



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

Report to the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

Title:	Independent Reviewing Officer Service
Committee date:	Tuesday 17 October 2017
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Purpose of Agenda Item

The purpose of this report is to provide Select Committee with an up to date position with regards to the performance and progress of Buckinghamshire County Council's Independent Reviewing Officer Service.

Background

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service annual report for 2016/17 provides an overview of the progress of the service over the last year and impact on improving outcomes for children and young people, as required by statutory guidance (the Children Act 1989, Section 25B (1) and in the IRO handbook¹). It is the IRO's job to ensure that care plans for children who are looked after by the local authority fully reflect their current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are congruent with the local authority's legal responsibilities for children and young people.

Each child has their own IRO from the time they start to be looked after. The IRO's role is to bring rigour and challenge to care planning, escalate contentious issues, drive plans for permanence and monitor the performance of the local authority as a corporate parent. Above all the IRO must make sure the child's current wishes and feelings are given full consideration.

¹ Department for Education (2010). Independent reviewing officers' handbook. ([Link](#))



Summary

The looked after population since April 2016 has remained fairly stable averaging at 458 children at 31st March 2017. The IRO service conducted 1,221 reviews in 2016/17 and of these 1,172 (96%) reviews were completed within the prescribed time scale (an improvement from 91% in the previous year).

The service continues to make a steady improvement and demonstrable impact on the quality of services provided to our children in care. The IRO service now has a compliment of permanent, experienced staff which has meant there has been minimal change in the allocated worker for individual children over the last 12 months. The consistency of workers has been positive for children and the IROs can demonstrate that they know their children very well.

Resource implications

There are no specific resource implications relating to the IRO service that require consideration. The service budget sits within the responsibility of the Head of Quality, Standards and Performance.

Next steps

The 2016/17 annual report highlights a series of key activities for the service over the next year, that will continue to improve outcomes for children who are looked after.