

**Children's, Families and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny
Committee**

23rd September 2025

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report (April 2024 – April 2025)

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Mark Statham Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

1. Aim

- 1.1 The IRO Handbook (2010) is the statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Local Authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review of children and young people in their care. It states that the IRO Manager should be responsible for producing an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the Corporate Parenting Board. It should also be available to the public on the Council website.
- 1.2 This report provides an annual review of the IRO service who play an integral role in ensuring timely and effective care planning for children and young people in our care. Examining quantitative and qualitative data relating to the IRO Service within Walsall during the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, as required by statutory guidance. The report captures performance between these dates and priorities for the IRO service in 2025/26.
- 1.3 The report provides an evidence base in terms of describing an established service which continues to support Walsall Children's Services and is key in providing good outcomes for children and young people who are looked after in Walsall. The report sets out where we need to develop and priorities for the coming year.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members to consider the work of the IRO service as per statutory expectation.

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 As outlined in the Annual Report.

4. Financial information

There are no financial implications or considerations outlined within this report

5. Reducing Inequalities

- 5.1 Ensuring children in care have access to the same opportunities as their peers is essential; we also know that they have often faced adversity, abuse or neglect which has resulted in them not being able to reside with their parents. It is therefore our corporate responsibility to ensure our independent reviewing service has the capacity, knowledge and skill to ensure the effective oversight of care planning for these children.

6. Decide

- 6.1 For scrutiny to note the contents of the report and is assured that the Local Authority meets its legislative duties and corporate parenting responsibilities, with children's rights and views central to every review and decision.

7. Respond

- 7.1 As 6 above.

8. Review

- 8.1 The report is prepared annually and will be provided to Scrutiny for updates.

Background papers

None

Author

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10th September 2025