

## IRO Annual Reports

### Purpose of the report and Summary

This is the second IRO Annual Report to the Corporate Parenting Board covering the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

The reports provide an overview of practice in relation to children looked after and safeguarding, highlighting the progress made during 2011/12 in strengthening the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) role within Lancashire. Whilst acknowledging the challenges faced by the service and recognising the areas for development, the reports also seek to celebrate achievements and successes in improving outcomes for children and young people.

### Key Information and Questions for Board Members

Attached are the IRO Annual Reports in respect of Children Looked After and Safeguarding. Information from the reports will be summarised in a presentation to the Corporate Parenting Board.



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### Background

#### The IRO Annual Report

The 'IRO Handbook' (statutory guidance for IRO's and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children) requires that the manager of the IRO Service produce an annual report for the scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Board. This report should identify good practice and highlight issues for further development. The report has to include information about:

- The IRO service
- The extent of participation of children & their parents
- The timeliness of reviews
- The procedures for resolving concerns
- Any resource issues affecting service quality
- Outcomes of any quality assurance audits

There is a Young Person's Guide to the IRO Handbook: [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)

Although there is no requirement to produce a Safeguarding Annual Report, this was recognised as a model of good practice in Ofsted's inspection of Lancashire's safeguarding and looked after children services in January 2012.

### **The IRO Role**

The Children's Commissioner for England has highlighted the importance of the IRO role<sup>1</sup>:

Children consulted wanted a significant person to hear and help them represent their views. The IRO represents the child/young person's interests and ensures their voice is heard

The IRO is often the most stable professional in the child/young person's Life, offering consistency and an independent view

The IRO has enabled improved participation for children and young people and access to advice and advocacy

The IRO ensures the plan for the child/young person is appropriate and is taken forward in a timely manner

The IRO role has been strengthened through statutory guidance (IRO Handbook) which reinforces the IRO's responsibility to ensure concerns about the child's plan or their care are addressed and resolved

Increasingly the courts are interested in the views of the IRO

### **Decisions required**

- (i) The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note the report and achievements during 2011/12.
- (ii) The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to give their views regarding the content of the IRO Annual Report for 2013/14.

Sally Allen,  
Directorate Safeguarding Manager  
Tel: 01772 531754  
Email: [sally.allen@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:sally.allen@lancashire.gov.uk)  
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<sup>1</sup> Children's Commissioner for England: 'Submission to the Family Justice Review', October 2010