

REPORT FOR: CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date of Meeting: 21 July 2010

Subject: INFORMATION REPORT - Harrow's Independent Reviewing Officer Service, Annual Report 2008/2009

Responsible Officer: Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children's Services

Exempt: No

Enclosures: Harrow's Independent Reviewing Officer Service Annual Report 2008/2009

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out to appraise the Panel of the annual Independent Reviewing Officer's report, 2008/2009 that has been considered by the Corporate Director and Lead Member.

Section 2 – Report

The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer is a legal requirement under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The Government issued the Review of Children's Cases (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2004 along with statutory guidance in September 2004

The regulations require all Local Authorities (LA's) to appoint an IRO to participate in the statutory meetings to review the care plan of each looked after child. The IRO takes on the role of chairing the meeting. The IRO is also responsible for monitoring the performance of the LA's functions in respect of each review. If appropriate, IROs can refer a child's case to the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) who will consider the appropriateness of legal action against the LA.

The 2004 regulations impose a duty on the IRO to ensure that:

- Children's views are understood and taken into account
- Person's responsible for implementing the review recommendations are identified

Any failure to review cases in accordance with the regulations or to make arrangements to implement any aspect of the care plan is brought to the attention of the responsible service managers.

The 2004 regulations state that the IRO service has a role in assuring the quality of a local authority' case planning and in order to support the continuing development and review of the local strategy for children's services the manager of the IRO service should provide an annual report to the lead member with executive responsibility for children's services and corporate parenting.

Section 3 – Further Information

In 2010 the Government produced further statutory guidance for independent reviewing officers and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children. The guidance clarified further the expectations in relation to the annual report, in that the report should be scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The annual report should identify good practice but should also highlight issues for further development, including where urgent action is needed. It should make reference to:

- procedures for resolving concerns, including the local dispute resolution process and it should include an analysis of the issues raised in dispute and the outcomes;
- the development of the IRO service including information on caseloads, continuity of employment and the make up of the team and how it reflects the identity of the children it is serving;
- extent of participation of children and their parents;
- the number of reviews that are held on time, the number that are held out of time and the reasons for the ones that are out of time;
- outcomes of quality assurance audits in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews; and
- whether any resource issues are putting at risk the delivery of a quality service to all looked after children.

The annual report 2009/10 will address the above requirements and will be for the attention of this Panel.

Section 4 – Financial Implications

There are no financial implications

Section 5 – Corporate Priorities

This report incorporates the following corporate priority

- Improve support for vulnerable people

As part of the monitoring function, the IRO has a duty to monitor the performance of the local authority's function as a corporate parent and to identify any areas of poor practice. This would also include considering the experiences

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 5 July 2010		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

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Background Papers:

Harrow's Independent Reviewing Officer Service. Annual Report 2008/2009 of the young people themselves.