

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
SAFEGUARDING AND IMPROVEMENT UNIT

Children's Rights Service: Child Protection Annual Report 2013-14

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the role of the Children’s Rights Service (CRS) in Leicestershire in enabling children and young people subject to the child protection conference process, to access advocacy. It is the second such report to be produced. In previous years, any work with children and young people subject to a child protection plan was included in the then generic Children’s Rights Service Annual Reports.
- 1.2 The Children’s Rights Officer (CRO) with a lead for child protection post was created following a successful Growth bid in 2012-13. The development of the post was seen as increasing advocacy capacity within the established CRS and was driven by recommendations following an Ofsted inspection of Leicestershire’s safeguarding and looked after children’s services in March 2012. The purpose of the post was to support an increased focus on ensuring children and young people’s voices being heard within the child protection process: to improve the influence and contribution of children and young people to the planning for their safety and welfare; to ensure their active participation is facilitated where appropriate; and enhance their contribution toward the development of child protection services.
- 1.3 The CRS is located within the Safeguarding & Improvement Unit (SIU) within Children and Family Services (CFS). There are 2 FTE CROs, one with a lead for child protection and the other with a lead for children in care. They work alongside Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and ensure a continued degree of independence from social workers and managers with responsibility for service delivery – significant in terms of the advocacy role, challenging plans and decision making for children and young people where appropriate.
- 1.4 The Children’s Rights Child Protection Advocacy Service was officially launched on 2nd June 2013.
- 1.5 This report highlights the context, purpose and aims for this service, but will focus on the work of the service between 2nd June 2013 and 31st March 2014. It will also include a plan for 2014-15 which will build on what has been learned during the first year of the service.

2.0 Purpose of the Service and Legal Context

- 2.1 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter CRC), Article 12 states that “parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”¹. Similarly, the Children Act 1989 states that “before making any decision with respect to a child whom they are looking after ... a local authority shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, ascertain

¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990) 1577 U.N.T.S. 3 (CRC).

the wishes and feelings of [the child]”². Article 19 of the CRC conditions that the state must take all appropriate measures to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, while in the care of parents or anyone who has the care of the child³. Similarly the Children Act places a duty on Local Authorities to intervene to protect children where they suspect the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm⁴. Children, therefore, have both the rights: to be protected and to have their voices heard. It follows that where the local authority is intervening to uphold a child’s right to be protected from harm that the child’s right to be heard is similarly respected.

- 2.2 In May 2011 the Munro Review stated that “[t]he child protection system should be child-centred, recognising children and young people as individuals with rights, including their right to participate in major decisions about them in line with their age and maturity.”⁵ This was in recognition of the fact that the child protection system was systematically failing, across the country, in terms of ensuring that the voices of children and young people were heard and that their views were acted upon.
- 2.3 Locally the Ofsted inspection for safeguarding and looked after children (SLAC) in March 2012 identified some areas for improvement which related directly to enabling children and young people going through the child protection process to have access to advocacy and assistance to attend conferences:

29. Ensure that the advocacy service effectively enables children and young people to attend, or be represented at, their child protection conference should they so wish, with regard to their age and understanding.

The report also highlighted the fact that within Leicestershire ascertaining the views of children and young people was not a strong enough focus and that subsequently acting on their wishes and feelings couldn’t be measured accurately.

47. The views of children and young people subject to child protection procedures are not routinely sought or given weight in making plans for them. Insufficient numbers are invited to attend or be supported to participate at conferences and it is not always clear from the reports submitted to these meetings what their views are, and if they have been sought, in relation to the safeguarding concerns.

- 2.4 It is widely accepted that only a small minority of children and young people nationally attend their child protection conferences and for many it is not a positive experience and can be quite intimidating⁶. The Munro Review

² Children Act 1989, s.22

³ CRC Article 19, Supra n.1

⁴ Children Act, Part V (s.43-47)

⁵ Munro E. (2011) *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report - A Child-Centred System*. TSO, London (CM. 8062).

⁶ Cossar, J., Brandon, M., & Jordan, P (2011), ‘Don’t make assumptions’, Children’s and young people’s views of the

highlighted the fact that children and young people's views, wishes and feelings are not sought enough throughout the child protection process and that the entire system needs refocusing on the needs and experiences of children⁷.

The evidence suggests that the voice of the child is not routinely heard or effectively represented in the child protection process⁸.

- 2.5 Research has demonstrated that children and young people who have attended child protection conferences without advocacy support have found the meetings difficult have not felt listened to and felt like they were asked awkward questions which were difficult to answer in front of their parents⁹. This key piece of research conducted as part of the Munro review contained some excellent ideas from children and young people, one of which was "More advocates – someone to speak with you and for you"¹⁰.
- 2.6 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (WT 2013) states that children should understand the purpose of the conference as well as who will attend. It also states that the child should be helped to prepare if he/she is attending the conference or making representation to the conference.¹¹ It emphasises the importance of listening to the child, taking their views seriously and working with the child/young person collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The aim of the service is to empower children and young people and to support them to ensure that their voices are heard in the child protection conference process. It is also the role of the CRO to ensure that the plan is child focused and centred and to chase professionals to ensure that agreements are adhered to.
- 3.2 Children and young people are given additional support to attend their conferences, including having the CRO to clearly explain the process to them and to support them in the conference.

child protection system and messages for change' Office of the Children's Commissioner (Centre for Research on the

Child and Family – UEA). *Of the 10 children and young people who had attended their conference, only 2 felt that they were even partly listened to.*

⁷ Munro Review (2011) s. 8.5. Supra n.5

⁸ Payne, L., Jellicic, H., La Valle, I., (2012) 'The voice of the child in the child protection system', NCB Research

Summary: NCB Research Centre

⁹ Supra n.6

¹⁰ Supra n.6

¹¹ Working Together to Safeguard Children, A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (March 2013), p.38 (DFE -00030-2013)

- 3.3 Children and young people who are unhappy with the service they have received from CFS are assisted in making complaints via the County Council's complaint's procedures.
- 3.4 Enabling children and young people to have a voice and participate in the child protection process, may lead to them feeling empowered to speak out against the harm they have experienced. This should potentially lead to better decision making and more positive outcomes for children and young people. It is hoped that it will also have the consequence of providing greater and more targeted safety for young people, where the young people themselves are inextricably involved in creating that safety.

4.0 Children's Rights Child Protection Advocacy Service

4.1 Referral Process

- 4.1.1 Referrals can be received from a number of sources including (but not limited to): Social Workers; Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs); parents; carers and other agencies, as well as children and young people themselves. However, there is also an automatic referral process whereby when an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) is booked, the CRO will be notified by the SIU administrative team if there is an eligible young person (10+) within the family. The CRO will then make contact with the Social Worker to ascertain if the family are aware of the ICPC taking place and to make note of any necessary information.
- 4.1.2 The CRO, for the most part, does not read the case notes, or ask the Social Worker for in-depth information. The main reason for this is that it is important for children and young people to feel that an advocate has not made any pre-judgements about their situation or home life. In this way they can tell the CRO their version of events which is important in providing advocacy as impartially as possible.
- 4.1.3 The CRO attempts to make contact with whoever has Parental Responsibility (PR) for the children and young people concerned as the CRS is not statutory and therefore if the parents/carers do not agree to the CRO involvement then case is closed. It should be noted that the CRO encourages those with PR to see the benefit of advocacy for children and young people and the CRO works hard to engage them in the process.
- 4.1.4 During 2013-14 46% of referrals were not progressed. The main reasons for a case not being opened to the service were an inability to contact someone with parental responsibility (PR), the parent/carer not agreeing to the service, the young person not wanting the service, or lack of CRS capacity or Social Worker concerns.
- 4.1.5 Legal advice has been sought in relation to provision of advocacy to children and young people where those with PR are not giving permission. There is a fine balance to be struck and issues of assessment of the capacity of children and young people to make an informed decision need to be considered. There

is a risk of the CRO being seen to act unlawfully if parental permission is not forthcoming and judgements have to be made on a case by case basis to weigh up the benefits of progressing against the damage this could create around working relationships with the family and their engagement in the process - both of which are crucial factors in bringing successful change and outcomes for children and young people.

- 4.1.6 It was noticed that the majority of unopened cases were due to an inability to contact the PR holder prior to the ICPC. In March 2014, in response, the following process was developed: The CRO now attempts to call a parent/carer a minimum of 3 times. If the CRO is unable to make contact a letter will be sent to the parent/carer explaining the role of the CRO and the benefits of the service and encouraging them to make contact if advocacy support is wanted.
- 4.1.7 If permission to see children and young people is granted, then the CRO will usually arrange to meet with them and parents/carers at home. The service will be clearly explained to them and a decision will then be made as to whether they want the advocacy support offered. In 2013-14 100% of children and young people who agreed to an initial conversation took up the offer of advocacy support.

4.2 Pre-Conference Preparation

- 4.2.1 The CRO aims to meet a child or young person at least once prior to the ICPC. During this initial meeting the CRO introduces the service and explains how it works; this includes information on making a complaint. The CRO explains the child protection conference process, including what the threshold is for a child protection plan to be agreed on and the kind of objectives likely to be in a plan. The CRO also makes clear the aim of the child protection plan. Most children and young people have said that this information is new to them and has not been made clear by their social worker. Some have suggested that attempts have been made to explain the process, but they haven't felt able to ask questions. One of the advantages of the CRO having no decision making powers, is that children and young people feel more comfortable to ask their questions and voice their concerns. The most common concern that children and young people have approaching the ICPC is that they will be taken away from their parents/carers. Many have said that they have spent days worrying about this, but felt too scared to ask anyone if it will happen.
- 4.2.2 The CRO asks children and young people if they wish to attend the ICPC. If the parent/carer has refused permission for this then the CRO will not ask that question. Statistics for children and young people's attendance at conferences are included in Appendix 3; the vast majority are asked this question.
- 4.2.3 If the child or young person is asked what they want to say/be said for them at the child protection conference this is usually undertaken using Growing Safety methodology and tools. The CRO will ask what is working well, what they are worried about / or isn't going so well and what they want to happen or change. This usually involves speaking about school, health, home and family

as these are the main topics covered in the conference. Some children and young people have chosen not to use this method, but prefer to talk about what they would like to say, or be said on their behalf. Others have written letters to be read by the CRO in the conference.

- 4.2.4 Children and young people are always asked if they have the contact details for the CRO so that if they have any additional questions, or want to add or take away anything from what they have said this can be sorted out for them.
- 4.2.5 In general, the information children and young people provide to the CRO is information they want to be read out in open conference. In a small number of situations they have requested that some information be confidential from their parents/carers and this has been carefully managed after conversation with the Independent Chairperson (IRO).

4.3 Representation at Conference

- 4.3.1 The vast majority of children and young people choose not to attend the conference. The reasons vary, but the majority don't want to miss school. Some don't want to attend a meeting with lots of people there discussing the intimate details of their life, which is completely understandable. In this situation, the CRO will present their views, wishes and feelings verbatim (inasmuch as is possible). This often is very effective in bringing their voice to the meeting, as it is their words.

"I just didn't want to go, coz I didn't want to go, I wanted to stay at home" K, 10

"I didn't want to miss school" L, 12

- 4.3.2 Of those children and young people who have attended their conferences, most wanted to hear what people were saying about them. Within the conference they can opt either to speak for themselves, or to have the CRO present their wishes and feelings for them. Most have reported that the conference was 'ok', or wasn't as bad as they thought it was going to be.

"It was alright, a bit scary, but alright" K, 15

"It was alright, it wasn't how I was imagining it, coz some of the meetings I heard about took really, really forever and were really boring, but the one I went to wasn't that boring" Y, 10

- 4.3.3 The CRO, as an advocate, does not participate in the decision making part of the conference. However, the CRO will represent the child or young person's view about whether or not they think they require a child protection plan.
- 4.3.4 Following the conference the CRO will aim to see the child or young person to feedback within 5 working days. This has sometimes proven quite challenging as priority has to be given to preparing others for conferences. However, accurate and timely feedback is important so they are not worrying needlessly. The CRO will usually liaise with the social worker to ensure that

this is done as quickly as possible. Children and young people have said that they like to receive an accurate report of what has been said and decided on at the conference.

“My mum sometimes doesn't want to explain, in case she gets it wrong, so I get to hear it from someone who knows what they're talking about.” Y, 10

4.3.5 This process repeats for each subsequent review in terms of preparation and representation. Children and young people can also request additional support from the CRO where they have questions or want to make a complaint. A limited number have required more intensive support for a time, particularly when there is a transition between Social Work teams, it is a benefit that the CRO remains the same through this transition. The CRO has also accompanied children and young people who have requested support in attending Core Groups and met with others to help them prepare complaints.

5.0 Quantitative Information: 2013-14

5.1 As at 31st March 2014 there were 96 children and young people aged between 10 and 17 years subject to a CP plan out of a total of 446 across the whole age range. Between 2nd June 2013 and 31st March 2014, 102 referrals were received by the CRO. The vast majority of these, 87% were via the automatic administrative procedure. The remaining 13% were referred by Social Workers, IROs and 1 referral was received by a parent/carer.

5.2 53 children and young people (10+) were open cases to the CRO during this period, representing 54% of all referrals received. In addition to these numbers, 6 under 10's were supported (all younger siblings of supported young people). In terms of benchmarking this performance and demonstrating improvement activity against that achieved previously in Leicestershire, given that this is the first year the service has been operational, it is not possible to compare within this period other than to say that it is a significant step forward. Data and therefore performance comparisons will be possible in the next and subsequent reporting periods. In comparison to other authorities, it is difficult to be specific given that very few authorities have such a service and for those that do, data available is not in a comparable format.

5.3 49 referrals were closed without any service being provided for children and young people. These are the reasons (in decreasing order):

- Inability to contact PR holder (33%)
- Parent/carer not agreeing to the CRO providing a service (27%)
- Children and young people not wanting the CRO to provide a service (18%)
- CRO not having capacity to open case (14%)
- Social Worker concerns (usually re. number of professionals involved) (8%)

5.4 15 of the 53 children and young people represented were closed to the service within the year. 9 due to no Child Protection Plan being put in place at

the ICPC and 6 due to the plan being ended after the 1st or 2nd Review. All were given the necessary contact details should they require advocacy support in the future and encouraged to call or text if they had any queries or questions. An additional 4 children and young people's plans were ended, but they requested CRO support during the first review of the Child in Need process which was provided.

- 5.5 During 2013-14 there was no clear trend by quarter of take up of the CRS. The CRO is engaging with parents/carers and children and young people, therefore, it is entirely dependent on them as to whether they avail of the service offered or not.
- 5.6 As stated above, the majority of children and young people chose not to attend their conference. The most common reason for this is that they do not want to miss school, but the second is that they don't want to be in a meeting full of professionals speaking about their family. Overall attendance at conferences is 20% of children and young people who avail of the CRS. In real numbers this is an increase from 2 in the first quarter to 7 in the fourth. This is partially due to some being reluctant to attend their ICPC, but feeling more confident to attend for the 1st review.

6.0 Qualitative Information: Children and Young People's experience of the Child Protection process

What follows demonstrates that many of the aims and objectives of Leicestershire's Growing Safety model, map neatly onto what children and young people say they want from the child protection process.

6.1 Good Working Relationships

- 6.1.1 The primary factor that contributes to a child or young person having either a positive or negative experience of the child protection process in Leicestershire is the relationship between the child/family and the Social Worker. Where this relationship is good it can make a positive impact in the family and the life of the child. Most children and young people who have worked with the CRO Child Protection have said that their relationship with their social worker is either ok or good (more statistical evidence is planned to be available next year). Some children and young people, however, have been extremely positive about the work their Social Worker has done. One young person wrote a letter, with the help of the CRO, to be read out at the final conference. Children and young people state that a good Social Worker is someone who is available (attending visits, replying to calls), listens to them, demonstrates genuine care¹² and follows through on what is said and plans that are made.
- 6.1.2 It is equally important that the immediate and extended family also feel that they have a good working relationship with the allocated worker. This is often

¹² This desire to feel cared for by the lead professional is a common theme in research. For a summary of research over the past 15 years see *Supra n.6, p. 21*.

a necessary prerequisite for a worker having a positive relationship with the child or young person. Taking the time to build relationships, explain things clearly and listening makes a great deal of difference in how parents/carers relate to workers.

- 6.1.3 Too many parents have required the CRO to explain how the conference will run and how the child protection process works prior to the ICPC – a role that is the primary responsibility of the Social Worker. The most common concern that parents and children and young people alike have prior to the ICPC is that their child or young person will be removed from the family. In many cases parents/carers have stated that they have been too scared to ask whether or not this is possible. This fear should be allayed as soon as the family are informed about the ICPC taking place (while explaining the process of CFS seeking legal advice, should that be deemed necessary).
- 6.1.4 Overall the CRS Child Protection has been greatly aided by the positive response from other agencies. In terms of education - a minority of children and young people prefer to meet the CRO in school and schools have been consistently accommodating in this regard, facilitating meetings, often at the last minute. Many children and young people have said that their school provides them with a 'safe haven' or a place they can just forget about problems at home. Most children and young people can identify someone who they could speak to at school if they had a problem. It is extremely positive, that when asked, the majority of children and young people have lots of positive things to say about their education. In terms of health – the school nursing service provides children and young people with health advice and support, but school nurses also spend time gathering the child or young person's wishes and feelings. This really compliments the CRS; in a recent conference a young person had expressed the same views to their mentor at school, the school nurse and the CRO – this gave all the professionals at the conference an extremely clear view of the young person's wishes and feelings.

6.2 Achievable goals/ Clear safety planning

- 6.2.1 A 16 year old young person was extremely fed up with having social work involvement with her family for almost 2 years. There had been no recurrence of the original domestic violence incident and the family just wanted to move on. When the case came for review the Social Worker recommended an end of plan, but some of the other professionals and chair disagreed. Although the reasons were explained to her, she still felt that neither she nor her siblings were at risk of significant harm and that the decision was unfair. In this situation she had good reason for thinking this and her frustration at the lack of progress was understandable. The family had done everything asked of them and yet the plan did not come to an end. Growing Safety training is currently being rolled out to the other agencies involved with children and young people, this is needed as it will enable agencies to see the potential for managing risk in more creative ways and to make more child and family focussed safety plans in conferences.

6.2.2 It is imperative that goal posts are not moved. A child or young person should be able to clearly see what needs to happen in order for them to be removed from a child protection plan. Otherwise the process will lose the investment of children and particularly older young people. Again, Growing Safety style conferencing will greatly aid this.

6.2.3 Children and young people have repeatedly said that the child protection process is not positive when they cannot see progress and they feel promises have been broken. The 'what needs to happen?' needs to be as clear in the minds of the child and family as it is among the professionals working with them.

6.3 Stories and Experiences

6.3.1 Many children and young people do not want to have to repeat their stories or experiences, particularly where these are negative and bring back difficult memories. It is important that their voice continues to be clearly recorded and that new social workers have taken the time to read these recordings.

6.3.2 There has been a marked increase over the past 12 months of case notes clearly recording the child or young person's voice – this is extremely positive particularly where young people are directly quoted. New workers ought to be able to read and hear the child or young person's own voice without a professional filter.

6.4 Smooth transitions

6.4.1 The handover between Social Work teams is extremely important for children and young people. It is crucial that the 'old' Social Worker says goodbye to the family and if possible introduce the new worker. This gives new workers the best possible chance of establishing a good relationship with the family. This has been raised at two team manager meetings to make sure that the information is disseminated throughout the various teams as children and young people have spoken about it being important to them that someone who they have developed a relationship with at least comes to say goodbye before they are expected to once again establish a new relationship of trust with a social worker from a different team. Less children and young people have raised this as an issue in the final quarter of 2013-14, which would suggest that the handover is being more carefully planned and managed between teams and highlights evidence of continuous improvement, based on what children and young people have fed back regarding their experiences.

6.5 Confidentiality and Trust

6.5.1 Several children and young people have said that they have felt betrayed where information they have shared with a Social Worker has been subsequently shared with their parents and/or other professionals. This is sometimes a misunderstanding, but workers need to be extremely clear about what they intend to do with the shared information.

6.6 Taking the time to listen

- 6.6.1 Children and young people respond extremely well to people who take time to get to know them. A few have said that they felt that workers were just asking them lots of questions and they felt like they were trying to trip them up. Whether this is the reality, or just because children and young people can often feel extremely defensive when meeting a new worker for the first time is unknown. Either way it's important for workers to take time to get to know them and to really listen to them.
- 6.6.2 Children and young people really appreciate that the CRO writes down their actual words. They are invited to read what has been written and check that they are happy with it. This works to engender trust and assures that their views and opinions will be expressed in their own words, even if they cannot attend their conference.

7.0 The Effectiveness of the Service: Impact and Outcomes

- 7.1 One of the main aims for 2014-15 is to develop a robust evaluation process which will be used to ascertain in greater detail the impact the CRS is having for children and young people and in what ways it is improving outcomes for them.
- 7.2 Some children and young people have said that they appreciate having accurate information about the child protection process, particularly the conference. As mentioned above many have been under the impression that they might be taken away from their parents/carers as a result of the conference. The CRO has been able to both dispel myths and provide more accurate information.

It made me feel better; I knew what everyone was going to be talking about when they were in there. L, 12

*It was really helpful, because I didn't know much but then when [she] told me I knew a lot.
K, 10*

- 7.3 Other children and young people have not known that they can attend their conference; some have even said that they have been told that they cannot attend. Having advocacy support in conferences has enabled more children and young people to attend their conferences. The preparation with the CRO has enabled them to feel confident to either speak in the meeting, or have their words spoken for them.

It's helped me say what I want. Something good about the Children's Rights Service is how they support you. J, 14

- 7.4 Those who don't want to attend their conference are now having their voices heard in them anyway. Although some excellent wishes and feelings work is being presented in conferences by Social Workers, having the CRS means

that the child/young person's voice can be heard independently from the decision makers.

*It was good [to have an advocate] because I don't really like talking to people, it's a bit scary;
I wanted [her] to do it. K, 10*

*It was good coz then if I didn't want to say something [she] could say it for me.
K, 16*

- 7.5 One of the most important impacts the child or young person's words have is on the parents/carers. In situations where parents really love their children, but are struggling to make good decisions or right choices regarding their best interests, hearing what their child is worried or sad about can be extremely powerful.
- 7.6 The next step is to work towards incorporating the children and young people's views and opinions into the Child Protection Plan, particularly where a child or young person doesn't believe they are at risk or need a plan. Most children and young people the CRS has supported in 2013-14 do not believe they are at risk of significant harm. Most can understand why other people are worried, but it is still often a hard jump to expect them to accept they are at risk when they don't believe they are.
- 7.7 One of the aims of the CRS is to assist children and young people making complaints; over the past year the CRS has supported 3 young people in making a formal complaint and assisted others in resolving their issues more informally. All have received responses that they have been happy with, which is excellent.
- 7.8 Overall far more children and young people are being given the opportunity to attend their conferences. Although only 14 children and young people (open to the CRS) chose to attend during 2013-14, the remainder exercised their rights in choosing not to in the knowledge that they would be represented by the CRS. It is hoped that with changes being made to conferences this number can and will increase.
- 7.9 The express aim of the CRS is to empower children and young people and to ensure that they are heard. Over the past year 59 children and young people have had the support to have their voices heard in the child protection process. In most cases these children and young people report that they do feel heard and involved in the process because of the CRS. L puts it extremely eloquently:

*It has been helpful because I've been heard haven't I? Coz I wouldn't have been able to say what I wanted. People know what I think rather than trying to guess what I think.
L, 11*

8.0 Training and Development

- 8.1 The CRO Child Protection is a Practice Lead for Leicestershire's implementation of Growing Safety. During 2013-14 Solution Focussed Practice and Signs of Safety Training has been attended, as well as several Growing Safety Practice Lead meetings and conferences.
- 8.2 In September 2014 a prototype for Signs of Safety style child protection conferences and the CRO Child Protection will have a key role in these developments.
- 8.3 There are plans to visit another local authority running a similar service and 2 authorities have agreed to the CRO visiting to observe and learn from best practice. One of these authorities has fully implemented Signs of Safety style conferencing and so this will be extremely useful with the view to be involved in Leicestershire's development of the same.
- 8.4 There has been a regular forum for developments in the CRS to be shared with managers at the QAIF (Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework) Team Manager's Meetings. This has been an effective way of disseminating the main messages from children and young people to the locality social work managers at all levels. These messages have included that young people want to ensure that a handover visit takes place, when there is a transition between teams and therefore workers. Young people have also asked that things be clearly explained to them, so that they don't feel that they are not being told the truth. The QAIF meetings have also provided a forum where managers can feedback as to their assessment of the service.
- 8.5 An updated leaflet explaining the child protection process is being developed by a small focus group of children and young people, who are themselves subject to Child Protection Plans. The LSCB is funding this work so that a clear, concise and useful leaflet can be produced. The group has met together twice and the young people have decided what should be in the leaflet, they have also come up with some wording. A 'Leaflet Day' has been planned for the summer holidays (2014) where they can do a fun activity and spend a few hours working on this. Many of the children and young people who have accessed the service do not have internet access at home and so a hardcopy of this leaflet is necessary.

9.0 Recommended areas for improvement by the Operational Service 2014-15

Based on children and young people's views these are the recommendations by the CRS for 2014-15.

9.1 Good Working Relationships

- 9.1.1 It is imperative that Social Workers particularly continue to foster good relationships with children and young people and their families. The Growing Safety methodology is already assisting in this, as is increased reflective practice and the use of Pod Meetings. Children and young people want

workers who care about them and this needs to continue as a priority for Social Work teams. Best practice and expertise must continue to be shared.

- 9.1.2 The CRS needs to be publicised among our partner agencies, particularly education, health and policing to aid continued good working relationships.

9.2 Achievable goals/ Clear safety planning

- 9.2.1 Growing Safety training to continue to be rolled out to partner agencies to aid more creative risk management and better partnership between CFS and other agencies.

- 9.2.2 Child Protection Plans to be extremely clear on 'what needs to happen' so that there is no moving of goal posts and children, young people and their families know what needs to be achieved in order for the plan to end.

- 9.2.3 Growing Safety style conferencing to be developed and implemented in Leicestershire to aid with this.

9.3 Stories and Experiences

- 9.3.1 As part of the transition process new Social Work teams or Early Help teams need to ensure that they have access to and have read case notes documenting a child or young person's story, are clear about their family makeup and particularly focus on the case notes where the child's voice is recorded.

- 9.3.2 Although much progress has been made the child or young person's own words need to be utilised more in case recording, as opposed to the worker's interpretation of those words.

9.4 Smooth transitions

- 9.4.1 As stated above the 'old' worker must say goodbye to the child or young person they have been working with. This needs to be monitored and ensured by team managers.

9.5 Confidentiality and Trust

- 9.5.1 It is imperative that all professionals working with a child or young person are crystal clear about the rules surrounding confidentiality. If a young person tells a worker something that will need to be taken forward then the professional should explain what needs to happen, what the likely outcomes will be (this may mean a range of optional outcomes) and involve the child or young person in having as much say as possible as to how that information will be shared.

9.6 Taking the time to listen

- 9.6.1 Social Work Teams need to ensure that they accurately represent a child or young person's views – checking this with them is often helpful. Social Workers need to be given the space and time to get to know children and young people and really listen to them.

Appendix 1: Performance of Children's Rights Service Child Protection against 2013-14 Annual Work Programme

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	RAG	COMMENTARY
<p>To offer advocacy to all children and young people (10+) approaching their ICPC.</p> <p><i>Measured by:</i> % of children and young people/ parents offered a service.</p>	CRO, Admin Team	<p>2014-15</p> <p><i>Revised for 2014-15</i></p>	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74% of parents/children and young people were offered advocacy during 2013-14. • Target for 2014-15 = 100%, but different method as described in 2014-15 action plan.
<p>Consideration will be given to the provision and delivery of advocacy support for younger children (under 10's) / how their voices can be heard within the child protection conference process.</p>	CRO, SIU Managers	January 2014	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration has been given and there is not sufficient capacity to offer this support unless a specific request is received or a younger sibling directly requests it. • Management responsibility to discuss resources and possibility of extending the service. • CRO responsibility in this area is closed, but cases may still be referred on an ad hoc basis.
<p>As well as conference support, children and young people will receive support to: attend core group meetings, attend court dates (if applicable) and to make complaints.</p>	CRO	<p>October 2013</p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p>	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to capacity the CRO cannot attend core group meetings as a rule, unless a child or young person is attending and/or specifically requests this. • The CRO has attended court with a young person as well as Pre-proceedings meetings. They have also assisted several young people in making complaints. • The CRO advises all children and young people of their right to complain and will continue to do

				<p>so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CRO will attend some Core Group meetings, as capacity allows if a child or young person is attending the meeting and requests support.
<p>The CRO will involve children and young people to create a leaflet which clearly explains the child protection process in a clear and meaningful way. This would include a small working group of children and young people being involved in the design and wording of said leaflet</p>	<p>CRO with support from Learning and Development, LSCB and Communications.</p>	<p>April 2014 <i>Revised Spring 2015</i></p>	<p>A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing. The group met in Oct and Nov 2013 and children and young people have also been consulted in April 2014. The group met again on 8th August 2014 – funded by the LSCB - several young people took part.
<p>By the end of March 2014 the CRO aims to create small focus groups of children and young people who can aid the overall development of Leicestershire's child protection service, subject to capacity.</p>	<p>CRO with support from the Participation Officer and wider CFS staff.</p>	<p>March 2014 <i>Revised Spring 2015</i></p>	<p>A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This work will fully commence once the leaflet has been completed. The children and young people who are involved in the creation of the CP leaflet are getting to know each other and learning to discuss things as a group. They have done some work including creating a short film, which has been shown to team managers to clearly reflect the young person's experience of the conference.
<p>A system for monitoring achievement of the aims and objectives will be developed.</p>	<p>CRO and SIU Managers</p>	<p><i>Revised Autumn 2014</i></p>	<p>A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CRO has done some work on this, but changes need to be made in line with wider service aims and objectives. However, some anecdotal evidence has been received. The system will be piloted with a number of children and young people to gain their feedback

				and suggestions before being formalised.
Evaluation of the service will take place periodically both via internal evaluation and children and young people's evaluation.	CRO and SIU Managers	<i>Revised Autumn 2014</i>	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This needs to be made more robust, but the service has been regularly evaluated in line with the QAIF, and in supervision. Work needs to be done to request evaluation from staff. This objective will be split to fit into 2 objectives for 2014-15 to include children/young people and internal evaluation respectively.
The first review of the service is scheduled for November 2013	CRO and SIU Managers	November 2013 <i>Ongoing reviews to take place</i>	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed and presented to team managers as well as follow up in March 2014.
Development visits will take place to other Local Authorities who have a child protection advocacy service.	CRO and possibly SIU Managers and Growing Safety lead IROs.	<i>Revised December 2014</i>	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not completed yet. Aim to do this in conjunction with those LAs using a Signs of Safety methodology in conferencing so that more can be learned by this exercise. Contact has been made with relevant LAs.
All work undertaken by the CRO will be carried out in line with the Growing Safety methodology, and the CRO will receive regular Growing Safety training.	CRO and Learning and Development.		G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice lead, training ongoing, regularly learning from good practice within and outside Leicestershire County Council. The Growing Safety methodology is fully incorporated into the CRS. The CRO has also completed some pieces of work with Children in Care around safety planning.

Appendix 2: Annual Work Programme 2014-15

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	RAG	COMMENTARY
Offer of advocacy via 100% of parents/carers. Letters will be sent when telephone contact has not been possible.	CRO and Admin Team	In place: June 2014 <i>Ongoing</i>	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of parents should hear about the service, but it may not be until after the ICPC. • So far, there has been no additional take-up from these letters.
On the advice of children and young people consider alternative methods of recording their views. (audio, digital recording etc.)	CRO	November 2014	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some consideration has been given as to how this would work/what equipment is available. • The CRS has access to video recording equipment. Confidentiality and security will need to be considered.
Children and young people involved in creating Child Protection Plans/ Safety plans.	CRO, SIU Managers, IRO Service Team, Learning and Development (Growing Safety Team)	Spring 2015 <i>Dependent on other services.</i>	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRO has had some discussions with SIU managers, the lead IRO for Growing Safety and the Growing Safety Development Team (L&D) • Children and young people should be involved in this development.
Conferences to be more child (and family) friendly.	CRO, SIU Managers, IRO Service Team, Learning and Development (Growing Safety Team)	Spring 2015 <i>Dependent on other services.</i>	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRO has had ongoing discussions with parents/carers and young people about their experiences of conferences. • Some discussion has taken place with SIU managers, the lead IRO for Growing Safety and the Growing Safety Development Team (L&D). A

				<p>joint meeting is planned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRO is involved in Signs of Safety style child protection conference prototype commenced September 2014.
Clarity as to what part of the conference a child may attend.	CRO, SIU Managers and IRO Service Team	Autumn 2014	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, this is done on a case, by case basis. Discussion has taken place to adopt a consistent approach.
Children and young people will be involved to create a leaflet which clearly explains the child protection process in a clear and meaningful way.	CRO with support from Learning and Development, LSCB and Communications.	Spring 2015	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group met on 8th August 2014. The LSCB funded the day and several young people took part. • The group is in the process of meeting with the design team and LSCB representatives to come up with an agreed design for the leaflet.
Focus group(s) of children and young people who can aid the overall development of Leicestershire's child protection service, subject to capacity.	CRO with support from the Participation Officer and wider CFS staff.	Spring 2015	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This work will fully commence once the leaflet has been completed.
A system for evaluating the CRS and monitoring achievement of the aims and objectives will be developed.	CRO and SIU Managers	November 2014	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRO has done some work on this, but changes need to be made in line with wider service aims and objectives. • The system will be piloted with a number of children and young people to gain their feedback and suggestions before being formalised.
Evaluation of the service will	CRO and SIU Managers	December	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This practice has been commenced, but more

take place periodically via QAIF meetings and possibly a staff evaluation.		2014		could be done in terms of evaluating the service from the point of view of the IRO Service Team and Social Workers.
Development visits will take place to other Local Authorities who have a child protection advocacy service.	CRO and possibly SIU Managers and Growing Safety lead IROs.	December 2014	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact has been made with relevant LAs operating Signs of Safety style conferencing. • Newcastle has been suggested by Viv Hogg as a good authority to observe. • Suggestion has been made to find a statistical neighbour using Signs of Safety for greater comparison.

Appendix 3: Statistics

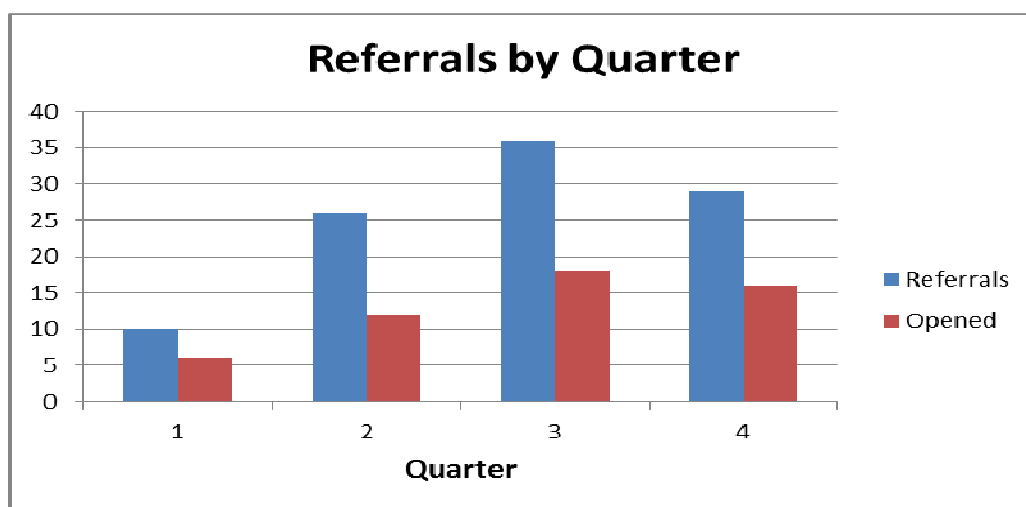
1. Referrals

2013-14

Qtr	Referrals	Opened	Unopened	%
1	10	6	4	60%
2	26	12	14	46%
3	36	18	18	50%
4	29	16	13	55%

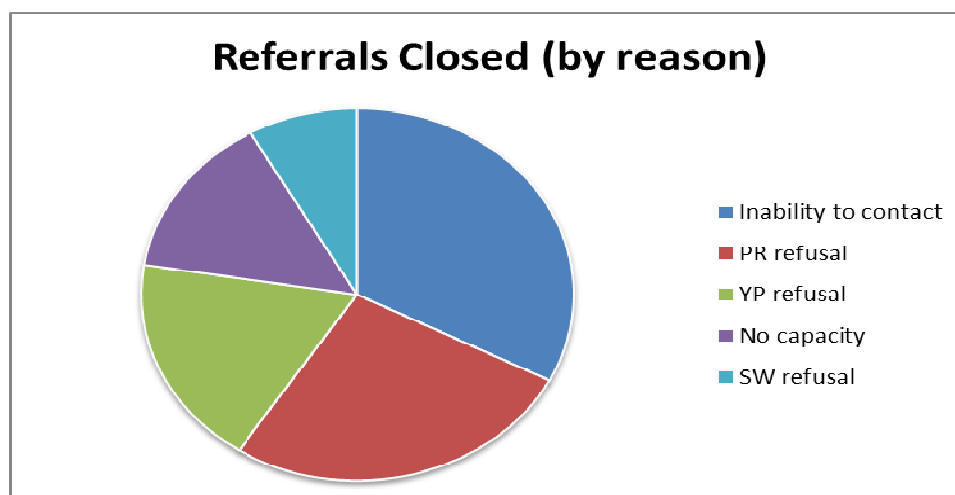
2014-15

Qtr	Referrals	Opened	Unopened	%
1	28	17	11	61

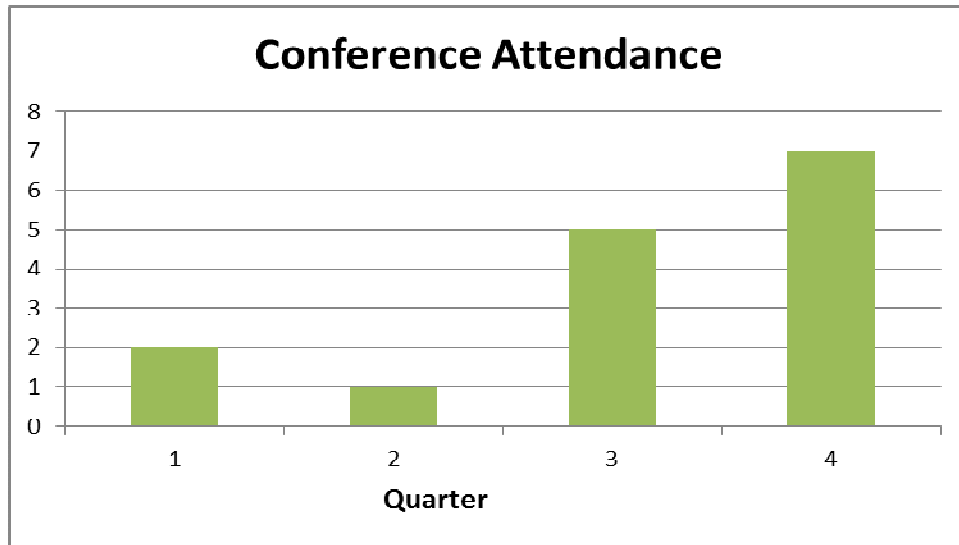


1.2 Referrals closed before any service was provided.

- Inability to contact PR holder (33%)
- Parent/carer not agreeing to the CRO providing a service (27%)
- Young person not wanting the CRO to provide a service (18%)
 - This was most often relayed via the parent/carer/PR holder and therefore it is not possible to ascertain with certainty whether this is a young person's choice.
- CRO having no capacity to open case/ human error (14%)
- Social Worker concerns (usually re. number of professionals involved) (8%)



2.0 Conference attendance



Q.1 April 2013 – June 2013

Category	Number
Number of Young People	3
Number of Conferences	3
CRO & YP Attendance	2
CRO Representation	1
Report Submitted	
Younger Siblings	
Young Parents	
Core Group	2

Q.2 July 2013 – September 2013

Category	Number
Number of Young People	10
Number of Conferences	10
CRO & YP Attendance	1
CRO Representation	6
Report Submitted	3
Younger Siblings	
Young Parents	
Core Group	2

Q.3 October 2013 – December 2013

Category	Number
Number of Young People	32
Number of Conferences	19
CRO & YP Attendance	5
CRO Representation	25
Report Submitted	0
Younger Siblings	
Young Parents	2
Core Group	0

Q.4 January 2014 – April 2014

Category	Number
Number of Young People	31
Number of Conferences	22
CRO & YP Attendance	7 (+1 att.)
CRO Representation (No. of YPs)	18
Report Submitted	3
Younger Siblings	3
Young Parents	0
Core Group	0

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