Summary

This report details the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services. The areas within the portfolio are listed each time a Cabinet Member is invited to attend any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be held to account.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, according to the Council’s constitution are:

- Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Service

2. Overview of 2013/14

2.1 During 2014 the demands on the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service have continued with an ongoing pressure on the numbers of cases being managed by the team. As work has been carried out with the Children’s Social Work Service to improve the service, this has had a knock on to the IRO service as the numbers of children looked after and the number of children subject to child protection plans have both increased. This has caused an initial drop in performance, although at the tail end of the calendar year this has improved.

2.2 There have been some personnel changes in the service with the departure of the previous interim Head of Service, who has been replaced by Janet Bailey, an experienced manager who brings a wealth of experience and expertise. An appointment has been made to the Principal IRO post with the permanent appointment of Sue Dunkin into post. This has been welcomed by both internal and external colleagues.
who are confident this will support the service to develop further over the coming year.

2.3 The IRO team remains reliant on agency staff, this position is consistent with the national picture. However, there is a clear plan in place to address this and the service remains optimistic that the number of permanent IRO’s can be increased over the coming year.

2.4 A key success has been the opening of a dedicated child protection conference suite at Eagle Court. This has just become fully functioning and now provides a professional environment for conferences.

2.5 Considerable work has been completed to ensure that processes are clear and streamlined as possible. Policies are in the process of being reviewed and updated to ensure that they are firmly focused on the future needs of the service. Much of this work supports the Medway Safeguarding Children’s Board (MSCB) multi-agency safeguarding work. Alongside this the IRO service is integral to the quality assurance work and support the raising of practice standards for vulnerable children. Examples of these are listed below:

2.6 **Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy:** is now in draft and will be sent out to partners and colleagues mid January. Although this is work that is led by the MSCB, the IRO service have been a major contributor to developing this work.

2.7 **Strengthening Families:** is a new approach in Medway that has been successfully developed by the IRO service as an improved way of focusing child protection conferences. There has been considerable multi agency training and training for IRO’s. This new approach is more focused on a child’s outcomes and families tell us that it helps them understand what agencies are concerned about and what they need to do to improve outcomes for their children. The feedback from partner agencies has been positive. The strengthening families model is going to be adopted by front line teams in assessments and supervision throughout 2015.

2.8 **Monthly surgeries:** the Principal IRO has set up monthly surgeries with the Team Managers, this will help with continuity and any issues being raised can be dealt with swiftly.

2.9 **Child Protection surgeries:** are to be established to consider the children subject to a plan 15+ months and then reducing down to 12 and 9 months. This will reinforce the rigour of ensuring that if improved outcomes for a child are not happening then further action can be taken. This may include considering legal action and removing a child into care.

2.10 **Cancelled Conference and Reviews:** it has been agreed with the Heads of Service that no conferences or LAC reviews can be cancelled without the authorisation of the Principal IRO or the Head of Service. Although in exceptional circumstances there may be good reasons for considering a cancellation of a review or conference, there are limited
appointment/conference times so limited flexibility. It is easy for the very tight timelines to slip, hence the tighter controls that have been introduced.

2.11 **Evaluation Forms for conferences**: these have been devised for Professionals, Parents, Young People and evaluation of the conference itself. These will be completed following the meeting. This will enable further information for when the review of strengthening families takes place later in the year.

2.12 **Escalation**: the Principal IRO now has a spreadsheet with stages and timescales and will report on this in her monthly assurance report to the Head of Service.

2.13 **IRO Links**: going forward IRO’s will now be linked with specific social care teams. This will enable the IRO’s to build better links with staff based at Broadside. The IRO’s will be more available for any consultation and can chase up any outstanding issues.

2.14 **IRO Supervision Notes**: from January, issues raised in supervision with the Principal IRO where there is a child specific discussion, will be added to the child’s file and an alert sent to the Manager – it will be clearly marked IRO supervision so that this will not confuse management decisions the social work teams make. This is work that would be deemed to be ‘outstanding’ in any Ofsted inspection.

2.15 **Strengthened performance agenda**: the team has strengthened the performance agenda by carrying out management meetings and the production of regular performance dashboards. Performance is improving in relation to ICPC’s and for December, performance improved to 85% of children who went to ICPC within 15 days of a strategy meeting in accordance with the procedures. The Medway target is 72% and the expectation is that such improvement will continue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>2014/15 YTD performance</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average IRO worker caseload</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Average case load as at time of writing report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% children whose ICPC was held within 15 working days of the initiating strat</td>
<td>72% or higher</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>A LEAN review of processes has resulted in recent improvements to performance. Provisional performance in December was 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of reviews completed in period</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Total number of ICPCs, RCPCs and LAC reviews to end of November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of de-planned Child Protection cases</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>Number of de-planned cases to end of November</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Performance Indicator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CYP becoming subject to a plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years</td>
<td>9% or less</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>Performance year to date is above target and has significantly improved compared to 2013/14. This equates to 17 CYP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% leaving care who are adopted</td>
<td>20% or higher</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>Performance in Medway is significantly higher than the national average. This equates to 37 CYP.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. The Future

3.1 The IRO service has made some considerable progress in the last year and the fruits of this are beginning to impact positively on children, young people and their families.

3.2 The strengthening families model is going to be adopted by front line teams in assessments and supervision throughout 2015. There will be a review of this approach later in the year to evidence the impact it has had.

3.3 The availability of the dedicated conferencing venue, whilst taking a while to become fully functioning, is beginning to work well and provides a more appropriate venue for conferences to take place.

3.4 Efforts will continue to recruit to permanent IRO posts and we will continue to try to retain the services of some excellent agency staff, particularly those who have been working within the service for some time.

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### Background Papers:

None