

<b>CREATING OPPORTUNITIES &amp; TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 8</b>
<b>11 JUNE 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.

#### **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 This report provides the Committee with an overview summary of the Council's performance since the last meeting of the Creating Opportunities & Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee on 12 March 2012.

At the January meeting of this Committee the core strategy was explained – based on ten core tasks. These focus on tackling those areas of greatest risk first and lay the foundations for more effective practice. We set ourselves six months to complete these tasks and it is very heartening to see that in a little over four months we have completed the majority of them.

- **Tackle backlogs by bringing in additional staff**

In January, we brought in the Sanctuary peripatetic team to act as an additional pod in the Referral and Assessment Teams. This additional capacity has been a major contributor to clearing up all of the outstanding initial and core assessments. By March, their work complete, the staff were absorbed into vacant posts and we resumed to working with three pods. By the end of April, the total backlog of initial assessments out of timescale had been

reduced from 235 in December to 0 and the number of core assessments out of timescale from 125 to 5. Furthermore, in April we completed 100% of initial assessments within the 10 day statutory timescale and 95% of core assessments in 35 days.

- **Make structural changes to front door**

We have re-engineered the working processes within the Contact Centre and between the Contact Centre and the Referral and Assessment Teams. We have also introduced the Early Intervention Service which has successfully diverted families into the 8-19 service and the early years' service.

- **Restore reasonable workloads by rebasing the establishment**

The establishment was increased from 56 staff to 81. This, alongside the clearing up of backlogs has had a dramatic impact on workloads - reducing the caseloads in Referral and Assessment from on average 30 per worker to 17 and in Family Support from 27 to 20.

- **Strengthen the quality of work undertaken in the assessment teams**

The introduction of the three pod system, a duty manual and three strong managers has considerably strengthened the quality and timeliness of assessments undertaken. We also adjusted the arrangements so that all core assessments are completed within the Referral and Assessment team.

- **Reduce workloads by restoring throughput, pruning caseloads and reducing the numbers of open children in need cases**

In December we had 1486 open children in need cases - at the end of April this had been reduced to 1000; a reduction of nearly 500 cases.

- **Strengthen leadership and accountability**

We quickly appointed two new and experienced Assistant Directors who commenced at the end of March/ early April. This has added considerable leadership capacity. We have introduced a suite of performance reports which track progress on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. The weekly improvement board exercises accountability and the monthly Governance Board oversees progress on the broader improvement plan.

- **Implement an effective quality assurance framework.**

The quality framework was completed in April; this will be a key driver for our work over the next 6 to 12 months.

- **Put in place a compelling workforce strategy**

We have completed the workforce strategy, rolled out a marketing campaign and set up a micro-site. We have moved from a position of no-one applying for jobs in Peterborough to a regular stream of experienced applicants. At the time of writing, four new staff have already commenced and 16 appointments are in the pipeline (i.e. have been offered a permanent post and are currently waiting to start).

- **Building an effective commissioning framework and range of preventive services**

There is still more to be done on this and this will be driven by the new Assistant Director Wendi Ogle-Welbourn. Since her appointment she has already established the panel system presented to the board in April and commenced discussions with the PCT and CCG on setting up a joint commissioning unit.

- **Providing front line teams with fit for purpose ICT, business support and working arrangements**

We have successfully implemented the Liquidlogic ICS product, and provided additional dedicated administrative support as well as floor walkers to support the introduction of the new system. We have also dispensed with hot desking, relocating the teams on the second floor into team structures. Given the progress we have made on the ten core tasks we now need to move into Phase Two of our improvement programme providing a new focus to accelerate us to the next stage.

## 5.2 PHASE TWO

Phase Two is built around seven steps

Our focus over the next six months will be to:

- 1) Ensure initial and core assessments are completed on time to an adequate quality and ensure all cases are allocated appropriately
- 2) Focus on raising the quality of casework through
  - i. Implementing the QA framework
  - ii. Monthly audit programme of case work
  - iii. Mock inspection of the contact referral and assessment service
  - iv. Audits of multi-agency practice
  - v. Assurance exercise in long-term teams
  - vi. Develop an “inspection ready programme” to prepare for the next full Ofsted inspection
- 3) Put in place a range of preventive services to avoid unnecessary family breakdown
  - i. Put in place an Access to Services Panel
  - ii. Commission high level family support
  - iii. Commission an adolescent intervention service
  - iv. Improve commissioning of all tier two and three services
  - v. Strengthen CAMHS and well-being services for young people
- 4) Improve care planning and outcomes for Looked after Children (LAC)
  - i. Audit of care plans for all LAC
  - ii. Increase numbers of adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders
  - iii. Improve the supply and choice of adoption and fostering placements
  - iv. Monitoring of minimum standards:
    1. statutory visits
    2. recording for LAC cases

- 3. Improving health care assessments for LAC
  - v. Early access to CAMHS provision
  - vi. Monitoring of Personal Education Plan for all LAC
  - vii. Strengthen voice of LAC in policy procedures and decision making
  - viii. Mock inspection of LAC service
  
- 5) Strengthen the multi-agency use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the Team around the Child
  - i. Establish Multi-agency Support Panels (MASG)
  - ii. Set up monthly monitoring of uptake and outcomes including use of CAF
  - iii. Strengthen preventive alternatives available at tiers two and three
  - iv. Put in place a review process for all vulnerable children in MASG process
  - v. Review CAF access and allocation processes
  
- 6) Put in place a permanent management structure and workforce
  - i. Restructure divisions and appoint new heads of service
  - ii. Recruit permanent social workers
  - iii. Recruit permanent Director of Children's Services
  
- 7) Improve the impact of partnerships
  - i. Strengthen monitoring and scrutiny role of Peterborough Safeguarding Children's Board
  - ii. Develop a Joint Commissioning Group to replace the Children's Trust
  - iii. Set up a Joint Commissioning Unit with the PCT and Clinical Commissioning Group

5.3 The Improvement Plan is currently being amended to reflect this new strategic focus.

## **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 None

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