

Meeting: Cabinet **Date:** 20th August 2024

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Independent Reviewing Service (IRO) Annual Report 2023 - 2024

When does the decision need to be implemented? For Information

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Cllr Nick Bye, Lead Member for Childrens Services

Director Contact Details: Nancy Meehan, Director Childrens Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 An annual report of the Independent Reviewing Service (IRO) for cared for children 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.
- 1.2 The annual report should be presented to the Director of Children's Services, Lead Member for Children and the Corporate Parenting Board at minimum and should also be available as a public document on the relevant Council website.
- 1.3 In line with our aspirational Corporate Parenting Strategy, the IRO Annual Report requires endorsement from Cabinet, reflecting each and every Member and Officers role as corporate parent.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 There is a legislative need for the IRO Annual Report to be considered as part of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 2.2 Torbay's vision is one whereby its people are able to thrive; in line with Torbay's corporate parenting responsibilities, our cared for and care experienced young people require particular focus and support, in order for them to achieve their goals and aspirations, and be safe, happy and healthy.
- 2.3 This report evaluates the effectiveness and impact of the Independent Reviewing Service; Independent Reviewing Officers play a key role in ensuring that care plans for children are progressed with a central focus on their needs, their ascertainable wishes and feelings and what intervention and support is required to help children achieve their goals.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

1. That the Cabinet endorses the Independent Reviewing Service (IRO) Annual Report set out at Appendix 1 to the submitted report and the publication of this in accordance with the legislative requirements outlined in the report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Independent Reviewing Service (IRO) Annual Report 2023 - 2024

Background Documents

N/A

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The IRO Annual Report provides an overview of the activity of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service, which sits within the wider Safeguarding, Reviewing and Early Help service within the Children's directorate. The report contains comprehensive analysis in respect of key performance indicators relating to cared for children specifically, including long and short term placement stability, those becoming and ceasing to be cared for, permanence outcomes and the timeliness of reviews. The report also considers the staffing structure, developments within the service and the key improvement objectives for the service moving forward.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 N/A – no other options have been considered.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 N/A

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The IRO Annual Report 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.
- 4.2 There are no legal implications as a result of the decision to endorse this Annual Report

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 A priority of the Independent Reviewing Officer service has been to enhance and develop the opportunities for children to participate and engage with their own cared for reviews, and also service improvements. This feeds into a wider participation strategy, and a continuous and embedded culture whereby the views of our cared for children and young people are sought, listened to and acted upon

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

- 6.1 N/A

7. Tackling Climate Change

7.1 N/A

8. Associated Risks

8.1 There are no associated risks with endorsing this Annual Report.

8.2 Should this report not be endorsed, Torbay will not be compliant with the statutory requirements as outlined above - there will no change in terms of the fundamental function of the service however if the report cannot be published this would limit the ability of the service to share learning in respect of patterns and trends, and achieve clarity across the service about the priorities for improvement.

9. Equality Impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	The IRO Annual Report outlines the strengths, areas to strengthen and the priorities for the Independent Reviewing service who play a critical role in overseeing the implementation of plans in relation to cared for children.		
People with caring Responsibilities	The Report considers placement stability, and as part of this, feeds into the fostering service development plan in terms of continuing to enhance the support we provide to our fostering families.		No differential impact.
People with a disability			No differential impact.
Women or men			No differential impact.
People who are black or from a minority ethnic			No differential impact.

background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			No differential impact.
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			No differential impact.
People who are transgendered			No differential impact.
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			No differential impact.
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			No differential impact.
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	The ambition of the IRO Annual report is to ensure that any child, no matter their level of need or their socio-economic status, has access to the highest quality support as a cared for child as possible.		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	The IRO service plays an integral part in overseeing the holistic care plan for a child, including their educational and health needs; as such, the provision of the highest quality IRO service can have a significant, positive impact on the longer term health outcomes for cared for children.		

10. Cumulative Council Impact

10.1 N/A

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 N/A