

REPORT TO: OSC

DATE: 5th September 2018

REPORT TITLE: Annual IRO (Independent Reviewing Officers) Report

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PURPOSE OF REPORT:

For the committee to be updated about the work of the IROs during the period 2017-18

SUMMARY:

This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the IROs during the period April 2017 to March 2018.

- The number of Looked After Children at the end of March 2018 was 347. Numbers of Looked After Children have remained consistent during the last few years.
- There were 16 adoptions and 32 Special Guardianship Orders
- Twenty young people were remanded in the care of the local authority care
- At the end of March 2018, 63 of the Looked After Children were unaccompanied minors. Since April 2018, the benchmark has changed to 59 (this is based on DfE calculations of the local population) and cases are transferred to other local authorities under the National Transfer Scheme. This has on occasions has taken longer than originally planned and has had an impact on young people who have already settled in placements.
- The number of children subject to child protection plans at the end of March 2018 was 242. The number of child protection plans at the end of March 2017 was

223. There has been a steady increase in the number of CP plans over the whole year which peaked to 257 in August 2017. A contributory factor to this increase was an unusually busy period and conferences for three large sibling groups.

- Twenty -nine transfer in conferences took place in 2017/18 (58 children)

1. BACKGROUND

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.

In Enfield, the IROs are also responsible for chairing Child Protection conferences, Disruption Meetings and undertake some LADO (managing allegations against staff and volunteers) work. A separate annual LADO report has been completed. It is an expectation that an annual report outlining the key activities of the IRO's is published every year.

2 ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Looked after children that runaway must be offered an independent debriefing interview within 72 hours of their return. From the 1st October the debriefing interviews will be carried out by IRO's. for all looked after and children and those subject to child protection plans. Statutory guidance (2014) specifies that these interviews should be carried out by an independent person (ie someone not involved in caring for the young person).

This is a new area of work for the Service and the challenge will be to develop robust systems and processes to ensure we are delivering good quality service and identifying trends and patterns which will enable the department to consider how we can reduce the incidents of missing young people and signposting them to appropriate services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the scrutiny panel notes the findings of this report and attached IRO annual report 2017-18.



Enfield IRO Annual
Report 2017-18.pdf

3. NEXT STEPS

- Developing processes to ensure de-briefing interviews for children looked after or subject to child protection plans are of a good quality and information is analysed to inform social work practice
- Improvement in some of the key performance indicators (how information is recorded to reflect the activity of the service)
- The recruitment of the part-time LADO
- Contribute to the department's continuous improvement plan and quality assurance programme