

## Manchester City Council Report for Information

**Report to:** Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 4 December 2019

**Subject:** Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) 2018/2019 Annual Report

**Report of:** Strategic Director of Children and Education Services

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### Summary

This is the 2018/2019 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing (IRO) Service for looked after 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 The IRO Handbook.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee Members consider the progress and impact being achieved by the IROs in the Safeguarding Improvement Unit and the goals set out for 2019/2020 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.
3. For Scrutiny Committee Members to seek a progress report in six months time which provides an update in relation to the service position on driving permanence and practice improvement.

*(Please note - Regional comparator IRO data for 2018/19 has not been published at the time of writing and the report will be updated to reflect the regional position once available)*

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**Wards Affected:** All

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

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and	The IROs will challenge and support stakeholders involved in children and young people's lives to

distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	ensure that they are ambitious and seek opportunities through education, employment and training.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	We are invested in the learning and development of the IROs to ensure that they have the expertise to deliver a high quality service to improve outcomes for children and young people.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	We promote Family Network meetings and actively encouraging children, young people, parent/carers to identify their own plans to enable children to remain with or in contact with birth family.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The IROs promote Manchester as a city with significant opportunities for Our Children as they move into independence so that they remain living and working in Manchester; whilst promoting environmentally friendly modes of travel in their day to day activity.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	We encourage all Our Children to experience the diverse nature of Manchester and promote the opportunities for leisure, entertainment and experiences available by a city the size of Manchester.

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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) 2018/2019 Annual Report

## **1.0 Introduction**

The annual report is prepared for those with executive responsibility for children's services and corporate parenting, to enable consideration of the services on offer, and to be assured that the local authority is having a positive impact on Our Children.

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 2019/2020 that recognises the key priorities and how we will achieve this.

## **2.0 Background**

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.

The key messages from the report from 2018/2019 show that while there is has a slight increase in the number of Our Children looked after the average IRO caseload has remained at 70 children, which continues to give the IROs the capacity to engage young people and ensure that they have adequate oversight.

In October 2018 an OFSTED focus visit recognised that since the last inspection in 2017 we had made improvements to the timeliness of reviews. We have also seen 46% of Our Children attended and participated in their review over this period that is an increase from the previous year.

The report identifies the following key successes over 2018/2019 within the service:

- Continued stable workforce
- The successfully of a child friendly review process, which includes minutes being written to the child and reflects the child or young person's understanding.
- A high percentage of children participating before and during their care planning review meetings.
- The Mind of My Own app has been implemented and used by Independent Reviewing Officers to engage with children and young people.
- The Have Your Say Booklet has been updated to be more strength based and there has been an increase in the use of the booklet as a result.

The report acknowledges that the Safeguarding Improvement Unit has continued to drive better outcomes for children and young people by providing challenge, support, learning and development. It has worked in partnership with a number of key partners to deliver better outcomes for children and young people. This includes ensuring children, carers, parents and professionals receive a record of their meeting in a timely manner so everyone is clear of the plan, recommendations and actions from Our Children's reviews.

### **3.0 Recommendations**

The report sets out the priorities for the IROs and the Safeguarding Improvement Unit through 2019/2020. It explains how we are working to achieve our goals and what the impact of this will be. We will align achieving all our goals to Manchester's practice Standards and continue to work in a strength based way with children, young people, parents, carers and professionals to deliver on the following goals:

#### **What Good Looks like - Practice Improvement Approach**

The unit has a stable workforce with significant experience amongst them. We have collectively identified that it is important that this expertise is fully utilised within Children's Services and while fundamentally their function is around chairing the child's review and monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis they can play a significant role in practice improvement. Therefore, we will invest over the next twelve months to supporting IROs to drive practice improvement by displaying "what Good Looks like". The vehicle to drive this will be the Golden Threads:

- Good Quality Assessments
- Good Quality Plans
- Impact chronologies (strengthening decision making & permanence planning)
- Good management oversight (including high support & challenge of IROs)
- Voice and experience of child is evident throughout
- Evidence of strong engagement with parents, family & carers throughout our involvement.

The IRO service has a stable workforce with significant expertise amongst them and in 2019/2020 we will strengthen our relationship with the locality Social Work teams to utilise this expertise and drive quality of practice through a coaching approach that provides high challenge and high support better outcomes through improved planning of children and young people.

#### **Strengthening Participation**

We will be creative in 2019/2020 to drive participation in Our Children's reviews this includes getting young people to think more about what their review would look like and delivering on this. We will work with Social Workers and carers to ensure that we are planned for reviews so that the meeting is purposeful in reviewing the care plan.

The Safeguarding Improvement Unit will actively engage children and young people in participating in the delivery of the services through inviting children and young people to be involved in decision making around service delivery, recruitment and learning and development.

#### **Actively seeking Feedback**

We will increase customer feedback by revising the approach to obtaining feedback with stronger emphasis on proactively seeking feedback and Independent Reviews and incorporating technology into this. We will use this information to learn about the impact we have had on improving outcomes for children & young people and this will

feed into improving service delivery.

### **Promoting Stability**

We will promote the importance of placement stability as being critical for the emotional wellbeing of Our Children and Young People'. We will drive the importance of Our Children build relationships and investing in their future through secure placements and investment in their local community. As part of IRO scrutiny we will ensure that the right placement is identified for the child in the first instance through early planning and ensure children's rights to be part of that process and meet with potential carers is promoted.

We will provide training in regards to Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) for all IROs to develop their knowledge on the effects of ACE.

### **Pathways Plans driving ambition**

We aim to focus on strengthening our oversight of Pathways Plans. We know that Pathway Needs Assessment and Plans assist young people to move successfully into independence and we will make this a priority for 2019/2020 to improve the quality of pathway plans. The IROs will ensure through regular oversight that the Pathway Needs Assessment are completed with the young people and provide an analysis of the young person's education journey, including EHCP, successes, ambitions, predictions and desired outcomes.

### **Our Manchester Permanence Practice Promise**

IROs have a role in ensuring that we are working towards our promise of permanence from day 1 with the least interventionist approach and that plans are driven at pace with everyone responsible for getting it right. The IROs play an active role in the permanent tracker process that has oversight of the permanence planning for all children. Over the next twelve months we will continue to participate in the process and actively connect with Social Work teams to drive the permanence plans for children.

In conclusion, the IRO service have already commenced the journey to what good looks like for Our Children in regards to working towards the goals set out above. We have started to embed the new Quality Assurance Framework that went live in 2019 and set ourselves some ambitious targets for supporting the improvement of practice with better links to the Social Work Services to drive good quality assessments and plans for children. The IROs have the expertise to share with Social Workers what good should look like and what exercise this when chairing reviews and having oversight of Our Children's files. Finally, we will work hard to strengthen the engagement, participation and feedback by ensuring that the service is dynamic and reaches out to Our Children, parents and carers.