

Report of Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities

Update on Independent Reviewing Officer Report for 2016/2017

Summary

1. This report is to update Corporate Parenting Board on the progress and practice of the York Independent Reviewing Service.

Background

2. We know that for most families York is a great place to grow up and that the vast majority of children are safe, resilient and achieving. The role of the Independent Review Officer is to since 2004 all local authorities have been required to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to protect children's interests throughout the care planning process.
3. The requirement to appoint IROs arose from concerns nationally, that looked after children could 'drift', with care plans that either did not meet their needs or were not implemented. Given these concerns nationally, it was decided that every looked after child should have an IRO: an adult with oversight of their care plan and empowered to act on their behalf in challenging the local authority. Although IROs were to be appointed by the local authority, they must be independent from the immediate line management of the case.
4. In the restructure of September, 2016, a very important change to the IRO service was envisaged, which is now implemented. This change was to not only have responsibility and oversight of Children Looked After and Chairing of Child Protection meetings, the IRO's now also have responsibility for the oversight of Child in Need cases. This is showing York's commitment to all the children we are working with, not just those we are statutorily required to work with.

Ofsted inspection

5. In November and December 2016 Ofsted carried out an extensive inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. The overall judgement received was “Good” and reflected that York has a strong base from which to build our work with children and young people, whose views and feedback are central to the work of the IRO in for filling their function.
6. The detailed feedback and recommendations from the Ofsted report strengthened the case for the IRO’s having oversight of Child in Need cases as well as their statutory functions.

Feedback from Ofsted

7. “Children’s plans are regularly reviewed across the service. Statutory reviews are held within timescales and are well attended by a range of agencies. Child protection chairs challenge social workers and their managers when there are gaps in children’s plans or when drift is occurring. However, children’s records do not show whether this challenge has made any positive difference. When a child in need plan is in place, this is reviewed by an IRO. This is a positive development, which is beginning to improve the quality of the child’s plan after the first review”.
8. The positive endorsement by Ofsted of our restructure and role of the IRO is a welcome acknowledgement of the City of York’s vision for children in our locality.
9. Some mosaic processes have been reviewed and others are currently under review to support the work of the IRO’s in their responsibilities.
10. We as a service are very involved in the early adoption of the new assessment framework, supporting implementation and reviewing of documentation currently used to ensure compatibility with the model.

Options and Analysis

11. There are no specific options associated with this report.

Council Plan

12. This report relates to the IRO Strategic plan and Child in Care Action Plan.

Implications

13. Financial: There are no financial implications to consider at this stage

Human Resources (HR): There are no HR implications to consider at this stage

Equalities: There are no equalities implications to consider at this stage

Legal: There are no equalities implications to consider at this stage

Crime and Disorder: There are no crime and disorder implications to consider at this stage

Information Technology (IT): There are no IT implications to consider at this stage

Property: There are no property implications to consider at this stage

Risk Management

14. There are no specific risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

15. Members are asked to note the information contained in the covering report and attached IRO Annual Report.

Reason: To keep Members updated on the IRO Service

Contact Details

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Report Approved Date 7 Nov 2017

Dot Evans Head of Service (on behalf of Eoin Rush)

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

All

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Wards Affected:

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None

Annexes

Annex A – Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2016-17

Abbreviations

IRO Independent Reviewing Officer