

Annual Report 2021-22

Service Quality Unit





Service Overview

Looked After Children

Child Protection Register

Qualitative Reviews

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Introduction

Purpose

This annual report is an analysis of the activity within the Service Quality Unit (SQU) in Swansea Local Authority between April 2021 and March 2022. It provides an overview of the team profile, Child Protection Conferences, Looked after Children Reviews and Adoption reviews. In addition, it captured views of children/young people and families experiences of the service.

The team focuses their work on “what matters” to each individual child/YP whilst valuing the importance of building long term relationships with them.

“Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be” (Rita Pierson).

This report provides an opportunity to highlight areas of good practice, areas for improvement and emerging themes and trends to help focus on the future service development in the coming twelve months within the Service Quality Unit.

Team Profile

- Principal Officer
- Team Leader and Assistant Team Leader
- Child Protection Conference chair/ Independent Reviewing Officer – 10 full time & 4 part time (14 full time equivalent)
- Business Support Supervisor
- Child Protection Pannel Support Secretary – 3 full time & 3 part time (4.5 full time equivalent)
- Team Clerical Officer - 2 full time
- Service Quality Unit Business Support Assistant - 3 full time
- Additional support from the Child and Family Panel Support team – 1 full time



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Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO):

'The IRO's role is to monitor, that is keep an overview, of the child's case, not just at formal review meetings, but in between review meetings as well. However, the IRO does not make final decisions about a child's case; that is for the child's social worker and managers. The 'decisions' made during a review are, in fact, 'recommendations' to the local authority. The IRO will want to develop a good working relationship with the child's social worker, and, in some circumstances, be able to advise the social worker. The IRO has a duty to look at how the child has been looked after and how the care plan is progressing, but the IRO does not make care planning decisions; the care plan is ultimately the decision for the social worker and manager as they are the representatives of the local authority who either have parental responsibility for the child or young person or are acting with birth parents' consent under s76 SSWB(W)A. (PRACTICE STANDARDS AND GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE Reviewing and monitoring of a child or young person's Part 6 Care and Support Plan, 2015)

Under the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales act 2014:

'The functions of the IRO are to:

- monitor the local authority's performance in relation to the child's case*
- participate in the child's review in line with the regulations*
- ensure that the child's wishes and feelings are taken into consideration*
- perform any other function prescribed in the regulations'. (p74)*

This will also include ensuring compliance of timescales for reviews, reviewing the Personal Education and Health plan and raising any concerns and challenge through the escalation process or despite resolution protocol.



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What is working well?	What are we worried about?	What do we need to do?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Numbers of Looked After Children has reduced during this time by just under 50 children. 2. 3 new members of staff have been recruited, and staff retention has been maintained. 3. Safe Lac Operation Group has developed themes for how we can progress children/young person care plans going forward to ensure they achieve permanence as quickly as possible. 4. A greater number of children have exited care, compared with the number who have entered. 5. A high proportion of Looked After Children chaired, attended or participated in their review. 6. During the year, there has been a reduction of the number of children on Child Protection Register. 7. More children have been de-registered compared to the number registered. 8. All reviews and child protection conferences were held within timescales. 9. Cockett house has been refurbished and re-opened 10. There is an ongoing service review-taking place. 11. We continue to save for all Looked after children to support them financially when leaving care. 12. Facilitated training to some Supported Care Planning teams on Child Protection. 13. Quality assured all Child Protection reports and Lac reviews. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More Looked After Children and those subject to Child Protection registration than expected did not accept the active offer of an independent advocate. 2. Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) have found it can be harder to engage with younger children via Teams etc. as they lose interest very quickly 3. Some IRO's have found that young people find it easier not to answer your calls and disengage. 4. Whilst IT has allowed us to continue to practice within the pandemic at times, Wi-Fi internet connections have been problematic, as well as some families not having access to the technology. 5. Virtual Child Protection Conferences have taken longer than in person. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand why children and young people are not taking up the offer of advocacy. This will include speaking to young people as well as professional to boost the offer of an independent advocacy. 2. Contribute to the care and support plans "task and finish group" to allow our plans to be more child focused. 3. Develop links with the new participation officer to increase engagement with looked after children. 4. Revise the information packs we give out to families on both Child Protection and Looked after children. 5. Undertake a system review of the Service Quality Unit. 6. We will start to develop tools and process to gain feedback from families in relation to their experience of the child protection processes we are reviewing.



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| <p>14. We have listened to children and families and returned to face to face reviews and conferences where possible.</p> <p>15. IRO's worked with Fosters Carers to support younger children to better engage and participate in reviews.</p> <p>16. Introduced weekly Qualitative Reviews of Child Protection decision making.</p> | | |
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Service Overview

Looked After Children

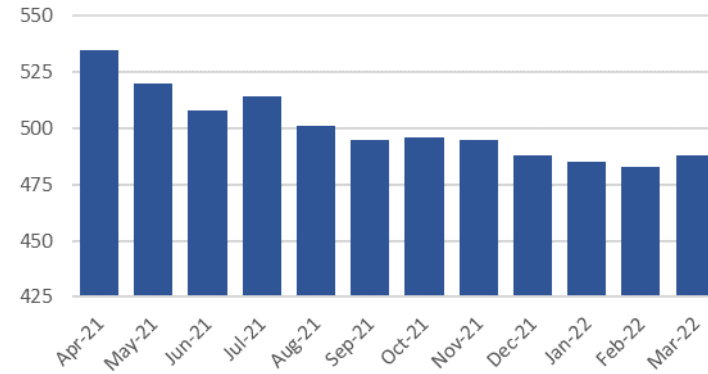
Child Protection Register

Qualitative Reviews

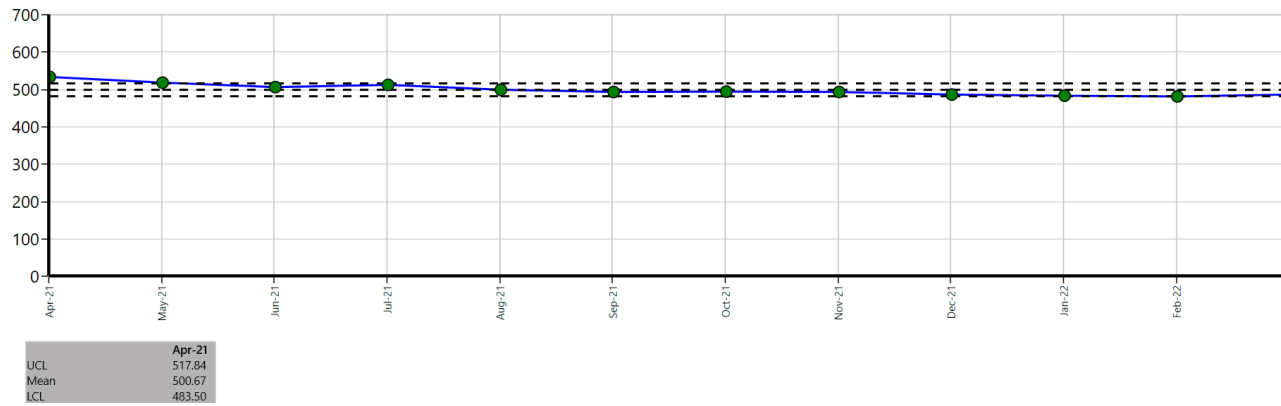
Looked After Children

Population Trend 2021-22

	Looked After Children (LAC) Population
Apr-21	535
May-21	520
Jun-21	508
Jul-21	514
Aug-21	501
Sep-21	495
Oct-21	496
Nov-21	495
Dec-21	488
Jan-22	485
Feb-22	483
Mar-22	488



LAC Population





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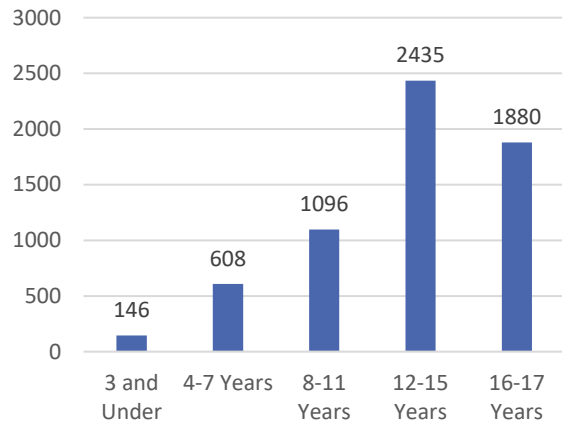
Looked After Children

Child Protection Register

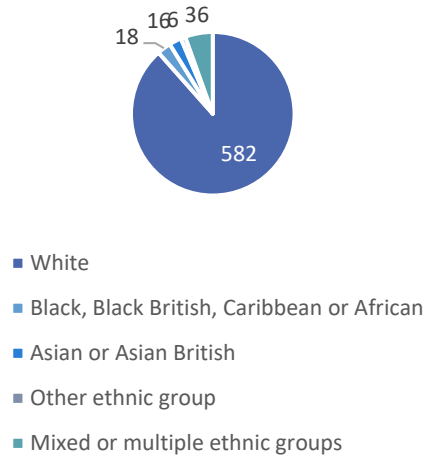
Qualitative Reviews

Looked After Children Demographics

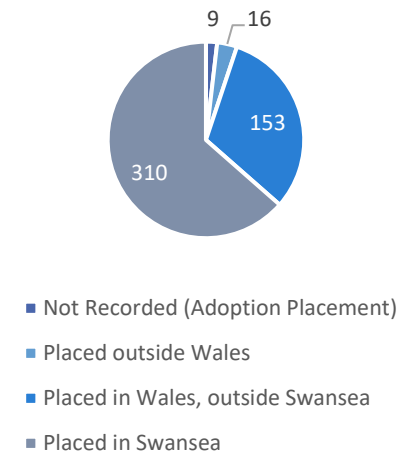
All Children Looked After between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, by Age as at 31/03/2022 (or as at date ceased LAC)



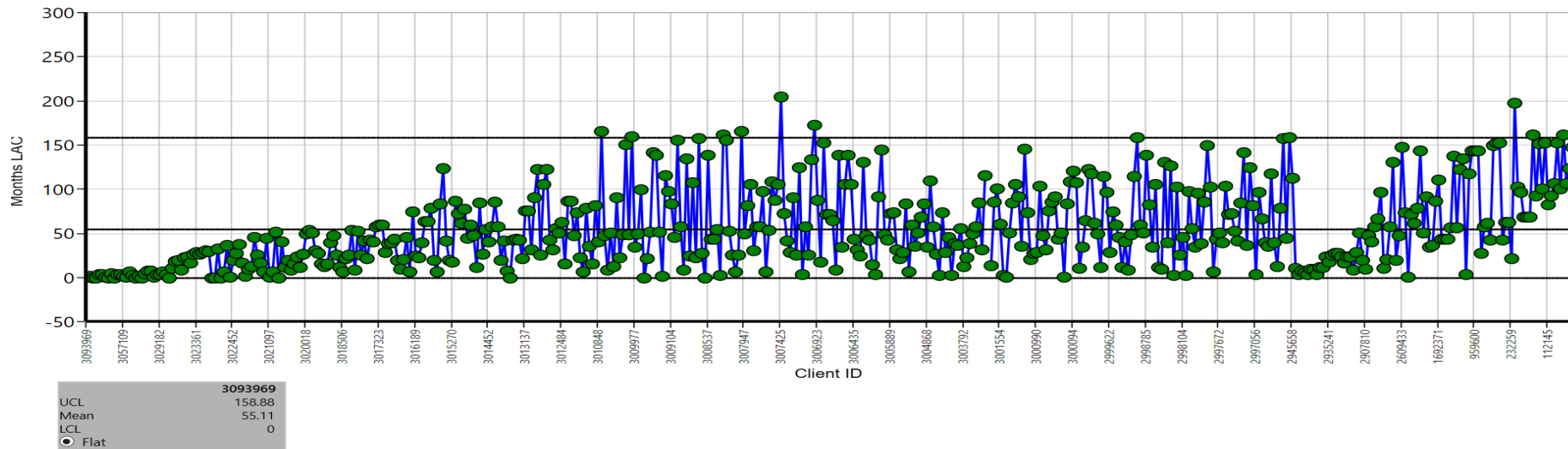
All Children Looked After Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, by Ethnicity



Children Looked After Placements as at 31 March 2022



Children Looked After as at 31 March 2022: Total Months Looked After to Date





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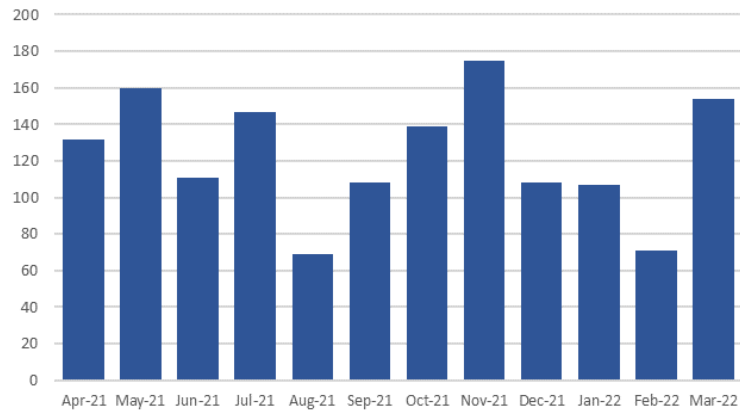
Looked After Children

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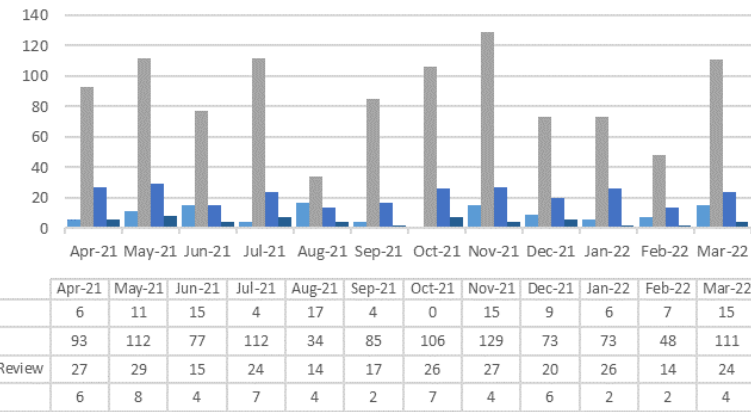
Qualitative Reviews

Reviews Held 2021-22

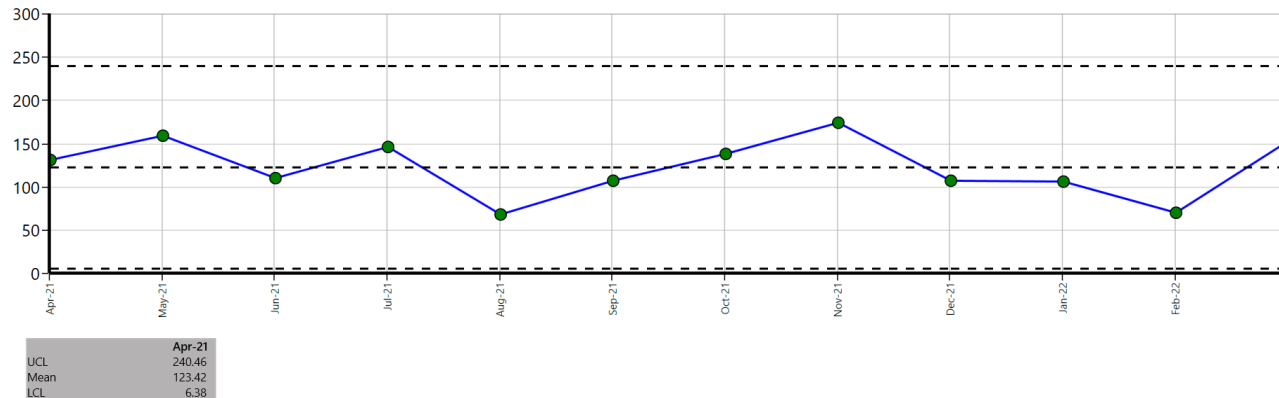
Number of Reviews Held



Type of Review by Month



Adoption, LAC & Pathway Plan Reviews





Service Overview

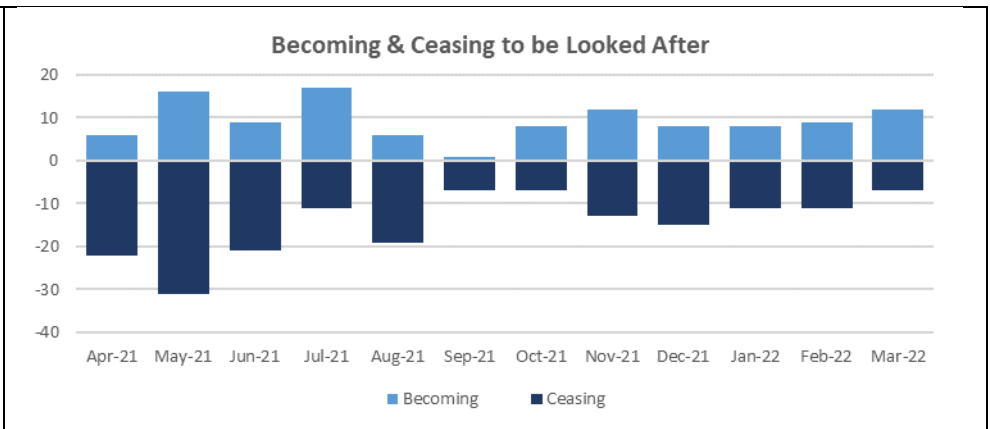
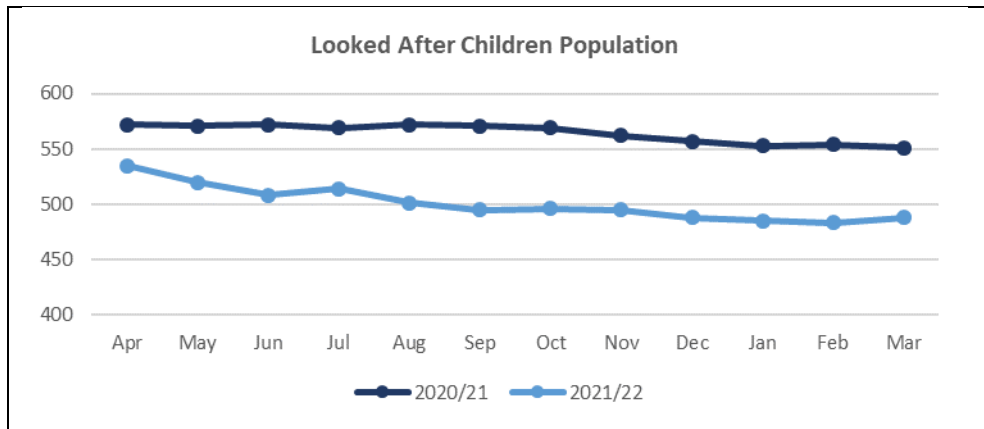
Looked After Children

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Annual Performance and Measures

Measure	2021/22
The number of children Looked After at the end of the year:	488
The total number of children who became Looked After during the year:	112
The total number of children who ceased to be Looked After during the year:	175
The total number of Looked After Children Reviews for Looked After Children held during the year:	1162
The total number of Pathway Plan Reviews for Looked After Children held during the year:	263
The total number of Adoption Reviews for Looked After Children held during the year:	56





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IRO Monitoring - Participation

2021/22

The total number of reviews carried out during the year, for children aged 5 and over:

1163

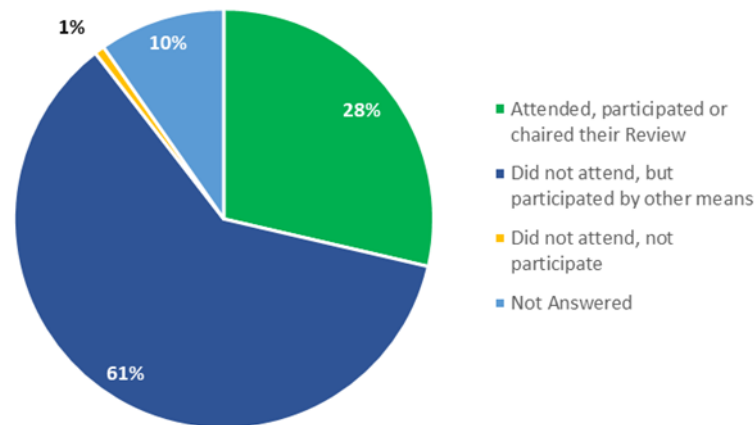
The percentage of children, aged 5 and over, who attended, participated or chaired their Review during the year:

333, 28.63%

The percentage of children, aged 5 and over, who did not attend their Review but participated by other means:

708, 60.88%

Participation at Reviews - 2021/22





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Independent Reviewing Officer Monitoring – Advocacy (Active Offer)

2021/22

The total number of reviews carried out during the year, for children aged 5 and over:

1163

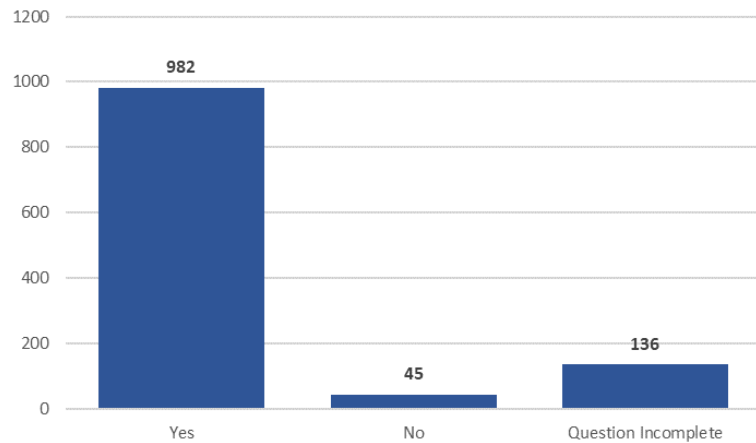
The percentage of children, aged 5 and over, who knew what an Independent Advocate is and how they can help:

982, 84.44%

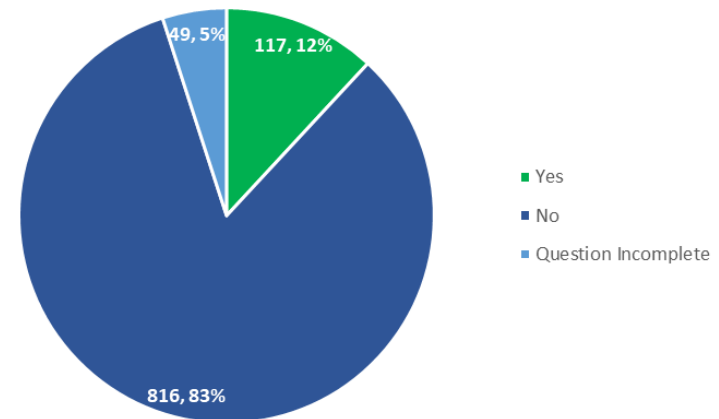
Of the children who knew what an Independent Advocate is, the percentage who accepted the offer of an Independent Advocate:

117, 11.91%

Do I know what an Independent Advocate is, and how they can help?



Was the offer for an Independent Advocate accepted?





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Service Review feedback on “What Matters” in Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews

- LAC reviews are balanced, everyone has a chance to give their view.
- Young people feel listened to by their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) more than anyone else.
- Reviews are really productive as discussions include all the important people in the child’s life together in one meeting.
- IRO’s listen to the children about the little things not just the big things. Children feel the IRO and LAC Review gives them a voice.
- Parents, children and carers have said they feel that their opinions are valued.
- Parents and young people felt that they were involved a lot, decisions not forced on you and involves young person and parents.
- Some children felt little decisions were very important to them but not to adults and the IRO helped make sure the little things sorted out for them too.

“I felt it was nice that the IRO told me what was happening, they would ask me what I thought and take into consideration my view before and in the review.”

“Instead of really important people making decisions, speak to the kids first, decisions are not always in their best interest even though adults think they are, adults need to ask the kid. My IRO has always done that, all the time but not everyone has.”

“I like to have a catch-up. It’s nice to have everybody who is important in the meeting.”

“The IRO is special, she comes to all our meetings. She is supportive.”

“It is someone we can talk to if we have problems, she’s there for all of us”

“Makes you feel relaxed and don’t feel threatened that your not getting listened to. Very considerate.”

“I have been at every meeting. I know I can ring my IRO myself if I need a problem solving”

Young People



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Looked After Children

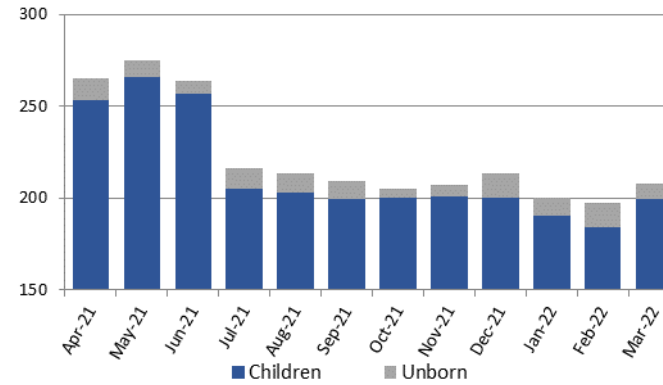
Child Protection Register

Qualitative Reviews

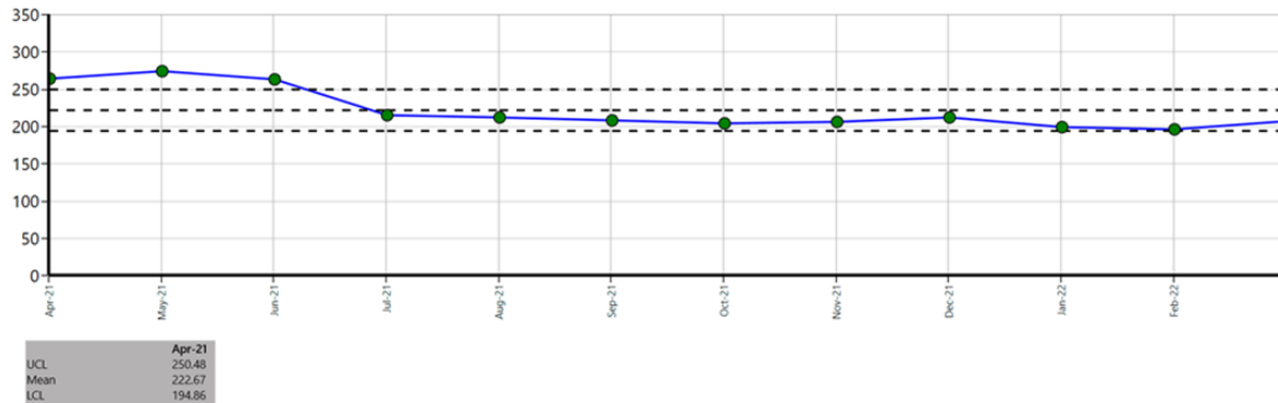
Child Protection Register

Population Trend 2021-22

	Children	Unborn
Apr-21	253	12
May-21	266	9
Jun-21	257	7
Jul-21	205	11
Aug-21	203	10
Sep-21	199	10
Oct-21	200	5
Nov-21	201	6
Dec-21	200	13
Jan-22	190	10
Feb-22	184	13
Mar-22	199	9



CP Population (Inc. Unborns)





Service Overview

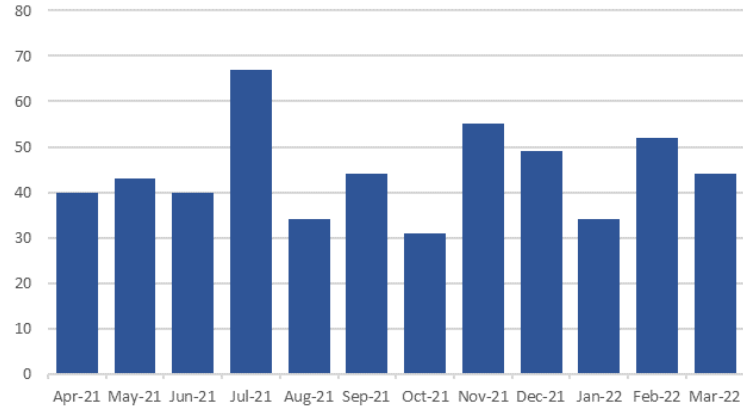
Looked After Children

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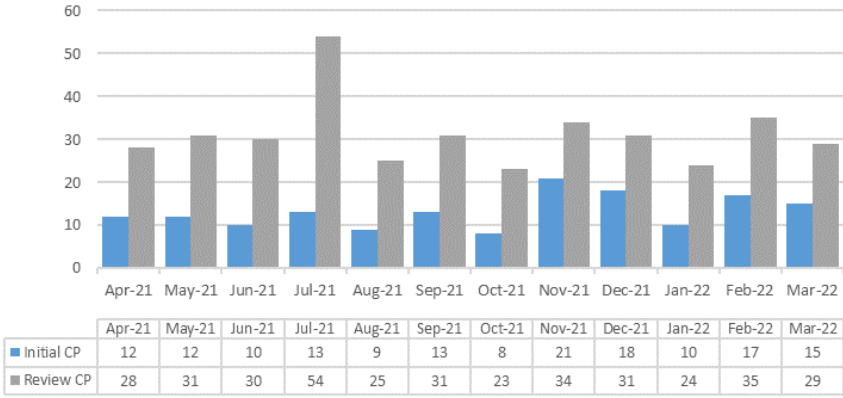
Qualitative Reviews

Reviews Held 2021-22

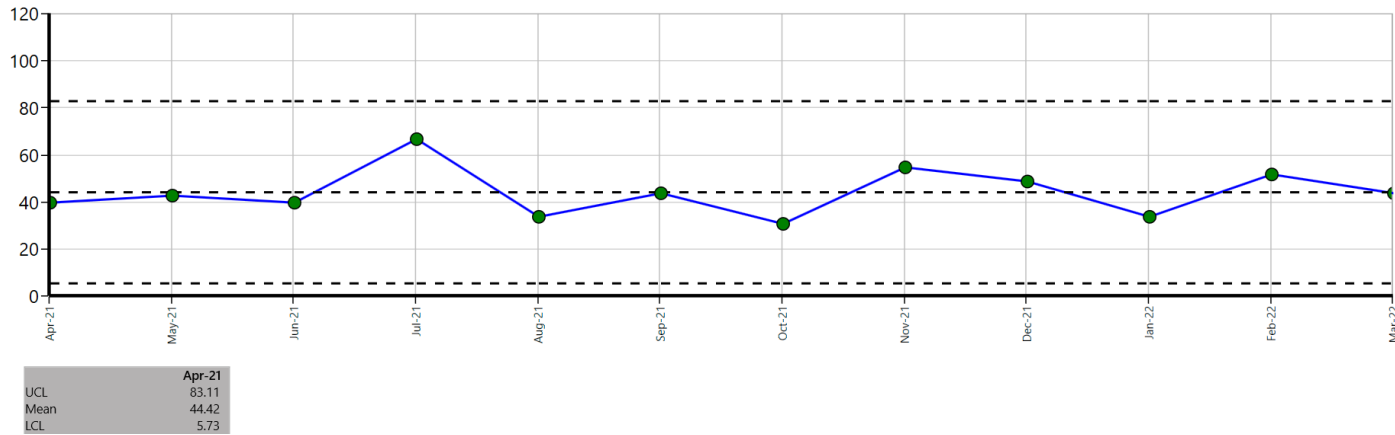
Number of Reviews Held



Type of Review by Month



Initial & Review Conferences





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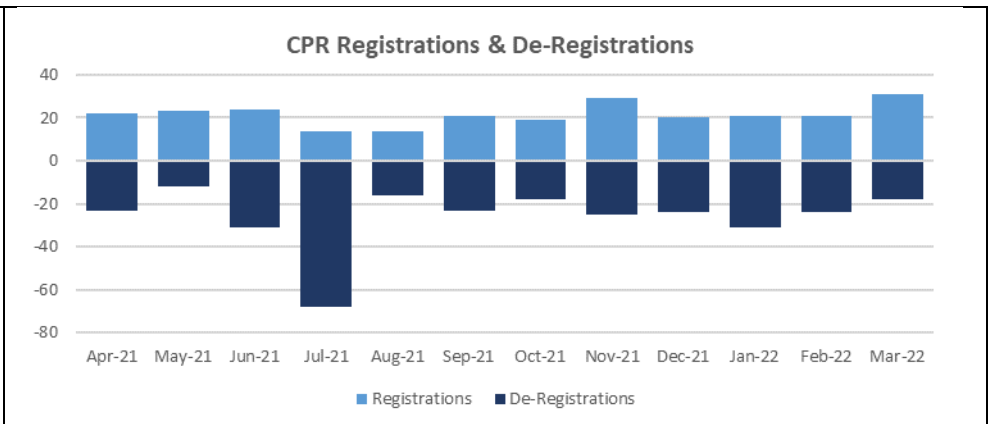
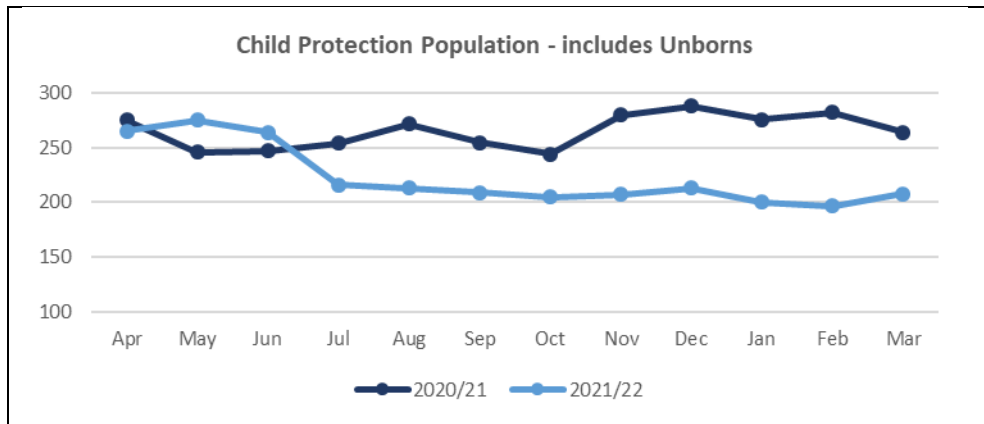
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Annual Performance and Measures

Measure	2021/22
The number of children on the Child Protection Register at the end of the year:	199
The percentage of children on the Child Protection Register at the end of the year, that have been registered previously:	18.09%
The total number of registrations to the Child Protection Register during the year:	259
The total number of de-registrations from the Child Protection Register during the year:	313
The total number of Initial Child Protection Conferences carried out during the year:	158
The total number of Review Child Protection Conferences carried out during the year:	375





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Child Protection Chair Monitoring – Advocacy (Active offer)

2021/22

The total number of Child Protection Conferences carried out during the year, for children aged 5 and over:

529

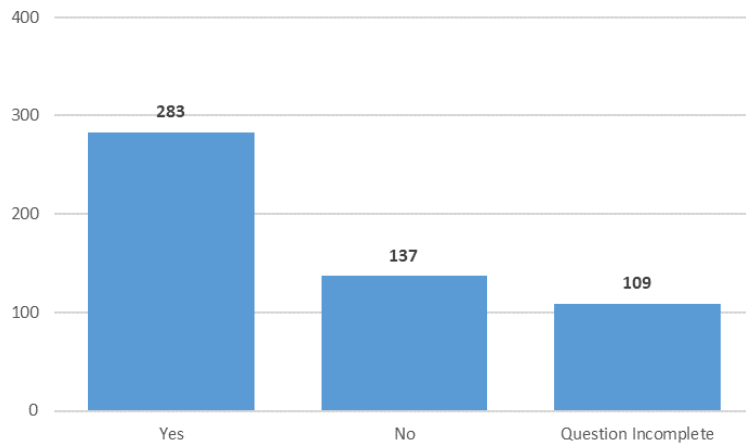
The percentage of children, aged 5 and over, who knew what an Independent Advocate is and how they can help:

283, 53.5%

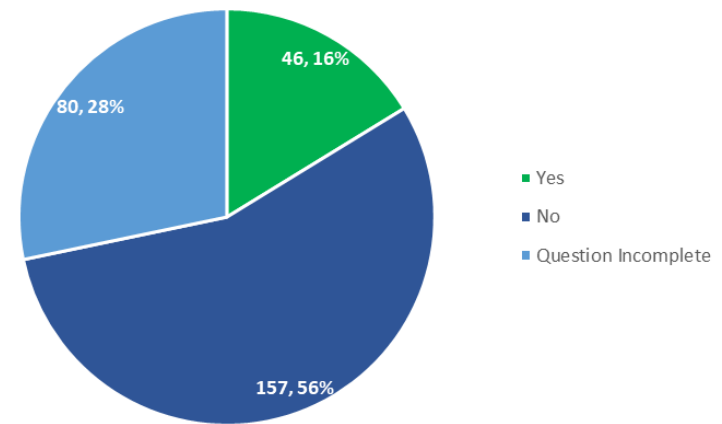
Of the children who knew what an Independent Advocate is, the percentage who accepted the offer of an Independent Advocate:

46, 16.25%

Do I know what an Independent Advocate is, and how they can help?



Was the offer of an Independent Advocate accepted?





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Service Review feedback on “What Matters” in Child Protection Conferences

The voice of young people, their families and carers telling us what is important to them during a conference;

- Parents and young people really appreciate talking to the chair before the meeting – helps put them at ease, chair can put their point of view across in conference without parents feeling threatened.
- Young people feel being listened to is most important.
- Parents feel equally respected to professionals. Child Protection (CP) chairs are honest and make sure young person is safe and children’s needs are considered.
- One young person who did not want to attend meeting would write things down and pass to IRO so knew his voice was heard.
- Involved in scaling and asked for their view regarding registration - even though they don’t get a vote it is important they give their view
- Parents feel equally respected to professionals. CP chairs are honest and make sure the young person is safe and children’s needs are considered.

“CP chair makes sure we feel safe”

“ Not just letting adults take over and make decisions about me”

“Understand tricky situations, everyone had an open mind, say our true feelings and have this listened to”

“I know that this (going to conference) would help me and my sister to be able to stay home with our mum and I knew that my mum would be able to get help and support”

Young People



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Qualitative Reviews of Child Protection

91 Child Protection Process Audits Apr21-Mar22

What is working well?	What do we want to improve?
Process has been improved to schedule cases in to be discussed, providing opportunity to invite relevant case workers and managers to reviews.	The number of staff who are able to attend these meetings and benefit from the learning.
A new database was created to capture various measures including child’s voice, views of family and views of professionals which aided the LIT team in producing a 6 month report.	Develop an online audit tool to capture this information which can provide opportunity to identify good practice for shared learning.
The weekly meetings have improved working together with our key partner agencies.	Have more succinct data which can tell us whether specific family members views have been included as well as specific agency views for example.
Next Steps	
<p>Ensure identified good practice is shared with the service.</p> <p>Continually improve the recording of data collected at the discussions to enable us to reflect and share areas for improvement as well as good practice.</p>	

“I have found these extremely valuable, and they highlighted the importance of: Effective multi-agency working. Questions could be asked and answered in a timely fashion. How important the voice of the child is, and how you seek to hear it in every report. The reviewing of the cases, which can highlight any gaps in training needs.” – *Student Social Worker*

“I found it really useful, it’s strange being under the spotlight and seeing other’s reactions to case management when they only see a snapshot. However, I appreciate the feedback from those who participated.” - *Senior Social Worker*