



Haringey Council

**Independent Review Officer
Basic Checklist Audit
July – September 2011**

Method

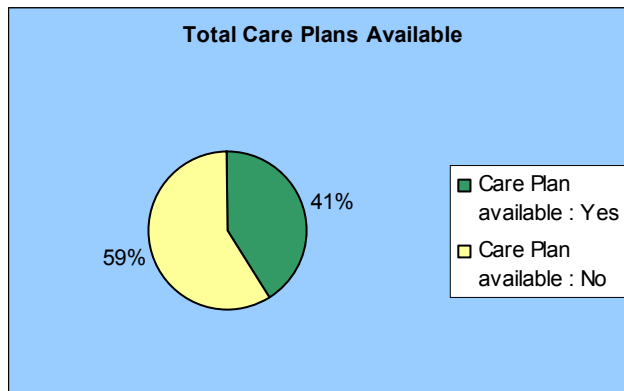
The Independent Review Officers (IROs) used a basic checklist to carry out a random sample analysis of Looked After Children Reviews. The audit was designed as a quick process that could provide some immediate data and create a benchmark for future audits. The information presented should not be taken as definitive, but rather as an indication of areas of concern. The audit was conducted over a three-month period, between July and September 2011 and included a100 of the reviews undertaken during that time. Where the audit questions relate to specific regulations or guidance, they have been referenced in the following report. The report presents general data gathered across the whole of Children and Families service, individual teams have been provided with the data to specific to them.

General Analysis

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Associated Guidance (Including the IRO Handbook) state that:

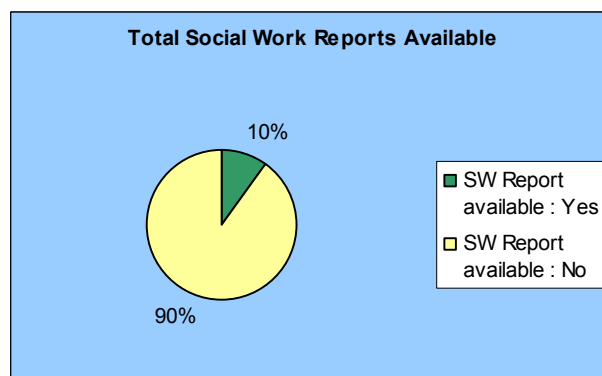
1. “A Care Plan must be prepared prior to a child’s first placement, or, if it is not practical to do so, within 10 working days of the child’s first placement.”

The audit showed that only 41% of all cases had a care plan available. The audit did not differentiate between first and subsequent reviews.



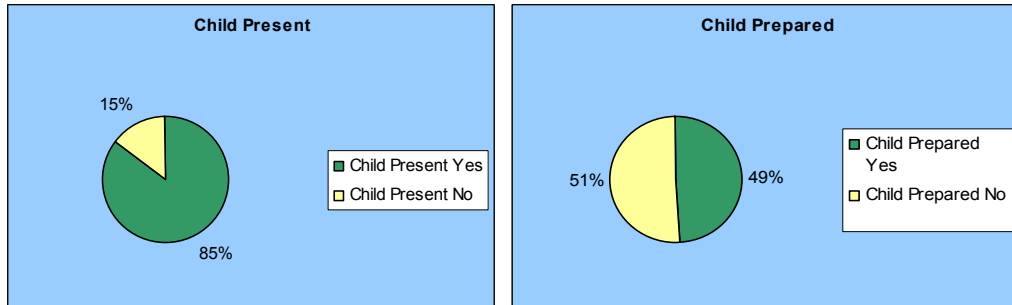
In some cases, the IRO used the Court Care Plan as a substitute for the LAC Care Plan. This will be investigated in the next audit to provide more in-depth analysis.

The audit also highlighted that in 90% of cases, there was no Social Work report available.



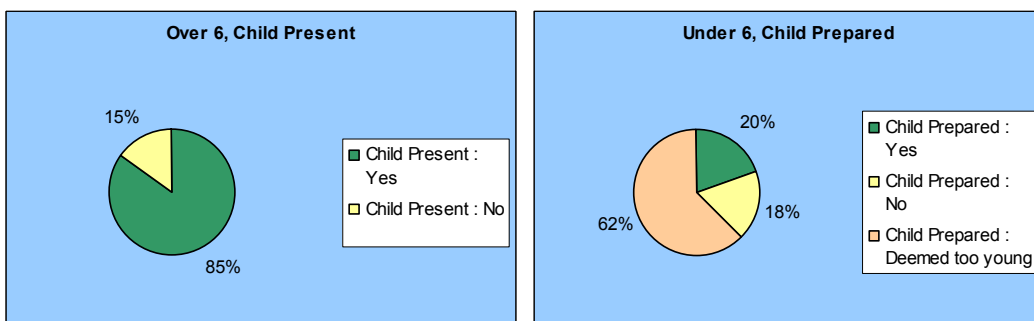
2. “The Local Authority should obtain and take account of the wishes and feelings of the child (subject to age and understanding) about the plan and the progress made since the last review.”

The IROs recorded that in 85% of cases, the child was present for the review and that in only 49% of cases, the Social Worker had prepared the child for the review.



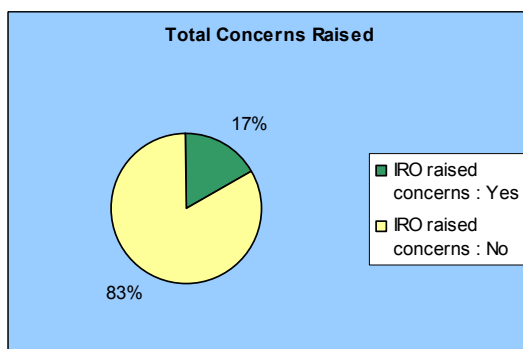
Although this data does not directly relate to the regulation, it is reasonable to assume that if the child was prepared and present for the review, then their wishes and feelings could be taken into account. However, their quality and degree of engagement in the process cannot be evidenced.

It is important to note that in many reviews, the child’s age and understanding was taken into consideration when preparing or requiring their presence for the review. For example, whilst only 3% of children under 6 years old were deemed to be too young to attend the review, 62% were deemed too young to be prepared in advance.

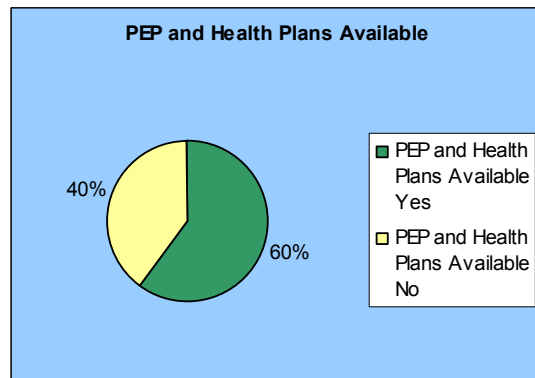


3. “As part of the monitoring function, the IRO also has a duty to identify any areas of poor practice, including general concerns around service delivery (not just around individual children). The IRO should immediately alert senior managers.”

In 17% of cases, the IRO raised concerns. These included concerns related to Social Worker practice, decisions, delays in family-with permanency management funding issues and finding for children plans.

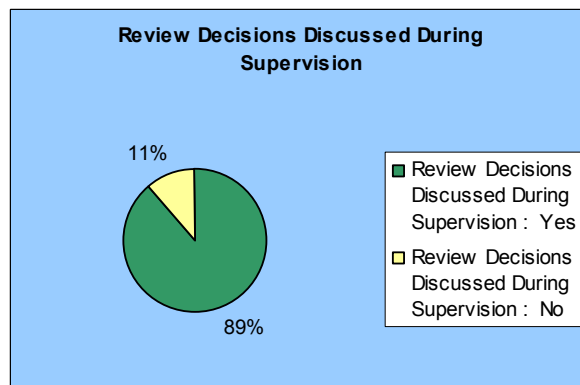


In 60% of cases, the child had a PEP and Health Plan available. In the next audit, the Health Plan and PEP will be looked at individually to provide clearer analysis.

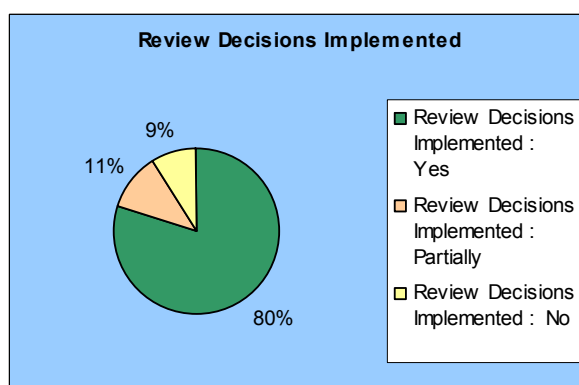


4. “Were decisions taken at the last review successfully implemented?”

In 89% of cases that were not an initial review, a discussion of previous decisions took place during the Social Worker’s supervision.



Following on from these supervision discussions, 80% of the decisions made at the review were implemented, 11% were partially implemented and 9% were not implemented.



Conclusion

The available data has shown us that there are some areas that we are currently performing very well at (children and young people present and prepared for reviews) and some areas that we need to work on to ensure that we are delivering the best service for our Looked After Children (children and young people with care plans, and the number of reviews where social work reports were available, the quality of case recording).

To address the areas of concern the following action is being taken:

1. The Report is being presented to the next LAC multi-agency meeting and it's findings will become part of the action plan.
2. The IRO service is meeting with services to discuss the findings and work with services to address the lack of care plans and social workers reports for reviews.
3. The Children in Care project working of on the forms and templates used by social workers is considering amalgamating the Court Care plan with Care Plan.
4. The IRO's are to be more rigorous in identifying and reporting upwards cases where there is no Care Plan available and social workers have not provided reports for the review. In future review decisions will be forwarded to the responsible Team Manager within in five days of the review, they will then endorse or challenge the decisions made prior to the minutes being circulated.
5. Re launch of VIEWPOINT. Viewpoint provides age specific on line questionnaires to consult children and young people on any topic, we are currently using it to ask young people about their care experience and aspirations. Viewpoints facilitates the participation in the reviewing process of children from four years old upwards and gives us access to information at an individual and group level, analysed by gender, ethnicity, age and placements.

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