

# Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

25 October 2018

Report on Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2017-18

---

**Report of:** Sharon Keenan,  
(sharon.keenan@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Responsible Director(s):** Sue Harrison,  
(Sue.Harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## Purpose of this report

1. 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 Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. note the content of the report.

## Issues

### Background

2. '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'.
3. 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

4. The report sets out data in relation to the Looked After Children population in Central Bedfordshire, including the timeliness of reviews and participation of children and young people in their reviews.
5. There were 875 reviews held in respect of 386 children during the year from April 2017 to March 2018. 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.

### Conduct of the service

6. The Service has focused 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

7. 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**

8. None required

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

9. Not applicable

### **Council Priorities**

10. Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing  
A more efficient and responsive Council.

### **Corporate Implications**

### **Legal Implications**

11. 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**

12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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**

15. Adherence to Human Rights and Equality issues are maintained.

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

16. 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.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A:**

17. Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2017/18

## **Background Papers**

18. None

**Report author(s): Sharon Keenan**

**Practice Manager, Children's Services**

sharon.keenan@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk