

Decision Maker: CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 22 November 2023

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT
2022-23

Contact Officer: Stuart Hills, Head of Service Quality Improvement
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Chief Officer: Richard Baldwin
Director of Children's Services

Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an account of the activity of the Independent Reviewing Service between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. This report evaluates the effectiveness of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service in ensuring the local authority, as a corporate parent, discharges its statutory responsibilities towards looked after children.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The Committee is requested to note the progress and actions of the Independent Reviewing Officers in discharging their statutory duties and contributing to the aims of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The report evidences the impact of the role of the independent reviewing officers in achieving positive outcomes for looked after children.
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Not Applicable
 4. Total current budget for this head: £ N/A
 5. Source of funding: N/A
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable: No Executive decision.
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Not Applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): All Bromley children in care
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 Our Reviewing Officers have a unique position within the Children’s Social Care Division in that they do not hold the case decision making responsibility or supervisory responsibilities with social workers and can therefore take an independent view of the service and care planning being provided for children.
- 3.2 While a rise in numbers of children with CP plans combined with number of children looked after has impacted on capacity and resilience, the service is using our quality assurance work to strengthen practice of our Reviewing Officers so that they consistently and persistently provide support and challenge where plans for children are not progressing. Specific areas of practice that are being strengthened are:
- The frequency and impact of Reviewing Officers footprint including escalation where this is necessary and helpful in improving children’s experiences.
 - Ensuring that children’s experiences are captured through Reviewing Officers relationships with them and demonstrating that visits and in person meetings happen between reviews and at reviews.
 - Strengthening plans for children so that these are always unique to each child.
 - Ensuring that children are consistently seen in person by their Reviewing Officers and that this experience reflects our Bromley Relationship Model.
- 3.3 We know that through this, our Reviewing Officers will be better placed to evidence our aspirations of a high performing reviewing team that pro-actively works with colleagues across Children’s Social Care to improve outcomes for children, and will perform to a consistently good or better level.

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 4.1 The report evidences the impact of the role of the independent reviewing officers in achieving positive outcomes for looked after children.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy/Financial/Personnel/Legal/Procurement Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2022/23