



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	11 November 2021
Subject:	Independent Reviewing Service Six-Month Report – 1st April to 30th September 2021

Summary:

This report introduces the Six-Month Report on the Independent Chair's Service. This is a statutory requirement and serves to update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the services to Looked After Children in Lincolnshire.

Actions required:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the attached Six-Month Report on the Independent Chair's Service and endorse the priorities for 2021-22.

1. Background

1.1 Introduction:

Every child who is 'Looked After' 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 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

1.2 Children in Care Services:

Due to the spread of Coronavirus and the strict measures imposed by the UK government the Quality and Standards Service has had to redesign the delivery of child protection conferencing, Children in Care (formally known as Looked After Children) reviews and Regulation 44 visits under the governments Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for children's social care services. During this unprecedented period the service has continued to hold CP conferences and Children in Care reviews within timescales and ensured the continued participation of children and families who face additional challenges.

The contribution of IROs is to Quality Assure and Improve Services for Children in Care.

The attached Independent Reviewing Six-Month Report 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021 sets out an overview of the services provided to children subjected to Child Protection Plans, Children in Care, those who receive Short Term Breaks.

The report outlines a range of key priorities for the service and includes the ways in which children and young people are encouraged to be involved in their care planning, how the service advocates for children and young people to ensure that their plans are progressive and tailored to meet their individual needs.

Within the report, key data outlines the current Child Protection and Children in Care population and provides fiscal comparisons to assist the reader to understand how this has changed over time and may impact upon future service delivery.

Management oversight, staff development and quality assurance of the service is also outlined within the context of developing a professional, reflective, and learning service that continues to meet the needs of these groups of children.

1.3 Review of Service Area:

There has been a whole service review including full consultation with staff. This has led to a reshaping of the management structure, with an addition of one Team Manager.

The Chairs continue at full capacity under the new ways of working and COVID-19 restrictions. Additional capacity has been created through the recruitment of two agency members of staff to address the increase workload. We are reviewing the best way to increase long term capacity in the service and how to implement a post COVID-19 exit strategy.

2. Conclusion

The main service priorities for 2021 – 2022 are set out below.

The service will be undertaking a review of Child Protection Conferences and Children in Care physical participation by families and professionals with a road map for attendance.

The plan going forward from January 2022 is that all initial Child Protection meetings are held in a hybrid format; the core group and family attending physically and other professionals attending virtually.

Work is being undertaken by the service with the Regional IRO Network to share best practice in relation to conducting hybrid meetings. Feedback has been gathered from partners and families of their experience of different styles of meetings. From this collaboration we have determined that a range of meeting styles will be appropriate depending on the individual circumstances of children and families.

Analysis and development of procedures and IT support required for post covid Child Protection and Children in Care hybrid meetings. Hybrid meetings being those attended by invitees in person and via electronic media.

Whilst awaiting the corporate roll out of electronic technology to fully utilise this facility for hybrid meetings, in the interim, equipment has been purchased by the service to enable hybrid meetings to take place at conference rooms around the county. This is also being used to facilitate Children in Care reviews where appropriate.

Integration of current feedback from Child Protection Conferences and Children in Care reviews utilising "Engagement HQ" (centralised feedback development and recording system) when this comes online.

We are still awaiting Engagement HQ to come online; however, we continue to collate feedback from children, families, and professionals in order to continue to develop the service.

Initial trial and review of progress of the new Pre-Birth Protocol, implementation of any subsequent amendments from the review.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the Annual Report on the Independent Chair's Service and endorse the priorities for 2020-21.

5. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Independent Reviewing Service Six-Month Report 1 st April – 31 st September 2021

7. 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, Head of Service Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker, who can be contacted on Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk, or on 0152253732.