

REPORT TO: OSC

DATE: 4th September 2019

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 2018-19

SUMMARY:

This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the IROs during the period April 2018 to March 2019.

- The number of Looked After Children at the end of March 2019 was 382. This is an increase by 10% from last year. (35 children)
- There were 13 adoptions and 29 Special Guardianship Orders (20 were in relation to children who had been looked after)
- The number of remands increased from 20 last year to 39 this year, which is significant. Young people in remand are deemed to be looked after by the local authority and are reviewed in line with the IRO Handbook.
- At the end of March 2019, 71 of the Looked After Children were unaccompanied minors. The current Enfield benchmark is 65, an increase from 59 in April 2018. The local authority continue to refer to the National Transfer Scheme but there have been significant delays in transferring cases. The local authority is continuing to raise this issue with the Home Office.
- The number of children subject to child protection plans at the end of March 2019 was 296. The number of child protection plans at the end of March 2018 was 242. There has been a steady increase in the number of CP plans over the whole year which peaked to the current figure. A contributory factor has been the number of conferences of large sibling groups. A recent audit of 25 initial child protection conferences (66 children) found that the outcomes were 46 CP plans

and 20 CIN plans and the decision making at conferences was appropriate.

- Thirty four transfer in conferences took place in 2018/19 (64 children), a slight increase from last year.

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

There has been a steady increase in the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans and children who are looked after. The Service is responsible for reviewing all CP plans and care plans for looked after children. Despite the increase in both, the majority of the reviews and child protection conferences are held in a timely manner. Participation of young people in their reviews has increased.

The challenge for the service is to maintain the high standards expected while at the same time managing increase in caseloads.

How contextual safeguarding interfaces with the remit of the Service

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the scrutiny panel notes the findings of this report.

3. NEXT STEPS

- Increase parental participation in reviews of looked after children
- Improve multi agency input in Child Protection conferences and quality of written reports
- Improve consistency of midway reviews and recording of IRO footprint
- Contribute to the department's continuous improvement plan and quality assurance programme