



Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	22 July 2021
Subject:	Independent Reviewing Officer Yearly Report

Summary:

This report is the yearly report on the Independent Chair's Service. It serves to update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the work undertaken between April 2020 and March 2021. The report includes an update on priorities identified for 2020-21 and new priorities for 2021-22.

This report is submitted to the Panel for background information and a presentation will be provided in the meeting.

Actions Required:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to note the yearly report on the Independent Chair's Service and make comments on the presentation to be provided at the meeting.

1. Background

Every child who is 'looked after' (Child in Care-CiC) by Lincolnshire County Council must have a Care Plan. This document details the long-term plan for the child's upbringing, and the arrangements made by Lincolnshire Children's Services to meet the child's day to day needs. All local authorities have a statutory duty to review the Care Plan regularly, within legislative timescales, as stipulated in the Care Planning and Case Review Regulations 2010.

It is a legal requirement for every child who is looked after to have an Independent Reviewing Officer appointed to them under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The Independent Reviewing Officers' handbook (2010) specifies that the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should provide continuity in the oversight of matters relating to a child being looked after, and that they should strive to establish a consistent

relationship with the child. The statutory duties of the Independent Reviewing Officer include the following: -

- Monitor the performance of the local authority and their function in relation to the child's case.
- Participate in any review of the child's case.
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the appropriate authority.
- Perform any other function which is prescribed by the regulations.

It is a statutory requirement to provide an annual report in respect of the Local Authority's Independent Reviewing Service.

The Independent Chairs Service consists of combined roles so that an Independent Chair is responsible for chairing and managing child protection conferences alongside the IRO duties and functions. The attached report therefore details performance across both these roles to ensure members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are provided with a holistic overview.

2. Conclusion

The last year has thrown up some significant challenges for the independent Chairs and service provision for Children and Families due to Covid and the restrictions in terms of contact, participation, and services. The service has met these challenges in innovative ways, being a frontrunner in the use of virtual meetings and as restrictions have eased, hybrid meetings. This continues to be a work in progress and the service continues to assess and roadmap future ways of working in order to take account of the current Covid restrictions and plan for the future to take the best working practices forward.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Lincolnshire County Council – Children’s Services Independent Reviewing Service yearly report 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Carolyn Knight, who can be contacted on 07879603618 or Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk.