



**Dorset Council:  
Independent Reviewing Officer  
(IRO)  
Annual Report 2022/2023**

***The contribution of Independent  
Reviewing Officers to Quality  
Assuring and Improving Services  
for Looked after Children***

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September 2023**

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## **1. Introduction**

In order for the aspirations and expectations for children in our care to be realised, it is important that we provide an annual report that sets out our progress. This annual report provides both quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO) Service in Dorset Council, as set out in the IRO Handbook. In Dorset QAROs undertake the statutory function of the IRO for children in our Care. It covers the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Overall, the information and data describe a service which continues to develop and provides good quality work to ensure children meet their full potential and achieve good outcomes. The report includes key information outlining the work of the service with and for children in care and the report includes case examples of IRO work with children.

A collaborative approach to working enables the service to work alongside our Corporate Parenting Board, our Children in Care Youth Voice, and the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership. The improvement journey continues to model a relational approach based on 'High Challenge and High Support' and builds upon the values and aims of Dorset Council, and the 'Dorset Children Thrive' model.

We continue to believe that a person centred, relational approach is more effective in improving the experiences and outcomes for our children in care and that this is supported through informal and formal escalations.

Through a range of QA activities and performance management the service contributes to effective and timely care planning for Children in Care. This report will therefore provide an overview of the performance data, the extent of young people's participation, the profile of our children in care, and details of the dispute resolution process and its effectiveness. The report concludes with a review of progress with the aims and objectives set in the last annual report and aims and objectives for the service for the upcoming year.

The Independent review of children's social care by Josh McAllister (May 2022) has produced a number of recommendations but in particular for a social care system that puts lifelong loving relationships at the heart of the care system. Concerns were identified about the effectiveness of IRO services nationally. The government has since published a response to the review called 'Stable Homes Built on Love' and Dorset has been selected as a Pathfinder to trial the reforms. IROs will have a pivotal role in the oversight and progression of family-led solutions and promote the contribution of family networks to the plans for children enabling more children to be cared for in their family networks, with the right support and funding from professionals.

We are continuing to build on the positive view of Ofsted in their inspection report Oct 2021 which stated:

*'An increasing number of children's reviews are written directly to children, an important part of helping them to understand key moments in their lives and their story through childhood. Independent reviewing officers, known as QAROs in Dorset, have regular oversight of children's lives and the plans for their future. Children's voices, either directly or through their advocates, are clearly heard within reviews.'*

The majority of children in care reviews are held in time and participation rates are high. The number of children having contact with their IRO is high and escalations where gaps are identified continues to increase.

Alongside all statutory areas of focus IROs have been particularly focussing on supporting better transition planning for young people leaving care in Dorset this year. Dorset has implemented a new structure, with Personal Advisors being jointly allocated at 16 and working alongside the Social Worker. This is to ensure plans are in place and children are more prepared to leave care with have the right support in place. The offer for Care Leavers has been significantly strengthened and IROs have been able to challenge and support where pathway planning and transition planning needs to be strengthened.

An Ofsted focussed visit in May 2023 inspected the arrangements for 16 and 17-year-old care leavers and concluded that *'Leaders have significantly strengthened support and services for care leavers and have made notable improvements in the quality and standard of their accommodation'*. It was highlighted that supervision needs to improve.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people have been an increasing part of our child in care family and the number in care to Dorset increased from 9 in April 2021, 27 in April 2022 to 43 in December 2022, and we ended the year with 34 in March 2023. This is set to increase by almost 100% in the next few months to 67, with the continuing implementation of the National Transfer Scheme. This is and will continue to be an important area of focus for IROs, ensuring that the needs of this group are fully understood and met in an area which is demographically 94% white (2021 census, Plumplot, accessed on 28 08 23).

## **2. The IRO service for Children in Care in Dorset**

The IRO service is made up of 10 IROs who work full time and part time. There is an almost even split of gender and a range of background experience including Child Protection, Adoption, Fostering, Permanence Teams, CAFCASS, Adult Services, including Probation, Frontline Management and Service Management. IROs have also developed areas of specialist interest such as children with disabilities and asylum-seeking young people. Although there are no designated IROs for any particular group this does mean that it is possible to allocate an IRO with specialist knowledge or interest if required, or a IRO of a specific gender if needed/requested.

The ethnic diversity in the team is low, although it is comparable to the population in Dorset. However, we do have Black Caribbean and White European ethnicities represented. Different sexualities are also represented in the team.

The team has been stable throughout the year with one retirement and 2 new appointments. The previous Service Manager has moved on to become Head of Care Leavers and Asylum Seekers, and a new, permanent, Service Manager commenced the role in May 2023.

Caseloads for IROs are between 50-60 (full time equivalent), although include a significant amount of travel due to the number of children placed out of county. We aim to keep sibling groups with the same IRO where possible to aid consistency and understanding of the whole family picture and history.

IROs in Dorset have access to independent legal advice through a reciprocal arrangement with a neighbouring Local Authority and this was renewed this year.

### **Working with other teams**

Dorset has a Locality based model for Children in Care and each has an IRO named as the link worker. There are also link IROs for the Children who are Disabled Team and one for the Care Leavers Service. We are aiming to strengthen these links over the next year, increasing visibility and providing training to the operational teams about the role of the IRO.

IROs regularly attend Permanence Planning Meetings, Stability Meetings, MACE (contextual safeguarding) meetings and other decision-making forums for their children. The Service Manager attends various regular tracking and oversight meetings to assist in shared decision-making, information sharing and advocating for the particular needs of children in care.

### **Quality Assurance role**

Dorset has adopted the name 'Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer' for IROs in to reflect the increased responsibilities around Quality Assurance work. The team sits within the Quality Assurance Safeguarding and Standards Service and undertakes monthly individual case audits, monthly thematic audits, assisting other teams with information gathering and auditing for example SEND quality assurance work.

Quality Assurance work is also completed monthly by the Service Manager, including dip samples, thematic audits, and contribution to our 'Good and Better Board', which celebrates good practice.

IROs complete monitoring forms at each review which identifies quantitative data around a number of relevant issues, for example, participation, whether children's views are represented, completion of plans, whether appropriate meetings are taking place (for example Permanence Planning Meetings) and gives an overall grading (in line with Ofsted grading). This contributes to preventing or addressing drift and delay, and overall performance.

The Quality Assurance Partnership, which the IRO service is part of, includes a focus on 'closing the loop' in terms of learning from audits and feedback. This is addressed with colleagues in Policy and Procedures, and Workforce Development who sit within the partnership.

### **Supervision and training**

Supervision takes place regularly and covers personal, performance and practice issues. An area for development in 23-24 is regular reflective peer supervision, and face to face team meetings with guests/visitors from partner teams and agencies to develop stronger relationships. A Team Development Day is also planned.

Training for IROs is available through the council training programme and IROs have been provided with a range of training opportunities throughout the year including Restorative Practice, Motivational Interviewing, Age Assessment, and Triple Planning (for asylum seekers).

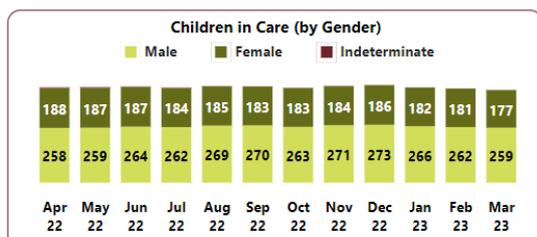
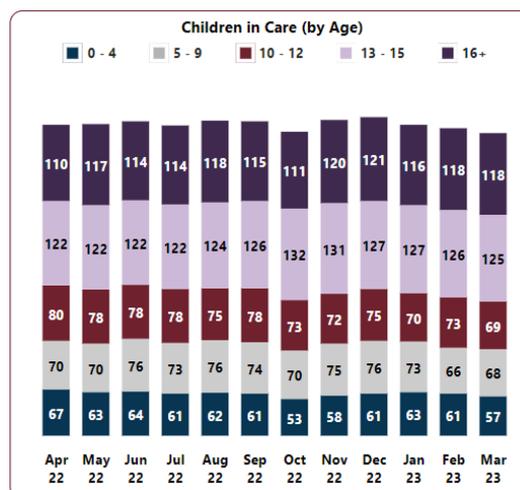
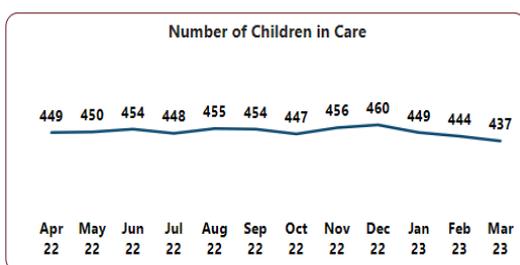
An area for development in 23-24 is strengthening Regional and National links and specific professional development opportunities in relation to the IRO role itself. The Clifton Strengths coaching is also being implemented in Dorset and all IROs will have the self-assessment completed and follow up support in understanding and using this approach next year.

Consultation questionnaires are sent out via an online form prior to every review, and are sent to parents, carers, other family members and professionals.

The consultation forms cover a range of areas including relationships, emotional wellbeing, health, education, family time, information sharing, and offer the space to add requests or recommendations and help the IRO to prepare for the review and understand the perspectives of those involved in the child’s life prior to the meeting so they can make sure it is as meaningful and useful as possible and all important points are covered.

The response is good from carers, however there is a noticeable lack of take up from parents and family members. The method for collating this feedback also requires improvement as it is currently completed manually by business support colleagues. This is an area for focus in 23-24.

### 3. Profile of children in care in Dorset



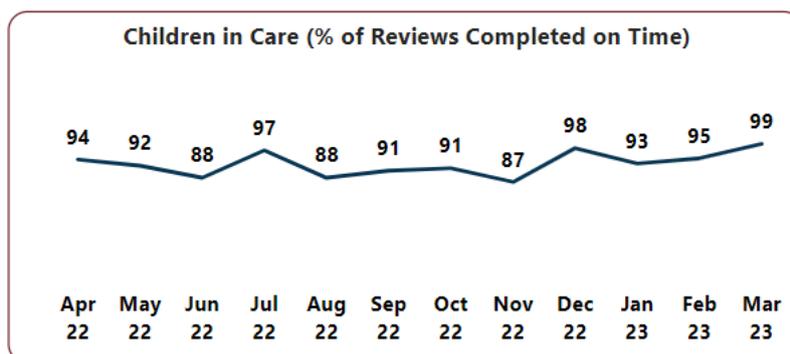
	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22
White	389	381	386	381
Asian	5	5	5	5
Black	5	7	7	8
Mixed White and Asian	4	4	4	4
Mixed White and Black	8	9	8	8
Mixed other	11	11	11	10
Other minority				
Non-white British (%)	17	18	18	19
Non-white British (Number)	76	82	83	84

Another area of progress for 2023-24 is the new addition on the children’s service database of more gender options (in addition to biological sex), pronouns and working towards the option to add sexuality, which is very welcome.

#### **4. Performance data for the service:**

##### **Number and Timeliness of Reviews, Recommendations and Minutes.**

<b>Children in Care (Reviews)</b>	<b>Apr 22</b>	<b>May 22</b>	<b>Jun 22</b>	<b>Jul 22</b>	<b>Aug 22</b>	<b>Sep 22</b>	<b>Oct 22</b>	<b>Nov 22</b>	<b>Dec 22</b>	<b>Jan 23</b>	<b>Feb 23</b>	<b>Mar 23</b>
Percentage Completed Within Timescales	94	92	88	97	88	91	91	87	98	93	95	99
Number That Took Place	121	142	78	105	95	118	117	124	93	128	93	125
Number Completed Within Timescales	114	131	69	102	84	107	107	108	91	119	88	124



Total number of reviews complete this year is 1, 339. Throughout most months of the year over 90% of reviews are completed within timescales with high points of 97, 98 and 99% in some months. Some of the lateness is caused by delays in write ups which can mean the data is not captured in the report for the month. Other reasons have included emergencies, for example within foster family circumstances, causing last minute cancellations.

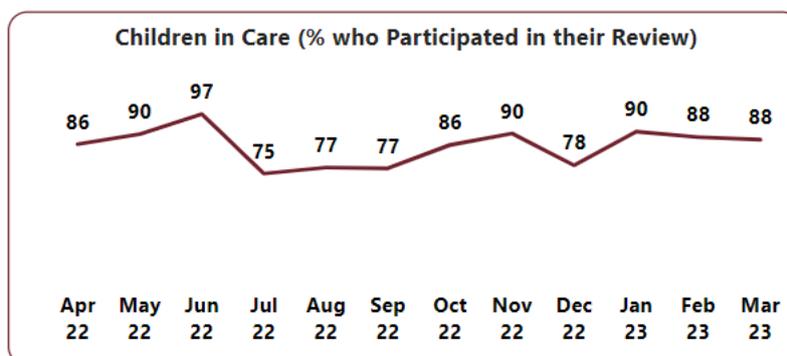
Ensuring the minutes are completed and distributed within the appropriate timescales of 20 working days is an ongoing challenge, which will require ongoing focus in 23-24. The timeliness of recommendations is good and as can be seen in the table below minutes are completed, just not as promptly as we would like. This has been affected by sickness absence and workload pressures.

Task	Total number	Percentage
Child in Care reviews that took place	1316	
Child in care reviews that took place within timescales (not including overdue reviews)	1221	92.78
Child in care reviews with completed recommendations	1315	99.92
Child in care reviews with completed recommendations within 5 working days	1192	90.58
Child in care reviews with full review minutes completed	1299	98.71
Child in care reviews with full review minutes completed within 20 working days of review	779	59.19

IROs in Dorset now all write their minutes in the form of a letter to the child or young person, and we are exploring ways to make this more child focussed with options to use a less formal template, with age-appropriate versions.

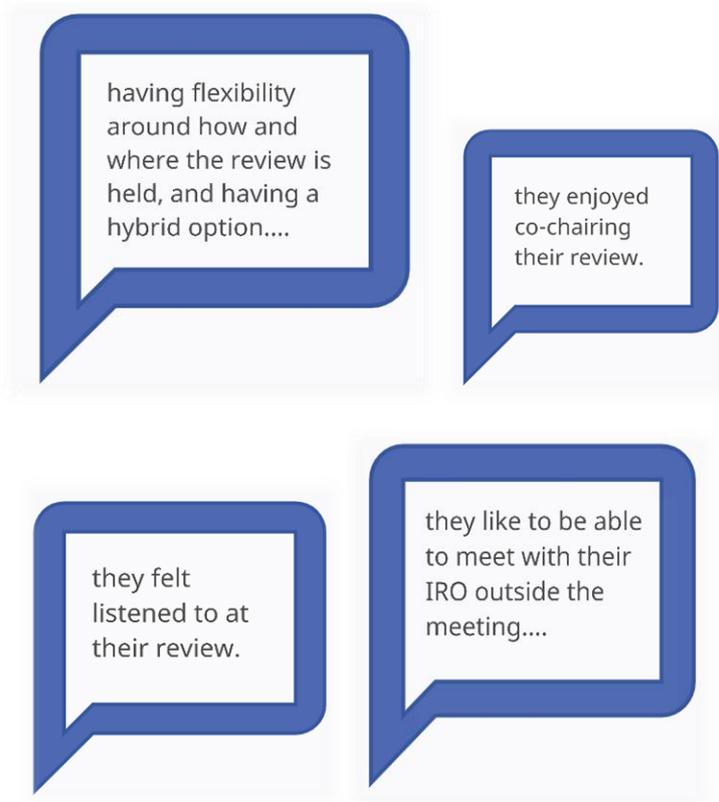
### Participation and advocacy

Children in Care (Review Participation)	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Children and Young People Participating in Reviews (%)	86	90	97	75	77	77	86	90	78	90	88	88
PN1 - Attends and Speaks for Themselves	55	65	30	39	38	37	44	53	33	59	38	51
PN5 - Does Not Attend but Advocate Represents	3	9	2	5	1	10	3	7	7		4	9
PN6 - Does Not Attend but Provides Views	28	38	31	26	19	31	42	37	21	34	27	38
PN7 - Does Not Attend and No Views Are Conveyed	5	12		5	8	10	6	6	7	2	6	4
Not Known	12	1	2	21	11	16	10	5	11	10	2	9



The number of children and young people participating in reviews is over 75% every month, generally around 90% and in one month a high of 97%. This is an area of focus for 2023-24. We are concerned about the current low take up of independent advocacy, and we have set ourselves the ambition to reach 100% participation, ensuring all children and young people feel able to share their views and participate in their meeting in some way.

Young people have fed back to us that they like:



**IRO contact and relationships with children and young people**

IRO contacts on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	
All Children in Care	436
Percentage of all Children in Care who have had an IRO contact in the last 6 months	95.87
Those in placements where a contact is expected to take place	425
Percentage of those above, who have had an IRO contact in the last 6 months	98.35

For the first half of the year (April 22 – September 22) 89% of children expected to have contact with their IRO over the previous 6 months did so. For the second half of the year (Sept 22 – March 23) it was 98%, which indicates an improving picture, with 3 IROs achieving 100% for that period.

Contact is tailored to the young person’s needs wishes and feelings. One particularly vulnerable young person had 23 contacts with her IRO over 6 months. Between Sept 2022 and March 2023 78% of children had more than one contact with their IRO, and 7% of children had 5 or more.

‘Contact’ in this context includes in person visits, telephone calls, text conversations and cards. IROs in Dorset use creative and individualised ways to build relationships with young people. For example, where one young person does not wish to meet or speak to their IRO, the IRO regularly sends cards

to show she is still 'holding them in mind' and she is there should the young person change their mind. Another has visited a young person in hospital, spending time with them and painting her nails to maintain and build the relationship.

Feedback from young people about their relationship with their IRO in Dorset:



Feedback from foster carers:



Gaining more structured, detailed feedback from children, young people, and families about their IRO, their review meetings and what could be better, is an area for further development in 2023-24. We are planning a quarterly survey and in person observations by the Service Manager.

### **Dispute resolution (escalations)**

Informal Escalations started in Period	Stage 1 Escalations started in Period	Stage 2 Escalations started in Period	Stage 3 Escalations started in Period	Stage 4 Escalations started in Period	Stage 5 Escalations started in Period	Total
146	21	9	4	0	0	<b>180</b>

In the year 2022 - 2023 we have seen an 44% increase in the use of the formal escalation procedure from the previous year. This shows a continued increasing trend upwards (125 raised in 21-22, a 17% increase on 104 the previous year). This shows that the escalation procedure is becoming firmly embedded and is increasingly used as a tool to improve outcomes for children.

As the data shows, most escalations were resolved 'informally' with the Social Worker or Team Manager, and all were resolved before reaching Stage 4 or 5. No referrals needed to be made to CAF/CASS this year. This shows the benefit of the collaborative approach and strong relationships with the operational teams which enable issues to be resolved before reaching those stages.

Although titled 'informal' escalation, this is recorded on the escalation document on the child's file and perceived by operational teams as formal. What is not recorded here is the majority of challenge and dispute resolution work undertaken by IROs via telephone calls, e-mails and within meetings. All IROs contact the teams and give them a timescale to resolve a dispute before an escalation form is completed, which is very often successful. Capturing the data on this work is an area for further development in 23-24 to enable us to fully represent the work of the IROs and any recurring areas of dispute that need strengthening within the service to children in care in Dorset.

More detailed reporting in 2022 - 2023 has enabled us to see the areas in which escalations are identifying concerns, so that priority areas can be identified and addressed by IROs and the operational teams.

Area of concern	Started between April 22 and March 23	Concluded between April 22 and March 23
Statutory handbook and care regulations not met.	70	53
Care Plan implementation	56	40
Outstanding CiC review decisions	43	28
Concerns re: provision of services	22	15

Voice of the child/young person	18	14
Health issues	15	12
Education issues	14	11
Transitions (post 16/18)	14	11
Concerns where the child/young person lives	9	6
Issues re: family time/time with important people	8	5
Concerns re: safety	7	3
Life story work/later life letters	2	0
Staff turnover/sickness	1	1
Other	57	46

As the table above shows the most common areas raised by IROs were around statutory handbook and care regulations, care plan implementation (drift and delay), and actioning of outstanding review decisions. Multiple areas can be raised on one escalation.

#### **Example of an escalation:**

One young person (age 14) was supported by his IRO around the transition to secondary school. It was a complex situation due to his special educational needs and the difficulties in availability of suitable places. The slow progress in identifying a suitable place was making him very anxious and he felt different to his peers who were all talking about where they were going next term. A 'back up' place was identified which was not suitable. This made him and his foster carers even more worried. The IRO was determined and persistent in challenging this decision and pushing for a decision on a school that could meet his needs. After several meetings the issue was resolved, and he was able to have some transition visits before the summer break. He loves it and is starting this term.

The Foster Carer said afterwards:

*'Debbie supported the Social Worker which kept everyone on track and focussed on J's needs. He wouldn't be in school if the wrong place was offered. She added interim meetings, and invited people from education and was following up if they didn't attend, booking another meeting the following week. She was persistent. As carers we don't have PR so we were stuck in how much we could do and felt powerless. The consequences for him would have been huge if he didn't have a place, it would have impacted on the rest of his life.'*

Feedback from Social Workers and Personal Advisors at a Leaving Care and Permanence networking and training event in June 23 highlighted that working collaboratively with the child's IRO had helped them:

'made sure accommodation was sorted earlier..'

'made sure the young person could stay where they could so they could finish their education.'

'Get the right education plans in place for young people.'

They fed back that having a IRO involved was helpful because the IRO:

'(the IRO) provides consistency for young people..'

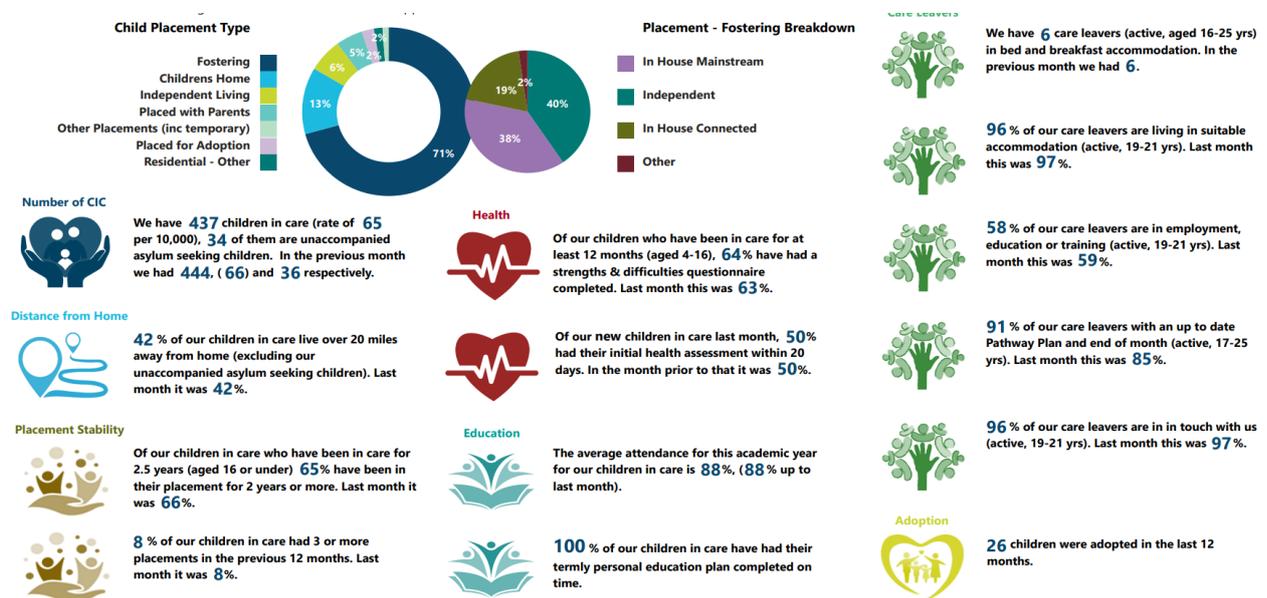
'(the IRO's) knowledge and understanding ..'

'not being afraid to challenge professionally..'

Another key area for development is around escalating to external services and partners, which would benefit from a better framework and reporting system. This would enable us to evidence and

challenge issues for children in care in this area more easily and support the operational teams in doing so. For example, the increasing difficulties in securing NHS dentists for Children in Care, access to appropriate mental health support, difficulties in accessing suitable education provision, and poor quality services from private fostering provision or children's homes.

## Snapshot of performance data for children in care in Dorset (taken on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)



One of the key challenges for Dorset currently is sufficiency of foster placements and other good quality placement options for children. This can make effective matching and effective permanency more difficult. The Mockingbird model has been implemented in Dorset over the last year and it is hoped this will have a positive impact on children’s outcomes through placement stability, belonging, connectedness and foster carer wellbeing.

Children achieving permanency after 10 months of being in care is steady at around 38%. This is an area of focus for IROs and will continue to be challenged and supported over the next year. Permanence Plans are in place for almost all young people, and IROs will track the regularity that they are reviewed is in line with their requirements.

The number of children placed outside of Dorset has reduced (excluding asylum seeking young people) and includes young people in nearby bordering local authorities. However, distance from home can still significantly impact on contact and school changes due to the large geographical size of Dorset and travel times around the county.

Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 days continues to be a challenge, as do dental checks. These are tracked and pursued rigorously however capacity in the health service does impact on our children. Strategic work is taking place at Head of Service and Corporate Director level to improve this.

Personal Education Plans completed on time is a strength at 100% in March 2023, although there is more to do for Children in Care with special educational needs, and the significant work in Dorset in improving this gives reason for optimism. A number of Children in Care have been able to access

Dorset Council's new Special School Coombe House, and the joining up of SEND with Locality teams continues to improve communication and collaboration.

## **5. Young People's experience/voice**

Dorset has recently commissioned a 'Bright Spots Survey' for Children in Care which captures children and young people's views in March 23. 151 children aged 4-17 responded.

### **Highlights:**

87% of children aged 8-17 felt their lives were getting better.

100% of children aged 4-11 trust their carers (all or some of the time).

95% of children aged 8-11 liked their bedroom.

97% children and 92% young people felt their carers were interested in their education (this is higher than the national average).

All children aged 8-11 had a trusted adult in their lives.

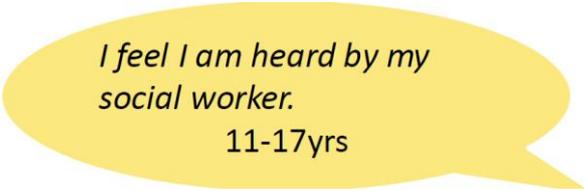
All children aged 4-7 felt safe and settled where they lived.

47% of young people had the same social worker for the last 12 months (compared to 34% in other local authorities)

All the youngest children said that they trusted their social worker.

97% of young people aged 11-17 said they were taught life skills 'at least sometimes.'

97% of children and 95% of young people reported they had spent time outdoors that week.



*I feel I am heard by my  
social worker.*

11-17yrs

### **Areas for focus and improvement:**

The proportion of children and young people who liked school was lower than in other local authorities.

28% of 11-17year olds said they were sometimes afraid to go to school because of bullying (slightly higher than the national average)

The number of children without one really good friend was substantially higher than the general population (except age 8-11)

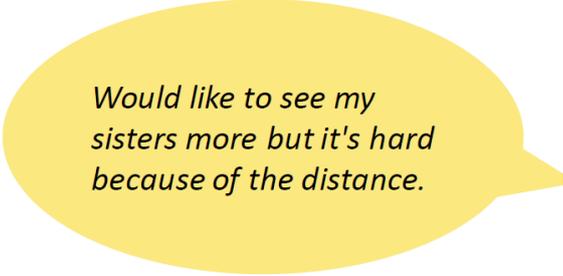
24% of young people (11-17) felt they could 'hardly ever' or 'never' do similar things to their friends, which was higher than in other local authorities.

24% of young people aged 11-17 who were unhappy with the way they looked, was significantly higher than in other local authorities.

18% of young people aged 11-17 felt the things they did on their lives were not worthwhile and were not positive about their future.

The proportion of young people aged 11-17 with very high happiness was significantly lower in Dorset than other local authorities.

Children and young people in Dorset were less likely to say they saw their siblings and dads 'the right amount' than in other local authorities.



*Would like to see my sisters more but it's hard because of the distance.*

(data and quotes from 'Your life, your care, A survey of the views of looked after children and young people aged 4-17yrs. Dorset, July 2023' Ollerearnshaw, R. Corum Impact and Evaluation team)

Children's views, as expressed in the Bright Spots survey, will be incorporated into service improvement plans for children in care. IROs will take these into consideration when undertaking their quality assurance role, for example, being mindful of the key concern that children have expressed about bullying and the actions within education to address them.

## **5. Review of areas for development identified in the 2021-22 Annual Report:**

*Continue to offer Learning and Development opportunities for IROs, including the embedding of restorative practice to support the focus on strengths based social work practice.*

As detailed above IROs have accessed a range of training including restorative practice, motivational interviewing, age assessment training, and triple planning (for asylum seeking young people). This is an area for further development in 23-24.

*Develop more creative ways to facilitate the meaningful involvement of Children in Care in their Reviews, particularly those who are currently reluctant.*

The data above shows good levels of participation of children in their reviews; however, this is something we wish to improve the quality of as well as reach 100%. 23-24 will also focus on participation of family members and a thematic audit is taking place in September 23 to assist with this. There are plans in 23 – 24 to improve the consultation documents and work with the Youth Voice team to direct this work.

*We need to develop an improved system that will enable us to strengthen our current performance on the timeliness of completing and distributing the minutes of all our child in care reviews.*

CIC review timeliness is similar to last year, when it ranged from 90%-100% each month over the year and minutes completed is good. However as identified in the body of this report the timeliness for completing minutes (in 20 working days) requires improvement. There are plans to establish a dashboard which will enable transparency of performance and enable the team to check and manage their own performance more easily.

*Better utilise data about our IRO footprint to assure ourselves that we have strong and through oversight of our children's care, their ambitions, their future plans and ultimate success into adulthood.*

Data from the IRO footprint has been collated and used throughout the year to contribute to the work of the IRO service. As detailed in the body of this report, review meetings, time spent with children, monitoring data, audits and feedback have all contributed to understanding the needs of our children and providing advice, support and challenge to the local authority in its care of children and young people.

*Maintain oversight, monitoring, and challenge for those young people where there is a Deprivation of Liberty (DOLs) and ensure that as an Authority we are acting in a legal way to protect the best interests of the young person.*

DOLS Orders are tracked monthly now by the IRO Service Manager and IROs challenge where orders need to be sought, and where restrictions need to be reduced. This is an area that needs to continue to be strengthened and training developed.

*Ensuring that young people are better prepared for leaving care by robust review and challenge around pathway assessment and transition planning, especially those young people where there is a need for transition into adult services.*

This has been an area of focus as intended, and the Ofsted focussed visit has demonstrated the good practice in this area. The IROs have contributed to this with attending permanence planning meeting, challenging drift and delay, and escalating where necessary. Attendance at the Leaving Care and Permanence team event and the feedback included above demonstrates that their contribution is effective and valued.

*To develop formal feedback following children in care reviews through our work with the Dorset Youth Council & NYAS.*

This is an area of focus for the year ahead, as detailed above.

*Ensure that our offer to our unaccompanied children seeking asylum meets their needs and they are provided with appropriate information to support them understanding what is happening to them.*

Dorset Council have now begun setting up a specialist asylum seeking children's team, and this will be realised in 23-24. IROs will have a key role in quality assuring this new venture and ensuring that asylum seeking young people's needs are fully met.

## **6. Conclusion and Plan for 23/24 - 5 key priorities**

There is a lot to be proud of in this report with consistently high review timeliness, high levels IRO contact with children, increasing and effective escalations, and positive feedback from children, colleagues, and families, however there is more to do.

As the new Service Manager for the Children in Care IROs I have been able to spend my first three months listening and observing where the strengths in the service are, and the areas for development. The team are a highly skilled, conscientious, committed and child focussed group of professionals who are proud of what they do, but can also see many ways in which we could improve the circumstances and support for children in care in Dorset. I hope that I can take this service to the next stage by putting in place supportive structures that will help to enhance their impact and improve the lives of the children that we serve.

**The five key priorities for the IRO Service in 23-24 are:**

### **1. Improve the IRO footprint.**

Increase the use of and impact of escalations to challenge gaps in practice, drift and delay and ensure the child's voice is heard and listened to.

Develop Mosaic processes to capture and report on the IRO footprint including informal escalations.

We need an improved system to collate the consultation document information and address the fact that very few parents or family members complete these.

Develop a midway review template for mosaic and once launched for this to be part of the IRO performance management.

### **2. Improvement in the take up of advocacy and participation in children in care reviews.**

The IRO Service manager is part of the working group with our current provider, looking at an improvement plan, and re-procurement options for 2024 onwards. Three IROs have attended focus

groups recently to identify what young people need from an advocacy service, and where gaps are in the current provision.

The Service Manager is now meeting monthly with the Advocacy Service Manager to provide feedback and work on improving the partnership working to improve the advocacy provision to children and young people.

Service Manager to track advocacy take up and include this within supervision to ensure IROs promote this with Social Workers in their consultation meetings.

### **3. Develop mechanisms for detailed feedback on the IRO service.**

To systematically obtain feedback from families and young people, from social workers, operational managers, and partnership/key stakeholders with Children in Care. This will include quarterly surveys.

### **4. Focus on asylum-seeking young people in care to Dorset.**

This service will need to work closely with the new asylum-seeking children's team to ensure this new and expanding area of work for Dorset is of the highest standard. This will include developing the skills and knowledge for IROs in understanding their needs and best practice nationally.

### **5. Contributing to the 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' Pathfinder work**

Dorset has been chosen as one of three Local Authorities to be Pathfinders for the implementation of Stable Homes, Built on Love. The IRO service will have a key role in contributing to co-design, and Quality Assurance of the pilot. The team has wide range of professional experience and our expertise in Kinship Care support is likely to be particularly valuable.

IROs will have a pivotal role in the oversight and progression of permanency arrangements for children and young people. IROs, therefore, will ensure that the family and child/ young person have been fully consulted about who is important in their life and unlocking the potential of family networks in developing family led solutions for children.

Ref: <https://www.plumplot.co.uk/Dorset-census-2021.html#:~:text=94.1%25%20people%20are%20white%2C%202.3,%2C%206.7%25%20provided%20no%20answer.>

## Appendix A

<b>Children in Care at End of Month</b>		<b>Apr 22</b>	<b>May 22</b>	<b>Jun 22</b>	<b>Jul 22</b>	<b>Aug 22</b>	<b>Sep 22</b>	<b>Oct 22</b>	<b>Nov 22</b>	<b>Dec 22</b>	<b>Jan 23</b>	<b>Feb 23</b>	<b>Mar 23</b>
Rate per 10,000		66	66	67	66	67	67	66	67	68	66	66	65
Number		449	450	454	448	455	454	447	456	460	449	444	437
<b>Children in Care who are UASC</b>		<b>Apr 22</b>	<b>May 22</b>	<b>Jun 22</b>	<b>Jul 22</b>	<b>Aug 22</b>	<b>Sep 22</b>	<b>Oct 22</b>	<b>Nov 22</b>	<b>Dec 22</b>	<b>Jan 23</b>	<b>Feb 23</b>	<b>Mar 23</b>
Number		27	35	35	35	38	41	41	43	43	37	36	34
%		6	8	8	8	8	9	9	9	9	8	8	8
<b>Children in Care (by Age)</b>		<b>Apr 22</b>	<b>May 22</b>	<b>Jun 22</b>	<b>Jul 22</b>	<b>Aug 22</b>	<b>Sep 22</b>	<b>Oct 22</b>	<b>Nov 22</b>	<b>Dec 22</b>	<b>Jan 23</b>	<b>Feb 23</b>	<b>Mar 23</b>
0-4		67	63	64	61	62	61	53	58	61	63	61	57
5-9		70	70	76	73	76	74	70	75	76	73	66	68
10-12		80	78	78	78	75	78	73	72	75	70	73	69
13-15		122	122	122	122	124	126	132	131	127	127	126	125
16+		110	117	114	114	118	115	111	120	121	116	118	118
<b>Children in Care (by Legal Status)</b>		<b>Apr 22</b>	<b>May 22</b>	<b>Jun 22</b>	<b>Jul 22</b>	<b>Aug 22</b>	<b>Sep 22</b>	<b>Oct 22</b>	<b>Nov 22</b>	<b>Dec 22</b>	<b>Jan 23</b>	<b>Feb 23</b>	<b>Mar 23</b>
C1 Interim Care Order		59	57	58	64	63	64	63	69	66	63	52	38
C2 Full Care Order		298	301	303	301	303	297	294	296	303	303	304	316
E1 Placement Order Granted		33	28	27	22	20	23	21	18	18	16	19	18
V2 Single Period of Accommodation Under S20		59	64	64	60	69	70	69	73	73	66	69	65
<b>Children in Care (by Gender)</b>		<b>Apr 22</b>	<b>May 22</b>	<b>Jun 22</b>	<b>Jul 22</b>	<b>Aug 22</b>	<b>Sep 22</b>	<b>Oct 22</b>	<b>Nov 22</b>	<b>Dec 22</b>	<b>Jan 23</b>	<b>Feb 23</b>	<b>Mar 23</b>
Male		258	259	264	262	269	270	263	271	273	266	262	259
Female		188	187	187	184	185	183	183	184	186	182	181	177
Indeterminate		3	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Children in Care:</b>		<b>Apr 22</b>	<b>May 22</b>	<b>Jun 22</b>	<b>Jul 22</b>	<b>Aug 22</b>	<b>Sep 22</b>	<b>Oct 22</b>	<b>Nov 22</b>	<b>Dec 22</b>	<b>Jan 23</b>	<b>Feb 23</b>	<b>Mar 23</b>
Who Were Previously CIC (Number)		57	55	54	52	57	54	54	53	53	52	53	52
With a CP Plan (Number)		3	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Who Were Previously CIC (%)		13	12	12	12	13	12	12	12	12	12	12	12

Children in Care (by Ethnicity)	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
White	389	381	386	381	385	380	370	375	377	371	368	367
Asian	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	7	7	6	6	6
Black	5	7	7	8	9	9	9	8	7	5	5	4
Mixed White and Asian	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Mixed White and Black	8	9	8	8	8	8	11	12	13	13	12	10
Mixed other	11	11	11	10	10	10	10	10	11	10	10	10
Other minority												
Non-white British (%)	17	18	18	19	19	20	21	21	21	21	20	19
Non-white British (Number)	76	82	83	84	87	90	92	95	97	93	91	83

Children in Care (Duration in Months)	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
0-3	59	66	61	50	45	45	51	61	57	57	50	28
4-6	32	26	29	38	49	43	36	26	33	31	37	38
7-12	26	27	37	36	39	50	54	59	58	53	52	57
13-24	58	57	51	53	49	50	45	52	48	53	55	61
25-36	77	70	70	64	63	56	47	45	48	42	36	41
37+												
Children in Care 2.5 Years or More	244	251	249	249	247	246	244	245	246	239	234	233
Children in Care more than 12 Months	332	331	327	324	322	316	306	310	312	308	305	314

Children in Care (by Need)	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Absent Parenting	25	33	33	34	36	38	38	40	41	37	35	33
Abuse or Neglect	255	247	255	251	253	252	245	256	262	257	252	244
Cases other than Children in Need	1	1	1	1		2	2	3	3	2	3	3
Disability	21	22	21	21	21	20	21	20	20	21	22	25
Family Dysfunction	96	98	96	98	98	96	97	95	93	93	91	91
Family in Acute Distress	38	36	35	31	33	32	30	28	28	28	29	29
Parental Illness or Disability	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	3	4	4
Any Other Reason	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	1	3	2	0	1
Sentenced to Custody	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Placement Stability	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
3+ placements in last 12 months (%)	9	9	9	9	9	7	7	7	7	6	8	8
In placement for 2+ years (<16 CIC for 2.5+ years) (%)	64	63	64	63	62	63	62	63	63	63	66	65

**Children in Care (Ceased by Age)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
0-4	3	7	1	4	2	2	5	8	2	3	3	4
5-9	2	4		4	1		4		1		2	1
10-12					2		1			1	1	
13-15				3		1	2	4	2	1	2	1
16+	10	5	6	4	1	6	4	2	8	9	5	5

**Children in Care (Ceased by Reason)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Died	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Care Taken by Other Local Authority	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Live With Parents, Relatives at al	7	3	0	7	1	2	8	5	6	3	6	7
Moved to Independent Living	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	2	3	1	1
Moved to Adult Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Any other Reason	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	1	3	2	0	1
Sentenced to Custody	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adopted	0	6	0	3	1	1	2	5	0	1	0	1
Over 18	8	3	4	3	0	4	2	1	2	4	4	1
Moved Abroad	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Residence Order	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Special Guardianship Order	0	4	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0

**Children in Care (by Placement)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Placed With Parents	18	18	24	26	27	27	28	32	26	22	20	22
Placed With Relatives or Friends	58	57	63	62	62	68	71	70	71	66	63	63
% Private Provision	45	47	45	46	46	46	46	45	44	45	45	45
% Own Provision	43	43	42	41	41	39	42	42	45	45	44	43

**Children in Care (by Placement Location)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Number of Children in Out of County Placements	192	194	191	192	197	194	193	197	198	196	190	188
Out of Dorset and 20+ Miles From Home (%)	31	30	28	29	28	28	28	26	27	27	26	27
Out of Dorset (%)	43	43	42	43	43	43	43	43	43	44	43	43

**Children in Care (Permanence)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
CIC 4+ Months with Completed Permanence Plan (%)	98	96	96	94	92	90	92	93	93	93	93	92
Children Achieved Permanence	42	44	40	40	39	39	41	41	39	40	41	38
Children Achieved Permanence (SGO)* (%)	15	19	15	16	17	11	10	11	10	8	8	8
Children Achieved Permanence (Adoption)* (%)	5	7	9	14	17	18	19	17	16	15	14	13

\*Rolling 6 Months

**Children in Care (Standard of Care Plan Rating)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Outstanding (Number)		1										1
Good (Number)	32	47	15	24	26	41	44	24	33	49	29	34
Requiring Improvement (Number)	2	1	1		4	7	1	1	2	8	2	1
Inadequate (Number)	1	2						9		2	3	2
Good and Outstanding Combined (%)	91	94	94	100	87	85	98	71	94	83	85	92

**Children in Care (Health Assessments)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
New CIC Receiving Their IHA (%)*	9	14	50	44	0	0	23	23	41	50	50	0
CIC Health Assessments Up To Date - Under 5 (%)	84	84	88	89	73	69	81	74	70	65	67	86
CIC Health Assessments Up To Date - Over 5 (%)	85	83	88	92	89	85	84	82	77	76	75	78

\* This measure is reported one month in arrears

**Children in Care (Immunisations)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Immunisations Up To Date** (%)	85	85	85	88	85	85	87	85	83	86	84	87
Immunisations Overdue (Number)	80	90	84	65	70	77	67	71	88	76	73	58
Immunisations Up to Date (Number)	369	360	370	383	385	377	382	385	372	373	371	379

\*\* for CIC 12+ Months

**Children in Care (SDQ Scores)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Immunisations Up To Date** (%)	16	15	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Immunisations Up To Date (Number)	79	82	80	77	77	74	72	72	69	68	63	64

\*\* for CIC 12+ Months

**Children in Care (Visits)**

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Total Visits	371	414	361	361	392	407	373	384	415	430	392	403
CIC with Up To Date Visits (%)	86	86	86	81	80	87	88	81	79	81	83	86
CIC with Up to Date Visits (Number)	387	386	391	365	366	397	392	371	363	364	368	375

**Children in Care (Timeliness of Visits)\*\*\***

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
Completed Late (Number)	53	83	56	58	86	90	75	58	60	80	56	69
Completed on Time (Number)	256	267	242	220	217	260	243	241	258	265	260	272
Overdue (Number)	62	64	63	83	89	57	55	85	97	85	76	62
Completed Late (%)	14	20	16	16	22	22	20	15	14	19	14	17
Completed on Time (%)	69	64	67	61	55	64	65	63	62	62	66	67

\*\*\*6/12 weekly as per plan due in month