Executive summary


The purpose of the report is to inform the Council of the productivity and outcomes of the Independent Reviewing Officer service. The report will include relevant data, assurance, celebrations and challenge and contains a summary of work completed by the Bournemouth Borough Council IRO Safeguarding Service for the period 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014.

This report provides an opportunity to highlight areas of good practice and areas which require improvement, identify emerging themes and trends, describe areas of work which the service has prioritised during the year, and will prioritise in the coming year.

Recommendations

Overview and Scrutiny note the Independent Reviewing Officers Report 2013-2014 of Bournemouth in order to scrutinise and comment on the key areas of progress, remaining challenges and key objectives.
Reasons for recommendations
To inform Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Panel of the work and priorities of the Independent Reviewing Officers.

Background detail

1. Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced the statutory role of the Independent Reviewing Officer; with a duty to monitor the Local Authority’s functions by means of regular statutory reviews of the Care Plan of looked after children. The IRO was given the power to refer a case to the Children and Families Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) if any dispute could not be resolved within the Local Authority.

2. The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 expanded the role of the IRO from just reviewing the child’s Care Plan to monitoring the child’s case on an ongoing basis.

3. Regulations (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations) were issued in 2010 and these are accompanied by four sets of statutory guidance including the ‘IRO Handbook’, which came into force in April 2011. All children in care including those in Adoption Placements or receiving short breaks are now covered by these regulations.

4. In Bournemouth the IRO service provides independent reviewers for looked after children and independent chairs for Child Protection Conferences.

Appendices

Appendix a)

Bournemouth Borough Council Independent Reviewing Officers
Annual Report April 2013 – March 2014

The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers in Quality
Assuring and Improving Services for Children in Care

1. Introduction

1.1 The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service has been positioned in the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service within Children’s Social Care since its inception. The Service Manager for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance reports directly to the Service Director for Children’s Social Care and is offline and independent to case decision making.

1.2 An Annual Report of the (IRO) Service for Children in Care is required in accordance with guidance arising from The Adoption and Children Act 2002 and Children and Young Person’s Act 2008.

1.3 The purpose of the report is to inform the Council of the productivity and outcomes of the Independent Reviewing Officer service for Children in Care. The report will include relevant data, assurance, celebrations and challenge.

1.4 The report is presented to the Executive Director of Children’s Services, the Lead Member for Education and Children, Corporate Parenting Panel, Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Bournemouth and Poole Local Safeguarding Children Board.

1.5 This report contains a summary of work completed by the Bournemouth IRO service for the period 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014.

1.6 This report provides an opportunity to highlight areas of good practice and areas which require improvement, identify emerging themes and trends, describe areas of work which the service has prioritised during the year, and will prioritise in the coming year. The information can used to inform commissioning plans
2. Purpose of Service and Legal Context

2.1 Every Child in Care in Bournemouth has a named IRO who has independent oversight of the child’s case including:

- Determining and representing the child’s wishes and feelings;
- Ensuring their rights and interests are protected;
- Assessing whether the Local Authorities’ Care Plan for the child meets the assessed needs of the child within the timescale of the child to ensure good outcomes for children are at the centre of all work;
- Negotiating with the social work team and managers on any identified issues arising from the Care Plan or implementation of the Care Plan and, where necessary, escalating unresolved concerns to an appropriate level in the Local Authorities’ management structure, and /or if necessary to CAFCASS.

2.2 The Local Authority has a duty so far as is reasonably practicable, to provide sufficient accommodation within the authority’s area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after. This requirement is manifested in section 22G of the Children Act 1989. The IRO contributes to the discussions regarding appropriate placements for individual children and regarding the development of services and training for carers.

2.3 Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced the statutory role of the IRO, with a duty to monitor the Local Authorities’ functions by means of regular statutory reviews of the Care Plan of Children in Care. The IRO was given the power to refer a case to the Children and Families Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) if any dispute could not be resolved within the Local Authority.

2.4 The main mechanism through which the IRO carries out their monitoring function is the Statutory Looked After Review. These take place regularly at the following times:-

- First review within 28 days of the child becoming looked after
- Second review within 90 days
- Subsequent reviews at 180 day intervals
- When a child or IRO asks for one
- When significant events occur
2.5 The review should, wherever possible, take place at the child’s placement. Parents, residential workers, foster carers and their support workers, social worker and the IRO are the expected attendees or contributors. Reports from other professionals such as Health, Education and CAMHS are also received. In some cases, it may be necessary to hold a series of meetings to facilitate all professionals and views to be heard – for example where a child does not want their parents or another professional to attend a review.

2.6 The Independent Chair of Child Protection Conferences is accountable to the Director of Children Services through the Service Director for Children’s Social Care. Working Together (2013) reinforces that the Chair of the conference should be independent and have no operational or line management responsibility for the case. The Conference Chair should have a good understanding and professional knowledge of children’s welfare and development and best practice in working with children and families. The chair is required to look objectively and assess the implications of the evidence on which judgements should be based and skills in ensuring constructive participation by both family and professionals. All decisions should be made with a clear focus on the welfare and safety of the child.

2.7 The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is also set out in Working Together 2013. The LADO is alerted to all cases where it is believed that a person who works with children has behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a child. The LADO provides advice and guidance regarding whether an allegation sits within the scope of the procedures. Any investigation is carried out in a timely fashion, with the child safety and welfare being the central focus but also ensuring that all allegations are investigated in a timely fashion. The LADO must ensure that strategic data is collated and maintained on a confidential data base. A report in respect of allegations against staff and work of LADO is reported separately to LSCB.

2.8 One IRO supports Visits by Independent Visitor to Milton House. This is in compliance with Regulation 33. These visits take place on a monthly basis and may be unannounced. This will involve interviewing staff and young people, with their agreement, and ensure that the conduct of the home promotes the well being of the young people and that they are safeguarded. A written report regarding these visits is completed and is sent to Ofsted.
2.9 One IRO has .5 of their allocated work to conducting annual reviews for Foster Carers. This is a requirement Regulation 20 (The Fostering Services Regulations). Reviews of foster carers have a key role in evaluating foster care practice and offering the opportunity for improving the quality of foster care provided. They are governed by regulations and require an assessment of whether or not a foster carer and their household remain suitable to care for foster children and if their terms for approval are still appropriate. The process evidences that in house placements provided and offer safe care for our children placed in-house. The review process takes on the same format as the Children in Care reviews and therefore adopts the same level of scrutiny.

2.10 The Bournemouth Children’s Social Care Quality Assurance Framework identifies the quality function of the IRO; who will undertake Quality Assurance of the whole case including Care Plan, Personal Education Plan (PEP), Health Plan and Court Process.

2.11 Practice issues are brought to the attention of the Team Manager and the Service Manager in order that any shortfall of knowledge or practice can be addressed for future professional practice requirements.

2.12 Practice issues may include e.g. updating a Care Plan or delays in progressing recommendations. Any good practice will be highlighted and shared with Team Managers and Social Workers. The overall outcomes are shared with Service Director and Service Managers in the Children’s Social Care quarterly performance meeting.

2.13 The IRO is an integral part of Care Planning in Bournemouth Borough Council and therefore they will be involved in all aspects of the Child’s life whilst they are in care.

2.14 The IROs have access to all the information on all Children Looked After. In line with the Care Planning guidance all young people have the opportunity to meet with the IRO before and after their review. Some young people will actively engage with their IRO and see how they can benefit from this participation; others may only have contact at the review.

2.15 The IRO is consulted on any education placement or care placement change, unless an emergency move of care placement is required.
3. Staffing—including competences and qualifications of the IRO

3.1 The role of the IRO is considered a specialist one which may involve challenging senior managers and may require the IRO to seek legal remedies if the local authority fails in its duties.

3.2 The IRO must be registered as a social worker by the Health and Care Professionals Council and should be an authoritative professional with at least equivalent status to an experienced children’s social work team manager. These criteria are met within Bournemouth Borough Council.

3.3 The role and responsibilities of the IRO have significantly developed and it has been seen that the ancillary work and rapid response to social workers and the modernisation of the service required a secure in-house service to progress the overarching intentions of the Council to provide an excellent service for Looked After Children.

3.4 There are reported national recruitment difficulties in securing experienced members of staff. However, following the progression of the recruitment strategy in Bournemouth, the IRO service now has employed the equivalent of 6 full time permanent members of staff. Two members of staff will be commencing in April 2014.

3.5 In November 2013, one of the IRO’s became the Interim IRO Manager, this role is to progress the development of the service and to manage the day by day workload and to contribute to reporting mechanisms to Senior Management and Quarterly Performance Reporting.

3.6 In line with recommendations all staff have had previous supervisory responsibility and bring with them direct experience from a range of social work fields. This includes adoption, Child Adolescent Mental Health, education for looked after children, working with perpetrators of sexually harmful behaviour. This very varied range of skills provides a broad expertise within the team.

3.7 The team of IRO’s are supported by 1 LAC co-ordinator for Looked After Children and 2.5 Child Protection Co-ordinators for Child Protection Conferences.
4. Staff Allocation of Work 2013/14

4.1 The national guidelines for allocated cases for IRO’s are 50 – 70 cases. The allocation of case takes this recommendation and attempts to ensure that this is maintained. Any developments within the team are undertaken whilst being mindful of this recommendation. It is difficult to represent the case loads during the financial year 2013 -2014 as there has been recruitment and training of new IRO’s with a reduction in work being undertaken by locum IRO. Allocation of work is prioritised using previous social work experience in order to promote best practice for the child.

4.2 The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit also provides .5 of post to undertake Local Authority Designated Officer work. The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is set out in the HM Government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013).

4.3 The LADO works within Children’s Services and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

5. Data and Information

5.1 On the 31 March 2014 there were 231 children which equates to 121 families subject to Child Protection Plans. There were 290 Children Looked After and 60 Annual Foster Care Reviews. There was management and oversight of 108 investigations of allegations against staff working with children (LADO cases). All of these figures indicate a rise in the pressures for the service.

5.2 Child Protection

Child Protection Conferences for children viewed as being at risk of harm are conducted by IRO’s in line with Bournemouth and Poole Local Safeguarding Board procedures. Many children who are looked after have at some stage in their lives also have been subject of Child Protection Procedures.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Abuse</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Children.</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Bournemouth University were commissioned by the Bournemouth and Poole Local Safeguarding Children Board to review and evaluate the Child Protection Processes and systems within both Bournemouth and Poole safeguarding services. The first stage of the study, ‘The Heart of the Work’ was reported in July 2013. The IRO’s have been involved in contributing to ongoing work to develop the Child Protection service and Bournemouth University will be returning in 2015 to complete their evaluation.

5.4 The most significant feature of the work was to integrate the theoretical principles of Strengthening Families/Signs of Safety within local procedures. There has been some training provided to share the benefits of this model of working. This has resulted in the Independent Chairs developing a more empowering approach with parents and children at the child protection conference, to facilitate their engagement in identification of resources both personal and within their family, as well as from agencies, in order to bring about changes for their child. The reporting to Conference has developed and a new format for Child protection reports will be developed in 2014 and will also be linked into RAISE reporting mechanisms to reduce bureaucracy for social workers.

5.5 Looked after child numbers:
5.6 Number of Children in Care by Age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>31 March 2013</th>
<th>31 March 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>89+(1)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>50+(1)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>265 (267)</strong></td>
<td><strong>290</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respite figures are displayed in brackets (-)

The IRO service has no legislative responsibility for Care Leavers 18+.

5.7 Children in Care by Legal Status as At 31st March 2014, Bournemouth Remains in The Top Quartile For Children in Care Compared To Other Authorities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interim Care Order</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Order</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Powers of Protection</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement Order</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Justice Remand to the Local Authority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Protection Order</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S20 Accommodated by agreement of parents</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>203</strong></td>
<td><strong>251</strong></td>
<td><strong>267</strong></td>
<td><strong>290</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As reported in the last annual report, the number of children accommodated under Sec 20 had stabilised between 2011 and 2012 with a significant rise in 2013. The snapshot data taken on 31 March 2014 shows a decrease of 10, compared to March 2013. This appears to coincide with a rise in Interim Care Orders (ICOs) and Care Orders. This is a reversal of the trend for the previous year.
The significant difference for children who are subject of Care Orders is that the Local Authority hold parental responsibility for that child. This is not taken away from a parent but the Local Authority, whilst always wishing to work in partnerships with parents, can make decisions that are considered to be in the best interests of the child, overriding the parental views. A child subject of a Care Order must have a Care Plan that reflects the Local Authority’s intention to provide for the needs of the child both in the short term and for their stability in the longer term.

What is very evident is that year on year there has been an increase in Looked After Children. This is a national trend. What is important however is to ensure that children who can return home, or with their extended family do so in a timely fashion.

The number of Placement Orders (PO) remains high, with an increase of 11 PO on last year consistent with excellent outcomes for Adoption for children. This could be a reflection of the Public Law changes, charging Local Authorities to complete applications to Court within very prescribed timescales, namely 26 weeks. Bournemouth Borough Council remains a high performer in court timescales which increases positive outcomes for children by reducing delay.

5.8 Planning for Permanency

There are many reasons why children are in care for sometime e.g. there continues to be a steady increase of babies and young sibling groups entering the care system that need permanent families. This puts a strain on the care system and may cause delay in these children leaving care as ‘forever families’ need to be chosen with care. To ensure the outcome is right for these children, the matching process is given considerable weight and should not be hurried. Permanency for all children Looked After by Bournemouth is considered and if not with an adoptive family, permanency may be through Special Guardianship or long term fostering.

5.9 It has been found that the availability of the ‘employed’ IRO facilitates increased communication and availability for discussion and decision making. It is the intention of the IRO service to work in collaboration with the field work services to ensure that children are placed within permanent families, their birth families or adoptive families in a timely fashion.
5.10 Number of children placed for adoption:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 1yr</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2yrs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5yrs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures would indicate a decrease in children being adopted in 2013-2014. However, there are reasons for this. A sibling group of three children were delayed in Court and their adoption was not completed until 2014. There were 30 decisions made by Agency Decision Maker, that adoption is best outcome for children in 2013/14, this is compared to 35 for the previous financial year.

5.11 Ethnicity of Children in Care in Bournemouth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ethnic origin of the Independent Reviewing Officers is White British. Social Workers allocated to Children in Care better reflect the ethnic mix of our children Looked After. The IRO’s are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that children’s cultural and religious needs are met. One IRO has a specific interest in promoting education with vulnerable minority groups, understanding their educational and cultural needs. Interpreters are used at meetings if required.
6. Performance Information about the IRO service

6.1 Numbers of LAC reviews carried out on time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outside time-frame</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% On time</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% outside time</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of reviews completed has remained constant over the last 2 years. To comply with the Care Planning Regulations many children have 2 or 3 meetings to complete this process providing a thorough service and consultation to all children and their families. This has increased this year, during the summer and early autumn of 2013 Children’s Social Care undertook a reorganisation of services, core transformation, this resulted in a number of cases and social workers moving within the organisation. This short term measure was to enable children to be most appropriately supported. As a result the IRO’s were often required to undertake more than one meeting in order to ensure that the review process was completed.

6.2 Review & Initial Child Protection Conferences Between March 2013 And April 2014:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Held in Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>459 One Initial held out of time (6 days overdue SM Approval)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion – between April 2013 and March 2014 there were 175 Reviews and 285 Initial (460 Combined) and one Initial Child Protection Conference was held out of time with Service Manager approval.
6.3 Levels of participation in making and reviewing care plans:

All children and young people are encouraged to actively participate in their reviews where age and understanding allows. Some may Chair their review, whilst others may have an advocate to help them participate during the review. All children and young people will be seen during the review process and their views inform the work being undertaken with them.


7.1 In the autumn of 2013 the Formal Dispute Resolution Process was introduced.

7.2 Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, amended section 26 of the Children Act 1989, to make the Independent Reviewing Officer’s role a legal requirement in Looked After Children’s reviews. Local authorities are now required, by regulations, to appoint IRO’s to monitor the authority’s functions in respect of the review and as a last resort refers a child’s case to the Children and Family Court Advisory Service (CAFCASS) if the failure to implement aspects of a care plan might be considered in breach of the child’s human rights. CAFCASS has the power to undertake legal action.

7.3 Where an IRO has been in dispute about a Looked After Child’s care plan or placement with the Social Worker or Team Manager, the case will be escalated to the Service Director for resolution. In all cases where this Escalation Policy has been used there has been an internal resolution, thereby negating the need to escalate any case externally to CAFCASS.

7.4 It is acknowledged at the end of 2013/2014 that the Dispute Resolution Policy required further adjustment in order to produce greater interrogation and reporting from the IRO service. The outcomes of these adjustments will be reflected within the next IRO Annual Report.

8. Any resource issues that are putting at risk the delivery of a quality service for Children in Care

8.1 It is recognised that some children require a safe placement that needs to be outside of the Borough to remove them from negative influences or that some children need specialist therapeutic or education provision. However, it is imperative to ensure the longer term emotional well being for children that they have opportunities to remain in contact with their families and their communities and that they can remain in the same schools.
The IRO service will be contributing to initiatives including additional early reviews of the initial planning for children to ensure that they have every opportunity to return home safely at the earliest opportunity or to return to Bournemouth as soon as is possible without causing further disruption to the child.

8.2 To progress the ‘Heart of Work’ recommendations, the development of the child protection conference process will need to be considered and careful consideration will be given as to how this can utilise existing resources. The service would wish at this stage to look to adapt and use resources creatively without any additional capital spending.

9. **Annual work programme of the IRO service i.e. priority areas for improvement and action in the IRO service in 14/15**

9.1 The trend of higher numbers of children with more complex needs requires the IRO service to play a key role to ensure that children who can return home do so in a safe and timely fashion and that children who need alternative permanent care have this identified for them at an early opportunity.

9.2 The IRO service will be committed to ensuring that plans for children incorporate and encourage their aspirations and that young people’s mental health and well being is addressed alongside their physical health needs.

9.3 Consultation and communication between professionals and young people is essential and the IROs strive to keep change at a minimum so that the young people and their carers know who to contact. During this financial year the service lost the co-ordinator who had provided the dedicated administrative support to the IROs. We are currently training a new co-ordinator to provide the service. A ‘credit card’ system has been introduced so that young people can have the contact details of their IRO and the direct line number for all calls into the service. All IROs have leaflets to give to families and young people.

9.4 The Alert of Concern was introduced as part of the Dispute Resolution Process in autumn 2013. This highlighted areas of practice, weak care planning etc regarding young people. This will be reviewed and will be strengthened in 2014 2015, with a quarterly report provided to Senior Management Team and within the IRO’s Annual Report.
9.5 The IROs will continue to provide a strong function relating to Allegations Against Staff working with Children, Child Trafficking, Regulation 33 visits and reports to Corporate Parenting Panel.

9.6 IRO will be working in collaboration with initiatives established within Bournemouth Borough Council to ensure that for children where it is safe to return home that this is done in a timely fashion: for children where living outside of the care of their parents, that this is established with legal protection, when required, in a timely fashion.

9.7 IRO’s will be addressing closely as to placements meeting needs of the child, particularly if these are outside of the 20 mile radius of Bournemouth. All short notice placements will receive an early scrutiny of planning from a nominated IRO. This will identify any work or challenges that would prevent an early resolution to finding the appropriate conclusion to a child coming into care on an ‘emergency’ basis. This could mean an older child returning home to parents or family or it could mean robust planning at the outset for a small child for an early conclusion.

9.8 IRO service will define links with information sharing with both Senior Management and with Practitioners.

9.9 Introduction of modernised IRO Review of Arrangements documentation.

9.10 Robust auditing of Looked After Children to ensure that all children have a current Care Plan: PEP: Health Assessment and to ensure that any deficits are reported to Senior Management at Quarterly Performance meetings and that practice improvement is disseminated to staff.

9.11 IRO’s in their role as Independent Chairs will continue in the development and participation of the Child Protection process ‘Heart of the Work’ and review with Bournemouth University.

9.12 IRO service will be developing improved reporting systems to contribute to monitoring of work in respect of Looked After Children and Child Protection Process in line with recommendation with Ofsted recommendations.

9.13 Robust audits of both Looked After Children performance and Child Protection plans will be developed and undertaken to provide senior management with collated oversight of progress being made to prevent drift and delay, practice and performance issues in line with recommendation that IRO’s challenge should be more rigorous.
9.14 IRO’s will introduce a systematic calendar of feedback both to Managers and practitioners regarding good practice and areas for improvement.

9.15 IRO’s will contribute through the process of audit outcomes, to an improved use of performance information as recommended by Ofsted.

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