

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD: 17 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO)  
SERVICE 2014-15**

**Purpose of report**

1. To inform the Board of the 2014-15 annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service.

**Link to Better Care Together**

<b>Workstream</b>	<b>Relevance</b>	<b>Workstream</b>	<b>Relevance</b>
Maternity, neonates, children and young people	X	Mental health	
Long term conditions		Frail and older people	
Urgent care		Planned care	
Learning disabilities		End of life	

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. This is the first time the Independent Reviewing Officer Report has been submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board – it is proposed that this will now be the approach taken on an annual basis. It is a statutory requirement for the Local Authority to produce an annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (*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 March 2010*). The content and format is prescribed in the guidance with the expectation that it will be available for scrutiny by the Corporate Parenting Board, as well as accessible as a public document.

**Background**

3. The IRO Service in Leicestershire is sited within the Safeguarding and Improvement Unit (SIU), part of Children's Social Care (CSC), which sits within the Children and Family Services (CFS). Whilst part of CSC, it remains independent of the line management of resources for children in care and the operational social work teams; the regulations are clear that IROs must be independent from the immediate line management of the child's case as this is significant in terms of their challenge and scrutiny role.

The appointment of an IRO is a legal requirement under S118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, their role being to protect children in care's interests throughout the care planning process, ensure their voice is heard and challenge the local authority where needed in order to achieve best outcomes.

The report outlines the contribution made by the IRO Service in Leicestershire, to the quality assurance and improvement of services for children and young people in the care of the County Council during the year April 2014 to March 2015. It evaluates how effectively the service and the Local Authority have fulfilled their responsibilities to Leicestershire's children in care over this period, including performance in relation to the Local Authority's corporate parenting function in seeking to achieve best outcomes.

The report is an opportunity to pinpoint areas of good practice and those in need of development and improvement, providing information that can contribute to the strategic plans of the local authority. It highlights emerging themes and trends, and details areas of work which the service has prioritised during the year, including progress on the areas of development that were identified from the 2014-15 IRO Service Annual Work Programme, as set out in Appendix 1.

### **Consultation/Patient and Public Involvement**

4. Consultation with and participation of children in care is central to the work of the IROs and is reflected in the annual report.

### **Resource Implications**

5. None of note at this stage.

### **Conclusions/Recommendations**

6. The Board are requested to note the content of the Annual Report and ratify the improvements and developments planned for 2015-16 as set out in the Work Plan. The main priorities considered relevant for the Board:
  - Over 2015-16, the IRO Service will continue to work with locality social work teams and the specialist nursing team for children in care in order to improve the timeliness of children and young people receiving Initial Health Assessments and ensure that they remain of good quality.
  - The IRO Service will continue to consider and challenge where required, as regards the suitability of CAMHS provision for children and young people in care. The IRO Service will use forums available to bring matters of concern to the attention of the Local Authority.

### **Officer to Contact**

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## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2014-15

### **Relevant Impact Assessments**

#### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

7. These are addressed throughout the report as the aim is to improve standards and outcomes for all children and young people in care and those with safeguarding needs, including disabled children, young children and those from minority and harder to reach groups.

#### **Partnership Working and associated issues**

8. This is key as regards the role of the IRO for the benefit of children in care and is therefore addressed throughout the report.

#### **Risk Assessment**

9. There are some national and local political implications given the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service is subject to the scrutiny of Ofsted inspections.