



Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officers Service 2019/2020

For consideration by:
Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

Date: 2 September 2021

Lead director: Caroline Tote

Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: ALL

■ Report author: Julie Jordan, Service Manager, Childrens Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit and

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The executive decision-making process

Stage	1 “Policy development” <small>Private meeting</small>	2 “Defining our approach” <small>Private meeting</small>	3 “Giving notice” <small>Public</small>	4 “Announcing the decision” <small>Private/Public meeting</small>
What happens	Initial briefing of City Mayor, Deputy or Assistant Mayor/s or Cabinet about new policy or decision that is needed	Officers draw up options paper for City Mayor etc.	We give 5 clear days’ notice of our decision	We let you know what our decision is and seek final comments questions from press, public, other Councillors
Where you can find out more	Informal notes Briefing documents Forward Plan Scrutiny may start to help develop the idea	Agenda, report, minutes Forward Plan Scrutiny may start to define our approach	Agenda, report Forward Plan	Decision record Press release Forward Plan Scrutiny may start to ask for a “pause” of the decision or to make sure our decision works as we said it would.

“Key decisions” are defined as:

An executive decision which is likely: -

- (a) to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are significant having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising on or more Wards in the City.

Expenditure or savings will be regarded as being significant if: -

- (a1) in the case of revenue the expenditure/savings are outside the approved revenue budget and are greater than £250,000
- (a2) in the case of capital, the capital expenditure/ savings are £1,000,000 or more.

Not all decisions to be taken by the Cabinet will be key decisions

1. Decision Summary:

Members and the City Mayor to note the work and activities undertaken by Leicester City's Independent Reviewing Officers Service.

The Independent Reviewing Officers' Service operates within the context of Leicester City Council being the 'Corporate Parent' for all of the children and young people in its care.

As Corporate Parents, the Council's ambition is not merely limited to ensuring that children and young people in care are safe and their welfare promoted, but they achieve their possible outcomes.

In order for the aspirations and expectations for children who experience our care to be realized, it is important for the Corporate Parenting Board (responsible for achieving them) to receive regular reports setting out progress. The annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report is part of that process.

As a service, we believe that transparent challenge and a collaborative approach across the Council and its partners, are more effective in improving the experiences and the outcomes for children in our care. Therefore, this report is aimed to provide opportunities for reflection and potentially influence/ inform future plans of actions and development of services across the Council.

In addition, the Independent Reviewing (IRO) Service for looked after children is required in accordance with the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 and subsequent statutory guidance published by the Department for Children Schools and Families in 2010 as set out in [The IRO Handbook](#).

Following presentation to the responsible Leicester City Council's Director for Children Services, Lead Member for Children and the Corporate Parenting Board, the report will be placed on the Council's website as a publicly accessible document

2. Why it is needed:

The report provides:

- an overview of Leicester City's children looked after population
- a summary of the Local authority's and IROs activities in the context of the 2019/2020 performance information;
- an overview of the participation of children and young people

The report notes the significant improvements made by the service, the Local Authority and partners in the period as follows:

- significant increase in IROs' oversight leading to better grip and challenge around progression of care plans
- continuing positive impact of the Edge of Care Services leading to successful pre-proceedings interventions and less children in care

- increased number of Special Guardianship Orders leading to children achieving permanency outside the care system.
- fully implemented offer of advocacy for our children looked after in meetings
- new developments in safeguarding children through robust and timely Foster Care Reviews and an increase in Independent Visitors

Areas for further focus:

- the partnership response to the health and educational needs and outcomes of our looked after children;
- the continuing development of the Signs of Safety, Stability Success and Wellbeing model for our LAC
- implementation of the Care Leavers' Action Plan & Transitions Strategy
- implementation of the sufficiency strategy
- targeted IRO focus on the most vulnerable children in and leaving care
- consistent high-quality child centred LAC/Pathway Reviews leading to improved outcomes for our children and young people

3. Options

To agree the Annual Independent Reviewing Officers Report for 2019- 20.
To note the actions within the report

4. Tell us how this issue has been externally scrutinised as well as internally?

IRO activities are being scrutinised as part of the OFSTED Inspection framework and part of LCC internal Corporate Parenting Board.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

There are no identified financial implications
Martin Judson, Head of Finance 0116 4544101

5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of this report.
Pretty Patel, Head of Law- Social Care & Safeguarding Tel: 0116 454 1457

5.3 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

N/A

6. Background information and other papers:

Appendix A - IRO Service Annual Report 2020-2021

7. Is this a confidential report (if so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

8. Is this a “key decision”?

no