

Lambeth:
**Children
at the Heart
of Practice**

Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2016/2017

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Report Summary

This report discusses important areas of the work of Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) over the last 12 months. The report starts with an introduction to the IRO team before looking at whether or not Children Looked After reviews are being held on time, how IRO's can raise concerns with a young person's care and the participation of young people and their families in IRO reviews. The report shows the progress made and the work which still needs to be done in these important areas.

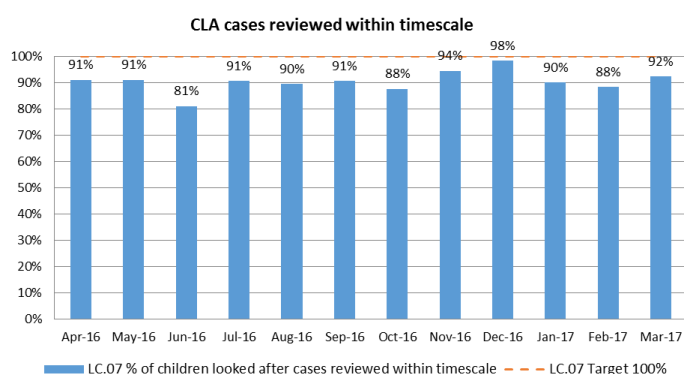
The Independent Reviewing Team

As of 19/04/2017 the team was made up of:

- Service Manager – David Michael, permanent 26/09/2016
- Team Manager – Margaret Noonan, interim 19/09/2016 (Permanent Manager, Sharon Griffiths, has been recruited and is due to start on 15/05/2017)
- 7 IROs
 - Mike Garforth (permanent)
 - Manfred Akinde-Hummel (permanent)
 - Mathew Nyakuhwa - interim IRO commenced 3/2/17 (replaced Avril Momoh whose ceased working on 3/2/17)
 - Ian Aubrey – interim IRO commenced 20/2/17 (replaced Ahmed Karkhairan who ceased working in January 17)
 - Mandy Harley (replaced Elizabeth Macauley in October 17)
 - Rose Flynn-Phillip (interim 08/07/2016)
 - Katie Wilson (interim 09/01/2017) (replaced Isabella Hunt who ceased working on 06/01/2016)
- 1 IRO is responsible for fostering reviews - Lorna Peterson (interim 10/06/2015)
- 1 Business Support Officer – Anne Mulindwa (permanent)

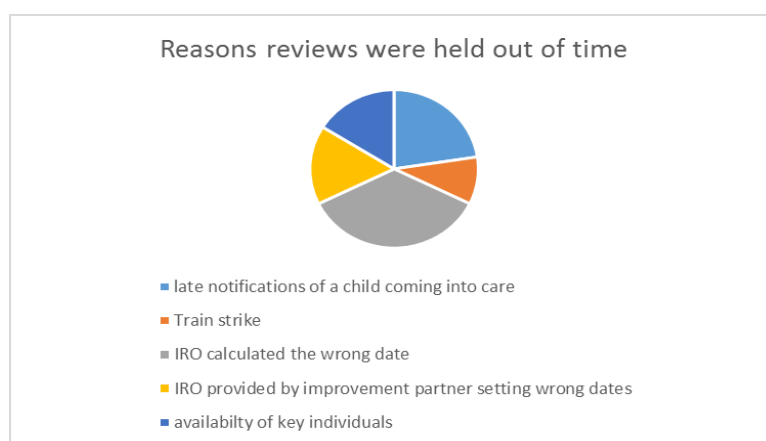
Currently the IROs have an average caseload of approximately 61 children, with the fostering IRO managing on average around 95 foster carers.

IRO Performance



Most children are having their Children Looked After Reviews on time. The Review is important because it is a meeting that includes the child in care and their family (in most cases) as well as their carer, where the IRO looks at the care plan for the child to ensure their needs are met.

- The reasons for the late reviews are as follows:-



Reviews should always be on time except in exceptional circumstances. During the last year, there were 1087 reviews of which 100 (9%) of these were out of timescale. The above table shows the breakdown of the reasons for late reviews.

Dispute Resolution Process

The Dispute Resolution Protocol (DRP) is when an IRO raises a concern in relation to a Child who is Looked After and keeps escalating the issue up the ranks of management until the concerns are resolved. It is really important that IROs do this to make sure Looked After Children are getting what they need. This has made a real difference – for example some children who have been in the same placement for years now know that they will be there though out their childhood and not get moved about. More work needs to done to ensure the IROs are using the DRP when it is needed.

The table below sets out the number of DRPs triggered by IROs and the number of responses within 20 working days.

DRPs raised in the months					
October 16	November 16	December 16	January 17	February 17	March 17
20	4	3	40	31	29
DRPs unresolved within 20 days					
11	2	3	36	1	4

You can see from this that from January onwards IROs are raising DRPs. You can see that at the start in January social workers and managers were not responding but they are now.

The participation of children and their parents

1037 Children Looked After reviews were held in which 925 children were reported to be of an age to participate fully. 95% of these children participated within their review in some capacity or another. However only 70% of children and young people actually attended their review in person. 4% (44) of children/young people were reported not to have participated at all.

For some children/young people (e.g. those with severe learning difficulties) attendance at the review meeting is not always beneficial and their participation is captured in different ways. However, 70% of actual attendance is considered low.

The participation of children at the LAC Review is categorised under the following codes. The table below provides the actual numbers and percentages of children and mode of participation.

Code	Definition	Participation in the year 1 st April 2016- 1 st March 2017
PN0	Child aged under 4 at time of Review	112 children or 10.8%
PN1	Child/young person physically attends and speaks for him or herself	598 children or 57.6%
PN2	Child/young person physically attends and an advocate speaks on his or her behalf	30 children or 2.8%
PN3	Child/young person attends and conveys his or her view symbolically (non-verbally)	3 children or 0.2%
PN4	Child/young person physically attends but does not speak for him or herself, does not convey his or her views symbolically and does not ask an advocate to speak for him or her	4 children or 0.3%
PN5	Child/young person does not attend physically but briefs an advocate to speak for him or her	180 children or 17.3%

PN6	Child/young person does not attend but conveys his or her feelings to the Review by a facilitative medium	51 children or 4.9 %
PN7	Child/young person does not attend nor are his or her views conveyed in any way to Review	44 4%
-	Not recorded by IRO	15 or 1%

IROs are expected to meet separately with the child as part of their review process. This is important because some children may find it difficult to talk openly at the meeting. The IRO provides an opportunity for the child to talk about any worries they may have.

However, children over the age of 4 were only spoken to alone by IROs in about 59% of CLA reviews. We also found that too many reviews were being held during school time which is not fair on the child because they have to miss out on lessons. We have told IROs to stop holding reviews during the school day.

We need to improve on social work reports being shared with children. Not counting children under 4, social workers shared the report with the child in only 54% of reviews.

We need to improve participation of parents at Children Looked After reviews. Between December 2016 and March 2017 parents physically attended 43% of reviews. In 10% of reviews where the parent did not attend in person, the IRO made direct contact with the parent to find out what they thought about the plan. This figure is far too low. We know that in many cases parents are important to children and we should keep them involved. Between December 2016 and March 2017 reports have been shared with roughly 12% of parents prior to the review.

A working group is due to begin in June 2017 to look at the Children Looked After review process with a focus on participation. The actions of the working group are detailed in the table below:

This is what we are going to do to make things better.

We will:-

Develop more child friendly ways to carry out a review for Looked After Children.

We will make sure parents are told about the review if this is the right thing to do.

We will do better in sharing reports before the review with young people, their parents (provided it's okay) and carers.



Lambeth