

<b>CREATING OPPORTUNITIES &amp; TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 8</b>
<b>12 March 2012</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

## **Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services**

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### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Improvement programme.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1

- To note the progress made on the core strategy and the work undertaken by the Member Task and Finish Group

#### **3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

3.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy identifies "Improving Health" and "Supporting Vulnerable People" as priorities. Improvement in Children's Social Care is key to the delivery of these priorities.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 Following an Ofsted Inspection in August 2011, the Council has engaged in a programme to secure rapid improvement. This improvement will be driven by three key elements:

- The Children's Services Improvement Programme
- The Core Strategy which focuses effort on what we must prioritise
- The leadership of Members and officers in delivering the required changes

4.2 The Council's progress is closely monitored both internally and externally by this Committee, the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and the External Improvement Board.

#### **5. KEY ISSUES**

5.1 The Scrutiny Task and Finish Group had its second meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February. The group discussed progress with the Director of Social Services and also considered in detail the performance within the service. Members also reported back on the deep – dive they had conducted into the Integrated Children's System and concluded that the new product will provide a significant improvement once implemented in April. A Member of the Task and Finish group will give a more detailed account of the meeting to this Committee

5.2 The second meeting of the External Improvement Board was held on the 7<sup>th</sup> February. This was a positive meeting and the independent chair Jane Held noted the progress made by the Council and commended the Council on the speed in which it had put together a strong senior management team over the service. The Board approved the final version of the Improvement Plan and will be monitoring the progress against the plan on a monthly basis.

5.3 The Council has made significant progress in the last few weeks in putting down the building blocks for sustainable improvement.

- We have now put in place a permanent team of Assistant Directors with the appointment of Sue Westcott as Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Wendi Ogle-Welbourn as Assistant Director of Strategic Commissioning. These are both high performing individuals with a track record of delivering improvement and high quality services. They will both be in place by the end of March
- We have rebased the establishment at 81 social workers and the budget report recommends to Council an additional one million pounds to fund this and a further £2million to fund the cost of Looked after Children.
- We have commissioned and procured a peripatetic team of experienced social workers and management from Sanctuary. They commenced working as an additional pod in the Referral and Assessment team on the 18<sup>th</sup> January. This team have provided the additional capacity to tackle the backlogs within the Referral Assessment Team and there has been a marked improvement in the timeliness of assessments and
- We have put considerable support into the Referral and Assessment Service to put in place sound business practices and organisational structures-
- We have commissioned an independent review of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children's Board – this will be an opportunity to reset its governance and effectiveness

This progress has been achieved due to the support and commitment of the Lead Member and Chief Executive and their modelling of a whole Council approach.

5.4

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The cost of the improvement programme can be met from within existing budgets. Resources are available to secure improvement in the immediate and longer term.
- 6.2 The Secretary of State has the power to issue a statutory notice if he is not satisfied that sufficient progress is being made.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Partner agencies, parents and children will be involved in the improvement activity.

## **8. NEXT STEPS**

- 8.1 This Committee will continue to receive a regular update on progress and the Task and Finish Group will meet monthly to support the improvement.

## **9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1
- Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding: Peterborough 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011
  - Ofsted Unannounced Inspection of contact referral and assessment arrangements 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011
  - Ofsted Safeguarding and Looked after Children Inspection: Peterborough 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010

## **10. APPENDICES**

- 10.1 Appendix 1 - Improvement Notice  
Appendix 2 - Peterborough City Council Safeguarding Improvement Plan – December 2011