

<b>Meeting Name:</b>	Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Date:</b>	11 November 2024
<b>Report title:</b>	Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2023-24
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>	All
<b>Classification:</b>	Open
<b>Reason for lateness (if applicable):</b>	N/a
<b>From:</b>	Alasdair Smith, Director of Children's Services

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the Independent Review Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2023-24.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2. The IRO Annual Report provides relating to the Independent Reviewing Service for children and young people in care within the local authority, as required by statutory guidance arising from the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
3. This report contains a summary of work completed by Southwark's IRO service for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It identifies the work of the service in fulfilling its statutory remit and highlights areas for development in relation to the IRO function.
4. The report is to be presented to the strategic Director of Children's and Adults' Services, the Lead Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Refugees and to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

5. Independent Reviewing Officers are dedicated to improving outcomes for children and young people in care through the review and challenge aspect of their role. They are often the stable and constant factor for children and young people in care and are committed to driving and improving outcomes for them through working in partnership with young

people, their carers and the social work and professional network around children.

6. In the Ofsted Inspection of 2017 the oversight was an area that was felt to need development. Previous Focused Visits from Ofsted have shown that this area had improved and is continually improving. The OFSTED inspection of September 2022 in particular noted really good practice by the IRO service. In considering the IRO report the Corporate Parenting Committee is able to exercise its own scrutiny and challenge function and hold services to account.
7. The report set out in Appendix 1, highlights the work of the service and the areas for development going forward and provides an overview of children in care and services provided to them.

### **Policy framework implications**

8. The Borough Plan has a commitment to a great start in life for all children and young people in the borough. This particularly has in mind those who are in care, for whom Independent Reviewing Officers are a key part of overseeing the Borough Plan commitment.

### **Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts**

#### **Community impact statement**

9. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities.
10. The work of the IROs is intended to improve the outcome for children and young people in care.
11. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, lays out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The council's [Approach to Equality](#) commits the council to ensuring that equality is an integral part of our day to day business.
12. The Council's Children and Families Directorate involves working closely with all relevant stakeholders and partners across the sector and collectively we are committed to upholding the responsibilities towards advocating the Public Sector Equality Duty and complying with the Equalities Act 2010.
13. The PSED enables public bodies to consider the diverse needs of groups and have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance

equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Due regard is about considering the different needs of protected characteristics in relation to the three parts of the duty.

14. The Equalities Act 2010 define the following as protected characteristics; age; disability, gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

#### **Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement**

15. The report takes account of the ethnicity, age, and disabilities of children in care, as well as the racial and ethnic background of current staffing of the IRO Service and addresses these areas in light of commitments set out by Southwark Stands Together (SST).

#### **Health impact statement**

16. The report takes account of the health and wellbeing of children in care.

#### **Climate change implications**

17. None.

#### **Resource implications**

18. None

#### **Legal implications**

19. None.

#### **Financial implications**

20. None

#### **Consultation**

21. Not applicable.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark's Approach to Equality	Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Children's and Adults' Services Tooley Street 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Tendai Murowe 020 7525 0654
<a href="https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality-and-diversity/equality-objectives">https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality-and-diversity/equality-objectives</a>		
Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010	Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Children's and Adults' Services Tooley Street 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Tendai Murowe 020 7525 0654
<a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/959/contents/2013-07-01">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/959/contents/2013-07-01</a>		
Southwark's Borough Plan 2022-26	Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Children's and Adults' Services Tooley Street 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Tendai Murowe 020 7525 0654
<a href="#">Fairer, greener, safer – Southwark Council Delivery Plan 2022 – 2026</a>		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2023-24

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Alasdair Smith, Director of Children's Services	
<b>Report Author</b>	Clare Ryan, Service Manager, Quality Assurance and Practice Development	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	30 October 2024	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		30 October 2024