this was a good example of cross-directorate working.
- Young people would continue to receive priority housing status, although there was limited choice in areas of higher demand. The aim was to give as much choice to young people as possible. As part of the process, young people were provided with pathway plans to identify any additional support needs, alongside social worker visits, increased personal advisor visits and finance groups.
- In addition to existing support needs, those young people who had experienced trauma required further support, The service was committed through the local offer and the wider health offer .
- There was an ambition to work with Housing Services to ensure properties were available for young people in areas close to their homes, so they were able to remain in the community they had previously lived in.
- All accommodation sourced was only suitable for young people wanting single occupancy and as a result shared accommodation was not offered. Although sourcing different types of properties was a challenge.
- Regular meetings with Housing Services were held and the aim was to work in conjunction with the service to obtain more step-down properties and consider accommodation provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under the age of eighteen and those 18plus
- The panel considered if a Care Leavers Charter would be provided to the Panel once it had been developed. It was noted that the Charter was not legally enforceable but did outline a commitment .
- The Care Leavers Charter would be co-designed with care leavers and would include the local authority's promise and commitment to care leavers.
- There was currently a gap as there was no specific Care Leavers Forum and the service would like to invite care leavers to attend

the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Resolved: - That the update be noted.

86. STAYING CLOSE AND OTHER GRANT FUNDING UPDATE

The Assistant Director for Children's Services gave an update on the Staying Close Funding and outlined the following:

- A bid was submitted for the Staying Close Funding following encouragement from the Department of Education. The funding would have provided additional finances to provide children with accommodation within their communities. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful, due to higher demand from other local authorities.
- It was noted that the local authority received feedback on its positive journey and the progress made.

Resolved: - That the update be noted.

87. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Assistant Director for Children's Services gave an update on the Corporate Parenting Panel Strategy and outlined the following:

- The previous Corporate Parenting Panel Strategy covered the period of 2017 to 2020. After it ended in 2020 there had not been a revised strategy produced. It was shared that significant work had taken place during 2021/22 that would support this activity
- There was a draft strategy completed, however this was not completed as it was felt that it was not co-produced with key stakeholders including Care Leavers, Looked After Children and 'Corporate Grandparents'.
- Within the interim period, the Local Authority would provide a statement of intent for Corporate Parenting Panel at the next meeting in September. The statement would outline the mission and priorities of Corporate Parenting Panel.
- All other core documents were already in place, such as the Looked After Children's Strategy Action Plan, the Sufficiency Strategy, the Care Leavers Action Plan, the Fostering Update Action Plan and Sixteen Plus Regulation.
- The revised Corporate Parenting Panel Strategy would include all of the above documentation. It was noted that young people, stakeholders, and care leavers would be fully engaged throughout the development process.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the update be noted.

- 2) That an update on the Corporate Parenting Panel Strategy be provided to the Panel in September 2023.

88. THE REGULATION OF SIXTEEN PLUS AND DISPERSED ACCOMMODATION

The Assistant Director for Children's Services gave an update on the Regulation of Sixteen Plus and Dispersed Accommodation and outlined the following:

- The service had a dispersed property at Hollowgate, which was a ten-bed property.
- Sixteen plus accommodation was unregulated at this point, however in October 2023, the legislation would change to require all sixteen-plus accommodation to be regulated.
- The Local Authority had notified Ofsted of its intention to regulate all accommodation provided to young people by October 2023 and plans were in place for to work alongside all current providers to ensure compliance.
- Regular updates would be provided to the Panel, however there was no expected barriers to regulating all accommodation provided.
- It was likely that there would be an increase in financial costs to Rotherham Council because of increasing fees issued by accommodation providers.
- All regulated providers would be required to have an employee responsible for the regulation of the related policies, procedures, and behaviours of residents within the accommodation setting.
- All accommodation providers would be inspected, with the aim of most registering with Ofsted by October 2023, with an inspection taking place within a six-month period after registration.
- The regulation rules were the same as the ones currently in place for children's residential homes. This included regulation of tenancies and ensuring staff and managers were appropriately trained.
- Rotherham Council had always quality assured all young people's provision and were assured that all the relevant staff have had safer recruitment training.
- The challenge would be that the new expectations would be very high in standards, and it was quite likely that some provision would not meet Ofsted expectations over time.
- If a provider was deemed inadequate in a single property, the provider would be deemed inadequate across all their properties.
- If an external provider did not meet regulation requirements after inspection by Ofsted, an opportunity to remedy this would be provided. Support and guidance were being provided by Ofsted to all providers across the country.
- If providers did fail regulation inspections, it would be difficult to source alternative appropriate accommodation.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That an update on the Regulation of Sixteen Plus and Dispersed Accommodation be provided to the Panel in the early 2024.

89. PERFORMANCE ON A PAGE

The Performance Analyst Officer introduced the report which provided a summary of performance for key indicators across Looked After Children Services for Quarter Four 2022/2023. This included a summary of service performance in comparison to the same period in 2021/22 and trend data, graphical analysis, and latest benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages (where possible). The following was outlined:

- The number of children entering care was slightly higher than the previous year.
- 94.7% of eligible looked after children had an up-to-date plan. This was a slight decrease on the year's performance, with the aimed target being 95%
- 77% of placements were family based, this was a 2.4% decrease on last year.
- 70% of looked after children were in a stable placement for two or more years, this was slightly lower than the previous year.
- There was currently 111 in house foster families, with 11 new approvals throughout the year. There had been 25 de-registrations with 14 less foster families than the previous year.
- It was noted that nine looked after children were known to the Youth Justice Team.
- 24 children had been adopted, which was a decrease compared to the same period in the previous year.
- The overall percentage of looked after children who had an initial health assessment within time scale had improved in comparison to the previous year.
- Dental assessments had also significantly improved compared to the previous year and were now back to levels before the covid 19 pandemic.
- 91.5% of reviews were completed within the time scale set, this was a slight reduction to the previous year. At the end of the quarter, 95.6% of visits were up to date and within time scales of the national minimum standard.
- At the end of quarter four, there were 319 young people in the care leavers cohort which showed an increase of 27 compared to the same point in 2022.
- 74.5% of care leavers had an up-to-date pathway plan at the end of the quarter and 97.2% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation. 69% of care leavers were in education, employment, and training.

The Chair thanked officers for the comprehensive report and for highlighting key performance areas.

Resolved: - That the report and the accompanying dataset be received.

90. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL- JUNE UPDATE

The Chair advised that as the item contained restricted information and as resolved in Minute 83, that the Panel would go into private session for the consideration of this item.

The young people on the Looked After Children's Council, supported by Lisa Duvall, gave a presentation to the Panel on the work of Rotherham's Looked After Children's Council drawing attention to the following:

- The Mayors Civil Service
- The Care Experience Virtual Art Exhibition
- King Charles III Coronation
- The VIP Summer Festival
- The 'Dare to Care' animation project
- The Lil Lac Club Update

The Chair advised that a Bluetooth speaker had been donated by a member of the public to the Looked After Children's Council.

Resolved: - That the panel thanked the young people for their inspirational presentation and noted the updates provided.

91. URGENT BUSINESS

There was one item of urgent business that was raised, this was to discuss the frequency of meetings and future meeting dates.

It was suggested that there should be two additional meetings added within the current municipal year. The following two dates were discussed:

- 23 January 2024
- 30 April 2024

Resolved: - That two additional meetings would be added within the current municipal year on the dates outlined.

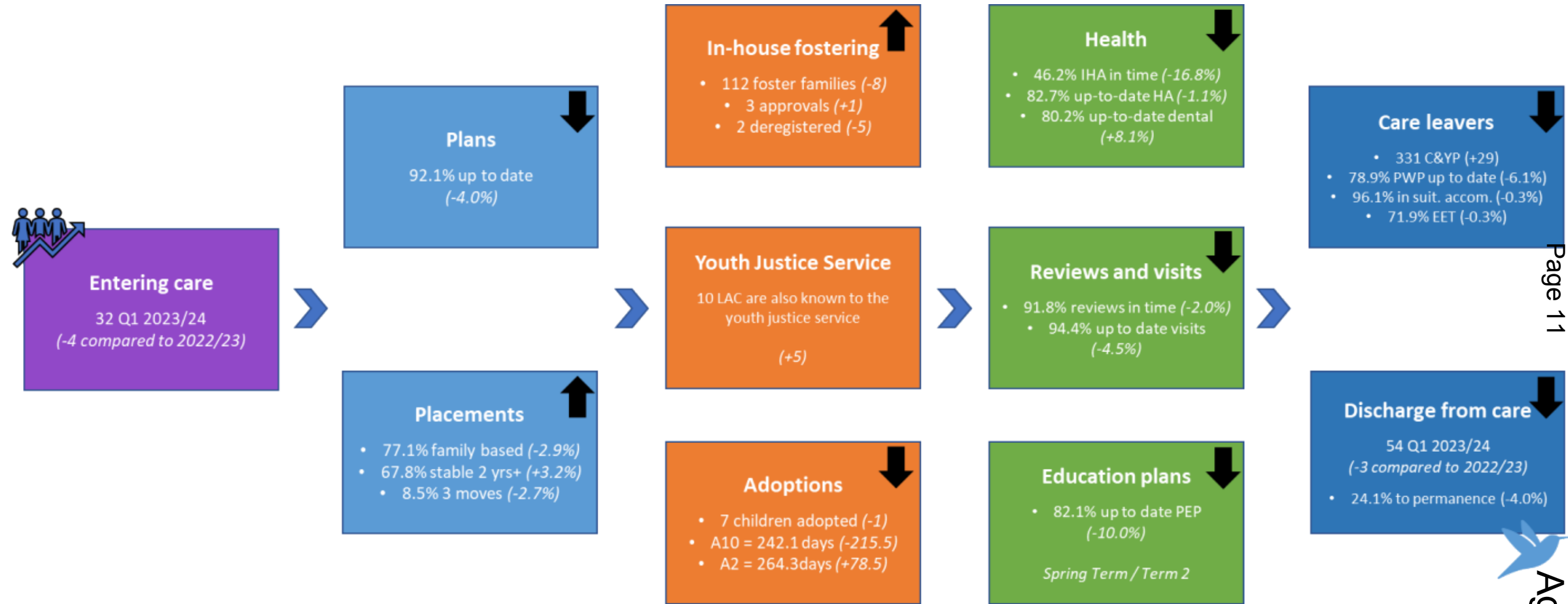
92. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting be held on 12 September, 2023, commencing at 4.00 p.m. to be held in the Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.




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Performance on a Page

As of 30th June 2023(Q1 - 2023/24)



All performance is for quarter 1, financial year 2023/24. Figures in brackets show the difference when compared to the same period in the previous financial year (2022/23).

 Improving performance/meeting target
  Declining performance/not meeting target
  Stable performance

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Looked After Children Performance Summary

As at month end: June 2023

*DOT - Direction of travel represents the direction of 'performance' since the previous month showing if the number or percentage has gone up or down. Colours have been added to help distinguish better and worse performance with the exceptions of measures that are for information only. Key Below:-

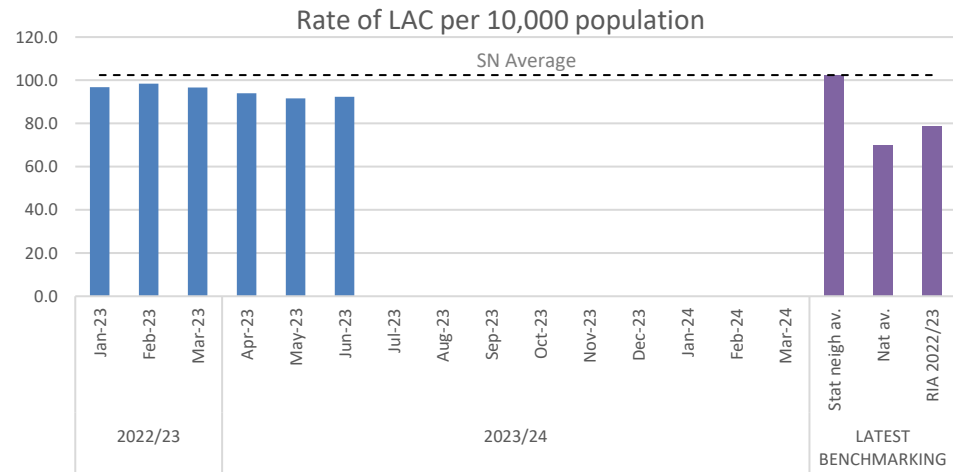
- ↑ - increase/decrease in number/percentage = improvement in performance
- ↓ - increase/decrease in number/percentage = decline in performance
- - number/percentage remained same as previous month
- ↑ - increase in number/percentage (info measures)
- - remained same as previous month (info measures)
- ↓ - decrease in number/percentage (info measures)

REF NO.	INDICATOR	TIMELINE	DATA NOTE	2023/24						TARGET & TOLERANCES			YR ON YR PERFORMANCE		LATEST BENCHMARKING					
				Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	2023/24 YTD	Good perf is	DOT* (month)	RAG (month)	Red	Amber	Green (target)	2022/23	Yr on Yr trend	Stat neigh av.	Best stat neigh	Nat av.	Top qtile threshold	RIA 2022/23
4.1	No. of looked after children	monthly	Count	530	516	520	529	info	↑					545						
4.2	Rate of looked after children per 10,000 population aged 0-17	monthly	Rate per 10,000	94.1	91.6	92.3	93.8	low	↑		95.2+	-	<95.2	96.7		102.4	56.0	70.0	-	78.9
4.3	No. of admissions of looked after children	monthly	Count	7	9	16	32	info	↑					181						
4.4	No. of looked after unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)	monthly	Count	38	35	36	36	info	↑					36	New measure 2022/23					
4.5	% of eligible looked after children with an up to date plan	monthly	%	91.3%	90.3%	92.1%	92.1%	high	↑		<87%	87%+	95%+	94.7%						
4.6	% of looked after children visits up to date & completed within timescale of national minimum standard	monthly	%	93.2%	93.8%	94.4%	94.4%	high	↑		<90%	90%+	98%+	95.6%						
4.7	% of looked after children care plans reviewed within timescales	monthly	%	95.0%	89.5%	95.5%	91.8%	high	↑		<87%	87%+	95%+	91.5%						
4.8	% of looked after children having an initial health assessment within timescale	monthly	%	53.8%	16.7%	57.1%	46.2%	high	↑					61.5%						
4.9	% of looked after children with a up to date health assessments	monthly	%	88.4%	85.9%	82.7%	82.7%	high	↓		<87%	87%+	95%+	78.7%						
4.10	% of looked after children with a up to date dental assessments	monthly	%	84.6%	81.8%	80.2%	80.2%	high	↓		<87%	87%+	95%+	69.4%						
4.11	No. of looked after children who are known to the Youth Justice Service (YJS)	monthly	Count	8	7	8	8	info	↑					9	New measure 2022/23					
4.12	No. of children with an Education Health & Care plan in the looked after children cohort	monthly	Count	93	91	91	91	info	→					95	New measure 2022/23					
4.13	No. of looked after children having at least one missing episode within the period	monthly	Count	7	12	12	25	info	→					59						
4.14	No. of children who have ceased to be looked after children	monthly	Count	22	21	11	54	high	↓					195						
4.15	No. of special guardianship orders (SGO) or child arrangement orders (CAO) granted after a period of being looked after children (Legal Status)	monthly	Count	7	5	1	13	info	↓					72						
4.16	No. of looked after children who have ceased to be looked after due to a special guardianship orders(SGO) or child arrangement orders (CAO)	monthly	Count	7	1	0	8	info	↓					39						
4.17	% of looked after children who have ceased to be looked after due to permanence (SGO, CAO, Adoption)	monthly	%	40.9%	19.0%	0.0%	24.1%	high	↓		<27%	27%+	35%+	30.4%						
4.18	% of long term looked after children in placements which have been stable for at least 2 years	monthly	%	64.7%	67.8%	67.8%	67.8%	high	→		<62%	62%+	70%+	65.2%		71.1%	77.0%	71.0%	74.1%	-
4.19	% of looked after children who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months	monthly	%	9.9%	9.1%	8.5%	8.5%	low	↓		16%+	8%+	<8%	9.7%		8.6%	5.0%	10.0%	9.9%	-
4.20	% of looked after children in a family based setting	monthly	%	75.5%	76.0%	77.1%	77.1%	high	↑		<77%	77%+	85%+	77.0%						
4.21	% of looked after children placed with parents or other with parental responsibility (P1)	monthly	%	5.5%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	low	→					5.7%						
4.22	% of looked after children in kinship care	monthly	%	6.8%	6.0%	6.5%	6.5%	high	↑		<8%	8%+	12%+	8.1%						
4.23	No. of placements that have been created for children via foster care (approvals)	monthly	Count	4	0	1	5	high	↑					21						
4.24	No. of adoptions completed within 12 months of SHOBPA	monthly	Count	1	2	1	4	high	↓					12						
4.25	Av. days between a child becoming looked after and having a adoption placement (A10)	monthly	YTD Average	214.5	130.6	242.1	242.1	low	↑		487+	-	<487	492.5		350.1	274.0	367.0	317.5	362.6
4.26	Av. days between a placement order and being matched with an adoptive family (A2)	monthly	YTD Average	122.5	280.2	264.3	264.3	low	↓		121+	-	<121	197.4		160.4	90.0	175.0	135.5	154.0
4.27	No. of care leavers	monthly	Count	337	337	331	331	info	↓					319						
4.28	% of eligible looked after children & Care Leavers with an up to date pathway plan	monthly	%	81.3%	79.5%	78.9%	78.9%	high	↓					74.5%						
4.29	% of care leavers in suitable accommodation	monthly	%	96.7%	96.7%	96.1%	96.1%	high	↓		<88%	88%+	96%+	97.2%		90.2%	96.0%	88.0%	93.1%	-
4.30	% of care leavers in employment, education or training	monthly	%	73.0%	73.6%	71.9%	71.9%	high	↓		<58%	58%+	66%+	69.6%		53.7%	75.0%	55.0%	61.1%	-
4.31	No. of care leavers who are former unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)	monthly	Count	28	31	31	31	info	→					29	New measure 2022/23					

Looked After Children (LAC)

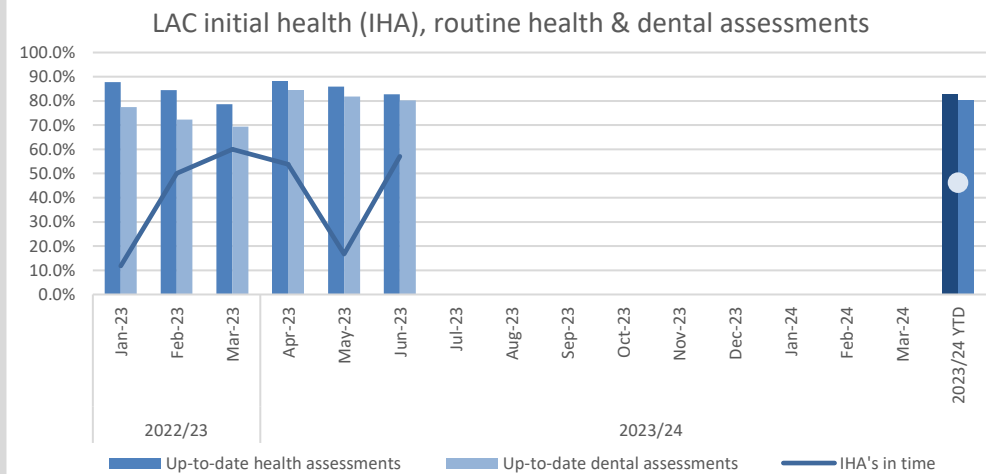
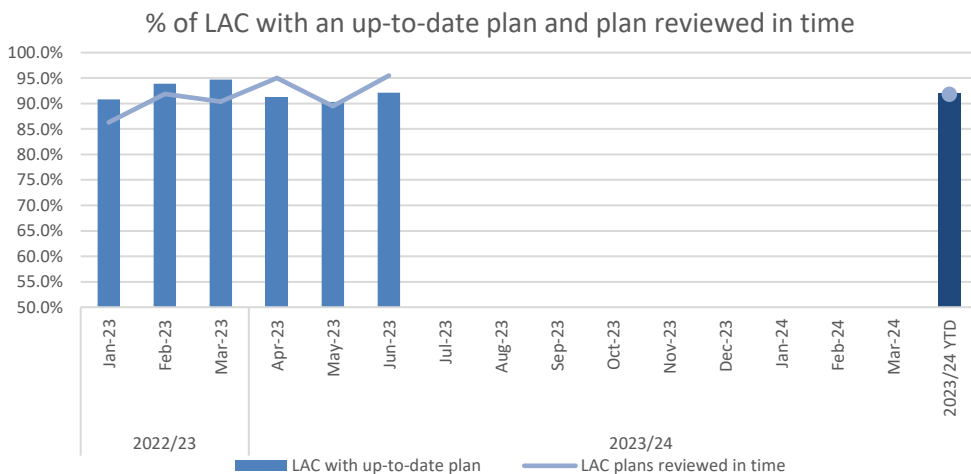
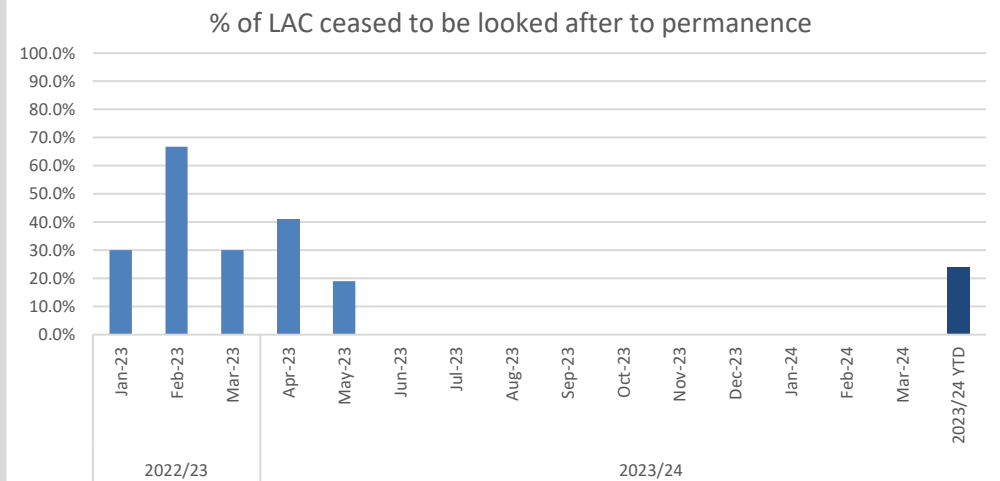
Children in care are children who have become the responsibility of the local authority either voluntarily by parents struggling to cope or through an intervention by children's services because a child is at risk of significant harm. LAC review meetings are convened to consider the plan for the welfare of LAC and how to achieve permanence for them within a timescale that meets their needs. The LA is responsible for visiting LAC wherever they are living to ensure his/her welfare continues to be safeguarded and promoted and the LA should ensure that every LAC has his/her health needs fully assessed and a health plan clearly set out.

520 LAC as at period end



32 Admissions (ytd)

54 Discharges (ytd)



94.4% of LAC visits are up-to-date & complete (NMS)

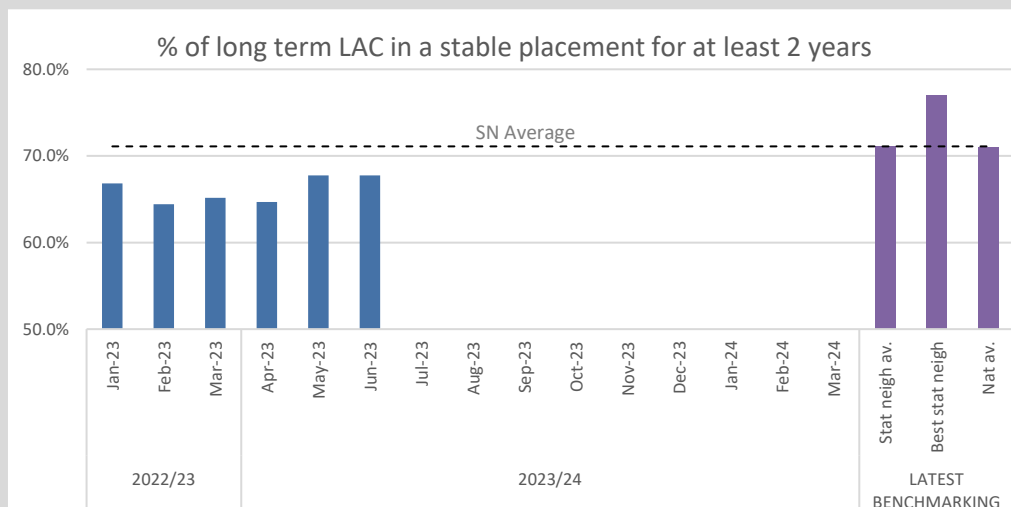
(National minimum standard is within 1wk of placement, then 6wkly till in placement for 1yr, then 12wkly after.)

46.2% of IHA's completed in time (ytd)

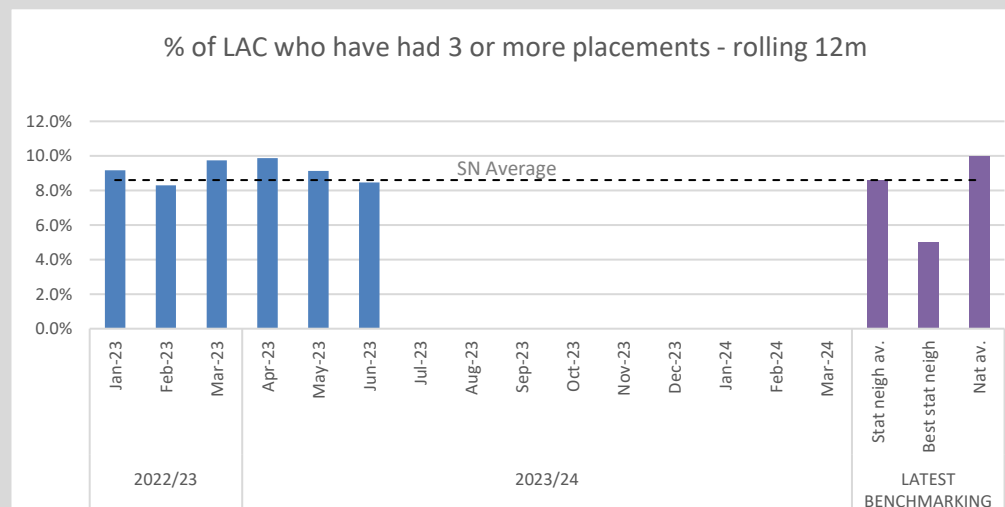
Placements

A LAC placement is where a child has become the responsibility of the local authority (LAC) and is placed with foster carers, in residential homes or with parents or other relatives. A foster care family provide the best form of care for most looked after children. Rotherham would like most of its children to be looked after by its own carers so that they remain part of their families and community.

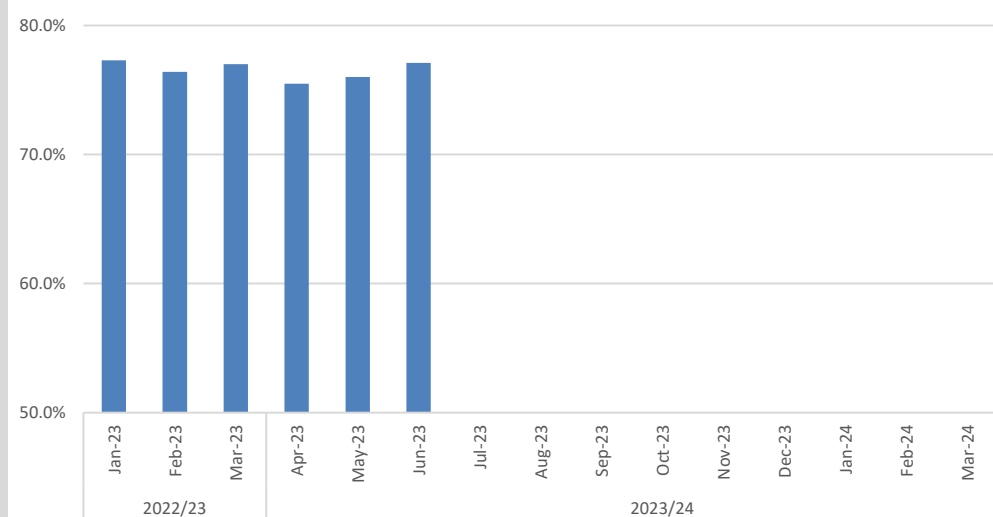
67.8% of long term LAC in a stable placement for 2 years+



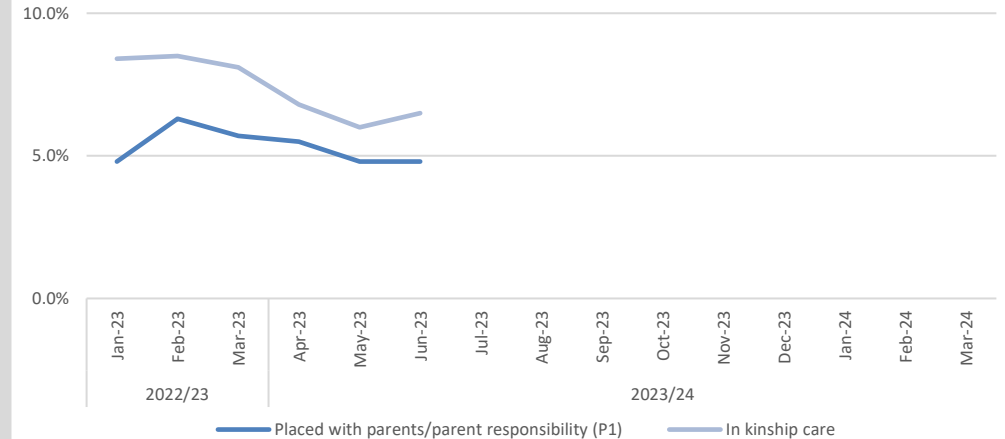
8.5% of LAC have had 3+ placements as at period end



% of children in a family based placement



% of children in a parental or kinship care placement



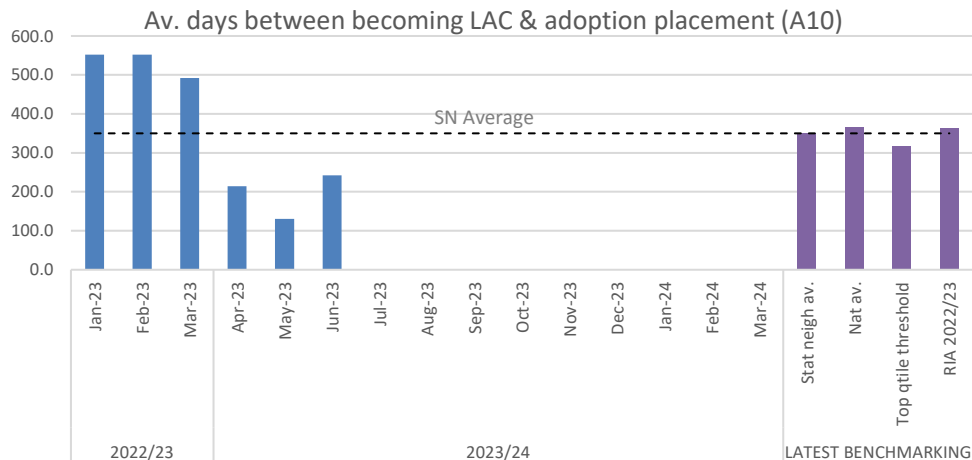
5 placements created via foster carer approvals (ytd)

Adoptions & Care Leavers

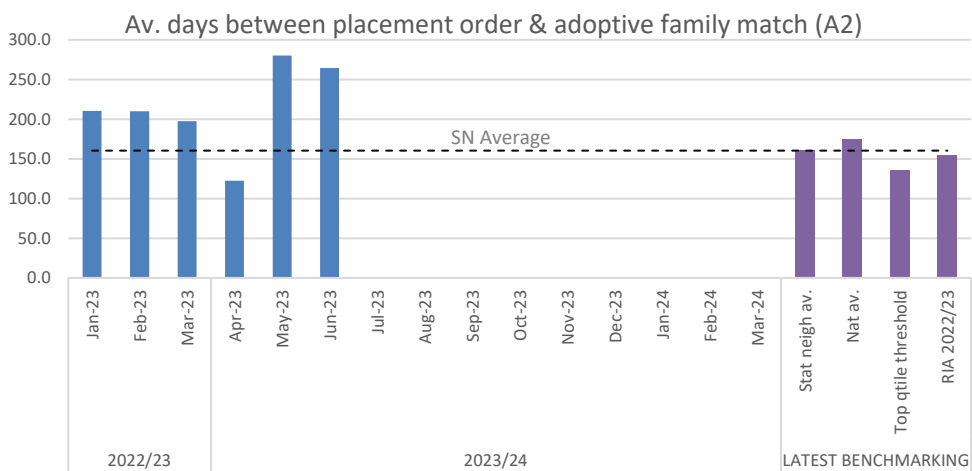
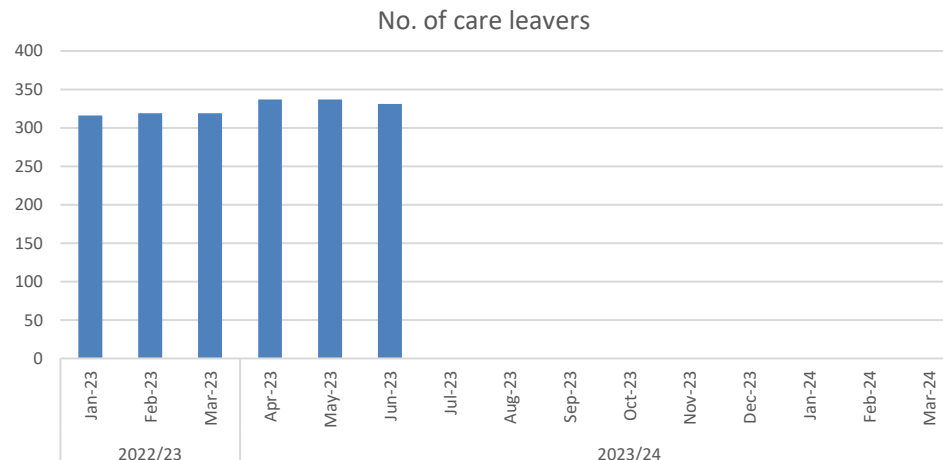
Following a child becoming looked after, it may be deemed suitable for a child to become adopted which is a legal process of becoming a non-biological parent. The date this is agreed to be in the best interests of the child is known as their 'SHOBPA'. Following this a family finding process is undertaken to find a suitable match based on the child's needs, followed by placement with their adopter(s). Placement are monitored and assessed before the final adoption order is granted.

A care leaver is, a person 25yrs or under; has been looked after by a LA for 13wks+ since 14yrs; and has been looked after by a LA at school-leaving age or after.

Adoptions



Care Leavers



331 care leavers as at the period end

78.9% of eligible LAC & care leavers had an up to date pathway plan at the period end

96.1% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation at the period end

71.9% of care leavers were in employment, education or training at the period end

4 adoptions completed within 12 months of SHOBPA (ytd)

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Corporate Parenting Panel – 12 September 2023

Report Title

Corporate Parenting Performance Report – Q1 2023/24

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

Craig Liversage, Interim Head of Children in Care,
craig.liversage@rotherham.gov.uk

Rebecca Harrison, Performance Officer
rebecca.harrison@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report provides a summary of performance for key performance indicators across the Looked After Children (LAC) services. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data reports, Appendix 1 which provides performance on a page giving an overview of the services performance in comparison to the same period 2022-23 and Appendix 2 which provides trend data, graphical analysis, and latest benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages where possible.

Recommendations

1. The panel is asked to receive this report with the accompanying dataset (Appendix 2) and consider any issues arising.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Performance on a page

Appendix 2 Looked after children performance – June 23 (Q1 2023/24)

Background Papers

Children's Social Care Monthly Performance Report – June 23 (Q1 2023/24)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Corporate Parenting Performance Report – Q1 2023/24

1. Background

- 1.1 This report provides evidence to the council's commitment to continuous improvement and providing performance information to enable scrutiny of the impact on the outcomes for children and young people in care. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report which provides trend data, graphical analysis, and latest benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.
- 1.2 Targets, including associated 'RAG' (red, amber, green rating) tolerances, are included. These have been set in consideration of available national and statistical neighbour benchmarking data, recent performance levels and, importantly, Rotherham's local service context.
- 1.3 All benchmarking data is as at the latest data release by the DfE and relates to 2021/22 outturn.
- 1.4 The narrative supplied within the report has been informed by the Assistant Director for Children's Services and the Head of Service – Children in Care.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 **Looked After Children** – At the end of Q1 (2023/24) we saw the number of children and young people we look after decrease by 16 to 520 when compared to the Q1 2022/23 when there were 536 LAC.

During Q1 32 children became looked after, compared to 36 in Q1 last financial year (2022/23). 54 children ceased to be looked after, compared to 57 in 2022/23.

The benchmark measure of 10k population rate of children looked after has reduced to 92.3 at the end of Q1 compared to 93.3 last year. This remains below the latest statistical neighbour's average of 102.4 but remains significantly higher than the national average of 70.0.

There are currently 36 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), an increase of 19 when compared to the end of Q1 2022/23 when there were only 17 UASC looked after by the local authority (LA). The commissioning team are working to ensure we are able to offer placements and accommodation commensurate to need. We know this is a potential ongoing pressure due to the growing need to support more UASC, and impact on local placement sufficiency is being monitored.

- 2.2 **Plans** – At the end of Q1, 92.1% of eligible LAC had an up-to-date plan, which is a 4.0% decrease in comparison to last year when it was 96.1%.
- 2.3 **Placements** – At the end of Q1 77.1% of LAC were in a family-based setting compared to 80.0% at the end of Q1 2022/23. 67.8% of long-term LAC had been in a stable placement for at least 2 years at the end of Q1 showing a 3.2% increase when compared to the end of Q1 2022/23 (64.6%). The 67.8% Q1 figure continues to be below the latest stat neighbour (71.1%) and national (71.0%) averages. Placement stability is an area of focus that the fostering service,

responsible Team manager and IRO have been engaged with to review what works and what their roles are in working to prevent placement breakdowns. The fostering service has sought to strengthen placement stability via completing the mapping assessment to identify support needs and ensure these are met via the service. The fostering service is expanding their support offer recruiting additional Family Support workers and an extended on-call support offering after hours and weekend contact, as these have been highlighted as best practice. Team Around the Child meetings are in place to support all placements, with a particular focus at linking in support from the agency or Rotherham Therapeutic Team earlier, to prevent disruption.

The percentage of children having had 3 or more placements in the last rolling 12 months has decreased to 8.5% when compared to 11.2% at the end of Q1 2022/23. The Q1 2023/24 figure (8.5%) is not only below the latest national average (10.0%) but it is also now below the latest statistical neighbour average (8.6%). The work linked to the team around the child will support strengthening placement stability. Additional support packages to grow foster carers for older children, have also been proposed and piloted, to improve local sufficiency.

- 2.4 In-house fostering** – There were 3 foster family approvals (5 new placements) in Q1, and 2 families ceased to be foster carers (loss of 4 placements), which equates to 1 extra foster family (1 extra placement) at the end of the quarter.

Placement sufficiency remains a key challenge and Brightsparks continue to support us in fostering recruitment work. We have a target set to increase fostering placements by 20 this financial year. We are projected to reach 14 new placements by the end of December 2023 which leaves 6 to gain between January – March 2024.

- 2.5 Youth Offending** – Of the 520 children and young people looked after by Rotherham at the end of the quarter, 10 were also known to the Youth Justice Service. At the same period last year there were 5 out of 536 looked after children.

- 2.6 Adoptions** – 7 children have been adopted since April 2023 which is a decrease of 1 when compared to the same period last year when there had been 8 adoptions.

At the end of Q1, the A10 measure (Average number of days between a child becoming LAC and having an adoption placement) was 242.1 days a significant reduction on 457.6 days at the same point in 2022/23. The A10 measure performance has been previously directly linked to the court delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The reduction in days is hopefully a sign the delays are improving.

The A2 measure (Average number of days between placement order and being matched with adoptive family) was 264.3 days at the end of Q1 compared to 185.8 days last year which is an increase of 78.5 days. The A2 figure from placement order to adoptive match indicates that we are matching children and placing them with adoptive families as soon as reported last year.

- 2.7 Health** – The percentage of LAC having an initial health assessment (IHA) within timescale has decreased in Q1 to 46.2% when compared to 63.0% in Q1

2022/23. Similarly, the number of up-to-date health checks also decreased to 82.7% when compared to 83.8% at the same point last year. We often see a delay in accurate performance figures being reported via Liquid Logic due to delays in assessments being signed off and delayed inputting. In order to address this the service manager is meeting health on a quarterly basis to ensure accurate data. The named nurse for LAC & Care Leavers can confirm that the below figures are correct for the end of June 23:

- Children placed in Rotherham aged under 5 - 99%
- Children placed in Rotherham aged over 5 - 94%
(98% if those that decline are removed from figures)
- Children placed out of Rotherham aged under 5 - 92%
- Children placed out of Rotherham aged over 5 - 92%
(95% if those that declined are removed from figures)

Up to date dental checks however have increased from 72.1% in Q1 (2022/23) to 80.2% (2023/24). Dental assessments continue to be an area of focus and is being reviewed via the LAC Health and Emotional Well Being Partnership and is a national issue that we want to ensure does not become a trend here in Rotherham.

2.8 Reviews and visits – 91.8% of reviews during Q1 were completed within the timescales set, which equates to 315 reviews in time out of 343 that were completed between April 23 and June 23. In the same period 2022/23, 93.3% were complete in time (335/359).

At the end of Q1, 94.4% of visits were up-to-date and within timescale of the national minimum standard. At the end of the same period in 2022/23 98.9% were in time, showing a 4.5% decrease this year.

2.9 Education – The performance reporting for PEP's remains the same as last quarter 82.1% of PEPs being up to date at the end of the spring term 2022/23, compared to 92.1% spring term 2021/22. The end of summer term performance will be available and reported in the Q2 report.

2.10 Care Leavers – At the end of Q1 there were 331 young people in the care leavers cohort which shows an increase of 29 when compared to 2022/23 (302). The Leaving Care Cohort remains high with the level of UASC growing making up 31 of the current cohort. The service is working close with the wider partnership to ensure there is a clear pathway of support recognising the vulnerability of this cohort.

78.9% of care leavers had an up-to-date pathway plan at the end of the year which is an 6.1% decrease when compared to the same period last year (85.0%). 96.1% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation compared to 96.4% last year. This remains above the latest stat neighbour (90.2%) and national (88.0%) averages. Of the 13 young people in unsuitable accommodation 7 are in custody.

71.9% of care leavers were in employment, education, and training (EET) at the end of Q1 compared to 72.2% at the end of Q1, 2022/23. However, this remains above the latest stat neighbour (53.7%) and national (55.0%) averages. The service remains ambitious but want to ensure this translates through to Plans. Pathway planning continues to be an area where we are scrutinising quality, as well as compliance.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 The full corporate parenting performance report attached at Appendix 2 represents a summary of performance across a range of key national and local indicators. Corporate Parenting Panel members are therefore recommended to consider and review this information.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report. The relevant Assistant Director and Budget Holder will identify any implications arising from associated improvement actions and Members and Commissioners will be consulted where appropriate.

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

- 7.1 There are no legal implications to this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct human resource implications to this report. The relevant Assistant Director and Heads of Service will identify any implications arising from associated improvement actions and Members and Commissioners will be consulted where appropriate.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The performance report relates to services and outcomes for children in care.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 There are no direct implications from this report.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no direct implications within this report.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 The Partners and other directorates are engaged in improving the performance and quality of services to children, young people, and their families via the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP). The RSCP Performance and Quality Assurance Subgroup receive this performance report within the wider social care performance report on a regular basis.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Inability and lack of engagement in performance management arrangements by managers and staff could lead to poor and deteriorating services for children and young people. Strong management oversight by Directorship Leadership Team and the ongoing monthly performance meetings mitigates this risk by holding managers and workers to account for any dips in performance both at a team and at an individual child level.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Craig Liversage, Interim Head of Children in Care,
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Monica Green, Assistant Director Safeguarding Children
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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

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Corporate Parenting Statement of Intent.

The most recent Rotherham Corporate Parenting Strategy covered the years 2017-2020. This has not been reviewed and updated since this time and therefore is significantly overdue. The intention is to refresh the strategy in 2023 to cover 2024-2027. To do this justice it is critical to ensure that we engage with all key stakeholders. We will ensure that we have a co-produced strategy which outlines how Rotherham MBC will meet the needs of their cared for and care experienced young people. We are committed to ensuring we have a fully co-produced and updated Corporate Parenting strategy by the end of January, this will be fully timetabled at the next Corporate Parenting Board in September 2023.

The draft Strategy will be presented at the corporate parenting board of December, with an intention for this to be presented to cabinet early in 2024. This document outlines how we are going to fulfil our corporate parenting responsibility in the interim.

This document sets out Rotherham's vision and principles, underpinned by the voices of our children looked after and care experienced young people to support us in ensuring we have high aspirations for them.

Corporate parenting is a collective responsibility first laid out in the Children Act 1989. In addition to the Local Authority, the Act placed a duty on partners, including health, education, and housing services to assist children's services to fulfil their functions under the Act – providing help, support and services in order to meet corporate parenting responsibilities. Government guidance for Councillors "If this were my child" (DfES 2003), emphasised the elected member role in ensuring that all children looked after receive a good standard of care and the high-quality outcomes that every parent would want for their own child.

We will work with partner agencies and stakeholders to ensure we have the right services, delivering the right support at the right time to secure good outcomes for children and young people. What is abundantly clear is that no single service operating alone can hope to meet the needs of the children in our care or their families. We need to establish close, coordinated working relationships with partners if we are to succeed in improving outcomes for our children now and in the future. Rotherham is committed to working in partnership with wider services and with children and young people to achieve this. As a partnership, we ensure children looked after and care experienced young people have a strong voice to support us in delivering our ambitions and in meeting their needs. We want all children and young people to achieve, be healthy, be safe and resilient.

Rotherham MBC and our stakeholders are committed to reducing inequalities for our most vulnerable groups; this includes children looked after and care experienced young people.

We recognise the importance of education by promoting a child's education from early years, with the opportunity to access outstanding education which will support their

aspirations . We want our care leavers to access opportunities for further education, training, and employment.

Focussing on these important areas we will ensure that we give all our young people every opportunity to meet reach their full potential with access to employment opportunities which will enable them to achieve their aspirations.

Our sufficiency strategy alongside the foster care recruitment and retention strategy outlines our commitment to providing permanent homes for our young people with the right support to help them live independently and to remain close to those people who are important to them.

Promoting and prioritising the health of our children both physical and emotional is a corner stone of our practice We work with our health partners to ensure that our children and young have their physical and emotional health needs met and that they have access to a dental care and regular health checks to check their progress .

The updated strategy will ensure that it fully encompasses the principles of the Care Review ensuring we provide stable homes for our young people.

We recognise our Children in Care Council support us as corporate parents, in addition to our wider population of children looked after and care experienced young people, who can share their lived experiences with us and influence continuous service improvement. We will listen to and hear what is being said and take action to improve the lives of this group of children and young people. As a partnership, we are also committed to feeding back to young people to ensure they know how their input has changed the way we support them.

As corporate parents, Rotherham is committed to ensuring all children looked after and young people whom we are working with, who are capable of forming their own views, will have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them. Their views will be given due weight according to the age and maturity of the child or young person and this will be a process, not a one-off event. We understand that by meaningful participation, this will enable children and young people to influence their own outcomes. As corporate parents, we are fully committed to meaningful participation by supporting young people to understand and express their needs, experiences and views, to influence practice, service and policy.

We already have several strategies and plans which underpin our commitment to ensuring that we are able to meet the needs of our young people these include.

- Rotherham's Young Person's Plan
- Commissioning and sufficiency strategy
- The Fostering plan
- The recruitment and retention plan
- The Care Leavers Local Offer

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S
SERVICES**

Independent Reviewing Service

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

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Purpose and Focus of the Report

The IRO Handbook provides the statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and their employers on their functions in relation to the case management and reviews for looked after children. The statutory guidance states that the IRO Manager should be responsible to produce an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

This report provides:

- The purpose of the service and legal context
- Governance arrangements
- The responsibilities of the IRO
- The development and make-up of the IRO service
- Information relating to performance and children and young people's participation
- Information in relation to disputes and IRO challenge
- Areas for development

The IRO handbook (Statutory Guidance) states:

'The IRO's primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child and to ensure that his/her current wishes and feelings are given full consideration. To be successful, the role must be valued by senior managers and operate within a supportive service culture and environment. An effective IRO service should enable the local authority to achieve improved outcomes for children'.

Purpose of the service and legal context

The Children Act (1989) and the Adoption and Children's Act (2002) (Home Office) make it a legal requirement for the local authority to appoint an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to each child in care, to participate in case reviews. The IRO has the authority, independent of their employing local authority, to refer cases to the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) should they believe the local authority's plan for the child is not in their best interests.

The Children and Young Persons Act (2008) extends the IRO's responsibilities from monitoring the performance of the local authority on 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.

The intention is that these changes will enable the IRO to have an effective independent oversight of the child's case and ensure that the child's interests are protected throughout the care planning process.

Together, the amended Children Act (1989) and the regulations specify:

- The duty to appoint an IRO
- The circumstances in which the children's social care department must consult with the IRO
- The functions of the IRO both in relation to the reviewing and monitoring of each child's case
- The actions that the IRO must take if the social care department is failing to comply with the regulations or is in breach of its duties to the child in any material way

The IRO's primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child in care and to ensure that their current wishes and feelings are given full consideration. It is not the responsibility of the IRO to manage the case, nor supervise the social worker or devise the care plan. Although it is important for the IRO to develop a consistent relationship with the child, this should not undermine or replace the relationship between the social worker and the child.

There are now two clear and separate aspects to the function of the IRO, namely:

- Chairing the child's review meetings
- Monitoring the child's Plan on an ongoing basis

As part of the monitoring function, the IRO also has a duty to identify any areas of poor practice, including general concerns around service delivery (not solely around individual children). The IRO should immediately alert senior managers if any such areas are identified. Equally important, the IRO should recognise and report on good practice.

In March 2014, the National Children's Bureau published an important piece of research entitled 'The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) in England'. The foreword was written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson who made the following comment:

"The Independent Reviewing Officer must be the visible embodiment of our commitment to meet our legal obligations to this special group of children. The health and effectiveness of the IRO service is a direct reflection of whether we are meeting that commitment or whether we are failing".

The Core Responsibilities of the IRO

The National Independent Reviewing Officer's manager's Partnership (NIROMP) offers practice standards for all IROs, namely that the IRO will:

- Ensure the child is central to all planning and decision making
- Ensure the child's wishes, views and feelings are given full consideration
- Be satisfied that each child's care arrangement is meeting their needs
- Ensure that each child knows how to contact you between reviews
- Make sure each review process results in clear, robust and informed judgements about the progress of the care plan
- Make sure care plans and decisions have a realistic timescale attached in keeping with the child's needs and a named person to implement them

- Challenge where there is drift in care planning and where necessary escalate to formal dispute resolution
- Be satisfied that plans for permanency have been identified by the second review
- Be satisfied that the corporate parent is meeting the requirements of the care planning regulations
- Pro-actively chase progress of the child's care plan and the implementation of review decisions
- Determine whether a review needs to be convened when there is a significant change/event in the child's life
- Champion the rights and entitlements of children living in care including their right to advocacy, legal support and redress through complaints and challenges
- Engage with the child's guardian in line with the Cafcass and IRO good practice protocol, to ensure effective communication about the child's care plan
- Provide both positive and constructive feedback to all the stakeholders to actively
- Promote good outcomes for children

Rotherham operates under the Signs of Safety (SoS) practice model, which is incorporated in the LAC review process. This model assists IROs to simplify reviews for children and carers and focus upon 'what's working well, what are we worried about and what needs to happen?' This approach supports IROs to meaningfully include strengths in the review process, asking about the positives for children and how this translates to planning– for example in relation to family time, career and educational aspirations, and relationships with others, whilst not missing what needs to change to develop smart focused plans.

Mission Statement

RMBC's Independent Reviewing Service exists to ensure that when Children and Young People are looked after by the Local Authority they receive the highest possible level of care, support and planning. We will do this by adopting an unwavering and steadfast commitment to the following 'Pillars of Practice', with the understanding that we work for the child first and foremost. This mission statement sits alongside RMBC's commitment to all of the children in the borough, that they will be:

Resilient, Successful and Safe

Why am I here - What's going to happen? (Building Resilience)

- The child will always have a positive, sensitive and accurate understanding of why they are in care and what the plan is for them, they will have homes which are stable and supportive
- Moreover, the child will be an active, informed, and powerful participant in the planning and decision-making process

I want to be the best version of myself I can be. (Building Success)

- The IRO will ensure there is a clear vision of success for the child, we will always be aspirational for children in RMBC's care and will hold the Local Authority to account in meeting the child's goals
- The child's achievements will be celebrated within the review process and we will build upon the strengths demonstrated

How will you deliver for me? (Ensuring Safety)

- We will robustly monitor and review the standard of care and planning that every Looked After child is entitled to and will rigorously challenge areas of concern
- The review will be an inclusive and supportive forum for open and honest discussion between participants, where the contributions of all are valued. The focus will first and foremost be on maximising and developing the child's strength and wellbeing and ensuring that they have a strong and supportive network throughout their childhood and beyond
- The IRO service will work supportively, proactively, and positively with professional colleagues across the review spectrum, recognising that we will achieve the best results for the children we work for when we demonstrate honesty, integrity and respect

Extended Functions of an IRO

The statutory guidance makes clear that the social worker must inform the IRO of significant changes in the child's life. Examples of this being:

- *Proposed change of care plan, for example arising at short notice in the course of proceedings following directions from the court*
- *Major change to family time arrangements*
- *Changes of allocated social worker*
- *Any safeguarding concerns involving the child, which may lead to enquiries being made under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 ('child protection enquiries') and outcomes of child protection conferences, or other meetings not attended by the IRO*
- *Where the child is excluded from school*
- *Where the child is running away or missing*
- *Significant health, medical events, diagnoses, illnesses, hospitalisations, serious accidents*
- *Agency Decision Maker decisions in relation to permanence*

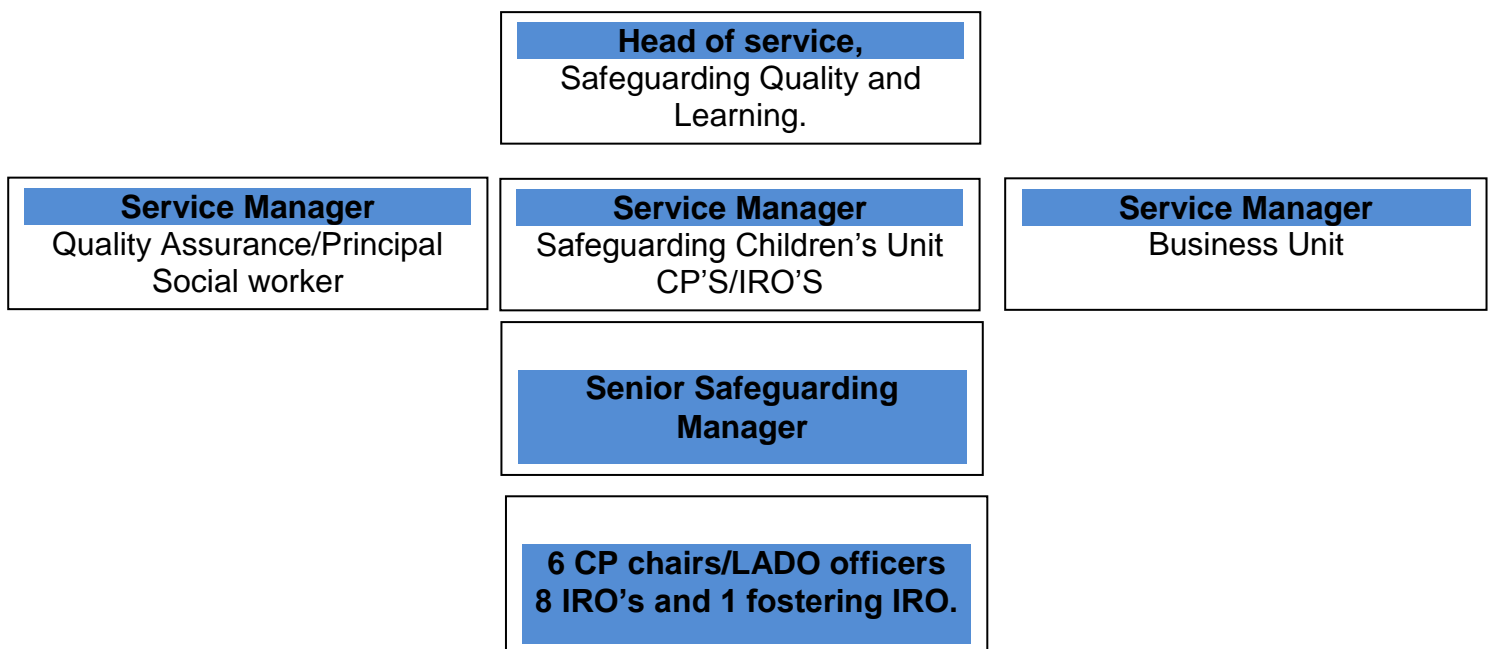
Furthermore, the statutory guidance sets out when an additional review must be convened prior to any of the following changes being implemented:

- *Whenever there is a proposal for a child to leave care before the age of 18, i.e., for the child to become a relevant child, rather than an eligible child*
- *Wherever there is a proposal for the child to move from foster care, a children's home or other placement, to supported lodgings, or to other kinds of 'semi-independent' or 'independent living' before the age of 18 (i.e., from accommodation regulated under the Care Standards Act to unregulated accommodation)*
- *Prior to children subject to care orders being discharged from custody*
- *Wherever any unplanned change is proposed to a child's accommodation that would have the effect of disrupting his/her education or training*
- *Where a change of placement is proposed that would interrupt the arrangements for the education of a child in Key Stage 4*
- *When a change of placement is proposed for a child who has remained settled and established with the same carer for a significant period of time*

In Rotherham like many other authorities, a small number of children are at times accommodated in unregistered settings for short periods. There has been revised guidance on the oversight and review of these children, including IRO's holding monthly midway reviews and a minimum of 3 monthly reviews.

RMBC Children's Services IRO Service

The IRO Team consists of the following staff as at 06.06.2023:



The IRO service has undergone 6 month Pilot structure. The Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers are managed by a Service Manager who has overarching responsibility for the Safeguarding Unit. She is supported in this task by the creation of a Senior Safeguarding Manager's Post, who's function is to support the Service Manager with day-to-day delivery of the service, whilst also carrying a reduced case load.

Several CP chairs and IRO's have also taken on a temporary hybrid role, to provide continuity for some of the children they work with.

The Fostering IRO role is currently made up via 2 part time workers. One of the IRO roles is also made up of 2 part time workers.

The team currently engages in:

- *monthly supervision and a yearly PDR.*
- *Team meetings are held twice monthly to provide updates to the team and focus on performance and service development*
- *The IRO's, together with a CP chair have been allocated a Team Link. The purpose of the Team Links and expectations around this have been re-vamped, with a minimum expectation that IRO's/CP chairs attend 3 monthly and provide updates on areas themes or issues arising from*

Performance Reporting. The team links also promote relationships across service and ensure that the Safeguarding Team is visible and engaged.

- *IRO's are also engaged in "bring and learn" sessions as well as development programmes with NQSW's.*
- *The service manager and an IRO attend the Regional IRO Managers and IRO Group respectively. The IRO manager has taken up a position as regional representative at the National IRO Managers partnership (NIROMP)*

The IRO handbook recommends an optimum caseload of 50-70 children per IRO in order to ensure adequate performance. IRO caseloads are impacted upon by several factors including:

- *Whether the child is in On-going Court proceedings: Reviews are held more regularly within Care proceedings as a consequence of a new LAC status and ensuring that the right plan of permanence is achieved for the child.*
- *Children placed in unregistered accommodation: These children receive monthly midway reviews, increased scrutiny and a minimum of 3 monthly LAC reviews.*
- *Placement moves: A placement move for a child requires a restart of the review process with reviews at 1, 3 and 9 months*
- *Children placed out of borough.*
- *If children, carers or parents request an early review, or if the IRO feels this is necessary*
- *IRO's have a number of additional meetings that they are required to attend for the child, outside of the LAC review.*
- *The IRO is expected to undertake audit activity as part of the preparation for the LAC review.*

Progress on the 2022/23 action plan

Issue	Action	Progress
Key performance objectives will be met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes within 15 days = 90% • Midway Reviews = 90% • Quality and Compliance completion in all reviews • Quarterly performance report and monthly highlight report to be completed by the IRO service Manager and shared with the Head of Service 	Partially achieved Partially achieved Partially achieved Completed.
Attendance and Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance data to be embedded into LCS by December 2022 • IRO visits to return to face to face for all children. The IROs will ensure each child is seen in placement in 2022/23 • Participation figures for 'attended and spoke for self' to increase to at least 35% by the end of the financial year 2023. • IROs to support broader attendance by those in the child's network and to 	Partially achieved Partially achieved with not all children seen in placement. Achieved.

	<p>encourage SWs to consider this in their invitations.</p>	
<p>Impact and Influence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children in unregistered care settings will be closely monitored and will be subject to formal challenge if delay occurs • IROs will seek to confirm and clarify aspirations for all children with pathway plans, to include their educational plans, employment hopes, the vision regarding their supportive networks and housing and any other areas felt important to that young person. IROs will discuss these with the young person and ensure their views are central to the review • IROs and Team managers will meet on a monthly basis to discuss thematic issues and agree plans going forward • The section 20 report will continue on a bi-monthly basis. In addition, deep dive activity regarding children placed with parents is planned for 2022/23, to be supported by the IROs service • The IRO Service Manager and PLO manager will produce a 6 monthly PLO and Court practice report, ensuring IROs receive relevant information to inform their oversight • IROs will ask in each review process as to the Local authority care plan and the rationale for the child remaining in LA care. This includes the plan for family time and what the vision is for this in the longer term. 	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>Partially achieved</p> <p>Achieved.</p> <p>Achieved.</p>
<p>Children placed in unregistered private care settings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation (reg) 44 reports for RMBC provision will be shared with IROs, they will ensure that any concerns are taken account of in respect of the child they are allocated to. IROs will ensure that they have sight of Reg 44 reports for any children in private provision • All children placed away from the Rotherham area in private settings will be seen by their 	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>Partially achieved</p>

	IRO in that setting prior to their review and a view conveyed in the review process as to the quality of the care provided	
Children at risk from exploitation/significant harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IROs will attend the 'Operational Missing Meeting' on a monthly basis to ensure that children looked after receive a swift and proportionate response and that plans (such as find me plans) are sufficient and up to date. Thematic information and feedback to individual IROs will be gathered • The IRO and CP service managers will continue to meet on a monthly basis to monitor to discuss shared activities and performance 	Partially achieved Partially achieved
Looked After Children will have access to Health support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IROs will continue to ensure dental checks are discussed and updated at every review and escalations raised where required. • All children without a health check in time should be discussed with the LAC nurse and an action retained in the review recommendations 	Achieved.

Feedback from Children, Young people, professional and carers

Consultation and feedback are essential to know that the service we are delivering fits with our aims and has a positive impact on the lives of children and young people. As these reports demonstrates, involving children in their reviews is the aspiration for all IRO's and considered "Gold Standard" for maximising the voice of the child and involving them in the development of their own care plan. The feedback below has been offered via the various adults present in reviews. This is positive to read and reaffirms the consistency and impact that an IRO can bring to the lives of looked after children.

Feedback from social worker – *'L is a very child centred Independent Reviewing Officer, I have recently been working closely with her in relation to two young people. Unfortunately these two young people were unable to attend their LAC reviews, however, L has visited them both outside of their review to ensure their voices are heard and appropriate updates were shared. L has also gone above and beyond and create pieces of direct work that has then gone onto being shared with the young people. In particular one of the pieces of work captured all of the positive comments that professionals said about the young person and the other piece of work captured the journey and progression that the young person needs to make to reach their goals in a creative and child friendly way.'*

Feedback from Foster carer - *Its been great having you as my IRO, even for a short time as you've kept an eye on us and helped make things work.*



Feedback from a Guardian – *The court valued the IRO's oversight, as she has been IRO for a considerable length of time, her involvement in the community assessment, able to comment on progress and change as well as contributing to the outcome of the support planning was noted. This is a real success story in terms of seeing parents' capacity for change over a period of time and capacity of IROs to be able to see this.*

Professional feedback to IRO: *“I like how you have phrased issues about neurodiversity in a positive way in this child’s review, that’s written to the child and in their language so that they understand.”*

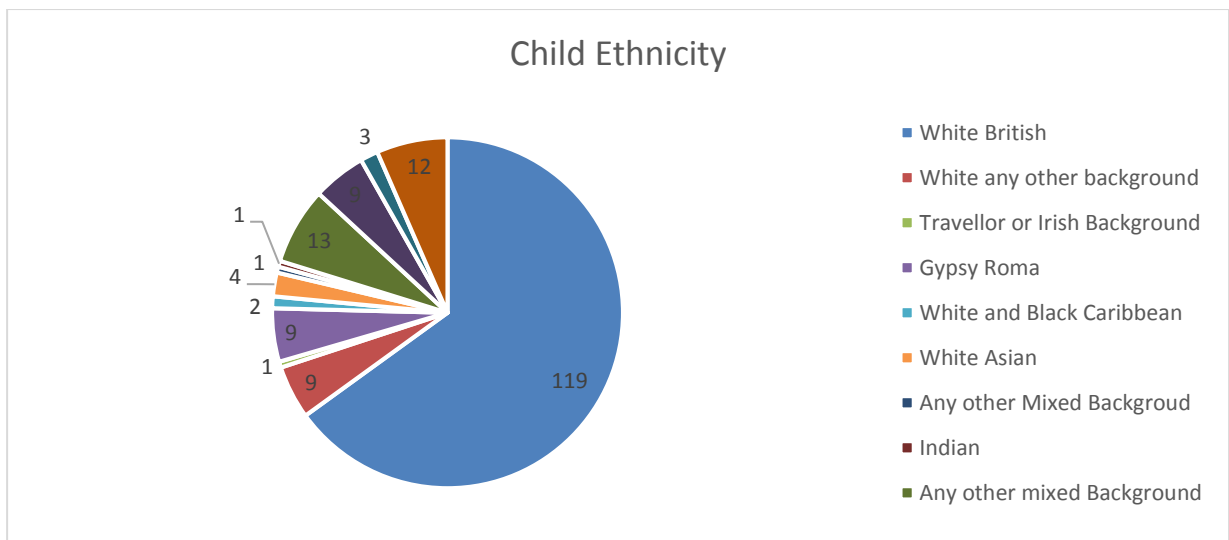
Child about their IRO: *My IRO listens to me and makes sure that what I want to say is heard in the meeting. She gets what I want to happen.*

Children entering/ ceasing care

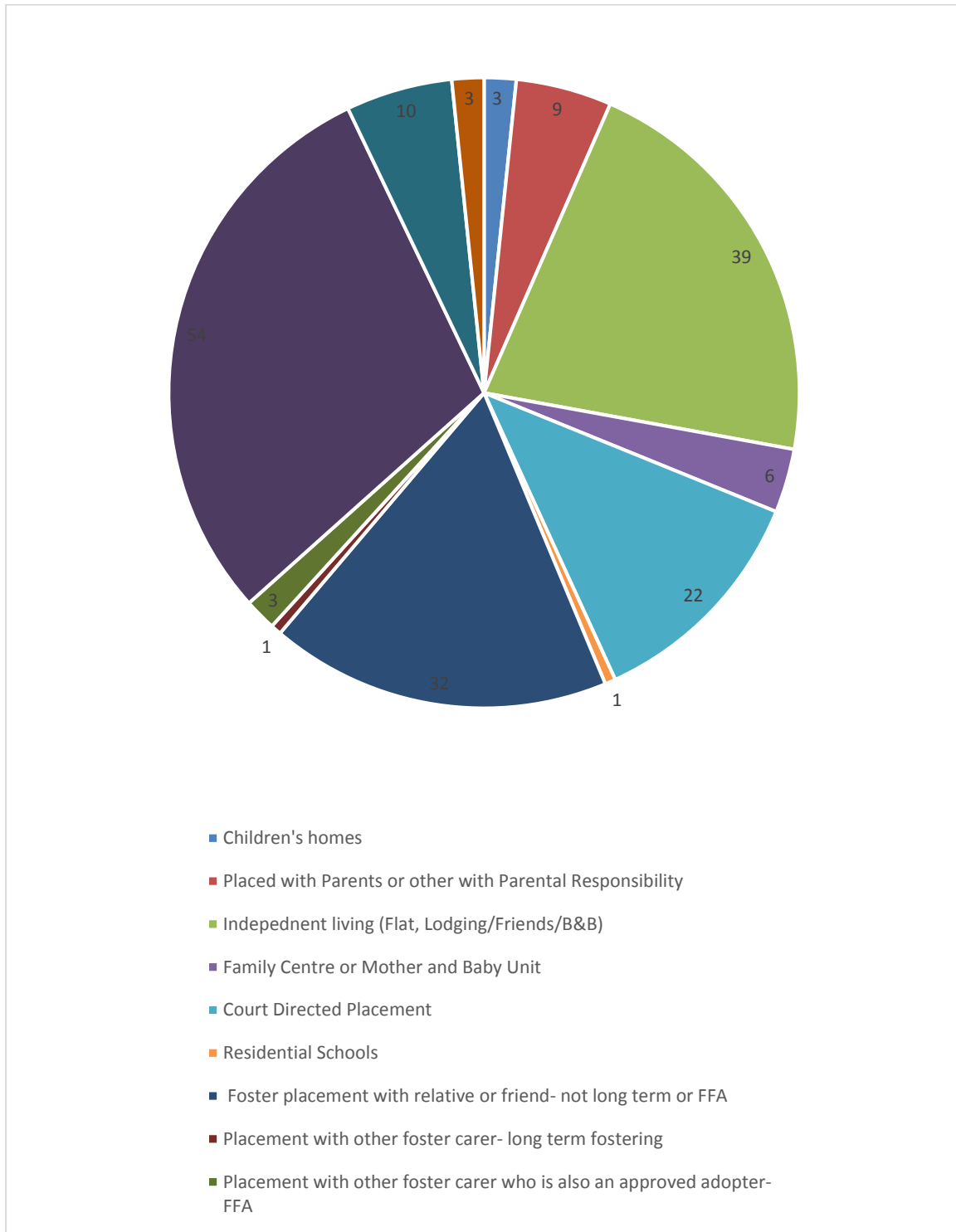
In 2021/22 176 children became looked after on 180 separate occasions (meaning that a small number of children became looked after more than once). In the reporting 2022/23 period, 184 children became LAC on 185 separate occasions, which means that one child was LAC on two separate occasions.

Of the Young people who became LAC, 74 were female and 113 were male

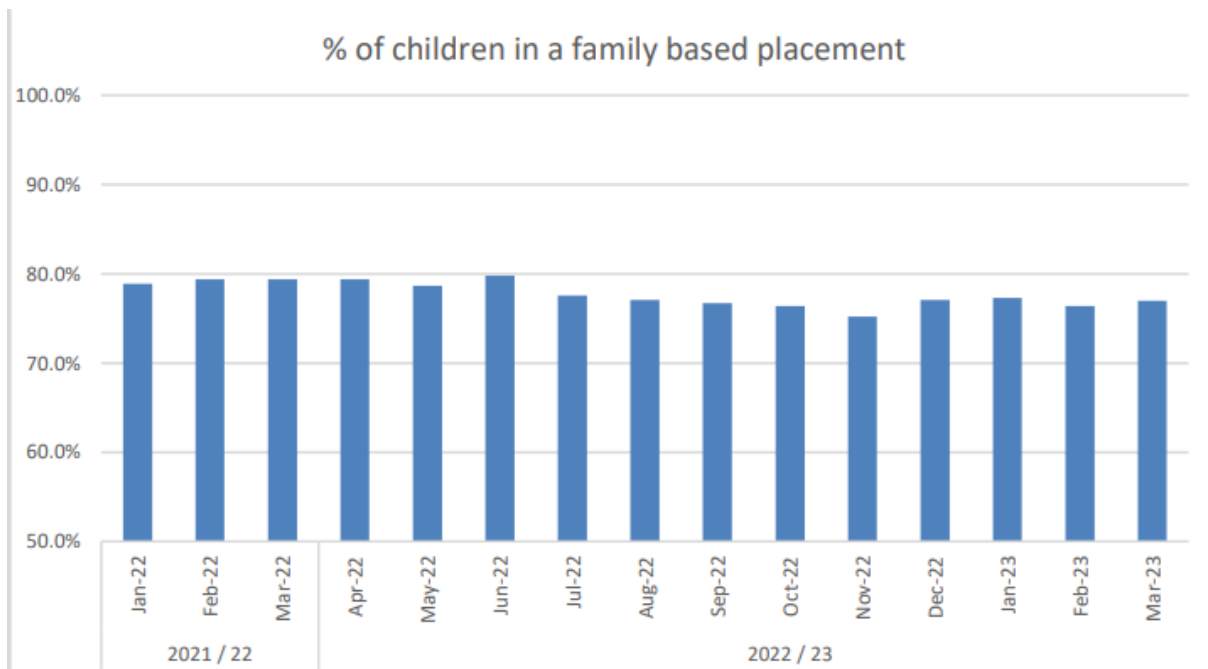
The Ethnicity of these young people were:



When entering Local Authority Care, the children were placed within the following settings:

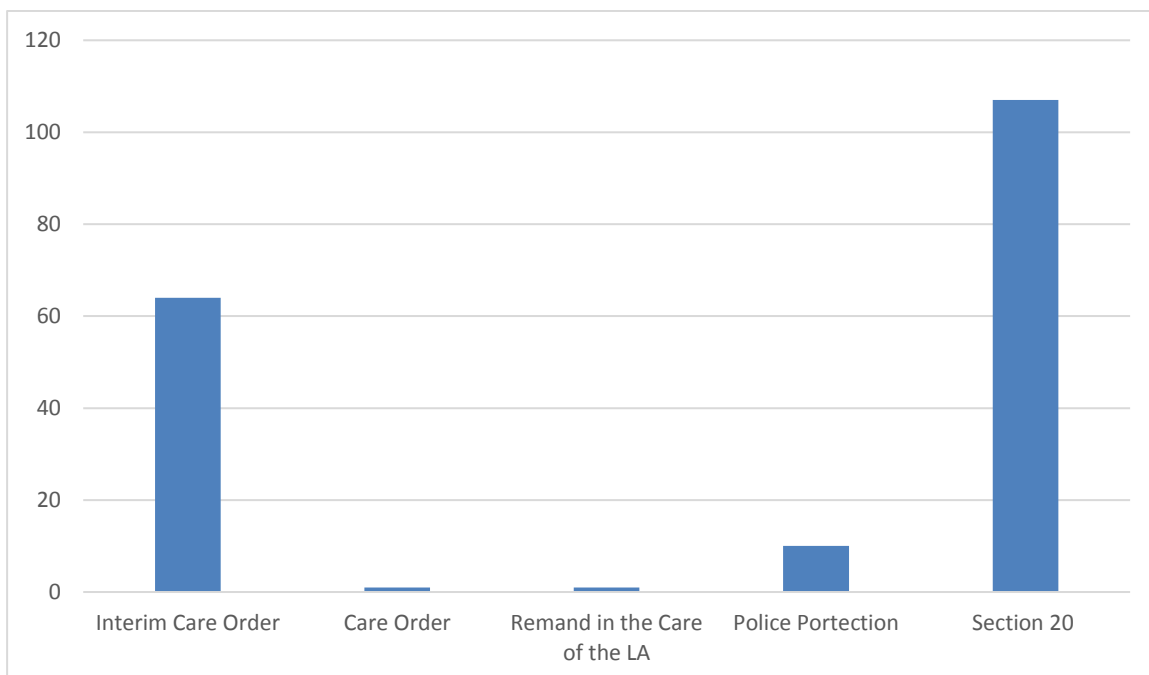


- It is positive that most children entering the system were offered family-based placements.



- 22 placements were court directed, (38.6) which implies that the LA did not achieve, through the court, its preferred placement.
- 9 were “placement with parents”, dip sampling some of these children suggests that the LA had sufficient concerns but assessments were incomplete that would recommend alternative care plans at the time of the conclusion of proceedings.

Legal status of children entering the care system:



Section 20 remains the main legal status of children entering the care of the local authority. This is slightly up on last year's figures, where 90 children entered care via this voluntary agreement. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children are also generally accommodated via section 20 arrangements.

The IRO service manager checks and reports on s20 admissions on a bi-monthly basis and these reports offer assurance that most of these placements are appropriate, and that delay in issuing proceedings, where warranted, is minimised. The majority of s20 admissions convert to care orders or return home.

In the period 01.04.2022 and 31.03.2023, 200 children ceased being LAC which is a reduction on the 216 that being Looked After on the year before. Of these children:

Reason Children Ceased being LAC	Number of children.
Over 18 and remained with carers.	32
Adopted application unopposed	17
Adopted, consent dispensed with	7
Left care to live with parents, carers or other person with no parental responsibility.	24
Died	1
Care taken over by another authority	3
Residence Order	4
Special Guardianship Order	36
Planned return home to live with parents	16
Independent Arrangement	17
Transferred to adult care	2
Ceased for any other reason	50

- There has been an increase in SGOs compared to the previous year with 27 being made in this year.
- There has been a reduction in the number of children have returned home on a planned basis.
- 24 children left care to live with parents, raising queries as to whether this was an agreed plan and if this could have been supported earlier in the child's journey as a LAC child.
- It is positive that some children were given the option and agreed to remain with their carers over 18 years, this includes the "Staying Put" arrangements.

IRO Activity

During the reporting period, one IRO has returned from maternity leave. Agency staff were used to cover this period. One IRO had several months on sickness leave, the children in this instance were absorbed amongst the team. One worker continues to be seconded to the University on a part time basis which promotes links the university and a positive opportunity for shared knowledge. The part time hours have been filled via a secondment opportunity which has been positive for that workers career development.

Despite the absences one of the significant benefits of the IRO role is the consistency that this offers to the child. IROs often have over 10 years post qualification experience. They tend to remain an IRO for some considerable time, as the role draws on multiple skills and

turnover is low within the team. Some children have experienced the same IRO for over 5 years, this is invaluable for children that can experience multiple changes in social worker and placement moves.

The IRO service has delivered 1600 reviews in the reporting period. In addition to the LAC reviews, IRO's continue to complete several additional tasks to ensure meaningful oversight of the child's care plan. This can include visits, attending various meetings such as Planning Meetings, Strategy Meetings, Disruption Meetings as well as Support and Resolution Meetings. They also maintain connections via Team Links with other parts of the service and contribute where possible to training and development of NQSW's. The IRO's also frequently attend Panels such as Fostering Panel and Missing Panel etc.

Of the LAC reviews that have taken place, 91.7% were held within timescales. This is a decrease on 94.5% of the reporting period from the year before.

The IRO team are expected to undertake Midway Review's to ensure that they maintain oversight of the young people. As of the 1st April 2023, 41.8% of children who have been LAC 6 months or more have had a Midway Review. This is a decrease of 67.5% from 1st April 2022. Midways reviews remains an area for development within the service and forms part of the action plan moving forward. Midway reviews are performance managed in supervision and in meetings the service is exploring what might constitute a midway review.

IRO visits have also re-commenced since the covid period. Reporting data taken on the 17.07.2023 notes that 273 children have been visited within the last 6 months which equates to 52.7%. 116 within the last 12 months. The voice of the child is central to IRO practice, therefore visits are explored in supervision with each IRO to ensure there is planning around this. For those children that perhaps don't want to see their IRO, then alternative ways of ensuring the voice of the child is being explored. One IRO has developed refreshed booklets to try and encourage children to perhaps record their view for their review.

Review Reports

The pre meeting report is completed by the social worker for the child. It is expected that this report will clearly set the scene, detailing the successes and worries over the preceding period and how the plans made for the child have progressed. The report should also set a clear vision for the continued care of the child. It is expected that this report is shared with attendees, including the child where possible, in advance of the meeting to support collaboration.

There has been internal activity within the IRO service to improve the quality of pre meeting reporting for LAC reviews. An IRO has completed draft guidance for social workers on things that are needed within the pre meeting report. This is now in the process of being distributed.

<u>Timeliness of pre meeting report</u>	<u>Number Completed</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
5+ days before review	388	24.3%
1-4 days prior to review	473	29.6%
After Review	449	28.1%
Same day as review	281	17.6%
No Meeting and/or Report	7	0.4%
Total	1598	100%

Those recorded as “No Meeting/or Report” are meetings that have been held at the end of the search parameter and are still outstanding a report at the time the performance data was pulled.

24.3% of reports were received in timescales, which is a slight decrease on 26.1% from last year. Of particular note, 28.1% of reports were received after the LAC review, which raises questions about the function of these reports given that the review process has been completed. This is an area that has been targeted in very recent months (March 2023 onwards) with clear guidance given to IRO’s, social workers and managers that without a pre meeting report/Pathway Plan a review should not progress unless in exceptional circumstances, eg the impact on the child.

Statutory Guidance states that review recommendations are produced within 24 hours of the review held and distributed within 5 working days. In addition, review minutes should be distributed to all parties within 20 working days of the review meeting. IROs record and complete their own minutes and business support is responsible for distributing such via email.

Care Plans

In all circumstances where a decision is made to look after a child, the child must have a Care Plan completed by the social worker and signed by the relevant team manager, the contents of which include:

- *The child's Placement Plan (setting out why the placement was chosen and how the placement will contribute to meeting the child's needs);*
- *The child's Permanence Plan (setting out the long term plans for the child's upbringing including timescales);*
- *The pathway plan (where appropriate, for young people leaving care);*
- *The child's health plan;*
- *The child's personal education plan;*
- *The contingency plan;*
- *The date of the child's first Looked After Review (**within 20 working days**);*
- *The name of the Independent Reviewing Officer.*

The Care Plan should include the arrangements made to meet the child's needs in relation to his or her:

- *Emotional and behavioural development;*
- *The child's identity in relation to religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background;*
- *Family and social relationships; arrangements for contact with sibling(s) accommodated by the authority or another local authority; details of any section 8 order, in relation to a Looked After Child; details of any order in relation to contact with a child in care; arrangements for contact with parents/anyone with Parental Responsibility/ any other connected person; arrangements for the appointment of an Independent Visitor for a Looked After Child;*
- *Social presentation;*
- *Self-care skills.*

94.8% of children are recorded to have had an up-to-date care plan as of the 31st March 2023. Reporting on Care Planning has recently changed. After the review, the social worker is responsible for updating the Care Plan within 10 working days, in relation to any changes to the Care Plan agreed at the review. Therefore, to ensure that Care Plans remain reflective of the most current LAC review, performance data is now reporting on Care Plans updated 10 days from the LAC review.

Quality Assurance

Central to the IRO role is the Quality Assurance function. The review itself provides ample opportunity to ensure that the Local Authority is carrying out its duties to those children that it looks after. In the vast majority of these cases, the Local Authority acts as corporate parent, and IROs, with their 'arm's length' independence are key to holding the Local Authority to account.

In preparing for reviews IROs complete a 'Quality and Compliance' Form on LCS. This form has been redesigned further to explore the impact of care planning on the child and also the quality-of-service delivery. Of 1600 reviews completed, 911 Q and C forms were completed. Given the variation to the Q and C form it is difficult to pull accurate data in terms of scoring however this should be available for the next annual report.

Challenge and escalation is a cornerstone of effective IRO practice, with IROs having the ability to escalate to CAF/CASS in the most serious of situations, for independent oversight and resolution. Fortunately, this has not been required.

IROs have several avenues for progressing plans and ensuring oversight, this is termed the 'IRO footprint'. Where there are concerns that a child's care journey is drifting, or there are serious concerns about the standard of care and social work intervention, the IRO will most commonly revert to a formal escalation.

Within the reporting period 163 escalation discussion case notes were recorded. This is an increase of 96 on the previous year. 95 formal escalations were raised in this reporting period compared to 20 on the previous reporting year. It is important to note that this current data is heavily relied upon IRO's inputting into a spreadsheet, which is inconsistent and under-reported. All of these escalations were resolved at either stage 1 and 2. The overwhelming rationale for the escalations relates to drift and delay – this includes reasons such as no pre meeting reports, delay in discharge of orders, assessments not completed timely or delay in important work such as life story etc.

Throughout the reporting period the use of escalations in challenge has been the focus of development. The process, its use and how as a team the IRO's use this process has been discussed in meetings, away days and individually in supervision. Furthermore, towards the end of the reporting period the escalation process was pulled together in a workable flow chart. Most impactfully was the development of an LCS form to enable escalations to be embedded within the system. This appears to have removed barriers in terms of allowing IRO's to raise an escalation. Whilst the data in terms of this being reported hasn't been captured as of yet via insight, this will enable more significant "grip" and oversight in terms of the escalation process and also monitor outcomes.

Participation in Reviews

Children and young people are encouraged and supported to attend their reviews. In some instances, young people have felt confident enough to chair these reviews themselves which is "gold standard" in terms of the voice of the child. There are a number of examples within the team of young people chairing their own reviews.

IRO's are encouraged to speak with the child prior to the review to discuss where they want the meeting to be held, who should attend and what they want to discuss in the meeting. IRO visits have increased since the pandemic.

Face to Face meetings are now standard practice unless the voice of the child indicates that they would prefer the meeting to be virtual or there is a rationale as to why this is in the interest of the child.

The IRO service works closely with the Rights 2 Rights advocacy service to ensure that those children who require or have requested an advocate are supported and heard in the process.

How the child participated in their review:	Number:	Percentage:
Child aged under 4 at time of meeting	274	17.2%
Child attended & spoke for self	656	41.2%
Child attended - advocate spoke	12	0.8%
Child attended - gave views non verbally	5	0.3%
Child attended without contributing	15	0.9%
Child not attended, advocate briefed with views	100	6.3%
Child not attended, views sent	396	24.9%
Child not attended & did not send views	135	8.5%
TOTAL	1593	100%

It is positive that during this period, 656 children felt able to attend their reviews and speak for themselves. A primary focus of the next 12 months will be to look at how, as a service, we can increase child attendance at their LAC reviews.

The Health of Looked After Children

IROs monitor within the LAC review process the Health Plan accumulated from the Health Assessment and the Dental Checks of the young people they review. The child's health is a standing agenda item for reviews. Drift and delay should be challenged via the escalation procedures if a child's health needs are routinely met without robust rationale as to why (often child refused etc).

Analysis from the borough wide most recent quarterly report notes that Dental and Health assessments are not being recorded in a timely fashion on LCS and performance continues to misrepresent reality.

Initial Health Assessments (IHA)

Within LAC reviews the IRO's will monitor and refer to actions within the Health Assessments. Any undue delay should be escalated as part of the escalation process.

As of the 31st March 2023:

- 376 children had an up to date Health assessment, equating to 93.1% of all children.
- 28 children didn't have a health assessment equating to 6.9%.
- 11 Health assessments were refused.
- 150 initial health assessments were carried out, of those 59.3% were within the 20 day timescale.

Dental Checks

As of the 31st March:

- 350 or 86.6% of children had a recorded up to date dental assessment. (This is an increase upon the previous year where the number stood at 78% and a significant increase of the low of 32% completed in 2020/21).
- 54 young people or 13.4% didn't have an up to date appointment.

Education for Looked After Children

The IRO is responsible for reviewing the Personal Education Plan as part of the statutory review ensuring the child is being provided with the support they need to reach their maximum potential. Within the review process the IRO is responsible for ensuring the PEP (personal education plan) is up to date and is sets clear aspirations, which are reflected in the care plan. As of the 31st March 2023 96.7% of children had an up to date PEP.

The IRO monitors the extent to which the child has 25 hours education and will escalate any concerns as part of the child's review process. The IRO quality assures that the pupil premium has been utilised to support the educational outcomes for the individual child. Any

concerns are raised with the individual school and the virtual school, via the Virtual Head for Looked After Children. Educational provision is overseen for children placed within residential care or complex settings as part of the 'Residential Panel' attended by the IRO service manager.

Data taken from the CYPS performance report notes that:

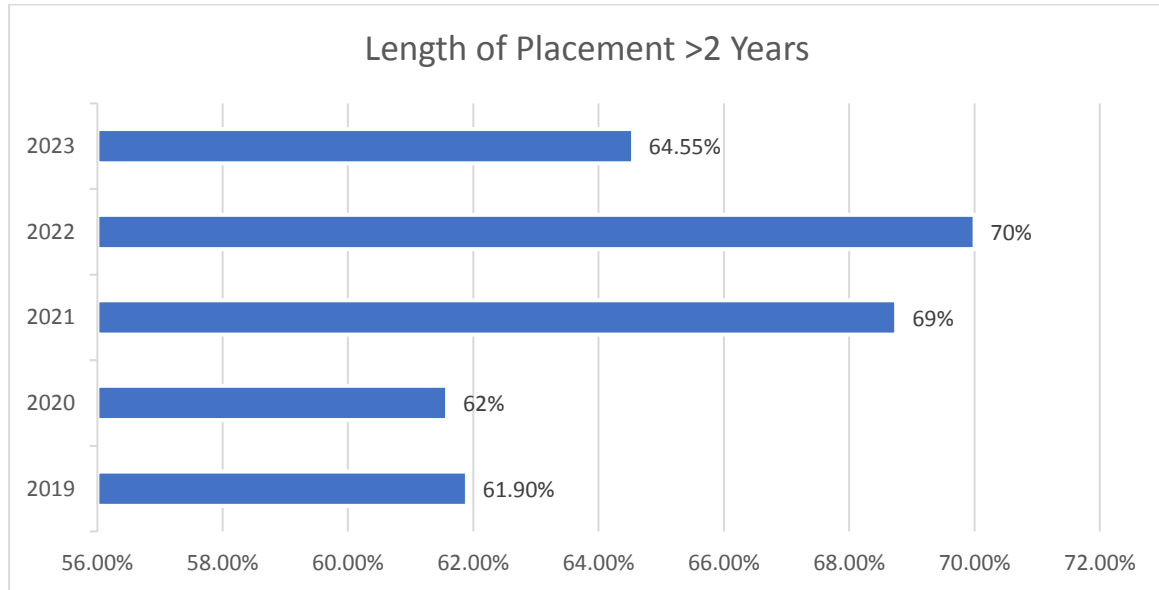
23	looked after children (LAC) were on a part time timetable within the period
1	looked after children (LAC) started on a part time timetable within the period
2	looked after children (LAC) ended a part time timetable within the period
89.5%	of 16 > 17yrs looked after children (LAC) are in education, employment or training (EET)
81.8%	of looked after children (LAC) attending a school with a good or better rating

The report notes:

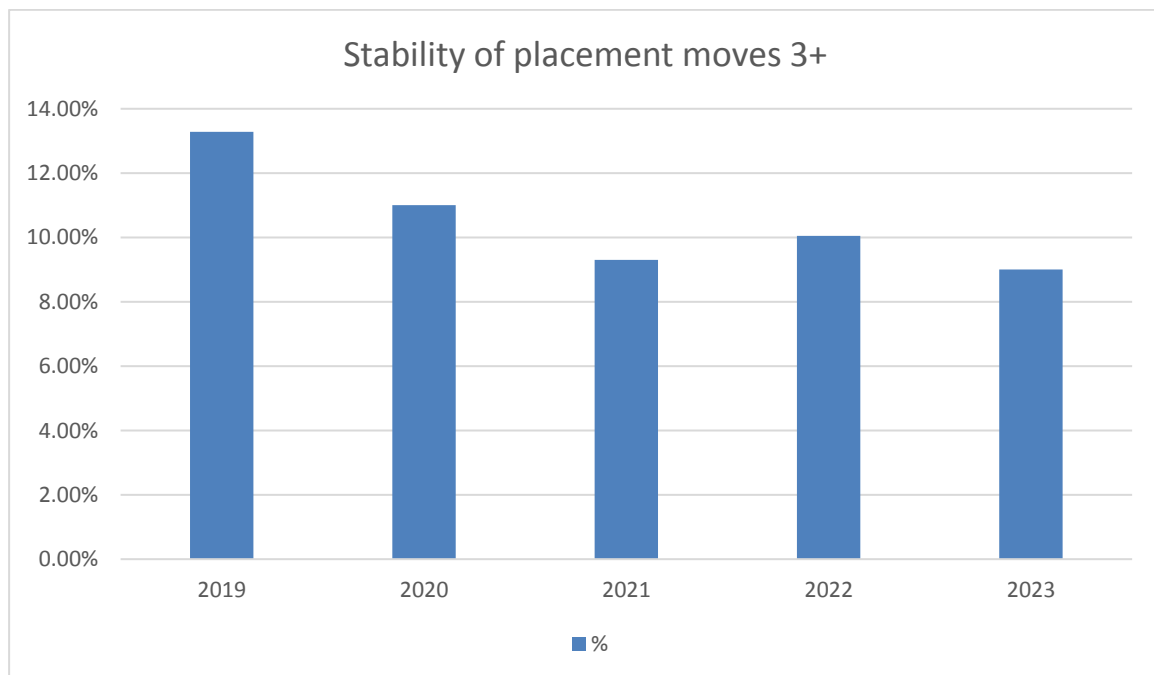
- Attendance has decreased slightly in secondary; attendance is just under 90% although the figure is not entirely accurate (this is the case in both phases) as there are some outstanding attendance marks which need to be collected to give an accurate figure. We continue to support schools in completing attendance tracking and attendance is a regular focus of VS team meetings and 121s.
- This term ePEP has been updated to support tracking of attendance to allow for earlier identification of attendance issues and swifter response and support.
- Persistent absence has increased in this term and as a result, the overall the persistent absence figure for secondary year to date has increased to 26.9% and primary has increased to 11.2% 16-17
- EET figure has increased and was at 85.2% at the end of the spring term. One of the main contributing factors to this improvement is the majority of UASC learners who had been awaiting placements are now in provision.
- The decrease in percentage of children attending good or better schools has been impacted by Ofsted inspections. There will have been children who enter care and are attending schools that are requires improvement. To ensure stability and avoid education disruption, Virtual School do not move children unless there is a significant safeguarding need, a care placement requirement, EHCP changes, or the education offer is so poor that we need to move a school.

Placement Stability

RMBC is committed to ensuring stability for all children looked after. An analysis of the data notes:



As can be seen above, placement stability has decreased by just under 6%, equating to 142 of 220 children who had/have been in placement for over 2.5 years. During the year, 536 new placements were commenced in total, with 354 of these being placement moves, i.e., for children already in local authority care. 9.96% or 54 young people experienced placement instability of 3 years or more. The IRO maintains oversight of placement instability and the impact on the child, reviewing changes in placement and raising appropriate escalations if necessary.



As of 31 March 2023, 301 children were placed out of the Rotherham area, this is a slight decrease from 316 on the previous year. This is a positive decrease, with the preference

being that children should be placed as near to their home as possible, and risk allows which is an important identity consideration for our children and also promotes connectedness to familiar communities, school placement as well as family.

Unregistered/Unregulated Care

In 2022/23, 32 children were placed in either unregistered emergency accommodation or unregistered unregulated accommodation throughout the year. This is accommodation, which is not subject to OFSTED inspection, yet is providing 'care' to children. There was a total of 64 unregulated/unregistered placements used amongst these children within the period. These placements are now illegal with any such placements reported to OFSTED. Unfortunately, during the reporting period, such placements have been used in the absence of other appropriate accommodation.

Children placed in these settings have an enhanced offer of 3 monthly LAC reviews and monthly midway reviews in order to monitor quality, provide additional safeguards, and to track placement moves. This year has been challenging in terms due to limited placement options, which can be seen in many other authorities.

Unregistered family settings also fall into this category, whereby family members are awaiting assessment or would not meet fostering regulations. However, in these circumstances the arrangement were in the child's best interest.

Regular meetings have taken place to monitor the provision of children in registered and unregistered residential care settings. These meetings include representation by the IRO Service Manager and colleagues from Commissioning and Residential services. These meetings promote IRO oversight and feedback in terms of the standards of care provided to children and ensure that these children receive a high level of additional scrutiny.

UASC children

Guidance from the National Transfer Scheme Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Version 4.0 (updated on 05 September 2022) notes:

The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) protocol for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) has been established to enable the safe transfer of unaccompanied children in the UK from one local authority (the entry authority from which the unaccompanied child transfers) to another local authority¹ (the receiving authority). Only unaccompanied children that meet the definition of a UASC, as set out in paragraph 352ZD of the Immigration Rules, are eligible to be referred to the NTS. When the NTS first began operating in 2016 it formed the basis of a voluntary agreement made between local authorities in England to ensure a fairer, more equitable distribution of unaccompanied children across local authorities. To meet the overall best interests of unaccompanied children, a fairer distribution of children across the UK helps all local authorities meet their duties under the relevant children's legislation.

Legislation was amended in 2018 to extend the scheme to include local authorities Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. From 26 July 2021, the NTS operated on the basis of a national voluntary rota, into which local authorities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with UASC at or over 0.07% of their child population, could refer newly-arrived unaccompanied children. However, despite substantial reform the voluntary model

has not sufficiently responded to the scale of intake into the asylum system. On 23 November 2021 the Government took steps to ensure the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) works effectively, and ensures all children are transferred promptly to local authorities to be cared for. On this date, the Minister for Safe and Legal Migration, Kevin Foster MP, wrote on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Home Department to all local authorities in the UK with children’s services to signal the Government’s intention to direct participation in the NTS.² This is pursuant to those powers set out under Section 72(3) of the Immigration Act 2016 (the ‘2016 Act’) providing for the Secretary of State for the Home Department to direct local authorities to comply with the scheme. From 15 February 2022, following the required representations process, all local authorities with children’s services in the UK have been directed to participate in the NTS, commonly referred to as a ‘mandated NTS’.

The duration of any mandatory period will be dictated by a range of factors including intake levels, ability to place children in local authority care in a timely manner, and the viability of a return to a voluntary NTS that works effectively. We will keep its operation under review.

As of the 31st March 2023, the local authority had in its care 36 children who were considered unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Combining those that turned 18 and were part of the leaving care service, this increased to 66. All of these children are subject to section 20 agreements. We have begun to see a slight reduction in the number of UASC young people present with the need to be looked after with our UASC cohort increasing from 39 at the beginning of Jan 2023 to 36 in March 2023

Fostering/Adoption

RMBC employs one full time equivalent fostering IRO (FIRO), as in 2021-22, this role was split between 2 part time workers and this continues in 22/23. One worker has stepped down from the role and the hours being covered by a new worker (part time CP chair who has increased their hours). This has been beneficial in that the two FIROs are able to have flexibility in allocation.

The FIROs have been developing the challenge and resolution process, bringing this in line with their children’s counterparts. A culture of open discussion between FIROs and team managers has been in place over time and has supported working relationships, whilst the escalation process has been embedded.

Within the period the fostering IRO’s completed:

Total Number of Reviews in Period	167
Total Number of Foster Carers Reviewed	107

During the reporting period, 12 fostering households were approved.

IROs chair reviews for children in the adoption process:

- No later than 3 months after authority to place the child for adoption has been obtained;
- At least every 6 months thereafter until an adoptive placement is made.

The IRO monitors the progress in making an adoptive placement for the child, if this is not achieved by the first 6 month review after the placement order was made, the IRO confirms that adoption remains the best plan for the child via the review process.

Where the child has been placed for adoption, arrangements must be made so that an Adoption Review is held:

- Within 4 weeks of the placement;
- Not more than 3 months after the first review unless an application for an adoption order has been made;
- At least every 6 months thereafter until an adoption order has been made or the adoptive placement ends.

Where a child has been placed for adoption but not adopted within 12 months, the child's social worker must present a further report to the Adoption Panel identifying the length of the delay, the reasons and the steps being taken to address any difficulties.

During the same reporting period the following children were achieved plans of permanence via adoption:

Measure	Number	Percentage
Number of Adoptions in Period	24	
Number within 12 months of Shobpa	7	29.2%
Number placed within 12 months of Shobpa	15	62.5%
Number placed within 426 days of BLA	12	50%
Number matched within 121 days of PO	19	79.2%

Children Missing from Care

In 2022/23 59 children looked after by RMBC went missing from their placement, with 296 missing episodes in total for those children – a decrease from 370 episodes on the previous years. There were 17 occurrences of children missing on more than three occasions in the year again a decrease of 24 from the previous year.

IROs are invited to all consequent strategy discussions and ensure that LAC reviews address the current safety plans and required responses and offer challenge if these are felt to be sufficiently robust. IROs are mindful of risks associated with child exploitation and contextual safeguarding – and ensure that review decisions reflect any protective action required. An IRO attends regular focused meetings to discuss practice in these areas.

Conclusion and Key Actions for 2022/23

The key priorities of the IRO service in the next reporting year will be:

- The child's voice in terms of their review experience will be captured formally, to improve the service offered. This will include inviting the LAC council to team meetings, implementing the voice of the child booklets, and also ensuring children voices are captured prior to their reviews.
- Children will be spoken to about chairing their own reviews should they wish. The service will anticipate an increase in the number of children chairing their reviews.
- All children will be visited within the year. For those children who do not wish to engage with their reviews, they will be offered advocacy services or their views will be collated in alternative means.
- Midway reviews will increase to 80% by the end of the reporting year.
- The Q and C will be embedded within LCS and reporting data will be able to be pulled from insight, which will enable thematic exploration to commence.
- The Escalation process will be embedded within LCS to prevent drift and delay and further evidence the voice of the child.
- IRO recommendations will become embedded within the LCS process to allow greater oversight from Team Managers.
- The minute template used to collate discussion from the review process will be further developed. This will focus on the voice of the child.

As the safeguarding unit as a whole:

- **Improve the timeliness of Initial Child Protection Case Conference** - Work will be completed across the service to ensure all children are heard at an Initial Conference timely. The escalation process will be utilised where needed

Quality of planning will be reviewed

- I. The safeguarding unit will review and scrutinise all children on Child Protection Plans focusing on particularly cohorts of children including teenagers, children subject to multiple periods of planning, PLO planning and children subject to planning for periods longer than nine months. This will ensure that our service is safeguarding the most vulnerable children and young people and those children where planning is not the most appropriate way to manage the risks and concerns are addressed.
- II. Continue to identify and scrutinise themes from escalations, support and resolution sessions and monthly performance themes to the Senior Management Team and performance board to support a clearer service wide and strategic understanding of themes and areas of practice that are outstanding or that require further development

III. The Quality and Assurance Dashboard will be developed to include the qualitative data and themes for all escalations, Q& C forms, midway reviews, 18-month analysis, PLO analyse support and resolution meetings.

- **Increase the voice of the child** - Advocacy will support children and young people before and within conference. The child friendly plan will be progressed by Barnardo's

Work with partners to increase attendance / contributions

- I. attendance at the headteacher quarterly meeting
- II. work with probation and the police to strengthen their role and contribution

Written by Jo Hacking Acting Senior Safeguarding Manager
With supervision from Joanne McCartan, Service Manager.
03.07.2023

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT April 202 – March 2023

Purpose of the Report

This is the annual report of the Local Authority Designated Officer for 2022-2022. The report is intended to set out the volume, broad content and outcome of activity referred to the function within the period 2022-2023. The report will also highlight any relevant issues in relation to partnership working in the borough, as well as thematic and practice quality issues.

Working Together 2015 (updated in 2018) requires that each Local Authority has a designated officer or team of officers, to deal with allegations made against professionals who are a part of the children's workforce.
(Working Together was updated in 2018, with no purposed changes made to the Local Authority as a designated officer arrangements)

Every local authority has a statutory responsibility to have a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who is responsible for co-ordinating the response to concerns that an adult who works with children may have caused or could cause harm to children.

The LADO works within Children's Services and gives advice and guidance to employers, organisations and other individuals who have concerns about the behaviour of an adult who works with children and young people. Included in this group are volunteers, agency staff and foster carers as well as people who are in a position of authority and have regular contact with children, such as religious leaders, police,

taxi drivers or school governors. LADO investigations and enquires should be considered for anyone who is working within the children's workforce.

In practical terms, the role of the LADO is to:

- provide advice and guidance to agencies and individuals, in relation to issues surrounding the conduct of their staff (whether paid or unpaid) which concern actions or behaviours giving rise to safeguarding concerns.
- ensure co-ordination and proportionate, fair and safe outcomes in relation to these matters, specifically regarding the safeguarding of any / all children concerned, the investigation of any criminal matters and the associated human resources processes.
- convene, chair and record strategy meetings for this purpose.
- manage and oversee individual cases from the commencement of the process through to conclusion and outcome.

The LADO will become involved, where there is reasonable suspicion that a person who works with children (whether paid or unpaid) has behaved in such a way as to:

- cause or potentially cause harm to a child.
- commit a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Indicate that he or she would pose a risk of harm if they were to work regularly or closely with children.

Both historical and current allegations of this kind should be considered. An incident or behaviour occurring in the context of a person's private life will be considered where this suggests that the person may pose a risk of harm to children.

In Rotherham to make a referral to LADO professionals and public can contact the Duty LADO for advice and guidance and contact MASH to make a referral. MASH will take all the details and screen the adult and any associated children.

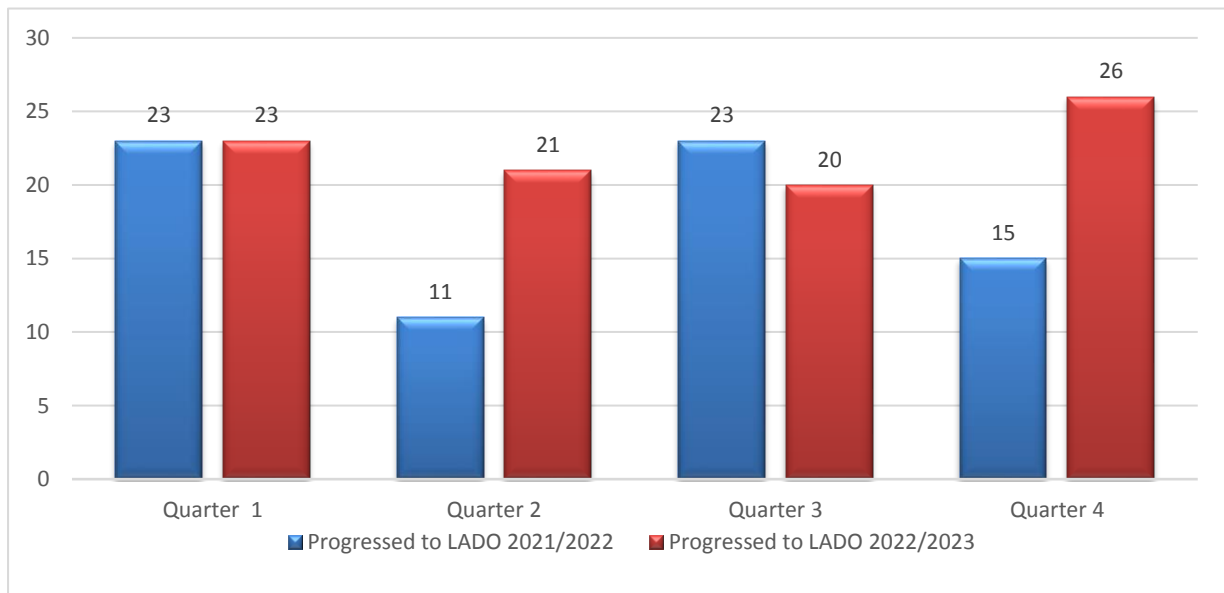
Volume of LADO contacts and enquires

Over the last four years our annual figures for LADO have remained relatively stable. We can see that whilst the number of referrals to LADO remained relatively consistent over the past 2 years, a higher proportion of referrals progressed to a LADO investigation in 2022/2023. This is an increase from 37% in 2021/22 to 47% in 2022/23 and suggests multi-agency training regarding LADO threshold is being effective in ensuring appropriate referrals are being made.

Table 1. Four-year comparison of LADO Contacts



Table 2. Quarterly comparison 2022/23

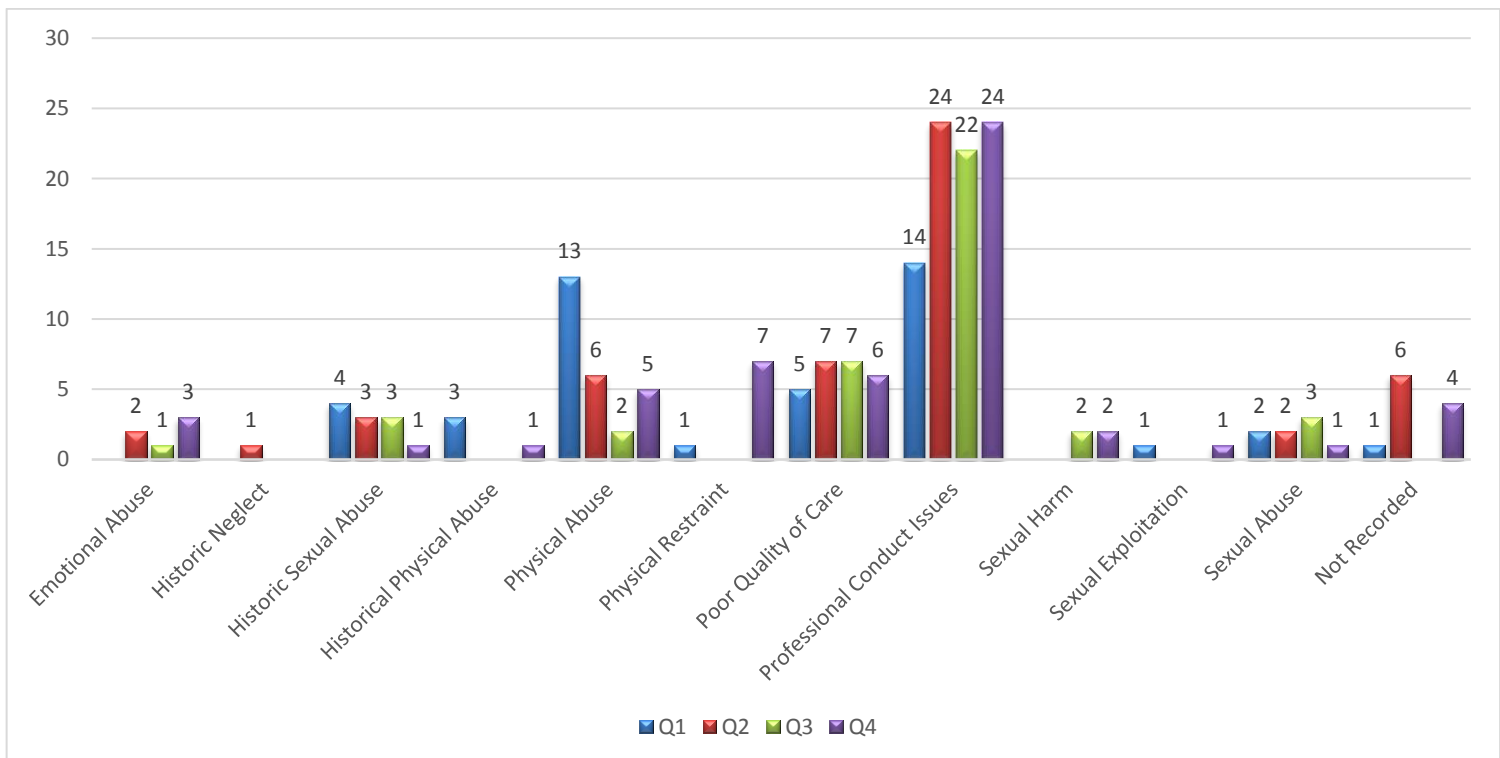


Over 2022/23 we can see a consistent number of referrals progressing to LADO investigations in each quarter.

We have continued to work hard to raise internal awareness within RMBC of LADO supporting a hypothesis that professionals are more aware of LADO and their responsibilities within safeguarding. The Lead LADO continues to meet regularly with MASH, LAC Teams and the Fostering Service to support staff to identify when an allegation meets threshold for LADO, and what steps need to be taken.

Of the 190 contacts received for LADO, the nature of concerns is separated into categories of harm.

Table 3. Allegations Type



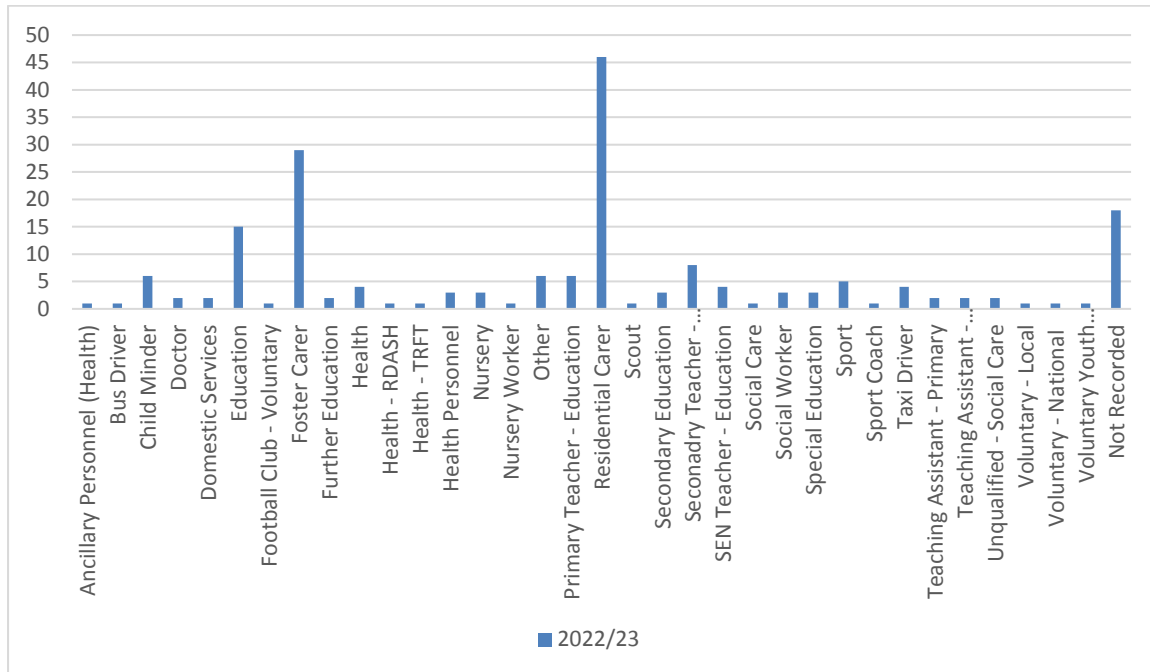
We continue to see a high number of professional conduct issues which result in investigations that are overseen by LADO. This category covers a vast array of concerns including behaviour outside of work which may indicate a transferable risk into the workplace, such as domestic abuse, neglect and alcohol and/or substance misuse. This category also considers issues within employment such as lack of supervision, concerning or inappropriate interactions, and behaviours that may harm a child.

10 LADO investigations do not have an allegation type recorded and this is being addressed with all LADO's to ensure we capture this information accurately.

The concerns around sexual abuse remain low, although we have seen a raise in historical sexual abuse, the majority of these relate to the investigations undertaken by the National Crime Agency (NCA).

Physical abuse through restraints has doubled from 4 in 2021/22 to 8 in 2022/23, however physical abuse has almost halved from 45 in 2021/22 to 25 in 2022/23.

Table 4. Employment of Alleged Perpetrator



Our most considered professionals remain residential carers, foster carers and those in education professions, which is consistent with previous figures. This is unsurprising as we know these professionals will have the most contact with children who have additional needs or have experienced trauma where they struggle to regulate their emotions resulting in incidents where physical restraints and altercations are more likely to occur.

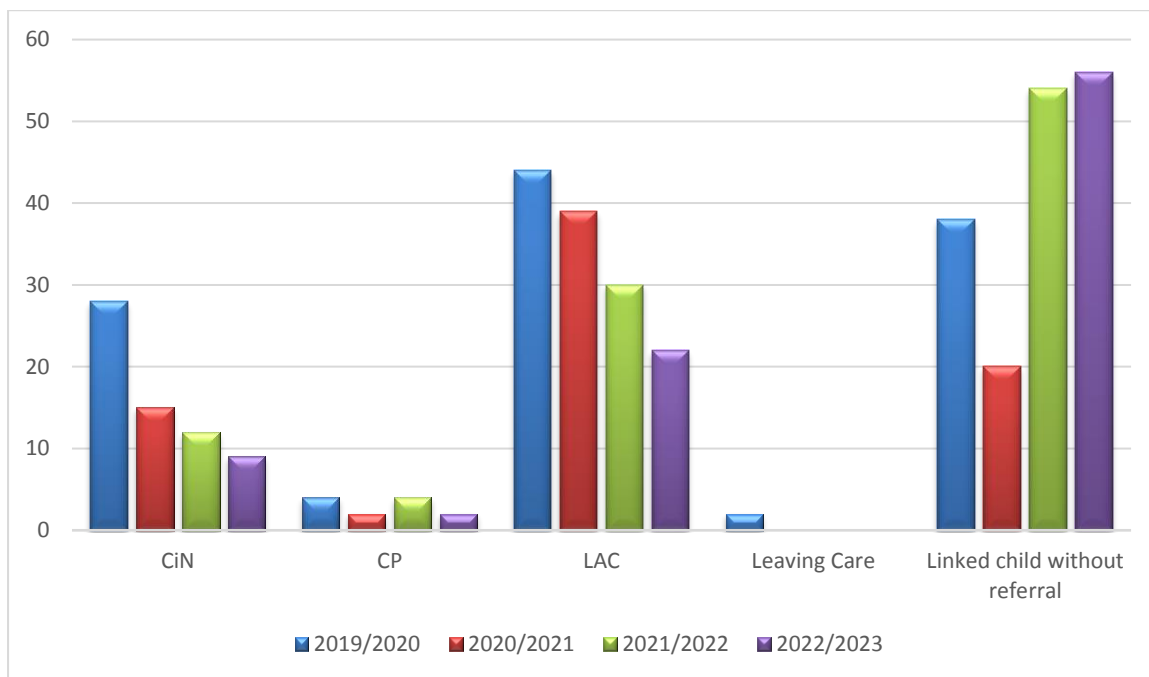
In addition to recording the professions employment detail, we continue recording the child’s current support status to ensure we are targeting training to professionals where we have our most vulnerable children.

We can see over the past 3 years a progressive downward trend in LADO investigations for professionals working with children who are Looked After or subject of Child in Need Plans. Children in these categories have the opportunity to share any worries or concerns with their Social Worker or Independent Advocate, which may lead to concerns being addressed at a low level rather than behaviours escalating to threshold for LADO oversight. Additionally, as a trauma informed workforce, staff are better able to understand children/young people’s behaviours and intervene appropriately by using de-escalating strategies.

This downward trend also suggests we are targeting our LADO training to staff who have contact with our most vulnerable young people, and they are better informed of what does and does not need to be referred through to LADO. The provision of LADO

duty advice and discussion prior to a referral also prevents inappropriate referrals being made

Table 5. Children linked to the Allegation



Concluded LADO

The figures for 2022-2023 demonstrate that the LADO has concluded 82 LADO investigations. 13.6% concluded with the member of staff continuing in employment with a risk assessment in place. A further 12.3% required further safeguarding training or additional monitoring and supervision. 24.7% of LADO investigations concluded with the member of staff being dismissed, resigning, or being suspended.

We have seen an increase from 5% to 13.6% of referrals that have progressed from MASH to a LADO investigation, but on further screening by the dedicated LADO worker it is concluded that no further investigation is required. It is important to note that on some occasions, further discussions and clarity is needed with the employer and employee to agree progression. It is right to initially progress these cases through to LADO to enable further exploration through for an information sharing meeting to take place in a managed way without rushing into a process that could be both emotionally damaging and or impact on their long-term employment.

The chart below demonstrates the varied outcomes for LADO and how we ensure the responses and outcomes are proportionate and appropriate for the employer.

Table 5. LADO Outcome

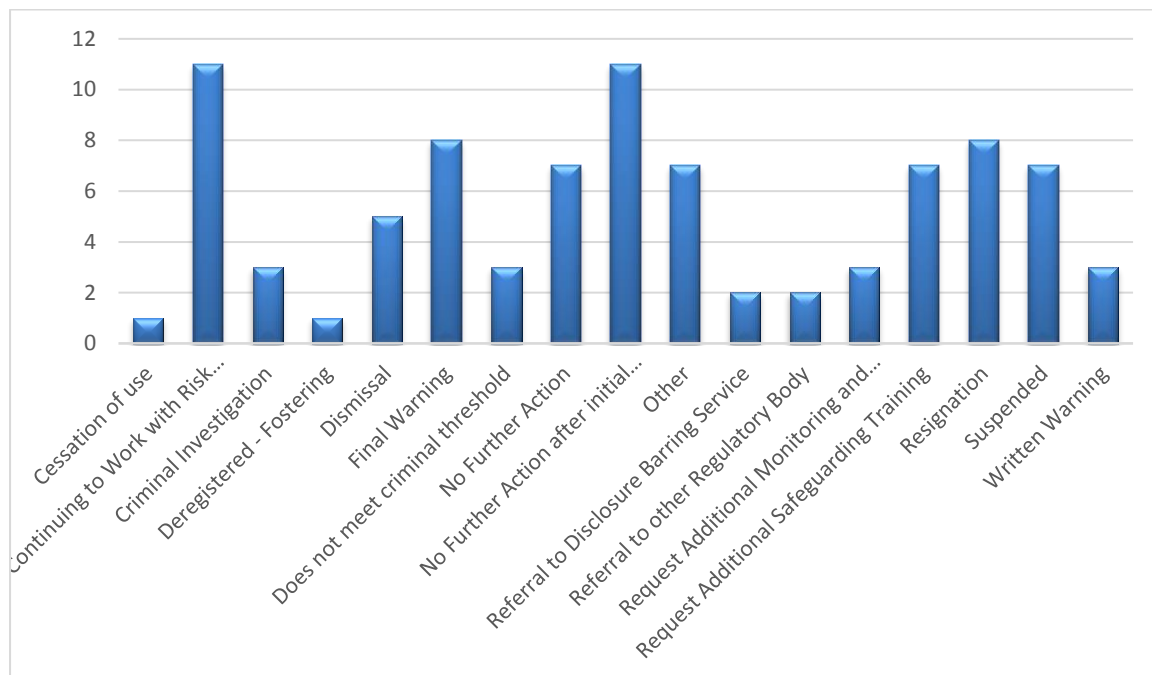
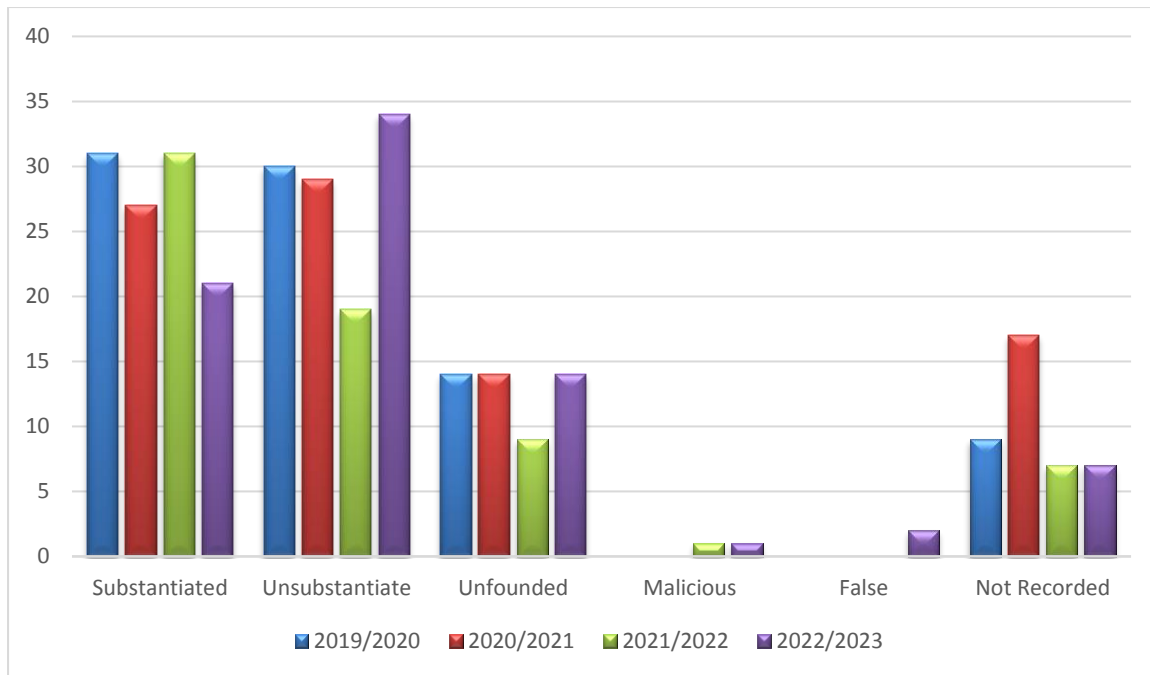


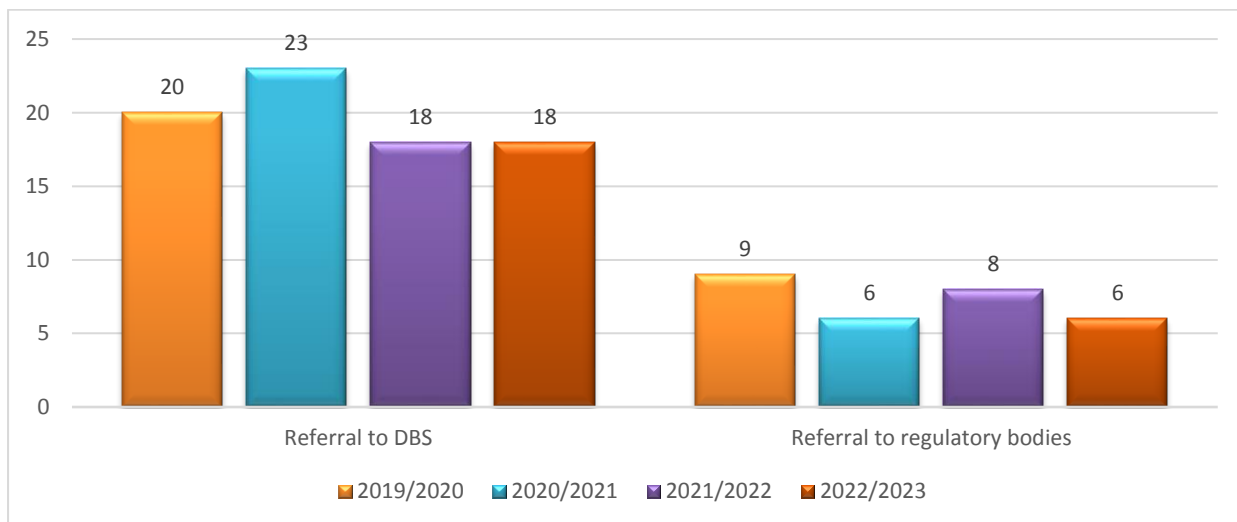
Table 7. LADO Final Outcome



It is positive to see only a small number of LADO investigations concluding with a malicious or false outcome, which again indicates concerns are being considered at the right level of intervention. The false category was only added as an outcome in 2022/23 so this information is not available for previous years.

Please see definitions of outcomes in Appendix 1

Table 8. LADO Referrals to DBS and Regulatory Bodies



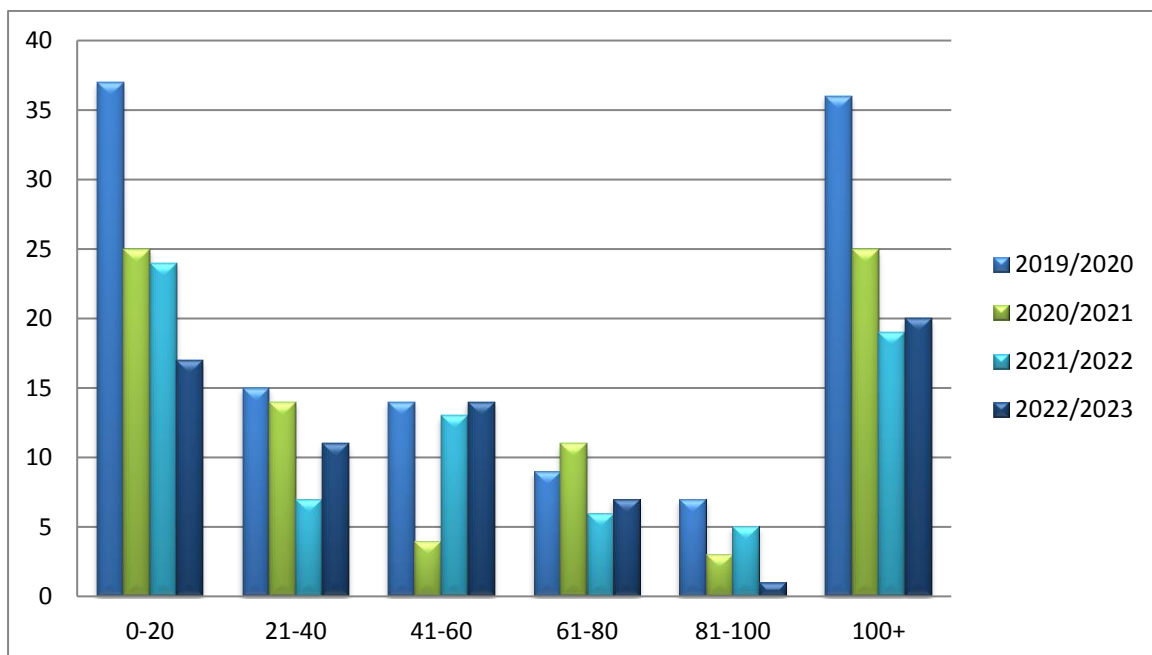
Referrals to DBS and regulatory bodies have remained consistent. This figure appears proportionate and reflects the 25.9% of workers who remain in post with a risk assessment in place, or further supervision, monitoring or training provided

Timeliness of LADO and Multi-Agency Involvement

We continue to work hard to address the timeliness of LADO investigations as we know that this impacts on professional’s long-term employment and mental health. We continue to streamline the process, however police investigations, robust employer investigations and disciplinary processes take time impacting on the length of the LADO process.

The decision of the initial LADO contact to progress to LADO is a positive picture, with over half of the decisions, 66% made within 3 working days. The timeliness of the progression of contacts is impacted on when further screening is required to ascertain the details of the concerns and whether a LADO is required, whilst this is often appropriate in considering all the information and ensuring our response is proportionate it can cause delay. This coincides with the high figure of 13.6% of LADO contacts that are felt not to meet threshold after further LADO screening indicating that decisions at MASH whilst timely require a more robust screening. However, what we do know is that on a number of occasions further discussions and reflections over a 72-hour period may reduce the risk and indicate that harm has not in fact occurred. 12% of decisions have been made after 7 working days which is due to a delay in MASH screening and when they have been signed off in MASH to progress to the LADO tray; whilst this remains a concern there has been a reduction from 18% in 2021/2022.

Table 9. Timeliness of Investigations Completed – Workings Days



The majority of LADO investigations are concluded within 0-20 days and over half for the last 4 years concluded under 40 days.

The LADO investigations that are over 100+ days are overall due to the length of police investigations, these are normally historical offences or when the employee’s

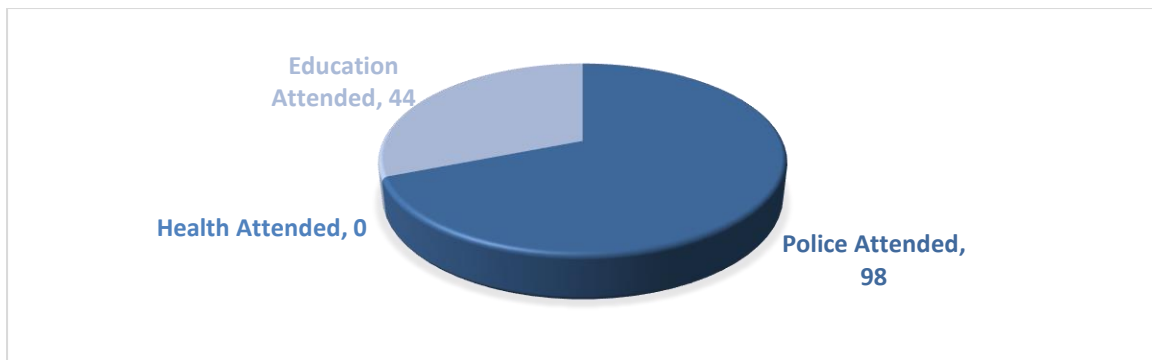
children are subject to CP planning, and it is appropriate to ascertain the outcome of this planning prior to making a final decision on employment. This is a balanced and proportionate approach to LADO investigations.

Multi-Agency decision making is crucial in terms of LADO decisions. When an employer has not concluded their investigation or undertaken appropriate HR procedures this can impact on the outcome and conclusion of the LADO.

We continue to work with key partners to ensure they are attending or contributing to the LADO process. Whilst the below figures for professional attendance appears low, we have agreed that Health is not routinely invited to LADO's unless the child is LAC, or the concern is regarding health professionals and if this is the case HR will attend. The figures below relate to 128 allegations meetings.

Police attendance has increased from 64.6% in 2021/22 to 76.6% in 2022/23. This demonstrates a closer working relationship with South Yorkshire Police and a drive to ensure that LADO's where there is a Police Investigation are concluded in a timely fashion.

Table 10. Professional Attendance at Allegations Meetings



Development and Awareness

The Lead LADO continues to provide training to RMBC Foster Carers to support them to understand the role of LADO and the process when a referral is made. Foster Carers have responded well to this training, and whilst they may still feel anxious about the prospect of having an allegation made against them, they have a better understanding of what happens 'behind the scenes' were they to become subject of a LADO.

The Lead LADO continues to provide LADO Training through Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership, and this has been attended by professionals including child minders, football clubs, residential carers, and nursery workers.

Training sessions were not as well attended in 2022/2023, however this may be due to staff absences with RSCP Training/Administration Team. This will be monitored over the coming year, and the number of training sessions offered will be increased if the demand is there.

The Lead LADO also links in with RMBC inhouse residential Children's Homes to offer support and guidance. A bespoke support package was in place during a very vulnerable young person's transition, and this assisted staff to consider what was a complaint vs what was an allegation. This regular 'check in' support also helped staff to feel valued and safe during this difficult transition.

In November 2022 the Lead LADO in Rotherham and Sheffield provided joint training with Assemblies of God Churches across South Yorkshire. This training was attended by over 30 participants and received very positive feedback.

The Lead LADO and Service Manager attend regular networking meetings with LADO staff from South Yorkshire, as well as regional meetings with LADO staff from Yorkshire and Humberside. These forums allow for sharing of best practice, minimising differences in practice across the region, and developing working relationships with organisations including DBS and the FA.

The LADO continues to have links with Yorkshire Sort Foundation and Diocesan Safeguarding to support safe practice.

In Summary

- The referrals that are progressed to LADO are appropriate and in the main meet threshold. There has been a higher proportion of referrals which on further screening by LADO do not meet threshold for a LADO investigation.
- LADO investigations are completed as soon as possible but can take a lengthy time to conclude due to HR/Police investigations. The allocated LADO worker tracks that these are completed as soon as possible to avoid drift and delay
- The performance scoresheet provides a detailed overview of LADO contacts, progressions to LADO, categories of abuse and the outcomes; this provides a wealth of information and detailed analysis.
- The Lead LADO continues to provide regular training to Social Care Staff including MASH, LAC Teams and Fostering Teams to raise awareness and understanding of the LADO role and when referrals need to be made
- The Lead LADO is working with RMBC Foster Carers to demystify the process and support understanding of when referrals need to be made to LADO

- LADO Training continues to be promoted in the RSCP prospectus and sessions are attended by a variety of professionals within the children's workforce
- LADO workers remain consistent in their approach and the timeliness of LADO contacts have improved.
- Managing allegations of alleged perpetrator / owner and proprietor of organisations that are not regulated. These 'one person band' setups have no regulation or governance around them and rely on parents to be vigilant and safeguard their children. Further work with DBS is required to support this process.

What needs to happen

What Needs to Happen	Learning or Development Need	Expected Impact	Date Evaluated
Lead LADO is to undertake training with MASH to improve understanding of threshold and ensure adequate screening is completed	MASH Workers will have a better understanding of threshold and ensure all necessary information has been obtained and considered as part of the screening process	We will see a reduction in the number of LADO referrals that are not progressed following further screening by the LADO Worker	30.09.2023
The timeliness of LADO needs to be continually reviewed to ensure allegations are addressed immediately without	MASH need to ensure that LADO referrals are progressed within 24 hours. This will be measured in the LADO Dashboard and performance figures shared with MASH to improve performance	Initial Allegations meetings will be held within 5 working days and LADO's will be concluded in a timely manner	31.03.2024

unnecessary delay.			
The LADO Dashboard needs to be reviewed on a quarterly basis and any fields not recorded need to be rectified immediately	LADO allegations that have not meet threshold for LADO allegations meeting will be reviewed. A selection of these will be scrutinised to ensure that threshold is consistent	The threshold will be tested, and we will be confident that all allegations are managed effectively	31.03.2024
LADO records are to be audited on a 6 monthly basis to ensure quality and consistency across workers	Any discrepancies in practice or recordings will be identified and streamlined	We will be confident that all LADO investigations managed in a consistent manner	31.03.24

Appendix 1 - The Outcomes for Allegations Meetings: DfE; Reference Final Outcome of Allegations and Concerns Management;

Substantiated	There is sufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.
Unsubstantiated	There is insufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
Unfounded	There is no proper evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made, or there is evidence to prove that the allegation is untrue or that the complainant misinterpreted the information or was mistaken
Malicious	There is clear evidence to prove that there has been a deliberate act to deceive, and the allegation is entirely false.
False	There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and suggest that it was falsely made
The summary of the allegation management process should clearly record what the outcome was and why. There needs to be clear information provided to the LADO from involved parties, e.g., Police, Social Care or Human Resources.	

The Outcome should also make clear if the person of concern was;

Dismissed
Convicted of any offence
Struck off any professional register or body i.e., Teaching, medical, or fostering approval.

The person of concern should be made aware of the outcome of the Strategy discussion.