

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 12 January 2022

Subject: IRO Annual Report 2020/2021

Report of: Strategic Director of Children and Education Services

Summary

This is the 2020/2021 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing (IRO) Service for Cared for Children, which 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](#).

Recommendations

It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee Members consider the progress and impact being achieved by the IROs in Manchester and the goals set out for 2021/2022 with regard to;

1. The continuous drive for improvement of practice that has positive impacts on the planning for our children and young people in Manchester.
 2. To strengthen the participation and feedback of children, young people, parents and carers involved with the Safeguarding Improvement Unit.
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Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

In the reporting year 2020-2021 the IRO Service has successfully embedded a hybrid model of working by utilising technology, which has reduced the transport requirements of professionals attending some meetings. Whilst we are certainly not advocating a virtual service, we have found virtual platforms helpful to deliver Child Led Reviews with professionals and to keep in touch with children during Covid19 pandemic

| Manchester Strategy outcomes | Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS |
|---|--|
| A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities | The IRO Service employ 21.5 full time equivalent staff occupied by 24 staff (4.5 job-sharers) from a range of cultural backgrounds, which reflects the culture and ethnicity of most of the children we work with. |
| A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success | IROs all have at least 5 years post qualifying experience in Social Work and share their knowledge and expertise across Children's Services. The IRO Service takes a significant role in driving the improvements and developments on practice across the city. |
| A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities | Throughout 2021-2021 we have successfully delivered several training sessions virtually and briefing sessions to a wider section of the workforce, the impact of this is that more services across the city have a greater understanding of the role of an IRO in planning for Children. |
| A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work | The IRO Service has recruited successfully during the reporting period and promoted Manchester as city that has children at the heart of everything we do and provides an excellent quality service. |
| A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth | The IRO Managers for Manchester are involved within the Northwest IRO network and national work to ensure we share learning and continuously develop in line with regional and national practice. |

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2020-2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The annual report is prepared for those with executive responsibility for children's services and corporate parenting, to enable consideration of the service and to be assured that the local authority is having a positive impact on Our Children.
- 1.2 The report provides an opportunity to highlight the key data of Our Children, areas of good practice over the last twelve months and goals for 2021/2022 that recognises the key priorities and how we will achieve this.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The role of the IRO is in two parts chairing a child's review and monitoring a child or young person's ongoing care plan. The report attached discusses how this has been achieved over the last twelve months.
- 2.2 The IRO Service sits within the Children's Safeguarding & Review Service (previously named Safeguarding & Improvement Unit) and is managed by the Service Lead for Safeguarding.
- 2.3 It is important to note that during the period relevant to the report, we entered a global pandemic that forced the service to work differently in conducting Our Children's Reviews and this is reflected upon throughout the report.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 The last twelve months have been unprecedented times with managing a global pandemic while ensuring we continue with business as usual. The ability for us to adapt over the last twelve months has allowed us to ensure we continue to deliver a good service to children and that children have timely reviews. Within the context of the adaptations required over the last twelve months this report outlines the learning. The recommendations of the report set out the service priorities for 2021/2022, which link strongly to the Children & Young Peoples Plan.
- 3.2 **Priority 1: To place children and young people at the centre of everything we do.**
 - We will focus on letters to children being good quality and sent out in timescale.
 - Consulting with children in a meaningful way about their Care Plan and ensuring we are ambitious for them.
 - We will co-produce with children to better drive service delivery.
- 3.3 **Priority 2: Listen to and respond to children and young people.**
 - We will continue to hold timely reviews that are led by children.

- Recommendations will be SMART and focussed on improving outcomes for the child and will be written in consultation with children and evidence what impact they will have on them.
- We will ensure that we drive issues important to children and be involved with practice improvement.
- We will improve how we deliver our service by listen and responding to children.

3.4 **Priority 3: We will being ambitious for Our Children**

- We will ensure all children benefit from purposeful visits within 6 weeks of their review to ensure they are actively involved in their planning.
- We will work to ensure all children have a good quality care plan by their second review.
- We will work to improve the number of children supported to attend their meetings and to co-chair to ensure that they are central to the planning.
- Achieving permanence for Our Children will be the focus of work for IROs.
- We will continue to focus on the quality of Dispute Resolutions and refocus to ensure the impact on children is evidenced.
- We will continue to build strong and effective relationships with the SW Teams to ensure that we provide appropriate scrutiny and provide support in ensuring children receive the best service and achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity.

3.5 To achieve our ambitions will we invest in our IROs learning and development and have a robust approach to quality assurance and review this monthly to ensure we can evidence impact for Children.