

Item No. 6.	Classification: Open	Date: 16 February 2011	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Independent Review Officers Annual Report	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The corporate parenting committee note and approve the report Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual report at appendix 1 to be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE).
2. The corporate parenting committee request that an action plan is developed from the report by the Head of the Quality Assurance Unit and is integrated into the children's specialist services business/service planning process for 2011/12.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. An Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service for Looked After Children is required in guidance arising from The Adoption and Children Act 2002 to be presented to the Director of Children's Services, Lead member for Children and the Corporate Parenting Panel. This report contains a summary of work completed by Southwark IRO Service for the period 2009-2010.
4. Section 118 of the Adoption And Children Act 2002 introduced the statutory role of the IRO with a duty to monitor the local authority functions in relation to a child's Review of Care Plan and to refer a case to the Children's and Families Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) if any dispute could not be resolved within the Local Authority . The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 expanded the role of the IRO from reviewing the child's Care Plan to monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis. New regulations (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010) have been issued and these are accompanied by 4 sets of statutory guidance including, The IRO Handbook, due to come into force in April 2011. All children in care including those on Adoption Plans or receiving short breaks are covered by these regulations.
5. The role of the IRO is presently under review by the government. The Munro Review and the Family Justice Review will be reporting in Spring 2011. Options being considered include:
 - Leaving the role as is
 - Streamlining the role reducing duties
 - Outsourcing the role to an organisation outside of the Local Authority to increase independence and effectiveness
 - Amalgamating the role with that of the Children's Guardian during Care Proceedings as there is an overlap in these roles.
- 6 The report summarises the performance of the service and progress made in the period 2009/10. Members should note that the service remains well staffed, and has been able to provide a consistent reviewing officer for children in care. The IROs have ensured that children and young people have participated in their reviews, and that plans are progressed within the required timescales.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. Key issues are contained in the IRO Annual Report at Appendix 1.

Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance

8. Not applicable.

Community impact statement

9. Any relevant considerations will be set out in Independent Review Officers report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
IRO Annual reports	160 Tooley Street SE1	Chris Saunders tel: 020 7525 1039

LIST OF APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	IRO Annual Report 2009-10

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson Deputy Director, Children's Specialist Services	
Report Author	Monika Ciurej	
Version	Final	
Dated	3 February 2011	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
Cabinet Member	Yes	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer	3 February 2011	