

## Central Bedfordshire Council

### CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

3rd July 2017

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### Report on Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2016-17

Report of Sue Harrison Director of Childrens Services  
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Advising Officers: Gerard Jones Assistant Director Childrens Services Operations ([Gerard.jones@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Gerard.jones@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)) and Sharon Keenan, Practice Manager, Conference and Review Service

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#### Purpose of this report

To ensure that members of the Corporate Parenting Panel have the opportunity to review and scrutinise the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report, and fulfil their statutory responsibility in accordance with the 'IRO Handbook – Statutory Guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers and Local Authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review of Looked After Children'.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive or Committee is asked to:

1. That the Corporate Parenting Panel notes the content of the report.

#### Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

Not required.

#### Issues

#### Background

1. 'The IRO Handbook – Statutory Guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers and Local Authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review of Looked After Children' states that 'the IRO Manager should be responsible for the production of an Annual Report for the scrutiny of members of the Corporate Parenting Panel'.

2. This report provides an opportunity to report on the activity of Children's Services in relation to Looked After Children, highlight areas of good practice and identify areas which require improvement. In addition the report describes the range of work the service has engaged in during the year and areas for development, which will be prioritised in the coming year.

#### Qualitative Information about the Service

1. The report sets out data in relation to the Looked After Children population in Central Bedfordshire.
2. There were 872 reviews held in respect of 414 children during the year from April 2016 to March 2017. The number of reviews held in respect of any individual child or young person is determined by when they become looked after, in accordance with statutory timescales and changes of circumstances which might require an additional review to be held.

#### Qualitative Information about the IRO service

The report sets out data in relation to the timeliness of reviews and participation of children and young people in their reviews.

#### Conduct of the service

The Service has focussed on the quality of care planning and provided challenge and scrutiny to operational practitioners and managers when gaps in relation to timely and appropriate plans for children have been identified.

#### Conclusions and Next Steps

The Conference and Review Service will continue to focus on delivering good outcomes for Central Bedfordshire's Looked After children and young people in accordance with the priorities of the Council and our aspirations for our Looked After Children. The work will continue to be rooted in the wider Quality Assurance Framework for Children's Services and the continuous development of good practice and high professional standards across the service in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for those children for whom the Council are the corporate parent.

#### **Options for consideration if appropriate**

None required.

#### **Reason/s for decision**

Not applicable

#### **Reason for urgency**

Not applicable

## **Council Priorities**

Medium Term Plan for Central Bedfordshire – the key priorities which relate to the report are:

*Promoting health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable  
Improved educational attainment*

The Children and Young People's Plan 2015/2017

Priority 1: Helping children and young people achieve more

Priority 2 Protecting children and keeping them safe

Provision of an independent reviewing service to scrutinise care planning for Looked After Children is a statutory responsibility of the Council. Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are employed to review care planning arrangements for individual children in order to secure the best outcomes for those children

## **Corporate Implications**

Legal Implications

Regulation and statutory guidance detail the requirement to report on the activity of the Independent Reviewing Service in relation to the reviews of Looked After Children.

Financial and Risk Implications

The Conference and Review Service is part of the wider Professional Standards Service within Children's Services Operations. The service is responsible for the coordination and chairing of reviews for Looked After Children and Child Protection Conferences. The Quality Assurance Service has an annual budget of £1M.

The financial implications noted in this report relate to the need to keep under review the staffing complement in order to ensure compliance with the recommended caseloads specified in the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Handbook

Risk Management

Breach of Regulatory and statutory guidance by non provision of a service by which the care plans of Looked After Children are reviewed and reputational risks by virtue of non production of an Annual Report in line with statutory guidance.

## **Equalities Implications**

Adherence to Human Rights and Equality issues are maintained.

## **Implications for Work Programming**

Not Applicable

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

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## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2016/17

## **Background Papers**

None