

Corporate Parenting Panel

18 February 2022

Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service



Report of Helen Fergusson, Head of Children's Social Care, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to introduce the Independent Reviewing Officer, Children in Care, Annual Report Summary, covering the period 2020/21 which will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel at its meeting on 18 February 2022. This was initially scheduled to come to the meeting on 22 November 2021, but due to unforeseen circumstances on the day, needed to be postponed.
- 2 The Annual report is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

Executive summary

- 2 This report highlights the key messages that are contained within the accompanying IRO Service Annual reports and sets out 4 key priorities that have been identified to address these.

Recommendation

- 3 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are required to:
 - a) Note the contents of the annual report.

Background

- 4 The annual report set out the performance and the direction of travel for the IRO service.
- 5 The IRO service is required to play a critical role in supporting and challenging the work of Children's Social Care in relation to Children who are In Our Care who are subject to a Child Protection Planning process.

Key messages within Annual Report

- 6 In 2020/21, the timeliness of children Looked After (CLA) reviews increased to 99%.
- 7 100 % of children under a Private Fostering arrangement had their review within timescales.
- 8 87% of Foster Care reviews were held within timescales.
- 9 The IRO Service has been successful in achieving Investors In Children (IIC) Status and 10 year award. The positive feedback from this report is within the Annual Report.

Key Priorities for 2020/21

Children who are Looked After

- a) To improve on the quality of care plans for children and young people and ensure these plans are formed with children and their families.
- b) Continue to support social care and the IRO service to embed Signs of Safety as the practice model.
- c) We want our children to have good prospects when leaving care.
- d) To support Social Care to make continuous improvements to the service they provide for children and young people.

Conclusion

- 17 The four priorities identified within the Annual Reports will be taken forward by the IRO service and form a critical part of the Social Care response to the ILACS inspection in September 2019.

Authors

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The statutory duties of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) are set out in section 25B (1) Children Act 1989 with further statutory guidance contained in the IRO handbook, which sets out the IRO in relation to case management and review for looked after children.

There are two clear and separate aspects to the function of the IRO:

- i. chairing the child's review; and
- ii. monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis.

Finance

There are no Direct Financial Implications within this report.

Consultation

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None

Appendix 2: Children Looked After Annual Report

Attached as a separate document