



# Corporate Parenting Board

## 22 November 2018

<b>Report title</b>	Independent Reviewing Officer Service Annual Report 2017 – 2018		
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Paul Sweet Children and Young People		
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards		
<b>Accountable director</b>	Emma Bennett, Director for Children's Services		
<b>Originating service</b>	Safeguarding		
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Dawn Williams Tel Email	Head of Service – Safeguarding 01902 550655 <a href="mailto:Dawn.williams@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Dawn.williams@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Children in Care Council Children and Young People Leadership Team	26 September 2018 11 October 2018	

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### Recommendations for action:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Utilise this report to inform strategic planning for Wolverhampton's Children and Young People in Care population.
2. Hold the Safeguarding Service to account in their delivery of services to Children and Young People in Care.

### 1.0 Purpose

1.1 Wolverhampton Safeguarding Service has statutory responsibility for overseeing and ratifying the care plans for Children and Young People in Care via the activity of the Independent Reviewing Officers. As a result, the service is duty bound to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an annual report that outlines the activity of the service, the impact for children and recommendations for service improvement that will enhance young people's experiences.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 reinforced and strengthened the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), enabling more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case. It has ensured that the child is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care and that the care plan that the local authority prepares for them is based on a thorough assessment of the individual child's needs.
- 2.2 In March 2010 the Government issued statutory guidance, The IRO Handbook, for Local Authorities and IROs on care planning and reviewing arrangements. The IRO Handbook states that the statutory duties of the IRO are to:
- monitor the Local Authority's performance of their functions in relation to the child's case;
  - participate in any review of the child's case;
  - ensure any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority;
  - perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations.
- 2.3 All children and young people in care, including children who are in an adoptive placement prior to an Adoption Order, are covered by the legislation. This applies to all children who are the subject of a care order (under section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or who are voluntarily accommodated for a period of more than 24 hours (section 20 of the Children Act 1989), including those described in this report as in Short Break Care, or who are placed for adoption under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. It also covers those who are compulsorily looked after, such as those remanded by the court to local authority accommodation. Since the publication of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) in December 2012, it has been the responsibility of the Local Authority to look after all young people who are remanded into custody. These young people require an allocated IRO and reviews in their place of custody.

## 3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

- 3.1 The annual report provides an outline of activity covering the period 2017 - 2018 and determines actions to be progressed in 2018 – 2019.
- 3.2 The IRO service has remained stable, with an experienced and capable staff team. The Ofsted Inspection of 2017 found that ‘Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are effective in driving improvements in practice and performance, leading to better outcomes for children looked after. A stable and experienced team of IROs has been given additional resources, to ensure that IROs are able to continue to deliver a high-quality service’.
- 3.3 Caseloads for IROs have been manageable, which has enabled the team to be more effective in driving improvements and to spend more time seeing children.
- 3.4 The report shows that, overall, the service has been effective in terms of the timeliness of reviews and the participation of children in reviews, but there is still room for improvement. This is reflected in the plans for 2018 – 2019.

#### **4.0 Financial implications**

- 4.1 The total budget for 2018-2019 for the Independent Reviewing Officer Service is £916,000.
- 4.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.  
[NM/07112018/Q]

#### **5.0 Legal implications**

- 5.1 The relevant legislation is contained within the body of the report. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.  
[TC/14112018/V]

#### **6.0 Equalities implications**

- 6.1 The Annual report recognises issues of equality for Children who access the safeguarding service and how equality is represented within the service.

#### **7.0 Environmental implications**

- 7.1 None

#### **8.0 Human resources implications**

- 8.1 None

#### **9.0 Corporate Landlord implications**

9.1 None

**10.0 Health and Wellbeing implications**

10.1 None

**11.0 Schedule of background papers**

11.1 The annual report for 2017 - 2018 is attached. The Corporate Parenting Board has received Annual reports in preceding years.