



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 3
NOVEMBER 2013

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (IRO) 2013-
14

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Committee of the 2013-14 annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officers.

Background

2. The publication of an annual reports on the activities of the Independent Reviewing Officers for Looked After Children (LAC) is a requirement of the IRO Guidance (2004) and is restated in the IRO handbook issued as statutory guidance in March 2010; these reports are attached at Appendix 1 and 2 and set out the role and activity of the Independent Reviewing Officers in Leicestershire over the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.
3. Within Leicestershire, IROs have a dual role whereby they undertake their statutory role as outlined in the IRO Handbook in relation to Looked After Children, as well as the chairing of all Child Protection Conferences (CPCs) and reviews convened in the authority.
4. The annual report is obliged to report on the following:
 - (a) An overview of the challenges about care planning in children's cases undertaken by the IRO Service and how these are escalated and resolved;
 - (b) The workload of the service and a description of the workforce of the service;
 - (c) The extent of participation of children and their parents in the review process;
 - (d) The number of reviews that are held on time, the number that are held out of time and the reasons for the ones that are out of time;
 - (e) The position in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews; and
 - (f) Whether any resource issues are compromising the delivery of a quality service to looked after children.
5. The annual reports identify good practice but also highlight issues for further development and identify action required. Key issues to progress:

- (a) Improved care and permanency planning and processes for children and young people; a joint action plan is in place across the IRO Service, Locality Social Work and Adoption and Fostering and the work of this plan is being driven forward.
 - (b) Improved placement sufficiency and suitability to support stability and permanency for children and young people in the care of LCC. This is currently being addressed through the Transformation Programme and Remodelling of Children's Social Care
 - (c) Strengthened and increased challenge from the IRO Service to improve influence and outcomes for children and young people at a service and strategic level not just individual case; Challenge forums have been developed between the IRO Service and Assistant Director and a Notification Policy is being developed.
6. In accordance with regulatory requirement the findings of the IRO annual report have been presented to the Corporate Parenting Board and will be published in full on the County Council's website along with an action plan detailing the work now underway to address the conclusions in full.

Equal Opportunities Implications

7. These are addressed throughout the report as the aim is to improve standards and outcomes for all children and young people in care, including disabled children, young children and those from minority and harder to reach groups. The IRO Service has a diverse compliment of staff with good representation across gender, age, sexual orientation as well as ethnicity.

Background Papers

8. IRO Annual report 2012-13.

Circulation under the Local Alert Issues Procedures

9. None.

Appendices

10. Appendix 1 – IRO Children in Care Annual Report 2013-14
Appendix 2 – IRO Child Protection Annual Report 2013-14

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