

Corporate Parenting Panel

25 November 2022

Independent Reviewing Officer Children in Care Annual Report Summary 2021/2022



Report of Chris Ring, Strategic Manager, Safeguarding and Professional Practice, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service covering the period from April 2021 to March 2022.

Executive summary

- 2 The annual report, attached as Appendix 2, has been produced under the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. This report provides an overview of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service with regards to Children in Care and provides assurance that we are discharging our statutory duty effectively.

Recommendation(s)

- 3 Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the contents of the attached report.

Background

- 4 The IRO service has continued to discharge its statutory functions effectively throughout 2021-22. We have started to form a recovery plan in response to the Covid-19, embracing technology to enable us to continue to communicate and engage with children and young people, and ensuring that children and young people's reviews took place in a timely way.
- 5 We have continued to work with the Children in Care Council (CICC) to inform service development activity, created preparation tools to try to engage young people in their reviews and achieved Investing in Children (IIC) status gold award.
- 6 We have continued to effectively support timely care planning for children and have seen an increase of children with plans of permanence in a timely way.
- 7 We have embedded our Resolution Process with IROs, social work teams and senior management, having a greater number of challenging and supportive conversations that make a real difference for children and young people.
- 8 We have maintained a high level of performance for children with 99% of CLA reviews held in timescales.
- 9 We continue to provide an increasing level of performance with 94% Foster Care Reviews held in timescales.

Conclusion

- 10 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be assured that we are effectively discharging our statutory duty to Children in Care under the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

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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