

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017/2018 REPORT

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
6th September 2017

REPORT OF:

Executive Director of Children's Services

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Agenda - Part:	Item: Update Report
Subject: Enfield Annual IRO Report 2016/17	
Wards: All	
Cabinet Member consulted: Cllr Orhan	

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the annual IRO report April 2017 to March 2017. In Summary:

- Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) were introduced nationally to represent the interests of looked after children. Their role was strengthened through the introduction of statutory guidance in April 2011. In Enfield, the IROs are also responsible for chairing Child Protection conferences, Disruption Meetings and final reviews of Supervision Orders. It is an expectation that an annual report outlining the key activities of the IRO's is published every year.
- 2016/17 saw a decline in the number of children subject to a child protection plan of approximately 10%. There are several reasons for this including: adopting the signs of safety model which puts clear concise safety plans into place and uses straightforward danger statements which are easily understood by parents and professionals. This has led to several families being supported to keep children safe with strong children in need plans as opposed to child protection plans.
- 2016/17 also saw a reduction in the number of looked after children through applying consistency in decision making. All cases on the edge of care are brought to a weekly placement panel. The panel is chaired by the Assistant Director of Social Care plans are reviewed regularly ensuring we have the right children in care at the right time.

- There were 16 remand placements to the secure estate, 3 remands into local authority care and 3 secure welfare placements, children in these setting are looked after and supported by an IRO.
- The number of children who became looked after over the age of 12 has grown significantly as it has in all London Local Authorities. The number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) remains constant as young people are transferred to other local authorities in line with the National Transfer Mechanism as the Enfield benchmark has been agreed to be 64. This figure has remained consistent and monitored on a weekly basis.
- IRO's continue to be robust in their planning and this is evidenced by good performance data. One of the biggest challenges the service faces is supporting the high number of Looked After Children over the age of 12 with multiple complex issues encouraging them to participate in their care planning.
- It has been a busy challenging year for the service with a focus upon maintaining and improving practice including working closely with KRATOS (Children in Care Council) to design and produce the child friendly child protection plan. This is an additional tool for direct work, ensuring children are aware of the worries professionals have and support them in contributing to their safety plans and participating in conferences.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the scrutiny Panel notes the findings of this report.

3. PLEASE SEE APPENDIX (FULL REPORT) ATTACHED.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

This report is for information.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To report to Members on the work and performance of the IRO's within the Safeguarding and Quality Service.

6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1 Financial Implications

N/A

6.2 Legal Implications

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) were introduced nationally to represent the interests of looked after children. Their role was strengthened through the introduction of statutory guidance in April 2011. The Independent Review Officers (IRO) service standards are set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010) and linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011.

6.3 Property Implications

There are no property implications.

7. KEY RISKS

Any operational risks are minimised by attention to good practice in strong recruitment processes in place.

8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES

8.1 Fairness for All, Growth and Sustainability, Strong Communities

The work of the SQS service meets all 3 of the council's key aims and the objectives and the priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan. The SQS service protects vulnerable children, keeps them safe from harm and allows them to benefit from a family life where possible.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

Enfield Council has been assessed against the requirements of the Equality Framework and was accredited at the excellent level. This award has inspired the Council to continue to tackle inequality in the Borough and continue to build on the strengths of our diverse group of Councillors and staff groups that reflect the wider

community to promote positive dialogue with our residents and service users. The Council is committed to being an exemplar of best practice in all equalities work. Corporate advice has been sought regarding equalities and an agreement has been reached that an equalities impact assessment is neither relevant nor proportionate for the approval of the Annual report. Safeguarding forms part of the Councils programme of retrospective equalities impact assessments (EQIA).

10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Children's Social Care has a robust data set and annual audit programme supporting the continuous drive for improvement by the Council and its partners in relation to outcomes for children.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

12. HR IMPLICATIONS

There are no HR implications relating to this report. The Safeguarding Service adheres to Council Policies and Procedures all staff members are aware of their rights and the expectations required of them in carrying out their duties. Any misconduct and performance issues are dealt with robustly and all Council employees are required to work within the remits of the Dignity at Work Principles and the Employee Code of Conduct.

13. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

The service promotes the ethos that children should be placed wherever possible in the locality to which they are familiar with. This will help in the building of stronger communities and social cohesion. Children will be better able to access the excellent range of services provided within the Borough.

The IRO's continuously review and promote health issues and ensure that care plans address access issues to both universal and specialist health services.

Background Papers

Draft Annual IRO Report 2016 - 2107