

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

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| MEETING:  | <b>Children's, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development &amp; Scrutiny Panel</b> |                                  |
| MEETING DATE:   | <b>13<sup>th</sup> November 2023</b>  | EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE |
|   |   |                                  |
| TITLE:  | <b>Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2022-23</b>                        |                                  |
| WARD:   | <b>All</b>  |                                  |
| <b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>                                |   |                                  |
| <b>List of attachments to this report:</b>                |   |                                  |
| Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2022-23 |   |                                  |

### 1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 An annual report of the Independent Reviewing (IRO) Service for Looked After Children is required in accordance with the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and subsequent statutory guidance published by the Department for Education. The report is produced to provide the Director for Children's Services, the Lead Member for Children and the Corporate Parenting Board with information pertaining to the work of the Independent Reviewing Service (IRS), which is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the care provided to children and young people for whom the Local Authority are Corporate Parents.
- 1.2 The Children's Health and Wellbeing Panel review the annual report to ensure members are appraised on the care provided to children for whom the Local Authority are responsible.

### 2 RECOMMENDATION

**The Panel is asked to;**

- 2.1 Note the growing pressures on the IRO service as a result of the increasing numbers of children being placed in the care of Bath and Northeast Somerset and the continued work and commitment of IROs to maintain contact with children in

care, regularly reviewing the plans for these children to ensure their needs are being met.

2.2 Recognise and value the impact of the IRO role in providing scrutiny and at times, challenge when there are concerns that the needs of children are not being met or plans progressed.

### **3 THE REPORT**

3.1 Please see attached the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) annual report for 2022-2023, which sets out how the IRO Service supports and monitors the function to ensure that Bath and Northeast Somerset Council are meeting the needs of the children and young people for whom it is Corporate Parent.

### **4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

4.1 The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for a child or young person in the care of the Local Authority is a legal requirement under section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. Since 2004 all local authorities are required to appoint an IRO to protect children's interests throughout the care planning process.

4.2 The IRO Handbook was introduced in 2010, providing statutory guidance for IRO's and setting out the local authority's functions in terms of case management and review for looked after children.

4.3 The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulation 2010 applies specifically to children who are looked after by a local authority. These Regulations aim to improve outcomes for children in care by improving the quality of the care planning processes.

4.4 IROs are required to oversee and scrutinise the Care Plan devised for every child or young person placed in the care of the Local Authority. The IRO will ensure that everyone involved in the child or young person's life fulfils the responsibilities placed upon them. IROs are expected to ensure that;

- Review meetings are held for all children and young people who are being cared for by the Local Authority,
- The views and wishes of children and young people in care are heard and considered when decisions are being made about them,
- Children and young people understand their care plan and any changes to this,
- The Local Authority is a good corporate parent to all children and young people in care by ensuring they get the same opportunities, support and care outcomes that other children living within their families receive.

## **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)**

5.1 The IRO service is aware of the increased pressures across the Council with finances. Being acutely aware of this, the IRO service has a statutory duty to fulfil its function in relation to the children of Bath and Northeast Somerset by offering a service that includes Quality Assurance, ensuring its Corporate Parents meet their statutory responsibilities. To support the pressures on the service, a request for funding for an additional IRO has been made in next year's council budget.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

## **7 EQUALITIES**

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was completed in October 2020 and can be found on the Children's Services Equality Impact Assessment Web Page.

## **8 CLIMATE CHANGE**

8.1 The Independent Reviewing Service uses various methods of travel, which will contribute towards reducing the service's carbon footprint and financial costs. It is normal practice within the service to send correspondence via email, reducing the need to print documents.

## **9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

9.1 None

## **10 CONSULTATION**

10.1 The report was shared with the Director for Education and Safeguarding, Mr Christopher Wilford and approved on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023.

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| <b>Background papers</b>   | None  |
| <b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b> |   |