

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee: Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee	Dated: 13/10/2025
Subject: Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), Annual Report for 2023–2024	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provides statutory duties	Statutory duties of 1989 Children's Act and IRO handbook
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N/A
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services
Report author:	Ria Lane, Independent Reviewing Officer, Safeguarding team

Summary

This report gives Members an overview of the Independent Reviewing service in the City of London covered in the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report for 2024–2025 (see Appendix 1-non public). It summarises the statutory requirements of the IRO service and how the City of London has performed in this regard. There is an overview of the IRO role and the officer's performance in ensuring that children's key needs are met. Strengths of last year's practice and areas of development for 2024–2025 are identified.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The IRO service follows the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, which is linked to the revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance that were introduced in April 2011. The responsibility of the IRO has progressed over time

from the management of the review process to a wider overview of the case, including regular monitoring and follow-up between reviews. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of care planning for children in care, and for challenging milestone drift and delay. Specifically, the statutory duties of the IRO are to:

- monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's case
 - participate in any review of the child's case
 - ensure that any children's ascertained wishes and feelings concerning their case are given due consideration by the authority.
2. The IRO's primary task is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs, and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child. As corporate parents, each local authority should act as a responsible and conscientious parent for the children they look after.

Current Position

3. A permanent IRO has been in post since September 2017.
4. The achievements identified in the Annual Report 2024–2025 are:
- Consistent participation of children in their review meetings
 - Consistent IRO visits and communication with children
 - Active monitoring of children's care plans and needs between review periods. This helps to prevent actions stalling, meaning that children in care continue to have their needs met and feel supported
 - Review minutes, contacts and alerts recorded on children's files within the online record system workflow
 - Consolidation of the Pathway and Care Plan process, leading to an increase in care plans being completed within timescale
 - Launch of the Caring Life portal.
5. In addition to direct work with children and the local authority, the IRO takes part in the London IRO Practitioner Network and serves as a practitioner representative to the London IRO Managers' Group. Engagement in these pan-London groups facilitates the IRO's access to information, knowledge and the experience of colleagues from larger authorities. It also ensures that the experience and needs of the City's children in care are represented in forums that have the potential to influence practice and statutory guidance on the services and support they receive.
6. The IRO service has been alerted to safeguarding issues for children in care and aims to build safety and stability according to the needs of each child. The

service will continue to monitor care plans closely to include actions that address the known risks of all forms of exploitation.

Options

7. The IRO service should review recommendations from reporting and planning work required for continued service improvement. There is no cost commitment required.

Proposals

8. The IRO identifies the following areas for improvement. An action plan has been put in place to address them.

Objective	Actions
Embed the modify Care Plan template in practice and ensure that the changes are impactful for children in care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work is in progress with a completion date set for reporting year 2025/26.
Continue to develop the review process to make it inclusive for children and ensure that anti-racism policies are embedded within the service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review systemic model and how this can be developed in the review process.• Ensure that all children in care are aware of their rights.• Ensure that service providers operate a consistent anti-racist policy.
Continue to monitor and flag health assessment timescales, so that children's health needs are assessed in a timely way and intervention is taken to improve health outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly meetings to be held with Health managers to ensure that children's health assessments are being completed within timescales.
Consideration for new ways to communicate and share information with children as part of their review process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce a video for new arrivals into care, explaining the national transfer scheme (when relevant), their rights as a child in care, and the process for reviewing care plans.
Annual Survey and Annual IRO report to be aligned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Correlate the reporting period so the annual survey of children reflects the same time period and can be reported on in IRO Annual Report.

Key Data

9. The key data directly related to this report include:

- There were seven children in care on 1 April 2024, which continues the downward trend of children in care numbers since 2022 (11 children in care on 1 April 2022, nine children in care on 1 April 2023). After the growth of children in care numbers during 2017–2021, a large majority have now turned 18 years and are being supported as Care Leavers.
- The National Transfer Scheme¹ has been effective in the last year. This means that, within a few weeks of being accommodated, most new unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are initially accommodated by the City of London are now moved to a local authority outside of London.
- Five children were in care as of 31 March 2025.
- 15 children came into care during 2024–2025.
- In total, throughout the reporting year, there were 22 children in care.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. There are no strategic implications directly related to this report.

- Financial implications – N/A
- Resource implications – N/A
- Legal implications – N/A
- Risk implications – N/A
- Equalities implications – N/A
- Climate implications – N/A
- Security implications – N/A

Conclusion

11. The IRO service has made significant contributions to quality assuring and improving services for children in care throughout 2023–2024. Initial and subsequent reviews, midway monitoring and care arrangement stability continue to be embedded and maintained at a high level.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – City of London Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2024–2025 (non public)

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¹ [National Transfer Scheme \(NTS\) Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children \(UASC\)](#)