

The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service (QAAS) IRO Annual Report

Reporting Period: 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025



Author: Nicola Robertson Service Manager QAAS

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WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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Acronyms used within this report:

CIC	Children in Care
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
IR	Issues Resolution
IV	Independent Visitor
LA	Local Authority
NYAS	National Youth Advisory Service
PEP	Personal Education Plan
QAAS	Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SW	Social Worker
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child(ren)
WBC	West Berkshire Council

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The 2024–25 QAAS IRO Annual Report outlines the work of West Berkshire's Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and their impact on children in care (CIC). The year's focus was on improving child participation, with new consultation tools co-produced with the Children in Care Council. This work will be continued into the next period to widen participation and feedback with all participants. A feedback survey is set to launch in July 2025 with children and young people.
- 1.2 The number of children in care has remained stable at 189, with 12% being unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). The demographic profile shows a higher proportion of males with the majority of children in care being aged 10 and above.
- 1.3 IRO caseloads have averaged 74 children, this is a mixture of both child in care and child protection cases. Despite staffing challenges, 92% of reviews were held within statutory timescales. Placement stability has remained strong, with 68% of children experiencing only one placement during the year.
- 1.4 The IROs raised 17 Issues Resolutions (IRs) over this period, mostly related to delays in documentation, all of which were resolved satisfactorily.
- 1.5 Children's voices are central to the review process, with 97% of children over the age of four years contributing to their reviews. Feedback from children has been overwhelmingly positive, reflecting strong relationships with carers and IROs. Advocacy services have supported 342 children, and 15 children were matched with Independent Visitors, who have provided consistent and valued support.
- 1.6 Care planning has remained robust, with 100% of care plans being sent out on time, 95% of Personal Education Plans have been completed within timescales, and 90% of health assessments conducted promptly. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) completion rate was 88%, with an average score of 15.8, indicating borderline emotional wellbeing concerns. This aligns with National findings.
- 1.7 A deep dive into children in care reported missing over the last period has resulted in plans being put into place to improve upon how this reported, to update missing children's protocols and improve training for foster parents.
- 1.8 The IROs have continued to provide strong quality assurance through audits and oversight, ensuring that children's rights and entitlements were upheld. Feedback from professionals and families has praised the IROs' professionalism, approachability, and commitment to achieving the best outcomes for children.

2. Comparator of data

- 2.1 The following are the current known statistics for CIC in England and a comparator of West Berkshire's performance over the same period.

2.2 Gov.UK: Children looked after in England - headline facts and figures – 2024
Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

Children looked after on 31 March 2024 83,630 Down <0.5% on 2023	Children looked after on 31 March 2024 per 10,000 children 70 The same as in 2023	Children looked after who were UASC 7,380 Down <0.5% on 2023
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West Berkshire Children Looked After on 31/3/25 189 Down 0.5% on 2024	CLA per 10,000 children 53 Up 2% on 2024	CLA on 31 March, who were UASC 22 Down 12% on 2024
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Children who started to be looked after during the year 33,050 Down <0.5% on 2023	Children who ceased to be looked after during the year 33,620 Up 6% on 2023	Children who ceased to be looked after, who were adopted 2,980 Down <0.5% on 2023
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Children who started to be looked after 88 No change on 2024	Children who ceased to be looked after 85 1.5% increase on 2024	Children who ceased to be looked after, who were adopted 15 No change on 2024
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3. Update on QAAS's Service Priorities over the 2023/24 period

3.1 To continue to strive to achieve excellence for all CIC:

- To have a clear set of guidance in place in relation to CIC reviews to ensure that all are clear on their roles and responsibilities as set out within the Care Planning Regulations.

3.2 This is now in place and accessible to all staff within the WBC online local procedures.

- To improve upon the quality of the consultation documents for CIC, their families and the professionals involved.

3.3 To date QAAS has replaced the child in care consultation document for children and young people aged 10yrs upward. The new document was co-produced with the Participation Officer and RVue (our Children in Care Council). Rvue are currently working on producing a suite of consultation documents for younger children in care and those with additional needs.

- To review the current processes in relation to how feedback is obtained and collated within the service.

3.4 In collaboration with the Participation Manager QAAS now has a survey monkey in place seeking feedback from children and young people regarding their reviews and their IROs.

3.5 This is scheduled to go live in July 2025 and will be sent out to all children in care following their review.

- To improve upon how IRO work is captured and reported upon within the ICS system once it goes live during 2025.

3.6 Unfortunately, the move to a new ICS system has been unavoidably delayed and it has not been possible to complete this action.

4. Update on recommendations from the learning within the 2023-24 IRO Annual Report

Recommended Action:	Who By:	Outcome:
To undertake a review of the current processes in place to track timeframes for the completion of statutory reports and file recordings to consider whether they are currently robust enough and what other measures might be put into place to support the SWs to address this issue.	All the Children & Family Services Service Managers	This has taken place and recruitment of a more permanent workforce has assisted in achieving some improvement within this area. Managers have systems to track this, but there remains a need for further improvement in this respect.
Explore take up of advocacy with our children in care to be assured it continues to be promoted.	Principal Social Worker	Take up remains lower for CIC than children subject to child protection processes. The availability of advocacy for our CIC however continues to be promoted at the point that children/young people are received into care and via the CIC reviews by the IROs.

Explore why the completion rate for Pathway Plans for former relevant children has dropped for the second consecutive year.	Service Manager for the 16+/Care Leaver Service	There are challenges in this respect as the young people who would sit within this criterion do not always want to engage or keep in touch. Every effort is made to engage with them. This is monitored and will continue to be so.
Action to be taken to ensure that child chronologies are present within their ICS case files and kept regularly updated.	This was raised as an expectation with all the Children & Families Managers and will be tracked over this period.	The format of chronologies and practice expectations in relation to this have been made clear. File audit activity (learning from audits) is indicating an ongoing improvement in practice within this key area. The presence of chronologies is now embedded within the full case file audit tool and will therefore be tracked on an ongoing basis.
Consideration to be given to undertaking a themed case file audit with a focus on CIC who have been reported missing.	Within the bi-monthly reporting period by all the managers who participate. To take place in November 2024.	A meeting was arranged involving all relevant managers to review the findings from the previous year's report and a plan put in place to address the identified issues. This is explored later in this report. An audit of children in care reported missing is planned for June 2025.
Consideration to be given as to how information can be captured for children and young people in care who have been reported missing, particularly if they have refused to engage within an RHI.	Within the Children & Families Leadership Team Meeting by September 2024 & progress to be reported within the 2024-25 annual report	All children in care are offered a return home interview but this is not always taken up. The Missing Children Co-Ordinator has oversight of this key area and shares learning via annual reports. In addition to this the CIC Annual Report will now include a specific analysis of learning and responses taken from information gathered from children in care who go missing.

5. Profile of the West Berkshire Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service:

- 5.1 The IROs within QAAS operate within the framework of the IRO Handbook 2011 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. The IROs hold a key role in relation to the improvement and quality assurance of the Care Planning for children in care and for challenging any drift and delay through use of the Issues Resolution process.
- 5.2 IROs have a responsibility to ensure that all their children in care have care plans in place which are relevant, timely and effective and are achieving the best outcomes for them. They have a responsibility to promote best practice and high professional standards across the Children's Social Work Service. The IROs work hard to deliver a high-quality service for West Berkshire's children in care and the success of this work is reflected within the high performance which has been maintained year on year within the service and the quality of the feedback received in relation to this work. They are clear on the independence of their role and use the Issues Resolution process to good effect. They keep their children and young people as the central focus within all the work they do with the primary aim to achieve the best possible outcomes for them; ensuring there is no undue delay or drift occurring; that each child's care plan meets their needs, that all children have a voice and feel that their wishes and feelings are heard.
- 5.3 The Independent Reviewing Officers in West Berkshire continue to hold dual roles and Chair both Child in Care Reviews and Child Protection Conferences. This has ensured that their relationship with the children they are working with endures and provides children with consistency throughout their journey within West Berkshire Children and Family Services.
- 5.4 There has been ongoing challenge in relation to workload management within QAAS due to unplanned extended sickness absence in respect of the IROs and the high number of children open to West Berkshire over this period who were subject to child protection plans.
- 5.5 There is some cultural and ethnic diversity within the service, however with no male workers within the service currently, the staffing cohort does not reflect the diversity of the Children in Care population in West Berkshire.
- 5.6 Staff within QAAS receive monthly supervision and have access to informal supervision as and when needed. They also meet as peers (both online and face to face), including for monthly team meetings. The current Service Manager remains committed to ensuring the level of supervision and support to Independent Reviewing Officers is consistent and of a high standard.
- 5.7 The IROs within QAAS all have significant post-qualifying experience as a social worker and are registered as social workers with Social Work England. They have all previously held roles as managers within other service areas. The IROs have been able to access a diverse range of training, appropriate to their developmental needs and the specific areas of knowledge required by the needs of the young people on their caseloads.
- 5.8 The IROs contribute, through their expertise and experience, to improvements in wider practice through delivery of training and briefing sessions to staff in children's services and for partner agencies in the following areas:

- Holding reflective sessions with social workers in relation to children the IROs are holding when requested
- Designated Safeguarding Leads Training
- Undertaking case specific audit activity
- Feedback in relation to this work has been positive.

- 5.9 The QAAS Service Manager sits on several Panels, forums and planning groups, in which the IRO perspective is valued as part of the decision-making process, alongside that of children's social work service. These include the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) Independent Scrutiny and Impact Group, the Child Exploitation Strategic Group, the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Policy and Procedures BWSCP sub-group and the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Monitoring Meetings. This also provides a useful setting to strengthen links across agencies and to share the perspectives of the IRO service regarding multi-agency planning for children in care.
- 5.10 The IRO Service Manager also represents West Berkshire Children and Family Services at the Southeast Regional IRO Managers forum and meets quarterly with all the Berkshire Safeguarding Leads, providing an opportunity to network with peers and share information and good practice.
- 5.11 The IRO's have had opportunity to network with peers from other Local Authorities within Berkshire as part of the Berkshire IRO Networking Meetings, this has included peer support networking meetings with the IROs in Bracknell Children & Family Services.

6. IRO Caseloads

- 6.1 The IRO Handbook recommends that a child in care caseload for a full-time IRO is between 50 and 70. There is no guidance in relation to average caseloads for Chairs who hold both children in care and children subject to CP plans. The IRO/CP Chair case load as of 31st March 2025 (average snapshot) was 74 (80) children per IRO, which is a decrease of 8% in comparison to the same period in the previous year. This breaks down to approximately 36 (41) children subject to child protection plans and 38 (39) Children in Care open to each IRO/CP Chair. The size of caseload alone however does not fully indicate the workload for each IRO/CP Chair as this is determined by a number of other responsibilities e.g., the number of out of authority placements and placement moves occurring, the number and complexity of families within CP, young people who are open under the 18+ Pathway Plan review offer and unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- 6.2 The number of children in care open to the IROs as of 31st March 2025 was in some cases near the lower end of the recommended caseload for an IRO without the CP cases:

IRO	CIC Caseload:
1	44
2	39
3	32
4	27
5	46

- 6.3 The IROs also provided cover for the Local Authority Designated Officer for annual leave, sickness absences and outside the LADO's working hours (the LADO post was 0.6fte up until the middle of this period). Positively the LADO post is now full time and cover has reduced to annual leave and sickness.

7. Quantitative information in relation to West Berkshire Children in Care

The National picture:

- 7.1 "Characteristics of CLA are broadly similar to last year. Many of the changes seen in recent years have been as a result of the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) as UASC are a distinct cohort with specific characteristics. However, the numbers of UASC this year are very similar to those last year.
- 7.2 Males are slightly over-represented in the CLA population (57%) compared to the overall child population (51%) - as shown in the latest ONS mid-year population estimates (opens in a new tab). Some of this is due to UASC, however males are still slightly over-represented for non-UASC CLA (53%).
- 7.3 Children from Mixed ethnic groups were over-represented and children from Asian ethnic groups were under-represented (opens in a new tab) in the numbers of CLA compared to the overall child population. Children of White ethnicity account for 71% of CLA, 11% were Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, 7% Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, 5% were Asian or Asian British, 5% other ethnicities, and ethnicity was not known or not yet recorded for 1%.
- 7.4 CLA are primarily from an older demographic. Over the last five years, whilst the number of CLA has increased, the proportion of CLA in most age groups have been relatively stable, the exception is those aged 16+ years which have been gradually increasing."
- 7.5 Gov.UK: Children looked after in England - headline facts and figures – 2024
- 7.6 Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

Number of Children in Care:

- 7.7 The average number of children in care over this period was 196. The actual number of children in care by the end of March 2024 had reduced to 187.

CIC numbers (snapshot) March 2019 to March 2023:

	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	March 2024	March 2025
Total No. Children in Care	158	146	166	197	187	189

Children in Care per 10000 of Total Population	44	41	46	55	41	53
National Rate per 10000 population (2023)	69.7 (70)					
SE Rate Average per 10000 (2023/24)	(48)					

- 7.8 The rate per 10,000 of children in the care of West Berkshire has remained consistently lower than the SE and National average rates, no specific reason has been identified for this difference. There has been very little change in the number of children in care over this period in comparison to the previous period.

(snapshot as of 31.3.25)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
No. of Children Entering Care	47	78	102	71	88
No. of Children Leaving Care	58	57	71	81	85

- 7.9 During 2023 just under 9% of the population of children in care within England are UASC. In comparison within West Berkshire as of 31st March 2025 just under 12% (13%) of our children in care are UASC. [Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)
- 7.10 There have historically been a significant number of UASC received into West Berkshire care because this locality has a large number of service stations in the area where many UASC have been left by traffickers over the years. In 2016 the Government introduced the National Transfer Scheme Protocol for UASC a voluntary agreement with Local Authorities (LA) to enable the safe transfer of UASC presenting in one Authority (predominately the port Authorities, such as Kent) to another LA. West Berkshire has always volunteered and been proactive in accepting UASC into the Locality, unfortunately not all LAs were as proactive and in late 2021 the Government compelled all Local Authorities to participate within the scheme and expected numbers are now set for each LA. This ensures a fairer, more equal distribution of UASC across counties and reduces delay in finding homes for these children. West Berkshire's number of UASC has remained relatively consistent as a result since then.
- 7.11 The table below shows the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) who have been received into care within West Berkshire over the last two periods:

2023/24:

CHILDREN IN CARE NUMBERS												
	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24
Total Number of Children in Care	197	202	209	201	199	188	193	192	193	198	194	187
Number of CiC that are UASC	27	29	28	27	27	26	27	29	29	28	28	25

2024/25:

CHILDREN IN CARE NUMBERS												
	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25
Total Number of Children in Care	180	180	185	177	180	194	188	189	183	179	185	189
Number of CiC that are UASC	25	21	26	25	26	26	27	27	24	21	20	22

7.12 The majority of the UASC coming into West Berkshire are approaching adulthood and therefore move relatively quickly into the Care Leaver Service. There are currently 87 (79) UASC open to and receiving ongoing support from the Care Leaver Service. This has remained consistent because of the expectations set for Local Authorities within the Government Dispersal Scheme.

Characteristics of WBC children in Care:

7.13 The characteristics of WBC children in care are generally similar to the previous reporting period. Male children and young people are over-represented within WBC's CiC population when compared to the overall child population in England (currently 51% -

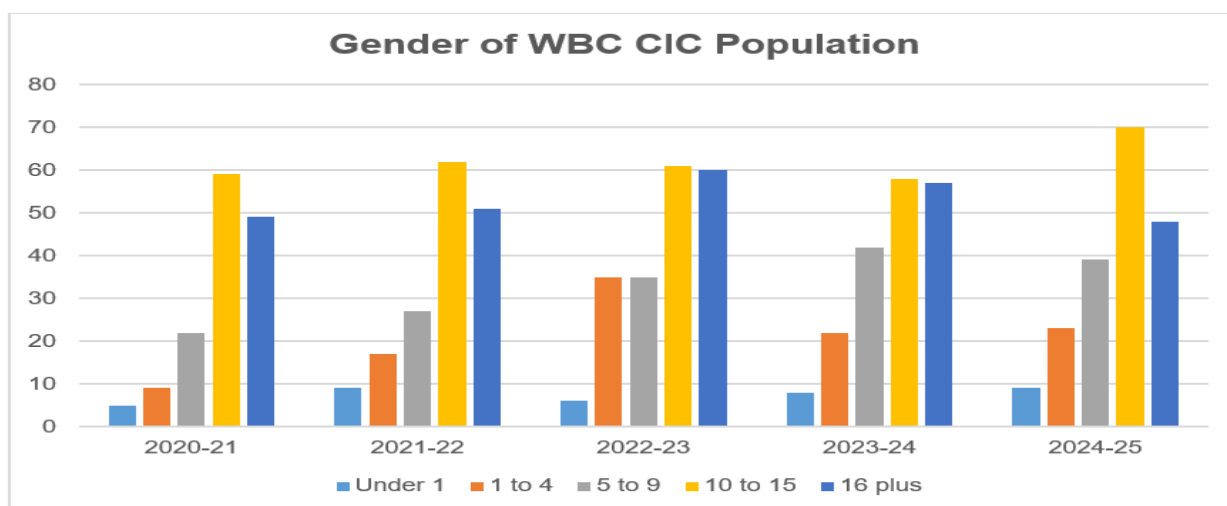
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2023>).

7.14 Within England children of white ethnicity accounts for 71% of the CiC population, with the remainder being from ethnic minorities. Within WBC the split is 86% white British with the remaining 14% being from ethnic minorities.

7.15 Currently (as a snapshot on 31st March 2025) 66% of WBC's CiC population are male.

Age range of WBC children in care:

7.16 West Berkshire's children in care are primarily aged 10 years upwards, although in recent years WBC has seen an increase in the number of children within the age range of 5 to 9 years as can be seen from the table below.

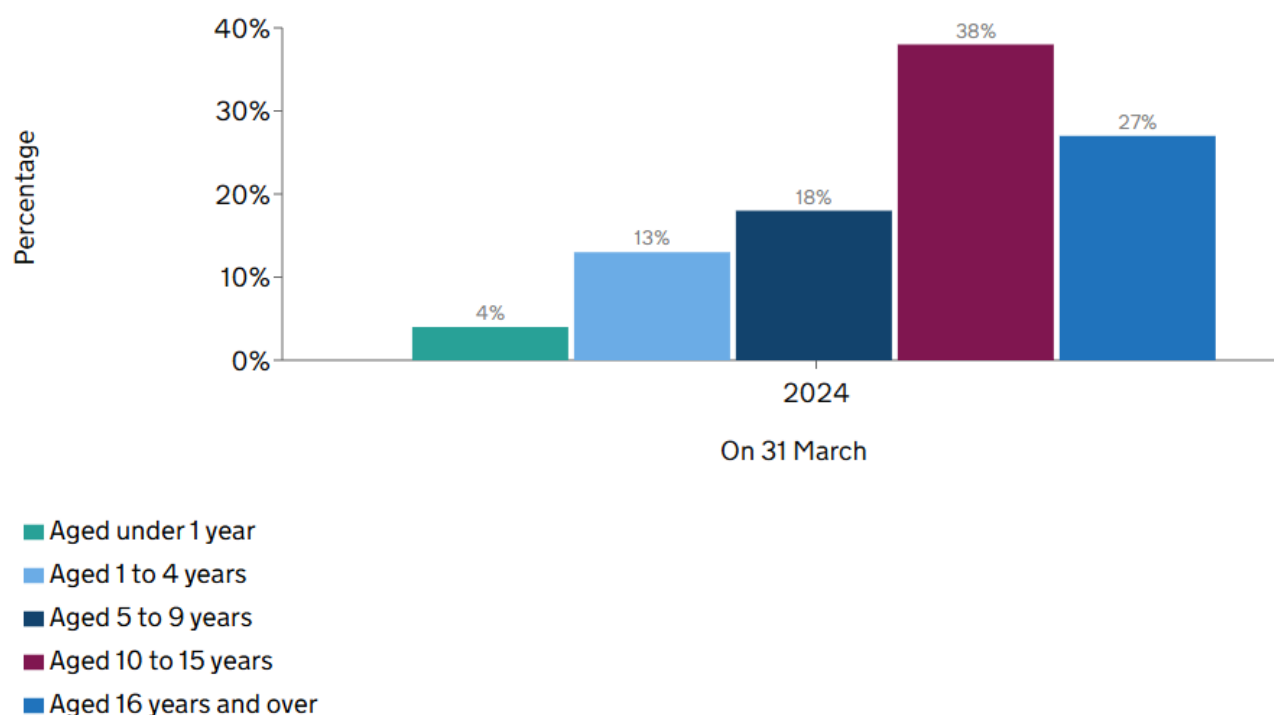


Age range	Under 1	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	16 plus
Percentage	5%	12%	21%	37%	25%

7.17 When the figures for 2024-25 are broken down into percentages, they align with the England figures as can be seen from the table below:

Children looked after in England are predominantly older

England, 31 March 2024



8. Child in Care Reviews

Number and type of CIC reviews held:

8.1 There were 549 (537) CIC reviews held over this period, equating to approximately 12 (11) meetings being held a week. Of these:

- 142 (114) were initial reviews for children entering care
- 117 (109) were the second reviews of children in care
- 290 (314) were subsequent reviews of children in care

8.2 129 (73) part 1 CIC reviews were held. This means that the review was held over two separate meetings (and dates) because of the circumstances at the time of the initial review. The reason split reviews are held is generally due to impending Court hearings and last minute availability of the child, foster carer or other key party.

Timeliness of the CIC Reviews:

8.3 92% (98%) of the CIC reviews held took place within the statutory timescales. Performance within this area remains high within WBC in comparison to the SE &

National Averages. There were 45 (47) CIC reviews held out of timescale this period this period for the following reasons:

(The overall number in this table is higher as there may have been more than one reason for the delay)

No. of reviews:	Reason the review was rescheduled:
7 (17)	Foster home breakdown/Foster home change
1 (12)	The updating information (including the care plan) were not available in time for the review
21 (10)	The IRO was unwell
6 (5)	SW availability (annual leave/change of SW/illness)
7 (5)	Foster parent/parent availability
2 (0)	Change of IRO due to IRO leaving
1 (0)	IRO capacity
1 (1)	Error in calculating next date (1 day late)
2 (0)	Late notification to QAAS
2 (0)	Delayed for outcome of Court hearing

- 8.4 IRO capacity to accommodate any delays and to continue to hold the CIC review within timescales has continued to be less over this period due to competing workload demands and there has been an additional factor of unexpected long term sickness within the service. Each child/young person affected has been individually considered in relation to the impact of the delay upon them and whether a change of IRO would be more appropriate rather than the review being delayed. This is also reflected within the above table.
- 8.5 This period has again seen a significant number of changes of foster homes for children, which had meant that these new foster homes have required a CIC review to take place earlier than what might have been necessary had this move not occurred. There were 25 (31) part 1 reviews held over this period because of a change of foster home for a child, these would all need a part 2 meeting to finalise the review and would have been held on a different date. Where necessary the IRO has raised an issues resolution in relation to any delays and they were appropriately addressed by the relevant line manager.
- 8.6 The IROs receive a weekly report to assist them in tracking reviews to avoid reviews being late, or the resulting documentation being sent out late and this has usually worked relatively effectively. However, the number of children subject to a child protection plan has remained high in West Berkshire and this has impacted upon the IRO's availability to reschedule reviews to keep them within timescales, despite the above issues. It has also meant that not all their documentation has been sent out within the procedural timeframes over this period. 277 (217) sets of minutes were sent out outside the 20-day procedural timescale over this period. The vast majority of these were sent out within 2 weeks of this timeframe. Delays in recordings being sent out have occurred predominantly because of unexpected extended staff sickness and volume of work within QAAS.
- 8.7 The timeliness of care plans being sent out following reviews has remained at 100%, this is robustly tracked by QAAS Business Support.

8.8 Number and location of the CIC reviews:

The table below shows the vast majority of WBC children live either within or close to WBC locality area. However, there is a significant amount of travel involved within the IRO's roles due to where some of our WBC children and young people are living. IROs are required to see all their children prior to their reviews and due to distance this is sometimes immediately before the actual meeting. There are occasions where there is a particular identified need when the IRO will visit a child or young person outside of their statutory CIC review timeframe in addition to the actual review (not included within the following figures):

Number of reviews	Locality area:
239 (135)	West Berkshire
124 (66)	Berkshire (not including West Berkshire)
40 (29)	Hampshire (1 Isle of Wight)
24 (12)	Oxfordshire
13 (12)	Wiltshire
13 (7)	Gloucestershire
10 (0)	West Midlands
9 (4)	Central & Greater London
9 (8)	Buckinghamshire
9 (8)	Surrey
9 (6)	Bedfordshire
8 (10)	Lincolnshire
7 (3)	Kent
6 (0)	Sussex
4 (3)	Dorset
4 (2)	Lancashire
3 (0)	Essex
3 (3)	Somerset
3 (0)	Wales
2 (2)	Shropshire
2 (0)	Greater Manchester
2 (2)	Cornwall
1 (0)	Derbyshire
1 (2)	Staffordshire
1 (0)	Devon
1 (0)	Cambridgeshire

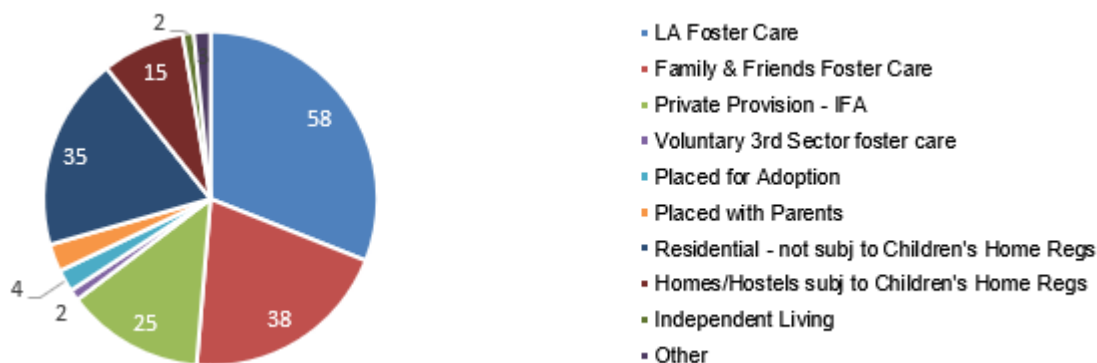
Post 18 Pathway Plan Reviews:

- 8.9 Twelve (11) care leavers have requested a post 18 pathway plan review (PPR) at their last CIC review. None progressed beyond one review post 18 years of age. 11 were UASC young people. Many UASC have been in LA care for a very short period and have not developed the confidence that the support they are receiving will endure once they leave LA care. The IROs have reported that after the initial post-18 PPR, none of the 12 young people taking up this service have felt the need for any further post 18 pathway plan reviews.

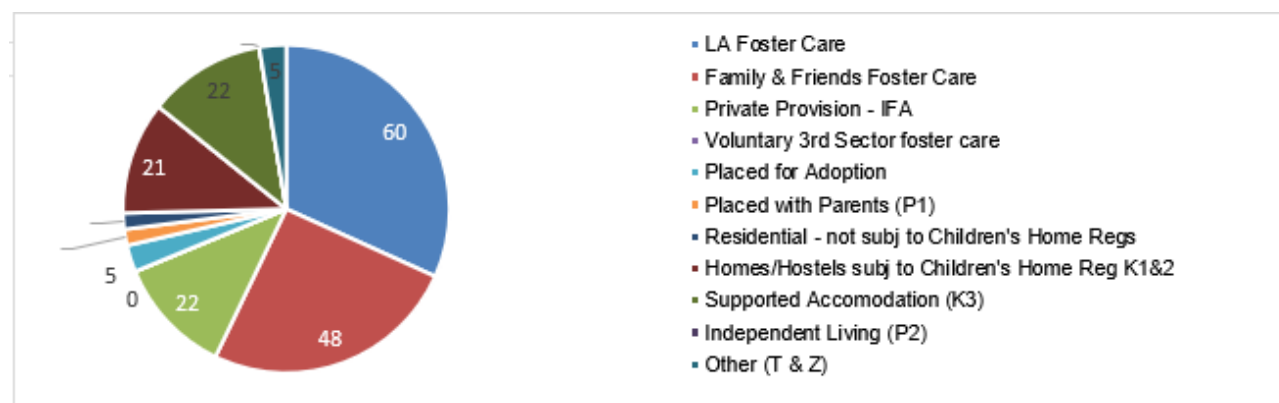
8.10 The Post 18 PPR service is always promoted within the young person's last child in care review by their IRO prior to them reaching 18 years of age. A letter detailing the offer is also sent out with their last child in care plan and child in care minutes, reminding them this service remains open for them to access at any time whilst they hold care leaver status.

9. Types of foster homes:

2023/24 (March 2024 snapshot):



2024/25 (March 2025 snapshot):



9.1 The tables above show the continued strong focus within West Berkshire for keeping children within families and in particular within their own friends and family networks wherever possible. As of 31st March 2025, over 55% of WBC's child in care population were living with either WBC foster parents or with friends and family over this period.

9.2 The number of young people listed as being placed within unregulated settings over this period has vastly reduced, but when this occurs these are matched to their needs and subject to ongoing 6 weekly reviews by the Family Placement Team, alongside the usual child in care reviews, and so are subject to robust scrutiny. They are also visited weekly by their allocated social worker. The IROs have had no concerns in relation to the level of monitoring and quality of these arrangements over this period.

10. Placement Stability

Children in Care: number of placements in the period (as of 31 st March 2025)	Children looked after in England no. of Placements:		
Number of looked after children with more than 3 Placements in the period	24	10%	10%
Number of looked after children with 2 Placements in the period	42	22%	21%
Number of looked after children with 1 Placement in the period	129	68%	69%
Total number of looked after children	189		

(England statistics taken from: [Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#))

10.1 The number of Placement moves experienced by WBC children in care has remained relatively similar and aligns with the England averages.

11. Children Leaving Care

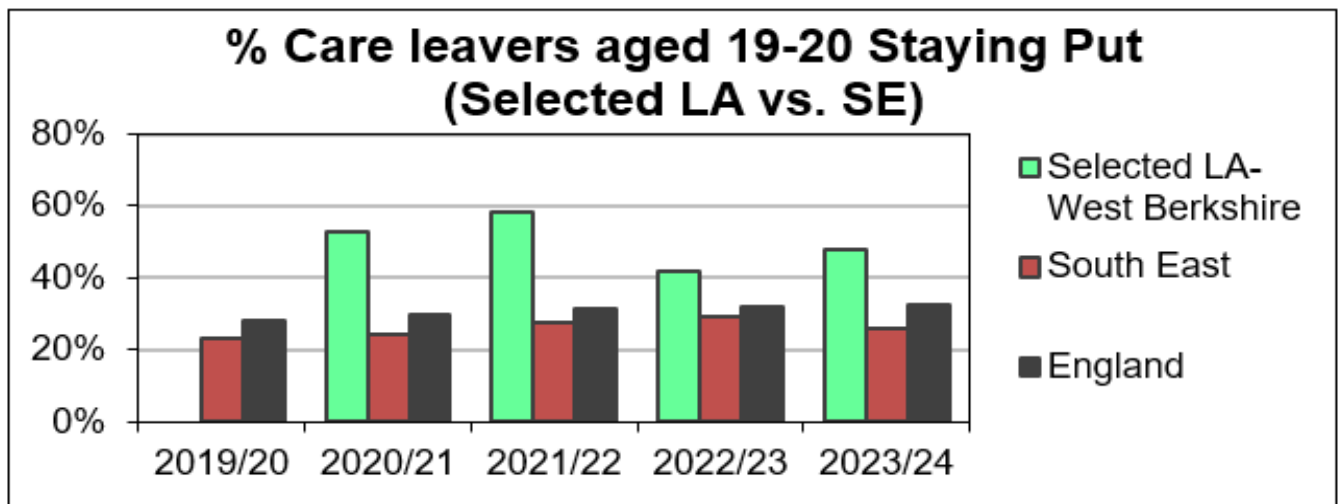
11.1 IROs are responsible for ensuring West Berkshire children in care achieve permanence and that this occurs without unnecessary drift or delay. During 2024-25, 85 (71) children are recorded as having left care.

Reasons for leaving local authority care:

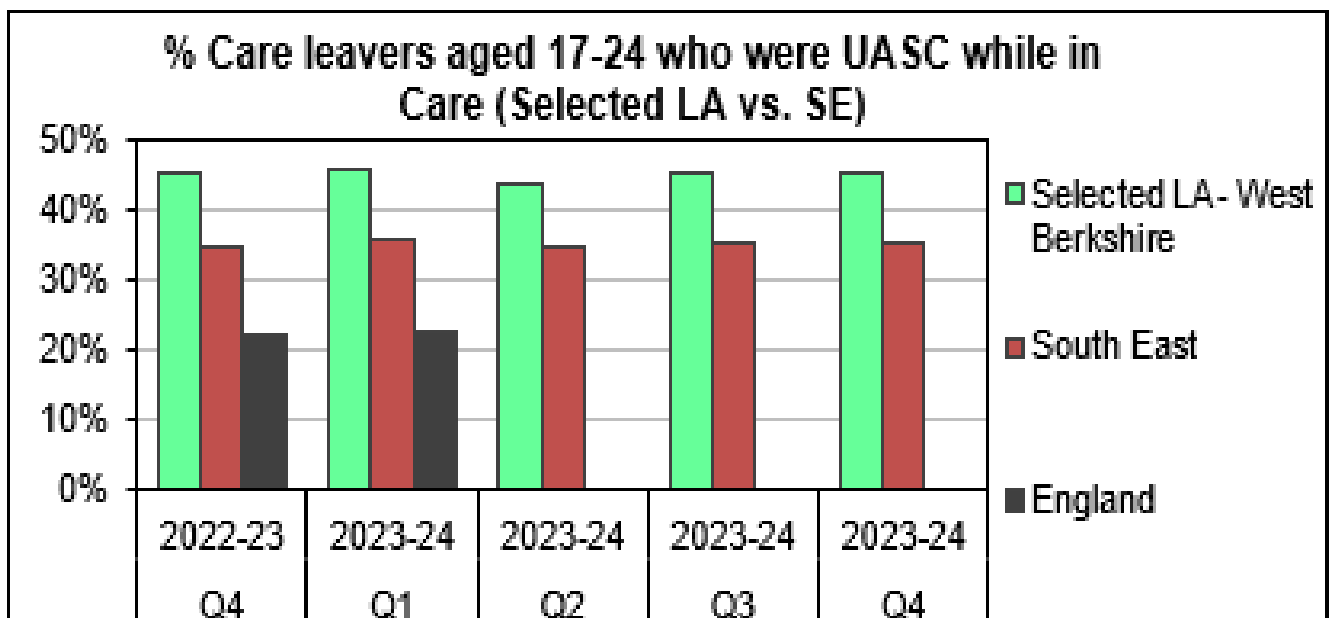
11.2 The table below provides a breakdown of the reasons why West Berkshire children left care over this period in comparison to the previous 4 years. Excluding children of 18 years of age, 62% (42%) of children in care within West Berkshire were either adopted or left care to live with their parents or a relative, indicating that permanency planning for children in care continues to remain focussed on achieving permanence through family-based options.

Reason the child left care:	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2021 to March 2022	April 2022 to March 2023	April 2023 to March 2024	April 2024 to March 2025
Special Guardianship Order made to former foster carers who were a relative	8	9	3	10	6
Residence order granted/Child Arrangement Order	6	0	1	1	0
Adoption	6	3	5	4	15
Other	3	2	8	11	3
Sentenced to custody	1	0	0	0	0
Left care to live with parents, relatives, or other person with no parental responsibility	2	12	9	28	14
Age assessment determined UASC to be aged 18 or over	0	0	0	0	0
Moved Into Independent Living	15	9	17	15	40
Transitioned into Leaving Care/Adult Services	5	1	0	1	1
Aged 18 but remained with current carers under a staying put arrangement	12	18	24	11	5
Total	58	57	71	81	85

11.3 WBC compares well in relation to its' proportion of care leavers who have remained in their foster homes post 18yrs:



11.4 5 (11) young people left care over this period and remained living with their foster families. As with most young people the need for family support does not end when they reach 18 years of age, and this arrangement ensures this support continues for them where it is an identified need.



11.5 WBC's percentage of care leavers who were UASC whilst in care has remained consistently higher than all other Local Authorities in the South-East region apart from Kent (data comparison was made via the reported figures within SESLIP) and is significantly higher than the England average, further evidencing how proactive West Berkshire has been in this respect.

12. Quality Assurance

12.1 Before each child in care review IROs undertake an audit of the child's case file to ensure the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority are being met. After the review they complete a Child in Care Chair's Report, which is placed on the child's file within Care Director, this includes the outcome of their audit and a letter written directly to each child telling them about discussions and decisions made in their child in care review. The information within their reports is aggregated and fed into West Berkshire's monthly Datazone Performance Reports to inform whole service performance and delivery.

Audit of CP and CIC visits:

12.2 An audit of social worker CIC and Child Protection visits was undertaken over March 2025. The quality of practice was found to be generally good and there was improvement found in relation to the recordings being present within the child's case files. Children's wishes and feelings were found to be consistently captured, however the direct work completed with them was not always saved to file. There was evidence of good practice occurring:

- *"This child is in a long term foster placement with a maternal family member and the visits capture how well the child is doing since the move and now that long term permanence has been established."*
- *"The social worker has clearly developed a warm and positive relationship with this child, talking about his favourite things (dinosaurs and football) and helping him and his carer (also known as Mummy) to navigate supporting him in understanding his family network."*
- *"Family time arrangements are all kept under consistent review via the CIC review process."*

12.3 There was however some variance in relation to whether or not a child's bedroom was seen and in relation to unannounced visiting and managers were asked to ensure this is occurring consistently as part of their supervision and tracking processes.

13. Consultation with children and young people

13.1 A key responsibility for the IROs is to ensure that every child in care is aware of their rights and entitlements in law, also to ensure that every child in care's wishes and feelings are known and are influential in shaping their care plan. West Berkshire's Children in Care choose to share their views via a range of different mediums:

- Attending their CIC reviews and contributing directly
- Completing consultation documents
- Speaking to their advocate
- Speaking with their social worker or another trusted adult
- Meeting with and speaking to their IRO

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN CARE REVIEWS FOR THOSE AGED 4+ WHERE THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR REVIEW

	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25
% of reviews this month	94%	95%	100%	100%	92%	94%	95%	86%	92%	93%	100%	94%
% of reviews year to date	94%	93%	95%	98%	97%	97%	98%	96%	95%	96%	97%	97%

13.2 97% (93.8%) of WBC children in care over the age of 4 years are recorded as having contributed to their reviews. 4 (4) young people chaired their own reviews over this period. The IROs record this when the meeting is entirely led by the young person, however there are a number of children and young people who co-chair with the IRO.

13.3 Where children/young people are recorded as not having contributed at all toward their reviews over this period, a review of their case files has indicated they were all consulted. The only exceptions to this have been children who have not wanted to contribute (this is generally with older adolescent CIC who do not want to participate), or if they are too young to engage. The IROs do however continue to try to encourage and support all children to participate and where possible take the lead within their reviews.

13.4 The information children and young people have provided for their reviews within consultation papers still indicates a high proportion of them have not been adequately consulted regarding how their review should be held. However, this is consistently explored by the IROs as part of the CIC reviewing process and they have identified no occasion where the child/young person has not been consulted about their reviews beforehand. It is therefore unclear why they are continuing to state this in consultation documents. The IROs have however incorporated discussion with children and young people about how they were consulted about their meetings into the IRO meetings with them prior to every review to ensure this is occurring as set out within the care planning regulations. QAAS has also developed a new document which will be sent out to every child and young person asking them to tell their IRO directly if they have any particular requests about their review meetings over the next reporting period (this is saved within appendix 1 of this report).

Consultation Documents - Child's Voice:

13.5 The following is a selection of feedback provided by children and young people for their reviews:

13.6 How I feel about where I live:

I like it and I hope the court judge says for us to stay with X and X
(8 yr old)

I love where I live and couldn't think of it any other way. X and X spoil me and treat me like their own child. We are always out doing stuff together and even when we are at home we still do stuff as a family.
(13yr old)

Its nice, I love playing in the meadow and wading in the stream
(10yr old)

caring, happy, good, nice, helpful, friendly - this place is good
(16yr old – UASC)

I love living here with my grandma, grandad and the dogs
(11yr old)

I like living here, they made me feel welcome when I first came here. I get along with X & X, they annoy me sometimes but I annoy em back ;)
(14yr old)

I wanna go and see mum again, I do like this family tho
(8yr old)

Happy like fish :)
(6yr old)

13.7 What I would want to Change:

I want to see X and X more than I do now I see my mum every week and I'm fine with it
(13yr old)

I feel that it is going well with my mom and think we are ready for the next step if everyone is happy with that. I have not seen my sisters since we went Bowling and that is something I would like to change. (15yr old)

I like living with X, she is nice, she has toys. I am safe there. God. A little bit bad as I always shout at her because I am angry straight in the morning when I am tired and because I am not with my mum. Got my own bedroom with train stickers.
(6yr old)

Nothing I want to change, not sure how I feel about time with family (14yr old)

I want to stay at mum's sleepovers
(10yr old)

13.8 How I think I am getting on at school:

I am getting on at school fine, I just get told off a tiny bit
(8yr old)

terrible, good at maths, I like my teacher now, I trust her. I am proud of my ideas for my writing and the vocabulary I have used.
(10yr old)

I think I'm getting on alright in school at the moment but I'm in a college for a little bit to change my behaviour and I think I have changed
(14yr old)

I think I am doing very well at school in all the tests I've done. I have got when I am expected or 2 times higher than what is expected
(11yr old)

No not really only that if you can I would like to really live with X my sis
(12yr old)

so far I am in a SEN school and I do not want to leave till I am 13 years old, like 3 days of story breaks then two days just school
(11yr old)

I like school, maths and english and dragon club (7yr old)

13.9 Is there anything else you would like to tell your IRO?

mummy, daddy and me, please
may you get a picter (picture)
(8yr old)

No not yet I'm pretty happy with everything in my
life at the moment
(15yr old)

I am learning about
kind hands
(5yr old)

I love having a kitten, I love having dogs, I love having
the responsibility of having a kitten. I love going out with
my mates, I love playing video games. I love having
dogs and kitten because when I'm sad, I have then and
also their the best and they give you hugs and the cat
also has downside which is he wakes me up at 2.00am
by eating my toes.
(11yr old)

When my mum went on holiday in Feb
instead of seeing me, I would like
someone to say if she has a date to
see me don't book anything else and
not to cancel unless she is ill because
it made me feel upset and let down
(13yr old)

14. Advocacy & Independent Visitors

14.1 West Berkshire children and young people in care are offered access to advocacy and independent visitors. This is an essential service as it provides the opportunity for children in care within West Berkshire to express themselves and share their views and interests with someone outside of Children and Family Services.

14.2 The provider for this service is the National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS). NYAS provide quarterly progress reports which are discussed with the QAAS Service Manager within quarterly monitoring meetings. The following information contains extracts of these reports alongside WBCs' own data.

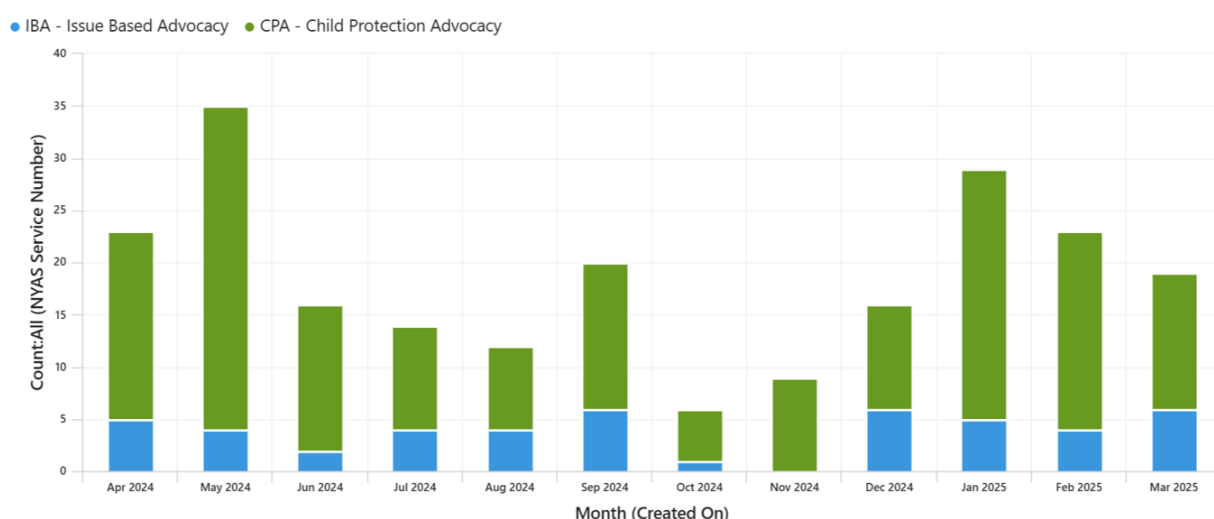
Advocacy:

14.3 A child or young person's right to advocacy support when making a complaint or representation is set out within:

- The Children Act 1989 (s24D and s26).
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- The Advocacy Services and Representations Procedure (Children) (Amendment) Regulations 2004.
- Guidance: Providing Effective Advocacy Services for Children and Young People making a complaint under the Children Act 1989.

Number of Advocacy Contacts this period in comparison to the previous period:				
Period:	April 2021 to March 2022	April 2022 to March 2023 (not including data from October and November 2022)	April 2023 to March 2024	April 2024 to March 2025
Total overall for the period regardless of child status/reason:	417	437	486	342

14.4 The table above lists the number of children being referred for advocacy services regardless of their status. The majority of referrals for advocacy continue to be for children subject to child protection plans:



14.5 Advocacy is provided through a variety of different avenues due to the high demand for it, which went over and above the current commissioning arrangements. NYAS managed 222 referrals for advocacy for children and young people over this period out of the 342 who requested it. Not all advocacy support involves complaints or representations and so some of the advocacy support for children and young people was provided through someone the child themselves had identified; a trusted adult (such as a pastoral support worker) or a family support worker not connected to the work with the family. The IROs have been generally satisfied with the advocacy provided for their children and young people and have used the Issues Resolution process when they haven't.

14.6 NYAS's contract period is approaching its end and whilst the service they have provided has been excellent, WBC is in the process of going back out to tender to ensure that future demand for advocacy can be entirely met through the independent provider.

Impact of Advocacy:

What was the need?	What did they do?	What was the impact?
To gain their views, wishes and feelings for their CIC review	We met in Costa and explored all aspects of his life, home, school, health, family contact, hobbies, likes and dislikes. The YP is very happy and content in all areas. YP has a great relationship with his social worker and feels able to discuss any concerns that may arise.	YP is doing really well, he is happy, settled and enjoying his life. He has a great SW and foster carers.
To gain their views, wishes and feelings for their CIC review	I met with the YP and we went out. We chatted about all aspects of his life and he informed me that he is very happy in all areas. He also told me how amazing his social worker is and that she is the best one he has ever had.	YP is happy, confident and able to discuss concerns with his social worker.
To gain their views, wishes and feelings for their CIC review	I met with the YP at his school, he was keen to meet with me in person and show me around his school. YP was very clear as to his wishes and feelings, which included some safeguarding concerns, which were raised internally.	YP attended the CIC review and was happy to have his views shared. He was considered throughout the review and plans were put in place to support his views, wishes and feelings.
To gain their views, wishes and feelings for their CLA review	I visited YP in school and we chatted and drew and she was able to express her views, wishes and feelings. I then attended the CIC review and advocated for the YP. I could not stay for the duration but have followed up with the social worker for an update.	The YP had her voice heard by family and professionals and these were taken into consideration when the plan was being drawn up for her.

Independent Visitors:

- 14.7 There were 15 (8) children showing as matched to Independent Visitors (IV) between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025. The Children in Care Service Manager regularly reviews the number of children waiting for IVs and Mentors to ensure they are matched in a timely way. Children and young people are prioritised according to level of need and there are ongoing discussions with the provider regarding steps being taken to identify the right matches for the children still waiting to be provided with one.

Provision of Independent Visitors and Mentors over 2024/25: (Snapshot March 2025)	
Young people matched with an IV	15 (12)
Young people waiting for suitable IV / Mentor	7 (11)

- 14.8 The independent visitors undertake a wide variety of activities with their children and young people such as a Harry Potter Studio tour, cinema, bowling, laser quest, dog walks, shopping, Winchester science centre and planetarium, escape rooms, Bucklebury Farm Park, iFLY, meals, fishing, VR experiences, ice cream, manicure, football game at Select Car Leasing Stadium and the Hawk Conservancy Andover.

Reason for the delay in allocation of an IV/Mentor:	initial meeting complete – waiting for male IV initial meeting complete – waiting for male IV initial meeting complete – potential match established, and match meeting organised Initial meeting complete – waiting for male IV still to arrange initial meeting match ended in April would like a re-match, possible option in recruitment re-referral - find local IV on IOW
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14.9 The above table sets out in detail the reasons why they are 7 young people waiting to be matched to an IV. NYAS completed a full service review of referrals for these services, mentoring was raised as part of the promotion and service awareness sessions, but no referrals were received.

Feedback regarding the children and young people's experience of their Independent Visitors:

14.10 NYAS conducted an annual review of their service with all young people that had been matched with their IV for a year or more. Some reviews were conducted face to face, and where this wasn't possible, questionnaires were sent for the young people to complete.

- **What do you like most about having an IV?**

'I get to do things I wouldn't normally get to do by myself.'

'Getting out with someone different. Having fun. I can share problems with someone different other than my foster carer.'

'It gets me out of the house.'

'There are things I can talk to her about that I can't talk to others about.'

- **Can you tell us how they have helped you?**

'She has helped me get out and about.'

'I used to struggle with school – she has helped talk through scenarios and school work. I feel like if I have a problem I have someone to talk to about it.'

'She gets me out of the house. I suffer a bit with depression and can bed rot sometimes. My friends cancel on me and she doesn't.'

'They've helped me feel more confident with going out.'

'They have given me advice.'

- **Your friend would like an IV and wants to know more about it – What would you say?**

'They're quite fun to do stuff with, try something a bit different. They're good to have a chat with if you ever need a chat.'

'They are great, I have one, she is amazing. 😊'

'It's good, it's cool, it's fun.'

'I would say go for it! They'll help you with anything really.'

14.11 All the young people who responded agreed that they felt listened to and able to talk to their IVs.

Impact of the IVs:

I just wanted to feed back that my young people seem to be having a really positive time with their IVs lately, and IVs are really working to fulfil their role. Two of them dropped off presents for the children in a residential home, separate to their planned visits which was lovely. The matching seems good, and the people you have appointed seem to be meeting the needs of the children. Please pass on the appreciation!
(Feedback from social worker)

When you read out the report, I can hear the YP, it sounds just like them.
(feedback from SW)

"You're the best"
(Young person's feedback to IV)

X's foster carer texted me afterwards and said what a difference it has made seeing me, and how animated, smiley and chatty X was when she got home.
(Feedback from IV)

Foster Carer has said how much X looks forward to his visits and again today he has stated this himself and really looks at us as friends and he really enjoyed our time together. (Feedback from foster parent)

It was a truly special experience for X who very much deserved the treat & smiled & laughed throughout our time there. I asked her what her highlight of the day was & she said seeing Father Christmas which was so lovely! I don't think she'll ever forget the experience and the fun that she had.
(Feedback from IV)

15. Quality of Care Planning

- 15.1 Monitoring information indicates that there are timely assessments undertaken for children and focused work from the point children in need enter the front door ensures they receive the right support. There is also timely, focused work occurring with children on the edge of care to ensure that they are safe, that problems do not escalate, and children remain within their families. An average of 95% (92%) of the children in care to West Berkshire are visited within the statutory timeframes each month. When a visit to a child in care is late without good reason the IROs raise an issues resolution to ensure a plan is in place to avoid this occurring again.
- 15.2 The timeliness of health assessments for West Berkshire children in care has remained consistently high over this period, with 90% (91%) having been completed on time over this period. This remains aligned with the national average of 91% and higher than the England average of 89%.
- 15.3 Most PEPs have been completed within timescales. The average percentage of PEPs completed within timescales over this period was 95% (96%).
- 15.4 The percentage of dental checks being completed within timescales has increased at 92% (86%), this is a particular area of good practice when compared with the England figures (79%) which remains lower than the pre-pandemic levels. Not all children and young people will consent to seeing the dentist, but every effort is made to encourage them to attend, and this is monitored within their child in care reviews by their IRO.
- 15.5 On average 88% of WBC's children in care over the age of 4years had a valid SQD and the average difficulties score as of 31st March 2025 was 15.8. This is in comparison to the England statistics where 77% of children in care had a reported SDQ with the average score being 14.7.
- 15.6 The SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) is a behavioural screening questionnaire. Its primary purpose is to give social workers and health professionals information about a child's wellbeing. A score of 0 to 13 is considered normal, 14 to 16 is borderline, and 17 to 40 is a cause for concern.

Completion of Pathway Plans:

- 15.7 Whilst practice has always been consistently good, there has been an ongoing improvement in the completion rate of Pathway Plans for all the eligible and relevant young people with 100% of Pathway Plans being in place and up to date for all eligible and relevant children in care and being progressed to the IROs satisfaction.
- 15.8 On average 78% (78%) of Pathway Plans are in place and up to date for former relevant children. The completion of reviews of pathway plans for former relevant children is dependent upon their willingness to engage in a review and upon ability to keep in touch with them.

16. Children and Young People in care who are reported missing

16.1 The QAAS service manager completed a deep dive of information relating to children in care who are reported missing. As a result of the learning from this a meeting was held during October 2024 to explore how reporting and understanding of this key area could be improved and the following needs and strengths were identified:

- WBC has a Berkshire wide Police Missing Protocol and a WBC one, both though date back to 2018 and need to be refreshed. The new Harm Reduction Unit commences Spring 2025, but WBC will be the last Local Authority to get this and so there is value in updating the protocol in the meantime. The CAAS team manager is leading on achieving this action.
- Current training for foster carers does not include what should happen when a child goes missing – it was agreed the missing children co-ordinator would include this within their training.
- WBC doesn't currently undertake compliance visits to children's homes; don't check they have a protocol in place and the quality of it and this needs further consideration.
- WBC is only notified by the placements themselves when CIC from OLAs in our locality are missing. Every year a letter is sent to Other Local Authorities asking if they have any CIC in our area, the service manager for children in care is going to include something in these letters around missing CIC moving forwards.
- A strength is the missing children co-ordinator is consistent in notifying the host authority and agrees the response with them.
- WBC's missing children co-ordinator is also very proactive with CIC from OLAs, she attends risk management meetings and raises challenges where necessary if key actions haven't been taken e.g. DoLS or a lack of support.
- There are daily morning meetings between the missing children co-ordinator and the Police re missing children and so WBC knows live who is missing and can act quickly.
- The missing children co-ordinator liaises with the allocated SW to agree who is best to complete the RHI and tracks completion of them.
- The IROs include exploration of missing episodes and this is considered within the child plans.
- There is a very extensive annual report written on missing children but this is not specific to WBC children in care. The service manager for children in care will include an analysis of this within their annual report.
- EMRAC was identified as a particular area of strength in that it has multiple layers of oversight.
- A dip audit of children in care reported as missing is in the process of being completed as a test of assurance.

17. Quality Assurance role of the IRO Service

- 17.1 A significant aspect of the IRO's work is focussed on continuing oversight and scrutiny of each child's care plan. For West Berkshire's IROs, this part of the role is about good quality conversations and appropriate challenge.
- 17.2 The IROs complete a case file audit of every child and young person's ICS record in the lead up to every CIC review they Chair. The aim of this is to ensure that statutory responsibilities for them have been met and this has happened in a timely way. It also enables the IRO to be clear on what may or may not have happened since the last review. This is particularly key given some of the IRs raised over this period relate to the IRO not having been notified of key events in the child/young person's life.
- 17.3 When any concerns arise from these audits the IROs will either set an audit action for the relevant professional to address them or raise an Issues Resolution (IR).

Issues resolution and escalation

- 17.4 IROs play a key role in ensuring that all children and young people in care are aware of their rights and entitlements and where necessary West Berkshire IROs support young people to make representations and complaints. This is sometimes also achieved through use of the IR process.
- 17.5 One of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process.
- 17.6 Every Local Authority is required to have a formal process in place for an IRO to raise concerns and to ensure that this process is respected and prioritised by managers. The process is referred to in the statutory guidance as the local dispute resolution process, however in WBC this is referred to as the Issues Resolution process. The WBC process has 5 stages, and when an IR is raised there is an expectation that it is responded to within 5 working days of the stage within which it was raised. The process involves an ability for the IRO to escalate the matter through a number of levels of seniority within WBC with an identified timescale for a response at each stage (set at 5 working days per stage). The IRO may bypass any stage and progress the Issues Resolution to the level they consider most appropriate. There is a statutory requirement that formal IRs (stage 1-4) do not take any more than 20 working days to resolve.
- 17.7 The IROs have positive working relationships with the social workers and their line managers and this is reflected in the fact that the majority of IRs are raised and resolved within the informal stage or stage 1 of the IR process. However, some have been necessarily raised at a higher stage in the best interests of the children and young people involved.
- 17.8 17 (22) IRs have been raised by IROs in relation to WBC children in care over this period:
- 17.9 Stage the Issues Resolutions (IR) was raised and resolved within this period:

	Stage the IR was resolved ➡	Informal	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Stage IR was raised ⬇	Number of IRs raised: ⬇					
Informal (Line Manager)	4 (4)	4 (4)				
Stage 1 (Team Manager)	8 (10)		8 (8)	0 (2)		
Stage 2 (Service Manager)	4 (6)			3 (5)	1 (0)	0 (1)
Stage 3 (Service Director)	1 (1)				1 (1)	
Stage 4 (C&FS Executive Director)	0 (1)					0 (1)

17.10 Where IRs were escalated to higher stages this was due to a delay in the response within earlier stages and they were subsequently resolved. Two of the informal IRs and one of the stage one IRs were raised with other services areas or partners:

Stage IR raised:	Agency/professional:	Issue raised and resolution:
Informal	Independent Fostering Agencies (2 agencies)	The IRO raised a concern with two IFAs due to ongoing issue relating to the frequency of sibling contact between two children in care. This was also escalated via stage 3 to the children in care service manager who took positive action to address the issue for both children.
Informal	Virtual School Headteacher	The IRO escalated a concern regarding a delay in identifying an appropriate school for a child in care, a full explanation was provided regarding the delay and the IRO closed the IR satisfied every effort was being made to resolve this and in the meantime the child was receiving EOTAS support.
Stage 1	Named nurse for Safeguarding	The IRO escalated a concern in a significant delay in health assessment for a child in the care of West Berkshire living within another Local Authority Area. The ICB raised an escalation with their counterparts in that locality and this was resolved.

17.11 Reason why the IR was raised:

Issue raised: (NB: more than one issue was raised in some of the disputes and so the total in this table will be higher than overall number of them raised by IROs)	No of times raised as an issue:
Reports for the reviews were not available for the review/within statutory timescales:	6 (6)
Delays in completion of later life work.	1 (1)
IRO not notified of a significant event:	0 (5)
Key documents missing from child's case file	5 (0)
IRO was not sent the child's care plan before it was filed and their views were not included.	2 (0)
No advocate in place	1(1)
No Placement Planning Meeting	3
Visits not completed within statutory timeframes	4 (4)
The IRO challenged a delay in setting up the child's allowances.	3 (1)
Delay in life story work	1
IRO of the view a Deprivation of Liberty Order (DoLS) is required	1
SW failed to attend the child's review meeting	1
Foster parents have not been given the medical consent documents	1
IRO concerned current arrangements for child are unsafe, child living within a kinship arrangement which the decision maker has not approved.	1

Delay in progression of the care plan	1
Delay in resolving ongoing issue regarding family time	1
Delay in the making of a referral to seek an alternative foster home after notice was received.	1

17.12 The number of IRs being raised in relation to the timeliness of paperwork remains the highest reason for IRs, if the reports are not ready on time this can lead to delays in the child's review being held.

17.13 There have been no IRs raised in respect of the IRO not having been notified of a significant event, which is positive and demonstrates a positive impact from a reminder which was sent out to all the relevant service managers reminding them of their responsibilities in this respect at the end of the previous reporting period.

17.14 The IROs went directly to stages 2 to 4 for a small number of children and young people because of the impact of what was occurring upon them and the need to ensure it was very quickly resolved.

17.15 All the IRs were resolved to the satisfaction of the IROs. The wide range of IRs being raised reflects the depth of audit and oversight the IROs undertake.

17.16 Issues Resolutions raised by service area:

Service Area	Stage IR was raised:		Total number of IRs raised:	
	2023-24:	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25
Family Safeguarding West	Informal: 2 Stage 1: 4 Stage 2: 2	Informal: 2 Stage 1: 3	8	5
Family Safeguarding East	Informal: 1 Stage 1: 1	Stage 1: 3 Stage 2: 2 Escalations: (1 stage 2 escalated to stage 3)	2	5
Children With Disabilities	Informal: 1 Stage 1: 1 Stage 2: 1 Escalations: 1 x Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	Stage 3: 1	3	1

Children in Care	Stage 1: 1 Stage 2: 1 Stage 4: 1	Stage 1: 1 Stage 2: 1	3	2
16+/Care Leavers	Stage 1: 1 Stage 2: 2 Escalations: 1 x Stage 2 escalated to Stage 4	Stage 2: 1	3	1
Named Nurse for Safeguarding/ICB	0	Stage 1: 1	0	1
Virtual Headteacher	Informal: 1			1
Independent Fostering Agency	Informal: 1	Informal: 1	1	1

17.17 No specific patterns have arisen for any particular team in respect of the number and type of IRs raised. And it is positive to see the number being raised has reduced in comparison to the last period.

18. Feedback

18.1 The way in which feedback is gathered is an area which needs review to strengthen the process. Currently it is gathered via a variety of means; consultation documents, full case file audit documents, 1-1s, within reviews and on occasion is spontaneously sent in via e-mail or other means. The theme of the QAAS Business Plan next period is participation and work will centre on improving the way in which feedback is sought to encourage more qualitative feedback.

18.2 The following is a cross-section of feedback received in relation to the IROs:

Relationship/role:	Feedback received:
Children via their social worker	The children thought you were a very nice person and they felt included and supported.
Father via the child from social worker	(child) told me his dad really likes you and thinks you are very professional.
Supported lodgings provider to IRO	Thank you very much for being so engaged with our meeting yesterday, it has been an absolute pleasure working with you, we (all) agree you are very friendly and approachable and thorough with your consideration for (child's) needs in its' entirety and his transition to adult independence. You have been the first IRO to offer support post 18 and this is greatly appreciated.
Family Support Worker to IRO	Thank you for taking the time to explain everything in detail and for answering my questions, your guidance has been appreciated and it has been a valuable learning experience for me.

19. QAAS Service Priorities for the Coming 12 months

19.1 Service Priorities:

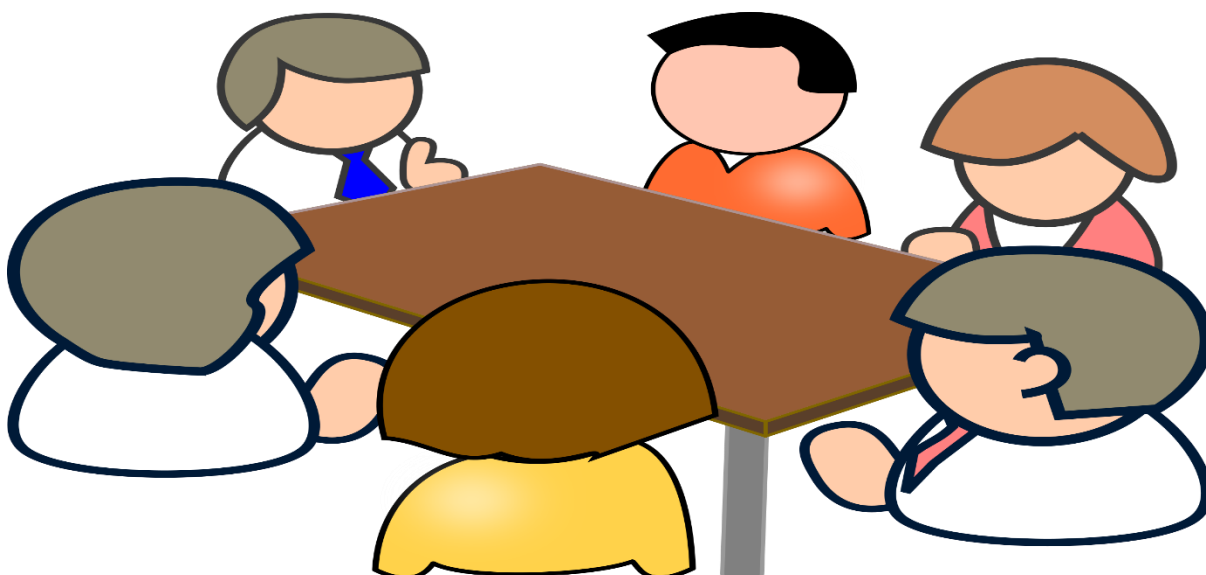
- To further improve the level to which children, young people and families participate within services provided.
- To further develop and expand QAAS's multi-agency training offer.
- To highlight the role of the fathers within meetings and ensure this is not overlooked.

20. Recommendations from the learning within this report

Recommended Action:	Who By:	When By:
Complete a dip audit of practice in relation to children in care who are reported as missing.	Children & Family Managers	By July 2025

Nicola Robertson
Service Manager
Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service

Appendix 1: Having My Say: What I Want to Happen in My Review:



My name:

My age:

The date of my child in care review is

The name of my IRO is (insert name)

Insert
Picture
here

Hi (INSERT NAME HERE)

I want to make sure that you are being asked about how your child in care review will be run. I want to make sure that everyone is doing what they should be to support you and this includes making sure you had a say in who you would like to be at your meeting and what you would like to talk about.

Your child in care review is important.

It needs to be held somewhere you feel comfortable, with only the people you want there present.

There shouldn't be any language used which you don't understand.

Your wishes and feelings should be listened to and be included in the meeting

There shouldn't be any surprises in what you hear.

It should celebrate your achievements.

It should think about your needs in the future.

It would be great if you would take a little bit of your time to tell me how you are getting on and what you would like to talk about in your meeting. I will use what you tell me when I plan your meeting and we can have a chat alone together about what you have said before your meeting starts.

People I want to come to my meeting: 

People I don't want to come to my meeting: 🤔

Things I want to talk about at my meeting: 🤔

Things I don't want to talk about at my meeting: 🤔

Don't worry if you forget to say something in your meeting, let me know and we can talk about this later and make sure it is included.

This is my e-mail: (insert e-mail here)

This is my telephone number: (INSERT NUMBER HERE)





It would be really helpful for my learning if you would take time after your meeting to tell me how well I did in your meeting. You can do this by :

Telling me after your meeting

sending me or the Participation Officer an e-mail

Ringling me

Filling in and giving the following form to me /your foster parent/your social worker/your advocate:

  FEEDBACK FROM MY REVIEW									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>What would've made your meeting better?</i>					<i>What was good about your meeting?</i>				
<i>My relationship with my IRO is :</i>									
<i>Good</i> 					<i>Not so good</i> 				
<i>Why do you think this?</i>									
<i>You can also send in your thoughts via this e-mail to:</i> <i>Deborah Mitchell</i>					listen tome@westberkshire.gov.uk				

Participation Officer:	
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Thank you for taking time to tell me what you think 🤗

We are committed to being accessible to everyone. If you require this document in an alternative format or translation, please call Children and Family Services on 551111.

**West Berkshire
Children and Family**

Market Street
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 5LD

T 01635 551111
www.westberks.gov.uk

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