

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS – ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide a summary update to Cabinet on the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officers 2021/22.
- 1.2 To seek permission to publish the annual report as per statutory guidance.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The work of the Independent Reviewing Officers is a statutory function as detailed in the Independent Reviewing Officer Handbook 2010. Independent Review deliver the following functions to all Children in Care within North Lincolnshire:
  - To undertake an initial Child in Care review within 20 working days of a child entering care
  - To undertake further Child in Care reviews within 3 months and thereafter 6 monthly
  - To determine if a review is required following any significant change in a Child in Care's circumstances
  - To undertake visits to Children in Care to ascertain their understanding of their care plan and to gather their views, wishes and feelings
  - To ratify care plans and offer independent advice and recommendations
  - To fulfil records and decisions distribution requirements
- 2.2 The Annual Report 2021/22 follows a standard format and sets out a range of information about the service, including the extent to which it complies with regulation and best practice, and what independent review helps us learn about the broader provision for children in care.

Key points are as follows:

- a) Children in Care in North Lincolnshire benefit from a timely, good quality review of their care plan by an experienced, skilled, and well-trained Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). They are encouraged and supported to chair their own meeting, to attend, and to contribute their views.
- b) Robust systems of management oversight, quality assurance, dispute resolution, case allocation, and performance management help ensure that the service is effective and responsive.
- c) Operating within a child-focused organisational culture with outstanding provision to children in care means that IROs are able to prioritise children's participation and engagement and provide challenge and support to multi-agency teams to promote best outcomes.
- d) Independent review in North Lincolnshire is statutorily compliant and adds value to a robust child in care system.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to note the contents and approve publication of the IRO Annual Report, in compliance with statutory guidance.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The Annual Report is a positive and balanced appraisal of the strengths of the service and the broader system around children in care. The report demonstrates progress and improvement across a range of indicators and sets out the very positive outcomes achieved for children in care in North Lincolnshire.
- 4.2 The report makes reference to performance information already in the public domain, such as published data. Other information and evaluative statements have been reviewed and considered appropriate for publishing, reflecting a commitment to be transparent and accountable.

### **5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)**

- 5.1 Publishing the IRO Annual Report will involve placing the report on the relevant council web page and will not require specific communications.

### **6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**

- 6.1 Publishing the report demonstrates transparency and accountability, which connects with the broader public engagement framework. The report provides evidence of strong practice and outcomes in terms of

delivery and impact on children in care, reflecting the council plan commitment to excellence.

**7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

7.1 Not undertaken or required.

**8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

8.1 No formal consultations are required. The content of the report has been shared with relevant staff across Children and Families.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 To note the key points in the Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2021/22 and agree website publication.

**DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Church Square House  
30-40 High Street  
Scunthorpe  
North Lincolnshire  
DN15 6NL

Author: Tom Hewis, Head of Early Help and Protection

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2022

**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2021/22  
IRO Handbook