

| Bath & North East Somerset Council | | |
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| MEETING/ DECISION MAKER: | Children’s Health and Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel | |
| MEETING/ DECISION DATE: | 08 November 2022 | EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: |
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| TITLE: | Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2021-2022 | |
| WARD: | All | |
| AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM | | |
| List of attachments to this report: | | |
| Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2021 -2022 | | |

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 growing pressures on the IRO service as a result of the increasing numbers of children being placed in the care of Bath and North East Somerset and the continued work and commitment of IRO's to maintain contact with children in care, regularly reviewing the plans for these children so as 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 2021-2022 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 was completed in October 2020 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 Reviewing Service uses various methods of travel which will contribute towards reducing the services carbon footprint. Over the last 24 months the service has sent 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 and approved on 31st October 2021.

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