

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 6
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Report of the Executive Director for Children’s Services

Contact Officer(s) – John Richards

Contact Details – john.richards@peterborough.gov.uk

OFSTED ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN’S SERVICES

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with the Annual Assessment of Children’s Services letter for discussion and questions.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To scrutinise the Annual Assessment made by Ofsted which was published on the 9th December 2010

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

- 3.1 Outcomes for all children are key issues included within Peterborough’s Local Area Agreement.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In their letter, Ofsted make the following introductory remarks: “Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children’s services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted’s inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children’s services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted’s inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of ‘performs excellently’ does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of ‘performs poorly’ does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted’s assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.”

5. THE JUDGEMENT: KEY ISSUES

5.1 Members will see that the Ofsted judgement is that Peterborough's children's services are deemed to be performing poorly. This is very disappointing as there is much to celebrate in the performance of Peterborough's Children's Services this year:

- In March our services for Children in Care were rated as 'good' for the first time ever.
- Peterborough's Youth Offending Services have been judged by inspectors as performing well.
- Peterborough has an increasing number of 'outstanding' services: 28 in total – there are now ten schools, six childminders, three providers of childcare, six nursery and early years settings, one independent special school, one secondary special sixth form and one children's home rated as 'outstanding'.
- In total, there are over 280 services and settings rated by Ofsted as 'Good' or better (c.64% of all settings).
- The quality of the work in our schools can be evidenced by Peterborough's best ever GCSE results – 72.4% of Peterborough's pupils achieved 5 or more A*-C grades – an increase of 9.8% and 46% achieved 5 or more A*-C grades including English and Maths.

The Ofsted Annual Assessment letter also highlighted good practice in the following areas:

- 'Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are almost always successful. Nearly all childminders, schools and children's homes are good at this.' (p3)
- 'There are good approaches to promoting community relationships and strengths in the arrangements for tackling bullying in schools and the wider community.' (p3)
- 'Increasing numbers of childcarers, nursery and secondary schools and colleges are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. Levels of attainment are rising quickly for five and seven year olds.' (p3)
- 'Good local initiatives provide opportunities for young people to become involved in volunteering and the number of young people engaging in positive activities is greater than elsewhere.' (p4)

Despite all this excellent work, due to the inadequate judgement received for the inspection of safeguarding in March, relating principally to the contact, referral and assessment service, Ofsted's overall grading for Peterborough is 'performs poorly'. This is a limiting judgement from Ofsted, so we can receive no other grade under their methodology.

Ofsted have also identified other areas for local improvement:

- Continue to increase the number of young people at the age of 11 who achieve the nationally expected level in both English and mathematics
- Continue to raise the attainment of 16 year-olds

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The implications for children's services and the staff who work for children in the city are great indeed. Despite the improvements made (as detailed above) and despite the fact that 64% of our schools and settings are good or better and real progress has been made in improving outcomes this is not recognised in the assessment score. It can be upsetting and demoralising for staff many of whom go the extra mile to ensure good service delivery.

We do not believe that the outcome of a single inspection should overshadow the hard work and excellent progress the vast majority of our services have made, and have unsuccessfully appealed to Ofsted to provide a judgement that is more reflective of local services and outcomes for children and young people. This was not upheld.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 N/a

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 As this assessment of “performing poorly” relates primarily to the inadequate safeguarding judgement back in March 2010, we will continue to ensure that the issues from the inspection are being tackled through the Safeguarding and Children in Care Project Management Board (see sister report on this scrutiny agenda)

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 N/a

10. APPENDICES

10.1 OfSTED Annual Children’s Services Assessment

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