

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL

1 SEPTEMBER 2016

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE

Report of the Director for People

Strategic Aim:	This report relates to the Council strategic objective two: "protecting vulnerable communities" and also to the Council's role as corporate parent for looked after children.	
Exempt Information	No.	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Councillor Richard Foster, Lead Member for Children	
Contact Officer(s):	Steve Tanner, Interim Head of Service, Safeguarding	Tel: 01572 758358 STanner@rutland.gov.uk
Ward Councillors	N/A	

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Note the performance of the service in ensuring all LAC reviews have been carried out in line with statutory timescales in 99% of cases.
2. Note the recommendations contained within the report for the local authority, our health partners, and the IRO service itself,
3. Note in response that the operational service will incorporate these recommendations into the service development plan which is monitoring by the Service Improvement Board (SIB)
4. Note the introduction of quarterly meetings between the LSCB chair, the DCS, Head of Service and the IRO manager to monitor progress on addressing the recommendations in this report and other issues.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Annual Report for the Independent Review Service is a statutory requirement, with guidance stating that managers of the Independent Review Service should provide an annual report for the scrutiny of the Council.

2. BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The Council is required to provide a reviewing service to oversee and review the work of the Council in promoting and delivering care plans for individual looked after children. This must be independent of the operational line management of the social work teams responsible for looked after children's cases. The IRO is also responsible for monitoring the performance of the Local Authority's functions in respect of each review. If appropriate and if there is an unmet need for a Looked After Child, the IRO can refer the child to the Children and Family Court Advisory Service (CAFCASS) who may consider legal actions on behalf of the child against the Local Authority.
- 2.2 There are some areas where further improvement is needed: such as providing timely reports to review meetings; ensuring timely health assessments with the LAC health service; strengthening parallel/contingency planning; ensuring the production of care plans within 10 days. Progress is still required to get more local foster carers for our children , and work is being undertaken with Communications, fostering, and the corporate performance team to support this.
- 2.3 The report also draws to the attention of the local authority the challenge in meeting the statutory expectations of the IRO service within a service that is dependent on one or two people and within the context of a significant increase in demand over the last year in relation to LAC and child protection cases.
- 2.4 Overall, however, the report shows that looked after children in Rutland are well cared for and appropriately placed, have placement stability, are making progress, and that the Council is overall discharging its corporate parenting responsibilities well in conjunction with its partners. It shows good engagement in the care planning process which is undertaken in a timely fashion with good involvement from children and young people, their families, as well as foster carers and schools. The timeliness of adoption placements has improved and many children, whilst placed near Rutland rather than within County, are cared for within their own extended families.
- 2.5 The areas for improvement for the organisation are detailed the report and will be incorporated into the children's service development plan.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1. None.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. None.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6. LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The Annual Report for the Independent Review Service is a statutory requirement, with guidance stating that managers of the Independent Review Service should provide an annual report for the scrutiny of the Council.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been completed because there are no equality implications arising from the production of the annual report. The report incorporates the need for the Council to ensure its care placements meet the needs of its looked after population

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None

9. HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None

10. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1. The recommendations pull out the key issues arising from the content of the annual report and are set out at the beginning of the report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 IRO Handbook:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/337568/iro_statutory_guidance_iros_and_las_march_2010_tagged.pdf

12. APPENDICES

12.1. Appendix A – The annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (attached).

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577