

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
3 JANUARY 2019	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Wendi Ogle Welbourn, Executive Director, People and Communities	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Sam Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Lou Williams, Service Director, Children and Safeguarding	Tel. 01733 864139

OUTCOME OF OFSTED INSPECTION OF PETERBOROUGH CHILDREN'S SERVICES, SERVICE DIRECTOR REPORT AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Service Director, Children and Safeguarding	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the content of the report in relation to performance by children's social care and actions being taken to maintain and improve this in certain areas; 2. Notes the content of the action plan following the inspection of children's services by Ofsted in June/July 2018 and the arrangements in place to assure that these are completed; 3. Note the work of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services in carrying out her duties. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report was requested by the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 This report provides Members with an overview of key performance measures within children's services, includes information about the action plan put in place following the Ofsted inspection in June and July 2018, and updates Committee on relevant activities and functions completed by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

2.2 This report is for the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council :

Children's Services including

- a) Social Care of Children;
- b) Safeguarding; and
- c) Children's Health.

2.3 This report relates to the corporate priorities relating to the safeguarding of vulnerable people.

- 2.4 This report directly relates to the children in care pledge as it is about the performance of children’s safeguarding services including services for children in care and young people who have left care.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1. This section begins by providing an overview relevant performance monitoring of children’s services, then summarising the brief action plan that we are required to have in place following the recent Ofsted inspection, before concluding by providing a brief summary of key relevant activities of the Lead Member and portfolio holder.

Service Director Report

- 4.2. The following section contains the usual reporting information provided on a regular basis to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.3. Charts are referred to throughout this section; these can be found in Appendix 1 to this report.

Contacts, referrals and timeliness of assessments

- 4.4. Chart 1 shows the number of contacts being received into the MASH [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub] and the proportion of these that move through to become referrals into children’s social care, as opposed to being signposted to other services or diverted to early help. The number of contacts remains higher than we would want, although the percentage moving on to referral is moving closer to target [although these two variables are clearly related].
- 4.5. As has been reported previously, we are in the process of launching significant change to the way in which the Integrated Front Door and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub operate. These changes were informed by a peer review that took place in March 2018. The changes have had to be included within much wider changes in Cambridgeshire, delaying their implementation.
- 4.6. A further complication in Peterborough relates to the need to vary the contract with Serco, which had been responsible for operating a small area of the services included within the new Integrated Front Door as shared with Cambridgeshire. This means the new approach will not go fully live before the end of the 2018 calendar year.
- 4.7. Once the new system is in place, we expect to see a reduction in the number of contacts to children’s social care, with more of these being passed directly to early help services or being signposted to other sources of support. This means that children will access services more quickly and there will be fewer hand-offs in terms of passing information across the system.
- 4.8. The changes to the MASH, which were largely implemented by 1st November 2018, will result in better decision making in relation to the number of children who are progressed to being considered referrals to the service. These changes will take some time to become established but the outcome should be a reduction in the number of referrals, and a consequent reduction in the number of single assessments, many of which currently conclude as no further action or a referral through to Early Help.
- 4.9. The current position in terms of numbers of referrals is as shown in Chart 2 of Appendix 1. This indicates that compared to statistical neighbour averages, actual referral rates in Peterborough are already a relatively positive story. We do, however, want to see a further reduction in the referral rate. This is because at present, around 15% of referrals do not progress to an assessment and are stepped down to early help [as can be seen in Chart 3]. We want the decision-making around referrals to improve further so that this figure reduces to closer to 5%. Achieving this not only reduces the amount of work in the system, but also reduces the number

of hand-offs and leads to a quicker response to those children in need of both early help and children's safeguarding support.

- 4.10. As has been the case consistently for a number of years in Peterborough, Early Help services remain an area of strength. As Chart 4 shows, there is a continuing high rate of children per 10,000 who are being supported through Early Help Assessments. Although the pattern has been a reducing one over recent months, with the exception of October 2018, the rate per 10,000 remains well above target and this illustrates the level of early help activity taking place across partner services including schools and health services. The September and October figures are likely to have been affected by the implementation of version 14 of Liquid Logic, meaning that the figures need to be treated with some caution. We will be closely monitoring performance over the next few months to ensure reported numbers are steady and any data issues resolved.
- 4.11. Chart 5 shows the timeliness of completion of single assessments, where performance is currently lower than should be expected. Managers are working hard to address this, however, and have introduced a 20-day checkpoint to try to ensure that assessments in progress are on track to be completed by the 45 working day timeframe.
- 4.12. Chart 6 shows the position with regard to the percentage of referrals where a previous referral has been made in the last 12 months. Where re-referral rates are high, it is an indication that some children may be being closed to children's social care too soon, and so are more likely to be accepted back into the system at a later date. Where re-referral rates are too low, it indicates that we may be being too risk averse and keeping too many children open to the service for too long, increasing overall volumes in the system. Performance is better than target at around 18% on a rolling 12 month average against a target of 22%.

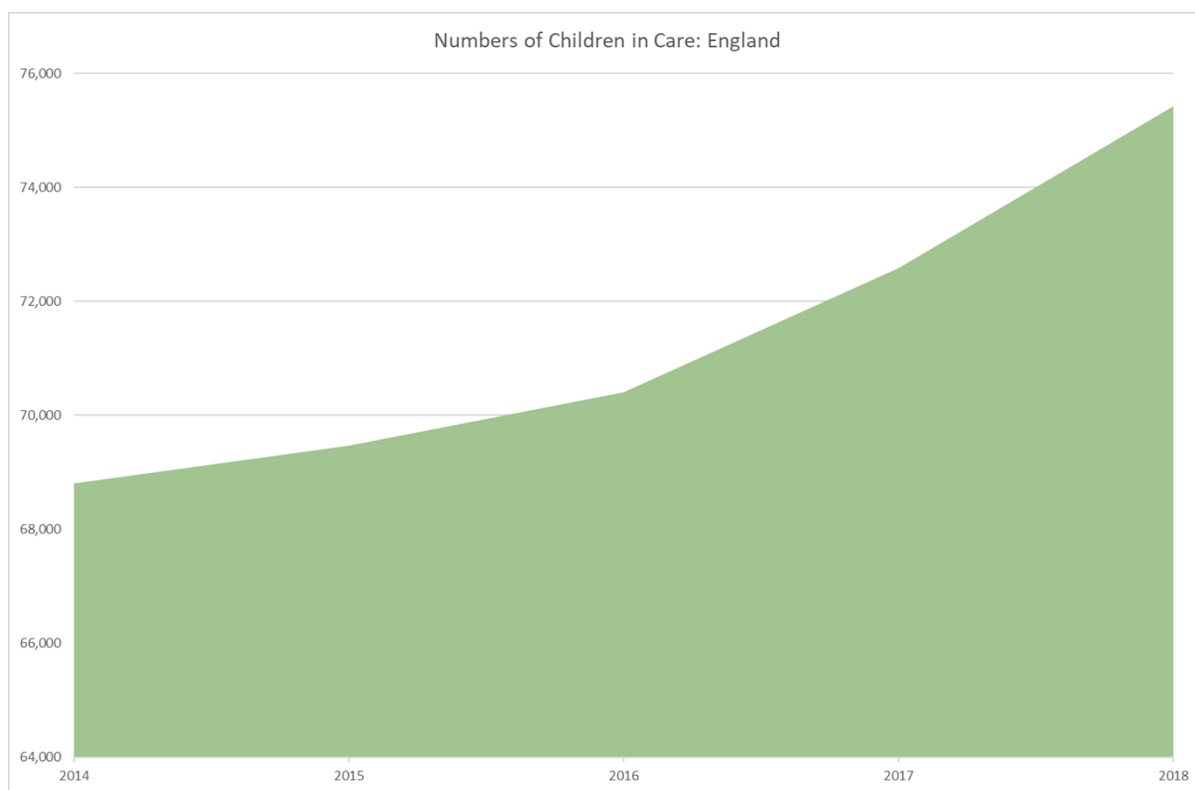
Safeguarding and Child Protection

- 4.13. It is in this area that we expect to see the greatest impact of our Family Safeguarding approach. Experience in Hertfordshire was that after implementation of the model, numbers of children who needed to be subject to child protection plans reduced first, followed by numbers of children in care.
- 4.14. Chart 7 indicates that numbers on child protection plans are in general reducing, although there has been a slight upswing in September and October 2018. This is a volatile indicator and can be affected by a single family with a number of children, all of whom either become subject to a plan or cease to be the subject of a plan. Nevertheless, it is disappointing that the most recent two months have seen an increase.
- 4.15. We are continuing to undertake awareness raising of the Family Safeguarding approach with key partners as it remains the case that for some, the perception continues to be that getting a child onto a plan unlocks resources and extra support, which is no longer the case.
- 4.16. On a more positive note, however, we have started to see a reduction in care proceedings compared with longer-term trends. While to date this reduction is small and it is not yet safe to call it a trend, the experience in Hertfordshire was a reduction in care proceedings followed by a reduction in numbers of children in care.
- 4.17. Only those children at the very highest levels of risk should be made subject to child protection plans, and they should not remain on child protection plans for too long. Child protection plans should either achieve their goal of reducing risks to children quickly or effectively, or quickly identify where such changes are not going to be made, with the result that robust action to safeguard children is taken. Chart 8 shows the number of children subject to child protection plans for two years or more. Peterborough's performance has been consistently good in this area. Of the 249 children subject to child protection plans as of the end of October 2018, only 32 have been subject to a plan for longer than 12 months and none for longer than two years, which is good performance.

- 4.18. Any child subject to a plan for 9 months is automatically reviewed by a senior manager. Legal planning meetings are automatically considered where child protection plans have been in place for 12 months or more. It is this robust approach to oversight of children subject to child protection plans that makes a significant contribution to keeping the overall numbers of children subject to plans low compared with similar authorities and authorities nationally.
- 4.19. Chart 9 shows the timeliness of visits to children who are subject to child protection plans. Performance remains consistently around 95% and at times above this - short of our stretch target of 98% - but this reflects good performance overall. Some visits will not take place because families choose to avoid them, in which case the service considers what actions need to be taken to ensure that the child is safeguarded. Other families may not be visited because they are away for genuine reasons, and the occasional visit will be missed because the social worker is off sick or has had to re-organise their diary at short notice because of other urgent matters arising. This combination means that actual performance will always be slightly below 100%.
- 4.20. Senior managers in children’s social care, the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and the Cabinet Adviser receive a weekly report that identifies the reasons behind any visits that have not taken place within expected timescales.

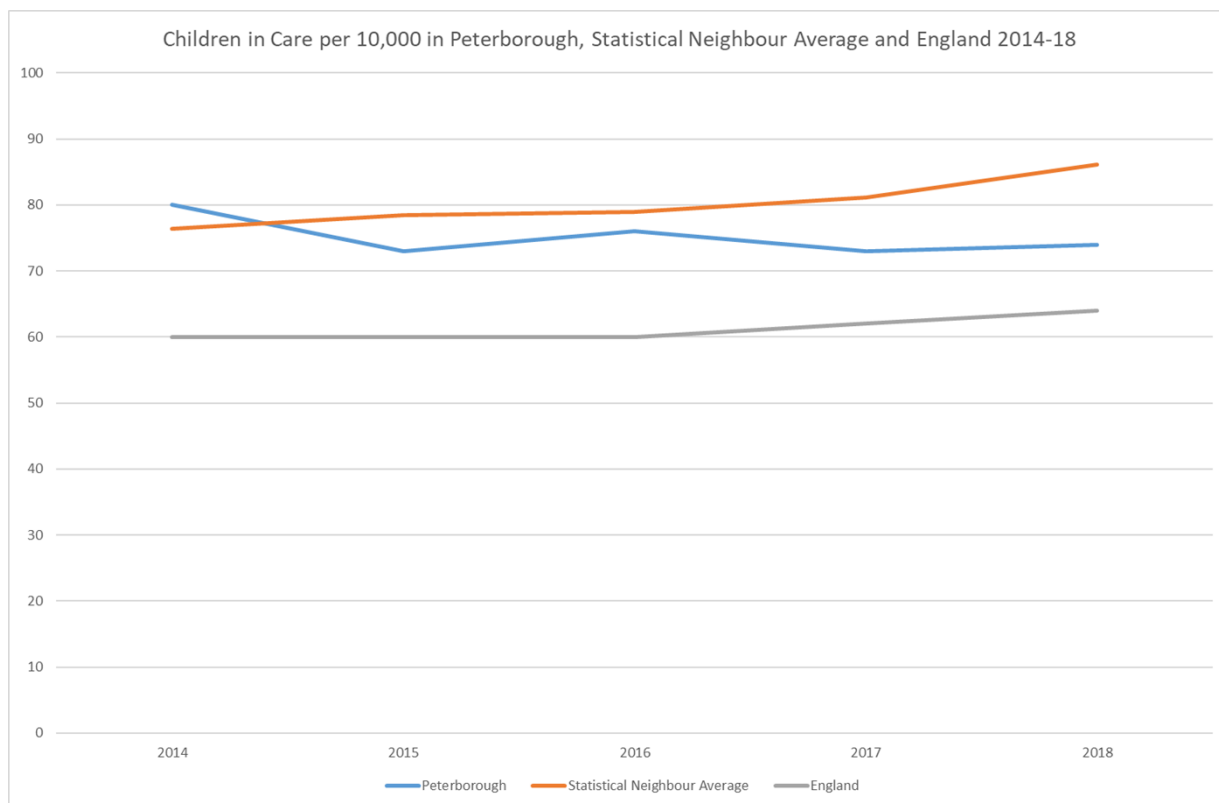
Children in Care

- 4.21. Before looking at the local position for children in care numbers, it is useful to look at the most recent national data, which covers the 2017/18 financial year and was released on 15th November 2018. As members will be aware, numbers in care locally have increased over the last two years, putting pressure on budgets, and leading to some doubt as to whether the positive impact on care numbers in Hertfordshire through Family Safeguarding would be repeated in Peterborough.
- 4.22. What the national data is telling us, however, is that there have been significant increases in numbers in care over the last two years across the country, meaning that analysing the impact of the Family Safeguarding approach locally needs to be considered in this context. The chart below shows the increase in numbers of children and young people in care in England since 2014:



- 4.23. It is clear that, all things considered, it is to be expected that numbers in care locally would also increase, particularly given the demographic profile of Peterborough and the growing population of children.

4.24. In order to make comparisons with other areas, the number of children and young people in care is expressed as a rate per 10,000 of all children and young people aged 0-17. As Chart 10 shows, the rate as at the end of October in Peterborough was 74.4 [where it has remained as at the time of writing this report at the end of November]. This is the same as the rate as of April 2018, as illustrated in the chart below:



4.25. The top orange line is the average rate of our statistical neighbours, and this shows that among our most similar authorities, numbers in care increased quite quickly in 2017/18, compared with a lower rate of increase in Peterborough – the middle, blue line. The grey line shows the rate for England as a whole.

4.26. Our looked after population is around 370-75; if we were looking after the same number as the average of our statistical neighbours, we would have 430 children and young people in care. Hertfordshire achieved an 8% reduction in the numbers of children in care as a result of Family Safeguarding. Our current looked after population, while higher than it was when we initiated the Family Safeguarding approach, is 12.5% lower than the average of our statistical neighbours.

4.27. The local difficulty associated with a national increased population of children in care is that the placement shortage that has been evident for the last two or more years is set to continue. This means that it is increasingly difficult to find suitable foster placements in the independent sector for children and young people we are unable to place with our own carers. This means that it remains more likely that young people we would previously have been able to find foster placements are now more likely to be placed in residential placements.

4.28. Chart 11 shows performance in relation to the number of children in care who have experienced three or more placement moves. Our performance in this area is generally consistently good; data over the last few months had indicated a slight deterioration, although this is now moving back in the right direction. We will continue to monitor performance to ensure that the direction of travel remains positive.

4.29. Chart 12 shows performance in relation to reviews of children in care being held within statutory timescales. Performance is just below 100%, representing very good performance. This indicator is regarded as something of a bell-weather indicator by regulators, since anything other than

consistently good performance can indicate other more significant issues within the child in care system of a local authority.

- 4.30. Chart 13 of Appendix 1 shows the timeliness of visits to children in care. Performance in this area is good at over 97%. This remains amber as we have a stretch target of 98%, but similar to issues that can affect visits to children subject to child protection plans, it is very difficult to achieve 98%.
- 4.31. Performance in relation to annual health assessments is a little below target at around 84%, as illustrated in Chart 14 of Appendix 1. We are exploring with our health partners why this has dropped over the last few months, as the system had been working well. Current performance is by no means poor, but there is room for improvement in this area. While we would want to see this indicator reach our target of 93%, this is a stretch target given that there will always be a number of young people who decline medical assessments.
- 4.32. Dental checks are currently running at a reported 80%, which is below target. This indicator does rely on self-reporting from foster carers and other children's placement providers, which means that there can be a lag. Actual performance in 2017/18 was 96%, for example, better than the reported rate during the year.
- 4.33. Chart 16 shows the proportion of children and young people in care who have a current Personal Education Plan. This is an area where performance is generally good and indeed is currently standing at 100% and has been for the last five months.
- 4.34. Chart 17 shows the percentage of children who leave care who are adopted. Small numbers make this a highly volatile indicator, and it is usually more reliable to await end of year data.

Action Plan following Ofsted Inspection of children's services June/July 2018

- 4.35. Any local authority with an inspection outcome other than outstanding is required to submit an action plan to detail the actions that will be taken to address priority actions identified during the inspection.
- 4.36. In our most recent inspection, five priority areas were identified by inspectors:
- Assessments of children who are missing or who are at risk of sexual exploitation;
 - The use of chronologies in underpinning children's assessments;
 - The number of return interviews that are successfully completed with children who have been missing from care;
 - The quality of information that is provided to care leavers about their rights and entitlements, including how they can access their health histories;
 - Consistency of management oversight including the recording of casework supervision across all teams.
- 4.37. A detailed series of actions have been developed to address the above five priority areas. This has been shared with Ofsted and can be found as Appendix 2 of this report. The senior leadership team within children's services monitors progress against the action plan.
- 4.38. Ofsted will consider progress against these priorities when they next visit Peterborough, whether as part of a further full inspection of children's services, or in the event that they carry out a focused visit or a joint area targeted inspection.
- 4.39. We have also developed a broader ranging action plan for internal use. This identifies actions to be completed against all those areas identified within the body of the inspection report where Ofsted found room for improvement. This approach ensures that we capture all of the learning from the inspection.
- 4.40. **Portfolio Report: Cabinet Member for Children's Services**
- 4.41. I would like to thank the scrutiny committee for providing me with the opportunity of advising you of activities I have been involved in as part of my role as Cabinet Member.

- 4.42. I was pleased to attend the joint national conference for leaders and lead Members in both children's and adult services in Manchester during November 2018. Councillor Lynne Ayres accompanied me in her role as Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University.
- 4.43. As always, the conference provided a very valuable opportunity to hear about likely developments within children's services over the next year or so. The conference included a number of presentations from senior officers in local government, senior civil servants, as well as Ministers.
- 4.44. What was very clear from the event is that the challenges facing Peterborough – most notably, the financial pressures that are a consequence of rising numbers of children in care – are ones that are being felt across the country. It was also encouraging that Ministers and senior civil servants are listening to the sector and asked for evidence about the impact of pressures such as these. Accordingly, I will be working with senior officers to ensure that we contribute to providing the necessary evidence.
- 4.45. I want to conclude by reporting to scrutiny the very good performance of our services in delivering improved outcomes through the Government's Troubled Families programme, which is known locally as Connecting Families.
- 4.46. I am pleased to be able to report that the most recent benchmarking data published in September 2018 placed Peterborough at 11th out of the 126 authorities that supply data in a comparable way. This is incredibly good performance and is testament to the hard work and dedication of Karen Moody, Head of Service for Early Help, and her very small team of dedicated staff.
- 4.47. What it also means, of course, is that this service is delivering sustained improvements in the lives of children and their families in the City, something that we can all be proud of

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with key officers and key partner service areas including business information services for performance data.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 That Committee:
- Notes the on-going work to ensure that children's services are delivering the best possible outcomes to vulnerable children and young people in the City;
 - Notes the content of the action plan following the most recent inspection of children's services in Cambridgeshire and the arrangements in place to ensure that the necessary changes are put in place.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 Children's services support and help to protect some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the City. How well the service performance is therefore properly a matter of significant importance to leaders and Members.
- 7.2 It is important therefore that this scrutiny has the opportunity to regularly review key performance indicators relating to the delivery of children's services.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 There are no applicable alternative options available.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Children's services in general and placement costs for children in care are areas of risk for all local authorities at present and it is important that Members are fully aware of the implications of increasing numbers of children in care in particular for Council finances.

Legal Implications

- 9.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Equalities Implications

- 9.3 There are no direct implications for equalities issues arising from this report.

Rural Implications

- 9.4 There are no particular implications for rural communities in Peterborough arising from this report.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 10.1 National data on looked after children in England has been included in this report. This data is published by National Statistics and is available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Charts to support the narrative within the Service Director section of this report.
- 11.2 Appendix 2: Action plan following Ofsted inspection of children's services in Peterborough in June/July 2018.