

Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of meeting: 16 October 2025

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2024/25

Purpose: To present the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report for 2024/25 to the Corporate Parenting Panel, highlighting key developments, performance and priorities.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the contents of the IRO Annual Report 2024/25.

1. Background

1.1 The Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report is a statutory requirement and is presented annually to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

1.2 The report provides a comprehensive overview of the work undertaken by the Safeguarding Unit, including the performance of IROs in relation to children looked after and child protection services.

1.3 The 2024/25 report marks the first time the IRO and Child Protection Conferencing reports have been combined, offering a more integrated view of service delivery.

2. Supporting information

2.1 The report highlights:

- A stable and skilled IRO workforce with no agency staff.
- Continued improvements in quality assurance through audits and midway reviews.
- Strong performance in timeliness of My Voice Matters (MVM) meetings (89%) and child participation (92%).
- A reduction in Child Protection Plans and increased permanency through long-term fostering.
- Ongoing development of the Valuing Care model and Life Story work.
- Effective use of Issue Resolution processes to challenge and improve practice.
- Continued focus on supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) (now referred to as Separated Migrant Children) and children from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Plans for further development in 2025/26, including improving consultation feedback, promoting reunification, and strengthening permanency planning.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The IRO Annual Report provides assurance to the Corporate Parenting Panel regarding the effectiveness of the IRO service and its contribution to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children looked after.

3.2 The report identifies areas of good practice and priorities for continued improvement.

3.3 The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the update.

CAROLYN FAIR
Director of Children's Services

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2024/2025