

Kent County Council
Corporate Parenting Select Committee

Independent Review Officer Service Annual Management Report
2013/2014

Summary

The report provides an account of the performance of Kent County Council's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service for children and young people in care during the year 2013/2014 (1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014).

- IROs completed 4,685 quality assurance audits over the year, out of 5,220 reviews chaired; a 90% completion rate.
- IRO caseloads have been steadily reducing, although this trend needs to continue in order to enable them to be as effective as possible in their case oversight role.
- There has been some improvement in the participation of children and young people in care at their reviews. Further work is required to strengthen their participation and involvement.
- IRO activity data shows that there has been a drop in the amount of time IROs spend seeing children between reviews.
- The proportion of review meetings chaired within statutory timescales remains high (97.2%).
- The IRO service receives a late notification of children coming into care in approximately 20% of cases.
- There has been an ongoing improvement in performance in care planning. For example, in Q3 of 2012/13 65.8% of plans reached a "satisfactory" level or higher; this improved to 75.4% in Q4 of 2012/13, and to 74.8%, 78% and 79.9% in Quarters 1, 2, 3 respectively in 2013/14.
- There has been a significant drop in the proportion of social worker's reports for the review graded as "satisfactory" or better since the previous quarter (that is, from Q3 to Q4 of 2014). A key factor remains the timeliness of these reports being completed and provided to the IRO before the review.

- Only 15% of children and young people in care reported in questionnaires that they knew what the Pledge was.
- Around half of all the children and young people in care in Kent who responded to surveys said that they did not receive a copy of their care plan.
- 6% of children and young people in care in Kent who responded to the “leaving care survey” said they found it difficult to receive the support and help they needed after leaving care.
- Although carers were generally confident about IROs’ practice and quality of service, they identified the following areas for improvement:
 - Having a better understanding of the role of IROs
 - having IROs contact numbers and being able to contact them in between reviews
 - keeping the same IRO for the child in care
 - cutting the length of reviews.
- Overall, comments from social workers and other professionals indicate that they find the IRO service to be very responsive and that it demonstrates sufficient case oversight.
- Parents are generally positive about the IRO service. However, they would like to receive reviews’ minutes on time, have greater involvement in their child’s review and discuss their concerns with the IRO before the review meeting.