



# **Northamptonshire** Children's Trust

## **Independent Reviewing Officer Service - Annual Report 2022/2023**



### **Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service** **Northamptonshire Children's Trust**

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## Introduction

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report is a requirement set out in the IRO Handbook (2010). It is directed that the report should be written in a format which is easily accessible to children and young people who live in care.

This report contains a summary of work completed by Northamptonshire Children's Trust's (NCT) Independent Reviewing Officer service between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

It is the duty of NCT, commissioned by the respective unitary Authorities (North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils) to act as corporate parents for all our Children in Care and, as any good parent, it is our duty to ensure that our children and young people are safe, healthy, supported to do well in education, employment & training and are helped to transition smoothly into adulthood.

NCT's vision is **Children, Young People and Families are at the heart of all we do, in every action we take and every decision we make.** Our commitment, which was co-produced with children and young people is:

***'What we do today affects your tomorrow, we promise to walk side-by-side with you.'***

## The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer

The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for a child or young person in the care of a Local Authority is a legal requirement under s.118 of the Adoption and Children Act (2002).

The role of the IRO is set out in Care Planning Regulations and Guidance (2010) and Children Act (1989). The Children and Young Persons Act (2008) extended the remit

of IROs from a focus on chairing reviews to reporting on Local Authority's performance in respect of the wider case management of children's Care Plans.

Detailed guidance and regulations for Independent Reviewing Officers and Local Authorities was published in 2010 as the 'IRO Handbook'. In this, it states that the primary role 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'.

A guide to help children and young people to understand the role of the IRO has been developed and can be found at the following link:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/221761/young\\_20peoples\\_20guide\\_20to\\_20the\\_20independent\\_20reviewing\\_20officers\\_20handbook.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221761/young_20peoples_20guide_20to_20the_20independent_20reviewing_20officers_20handbook.pdf)

In this guide it states that: -

- *The main job of the IRO is to make sure that your care plan meets your needs.*
- *They will do this by first, chairing your review, second, by letting you have your own say in your review and third, by following up to make sure that people actually do what they agreed to do.*

Children and young people are reminded that Children in Care Review belong to the young person, and it is essential that the IRO knows how and what they feel.

Furthermore, the IRO Handbook states that IROs must: -

- promote the voice of the child;
- ensure that plans are based on a full and proper assessment of each child's needs;
- make sure that each child knows how they can get hold of an Advocate;
- act as a safeguard against children staying in care longer than necessary, or not getting the services they need, because of a lack of good planning;

- listen to children and see that they understand any changes to their Care Plan and
- make sure that the Local Authority is a good “corporate parent” to children in care

## The IRO Service

The IRO Service is part of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service (SQAS) within Northamptonshire Children’s Trust. The service comprises of 19 IROs (16 full-time, 3 part-time) 84% is female, and 26% are global majority identity. The service is managed with the support of an Assistant Director, Strategic Manager and two IRO Service Managers; all of whom are permanent members of the service. There is an extensive range of experience in the team, with IROs who have experience in youth justice, fostering, adoption, kinship fostering, children in care, safeguarding (child protection), mental health, separated children (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children - UASC), children with disabilities, substance misuse services and CAFCASS. Five IROs are designated Signs of Safety champions. The service continues to be supported by a dedicated business support team, without which, the service would struggle to function effectively.

The IRO Service is a separate service to the Child Protection Chair Service, which is supported by 10 Child Protection Chairs (CPC’s) and a Service Manager. Having a separate service enables IROs to focus solely on the needs of our children and young people who are in care and ensure they receive good quality services in line with the IRO Handbook and Care Planning Regulations. Whilst CPC and IRO Services are separate, some officers are recruited as joint IROs and CPC’s, enabling services to be flexible to meet the needs and demands placed on either service area.

The IRO Service, whilst employed by NCT, is an independent service whose functions include ensuring that NCT meets the needs of Children in Care, monitoring the performance of the Trust’s function as a corporate parent and to identify areas of

practice that require improvement. As a service, we take the view that having a positive, collaborative working relationship approach, whilst remaining a critical friend to our colleagues, is more effective to work towards best outcomes for our children and young people. The service also recognises the importance of acknowledging and highlighting good practice that Social Workers evidence and the positive impact this has on children. IROs regularly praise Social Workers, share good practice, and bring positive work to the attention of senior leaders, including the Chief Executive of the Trust, who acknowledges each contact personally.

### **IRO caseload (number of children and young people they should work with)**

1. The IRO handbook recommends a caseload between 50 to 70 children and young people per IRO. Ofsted (2013), *Independent reviewing officers: taking up the challenge?* A thematic inspection of IRO services states 'although a lower caseload was not a guarantee of high-quality work, IRO input was likely to be more effective where caseloads were manageable'
2. The number of cases held by individual IROs has varied and has, at times, risen above 80 cases. Individual caseloads have ranged from 40 (part-time staff) to 84 cases per IRO during the reporting period. At the end of the reporting period (31<sup>st</sup> March 2022) the average caseload was 71; however, this included the 2 Service Managers managing small caseloads due to the increasing numbers of children coming into care and IRO absence (long-term sickness and maternity leave). This resulted in IROs also having to cover for colleagues, and this is not reflected in the average caseload data.
3. Size of caseload does not always provide an accurate picture of the volume of work for an individual IRO. It does not account for additional reviews due to placement breakdown or disruption, additional visits to children - prior to, or between reviews, children in out-of-county placements or large sibling groups.

## Progress made April 2022 to Mar 2023

The IRO Service continues to be a permanent staff group. This year saw some changes in the staff group, with four new IROs joining the service because IROs retired, went on maternity leave, moved to an Auditor role and creation of new post from existing hours using hours 'released' when IRO's chose to reduce hours and work part-time. The team has remained stable, with 50% of the team engaged in their IRO role for more than 5 years and 5 IROs with over 8 years' service. This has resulted in our children and young people benefitting from someone consistent in their life, and with whom they can build a positive, stable relationship. This is vital at a time when some children in care have experienced higher than desirable changes of Social Worker. The IRO has been able to be the constant and therefore able to ensure that the child's assessed needs are met and regularly revisited as part of the care planning and review process.

The last year has seen the IRO service being able to fully return to in-person reviews, following the conclusion of Covid concerns. IROs comment that they continue to value this position and they are able to visit children and young people in their homes and engage with them in-person. Some young people have continued to request that visits take place virtually, as they find this way of communicating more engaging and less formal; similarly, reviews now benefit from learning gained during Covid to enable i.e. face to face, virtual and hybrid meetings, as agreed / directed by the young person. As a service we have agreed that all first and second reviews are ideally in person and face to face in order to start to build that important relationship with the children and young people.

IROs rightly believe that active participation of children and young people in their review is critical. IROs continue to prioritise and support children and young people to share their views and be part of their review in a range of ways - from attending face-to-face or virtually, writing their views for their review, having an Advocate support them to share their wishes and feelings, and supporting children to chair their own reviews.

IROs have made effective use of a range of approaches to engage with young people, using various IT platforms. In the last year there was a 15% increase to 54% of children and young people attending their review compared to last year. Overall, 82% of children and young people were able to either attend or share their views with the IRO prior to, or at their review enabling the young person's voice to be more clearly heard and enabling them to actively partake in the decision-making about their life

IROs continue to work closely with CAFCASS, holding 2 joint meetings / workshops last year. Joint IRO / CAFCASS Guardian workshops allow both services to develop good practice and to share concerns relating to cases, consider Family Proceedings Court practice and Deprivation of Liberty Orders (DOLS) and to share developments within services. IROs continue to attend regional IRO seminars to develop their practice and the service provided to children and young people through learning from other authorities.

IROs continue to write their Chair's report directly to the child or young person - subject to the young person's age and understanding and this includes a summary letter to all children / young people regarding their review meeting. The young person has a choice of receiving the full report, summary letter, or both. Over the last year we have had 1½ service development days and writing to the child has been discussed and good practice shared to further progress this practice and to act as role models across the Trust. (See appendix A).

IROs continue to raise formal and informal escalations on individual cases when there is a significant impact for a child. Alongside the daily report, the service creates a quarterly report highlighting team performance and themes raised. Key findings from this process are shared with senior managers in a quarterly report to the Quality Assurance Board. The report is available to operational Service Managers and themes are addressed in regular Service Managers' meetings, the latter is chaired by IRO Service Managers; these meetings have become better attended and more focussed during the last year.



Children and young people have fed back to IROs that they continue to find having one-page profiles (see appendix B) beneficial and this assists in making the first meeting more informal. IROs continue to update and send their one-page profiles to children and young people prior to their first review and new IROs are required to complete their profile upon appointment.

### **Examples of challenges by IROs: -**

- An IRO raised concerns about the quality, safety, and cleanliness of a placement and this resulted in 5 young people being moved into appropriate accommodation.
- When a young person had photos taken and they were published in the local paper or on the school website, they put an emoji over her face as a standard risk averse response for children who are in care rather than a risk managed approach which the IRO was able to support. The IRO then agreed to advocate that her face be shown - which was in line with her views and wishes.
- IROs attendance at final care planning meetings and challenge to the proposed plan where the IRO has assessed this to not be in the best interests of the child/children - for example, a plan for 4 siblings was to be 2 separate plans: adoption for the younger siblings and long-term fostering for the older siblings. Following challenge, this was changed to a plan of long-term fostering for all 4 children, where very regular family time could be supported into their futures.
- IRO supported 2 young brothers to present their concerns regarding their sleeping space and the need for an urgent extension (previously agreed, but not actioned) to the Chief Executive and the Director of Children's Social Care. An extension to this property is now progressing.
- IRO raised concerns regarding a CPR (Child's Permanency Report) for a child where there had been no management oversight or quality assurance checks and the work was of an unacceptable level - this has been addressed and now reflects the child's history.
- IRO raised concerns regarding a lack of school place for a young person living out-of-county. As the IRO and Social Worker did not get a response through the escalation process, the IRO made a formal complaint using the Local Authority's complaint's process where the young person was placed, and this resulted in instant resolution of the issue.

**Example of compliments for IROs:** The work and support of IRO's has been appreciated by many children and young people, parents, carers, and professionals.

Please see below for some examples of this: -

Foster carers shared... The IRO was absolutely superb and a key driver in ensuring A and B's voice was heard. It would be excellent to have him involved again.

Fostering Social Worker shared... We just wanted to say thank you for all your support. You are excellent at coordinating these meetings, ensuring clear actions and accountabilities are taken.

**Parent shared..** *"I just want to say thank you to you and A for everything your kind words and support.. I know your jobs not easy just like social services but I want you guys to know I appreciate what you all do and very lucky to have had two very supportive people. It helped me see what is right and the importance of parenting and help me see I am a great mum people can change and I'm not worthless i am strong and to know my kids will grow up with happy memories makes me happy. So thank you both very much".*

**Parent shared..** *"Thank you so much i want you to know you have been a very active and positive part in my struggles as a parent I'm really grateful for your help guidance and I have learned so much about myself it's daunting but I'm glad I want you to know you are amazing at your job you will be missed also sorry if I've been hard work I never meant to be it's my of trying to say thank you for everything you have done for me and my family on after what happens next you deserve our gratitude and more there are not many people like you who are open to understanding You will be missed and remembered Thank you so much for everything"* 😊

Foster carer shared this after the review about the IRO... I just wanted to write a few lines to praise her as we thought she was really professional and a great advocate for our children. She was no nonsense and was not worried about talking about the difficult subjects that needed discussing, doing it in a caring but respectful way. It was a pleasure working with her and we hope to again, people are always to ready to complain so I wanted to praise instead.

Practice manager shared: She has gone above and beyond in her role as IRO with one of our families. She has been available when the carer has called and been reassuring to her. She has been extremely supportive of the family who sing her praises highly.



SSW shared ...she was talking with the young person B. And she talked about several social workers and other professionals in her life since she and her siblings were subject to care proceedings in 2015-16. B named the IRO as the only professional who really shows an interest in her life, takes time to listen to her views and try to support her. I also have observed the same during reviews where the IRO's approach was child centred and encouraging the YP to voice her views. The IRO has also emailed us to chase the actions as part for planning for next review. The organisation, communication and attention to detail are few skills to mention. There was always response the same day when the IRO was copied into emails and prioritised attending a professional's meeting organised at short notice.

**Family time supervisor...**Just a short note to say that I have just read the CIC notes you put on FB's Care First observations and, I have to say, it is one of the BEST I have ever read! I am sure that people are quick enough to complain about things but not many speak up to say a "Well done" do they? I think its beautifully written, for FB to read when he is older if he chooses to – very sensitive to his situation and careful consideration on the way it was written in the style of "writing to the child" - its also informative for other professionals involved in this child's life. So, a big Thank You from little old me 😊 tell your Boss I said so too

A compliment from an adoptive placement breakdown parent where there has been a really challenging journey. *Just wanting to say thanks again for all your hard work and keeping him, ooh making sure he's become the lovely young wonderful lad that he has. Thanks for being there for him and for us, we've met very few of those people on our adoption journey and we really really appreciate it. Take care Bye bye*

## From April 2022 – March 2023, 3036 Children in Care reviews took place:

The timeliness of the first Children in Care review in 2022/23 was 83%. Delays occurred as result of IROs changing dates in the best interest of young people, following changes of Social Workers, late notification of children entering care, and, in some cases, unavoidable delay caused by IRO sickness absence. The percentage of second reviews on time was 88% and subsequent reviews was 93%. Some reviews were out-of-timescales through IRO sickness, and it was not considered in the best interests of the young person to allocate to another IRO to meet performance targets. Other reasons include changes of Social Workers, delaying reviews to enable a Social Worker to attend Court, to enable parental attendance and, in some cases, so that young people could attend the review.

The table below show timeliness of completion for IRO decisions and recommendations reports for year ending March 2023. The figure is taken from the reporting system. The 'actual' figure relates to data which has been corrected to consider human data entry errors which, in the report, shows as 'missing' and is recorded by the data entry system as being out-of-timescale. Unfortunately, this year the 95% target for chair reports was not achieved as result of unexpected long-term sickness and maternity leave.

Report type (Target 95%)	Reported Figure	Actual Figure
Decisions	83%	96%
Chair's Review Report	78%	86%

The following priorities were highlighted in the 2022 / 23 IRO Annual Report (**What we said / What we did**): -

- Ensure that the voice of the child / young person continues to be central to care planning for all our young people and is supported and evidenced by greater use of the Mind of My Own App to record and represent their wishes and views for children in care reviews.
  - IROs received training on the use of the Mind of my Own App and IROs have encouraged young people to use the App to provide feedback and their views and wishes for their reviews. Many of the children and young people have however shared that they are not happy to download and use this and prefer to talk with their IRO and use feedback forms.
- Ensure the Care Plan / Pathway Plan holistically explores and identifies each child and young person's needs, particularly focusing on children and young people's cultural and diversity needs.

- IROs have attended cultural competence training and have also taken part in bespoke training focussing on the role of the IRO and CP Chairs; this training included a focus on care planning and diversity.
  - There are now 2 equality influencers in the IRO service.
  - Team meetings now have a monthly focussed discussion regarding any individual needs to be considered in care and pathway planning, with a specific focus on equality and diversity.
- Continue to develop our practice of writing reports and summary letters to children and young people to ensure this becomes consistent across the service.
    - This has been consistently implemented across the service, including with new IROs who have joined the team.
    - An IRO has developed a training course about “Writing to the Child” with the Learning and Development team and some IROs have been able to attend this for their development.
- Work with our colleagues in NCT by facilitating monthly Service Managers’ meetings, with the aim of sharing good practice and identifying areas of concern so we can develop joint plans to address these.
    - This has been progressed and these meetings now take place bi-monthly. There has been good attendance across the Children’s Trust to work together at this level.
- Progress monthly quality assurance meetings to review themes identified through escalations and standing team agenda items regarding policy, procedural, and practice concerns. This will be supported by developing action plans to address matters identified with peers in NCT.
    - This has been progressed as a standing agenda item in the Service Managers’ meetings and through bi-monthly meetings with the Children in Care Strategic Manager.
    - Service Improvement plans have been updated to address these issues.
    - This was an area reviewed in an IRO development day, where themes and concerns were identified which will inform the IRO service development plan.
- Support and encourage IROs to fully evidence the direct and indirect contact they have with children and young people and their families.
    - We continue to monitor this and have tried to support this through making changes to the Chair’s report; unfortunately, the IT system could

not support this change and we await the new system to be able to progress this further.

## Children in Care population

The number of children in care has continued to rise from 1185 in care at the end March 2022 compared to 1226 at the end of March 2023. (A more detailed breakdown is found at Appendix C).

## Priorities for 2023/24

As a service we have identified the following priorities for the year April 2023 to March 2024:

- Ensure children and young people's voices are heard by updating our consultation forms to make them more age-appropriate and accessible, whilst concurrently supporting them to use the Mind of My Own app. Further surveys to be undertaken by the Independent Advocates on themes to be agreed with the IROs and Children in Care Council.
- To continue to focus and improve evidencing our understanding of each child's unique diversity. Service Managers to undertake observations and case audits to assess context and substantive practice in this area.
- All IROs to attend Cultural Competence and Writing to the Child training.
- To develop the role of the link IRO with respective children's teams across the Trust and to build effective working relationships which will enhance the lives of all our children and young people. Services from across the trust will be invited to the IRO Team Meeting to share and develop our understanding of the full range of roles across the Children's Trust.
- To positively reflect upon our learning in our work with children and young people and use appreciative inquiries to facilitate this and further development days.
- To ensure IROs understand their role within the developing Child Exploitation framework.

- IROs to ensure that Care Plans identify the clear route to permanency by the second children in care review
- Where IROs identify a concern that has a significant impact on the Child/Young Person's Care Plan they will address these issues consistently using the dispute resolution process.

## Overview and Summary

The last year saw an increase in the number of children and young people coming into care. As a result, caseloads for IROs have remained over the recommended amount outlined in the IRO Handbook. IROs have continued to increase the number of in-person reviews and enabled young people to make an active choice if they prefer hybrid or virtual meetings. Performance this year has not been as consistent as we would have hoped for, but we have had significant illness and loss in the team, alongside the return to more face-to-face work – with associated time lost from travel-time.

The service continues to work in collaboration with NCT colleagues to acknowledge areas of good practice and highlight areas that require improvement. The service has welcomed four new IROs to the team in the last year. The service continues to benefit from having a stable and permanent workforce, who are committed to being the best advocates they can be for the children and young people in our care.

## Appendix A: Writing to the child examples:

Child in care review Summary provided to young child:

Hello A, My name is B(IRO) and I am your independent reviewing officer. At the time of writing this report you are nearly 5 months old and whilst I appreciate you are too young to understand the current circumstances and offer your views, wishes and feelings, I wanted to write this record should you wish to read this when you are older, in hope this record will support your understanding of the meeting and decisions agreed in your best interest. My role as your independent reviewing officer is to oversee your care plan and what I mean by care plan is a document that considers your safety and wellbeing, ensuring your needs are adequately met in the environment where you live, your health, education, identity and family time. Today is your second child in care review. A, I can confirm that your current care plan is a twin track plan and what I mean by a twin track plan is consideration for your longer term care needs to be met and for you to be cared for with your family or with connected other and if this option is not deemed a in ensuring your needs are consistently whilst ensuring your safely and wellbeing, as a last option a plan of adoption for you to be cared for outside of your family will be considered. A, you have a new social worker named C and she shared in the review that despite her best efforts she has not been able to consistently engage with your mum to complete the parenting assessment, and due to non engagement, the assessment is negative which means your social worker is not recommending a return of you to mums care at this time. Mum is understandably upset receiving this news and has shared in the meeting today that a number of personal circumstances have impacted her engagement. C and myself and have urged your mum to speak with her legal representative to seek an extension and to do this as a matter of importance for the court to consider. A, your mum has put forward your great maternal uncle to be assessed as a possibility to care for you long term. Your social worker is going to complete an assessment as part of parallel planning. C aims to have the initial viability screening assessment completed within the week and if positive this will progress to a more in-depth assessment called a Connected Person Assessment. In the review A, your foster carer proudly shared updates about your progress. Your foster carer (FC) often shares pictures of you on various outings and you have the most precious smile that lights up your face. FC explained that you are gaining weight steadily and that this has been supported with a change in milk which appear to have eased your symptoms of reflux. A you are now provided Kendamil milk and this replaced Cow and Gate, you take 5-6oz every bottle and you are having feeds every 4 hours. At the time of writing you are 6.7kilo. Your health visitor has completed your 4.5 month development review and you are meeting your age expected milestones, which is fantastic. FC has shared that in the last 3 months, you have accompanied them on various trips and outings such as visiting a new country of Scotland, going to Butlins and you enjoy going out in your pram in the community exploring, taking in your surrounding. FC described you are becoming more active and personable each day and that you are an absolute delight to care for. Next steps, in respect of your care plan A, is C will complete the assessment of your great maternal uncle and mum will explore if she can obtain an extension to engage with C as part of her assessment. Whilst all of the assessments are being undertaken, you will continue to be cared for by your foster carers who love and value you greatly. I have set another date to review your care plan for 6 months 26/06/2023. Your IRO

Dear

This was your first child in care review, following you becoming looked after. You left the hospital following your premature birth at 19 days old and moved straight to the care of J, following the granting of an Interim Care Order by the Court on the same day. An assessment of mummy is being completed to see if she is able to care for you in the future and given she has not put anyone else's names forward, twin tracking has been agreed. This means that in the future you will either return to mummy's care or permanence will be achieved for you by way of adoption. This decision is not taken lightly and your social worker will work with everyone to ensure the wise Judge in Court is given all the information to make a forever decision for you. social worker agreed to finalise your My Care Plan within 10 days of your review, that being 08/06/23 and this is to be shared with mummy and daddy on completion. I was pleased to hear you have settled well into J's care and your development is evident, which was agreed by everyone in your review including you mummy. A great photo was shared with everyone of you in your swimming costume, we all joked that by your next review in 3 months time you will have hopefully grown into it! I'm so looking forward to seeing your development over the next few months and I look forward to visiting you again before your next review on 08/08/23. Best wishes



## Appendix B: One-page profiles of 2 new IROs

Hi! My name is Nina Loyal.  
Here is some information about me...



### What makes me happy?

Helping others to have a good and happy life.  
Seeing people being treated fairly and with respect.  
Performing random acts of kindness whenever I can.  
Knowing that people I care about are doing well.  
Relaxing at home with absolutely no chores left to do!  
Eating chocolate and ice-cream (a little bit too much!)

### Things people like about me

I am always truthful, thoughtful and kind.  
People have told me that I am good at listening and helping.  
I speak up when I see that things are not right or unfair. I think that usually people need to know more about a situation so they can understand others better.  
I look at the whole story before having an opinion about something.

### I might feel sad when

People being negatively judged. For example because of their skin colour, language, heritage, ability, gender, mental health and other things about them or their situation.  
The people I care about are unhappy or unwell.  
Something unfair or unkind is happening.

### As an IRO, it is my job to make sure that :-

- your care plan meets your needs and is based on a proper assessment of these.
  - decisions taken are ones that are best for you, follow your care plan and respect your rights.
  - I know how you feel and what you want to happen.
  - you know how to get hold of an advocate
  - plans for you are made as quickly as possible so you can feel settled in your home.
  - everyone is doing what they should be and within the time agreed.
  - you feel able to attend your review meeting and be in charge of it with me if you are comfortable to.
- There is much more to what I do but I can tell you about that when we meet.

### I need a little help with

Hearing things well.  
To make things easier, I often wear hearing aids.  
It helps if people speak clearly and look at me when they are talking.  
It helps me to 'hear' more clearly if I see facial expressions and lip movements as well as the words being spoken.

I am really looking forward to meeting you  
and getting to know more about you 😊



**My name is Liz White. I am an IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer), and this is my 1-page profile!**



### **What makes me happy?**

Getting to know People and learning about their experiences

Listening to music and going to festivals

Watching films and Netflix series and Anime

Exercising, if I'm not eating chocolates and food

Knowing that I listen to the young people I work with, and support them the best I can



### **Things people like about me**

I am friendly, and easy to talk to

I am always kind to people

That I always do my best to help people

### **I might feel sad when**

When the young people I support are not happy, and feel that their voice is not being heard

### **I need a little help with**

Getting to know you, and your journey. How are you feeling about coming a child, young person in care?

Who are the people most important to you? and how they can support you

### **What IROs do – My job is to make sure that YOUR Care Plan meets your needs.**

These are **your** reviews, so it is very important that you make sure I know how you feel and what you would want to happen. This includes letting me or your social worker know who you want to come to your meeting and where you would like to have your meeting. It could be where you are living, your school, Virtual meeting, our office or somewhere else you feel comfortable, but it must be a private place where no-one else can hear us.

- ❖ Ideally you will attend your review if suitable.
- ❖ If you want to, I will help you to chair your review meeting, if you feel you don't want to, I can chair the meeting, or we can do it together
- ❖ I will make sure you have your own say in your review; and
- ❖ After the meeting I will do my best to make sure that people do what they agreed to do during the meeting.
- ❖

There is more to what I do, but I can tell you about that when we meet.

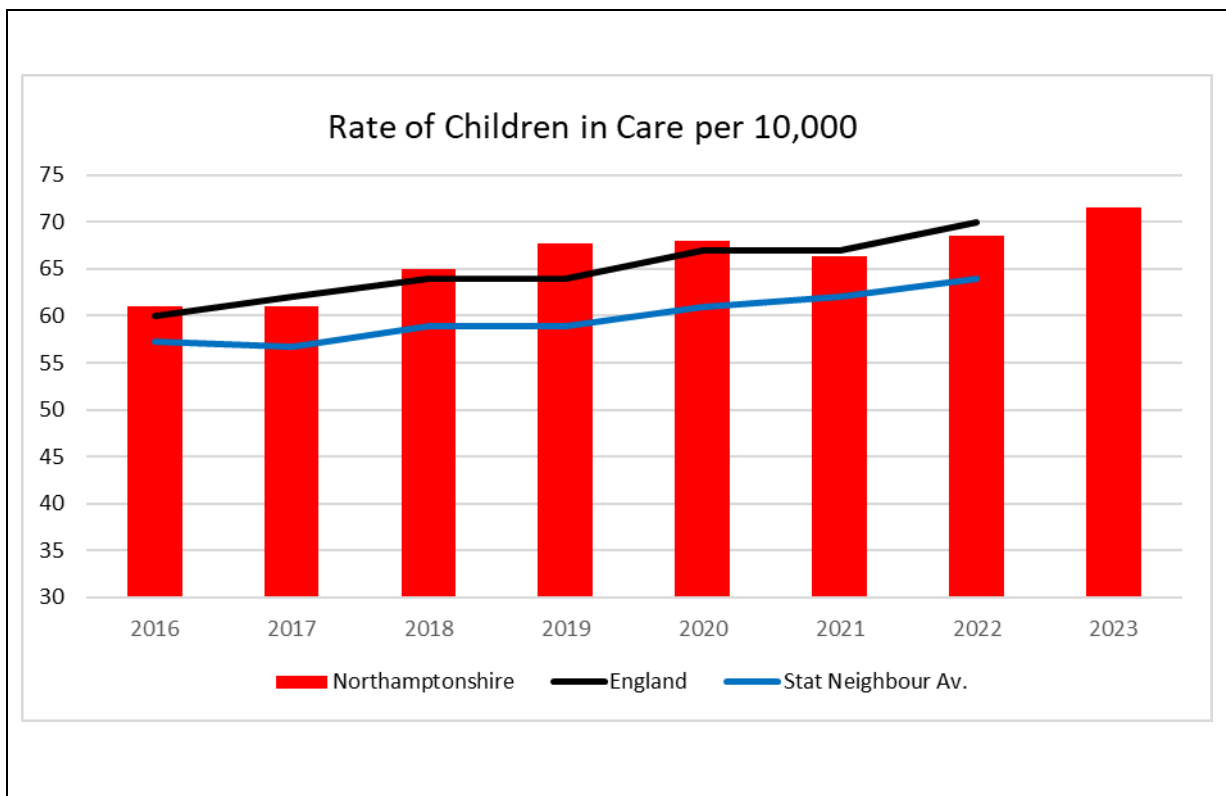
## Appendix C - Children in care - data trends

### Participation Data April 2022 to March 2023

Participation	0-3		4-6		7-9		10-15		16+		Grand Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
PN0 Under 4 at time of review2	527	99%	40	14%	32	10%	18	2%	11	1%	628
PN1 Attended spoke for her/himself	0	0	19	7%	43	13%	400	36%	510	64%	972
PN2 Attended spoke via an advocate	0	0	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%	6	1%	8
PN3 Attended used non verbal means	0	0	2	1%	0	0%	1	0%	2	0%	5
PN4 Attended did not convey views	0	0	4	1%	2	1%	6	1%	2	0%	14
<b>Attended Total</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>1627</b>
PN5 Did not attend spoke via an advocate	0	0	13	4%	13	4%	32	3%	6	1%	64
PN6 Did not attend used other means	0	0	130	45%	158	49%	403	37%	114	14%	805
PN7 Did not attend did not convey views	0	0	57	20%	47	15%	145	13%	81	10%	330
<b>Did not attend total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>1199</b>
Not recorded	3	1%	25	9%	26	8%	93	8%	63	8%	210
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>530</b>		<b>290</b>		<b>322</b>		<b>1099</b>		<b>795</b>		<b>3036</b>

Participation	Grand Total
PN0 Under 4 at time of review2	628
PN1 Attended spoke for her/himself	972
PN2 Attended spoke via an advocate	8
PN3 Attended used non verbal means	5
PN4 Attended did not convey views	14
PN5 Did not attend spoke via an advocate	64
PN6 Did not attend used other means	805
PN7 Did not attend did not convey views	330
Not recorded	210
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3036</b>

## Rate of Children in Care:



### Commentary

The Northamptonshire child in care rate has steadily increased since 2016. At a rate of 71.6 per 10,000 head of population at the end of March 2023, it is above national (70). IROs continue, together with Children in Care team, to review cases of children who are having regular contact with family to assess if significant changes have been made that can enable children to safely return to the care of their family.

## Gender of children and young people in care at End March 2023

	Male	%	Female	%	Total
2017/18	596	55%	488	45%	1084
2018/19	613	55%	502	45%	1115
2019/20	638	55%	525	45%	1163
2020/21	620	54%	523	46%	1143
2021/22	650	55%	536	45%	1185
2022/23	709	58%	517	42%	1226

### Comparisons to National and Population statistics

Gender

	Northamptonshire 2023 (%)		England 2022 (%)	
	Children looked after	Population	Children looked after	Population
Male	58	51	56	51
Female	42	49	44	49
<b>Commentary</b>				
The above table shows that more boys than girls come into to care both locally and nationally compared girls.				

## Ethnicity of children and young people in care at end March 2023

	All Children looked after %	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children %	Non-Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children %
White	77%	6%	83%
Mixed	9%	1%	10%
Asian or Asian British	2%	20%	0%
Black or black British	7%	31%	4%
Other ethnic group	3%	24%	1%
Not stated			
Not recorded	4%	18%	2%

### Comparisons to National and Population statistics

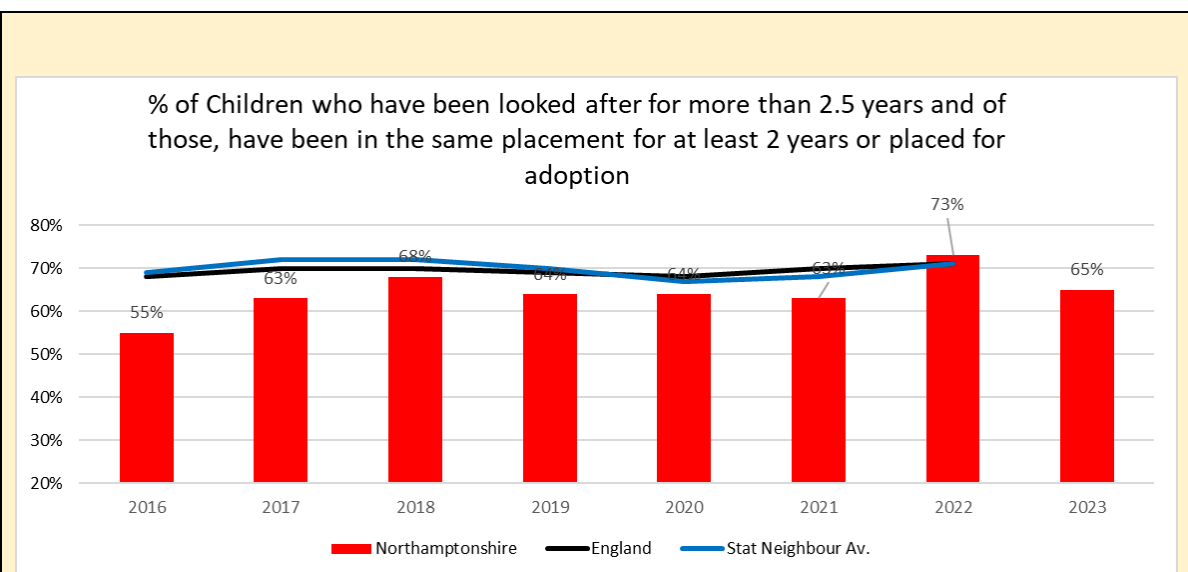
	Northamptonshire		England 2022	
	Children looked after %	Population %	Children looked after %	Population %
White	77%	83%	73%	74%
Mixed	9%	6%	10%	6%
Asian	2%	5%	5%	11%
Black	7%	5%	7%	6%
Other	3%	1%	4%	2%

### Commentary

The above tables show that children and young people who are from mixed and other minority background are over-represented - both locally and nationally, when compared to the general population.

## Children in Care at end March 2023 by age and placement type

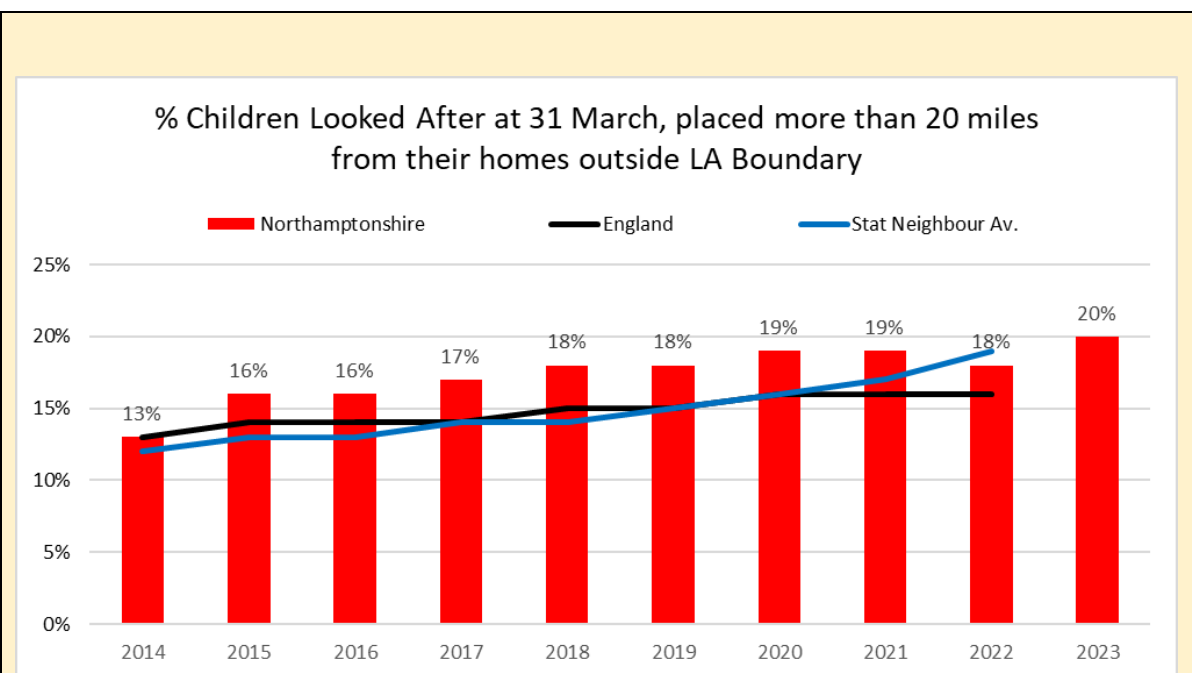
	Under 1	1-4	5-10	10-15	16+	Grand Total
Children's Home	5	2	6	66	60	139
Fostering	41	85	135	265	96	622
Fostering (Friends & Family)	5	38	63	76	23	205
Independent living	0	0	0	7	135	142
Placed for adoption	0	9	4	0	0	13
Placed with parents	6	20	22	28	12	88
Residential care home/School	0	0	0	2	4	6
Other	3	1	0	2	5	11
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>1226</b>



## Commentary

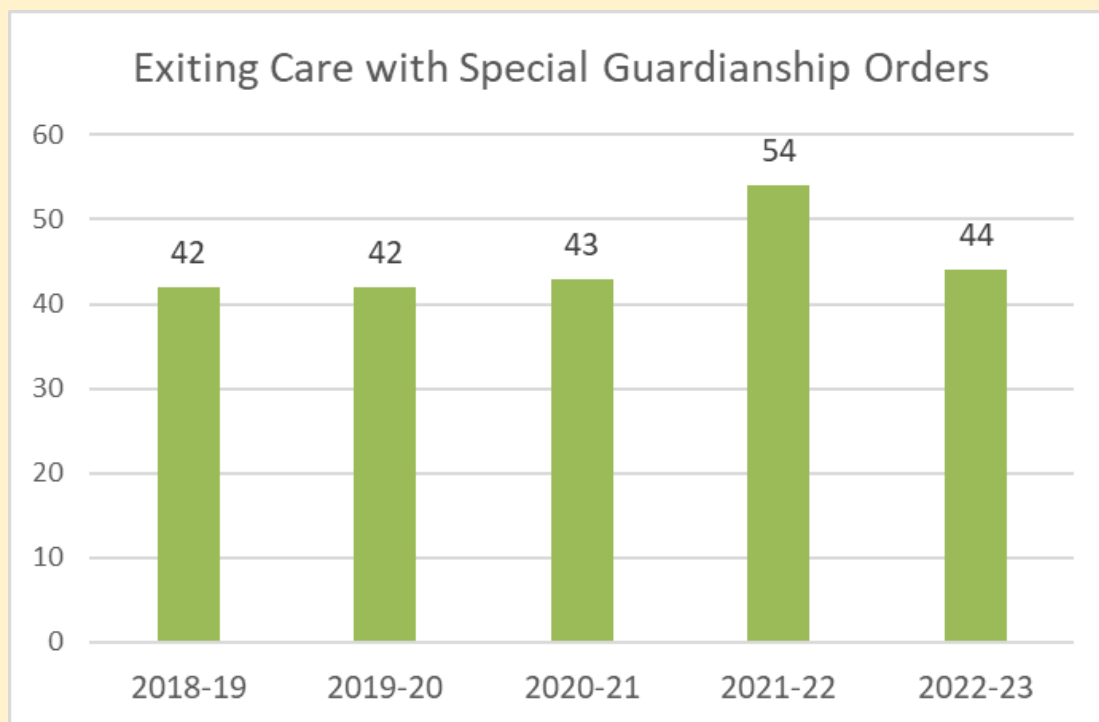
This chart shows a decline for 2023, with the provisional end of March 2023 being 75%. The IRO Service has been involved in supporting stability through attendance at stability meetings and also within Circles to Success and tracking for permanence planning.





## Commentary

The chart above shows the number of children placed 20 miles or more away from their family home and outside the Northamptonshire boundary. In some cases this means they could be closer to their family home than being placed in-county, which spans 56 miles along its axis. Placement sufficiency is a key concern local and nationally resulting in some children and young people having to be placed out of county.



### Commentary

This chart shows that 44 children were made subject to a SGO in the year April 2022 to Mar 2023. Children in Care teams continue put forward plans for SGO as route to permanency with connected carers. IROs together with Social Worker also encourage foster carers to consider applying for SGOs for children who have been in long-term stable placements.

For the period April 2022 to end of Mar 2023

- Timeliness of reviews held compared to previous years

	2021-22	2022-23
% of Children in Care with their 1st review on time	78.9%	82.6%
% of Children in Care with their 2nd review on time	88.0%	88.3%
% of Children in Care with their subsequent review on time	93.2%	92.7%