

APPENDIX 1

IRO Annual Report 01<sup>st</sup> April 2016 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The IRO handbook states that the IRO manager should be responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the corporate parenting board. This report should identify good practice but should also highlight issues for further development, including where urgent action is needed. It should include an analysis of the issues raised in dispute and the outcomes. Present the team dynamics, current case loads and information on the participation of children and families in the review process. Annual performance timeliness of reviews and outcomes of quality assurance audits in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews.

1.2 Bradford's current pledge to our children looked after is to offer support in all education matters which will run through into adult life and assist our young people to prepare for independent living. Professionals will be open and honest with a real commitment to engage our children so that their voice has where appropriate a priority in decision-making for them. This support will include keeping them safe and assisting in the pursuit of personal goals and dreams. Bradford recognises the importance of family both before and after care. We will ensure that family contact is supported even in the most complex of circumstances.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to describe how the Independent Reviewing Unit plays a key role in monitoring the performance of the local authority as a corporate parent. The primary task of the IRO is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child. As corporate parents each local authority should act for the children they look after as a responsible and conscientious parent would act. 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.

1.4 The number of formal disputes escalated to senior management is not the only indication of how effective we are, as the IRO Handbook repeatedly advise to resolve matters through negotiation and agreement first. As one IRO put it for the University research;

*1.5"...before an IRO gets to challenge at Cafcass level, there's a lot of hoops to be jumped through. So initially you go to the social worker and try, just on that level, to iron out any problems; team manager; then you'd be involving my manager, and you'd be getting involved with, probably, service managers, potentially assistant directors. And usually, any disputes we've had, we can get solved at that sort of level . . . "*

1.6 Following on from this it has been also accepted that where appropriate the IRO's will escalate poor standards of practice and an inability to provide an effective care plan via their local dispute resolution process.

## **2.Profile of the IRO Service in Bradford**

2.1 The Bradford IRO service has 13 IRO's, 9 fulltime and 4 part-time (11.2 FTE). The teams are all experienced practitioners with 5 years post qualification experience as required by the IRO Handbook.

2.2 During this financial year we have successfully recruited 3 new full-time IRO's to replace members of the team who either retired or reduced their working hours. We experienced healthy interest in our vacancies and were pleased to recruit a very experienced social work manager and two very experienced social workers.

## **3.Statistical information regarding Looked after Children (CLA) and the IRO Service**

### **Children Looked After in Bradford**

#### **BRADFORD CLA 2016-17 DATA**

<b>3.1 AGE AT 31 MARCH 2017</b>			
<b>BOYS</b>		<b>GIRLS</b>	
Under 1:	43	Under 1:	15
1 - 4:	65	1 - 4:	69
5 - 9:	100	5 - 9:	97
10 - 15:	193	10 - 15:	173
16 - 17:	93	16 - 17:	79
18 & over and placed in a community home:	0	18 & over and placed in a community home:	0
TOTAL BOYS:	494	TOTAL GIRLS:	433
TOTAL ALL CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AT 31 MARCH:	927		

3.2 The total number of children looked after has increased from 848 on 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2016 to 927 children on 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2017. This is 79 more children and a 9% increase in our CLA population. In 2017 the numbers of looked after children in England continue to increase. After small rises of 1% each year between 2014 and 2016, the rise this year has been greater at 3%. At 31 March 2017 there were 72,670 looked after children in England, an increase of 2,220 on 2016, and an increase of 4,600 on 2013.

3.3 At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, in England 62 children per 10,000 of the population were looked after, up from 60 children per 10,000 in the previous four years. In comparison our CLA population has increased 6% higher than the national trend and we have 67 children per 10,000 of the population looked after which again is 8% higher than the national overall trend.

3.4 The majority of our children looked after are still in the age range 10 to 15. These account for 39% of our CLA population and match the national trend for this age range. Within this age range 10-15 girls have remained stable but boys have increased by 8 since last year.

3.5 The total number of boys has gone up from 431 in 2016 to 494 on 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2017. We experienced an increase of 15 boys in our under one age and 23 more boys in the age range 16 to 17. Over the year the total number of boys has increased by 63 and the total number of girls has increased by 16.

3.6 The national data report that there are slightly more males than females looked after, at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 56% of looked after children were male and 44% were female. Our gender mix is very similar to the national picture, with 53% male and 47% female.

<b><u>3.7 ETHNIC ORIGIN OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AT 31 MARCH 2017</u></b>	
White	632 (68%)
Mixed	138 (15%)
Asian or Asian British	92 (10%)
Black or Black British	20 (2%)
Other ethnic groups	45 (5%)
<b>TOTAL :</b>	<b>927</b>

3.8 The ethnicity of our children looked after has seen an increase in white children from 582 to 632 and an increase in our other ethnic groups from 25 to 45. The increases in the number of other ethnic groups reflect the new communities from Eastern Europe now coming to settle here.

3.9 The national statistics report 75% of looked after children at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 were white, 9% were of mixed ethnicity, 7% were black or black British, 5% were Asian or Asian British and 3% were other ethnic groups. In comparison our figures show a higher number of 10% in Asian & Asian British which does reflect the large number of families from the south Asian communities which live here.

3.10 We have also seen an increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking young people coming to Bradford as part of the national dispersal scheme. This increased from 7 in March 2016 to 16 on 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2017. The national trend report a 6% increase, 260 (4300-4560) more UASC compared to 2016. The national trends show that numbers started increasing from 2014.

<b><u>3.10 LEGAL STATUS AT 31 MARCH 2017</u></b>		
Care Orders:	Interim	137
	Full	639
Voluntary agreements under S.20 (single period of accommodation)		105
Freed for adoption		1
Placement Order		42
On remand, committed for trial, or detained		3
Emergency orders or police protection		0
TOTAL:		927

3.11 Children subject to ICO have gone up from 113 in March 2016 to 137 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. This is a 21% increase in the number of children in proceedings and as advised by the manager of Cafcass in line with the national picture. Full care orders have gone up from 572 to 639. So

alongside the increase in new proceedings we also have an 11% increase in the number of children subject to a full care order. The number of children accommodated under a section 20 agreement has gone down from 51 to 42. This illustrates that even though our children looked after population has increased we are less inclined to use section 20 agreements for long-term care episodes. There is a drive for such accommodations to be regularly reviewed at our Legal Gateway Panel to ensure our children have the correct legal status. The IRO manager has also been actively involved in challenge panels arranged to determine appropriate legal status for some of our section 20 children.

3.12 Once again we have seen a further decrease in children subject to placement order, going down from 51 in 2016 to 42 in 2017. The total number of successful adoptions also reduced from 73 in the financial year 2015-2016 to 42 in 2016-2017. As reported in last year's annual findings this continues to show a reduction in adoption being the preferred permanency plan.

3.13 National statistics show that 50,470 children were looked after at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 under a care order, up 10% on 45,750 in 2016 and up from a low of 40,070 in 2014, which represents an increase in numbers over the last three years of 26%. The numbers of children looked after under a voluntary agreement under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 was highest in 2015 at 19,350 but has since fallen to 16,470 in 2017. In comparison we have also seen a similar increase in children subject to care order and a drop in section 20 accommodation & placements orders.

<b><u>3.14 PLACEMENT AT 31st MARCH 2017</u></b>		
Foster placement with relative or friend: <b>24%</b>	Inside local authority	176
	Outside local authority	45
Placement with other foster carer: <b>46%</b>	Inside local authority	346
	Outside local authority	67
Secure unit		1

Homes and hostels	103
Hostels and other supportive residential placements	2
Residential schools	1
Other residential settings	8
Placed for adoption (including placed with former foster carer)	20
Placed with own parents	112
In lodgings, residential employment or living independently	46
Other placement	0
TOTAL :	927

3.15 Family and friends placements increased from 201 in 2016 to 221 in 2017(10% increase). The percentage increase of these placements is almost the same as the percentage increase in our overall children looked after population. Forty five of these placements have been outside of Bradford which is a 32% increase on last year. This is positive that it shows Bradford is committed to keeping children within their family network when it can be done safely. This is also within the signs of safety practice framework.

3.16 National statistics show that the total number of children being fostered has been increasing since 2015. From 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> march 2017 we have seen the number of children nationally placed with family and friend's carer's increase from 8296 to 9081.

3.18 Other foster care placements which will be a combination of Bradford's own foster carers and privately purchased foster carers had a 4% increase from 398 in 2016 to 413 in 2017. This is in line with the national picture where foster placements account for the majority of our placements, at 70%.

3.19 Children placed at home with a placement with parent's agreement increased by 26% going from 89 such placements in 2016 to 112 on 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2017. This once again shows a shift by the judiciary on removing children. The threshold for imminent danger and removal has increased. National statistics also report a 13% increase in PWP agreements over the 2 periods.

3.20 In lodgings, residential employment and independent living has also gone up from 27 in 2016 to 46 in 2017. This shows the impact of a 32% increase in our 16 to 17 age range for boys and the increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

3.21 The percentage of children placed for adoption has also seen a slight drop which again is in line with the national picture.

<b><u>3.22 CATEGORY OF NEED FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AT 31 MARCH 2017</u></b>	
Abuse or neglect	815 (88%)
Disability	14 (1%)
Parental illness or disability	5 (0.5%)
Family in acute stress	27 (3%)
Family dysfunction	43 (5%)
Socially unacceptable behaviour	2 (0.2%)
Low income	0
Absent parenting	21 (2%)
TOTAL :	927

3.23 Abuse and neglect continues to be the most significant category of need for our children. This year it accounts for 88% of our total children looked after population. This is consistent with last year. We have seen a 25% reduction in the family in acute stress category and the absent



parenting category has doubled from 10 to 21. If we add the 2 categories together the situation has remained constant over the 2 periods.

3.24 National trends also show consistency over the 2 years with abuse & Neglect accounting for 61%, family in acute stress 8%, family dysfunction 15% & absent parenting 7%. In comparison we are much higher in abuse & neglect and less in the family categories.

<b>3.25 <u>CARE STARTED / CEASED AT 31 MARCH 2017</u></b>	
Total Number of Children who have Started to be Looked After	351
Total Number of Children who have Ceased Care	281

3.26 In contrast to 2016 more children came into care alongside a reduction in the numbers who ceased care. Numbers coming in have gone up from 302 to 351 amounting to a 16% increase. Children who have ceased care have gone down from 331 to 281 which is a 15% decrease. This will have an impact on service delivery with once again a need to do more for less. In line with the national picture we have seen an increase in care proceedings. Bradford has one of the largest populations of young people and alongside welfare reform and emerging new communities we have observed like many other local authorities a continuous increase in our CLA numbers.

3.27 The national statistics report an increase of 2% of children coming in and a 2% drop in the number of children ceasing to be looked after. Even though the pattern is similar for Bradford the difference in actual percentage is significant.

**3.28 The profile in terms of children leaving care as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. There were 281 children who left care in the year. Of these:-**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Accommodation ceased - care taken over by another authority	2	0.71%
Accommodation on remand (S23 CYPA 1969) ceased	2	0.71%
Adoption, application unopposed	31	11.03%
Adoption, consent dispensed with	11	3.91%
Ceased for any other reason	13	4.63%
Death	1	0.36%
Independent living with formal support	3	1.07%

Planned return home to parents or other person with PR	83	29.54%
Reached age of 18,19 or 21	60	21.35%
Residence Order / Child Arrangements Order	2	0.71%
Returned to live with parent or relative - with no PR	8	2.85%
Sentenced to custody	4	1.42%
Special Guardianship Order not to former foster carers	2	0.71%
Special Guardianship Order to former foster carers	32	11.39%
Supervision Order	23	8.19%
Transferred to care of adult services	1	0.36%
Unplanned return home to parents or other person with PR	3	1.07%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>100%</b>

3.29 Total number of adoptions decreased from 73 in 2016 to 42 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

3.30 83 children had a planned return home to parents or other person with PR which was 10 less than the previous year. This was close to the national picture, reporting that 32% of the total number returned home which was only slightly down from 2016.

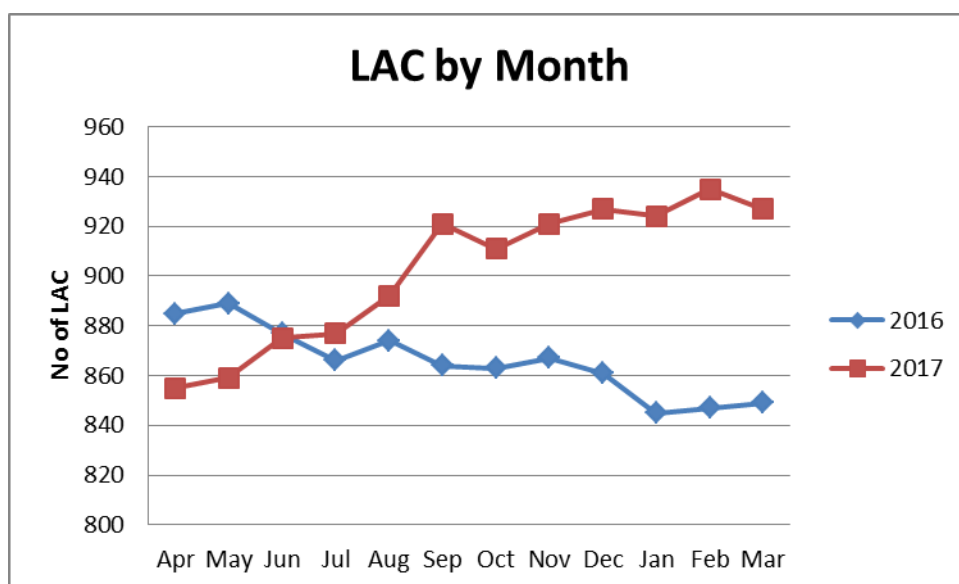
3.31 Children reaching the age 18, 19 or 21 went down from 68 in 2016 to 60 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. This shows a very slight reduction in the number of our CLA still accessing post 18 support.

3.32 The total number of special guardianship orders achieved as the permanency plan reduced from 42 in 2016 to 34 on 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2017. National statistics report 3,690 (12%) ceased to be looked after due to a special guardianship order up 33% from 2,770 in 2013 but down slightly since 2016. Our care proceedings lead case worker has informed that the court is no longer in favour of making SGO at the final hearing for untested carers. The preference is to for a return to court once the placement has been tested and assessed over the year following the final hearing.

### 3.33 CLA Totals by Month

As At Date	LAC Total	IRO Caseload 76-83	As At Date	LAC Total	IRO caseload 75-79
30-Apr-16	855	76	30-Apr-15	885	79
31-May-16	859	77	31-May-15	889	79
30-June-16	875	78	30-June-15	877	78
31-July-16	877	78	31-July-15	866	77

31-Aug-16	892	80	31-Aug-15	874	78
30-Sept-16	921	82	30-Sept-15	864	77
31-Oct-16	911	81	31-Oct-15	863	77
30-Nov-16	921	82	30-Nov-15	867	77
31-Dec-16	927	83	31-Dec-15	861	77
31-Jan-17	924	82	31-Jan-16	845	75
28-Feb-17	935	83	28-Feb-16	847	76
31-Mar-17	927	83	31-Mar-16	848	76



3.34 The tables above illustrate the difference in the total children looked after population trend over the 2 periods. We can see that in 2016 the numbers were relatively constant over the financial year with a slight decrease in May to July and a further reduction from November 2015 to January 2016.

3.35 The picture for the financial year 2016 to 2017 is very different. We can see that there was a gradual increase from April 2016 with the only slight dip in September 2016. This has resulted in the different positions at 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2016/2017.

3.36 The difference in the children looked after population of the 2 periods has also had an impact on IRO caseloads. As we can see for financial year 2016/17 IRO's have consistently been reviewing more children with the

position being 8 children more per caseload at 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2017 in comparison to the same time the previous year.

#### **4.Timeliness of LAC Reviews**

4.1 We are very pleased to report consistent and continued performance of 98% of children looked after reviews being on time at 31.03.2017. The team have done exceedingly well to meet a very challenging revised aspirational target of 98% again. It was achieved by close monitoring through our monthly performance strategy meetings and addressing any meetings planned outside timescales via our LCS forecast reports.

4.2 There were 2550 LAC Review meetings held in 2016-17 in respect of 1090 children. 123 more children were reviewed than the previous year.

4.3 This increased demand and the volume of review meetings during the year alongside changes to the team adds further value to the reported performance. The service was successfully able to meet a very challenging aspirational target throughout the year.

#### **5.Participation & Voice of the Child in Reviews (LAC age 4+) 2016 - 2017**

Participation code	Total
PN1 Child attended & spoke for self	870
PN2 Child attended - advocate spoke	3
PN3 Child attended - gave views non verbally	8
PN4 Child attended without contributing	9
PN5 Child not attended, advocate briefed with views	181
PN6 Child not attended, views sent	876
PN7 Child not attended & did not send views	50
Grand Total	1997

Participation Rate (PN1 to PN6)	97.4%
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5.1 We are also proud to report an increase in children's participation from 89.6 in 2016 to the above figure of 97.4% 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

5.2 The key to this improvement has been a significant reduction (109 to 50) in PN 7 child not attended and did not send views recording. This is following a drive to ensure IRO's are more proactive in collecting the views of children who do not attend their meetings hence the significant increase in code PN 6 child not attended, views sent.

5.3 This financial year's collective performance reporting on timeliness and participation is our best so far.

## **6.Viewpoint consultation and Children's Feedback**

6.1 From 01<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 the IRO's completed 407 Quality Assurance audits which included recording of viewpoint performance. The IRO's reported that 84 viewpoint questionnaires were completed and on 230 occasions the child or young person declined to use viewpoint or it was not required due to the child's age or a complex health condition. If we subtract these 230 from the total number of audits we get QA view point performance of  $84 / 177 \text{ audits} = 47\%$  for the period. This is a 3% improvement on the previous year's performance using the same method.

6.2 The IRO manager now chairs the viewpoint user group which meet bi monthly to drive viewpoint questionnaire performance. Champions from different parts of the service have been identified to give updates from their respective teams and to prepare data for our sufficiency reports which highlight trends and patterns. Viewpoint consultation is also presented in our new foster care recruitment training and social work forums organised by our principal social worker. Bradford's IRO's have also contributed by presenting the role and responsibilities of the IRO at these forums.

### **6.3 Completed Viewpoint Questionnaires**

Questionnaire Age range	Questionnaires Completed 2015-16	Questionnaires Completed 2016-17
LAC Review 4 - 6	77	59

LAC Review 7 - 9	133	89
LAC Review 10- 15	214	225
LAC Review 16+	36	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>425</b>

6.4 As with previous reporting we can see that we still get the most completed questionnaires from our 10 to 15 age range.

6.5 Even though the total number of completed questionnaires has once again fallen from 460 to 425 the reduction has slowed down. From 2015 to 2016 we had 135 less completed questionnaires and comparing 2016 to 2017 its just 35 less. We are happy to see an improvement in performance for our older children 10-15 and 16+ over the 2 periods.

6.6 This year also saw the introduction of providing information from our completed questionnaires for our sufficiency data reporting. This was following on from a previous OFSTED inspection recommendation on achieving better use of viewpoint. The sufficiency data presented findings on 8 separate questions answered by children in completing their questionnaires. For example in the first quarter, out of 58 children between the ages of 4-15 living with our foster carers who replied, 35 said they were happy at school, 18 said they were quite often happy or didn't worry much, another 2 replied they were not often happy, 2 were never happy at school and 1 did not answer the question.

6.7 The findings of this sufficiency data were looked at and reflective discussion was held at our bi-monthly viewpoint user group. Where children had expressed a complaint or negative feeling regarding the question the group investigated what the IRO did. This included what action the IRO took once they were aware through the viewpoint questionnaire that a

child/young person was not happy about their placement, social worker, school etc.

6.8 In the samples we checked we found that the IRO was aware of the child's feelings and took action both within and outside of the formal review meeting. For example:

- A child said that they could not get hold of their social worker. The IRO chased this and found that the social worker was no longer working and arranged for an immediate new worker to be allocated.
- A change of placement was decided to be in the best interest of the child following expression of sadness and not being happy living with MGM.
- During the initial stages of reunification the child said that they were unhappy and they found it difficult to speak to their mother. The IRO made enquiries and once again within the review process it was decided that a change of care and placement was in the best interest of the child.
- The child said that they were not happy with the current contact arrangements with a family member and they did not want to go back to their house during contact. The child did not feel comfortable telling this family member. The IRO advocated on her behalf. The IRO changed contact arrangements and informed the family member.

### **6.9 Child's Voice**

6.10 We are very proud to present the following powerful message shared to the IRO from 2 sisters who ceased to be looked after:

6.11 *"We had a very strong relationship with our foster carers. We had the best time of our lives in foster placement and it didn't even feel like we were living with someone who we didn't know. Our foster carers gave us everything we asked for and treated us just as their own daughters. We never felt shy to ask for something because it just felt like living in our own house. I believe that if we weren't put in care we wouldn't have the*

*stable life we have now. They've always been there for us, to comfort us in our difficult times. They made sure we had everything we needed to the best standard. We can't thank enough our foster parents and foster siblings for the care and support they've given us."*

6.12 Feedback from 2 other children following review meetings:

*6.13 "Yes I do know my IRO. I did not meet them before the meeting. I was able to say what I wanted at my review and the IRO did listen to me. The IRO also helped other people to listen to me. The explained what was decided at the end of my review and I understood what people have agreed to do now. I was happy and satisfied with the whole meeting."*

*6.14 "Yes, my IRO is... Who met me before the meeting. I completely agree with all the things such as being able to speak, being listened to and things being explained to me. My IRO always listens and takes notes. He's really nice and seems to know what he is doing."*

## **7.IRO Quality Assurance and Making a Difference**

7.1\_Bradford has a QA system implemented into our LCS database where IRO's can address and report on Challenge, Good social work practice and undertake a Quality Assurance Audit overview in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews. These audits not only give an over view but also enable us to pin point areas to improve and poor standards of practice specific to the case and allocated social worker and team. These audits report on quantitative and qualitative service delivery factors.

7.2 The feedback from team managers and service area managers so far has been very positive. They have found the QA audits very useful, in not just raising areas for improvement but also identifying good individual social work which then can be used to drive better practice across the rest of the team. Team managers have welcomed IRO's to be even more subjective in there scrutiny and auditing.

7.3 We are pleased to report that the IRO's have completed 407 QA Audits over the year. In addition to this they have also issued 78 QA challenges & 44 QA Good Practice acknowledgements. There has been an increase in all 3 areas over the previous year with 11 more Challenges, 6 more Good Practice acknowledgments and 91 more Audits.



7.4 The lead categories for good practice were, evidencing the Voice of the Child, Good Quality Assessments & Parental Inclusion. Good Review Preparation was once again regularly acknowledged through Quality Assurance Good Practice.

### **7.5 Challenges by Outcome**

No Outcome	12
QA Not Resolved - NFA	4
QA Resolved - NFA	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>

7.6 67% of the challenge responses were on time. This is an improvement on last year's 63%. 81% of the QA Challenges were resolved through our QA process with 12 outstanding outcomes where the IRO is still waiting for a response from the key team. Once these 12 have also achieved resolution the performance for positive outcomes on challenges will be consistent over the two years. All our QA challenges are escalated to service manager level.

### **7.7 Challenges by Category (see Appendix A)**

7.8 Once again the IRO's challenged on a wide spectrum of categories (118 in total). The 2 most popular categories were actions outstanding from the previous review & no pre meeting report which was the same as last year's findings. Appropriate and effective challenge is constantly reviewed and given in supervision and team meetings. IRO's also highlight areas to improve in QA audit actions plans.

7.9 The IRO's report that 63% of the pre meeting reports were of a good quality. Only 3% were poor. Last year IRO's found almost 90% of the PMR's were of a high standard. This would be the impact of better and more consistent auditing as well. 99% of meetings had pre meeting reports. 11% of the reports audited were not signed off by a TM before the review. This has increased as we now only report if it has been signed off before the review meeting. Within the audit IRO's will offer some narrative on their findings for e.g. On one audit the IRO commented,

*"A Good PMR. The pre meeting report provided up to date information, there is limited information on the Child Young person section and this could go into more detail. This may potentially be necessary given the child's age and the progression through to adulthood which will be starting*

*to gather momentum over the next couple of years. However the report is fit for purpose and informs the general progress the child is making.”*

7.10 IRO’s report a slight increase in the quality of Personal Education Plans for our CLA population from 71% to 78 % this year. 17% were poor and needed updating. Good education provision has gone up from 70 to 76%. Inadequate had reduced from 3% to 2%.

7.11 Good quality care plans remained consistent over the 2 years at 80%. Poor quality care plans had increased from 10% to 14%. 81% of care plans were supported by a through needs assessment. This has seen a significant improvement. Drift and delay in the implementation of an element of the care plan still remained very low at 1% of all cases audited. Once again IROs will offer some narrative on the quality of the plan within the audit for e.g.

*The IRO commented, “A Good care plan. The care plan completed in April does acknowledge the salient points and in some depth and outlines what is being done about them.”*

7.12 91% of all audits evidenced the voice of the child in the assessment, plan and review process. This was a 10% improvement from last year’s findings. Viewpoint performance was 47% on eligible reviews. This was a 4% increase from last year’s report. IRO’s once again report strong performance in parental inclusion of 68%. This is again an increase of almost 10%. On a recent audit the IRO commented;

*“Mum is included in planning and attends the CLA reviews, the child does not complete viewpoint but does write letters to the CLA review process to outline her views and wishes. The child has occasionally attended her review if she isn't at school. On recordings her views are noted down so her voice does come through the case file and care planning processes.”*

7.13 IRO’s continue to report 91% good health provision. 80% Health assessments were on time. Last year this was 86% so slight reduction. 13% assessments overdue, last year it was 9%. 46% did not have health action plans/ assessments on file. 11% of dental assessments are overdue. This has also gone up from 6% last year. These findings show slight reduction in the QA health performance for our CLA.

**7.14 IRO outcomes for the 407 audits completed as follows:**

- IRO’s found 14% Outstanding, which was a 15% reduction from last year’s figure of 29%.
- 68% Good, which has gone up from 58% last year.

- 17% Needs improvement, which is an increase from 12% last year.
- 4 of the 407 audits led to a challenge.

The IRO's continued to identify and present detailed actions required for all of the Needs Improvement outcomes within the summary section of the audit for e.g.

#### ***Actions required***

*For future CLA reviews, single child assessment pre-meeting reports need to be completed in line with the agreed protocol.*

*Health Plan needs uploading to civica from the Health Assessment that took place in December 2016.*

*Care Plan needs to be updated to include Triple Planning and the young person's needs as an asylum seeking young person. Whether he will remain S.20 or if Care Proceedings are to be initiated is yet to be clarified by CSC management and this needs detailing within his Care Plan.*

*PEP needs to be updated /revised so that it is fit for purpose. Social Worker can liaise with the Virtual School who can provide advice and support with this.*

### **8.Training & Development**

8.1 The Bradford Safeguarding & Reviewing Unit held a joint training event on 09.11.2016 on the Signs of Safety Framework.

8.2 Bradford Childrens services are committed to the implementation and use of the signs and safety assessment and planning framework for our social work intervention and practice from case commencement and closure. At its simplest this framework can be understood as containing the 4 main domains: What are we worried about? What's working well? What needs to happen? Where are we on a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 means that there is enough safety of the child for protection authorities to close the case and 0 means it is certain that the child will suffer from some form of abuse or harm.

8.3 The joint development day had a very detailed agenda looking specifically at our core business in the style of the signs of safety framework. We did a SWOT style case mapping exercise and a plan of what

we felt needs to happen for the benefit of the service which included the following work plan:

- Establish the current Standards of Practice document and hold people to account for that.
- Communicate about QA and make sure it's understood by Team Managers and Social Workers.
- IRO, Co-ordinators and Managers to attend Social Work/Team Manager forums.
- What do signs of safety mean? Address what practical changes need to be addressed in meetings.
- Find out if other authorities are further ahead in Signs of Safety, especially in CLA Reviews.

8.4 IRO's have undertaken the mandatory 2 days in house Signs of Safety Training & will continue to attend the Practice lead workshops.

8.5 IRO's also attended the Regional IRO Annual Conference in Sheffield on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016. This year the agenda included workshops on working with unaccompanied asylum seeking children, deprivation of liberty and a presentation by principal social worker and adviser to the Cabinet Isabel Trowler. There was healthy discussion around the future role of the IRO and power to innovate. It was agreed that IRO's are a valuable resource to local authorities given their wide range of skills and experience.

## **9. Summary**

9.1 There has been a significant increase in the total number of our children looked after population. In this respect Bradford is following the national picture of increased demand. However it is important to also report that our numbers are significantly higher than the overall national picture for both children coming into care and the slowdown in children exiting care. During this financial year our numbers peaked in February 2017 at 935.

9.2 We have seen a 16% increase in children becoming looked after and a 15% decrease in the number of children leaving care. We have seen a 21% increase in children subject to ICO which indicates an increase in proceedings. Adoptions decreased from 73 to 42. SGO decreased from 42 to 34. The pattern of more coming in and clearly staying longer in care has inflated our numbers. The increase in full care orders and children remaining longer in care is due to a reduction of SGO as the final order in

the initial proceedings, the slight increase in PWP, increased court time scales, fewer placement orders and delays in discharging the care order where appropriate.

9.3 Our performance for reviews being held on time and participation of our children within their reviews has once again improved. IRO's have shown great strength, hard work, dedication and good organisation skills to ensure that this has been achieved during a period of increased demand, changes in personnel and reduced admin support for preparing minutes.

9.4 IRO's completed 407 Quality Assurance Audits of which 18% were outstanding, 68% were good and 17% assessed as requiring improvements. IRO's presented clear action plans for key teams to address on the needs improvement audits. We have found the key teams to be very proactive in addressing those action points.

9.5 Separate to the audits the IRO's have also issued 78 Quality Assurance challenges for poor standards of practice and drift and delay. These challenges covered 118 separate categories as detailed in the report. We successfully managed to achieve team manager responses to all the challenges with an improved 67% performance. The IRO's achieved resolution for over 90% of these challenges.

9.6 The IRO's also completed 44 acknowledgements of good practice. We have found this to have gone down very well with both key teams and senior management. The process identified exceptional piece of work and role model practitioners.

9.7 Our Quality Assurance findings were shared with the performance management group with individual breakdowns for the different service areas. This allowed service managers to see how IRO's perceived the quality of social work in their pod and also compare to other teams.

## **10 Key Priorities 2017/2018**

10.1 Bradford's IRO's are committed to developing the use of the Signs of Safety framework in the reviews of our looked after children. The aim is to contribute to the wider service plan of making Bradford a lead authority in embedding Signs of Safety in every aspect of children services work.

10.2 To continue the high performance of ensuring CLA review meetings take place within the appropriate timescales against the backdrop of increased CLA population. This will include the production and distribution of our minutes within our agreed standards of practice.

10.3 To focus on the wishes and feelings of the children and young people and make them central to the care planning for their future. To use the Signs of Safety model to ensure that all possibilities within the family network has been explored when planning for our children.

10.4 IRO's will continue to complete Quality Assurance audits, challenge and good practice to ensure that regular information on our strengths, poor practice and areas to improve is fed back to the key teams who deliver our front-line social work service. The audits will encourage and identify good learning to be shared alongside key areas to improve service development. Annual and 6 monthly quality assurance reports will be produced and shared with the senior management performance group.

10.5 Bradford's IRO's will continue to focus on children who go missing from care to ensure every effort is being made to keep them safe and address issues that cause them to run away.

10.6 The IRO manager will continue their involvement with the Regional and National IRO managers groups to ensure Bradford can benefit from innovative practice across the region and contribute to service development.

10.7 To engage with advocacy arrangements made for our children looked after to ensure that their views are effectively communicated at the reviews that the IRO's chair.

10.8 IRO's will benefit from having access to our licensed Research in Practice online library which consists of research, case studies, webinars, serious case review learning etc. This will enable IRO's to draw on robust information on best practice to produce the best outcomes for our children.

10.9 The Reviewing service will continue to contribute to the on-going challenge panels on placement suitability and appropriate legal status for our children looked after.

## **11. Addendum & Update**

### **CLA Data Findings 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2017 to 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2017**

11.1 By 01<sup>st</sup> December 2017 the total number of children looked after in Bradford was 968 which is a 4% increase from last year. Our CLA population has gone up by 41 since April 2017. We still have more boys than girls and the majority of Bradford's children still fall into the 10-15 age range. Children in this age range continue to make up 40% of our CLA population.

11.2 Children from White Ethnicity background still make up the majority of Bradford's CLA population. The number has gone down from 646 last year to 612 by 01/12/17. Children recorded as being from Other Ethnicities increased from 45 to 84. The majority of these children will be from Eastern Europe and include Under Age Asylum Seeking Children as well. This represents the changes and diversity we have seen in Bradford's population over the last 5 years. The number of children from South Asian background has remained steady going from 92 in April to 99 in November 2017.

11.3 The number of children subject to full care order has increased from 611 in November last year to 662 by 01.12.17. Children subject to interim care order increased from 137 in April 2017 to 164 by 01<sup>st</sup> December 2017. This represents a 20% increase in live proceedings cases over the 9 month period 01/04/17 to 30/11/17. The national picture shows a 13% annual increase in new proceedings applications since 2015. In Bradford there was a dip in 2015/16 but a 29% increase for new proceedings applications in 2016/17. Looking at the current number of live proceedings, Bradford should see a 10% reduction by the end of the financial year.

11.4 President of the UK High Court, Family Division Sir James Munby has said that the increase in new proceedings is primarily down to the following reasons;

- i) Increasing amounts of abuse or neglect.
- ii) Local Authorities becoming more adept at identifying abuse or neglect.
- iii) LA lowering their threshold for intervention

11.5 Children accommodated under a section 20 agreement have actually gone down from 105 in April to 95 by 01<sup>st</sup> December 2017. As mentioned in the main body of the report work has been undertaken around achieving the appropriate legal status for Bradford's CLA. The number of children subject to placement orders has remained relatively constant going from 42 in April to 45 by 01<sup>st</sup> December 2017. It once again shows the relatively low number of children with Adoption plans compared to previous years as the

department and courts focus on meeting the children's needs within the family network.

11.6 The number of children placed within a connected person's placement increased from 221 in April 2017 to 239. Over 20% of these placements were once again outside of Bradford showing Bradford's commitments in keeping children within their family network where possible. The majority of Bradford's children are still placed with Bradford foster carers with this going up from 413 to 438 over the 9 month period. Children subject to secure accommodation still remains relatively low at 2. Children living at home under a placement with parent's agreement increased from 112 to 121. This shows a continuation of court's preference in making assessment at home directions as already mentioned in the main report. Children living under such agreements now make up 13% of Bradford's CLA population. The number of children placed for adoption has remained constant at 21. This is however a further reduction in adoptions given the overall increase in Bradford CLA population.

11.7 The main category of need is still abuse and neglect which consistently accounts for 88% of Bradford CLA population.

11.8 The difference between the number of children becoming looked after and ceasing care actually decreased by 01.12.2017. Over the 9 months 248 children became looked after and 204 children exited care. Last year the difference between the 2 was 81 so it is encouraging to see this now reduced to 44.

11.9 In Bradford 21 children were adopted between 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2017 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017. This accounted for only 6% of the 204 children that ceased care. Last year adoption accounted for 15% of the 281 children that exited care. 67 of the 204 children returned home to live with either parents or a relative. This has consistently been around 33% of the total number leaving care. The number of SGO's decreased from 24 in 2016 to only 18 by 01.12.2017. This once again shows reluctance on behalf of the courts to agree SGO for any new or untested placements within the initial proceedings. Social workers are being asked to return within 6 to 12 months with applications for SGO where appropriate.

11.10 The service is once again very proud to present continued performance of 98% review meetings being held on time and 98% participation of children within their review process. Children who attended meetings and spoke for themselves continue to contribute to 45% of total participation.



## **Additional Data set**

11.11 Bradford's children looked after numbers per 10,000 populations actually went down slightly from 67.4 to 66.

11.12 The number of children who returned home remained consistent at 67.

11.13 Placement stability where children remained in the same placement for 2 or more years also remained consistent at 70%.

11.14 The number of Under-Age Asylum Seeker children remained at 16.

11.15 The number of Bradford's children placed in, out of authority residential placements remained consistent at 3% but the number of children placed in out of authority foster care placement reduced from 7% to 3.4%. Out of authority residential placements are usually sought to meet specialist needs.

## **12. Quality Assurance 01.04.2017 - 31.09.2017**

12.1 The service is happy to report QA performance of 29 challenges, 40 good practice acknowledgements and 239 audits completed over the six-month period. If we compare this to the same 6 month period last year, we have done 4 less Challenges, 27 more good practice and 91 more audits which represents a clear overall improved performance.

12.2 Since last year the frontline social work service has gone through a restructure where the CLA and leaving care teams have merged to form the new Through Care Service. With these changes comparative analysis on historical data by key team for those teams was no longer possible.

12.3 A total of 12 challenges were issued across LAC, Leaving Care & the new Through Care teams. This accounted for 41% of all the challenges issued. Last year we issued 14 challengers for the same teams which accounted for 42% of all the challenges issued. This shows a consistency of challenges issued across these teams by the IRO's over the same period. 169 audits were completed across these teams which is 79 more than last year.

12.4 We have seen a drop in the performance of challenge responses being done within timescales. This has gone down from 79% to 59% this year. It is a clear indication that certain team managers need to improve on responding to challenges issued. Given we have not seen an increase in challenges issued questions arise as to why team managers have struggled this year. It is also promising to see some managers achieve 100% performance on this.

12.5 The IRO's report continued good performance of 90% in achieving resolution for all the challenges issued. The other remaining 10% would be challenges that are still open or that an IRO did not achieve a satisfactory resolution but did not feel the need to escalate it any further. No challenge has been escalated to the head of service level or above. We continue to inform service managers of all challenges issued.

12.6 Within the 29 challenges the IRO's identified 73 separate categories of poor practice. Last year within the 33 challenges the IRO's highlighted 88 categories. The joint top categories for challenge were no pre-meeting report and inadequate or poor preparation for review. Last year the most prevalent category was actions outstanding from the previous review. This has gone down from being challenged 12 to just 4 occasions this year. QA challenges within the care plan category went down from 16 to 11 this year.

12.7 This year has seen a significant increase in good practice QA's in line with the suggestion from the Bradford corporate parenting panel in January 2017. Our good practice QA's have been shared and acknowledged with key teams' right through to their senior management. These have been very useful in identifying good pieces of work and role model practitioners. Social workers are very happy to receive them as they represent an effective form of appreciation.

12.8 Within the 40 good practice acknowledgements the IRO's identified that we are strong in providing good quality pre-meeting reports, good preparation for reviews and evidencing good communication with families.

12.9 Out of the 239 audits completed we report 90% pre meeting reports are of good quality. This has been consistent since we started our audits. On 9 occasions we did not receive a report and on 13 occasions the report was of a poor quality. On 31 occasions the report was not signed off by the team manager before the meeting. This represents 13% of the audits.

12.10 The IRO's audited that 26% of the 239 care plans/pathway plans needed updating and they were of a poor quality. This has gone up significantly from 9% last year. Good quality care plans have gone down from 86% to 69%. There has also been a slight dip in the quality of the pathway plans audited. The IRO manager presented a more detailed report on these inadequate care plans at the Assistant Directors performance clinic in November 2017. Findings with specific areas to improve were shared and taken on board by the wider management team.

12.11 The voice of the child was evident in 85% of the cases audited and over 90% had good health provision.

12.12 Bradford's IRO outcomes for the 239 audits done over this 6 month are 14% outstanding, 64% good and 21% needs improvement. We have seen a slight increase in the number of outstanding audits but also the same increase in the number that require improvement. The number of good cases audited has been relatively consistent. A breakdown of these outcomes by service, team and allocated worker has already been shared at the management performance clinic. This enables the respective service managers to acknowledge areas of strength and address areas of improvements with their managers and social workers.

Imran Cheema

IRO manager 12.12.2017

## Appendix A

<b>Action from the last review - Non completion of decisions</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Action from the last review - Outstanding tasks</b>	<b>6</b>
Assessments - No up to date/poor quality single child assessment	4
Care Plan - Dispute in Care Plan	1
Care Plan - Drift/delay in the implementation of the child's Care Plan	5
Care Plan - Failure to implement a significant element of the child's Care Plan	2
Care Plan - No Care Plan	2
Care Plan - No up to date/poor quality Care Plan	4
Care Plan - No up to date/poor quality Pathway Plan	1
Care Plan - None production of a Care Plan or a Pathway Plan that is not supported by a thorough needs assessment	5
Case Management - Concern around professional practice	3
Case Management - Failure to notify the IRO of potential significant changes to the child's care plan	2
Case Management - Inadequate or poor preparation for review	4
Case Management - No evidence of children being seen alone	3
Case Management - SW visits not undertaken	2
<b>Drift &amp; Delay - Failure to meet timescales</b>	<b>6</b>
Education - Inadequate education provision	3
Education - No up to date/poor quality PEP	3
Family Links - Poor communication	1
Health - Health Assessment over due	1
Health - Inadequate health provision	2
Health - No health action plan in place	2
Participation - Parents not included	6
Placed with Parents - Breach of PWP agreement	1
<b>Placed with Parents - PWP not signed by GSM</b>	<b>6</b>
Placement - Concerns around the suitability of the placement to meet the child's needs	5
Placement - No up to date or poor quality sharing of information	1
Placement - Placement does not meet child's needs	2
Placement - Poor placement stability	1
Placement - Poor standard of care & choice of placement	2
<b>Pre-meeting Report - No PMR</b>	<b>9</b>
Pre-meeting Report - Poor Quality PRM	6
Pre-meeting Report - Pre-meeting Report not signed off by Team Manager	5
Safeguarding - Breach of safe guarding plans & advice	1
Safeguarding - Lack of information sharing	1
Safeguarding - Missing protocol not adhered to	2
Safeguarding - Safeguarding concerns	3