

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

19 OCTOBER 2021

Independent Reviewing Officer Monitoring Report July 2021

Reasons for the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee concerning key updates and trends for Children Looked After in the last period. The report has traditionally been completed on a bi-annual basis, however, has been on hold throughout the pandemic.

Background

2. Local authorities are required by law to appoint an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to every child who is looked after. They monitor care plans, convene and chair reviews for children subject to care orders, accommodated voluntarily, placed with foster carers, in residential or secure establishments, living with kinship carers or placed for adoption.
3. Their role is to ensure that each care plan clearly sets out the help, care and support each child needs and takes full account of each child's wishes and feelings.
4. Independent Reviewing Officers have specific responsibility to escalate concerns about Looked After Children through a dispute resolution process. If the concern cannot be resolved within the line management structure, the process allows escalation to the Chief Executive and ultimately to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS Cymru) to consider legal action if necessary.

Issues

5. The July 2021 monitoring report attached in **Appendix A** sets out key updates on the IRO service including the response and challenges as a result of the pandemic.

6. Key performance data is also set out in the report outlining key demographics of our young people including gender, age and placement type

Financial Implications

7. Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from the report, there are costs associated in respect to the operation of the Independent Reviewing Officers. The Committee may want to consider if there is any financial information required for the Committee to undertake its Terms of Reference. The Next Steps section of the report sets out a series of initiatives some of which have been costed and funding identified and where this has not yet occurred then funding would need to be identified prior to action being commenced

Legal Implications

8. There are no legal implications arising from this report

RECOMMENDATION

9. The Committee are recommended to note the Independent Reviewing Officers Monitoring Report July 2021 in **Appendix A** and to make any observations or comments

DEBORAH DRIFFIELD
Director, Children's Services
30 September 2021