

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Children's Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	03 November 2020	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2019 – 2020	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2019 -2020		

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 Person's Act 2008 and subsequent statutory guidance published by the Department for Education. The report is produced in order 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 so as 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 consistently high number of children in care reviews that are held within statutory timescale thus ensuring the needs of children and young people in care are being appropriately reviewed and care plans effectively scrutinised. The IRO manager has ensured that IRO's have a workload that allows them to have the capacity needed to maintain good oversight of care planning for children and young people in care.
- 2.2 Note the number of children and young people in care that are placed over 20 miles from their family home / community and consider what additional support can be provided to children's social care to increase the number of foster carers available within Bath and North East Somerset. Children need to feel that they

can maintain connections with the important people in their life even if they are unable to live within their families.

- 2.3** Consider the positive feedback that was received directly from children, young people and their carers about their experiences of the Independent Reviewing Officers within Bath and North East Somerset. Feedback from children, young people, their carers, parents and other family members is an area that requires greater resources and focus.

Recognise the quality assurance mechanisms in place within the Independent Reviewing Service and the use of quarterly reports to highlight to senior managers within children's social care the delivery of child in care reviews, themes identified by Independent Reviewing Officers, recommendations being made at child in care reviews and an understanding of the escalations and challenges made by IRO's.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 Please see attached the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) annual report for 2019-2020 which sets out how the IRO Service continues to ensure that Bath and North East 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 have been 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 functions of the local authority in terms of case management and review for looked after children.
- 4.3 The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulation 2010 apply specifically to children who are looked after by a local authority. The objective of these Regulations is 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 who is involved in the child or young person's life fulfils the responsibilities placed upon them.
- 4.5 IRO's 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, love and care that other children living within their families receive.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 No request is being made for additional resources.

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 has been completed and can be found on the Children's Services Equality Impact Assessment Web Page- [Children's Services Equality Impact Assessment Web pages](#)

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 The Independent Review Service uses various methods of travel which will contribute towards reducing the services carbon footprint. IRO's use public transport, share travel with colleagues and work from a range of settings.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 This report has been reviewed and endorsed by all Independent Reviewing Officers within Bath and North East Somerset Council.

10.2 The report was presented for consultation at the Bath Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP) Quality and Performance Group on the 21/09/2020.

10.3 The report was shared with the Director for Children and Young People's Specialist Services on 17/09/2020.

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Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	