

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 26 February 2019	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Progress Report on Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Escalations	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		None	
From:		Director of Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That committee members note the contents of this report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. At the corporate parenting committee held on Monday 5 November 2018 members requested that a progress report on the *“systems surrounding the IRO reports which previously had been ineffective too social care work”* be made available for the corporate parenting committee of 26 February 2019. This related to the Ofsted finding in the 2017 single inspection framework (SIF) inspection that *“there is not sufficiently strong oversight or challenge by managers and IROs”* and that *“current performance regarding the timeliness of reviews is not strong and is not being addressed with sufficient urgency”*. The annual report of the independent reviewing service presented to the November committee meeting did not provide the level of detail that would have provided members with the requisite assurance. The committee wanted reassurance that these issues were being addressed.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3. In the reporting year 2017-2018 (April-March) there were 219 logged IRO escalations affecting 193 children. There was no accurate record of the different stages of escalation, but the figures suggest that 26 young people had an additional escalation stage beyond stage 1. This suggests that most escalations are resolved at the local level but accurate logging as part of the incorporation of the escalation process into our electronic recording system will provide this level of detail in future and the aligned assurance required.
4. Mosaic is the name of the council’s electronic recording system where the records for children in care kept. They are maintained and updated mostly by social workers the child’s social worker but also others contribute where appropriate, for example the social workers manager or IRO. Within Mosaic, many of the processes that social workers have to follow are governed by a “workflow”. Each workflow has steps that need to be completed before the next one can be commenced.
5. In 2017-18, 148 (68%) of 219 escalations related to incomplete or inadequate care plans. Investigation found that this was associated with Mosaic workflow steps not being fully completed, affecting the ability to enter later stages of the

workflow activity. In this situation IRO's are not able to enter a record of the review if previous stages have not been closed off. This can affect system-generated statistics which suggest that reviews for children in care are not timely. Manual processes enable us to provide end of year performance data that is accurate, but system generated reports may still suggest a deficit.

6. The next area for challenge by IRO's was around drift & delay in the care planning for children with 23 (10.5%) affected. This issue relates to a delay in securing permanency for young people or where care plans have changed without the IRO being involved in discussions.
7. The following table relates to this reporting year April 2018 / March 2019 for the period up until November 2018. The main reason for escalation continues to be the issues around care plans outlined before, but at a reducing level suggesting that the targeted improvement work around this issue is having demonstrable impact. There was further cleansing activity in the immediate runup to the focused visit in January 2019 which will have improved performance further. There is still a core group of cases where care planning is delayed and this is subject to further investigation.

Reason for IRO Escalations Apr to Nov 2018 pre Mosaic:	Count of
Incomplete or inadequate care plans	38
Drift or delay in care planning	23
Other	13
Education	8
Action and effectiveness of management	8
Placement concerns	7
Concerns around social work provision	4
Non completion of review decisions	1
Safeguarding concerns including missing episodes, crime related or CSE risk	1
Grand Total	103

8. The following table relates to the first month of direct entry of IRO escalation onto Mosaic workflows and the consequent ability to run defined reports. One of the concerns around the scrutiny and challenge function of the IRO role was our difficulty in evidencing the levels of constructive challenge that workers and IRO's verbally reported. This was the basis for the committee's own challenge to the IRO service, and this very early data suggests that we will be able to provide the accurate information expected through Mosaic reporting. There will be a need to recognise that with enhanced reporting capability comes the potential for a seemingly greater volume of escalation that may appear at odds with previous levels of intervention, as evidenced by this table.

Reason for IRO Escalations Nov - Dec 2018 on Mosaic:	Count of
Inadequate care plan	19
Care plan delay	7
Other	6
Social work	3
Education	3
Follow-up actions	2
Safeguarding	1
Placement	1
Health	1
18+ planning	1
Grand Total	44

9. In the focused visit of 15/16 January 2019, Inspectors found that *"IRO's were having an increasing impact on improving the quality of practice and of reviews"* but that not all interventions were recorded well.
10. It is the service's aim to work constructively with the social work teams to improve recording and workflow performance leading to a reduction in escalations related to these issues. With the use of Mosaic – linked escalation forms to also be able to provide clear evidence of their footprint, and through that clearer evidence of their impact on better outcomes for children and young people.

Policy implications

11. None

Community impact statement

12. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities.
13. The work of the IRO's is intended to improve the outcomes for children and young people in our care

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
IRO Annual Report 2017-2018 Children's Services Focused Visit	Quality Assurance Unit Ofsted Published Report	N/a
https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80514		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children & Families	
Report Author	Tom Stevenson, Assistant Director, Quality and Performance	
Version	Final	
Dated	14 February 2019	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	14 February 2019	