

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (IRO)
SERVICE 2013/14**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report is the annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) service 2013/14. A full report is appended.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The IRO Handbook states that the IRO manager should be responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of members of the corporate parenting board. This report identifies and makes reference to good practice and highlights issues for further development. A full report is appended.
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- 2.3 Key highlights from the report include:
- 2.3.1 North Lincolnshire maintains a low number of children in care and remains lower than statistical neighbours and the England average.
- 2.3.2 There were 170 children and young people in full-time care as at the end of March 2014 compared to 165 at March 2013.
- 2.3.3 All reviews of Looked after children in full time care in 2013/14 were held within timescale.
- 2.3.4 Through a range of methods, 100% of children/young people both in full-time and short break care and those with a pathway plan participated in their review during the year.
- 2.3.5 There is robust management oversight of the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews.

- 2.3.6 The Care Planning Dispute Resolution Policy within North Lincolnshire outlines that a key function of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process. North Lincolnshire IRO's have established collaborative and challenging working relationships with social workers and their managers. The IRO's work with the local authority Complaints Officer and Children's Advocate where necessary.
 - 2.3.7 Children in care are a priority for North Lincolnshire Council. The Council demonstrates a verifiable commitment to children, young people and families, front line service delivery and the finance to support this within the 2012 – 2015 budget. North Lincolnshire Council has invested in family based care, supported accommodation, permanence through adoption.
 - 2.3.8 There had been a celebratory launch of the refreshed corporate parenting pledge in April 2013 jointly planned with children and young people in care and attended by the Cabinet Member for People Director of People, and other partner key leads. Supplementing the event were displays of artwork and showcasing of creative writing. Children and young people were immersed in arts and craft activities with a high attendance by foster parents and professionals involved across the partnership with children in care.
- 2.4 In the previous annual report the developments in 2013/14 were as follows:
- 2.4.1 Continue to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the IRO service through the IRO/Children in Care outcomes/cohorts monthly meetings with a continued focus on IRO practice through pre-review meetings/discussions with children, observations of younger children, case tracking and feedback from children, young people, parents, carers and professionals.
 - 2.4.2 Case reviewing in response to the revised Public Law Outline.
- 2.5 There have been advances as follows:
- 2.5.1 Additional case recording standards were introduced during the year. These included IRO pre discussion with Social Workers, pre-review visits to children, case tracking and dispute resolution recorded in review reports and as case notes on the child's case file.
 - 2.5.2 IRO's and the Service Manager keep up to date and are trained in and knowledgeable about the revised Public Law Outline (PLO) guidance and potential impact alongside Social Workers and the wider children's workforce. The court timescales and implications for Social Workers and IRO's were pre-empted and mitigated via strategic planning and senior management commitment to supporting services. IRO outcomes meetings

monitored the specific impact and outcomes for children in care to successfully refine the case reviewing system.

2.6 Developments for 2014/15 are:

2.6.1 Further enhance our involvement with children/young people in care focussing on how their ideas can be incorporated into IRO review practice development and hold a focus group event facilitated by IRO's for children and young people to further develop their aspirations and empowerment ideas during the review process.

2.6.2 Implement findings from our QA audits in relation to the organisation and effectiveness of reviews.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 This report is for information only.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 This report is for information only.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 There are no resource implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

6.1 None

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 This report is for information only.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That Cabinet Member agrees to the publication of, the annual report of the IRO service.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report - None