



Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

National review of care planning for children and young people subject to Public Law Outline pre-proceedings

December 2016



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1. Introduction

Why the review was carried out?

- To check out the extent to which the work of social services is effective in helping people who need care and support and their parents or carers to achieve good outcomes.
- To investigate whether thresholds are routinely met for those children and young people whose wellbeing is compromised to the extent that they are subject to 'Public Law Outline pre-proceedings'.
- To look at the experiences of those children during the time they are subject to the pre-proceedings process.

Evidence to support the key findings outlined in this national report was gathered from:

- The findings from a survey of 22 local authorities aimed at producing a profile of pre-proceedings and PLO activity across Wales;
- The findings from fieldwork completed in six authorities consisting of three inspectors undertaking 3 days reviewing activity between May and August 2016. The period under review was April 2014 to end of March 2015. This retrospective view was chosen so that outcomes for children and young people could be seen.

Please note that the parameters of this review were confined to the pre-proceedings phase and only included in depth review of 36 cases across the following 6 authorities: Caerphilly County Borough Council; Conwy County Borough Council; Pembrokeshire County Council; The City and County of Swansea; Torfaen County Borough Council; Wrexham County Borough Council.

This report explores the quality and effectiveness of the pre-proceedings phase of the Public Law Outline in ensuring that:

- **Good outcomes had been achieved for the children and young people.**

Key finding

Work which had been carried out by the 6 local authorities under the Public Law Outline (PLO) pre-proceedings process was very outcome focussed. We were able to see that children were settled in permanent placements, and in most cases their needs were being addressed through direct work or therapy. When children remained at home or within the family it was a challenge to ensure that progress was maintained as some families did need ongoing intervention to care for their children. The number of children who did NOT become subject to application for an order despite having been through the pre-proceedings evidences that preventative interventions are proving successful. However the number of applications has not reduced over the period since the PLO was introduced.

- **The threshold for making an application for a legal order had been made.**

Key finding

A framework for establishing thresholds was used in each of the authorities where fieldwork was completed. There was more consistency and transparent decision making where the service was using one model or approach to assessing risks and concerns. However it was evident that thresholds across the authorities visited were appropriate and this was confirmed by the Welsh court's acceptance of applications for orders. Legal services had constructive relationships with children's services but provided challenge and often specialist training on the PLO process.

- **Families had been given the appropriate support and service to care for their children.**

Key finding

Family support services were well developed and in most areas had been tailored to meet the presenting needs. There was a lack of primary mental health services for parents, and specialist children's services were mainly funded by social services. The interface between intensive and preventative services was an area for improvement. Most authorities had plans for better integration and co-ordination of the range of services across their area. All authorities had reviewed the funding of services to prioritise need; most had to manage a reduction in funding.

- **People had access to comprehensive information about the Public Law Outline and had received prompt advice and support.**

Key finding

There was a lack of suitable literature on the pre-proceedings process across Wales. There was limited availability of clear information in a range of languages and formats which would assist communication. Families did benefit from the good communication skills of social workers. Pre-proceedings letters were generally of good quality and written in accessible language. There was no consistent written notification that the PLO process was being stopped.

- **Children had a voice and were encouraged to express views and opinions which were taken into consideration when decisions are being made.**

Key findings

There was evidence of a strong children's rights ethos driving practice across the pre-proceedings process. This was not always well recorded but workers were clearly child focussed. It is worth noting that children do not have their own representation at the pre-proceedings stage unlike their parents who are entitled to legal representation. However examples of good quality creative direct work was noted during the review which not only represented children's views but enabled them to speak about the concerns they were experiencing. Social workers did need enough capacity to engage and form relationships which could engender trust and respect with children and young people.



2. Background to the review

The right of a child to be brought up in a loving family is enshrined within the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, for most children this will be the family they were born into. For a small number of children, however, this will not be possible and alternatives may have to be explored. Where there is a possibility that a child cannot live with the birth parents and placement with the extended family is unable to meet the needs of the child, alternative plans need to be made as quickly as possible. The Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014 reaffirms this commitment and states that those exercising functions under the Act in relation to a child must have regard to the importance of promoting the upbringing of the child by the child's family, in so far as doing so is consistent with promoting the well-being of the child¹.

All children deserve the best experiences in life, from parenting which promotes good health and educational attainment, to a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills in order to have an enjoyable childhood and successful adult life. Permanency, good health and support during transition are all essential elements, but children will only achieve their potential through the ambition and high expectation of all those involved in their lives. Early permanency planning is essential for all children to avoid drift and ensure that they have the opportunity of reaching their full potential from a safe and secure base.

The Public Law Outline (PLO) came into force on 1st April 2008; the primary aim was to address concerns that permanency was not being achieved in a timely way and children were being placed at a further disadvantage due to the length of time a child could spend in a 'temporary' placement while a legal order was secured. The PLO sought to ensure that child care public law cases were dealt with expeditiously and fairly, and supported better opportunity for children to achieve a secure base. Whilst the PLO provided a flowchart for the progression of the case no timetable was enshrined but instead the timetable was

set as 'the child's timetable'. The expectation was that cases would go as fast as the child's timetable required it. These arrangements were reviewed and a revised PLO, designed to speed up the process for bringing an application for a care order, was rolled out across England and Wales from July 2013. Significantly these revised arrangements included a deadline for concluding each case within 26 weeks or less.

These arrangements have had a number of implications on the capacity and practice for children's services. The PLO process 2014 outlined the entire care proceedings process with imposed timescales at each stage. Any extension of the timescales set out have to be agreed with the court. The implementation of these arrangements has resulted in an improvement in timeliness for the conclusion of proceedings in Wales with 77% of cases completed within 26 weeks of an application being made during 2014 /15. However before the court application is made there is generally a pre-proceedings process. This is when the level of concerns about a child's welfare are identified as having reached the threshold beyond which a child protection plan would be effective. CSSIW wanted to look at the effectiveness of this crucial period when a child will have been identified as possibly in need of a legal order to ensure his or her wellbeing. The arrangements used to monitor this period could be crucial in ensuring there is no drift and that decisions about whether plans need to be escalated or scaled down are timely and appropriate.



¹ The review only looked at practice carried out before the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

3. Recommendations

3.1. There should be a systematic approach to ensuring that the threshold for Public Law Outline pre-proceedings has been reached.

Local authorities should consider developing a systematic approach to the PLO which:

- Is underpinned by updated policies which are routinely reviewed and updated.
- Makes sense to staff; partners and those using the service.
- Has procedures and training which are familiar to staff; easily accessible and supported by knowledgeable managers.
- Evidences clear decision making and management oversight.
- Includes a legal service which supports workers' decision making but can constructively challenge the identification of thresholds.
- Integrates quality assurance throughout the process which translates to ongoing learning and development of practice.
- Includes a preventative strategy and a commissioning approach which builds on early work with family support services across a range of intensity. Transition arrangements should include supporting families to engage with step down services and clear agreements on measuring ongoing progress.
- Adopts a shared model/approach to risk assessment and care planning.
- Provides clarity and consistency for the transition between the child protection and the PLO.
- Captures data on children subject to repeat periods in the pre-proceedings process.
- Reports on pre-proceedings performance and moves to a more rigorous assessment of the child's timeline and potential for sustained change.

3.2. There are effective arrangements in place to inform parents and carers about the PLO arrangements and what this process means.

- There should be Wales wide literature on the pre-proceedings PLO process

developed to ensure people's rights to information is consistent across the county. This should include easy read versions for those with additional needs and age appropriate child friendly versions.

- A common proforma for the 'pre-proceedings letter' should be developed, for use across the country. Chronologies and legal advice should be locally adapted and provided as appendices. Letters should capture not only the identified risks and concerns but what needs to happen for better outcomes for children and young people to be achieved.
- Assessments; decisions and planning should be routinely shared with families and children and young people. Their engagement in the process should be clearly recorded and their views made apparent. The impact on children and young people of the identified risks and concerning behaviours should be clearly outlined.
- Service structures should support purposeful relationships and continuity for families. Professionals should be supported to facilitate transition between systems and teams.
- Consideration should be given to routinely providing letters to inform families of the cessation of the PLO process. These should outline the areas where change is still required and include the consequences should positive progress not be sustained.

3.3. Care planning arrangements support timely permanence for children and young people to achieve good outcomes.

- Arrangements should be in place to ensure that there is engagement with families at an early stage to agree what permanency options are available. These should include ensuring that families fully understand the need to nominate alternative carers within the family.
- Further guidance is needed to ensure there is country wide consistency on how to meet expectations of the court in supporting kinship care arrangements.
- Local authorities will need to address not only having systems in place to ensure the effectiveness of early preventative services

but how 'step down' arrangements can support the sustainability of improved outcomes for children and young people.

- Quality assurance needs to be integrated throughout the PLO process. Arrangements to supervise case work should be systematic so that the threshold for triggering the PLO process can be more consistently maintained. The reviewing of the progress of cases already in the process should also be subject to quality assurance arrangements. This should include looking at the role of case conference chairs in strengthening the alignment between the child protection and the PLO process.
- Local authorities need to look at how the learning from evaluation of the effectiveness of the pre-proceedings process could be used to strengthen earlier intervention and more timely decision making.

3.4. Arrangements promote rights based practice and the voice of child.

- The voice of the child needs to be more routinely integrated into assessment and planning processes. Parents need to hear the

impact of their behaviour on their children in a constructive manner. The child's timeline should be kept in sharp focus.

- Workers should be given the capacity to carry out quality direct work with children and young people. More guidance and support is needed for staff to gain experience and develop skills and confidence to discuss risk and alternative permanency arrangements with children and young people.
- Practice could be enhanced if families were routinely consulted on 'what works for them'. This learning should be shared nationally between authorities and tools and models of working made available through a national database.
- Consideration should be given to how children and young people could be more engaged in legal gateway meetings and how advocacy might empower them to have a stronger voice in the pre-proceedings process.

What works in Conwy County Borough Council

One social worker used a fun quiz (with prizes) to determine whether children had understood what was going to happen and how their views would be taken into account. This increased children's engagement in the process and helped reduce the stressful nature of the serious matters being communicated.

Social worker quote:

“ Families have a right to express their views about what works for them. We have a duty to listen and try to work out why other support has not worked and how we can do things differently. ”

Case related to family who have moved from PLO process to case closure because they were able to engage in the support service and achieve the best outcomes for their children.

Cases which met key triggers but did not progress to the pre-proceedings process were subject to audit by Swansea children's services. This together with routine analysis of data related to court applications and evaluation of outcomes worked towards assuring senior managers that only the 'right cases' were being brought to care proceedings.

4. What works – summary of findings



Question 1: Is there a systematic approach to ensuring that the threshold for Public Law Outline pre-proceedings has been reached?

- Where a systematic approach had been embedded across the service it was possible to see a common understanding of what triggered the threshold for the Public Law Outline pre-proceedings. The degree of rigour of the process was reported to have increased social workers confidence in the knowledge about children and their families. Effective early work could be seen to strengthen the care order application if this course of action was needed.
- There was better co-ordination and integration of support services when underpinned by a clear commissioning/preventative strategy. This led to better outcomes when families and children could benefit from a full range of support from early preventative to intensive 'edge of care' services. Arrangements for access to 'step down' services were critical to sustaining positive outcomes.
- PLO policies and procedures which underpinned the process being reviewed did not always reflect the most recent legislation. There was no common policy or procedure across the six authorities where the fieldwork was carried out but there had been regional agreement in some areas.
- Social workers were knowledgeable about the PLO process when they had received comprehensive training which had been enhanced by updates often delivered by members of the legal service. Information and guidance on the process was easily accessible to workers when available via the authorities own intranet. Where 'expert roles' in the process had been developed arrangements better supported staff's confidence; opportunities to gain experience and improve the quality in this area of work.
- Partner agencies generally did not fully appreciate the contribution they could make to the PLO process seeing it as a social services responsibility. The interface between the child protection process and the mechanisms for decision making within the PLO were not fully understood.
- There was improved consistency in measuring the progress being made by families in improving outcomes for children and young people when legal services staff provided direct input into outlining thresholds which had been reached. This was most useful when combined with a clear timeline for review and the identification of what needed to happen for the concerns to be reduced.
- A number of strategies to avoid duplication of effort and improve communication were noted during the review. These included:
 - a) Improved continuity with legal representatives allocated to certain teams or localities.
 - b) Increased professional accountability by ensuring service managers were included in reviews of the pre-proceedings across the service.
 - c) Integrating quality assurance into the process to increase challenge and strengthen decision making.These measures also helped ensure more consistent tracking of the effectiveness of care planning.
- Routine reporting and analysis of the data and outcomes of the effectiveness of pre-proceedings work assisted with the mapping of need and evaluation of preventative being services used. Not all authorities had systems in place to track which families had been in the pre-proceeding process more than once. The reporting of performance related to the effectiveness of the pre-proceedings work was limited.

What works in Caerphilly County Borough Council

Caerphilly had restructured its children's services to improve continuity for the families and consistency in practice. The restructure also considered how the PLO could be implemented most effectively across the operational teams. To improve consistency a senior practitioner role has been developed in each team and where this role did not include carrying a full caseload it had been successful in supporting staff working through the PLO process. The arrangements for continuity of legal support across localities had helped improve communication and the quality of decision making around thresholds.



Question 2: Are there effective arrangements in place to inform parents and carers about the PLO arrangements and what this process means?

- There is a lack of suitable literature available across Wales for families and young people to explain the PLO process. Two local authorities had a leaflet available; only one authority had developed a 'child friendly' version.
- Communication to inform parents of the pre-proceedings process was mainly clear and consistent. The most effective pre-proceedings letters' were constructively written using accessible language but never the less outlined the risks and what needed to change. Some letters included long chronologies which were necessary to provide a comprehensive history for the families' legal representative. Families did find long chronologies daunting to read particularly when they were part of the letter. When presented as a separate document the information was more constructively communicated and understood by families. Information about the availability of legal advice was routinely provided although the availability of 'legal aid' was not always understood fully by families.
- Families interviewed for the review had appreciated the effort made by social workers to help them understand the PLO process. All reported that they were talked through the pre-proceedings letters and safety plans or contracts of expectations. It was evident that social workers were skilled in communication particularly with those people who had additional needs.
- Better quality assessments and plans engaged families in the process. This was less consistent when working directly with children and young people. A number of tools were available across the local authorities some workers were not clear about which tools were most effective in which circumstances. However there were examples of very effective direct work being carried out by social workers. These included an innovative tool to capture the progress of outcomes and using a quiz approach to check out children's understanding of what they had been told.
- Where all workers were trained and supported to use the same model of risk assessment, families had a better understanding of the thresholds and what changes in behaviour were needed. Some families had not appeared to respond to child protection planning when their child had been on the child protection register but once the PLO process was instigated became compliant. This was particularly the case when there was a long history of involvement with children's services.

- Most families appeared to have a clear understanding of being subject to the PLO process and the child protection process running simultaneously. This was helped where the assessment/ risk model used by the service was in consistent use throughout the two processes.
- When families were provided with a formal letter to inform them that the PLO proceedings were removed it was more evident that this was a step down arrangement where there were still changes to be made. Letters were used to re-enforce the need for progress to be sustained and what actions were still outstanding.

What works in City and County of Swansea

Workers in Swansea children’s services had further developed the ‘signs of safety model ‘as they had gained confidence in the approach .Danger statements were translated into well being outcomes for ‘step down ‘services to use to measure progress. Learning was shared across teams with presentations or examples of assessments and plans which had been given positive feedback.

Parent quote:

“ I had no written information provided, but the social worker told me about what was going to happen, and they were always open and honest, nothing was hidden. I was listened to and people supported me and – with my child, they understood what I needed and wanted to help me and my child. The support plan was clear and I was included in the decisions and my views were listened too. I had excellent support from the social worker, was always there when I wanted her. ”

Social worker quote:

“ The PLO process enables families to change – it is a more transparent way of working, better for families, they are clear what is needed to be done for change to happen. ”

What works in Wrexham County Borough Council

Children’s services had developed ‘live case monitoring ‘arrangements which provided the opportunity for senior managers to oversee the progress of cases and intervene to influence partner agency engagement or approve additional resources to produce more timely results.



Question 3: Do care planning arrangements support timely permanence for children and young people to achieve good outcomes?

- The arrangements which worked well to promote timeliness started with systematic supervision of all cases where there were concerns for a child's welfare. The most effective systems included a management team approach to evaluating thresholds and reviewing progress with consistent legal advice and the availability of 'specialist advice from experienced workers.
- Authorities where cases were discussed and analysed particularly by means of a panel which included service managers team, other agency representatives and legal services strengthened decision making and professional accountability. This approach was also used effectively to assess progress and challenge drift. Partner agency involvement in this process was not consistent across the local authorities reviewed.
- Planning was more effective when supported by a commonly used assessment model which included identification of risk. Where workers had been engaged in adapting models for local needs there was clear ownership of the tools and approaches used. This increased confidence in 'getting it right' and supported more transparent and timely decision making.
- Quality assurance was effective when embedded across the process including case file audit and analysis of those cases where the threshold for pre-proceedings had not been met. Consistent use of constructive challenge and feedback including from other agencies and legal services also improved continuous improvement across the process, leading to better and more timely outcomes.
- Where 'edge of care' services could be tailored to meet individual needs children were better supported in the community to achieve good outcomes. This progress was only sustained where the step down arrangements included a range of different services and support for families to engage in them. Where children's names had been removed from the CPR before the effectiveness of the on-going support had been evaluated a 'revolving door' syndrome was more likely to occur.
- Definite timescales for reviewing whether pre-proceedings should be continued or escalated to an application for an order were routinely used across the authorities reviewed. Arrangements were in place to address any historic drift either while a child's name was on the CPR or in Sect 20 (76). Independent reviewing officers and case conference chairs were routinely engaged in monitoring 'drift' and reporting timescales. While extended periods within pre-proceedings were not noted, some children had been in the process a number of times. This was generally a result of the family being unable to sustain progress that had been made and could impact negatively on a realistic timeline for the child to achieve a permanent alternative base.
- Arrangements which routinely considered contingency plans during the pre-proceedings phase led to more timely outcomes if the family could not care for their children in the longer term. It was evident that although families understood the seriousness of their situation they were reluctant to share their situation with family members who might be considered as alternative carers. More experienced and confident workers were better able to support families to make this step. Effective use of 'family meetings' which were often chaired by workers themselves could be seen not only to prevent delays later on when legal proceedings were instigated but also to address at an early stage the complexities of managing contact and financial or practical support that might be needed.

Quote from foster carers in Pembrokeshire:

“ When we saw how many people were at the case track meeting (24) we were taken aback then we realized we knew everyone of them and what role they had played in supporting J. ”

The number of people and the amount of resource involved in this case illustrated well that there is no quick solution for children whose well being has been compromised. The outcome for J was a positive one; a stable placement was clearly meeting his needs. This had been maintained during the PLO process while effort had been made to support J to live at home. Some very creative work to develop J's emotional resilience meant although living at home would have been his first choice he understood and accepted why that could not be the case. This allowed him to move on and make progress and his relationships with his family had been maintained which gives him the best opportunity to maintain his emotional support networks in the future.



Question 4: Do arrangements promote right based practice and the voice of child?

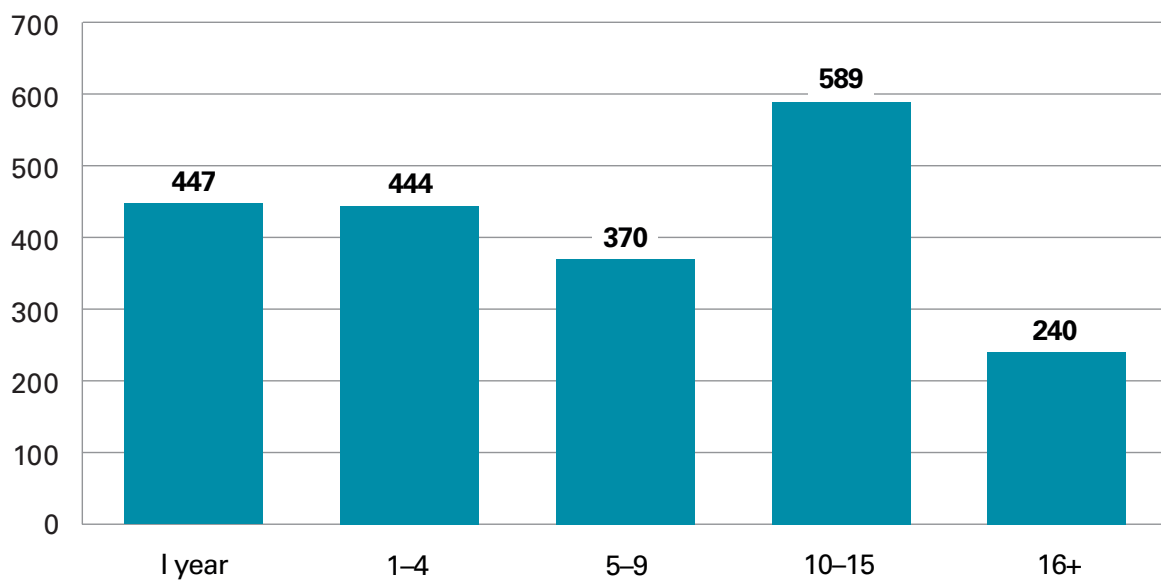
- There was evidence of a strong children's rights ethos driving practice across the pre-proceedings process. This was not always well recorded but workers were clearly child focussed.
- Children and young people are not represented in their own right during the pre-proceeding process whereas parents and carers are. Approaches which captured the impact of adult behaviours on children delivered the most powerful message about the need for change. Advocacy services were not routinely offered as children within the pre-proceedings are not automatically eligible.
- It was not always clearly communicated to families that legal aid was highly likely to be available to them. However if they did not have legal representation at the first 'gateway' meeting these were generally postponed until this could be arranged.
- The review noted examples of where social workers highly developed communication skills had not only promoted the voices of the children but supported them to disclose risks they had experienced. Some staff needed further training and guidance to support them to openly discuss risk and safeguarding with children and young people.
- Management support for training and development of workforce skills in direct work produced good results in supporting children, young people and their children to engage in their assessments and plans.
- Where families had been listened to and their views respected there were much better outcomes for children even when these had not been their ideal choice. Families had more acceptance of their situation when they believed workers had been honest with them even when this was not what they had wanted to hear.
- Families raised the fact that there was a lack of primary mental health care to support them. They identified that they would be more able to care for their children if appropriate services were in place for them.
- There was a lack of information for people on the role of children's services in supporting alternatives to parental care such as Special Guardianship and Child Arrangements Orders. The availability of support including financial help was not clear enough at the start of the process so that people could make better informed choices.
- Mutual respect and shared aspiration was evidenced across case tracking meetings held as part of the review. Working relationships were valued between staff and families, children and young people.

Appendix 1

The data which has been used to produce these charts was collected from a survey of all 22 local authorities. It has not been validated and therefore can only be relied on to give a general profile across Wales. A small number of authorities were not able to extract the data requested from their systems and this is noted on the individual chart.

Profile of data collated from survey of local authorities

Chart 1: Number of children becoming looked after in 2014/15 by age profile

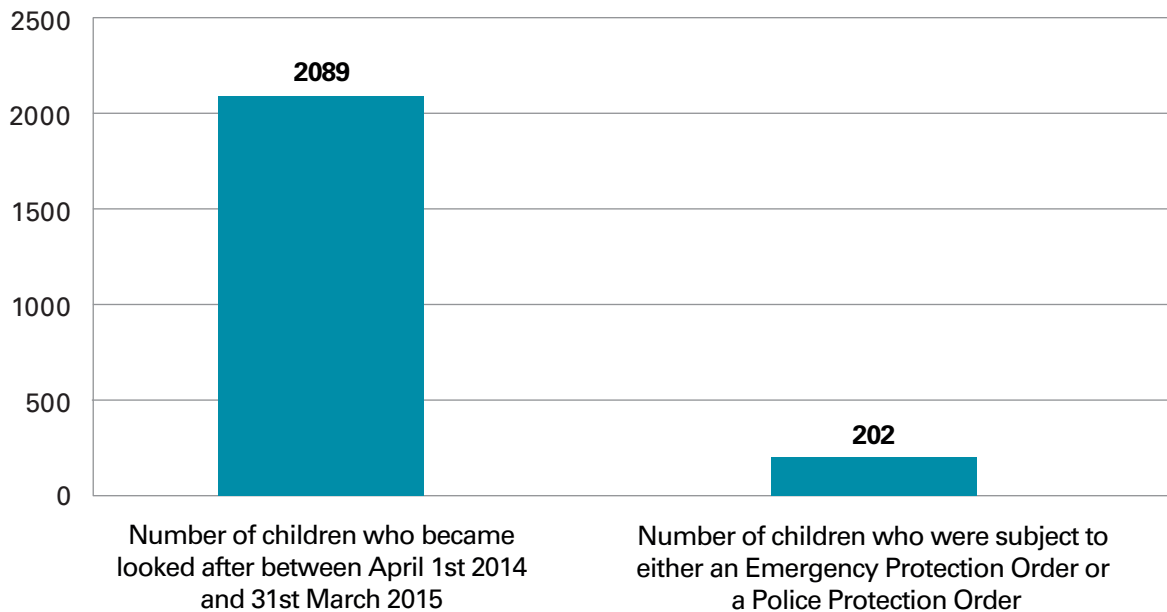


This chart illustrates that there was a relatively high number of children and young people over the age of 10 becoming looked after in 2014/15. It is likely that only a minority of these would be subject to PLO pre-proceedings process.

What works in Torfaen County Borough Council

Children and family services have not only developed family support services which could be tailored to meet families needs but workers also ensure that good use can be made of community based services. One parent told us 'The support service we received PAFT (Parents as First Teachers) was fantastic I think it should be recommended for all families it was provided in our own home which was what we needed and made a huge difference'.

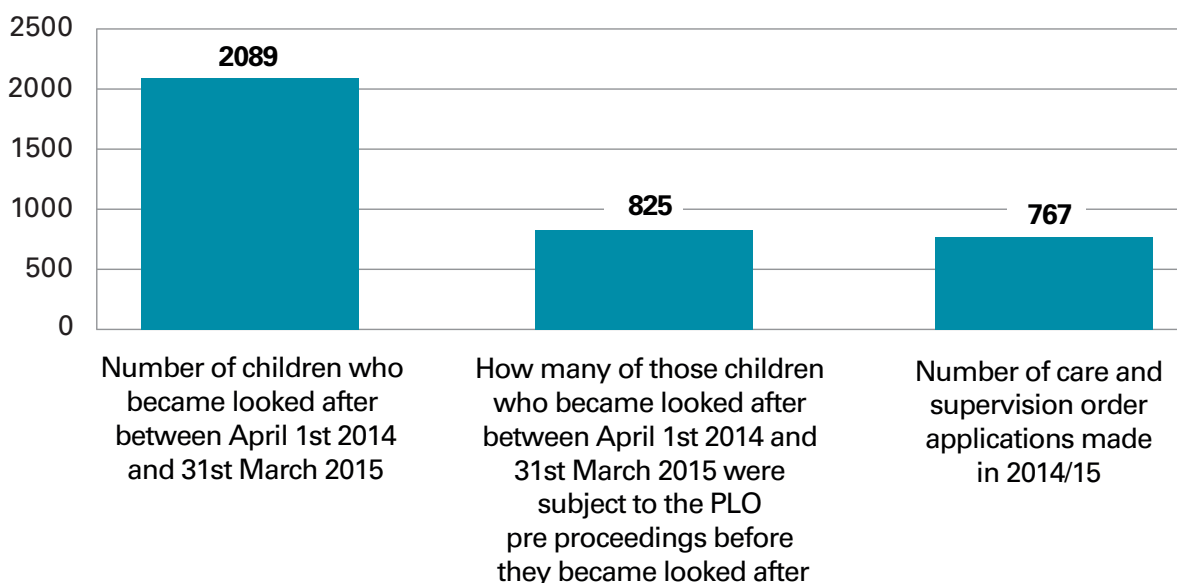
Chart 2: Number of children becoming looked after and those subject to EPO/PPO



The children who were subject to either an Emergency Protection Order or a Police Power of Protection order were not included in the

sample of cases reviewed. The number of such orders remains relatively low.

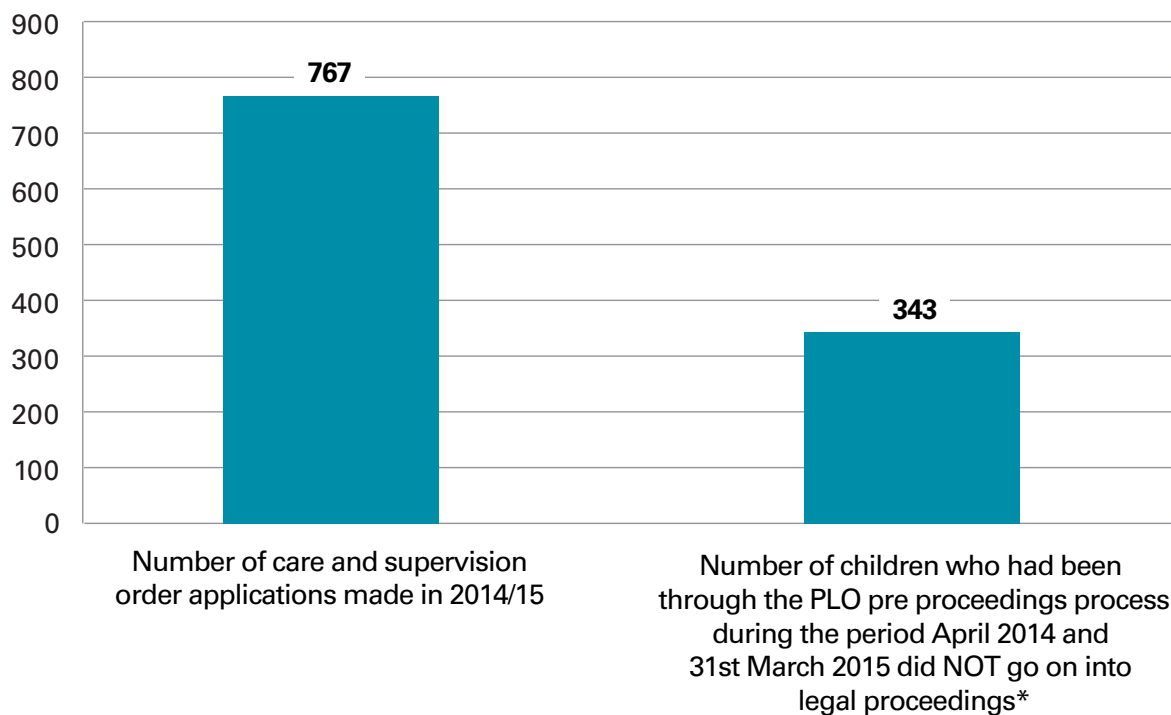
Chart 3: Number of children becoming looked after, those subject to pre-proceedings before they became looked after and number of care and supervision order applications made



The number of children who became 'looked after' while still at the pre-proceedings stage was slightly higher than the number of care and supervision order applications made for the same period. This indicates that changes

made could have resulted in the threshold being no longer met and might include children were successfully reunified with their families without the need for a legal order.

Chart 4: Children who had been through the PLO pre-proceedings process during the period April 1st 2014 and 31st March 2015 who did NOT go on into legal proceedings



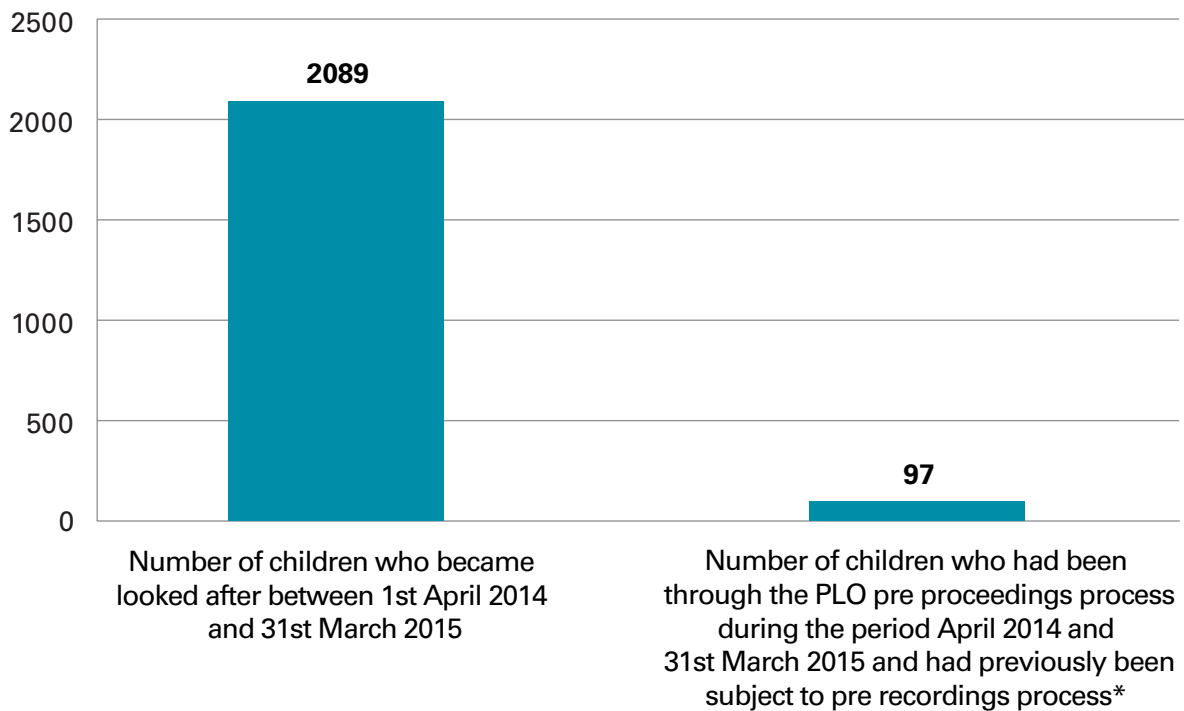
* Does not include data from all 22 local authorities

This data illustrates that the pre-proceedings process can be effective in reducing the need to apply for a care or supervision order. It is likely that some of these children came back into the process at a later date but legal

advice was clear that if the threshold was not being met the process should be discontinued. Consideration of the sustainability of improvements should be given to repeat referrals into the process.

One parent interviewed believed the reason her children had come back into pre-proceedings for a second time was that she had found it difficult to engage with the worker from the 'step down' service she was referred to for on-going support. Feeling this was a failure on her part she withdrew and became depressed and isolated. A number of authorities had recognised a need to strengthen support for transition between support services.

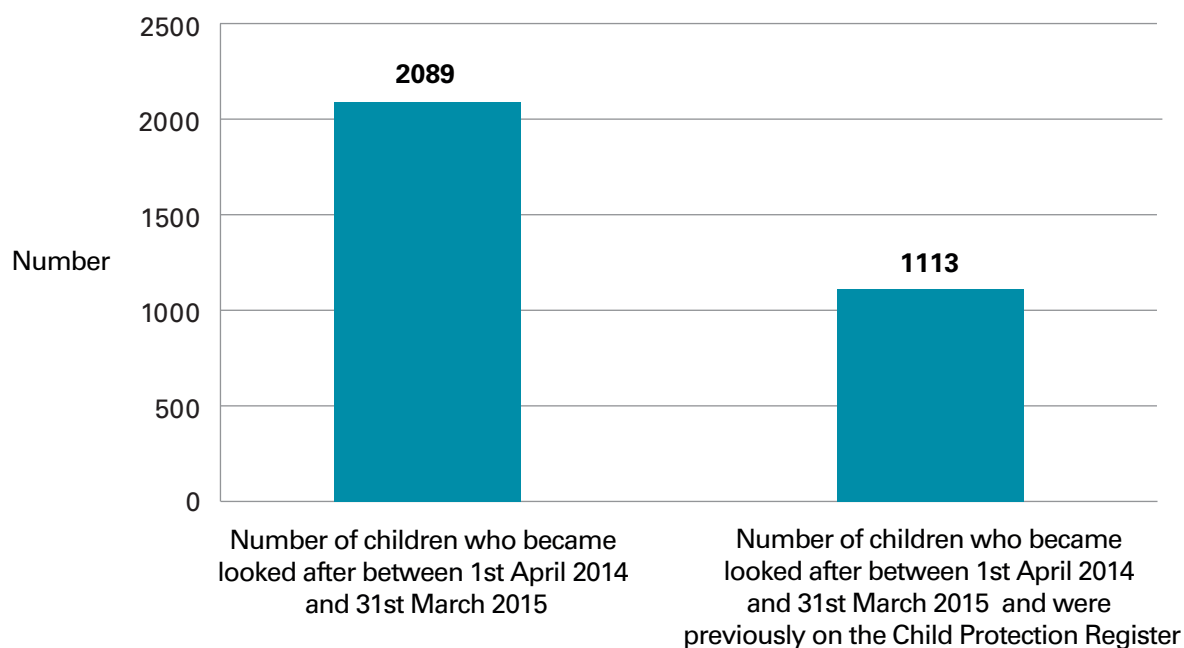
Chart 5: Children who had been through the PLO pre-proceedings process during the period April 2014 and 31st March 2015 and had previously been subject to pre-proceedings process



* Not all authorities were able to report on this data as not all systems were set up to record it. Clearly it is important to be able to identify those children, who have been through the process more than once as drifting in and out of this crucial period would impact on the child's timeline for achieving permanence.

Families were asked why they had responded more positively to the requirements of a plan drawn up under the PLO process when often they had not done so in co-operating with the child protection plan despite their similarity. The general response was that the seriousness of the situation and the realisation that the children could go into care was brought home to them by what they believed to be independent advice from their solicitors.

Chart 6: Number of children who had been on the child protection register before becoming 'looked after'



Quote from a 'case conference chairperson'

“ I chaired an initial conference on a 15 year old with learning difficulties who had been on the CPR three times previously and I expressed her concerns about the risk of the revolving door effect here, where slight improvements lead to case closure or removal from the Child Protection Register only for a swift re-referral as issues and concerns reoccur. The result was that the case was reviewed to assess whether the threshold for instigating the PLO had been reached. ”

Caerphilly children's services had integrated its quality assurance system into the PLO process in a most effective way. Decisions and plans were approved by a permanence panel and the quality of reporting checked by the specialist senior practitioner and legal services in addition to the team manager. Feedback was given both individually and in group sessions (practice development group) to look at the 'what works' best in practice.

Torfaen County Borough Council have developed a particularly effective 'Vulnerable Children's Panel' which legal services and partner agencies contribute to. All cases where concerns have been identified in supervision are considered by the panel and then reviewed systematically. Members have the authority to make decisions and staff valued the challenges which strengthened decision making. The outcomes of the PLO work had also been evaluated and the learning shared across the management team and staff group.

Appendix 2

What works in Pembrokeshire children's services

A senior social worker has developed a set of tools which are visual aids for social workers to use in direct work sessions with children and young people to help identify issues around their lives and provide a better understanding of the child or young person's perspective. This work can inform assessments, and personalize planning to help identify unmet needs. Social workers can better identify and resolve issues to ensure service delivery is child centered.

About Me!! Me and my health

My name:

My social worker: 1 = _____

Today's date: 10 = _____

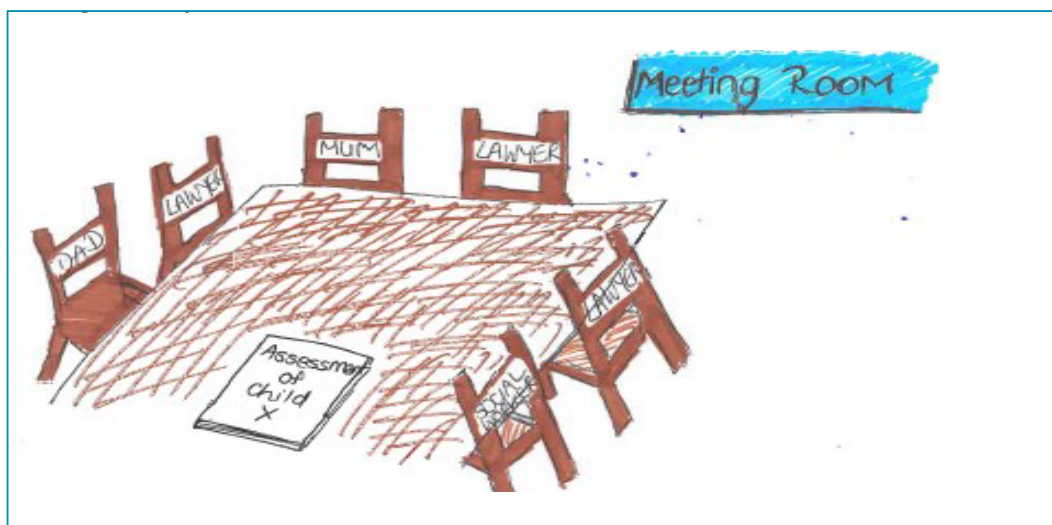


Appendix 3

What is Public Law Outline and what does it mean for me?



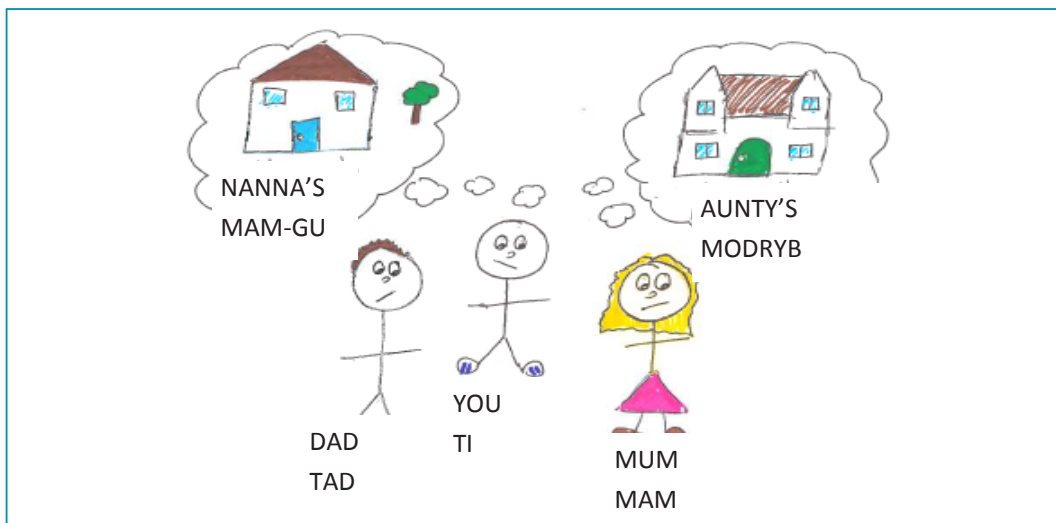
Your social worker and Swansea Child and Family Services are worried that it isn't safe enough for you at home. They may have tried to put changes in place already that haven't worked, or they could feel it is so risky that they have to go to PLO straight away.



Your social worker, Mum, Dad and all the lawyers will have a big meeting to talk about what needs to happen and how long this will take. Your social worker will ask to do a risk assessment, which means they will talk to you, your parents and everyone in your life. This will help them make suggestions on what should happen.



PLO means that social services will tell your Mum and Dad to speak to a solicitor about what is happening. If things don't change then your social worker might have to go to court with Mum and Dad to help make sure you are safe.



Mum and Dad might be asked to think about who you might be able to live with if social services think it isn't safe enough to stay at home. You will be asked about what you think too because your opinions are really important.

What works in the City and County of Swansea

The above information leaflet had been developed to help children and young people understand what the PLO process would mean for them. Social workers made good use of such material to enhance the direct work being carried out. It also helped parents to open discussion with their children about what was happening in their lives and how they could be appropriately involved in their 'safety plans'.

Appendix 4

4.1 Methodology

Key questions for the review

- Is there a systematic approach to ensuring that the threshold for Public Law Outline pre-proceedings has been reached?
- Are there effective arrangements in place to inform parents and carers about the PLO arrangements and what this process means?
- Do care planning arrangements support timely permanence for children and young people to achieve good outcomes?
- Do arrangements promote rights based practice and the voice of child.

Methodology profile

The review consisted of the following:

- Survey completed by 22 local authorities (see charts in Appendix 1)
- Review of a number core strategic and operational documents to be provided to CSSIW prior to inspection
- Presentation by each of the six the local authorities chosen for fieldwork on the model/approach used by children's services to manage the pre-proceedings arrangements
- Review of assessment and planning documents for up to 6 cases in each authority selected by CSSIW categorised against three specified criteria
- A maximum of three of the selected cases were tracked in more detail by the inspectors and this to include a case tracking review meeting with the range of professionals involved
- Individual meetings with child /young person and their family
- Case interviews with social worker; team manager; case conference chair/IRO for 3 cases not selected for a case tracking review meeting
- Interview with legal services representative
- Interview with head of children's services.

Six local authorities chosen for the fieldwork were required to submit the following core documents:

- Strategic and operational structure for delivering children's social services
- Copy of the authority's permanency strategy
- Copy of authorities family support strategy/preventative support strategy (or equivalent)
- Protocol for managing PLO process
- Profile of children on the CPR including length of time on CPR, registration category, age and gender
- Copy of performance information and quality assurance activity related to the PLO pre-proceedings/PLO process
- Copy of any information available for families, children or young people with respect to the PLO process.

Lists of case files from which 6 files would be selected:

Case Selection Criteria

(All the cases should have commenced pre-proceedings/ PLO between the dates of April 2014/end of March 2015). Dates any pre-proceedings were commenced /finished. Sibling groups were identified.

Category 1

- Cases where the child had been subject to the PLO pre-proceedings and did not go on into legal proceedings but remained with his/her parents and the proceedings were discontinued.

Category 2

- Cases where the child had been subject to the PLO pre-proceedings previously (i.e. 2 or more separate episodes) For LAs where there are no children in this category: Cases where the child had NOT been on the CPR before becoming looked after (excluding EPO/PP0).

Category 3

- Cases where the child had been subject to PLO pre-proceedings before becoming looked after under Sect 20.

Six cases were selected but only 3 required case review meetings. For all 6 cases the following documents were requested:

- Completed case summary (template provided)
- Most recent (current) assessment
- Most recent (current) care and support/child protection/risk management plan
- PLO notification letter
- Any C/P conference minutes from the period under review
- Any core group meetings from the period under review
- Any Family Group conference minutes/plans/agreements
- Legal meeting minutes where applicable
- Evidence of how family received information on the PLO process.

Case tracking meetings were held in each of the 6 local authorities for 3 of the cases selected.

Cases were selected by lead reviewer from case lists provided by local authority.

The multiagency meetings were planned to last up to 2 hours.

A background paper was provided for the participants.

Each review meeting should have included as applicable for each case selected:

- Social worker
- Team manager
- Case conference chair/IRO
- Operational manager
- Legal service representatives
- Carer/residential worker
- Family group conference chair
- Core group members (not the family) if child on CPR
- Education/health reps if not included in above.

A separate meeting was organised with

- Child/Young person
- Parents/Carers

A letter was provided for those families chosen for the case tracking.

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- The head of children's services
- Children's services – service managers
- Children's services – team managers
- Children's services – social workers
- Legal services representatives
- Independent reviewing officers
- Case conference chairs
- Representatives from the health, and local authority education services.

The review was advised and supported by a national reference group to which the following organisations made a contribution:

Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru; All Wales Heads of Children's Services; CAF/CASS; Civil, Family and Tribunals for Wales; The Children's Commissioner for Wales; Voices from Care; Welsh Government Policy Unit.

The CSSIW review teams included Area managers from the regional teams and inspectors from the strategy team. Lead inspectors were Pam Clutton and Katy Young.

